

YALE GALA

YALE'S LGBT ALUMNI/AE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Bulldogs in the Boroughs Part II: New York's LGBTQ Youth and One Special Yale Alum

By Bob Cruz DC '79

In 1979, in New York City, an organization was founded specifically to provide aid and shelter to gay and lesbian youth, who otherwise would have had no place to turn. The organization's founders—Emery S. Hetrick, a psychiatrist, and A. Damien Martin, a New York University professor—had been spurred into action after learning of the plight of a 15 year-old gay male in New York City who had been beaten and sexually assaulted by residents of the group home where he was living at the time, and who, subsequently, was blamed for the attack because of his sexual identity. Deeply affected, Hetrick and Martin established the Institute for Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth.

Twenty-six years later, that organization—since renamed the Hetrick-Martin Institute (HMI) in memory of its founders—has grown to become New York City's leading professional provider of social support and programming for at-risk youth of all orientations: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and even those simply in the process of questioning (aka LGBTQ). Working in partnership with New York City's Department of Education, HMI helps run the Harvey Milk High School (located on the same premises as HMI), a public school devoted to fulfilling the specific needs of at-risk LGBTQ youth.

Beyond its support of the school, HMI also provides many after-school services for LGBTQ students from all New York City high schools.

At the helm of this remarkable organization is David Mensah, a 1989 Yale Divinity School graduate and executive director of HMI since January of 2002. David possesses a keen insight into the plight of LGBTQ youth in the challenging urban setting of New York City: "Hetrick-Martin has been around for 25 years serving 'invisible kids'. The students who attend Harvey Milk High School are those who have been victimized without consequence. But the fact that they've asked to attend Harvey Milk means these kids are fighters, they're resilient. They come to us because they have energy, life."

David's journey to HMI began in West Africa, where he was born. He moved to Oregon at an early age, and later attended Oregon State University. Shortly after graduation, he moved to New Haven, where he discovered a new, more relaxed sense of identity. "I love New Haven!" David proclaims (employing the present



David Mensah—1989 Yale Divinity School graduate and current executive director of the Hetrick-Martin Institute

tense despite his having left the Elm City five years ago), "it was the first time I could walk down the street without being stared at." He obtained a Masters of Divinity from Yale and a Certificate in *(continued on next page)*

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Damien Martin and Emery S. Hetrick,
founders of the Hetrick-Martin Institute
(Courtesy of the Hetrick-Martin Institute)

Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of Bridgeport. Initially he worked in various capacities throughout Southern Connecticut as both a counselor and counselor instructor. Eventually, however, David's drive along with his affection for the Elm City led him to a New Haven-based organization—Connecticut AIDS Residence Project (CARP)—where he functioned as executive director, managing and providing residential and support services for HIV-positive homeless adults. In the process, David ended up earning statewide prominence for CARP and awards for himself from such entities as the Connecticut Department of Health and the New Haven Metropolitan Community Church.

After seven years, however, burnt-out as executive director, David left New Haven and joined New York City's Safe Horizon, where he managed nine community-based service centers which provided emergency assistance for victims of crime, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. There, his counseling skills proved invaluable in the wake of 9/11. He coordinated a Trauma Response Team specifically assembled to deal with the city's unprecedented demand for grief and trauma counselors.

Finally, in January of 2001, David

hired on to the Hetrick-Martin Institute as executive director. "I met the Board and loved them. And I loved the mission."

The mission of HMI—as specifically stated in its promotional materials and echoed by David himself whenever he takes visitors on a tour of the HMI facilities—is "making the world a safer, more encouraging place for all youth and . . . finding a way for all LGBTQ youth to fulfill their potential."

Wistfully, David elaborates, "You have to believe that every kid has the right to go to school to learn in a safe supportive environment. Some of these kids have no cultural safe space."

And how—exactly—does HMI accomplish its mission?

Citing HMI's flagship program, the Harvey Milk High School, David commences to explain: "HMI supports the Harvey Milk High School—but as a separate non-profit entity. We *partner* with New York City. HMI provides the space and support services, New York City provides the academics. We do not run or administer the school. That is the job of the New York City Department of Education. They staff the school, and handle all admissions."

Literature about the Harvey Milk High School clarifies the school's purpose: "Students of the Harvey Milk High School have already been segregated by abuse, by assault, or by neglect. For them, Harvey Milk High School is not an eccentricity or indulgence, it is a necessity."

To that David adds: "The school exists to provide these kids with harassment-free learning. Our goal for these kids is to get them to stay in school, graduate, then go off to college."

