



# OLA News

**Oberlin Lambda Alumni**

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

## OLA Steering Committee

Midge Wood Brittingham '60  
50 W. Lorain St.  
Oberlin, OH 44074  
(440) 775-8692  
midge.brittingham@oberlin.edu

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

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)  
Magnolienweg 14  
53177 Bonn, Germany  
+49.228.32.30.800  
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

OLA News is a newsletter serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered, intersexed, queer and questioning (Lambda), and Lambda-affirmative Alumni of Oberlin College. OLA News is published twice annually by the Oberlin Lambda Alumni. Contributions to the OLA News are a collective effort of the Steering Committee members listed above. Design and layout by Carol Levine '84. OLA logo by Peter Nicholson '91.

Volume 12, Issue 2

Summer 2003

## Featuring Fabulous Alumni: Roger Goodman '68, Lecturer, Spiritual Director, and Faculty in Harpichord and Baroque Music, DePaul University

We achieve, we aspire; we laugh we cry; we create and we share. The following is an interview with Roger Goodman '68.

### **Describe your current career/ life situation.**

Currently, I speak to queer communities (and sometimes straight ones as well) about queer spirituality, sexuality, and politics. For me they are all intertwined, with queer spirituality being at the root of all three. We have always been a tribe of Queer Spirit, revered and held in awe for ages back. We were and still are the magic people, the wise ones, the spiritual pillars of tribes and clans, churches, synagogues and mosques. This is a legacy that few of us know about, and it is my life's work now to speak of this, and how it relates to our sexuality and politics. To help queers find their Queer Spirit is my career path. We are an extraordinary people with great

gifts to offer the world. With the possibility of non-violence, understanding, compassion, respect, generosity, and loving-kindness, we can change the world. We have a long way to go to create such a queer community that is filled with love and respect for each other, but I know it can be done, and I hope that my speaking and workshops will help a little bit to bring that to fruition. I am also a spiritual director in private practice, and a very part-time faculty member at the DePaul University School of Music. My main focus, however, is my speaking and workshops for queer people and helping all people find their own authentic spiritual paths.

### **How did your Oberlin experience affect your path/ choice?**

My Oberlin experience was based on my coming out with the help of a very wise and compassionate psychotherapist on staff who kept

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside this issue:

**OLA in Cyberspace** 3

**Lambda Cookie-Baking in Minneapolis** 3

**Sex/Gender Lexicon** 4

**Incite. Push It.** 5

**Highlights from the April OLA Steering Committee Meeting** 6

**Coming Soon... Midge's Retirement** 7

**Out?** 7

## In Addition to Being Oberlin Alums, do Lambda Alums Have Anything Else in Common?

**By Jeremiah Gold-Hopton '85**

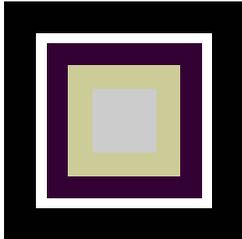
As this alumni group has become more inclusive, the answer to that question has become less obvious. The group commonality used to center on sexual orientation toward the same sex when the group name was the Oberlin Gay and Lesbian Alumni. Changing the name to the

Oberlin Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Alumni made sexual orientation other than heterosexual the group commonality. Since the group name has become the Oberlin Lambda Alumni, sexual orientation is no longer the common meeting place for this group.

Lambda has been defined by OLA as including gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people, intersexed people, queer, and questioning. Identity as a transgendered person centers on gender identity, not sexual orientation, and identity as an

*(Continued on page 4)*

**“We have always been a tribe of Queer Spirit, revered and held in awe for ages back. We were and still are the magic people, the wise ones, the spiritual pillars of tribes and clans, churches, synagogues and mosques.”**



**Roger Goodman '68**

**Contact Roger with your thoughts at:**

**[rgoodman@condor.depaul.edu](mailto:rgoodman@condor.depaul.edu)**

## Featuring Fabulous Alumni: Roger Goodman '68

*(Continued from page 1)*

telling me that being gay was a great gift and that I needed to nurture it and celebrate it, rather than living in fear of it. I came out with a vengeance in 1964. No one else was out then, and I remained the only out queer man on campus for my four and a half years at Oberlin. I was the first queer man to have come out in the history of Oberlin. I soon realized that this was an extremely radical statement, both socially and politically (queer spirituality had not yet come into the picture), and I lived a completely open gay life on campus, challenging professors who would not speak about the homosexuality of writers, painters, sculptors, poets, and composers, etc. I challenged them to discuss how those great artists filtered their art through their sexuality. This was unheard of in the Oberlin classroom, this open speaking of being queer. That was the beginning of my political path. I graduated in 1968, and went on to graduate school. During the summer of 1969, I happened to be in New York on June 27, and found myself at a bar called The Stonewall Inn. There I was in the middle of an extraordinary riot in the streets, quite violent and very empowering, and I began to think about Queer Spirit which didn't really come to life until I attended seminary. After the riots I worked with the Gay Liberation Front in the streets of Boston/Cambridge for three years, providing food and shelter to queer street-youth. I then went back to Northwestern, finished my Master's degree and began concertizing and teaching. My Oberlin experience prepared me for the work that I

was given to do. As a concert harpsichordist, the audiences always got that I was a gay man, as I would rip my chest open and expose my heart in all its pain and all its joy, and people in the audience changed inside themselves. Now that I cannot



