



# NEWS

**Oberlin Lambda Alumni** —  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and LGBT-affirming Alumni & Friends of Oberlin College

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## OLA Steering Committee

Matt Brititzer-Stull '94  
(Secretary)  
3954 Xerxes Ave. N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55412  
(612) 625-9896  
matt\_brititzer\_stull@world.oberlin.edu

Chanel Chambers '97  
Durham, NC  
crchambers@altacrest.com

Jeremiah Gold-Hopton '86  
P.O. Box 285  
Pine Lake, GA 30072  
(404)294-5850  
Jeremiah@world.oberlin.edu

Roger Goodman '68  
4430 N. Spaulding Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60625-5406  
(773) 267-5810  
rgoodman@condor.depaul.edu

Stan Kim '90 (Treasurer)  
1234 N. Havenhurst Drive, #11  
West Hollywood, CA 90046  
(323) 822-1588  
stanonmars@aol.com

Diepiriye S. Kuku-Siemons '97  
(Co-Chair)  
C 16 Soami Nagar  
110017 New Delhi, India  
+91 981 056 7533  
dskuku@world.oberlin.edu

Carol Levine '84 (Co-Chair)  
518 Ninth Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
718-965-0409  
clevine@carmelus.com

Leslie Myers '85  
P.O. Box 1605  
Sioux Lookout, ON P8T 1C3  
(807) 737-2487  
myers026@pol.net

Lawrence Wexler '72  
160 West 66th Street  
New York, NY 10023  
212-787-1703  
larrymwexler@hotmail.com

## This Election! A Quick Reference Guide for a Queerly Conscious Vote

By Diepiriye S. Kuku-Siemons '97



Adoption, civil unions and domestic partnership, social security and spousal pension benefits, more inclusive hate crime legislation and lifting the military ban for queer people are all issues upon which George W. Bush and John Kerry fail to see eye to eye during this election season. Essentially, John Kerry supports all of the above while George W. Bush opposes them.

Regardless of what you believe in and support, it is always good to be informed. The purpose of this article is to provide insight to the candidates' key views and mostly, to provide websites where further information can be researched. You can visit any of the sites below for both more comprehensive and more accessible information regarding the George W. Bush and John Kerry positions and records on issues directly affecting the lives of queer people and people living with AIDS.

Significantly, these two candidates hold **greatly divergent views on health care**. Below you will find a link to the Gay Men's Health Crisis. There, you can read a very comprehensive analysis of HIV/AIDS related issues at stake vis-à-vis the divergent positions of Senator Kerry and President Bush. Of note, President Bush opposes the federal government taking a mandated role in negotiating prescription drug prices and closing intellectual property

loopholes that have been used to monopolize patents on prescription drugs. Senator Kerry has presented his support of such measures as key to his election platform.

John Kerry was one of the 14 Senators to oppose the Defense of Marriage Act (even during his re-election in 1996). Senator Kerry co-sponsored the first Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency Act (CARE), which constitutes the largest federal funding initiative to treat people living with HIV/AIDS. Senator Kerry has liaised with the Congressional Black Caucus to support bills that strengthen global HIV/AIDS prevention programs as well as support seropositive parents and caregivers.

George W. Bush endorses and encourages abstinence as the only sure way to prevent STD's, and has recommitted federal funding of the CARE program. President Bush supports a Federal Marriage Amendment that aims at "defining and protecting marriage as a union of a man and a woman as husband and wife." Lastly, President Bush has appointed several individuals to Federal Courts, who have publicly espoused anti-gay positions.

The weight of what is at stake is grand. As evidenced through the last election, and just in case anyone forgot: Your vote counts! Although President Bush and Senator Kerry are not the only candidates running in this year's election, they are the only two on

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## OLA at Oberlin

By Carol Levine '84

Last March, OLA sponsored a mini-reunion, which featured a panel discussion on "Being Out at Oberlin from the '60s to the Present." The panel, which had representatives from each of the decades, met in Wilder with an intimate



group of students, faculty, staff and alumni. The event was followed by a pizza dinner at Talcott that was festive and encouraged many lingering conversations.