Like most schools in New York City, Harvey Milk High employs state-of-the-art technology when it comes to teaching materials. Every classroom is equipped with a digital video projector. A wireless filtered internet serves the school, and all desk sets accommodate laptops. David explains that part of the school's goal is to create tech-savvy kids, not by teaching them the specifics

of technology, but rather, by applying technology within the context of the actual subject. David refers to this process as "tech integration": "We're teaching them how to use the computer in a regular classroom. For instance, in a poetry class, one particular exercise instructed the students to select a favorite poet, search the internet for data on that poet, then use that information to create a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation about that poet."

Beyond its support of Harvey Milk High, HMI

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addresses additional—indeed perhaps more critical—student needs via two supplemental components: the After-School Services Department and the Supportive Services Department.

The After-School Services Department (ASD) offers an alternative safe space on weekday afternoons and evenings, and provides engaging activities, counseling, education, and training for LGBTQ youth to achieve their full potential in a healthy, positive environment. Services are available Monday–Friday, 2:30 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. throughout the calendar year, and fall into three categories: arts and cultural, health and wellness, and job readiness and career exploration.

The Supportive Services Department (SSD) provides sensitive and high-quality physical, social, and emotional support. SSD assures that at-risk LGBTQ youth who come to HMI have immediate access to basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as case management services that can make referrals to address legal, medical, and mental health care needs.

But HMI's dedication to helping at-risk LGBTQ youth goes still further. HMI also staffs an outreach team which seeks out at-risk LGBTQ youth in places where they are most likely to be found: New York City's parks, street corners, low-income neighborhoods, and piers. The outreach team offers food vouchers, hygiene products, HIV education materials, and referrals for housing, medical, and mental health services, thus encouraging such at-risk LGBTQ youth to participate in HMI's varied activities and programs. For those who subsequently choose to attend Harvey Milk High, HMI interacts with the school to ensure that each newcomer first meets with an SSD staff person who conducts a comprehensive needs and safety assessment. As per HMI's goals, counselors work to move these LGBTQ at-risk youth towards emotional stability, helping to empower themselves while encouraging positive social behavior.

The net result is a place where New York City's LGBTQ students talk about relationships as easily as they talk about college (which, for many, is an achievement in and of itself). Visiting the hallways of Harvey Milk High School, one picks up an aura that, for the most part, is the same as in any other New York City high school—yet distinctly different as well. Brightly-colored lockers and walls sport handmade signs proclaiming “shade-free” zones. A cafeteria is equipped with overhanging lighting racks and a rollout platform to serve double-duty as a performance space. The majority of the students are Hispanic and African-American. Observed on a weekday during Winter Break, they cluster in groups, chatting away as any group of teenagers is prone.

“Twenty percent of the students who use this space and facilities offered by Hetrick-Martin daily are from Harvey Milk,” David states. “The average number of students is 35–55, but for an event 150 kids may show up. About a hundred students attend Harvey Milk, while over thousands



LGBTQ youth at New York City's Pride Parade (Courtesy of the Hetrick-Martin Institute)

of students from across New York City's five boroughs take advantage of HMI's After-School and Supportive Services departments.”

Past events in the cafeteria/performance space have included dances, HIV-prevention sessions, a fashion show complete with a runway, and, David wryly discloses, “voguing” classes. As if called upon to verify David's disclosure, three male students nearby engage in exactly that: “voguing.” Strutting and posing with all the grace of supermodels, they are observed and constructively critiqued by male onlookers. The rest of the gathered students, however, seem either too caught up in their own conversations to notice, or prefer to peruse through the latest issue of *The Advocate* (copies of which are supplied to the school for free).

To a visitor, perhaps the most dramatic feature of the Harvey Milk High School is its entrance: a separate, restricted entryway installed by the landlord and secured by a locked door. “High security ensures safety.” David explains. “We get, naturally, harassers—a few of which ended up being ‘questioners’ wanting to know more about the school.”

For his efforts at having helped the Harvey Milk High School to expand, David has been recognized with awards from the Association of Gay & Lesbian Psychiatrists, the Human Rights Commission and the Heritage of Pride.

Among student testimonials featured in the brochure for Harvey Milk High School, one rather poignant comment seems to validate David's recognition:

“When I look at the future now, I see beauty. . . .”

David Mensah DIV '89 lives in Brooklyn with his partner, Christopher Moore (also a Yale graduate—MPH '02). He extends an open invitation to all Yale alums to visit HMI and the Harvey Milk High School. David can be reached at 212-674-2600, or dmensah@hmi.org.