*I was the first queer man to have come out in the history of Oberlin.*

perform anymore I change people through my spoken words. Throughout my life since 1964, my Oberlin queer experience has guided my path, and helped me make extraordinary choices in my life.

### **What obstacles did you face on your path?**

Being queer has been an obstacle on three levels in my career. The biggest obstacles were social, ecclesial, and internalized homophobia, and being diagnosed with AIDS in 1995. Now another obstacle is in my path, which is Parkinson's disease. Somehow no matter what the obstacle, I overcome it and bounce back. I am a very resilient man, and I believe that has a lot to do with being queer, fighting my own internalized homophobia throughout my childhood, and, after coming out, fighting for our liberation in my way, loving my self exactly because of being queer. I also have a powerful spiritual life, which helps me overcome whatever obstacles cross my path. This is not to say that it is easy for me. In fact, it is very hard work, but somehow I slowly overcome the obstacles.

### **What advice might you give to others on their career path?**

I would say to anyone that coming out in the workplace, in your career, is very tricky business. It is important to get a feel for what the company or university stands for regarding equality for all employees. How heavy is the homophobia among executives and working colleagues? Does your workplace have an official non-discrimination policy? Also, I would say to follow your own passion. Listen to the path of your heart and do what you love doing. If you can do this as an out queer person, you will experience a profound liberation. The closet is a terrible thing.

### **What makes you happy?**

What makes me happy are things both small and large. Sitting in my rocking chair sipping a cup of cheap English tea, or a fine Earl Gray, reading as I sip my tea on a quiet afternoon makes me happy. As an esoteric Christian Buddhist who knows the truth of Queer Spirit, I am happy. My cats make me happy. Good food makes me happy. Meditation and prayer make me happy. Doing the work I have been given to do for my queer people makes me happy. My friends and partner make me happy. Being queer makes me particularly happy. Most of all, I am happy because I am still alive when I should not be, because of the three opportunistic infections I had in which I had near death experiences. Life is good, even with all the difficult obstacles, life is very good.

## 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>

## Lambda Cookie-Baking in Minneapolis!

*By Matthew Britzler-Stull '94*

Oberlin alumni from all walks of life attended a holiday cookie-baking party on December 8, 2002 in Minneapolis. The get-together was sponsored by OLA and hosted by Balint Gergely (Twin Cities OC Alumni Regional Coordinator) and his partner, Daniel Skwarek, in their spacious, warehouse-district loft.

Those who attended brought with them a variety of cookie doughs made at home. Dough-eating and drinking of holiday cheer (that is, spiked cider and egg nog) preceded the actual baking. Once the cookies started coming out of the oven, dozens were available to gobble on the spot or to take home. While many kinds of cookies were made, participants elected (in most un-Obie-like fashion) to eschew innovative designs such as gingerbread lesbians and anatomically-correct reindeer in favor of more traditional varieties.



Music, board games, and wonderful conversation rounded out the afternoon. It would be fair to say that a good time was had by all and that most left the gathering laden with cookies inside and out. Obies in attendance represented a variety of class years, majors, and current life interests. With luck, increased interest will demand that this event become an annual tradition in the Twin Cities.

## Oberlin Alums, Lambda Alums (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

intersexed person centers on sexual identity, not sexual orientation. Many transgendered people identify as heterosexual. Often, transgendered people and intersexed people decide that none of the definitions of sexual orientation fit since the definitions of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual are all based on a dualistic sex/gender paradigm which assumes that transgendered people and intersexed people do not exist. Therefore, sexual orientation is not a commonality for all of us as Oberlin Lambda alumni.

Despite the loss of that commonality around sexual orientation, OLA is not just a random assortment of people with nothing in common. We are all marginalized by society in various ways because we do not conform to the social script for sex and gender. Part of that script says that there are just two opposite sexes which are synonymous with two opposite genders. Another part of that script says that each of these sexes/genders is never romantically and sexually attracted to the same sex/gender. These two pieces of the script are interlocking and dependent upon each other.

For instance, laws prohibiting same-sex marriages are linked to the requirement that every person must be designated as either female or male on a birth certificate and that changing this designation from female to male or from male to female is legally difficult or prohibited (depending upon the state of birth). If we were able to easily change our legal sex designation or allowed to opt out of having a legal sex designation, the laws which prohibit same-sex marriage could not be enforced.