During the weekend, OLA renewed its relationship with the LGBTCC (Lesbian, Gay,

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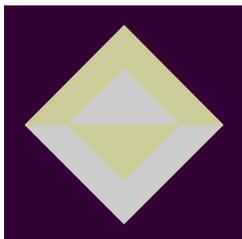
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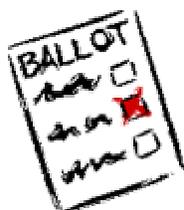
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**Contrary to popular belief, barebacking does not provide a safe environment for having sex.**



**Vote America**

**Your Vote Counts**



**Nov. 2, 2004**

## Barebacking

By Lawrence M. Wexler, Ph.D.

Barebacking refers to gay men practicing unprotected anal intercourse with people of the same HIV status, such as HIV positives with other positives, and HIV negatives with other negatives. Although some people perceive this as responsible and safe sexual behavior, the purpose of this article is to refute this premise.

Many AIDS specialists feel we are on the brink of a major AIDS epidemic. In fact, we are not in a post-AIDS era. Recently, there has been an increase in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially gonorrhea. Other STDs include syphilis, warts, herpes and Hepatitis B. STDs are often contracted while practicing unsafe sex, or sex without a condom, which then serves as a proxy or host for development of the HIV infection. For those people who contract STDs while already plagued with HIV, the results can be fatal; their bodies are already immunocompromised and, therefore, prone to infection.

Alternatively, there are benefits to barebacking. These include more sensitivity, feeling and enjoyment, greater intimacy with your partner, more spontaneity without pausing to get a condom, and lowered costs.

Contrary to popular belief, barebacking does not provide a safe environment for having sex. Instead, it can take up to six months to seroconvert, or go from HIV negative to HIV positive status on a blood test even though a person actually becomes infectious at day one.

Nevertheless, many people somehow convince themselves that they will not get infected, that they are immune. This is the Russian roulette syndrome. There are even some men, known as bug chasers, who are HIV negative yet who try to get infected with HIV to become part of the "exclusive club" that comes with being part of the disease.

In summary, more and more gay men, and especially those from the younger generation, are becoming increasingly less aware of the repercussions of practicing barebacking. With a little knowledge, many more lives can be saved.



*Larry Wexler '72 is an epidemiologist living in New York City with his partner of 18 years.*

## This Election! (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

the ballots of every state (Ralph Nader is on 34 states' ballots). If you have information that you can provide concerning this election and a queerly conscious vote, please participate in OLA's online community OLAdiscussion at Yahoo! Groups. Send comments to: [OLAdiscussion@yahoogroups.com](mailto:OLAdiscussion@yahoogroups.com)

For more information on the candidates and their positions on these and other issues, visit: <http://www.johnkerry.com>  
<http://www.georgewbush.com>  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

The Gay Men's Health Crisis:  
<http://www.gmhc.org>

A comprehensive comparison of Bush and Kerry's health care plans:

[http://www.gmhc.org/policy/president\\_report04.pdf](http://www.gmhc.org/policy/president_report04.pdf)

The AIDS Vote posts a concise summary of relevant issues at stake in this election:

[http://www.aidsvote.org/platform\\_summary.html](http://www.aidsvote.org/platform_summary.html)

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has a wonderfully well organized election resource center:

[http://www.thetaskforce.org/community/election\\_center.cfm](http://www.thetaskforce.org/community/election_center.cfm)

In addition, please visit the Human Rights Campaign:

<http://www.hrc.org>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/hiv aids/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Presidential\\_Candidates&CONTENTID=15419&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm](http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Presidential_Candidates&CONTENTID=15419&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm)

## Who Were Robertson and Cemelli?

*Information Retained by the LGBTCC and Submitted By Deborah Rifkin, Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Chairperson of the LGBTCC (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns Committee)*

In 1996, a fund was initiated honoring two OLA Steering Committee members who were lost to complications from AIDS-related illnesses. The fund produces an annual financial award to students in the process of or who have completed work related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgendered community. This article is about the men who inspired the gift.