For more information on the Hetrick-Martin Institute and the Harvey Milk High School, visit www.hmi.org. ▼

Yale Law School Victorious over Department of Defense

Special to the Yale GALA Newsletter by

Adam Phillip Romero, Yale Law School '07

In 1978, the Yale Law School became one of the first institutions of its kind to include sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination policy. Because the military discriminates against lesbians, gays, and bisexuals and is thus unable to sign a pledge of nondiscrimination required of all other employers recruiting law students. The Law School had long prohibited the military from participating in official interview programs sponsored by the Career Development Office. While the military has always been permitted access to campus if invited by a student, the Law School refused to affirmatively assist the military in its efforts.

In 2002, however, the Law School suspended its nondiscrimination policy to specially exempt the military. Under a law statute known as the Solomon Amendment, the Department of Defense had informed the Law School that, unless the military was allowed into the official interview programs, over \$350 million dollars in federal funds would be withdrawn from the entire university. While the Law School in fact receives very few federal funds, other sub-elements of Yale—particularly the Medical School cancer and AIDS

research programs—receive large amounts of funding. In response, Law School faculty and students separately filed suit in federal court challenging the constitutionality of the statute that conditioned the university federal funding on the suspension of the nondiscrimination policy with regards to sexual orientation. Students also organized educational campaigns and signed pledges not to interview with the military through the official programs.

On 31 January of this year, District Court Judge Janet C. Hall granted summary judgment in favor of the faculty plaintiffs. Holding that the Solomon Amendment violates the faculty's First Amendment right to freedom of speech, Judge Hall declared the law unconstitutional as applied to Yale Law School and permanently enjoined the Department of Defense from enforcing it against Yale University based on the Law School's nondiscrimination policy. Judge Hall wrote that Yale Law School, "acting through the Faculty, has been unconstitutionally coerced into foregoing its own message [of nondiscrimination] and into assisting DoD in the dissemination of DoD's message of its Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. . . ." "In addition, DoD offers no evidence to support a finding that the Solomon Amendment, and the suspension of the N[on-D]iscrimination P[olicy] for the past two years at YLS that it caused, has advanced its goal of raising an army through effective recruiting." Judge Hall clarified that "the Solomon Amendment is not narrowly tailored to advance a compelling government interest, and thus unjustifiably burdens the Faculty Members' First Amendment right of expressive association."

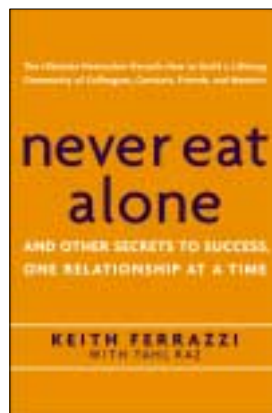
While the government is likely to appeal, in light of Judge Hall's ruling Law School Dean Harold Hongju Koh informed military recruiters that the nondiscrimination policy would, once again, be enforced without exception, and that the military would not be permitted to participate in the school's 2005 Spring Interview Program.

The Law School has received criticism for its enforcement of the nondiscrimination policy against the military, particularly in a time of continued war. Such criticism, however, is misguided and misplaced. The Yale Law School is not anti-military, but rather is against being enlisted into the service of discrimination against members of its own community. If the military is sincerely interested in raising the most excellent, finest army it can and truly seeks to attract Yale Law graduates, it should end its discrimination against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

The faculty case is *Burt v. Rumsfeld* (D. Conn. Jan. 31, 2005). For one smart excellent commentary on related issues see Kenji Yoshino, "Suspend Don't Ask, Don't Tell" available at: http://www.law.yale.edu/outside/html/Public_Affairs/300/yls_article.htm ▼

GALA Member Shares His Strategy for Phenomenal Success

Keith Ferrazzi BK '88, is the former Chief Marketing Officer of both Deloitte Consulting and Starwood Hotels, and currently head of his own marketing and sales consulting firm. In his new book, *Never Eat Alone And Other Secrets To Success, One Relationship At A Time* (Currency/Doubleday), Ferrazzi presents a guide for building a lifelong network that will help people succeed at both work and life. Based on Ferrazzi's own life and supplemented by anecdotes about legendary networkers like Henry Kissinger, Katharine Graham, and Dale Carnegie, *Never Eat Alone* is the ultimate primer on the connected. ▼



Jerusalem 2005: LGBT People Have Their Say

by Jesús Chapa-Malacara MC '04 (with Hagai El-Ad)

An unprecedented coalition of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders has emerged to voice its opposition to the upcoming world-wide pride celebration, WorldPride 2005, scheduled to happen in Jerusalem from 18 to 28 August. Wait. Let me repeat that: a coalition of Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders are working together in the holy and fought-after city of Jerusalem.