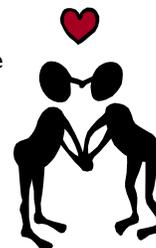
Our common transgression of the social script for sex and gender is clear to those who marginalize us, insult us, dehumanize us, attack us, and kill us. Unfortunately, our commonality is not always that clear to us. I have often encountered transphobia in gay/lesbian communities and homophobia in transgender communities. I see communities such as that of the Oberlin Lambda Alumni as bridges which can bring us together and give us the opportunity to understand our commonality as well as we understand our differences.

## Sex/Gender Lexicon

By Jeremiah Gold-Hopton '85

When non-transgendered and non-intersexed people talk with transgendered and intersexed people, we often run into the limitations of language regarding sex and gender. The usage of the English language usually is limited to the paradigm of only two sexes and only two genders which correspond in a one-to-one fashion. The word "woman" is usually used as a synonym for "female person," and the word "man" is usually used as a synonym for "male person." Since transgendered and intersexed people transgress that paradigm, we need to define words in ways that allow us to talk about sex and gender without getting caught in semantic tangles.

I have developed the following lexicon which reflects the most common usage of English sex and gender words in the transgender and intersex communities. Although the language used in these communities continues to evolve as individuals introduce new terminology, this lexicon provides a basic starting point for non-transgendered and non-intersexed people who want to understand and participate in conversations with transgendered and intersexed people about sex and gender.



**Sex** refers to the anatomical features by which a person is identified as **female**, **male**, or **intersexed**.

An **intersexed** person has anatomical features that overlap between the categories of **male** and **female**.

The personal pronouns **she**, **he**, **her**, **him**, **hers**, and **his** refer to **gender**, not to **sex**.

**Gender self-identity** refers to the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects by which a person self-identifies as a **woman**, a **man**, or a **transgenderist**.

A **transgenderist** is a person (of any **sex**) whose **gender self-identity** is other than **man** or **woman**.

**Social gender identity** refers to the **gender** which other people assign to a person based on the socially constructed, dualistic **gender paradigm** in which all people are either **female women** or **male men**.

**Transgendered (Trans)** refers to a person whose particular combination of **birth sex** and **gender self-identity** transgresses the **gender paradigm** of **female women** and **male men**.

**Cross-dressing** refers to wearing clothing which transgresses the **gender paradigm** of **female women** and **male men**.

**Cross-living** refers to always **cross-dressing** in all parts of one's life in order to present a **social gender identity** which is congruent with one's **gender self-identity**.

**Transsexual** refers to a **transgendered (Trans)** person who has (or wants to have) some or all of the anatomical features associated with **sex** transformed by using hormones and/or surgery.

## Incite. Push It.

By Diepiriye S. Kuku-Siemons '97

Wartime, in particular this one, inevitably raises the issue of national identity. The fear inherent in such situations generally provokes extreme superficial collectivity like that witnessed during the Revolutionary War, WWI, and WWII, to name but three. America's unwelcome and unsuccessful intervention in Viet Nam is a counterexample of the opposite effect—extreme divisiveness caused by war. The most recent incident, the war on terrorism declared by the Bush administration, has resulted in a caustic combination of unity glued by fear, one prone to incite significant, and not necessarily beneficial, social changes.

Every day I am confronted with symbols, displayed by citizens from all walks of life. These symbols suggest that there is, should be, and must be a sense of American unity against the (hidden and as yet undetermined) culprits of the heinous 9-1-1 attacks. False! This unity seems rather contrived and largely superficial. Has it really changed anything with regard to how the dominant class sees right through me? My life has taught me that the same American 'brothers' and 'sisters' that were so quick to regard me (sometimes to my face) as a 'faggot' or 'punk' will likely continue to do so.

This apparent American unity highlights an ironic juxtaposition of administrations—one filled with such abrupt malice bent on massive destruction (Bush II) and the other, two terms devoted to building alliances (Clinton). Let us not forget that Clinton's presidency, marked by the first sitting American president to visit Africa, succeeded a similar period of malice and unjust

violence under the other Bush administration. Is unity in this time of war on terror truly being fostered or is it a mirage for a more sinister agenda?

The time has come to push it. I mean really push it. We can no longer accept domestic injustices disguised as superficial unity in lieu of much-needed nation-building in America. We are divided. We are divided. Heterosexism, white supremacy, class supremacy, misogyny, and religious- and gender-based oppression continue to plague this great nation. If there has been any real knowledge of day-to-day American life that I have revealed to friends I've met in my travels around the world it is that Americans live separately. My reality, for one, is quite separate from that of the dominant paradigm, the dominant paradigm that has sold the Nike brand to poor children in South Asia; the same paradigm that drives a young Caribbean man to sacrifice food for garb that implies an American persona; the same paradigm that has forced formula milk down the throats of babies all over the developing world when their mothers were otherwise quite capable of nursing; the same paradigm that forces governments to adopt undesirable mismatched policies in order to profit from 'aid funds' which are essentially monetary returns for blatant exploitation of their resources.