Norm Robertson '81, enrolled in Oberlin College in the fall of 1975 intending to be a pre-med major. By the time he graduated in 1981, like many Obies, he had a completely different outlook and graduated with a Religion major with significant interest in the Conservatory. Although he had studied the violin seriously in high school, he never intended to become a professional violinist. Oberlin introduced him to early music for the first time. While a student, he participated in Collegium Musicum and studied baroque violin and viola. When he moved to Chicago after graduation he was one of the first members of City Musik, a short-lived but distinguished baroque orchestra. His partner also participated and was a well-known keyboard instrumentalist and soloist. Along with City Musik, Mr. Robertson played with Jubal's Lyre, Basically Bach, and Harwood Early Music Ensemble.

Oberlin professors who knew Norm well remember him as a talented student and gentle, generous person. While at college, Norm worked hard and managed to reconcile his sexuality with his deep felt convictions as a Catholic. After graduation, he put his convictions to practice and worked for several years in a parish in Baton Rouge, LA as director of Christian education. He was also quite proud of his position as director of consignments at Leslie Hindman Auctioneers, one of the Mid-West's finest art auctions. As a resident of Chicago Norm was very active in the Chicago alumni group and received the volunteer of the year award.

Norm Robertson died of complications related to AIDS on January 11, 1992. He was remembered by his friends in Fairchild chapel in an historical performance concert entitled "Bach for AIDS."

Andrew Cemelli enrolled intending to pursue a biology major with an interest in voice. Like Norm Robertson before him, by the time he graduated he had completely changed his focus and graduated with a BA in Theatre. Theatre was not his only interest at Oberlin; while here, Andy developed interests in photography, knitting, and dance. He was an active member of Keep Co-op and was perhaps most famous in his time here for his sparring with former President Starr. He was very active in lesbian gay and bisexual issues including the data project where he attempted to make a database with lesbian, gay and bisexual interests so that they could seek each other out for support and discussion. After graduation, he started Concepts and Keystrokes (a computing company) with his mother Ginger Cemelli. He continued to pursue his diverse interests including pizza eating and scuba diving, and sang in the Pro Art Chorale in Paramus, NJ. He was very active in the Oberlin LGB alumni. He worked at Novell/WordPerfect until he was forced to leave on disability in November 1995.

Andrew Cemelli died on February 5, 1996 of complications related to AIDS. He is remembered by his friends as being a very persuasive and proactive person.

### Robertson Winners

2003- Abby Farragher '03; The changing views of lesbian identity from 1900-to the present. From the scientific/psychological description of lesbianism as a disease, to the changing perception of lesbians in the media.

2003- Sarah Saunders '03; Transgender rights in the American prison system. A transgender (MTF) person was incarcerated as a result of protesting the School of Americas, and Sarah organized to make sure she was given the proper medication to continue hormone therapy.

1997- Robert G Colby '96, honorable mention; "The Angels of Sodom: Gustave Moreau, Homosexuality and the Culture of A Rebours"

1997- Stephanie Cohen '97, honorable mention; "Bodies Gone Public: Passing Exposure Stories and the Visualization of Heteronormativity"

1997- David Berman '97; "For Better or Worse: The Gay Movement and the Problem of Gay Marriage"

### Cemelli Winners

1999 - Matthew Hayden '94; Creating a resource list and training materials for the Lorain County Rape Crisis Service dealing with LGBT issues and an academic paper on the subject.

1999 - Joey Plaster '01; Oral interviews with alumni regarding the history of sexual identity and culture at Oberlin.