Wow. It's almost inconceivable, no? Actually, it's not as unlikely as it sounds.

Once again, the heteros are playing catch-up (surprise, surprise—what's new?). In fact, LGBT people in Jerusalem have been working across the conflict for years at the home of the very organization that is hosting WorldPride, the Jerusalem Open House (JOH). JOH is Jerusalem LGBT community center, and it's an incredible place; I visited it and Jerusalem, along with GALA President Mickey Dobbs, in January. Muslims mingle with Orthodox Jews mingle with Christians mingle with secular Jews mingle with Christian Arabs mingle with . . .

Yet, the JOH is not a reactionary movement based in hatred, intolerance, or exclusion. It is community based in tolerance, love, and respect, in the belief that human rights transcend cultural and ethnic boundaries and that differences can be respected peacefully and even celebrated. And it is with that vision that the Open House brings WorldPride to Jerusalem.

The WorldPride label befits a unique event, in a unique city, with a statement that will echo far and wide. The first WorldPride, Rome 2000, was just that: it brought to the heart of Europe, and indeed to the Pope's doorstep, the message that gays and lesbians are and always have been a vital part of humanity.

Jerusalem WorldPride 2005 intends to take that message to a new and even more challenging frontier. It is an attempt to demonstrate to our community, our neighbors, and our peers, and indeed to the world, not only that we



Staffing the WorldPride Booth at a recent New York City Gay Expo are Po Chen BR '04, Jesús Chapa-Malacara MC '04, and Patrick Dundon SY '04.

belong but that our love and our pride know no borders. There is no better place in the world than Jerusalem to make this statement, and perhaps no city that needs to hear it more. The Jerusalem Open House should know.

An incredible mission for an incredible event, Jerusalem WorldPride aims to bring together in Israel/Palestine tens of thousands of foreign and local LGBT people and their supporters. It will, of course, include the typical pride events (a parade, plenty of parties, etc.) as well as cultural, academic, and political happenings. But it also will be so much more than that. This year it's in Jerusalem. . . .

As if this article weren't full enough of shocks, you might be interested to hear that several Yalies are involved in pulling off this whole fabulous gathering; in fact, just among the GALA board, five members are a part of this effort.

Emily Regan Wills (TC '04) is helping plan an international women's art exhibition, while **Brennan Gerard** (TD '01), as co-director of Moving Theater, is working on developing a dance theatre piece for WorldPride's arts programming. **LKI Director Jonathan Katz** is a key figure in the WorldPride queer academic conference. I am coordinating the North American marketing and outreach campaign. And **Mickey Dobbs** (TC '92), also Acting President of the American Friends of JOH, is ultimately in charge of, well as always, nearly everything.

We invite you to learn more about WorldPride and the momentous event and opportunity it presents. For more information, please visit the WorldPride website: <http://www.worldpride.net> or email me at newyork@worldpride.net.

This year in Jerusalem . . . WorldPride 2005: Love Without Borders. Bring it on.

Hagai El-Ad is the executive director of the Jerusalem Open House. Jesús Chapa-Malacara MC '04 is a GALA Board member from New York and is doing independent consulting for non-profits around the world. ▼

Visiting New Haven for your REUNION???

Yale GALA has receptions scheduled for both Reunion weekends—on Saturday May 28th and on Saturday June 4th.

Check your Reunion website—or watch for an e-mail from GALA President Mickey Dobbs. We'll be there—will you???

Annual GALA Student-Alumni Dinner

Saturday, November 13, 2005

Hall of Graduate Studies, New Haven



Over 50 LGBTQ alums and students wined and dined—our biggest attendance ever



Ran Frazier SM '03, Alexis Hoag SM '04, Jamal Caesar ES '03 and Derrick McBride BR '04 bidding everyone "Cheers!"



Ryan Miller '05 and Hector Silva '05
(shortly before exiting for a trip to NYC!)



GALA Secretary Bob Cruz DC '79, Raul Navarro '08,
Ricardo Sandoval '07 and Hector Silva '05
incite a New Haven-style "hispanic panic"



GALA member emeritus Chuck Porter PhD '62 and
GALA Treasurer Tim Bertaccini ES '77



Former Army Ranger Brian Hughes TC '04 and David Call TD '03