1999 - Khary Polk '02; Tulane University archives - Forms of homosexuality with Slave Relations (master/slave, slave/slave, consensual, homoerotic games, prostitution and rape)

1998 - Jesse Ehrensaft-Hawley '98; "Historical, socio-political, literary and cinematic representations of transgender people of African descent in New York City Since 1920"

1998 - Mary Margaret Towey '00; " Transsexual Odyssey 4 Case Studies"

1996 - Nicole Hurt '98; "Bad Barracks Beulahs to Blues Divas: A Partial History of Same-sex Love Among Black Women in the United States"

1996 - Andrew W. A. LaVallee '98; "Coalition Building within the Academy: Relating/Rethinking Queer and Ethnic Studies"

1995 - Deborah Cane '96; "The Beginnings of Gay Activism at Oberlin College 1968-1984"

## Introducing Chanel Chambers '97, a Wonderful Addition to the OLA Steering Committee

Chanel R. Chambers '97 graduated from the double-degree program with majors in English and Music Education. She received a Master's degree in 2004 from North Carolina State University and is currently working as a Web developer. Through membership on the steering committee, Chanel hopes to give back to Oberlin's LGBTQ community, to whom she feels grateful.



In Chanel's words: "When I arrived at Oberlin in 1993, I desperately needed a support system to help me through my coming out process. I found that support system through Zami. Over time, I was able to realize that Oberlin is an incredibly supportive place to be for young adults who are struggling to come to terms with their identities. I am especially thankful that Oberlin was one of the first institutions to employ an LGBT intern in what was then

the Multicultural Resource Center. The people who filled this position during my time at Oberlin were invaluable to me during my college years. Likewise, the alums who returned to Oberlin for OLA meetings and reunions were role models who showed that a happy and fulfilling life after Oberlin was possible. Now the time has come for me to give a little back to that community."

Chanel can be contacted at:  
[crchambers@altacrest.com](mailto:crchambers@altacrest.com).

## OLA in Cyberspace!

### OLA Discussion Group

Do you have reactions or responses to any of the articles in this newsletter? Do you have thoughts that you'd like to share with other Oberlin Lambda alums? It may not be quite the same as when we were Oberlin students talking in the dorm, the Student Union, a co-op kitchen, the Con lounge, a cafeteria, (or wherever it was that you used to have discussions at Oberlin), but the new Oberlin Lambda Alumni electronic discussion group is an excellent opportunity for us to share our thoughts, so please come and join the discussion!

Here's how to join:

Go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OLAdiscussion> and click on "Join This Group"

OR

Send a blank email to: [OLAdiscussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:OLAdiscussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

[www.oberlin.edu/alumni/  
OLA/default.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/alumni/OLA/default.html)

### OLA Listserv

This is a listserv hosted by the Oberlin College Center for Information Technology for OLA members to post announcements of upcoming events and items of interest. This listserv is moderated, and only Oberlin alumni are allowed to join. The volume of messages is fairly low. To subscribe to this listserv, send an email message (from the email account where you want to receive listserv messages) to [majordomo@venus.cc.oberlin.edu](mailto:majordomo@venus.cc.oberlin.edu) that says: Subscribe ola\_news.

**NOTE ON CONFIDENTIALITY:** The list moderator will only approve current OLA members as subscribers to ola\_news, and the list of subscribers will not be shared or made public in any way by OLA. However, subscribers should be aware that anyone already subscribed to the list who is familiar with the command system for this listserv software might be able to access email addresses (not names) of subscribers. Because the software is commercially produced and administered by the Oberlin Center for Information Technology, we are unable to change this feature of the program. Since anyone attempting to do this would have to already be an OLA member subscribed to the list, we believe that the risk to members concerned about confidentiality is minimal.

### OLA Email Address

[ola\\_oberlin@yahoo.com](mailto:ola_oberlin@yahoo.com)

### OLA Website

<http://www.oberlin.edu/alumni/OLA/Default.html>

## There's No Place Like Home

By Paul Wolansky

Many alumni will only make it back to campus every few years or so for a Reunion—with some not being able to return at all. One way that Oberlin reaches out to alumni is through our national Oberlin Clubs. Presently, there are 30 Oberlin Clubs operating from Austin, Texas to Western Massachusetts - and all points in between. Many of our largest and most active groups are located in major metropolitan areas, including New York City, Boston, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and Chicago; however, we have terrific groups located in smaller areas like Colorado and Minneapolis/St. Paul as well. Chances are... there's an Obie near you!

A local Oberlinian known as the Regional Coordinator manages each Oberlin Club. These RC's are volunteers who plan at least two events per year— sometimes on their own and in some cases with the help of a local steering committee of other volunteers. In the years ahead, the Alumni Office would like to strengthen the representation of all alumni affiliate groups, including OLA, with these regional groups. In December 2002, the Oberlin Club of Minneapolis/St. Paul co-sponsored along with OLA a "Holiday Cookie Baking" party that was a smashing, not to mention delicious, success.

Alternatively, the San Francisco Club has traditionally sponsored a team for the annual AIDS walk. If you have an idea for an event that you'd like to see in your hometown, it doesn't take much to get it going.

The first step is to make contact with your local Regional Coordinator via telephone or email. This will give you the opportunity to share your idea. The Regional Coordinator (RC) will then work with you to map out the specifics of the event—where will it happen? Will there be a cost associated with participating? Is there a target population for the event? Once those details are nailed down, the RC will forward the event particulars to the Alumni Office for marketing support. Here at the Alumni Office we'll create either a paper flier or compose an email for your event and send it to alumni in the area. We'll also post the event to our alumni off campus events calendar. Moreover, in those cases where a monthly Oberlin Club e-newsletter exists, the RC will include that information there, as well. It's a very simple and manageable process for all involved.

Remember, the Alumni Office doesn't send out mass emails for events that are not

"officially sponsored" Oberlin Club events. If you would like to make a personal event announcement, the best venue for that is the monthly e-newsletter. However, we will post your "unofficial" event for you on the alumni off campus calendar as a public event.

How can you help? Consider getting involved on your local steering committee by contacting your Regional Coordinator. You can find the contact information for all volunteers at ObieWeb, the alumni online community, at [www.oberlin.edu/alumni](http://www.oberlin.edu/alumni) in the "Oberlin Clubs" menu. You can also help by updating your personal profile on ObieWeb and selecting the "I'd like to volunteer for my local Oberlin Club steering committee" in the personal profile Activities and Interests area.

Remember—there's no place like your home [town] to plan a regional event!

*Paul is the Director of Alumni Regional Activities and Electronic Communications for Oberlin. He can be contacted at [Paul.Wolansky@oberlin.edu](mailto:Paul.Wolansky@oberlin.edu)*



**Chances are...  
there's an Obie  
near you!**

## OLA at Oberlin (continued)



OLA meets with the LGBTCC

(Continued from page 1)

Bisexual and Transgender Concerns Committee), which is a faculty committee that supports both student and faculty LGBT concerns, and which is responsible for managing selection and distribution of the Cemelli and Robertson prizes. Subsequently, OLA has made arrangements to meet with the LGBTCC regularly and to coordinate an event this coming spring, together with help from the Multicultural Resource Center as our main conduit to the student groups on campus.

In the meantime, OLA participated in a Career Services sponsored event for the second time this past September to network with students who have concerns about being out in the workplace. OLA continues to draw over 20 students at each event, and continues to grow in popularity.



**Back for the Mini-Reunion was a past OLA Steering Committee member—  
Herb Zeman '65  
(front and center)**

## Oberlin Student Groups

By Kate Eubank, Multicultural Resource Center LGBT Coordinator

Oberlin encourages people to explore their worlds and to find comfort in their peers. There are currently six groups on campus that are explicitly organized around queer identities and issues. Below is a brief description of each of them.



### Kinsey 1-5

A group for those who do not fit neatly into categories of heterosexual or homosexual. Meets weekly for discussion and planning of campus activities.

### Lambda Union (f/k/a LGBTU)

As stated in its charter, the purposes of Lambda Union are: "To provide a forum for the political, social, emotional, and educational needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual and Questioning people in the Oberlin Community; to promote interaction, communication and coalitions within Lambda Union and with various organizations; to actively pursue ending social, political, and legal oppression of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Transsexual persons."



Lambda Union's activities last year included coming out day events, (including a trip to Cleveland Heights to canvass with Heights Families for Equality). LU also provided financial support for queer-related events on campus and helped send students to NGLTF's Creating Change conference and the Midwest BLGTA conference in Iowa.



### Queers and Allies of Faith (QuAF)

QuAF's mission states: "Our goal is to create a supportive environment for people who are dealing with conflicts between their spirituality and sexuality and to provide a space in which they can grow

spiritually through membership. In the more public sphere, our goal is to create awareness of these issues throughout the Oberlin community and promote union between the queer community and religious communities."

it can be hard to gain entrance to middle and high schools to talk about these issues, last year Queer Peers worked mainly on Oberlin's campus, giving dorm raps and a well-attended Trans/Gender 101 workshop in Wilder. Queer



Kate Eubank during discussions with OLA last March.

QuAF is open to people of all faiths. Their activities last year included meeting weekly for discussion as well as bringing Rik Fire to speak during the week preceding Drag Ball.

### Queer Peers

The mission of Queer Peers is, "to teach awareness and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning issues in middle school and high school communities, working to make these environments safer and more comfortable for all students." The group strives to do this through community outreach, presenting workshops, panels, personal narratives, resources and open forum discussions. As

Peers also organized to take students to the GenderPac conference and put on an open mic/poetry slam as a pre-Drag Ball event.

### Transgender Advocacy Group (TAG)

In their proposed charter, TAG identifies two goals: "(1) providing support for people who transcend gender norms within existing gender binary systems and (2) working to end gender oppression and transphobia through education of and dialogue with other members of the Oberlin College community and within the broader context of the United States and the world." TAG's charter also states: "We

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## Oberlin Student Groups (continued)

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strive to maintain and incorporate an awareness of the myriad oppressions extant in this world (including sex, gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ability, size, religion, and nationality-based oppressions) and the ways in which those oppressions can intersect in the living bodies of people.”

TAG has two meetings per week. One is an advocacy meeting, open to anyone interested in organizing around trans issues, and one is a support meeting, open to those who identify as transgender, gender queer or gender questioning. Last year, TAG organized the Trans Day of Remembrance in November, and an action-packed Trans Awareness Week in April.

### Zami

A group for queer and questioning students of color. Zami meets weekly for discussion and support. Members also hold events on campus including coffeehouses, speakers, etc. Zami also publishes the “Zami Zine”, a collection of the writings and artwork of queer and questioning students of color.

Kate can be reached at:

[Katherine.Eubank@oberlin.edu](mailto:Katherine.Eubank@oberlin.edu)



## Oberlin On-Line Community

Changes to the on-line community at the Oberlin website were implemented this past winter of 2004. You now have the opportunity to update your profile and share as much or as little information about yourself as you like.

When you sign on, there will be four sections to complete:

- Personal
- Professional
- Academic
- Activities and Interests.

Under the last section, there will be two places where you can choose to identify with OLA. Please select Oberlin Lambda Alumni “Out” List under the OC Self Identified Groups (along with all other groups with which you identify) if you are comfortable allowing alumni to search for you under OLA.

If you want to remain anonymous, please select the box next to Oberlin Lambda Alumni instead; your affiliation with OLA will remain confidential and “hidden” from other alumni.

Feel free to contact anyone on the masthead of this Newsletter if you have any questions.



### OC Self Identified Groups

I am interested in participating in the following Oberlin Alumni Association self-identified group(s). *Please be aware that this is public information and is searchable by others.*

(To select multiple items, hold down the control key on the PC or the command key for the Mac while selecting.)



Oberlin Lambda Alumni

*I am interested in participating in Oberlin Lambda Alumni - the group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender, Intersexed, Queer and Questioning (Lambda) Alumni. This information is confidential and will not appear in the Directory. Those alums who are also interested in being “out” should select this option in the Self-Identified Groups menu above.*



Oberlin Lambda Alumni  
c/o Oberlin Alumni Association  
Bosworth Hall  
50 West Lorain Street  
Oberlin, OH 44074

Phone: (440) 775-8692  
Fax: (440) 775-6748  
Email: OLA\_oberlin@yahoo.com

[www.oberlin.edu/alumni/  
OLA/default.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/alumni/OLA/default.html)