We cannot continue like this. Now is the time for us to really challenge ourselves as a nation, to push this unity, however delicate it may be. We need to push each other to know each other, and moreover, to accept each other despite our differences.

Emancipation, Desegregation, Feminism, and Womanism, Affirmative Action and Hate Crime mandates have made it quite clear that while we may affect policy, policy does not always affect attitudes. We cannot change our hearts overnight. We can, however, implement policy that represents our pure intentions for justice. Justice, after all leads to profound unity. To that end, queer people must be allowed to serve this community in those capacities most suited to our talents and tastes. For some that means being a lawmaker and influencing policy. For others, this implies being an educator, artist, or activist. For others this may mean serving in the military.

I in no way advocate malicious violence as an appropriate response to malicious violence. Violence obviously opposes justice and the vision of world peace. Yet, it must be noted that we are a society built upon expanding freedom for everyone. We later came to define this as defending freedom everywhere. I am a gay American and I defend freedom with words and persistent, pro-active, non-violent action. We must honor our hard-earned freedom by avidly and openly defending that of others. As queer people we know what it means to have our personal freedoms denied. It is, therefore, our duty to ensure that the unity espoused in these troubled times becomes a reality more profound than flag-waving and bumper stickers. It is our duty to push this sense of unity into the day-to-day life of those in this country by setting an example: as we seek to be understood, so too should we seek to understand.



Mudd Lounge

***“It is our duty  
to push this  
sense of unity....  
as we seek to  
be understood,  
so too should  
we seek to  
understand.”***



**Look familiar??? A bright blue sky atop Peters!**

**Steering Committee Members attend meetings at Oberlin twice yearly.**

## Highlights from the April OLA Steering Committee Meeting

By Matthew Bribitzer-Stull '94



**Midge (Brittingham) will be retiring from her duties next January (2004). OLA members will, perhaps, feel her loss more acutely than some because of her long-standing devotion to our community.**



The OLA Steering Committee returned to Oberlin the weekend of April 4–6. Skies were overcast and the lake-effect, bone-chilling clamminess was omnipresent. Vibrant green grass and blooming flowers, however, helped to paint a prettier picture. To some the weekend was a foretaste of spring, to others, a return to winter. Nevertheless, the weather was quintessential Oberlin—sporadic cloudbursts succeeded in soaking each of us at least once but they failed to dampen our spirits.

Friday evening found “the guys” at Java Zone enjoying catching up on news from our lives, getting to know new member Jeremiah Gold-Hopton, and flirting with the wait staff. The official meeting began Saturday morning when we all had an opportunity to meet our other new member, Leslie Myers. All of the members of the Steering Committee were excited by the addition of Jeremiah and Leslie—there was a palpable synergy to our meetings that led to both good will and productivity.

During our meeting times on Saturday and Sunday we were able to experience first-hand the development of the Oberlin campus. New to the scene was our meeting place: the Science Center, a spacious, modern building that links new construction with Kettering and Wright to create a unified center for the sciences on campus. In contrast, a long-time cornerstone of the Oberlin campus was also present; Midge Wood Brittingham, heart of the alumni community since the 1970s and a member of the OLA Steering Committee since its inception. Alas as the new arrives, the familiar often departs; Midge

will be retiring from her duties next January (2004). OLA members will, perhaps, feel her loss more acutely than some because of her long-standing devotion to our community.

Much of Saturday was spent on the typical maintenance duties necessary for any governing body. However, a luncheon with current students

restaurant next to Gibson’s for dinner (a great place to go next time you’re in Oberlin). There we enjoyed fine food and what can only be described as “one of those conversations you only have with other Obies.” Afterwards, we made an aborted attempt to attend the annual Drag Ball, convincing ourselves that we were unable to stay for the real festivities



OLA Steering Committee in the Science Center.  
From Left to Right: Diepiriye, Matt, Leslie, Stan, Carol, Roger and Jeremiah.

(featuring pizza from Lorenzo’s) helped to punctuate the day’s work. Steering Committee members and students often found themselves mirroring one another as we looked back (“When I was here...”) and they looked forward (“Is there life after college?”). After lunch the Steering Committee devoted some time to planning special projects, including bringing movies and speakers to Oberlin, Lavender Graduation, and the new Queer Studies program on campus.

Of course, not all our time on campus was consumed by work. A number of the Steering Committee members went to the new Chinese

because of daylight savings time and an early Sunday morning. (Certainly, it couldn’t be our advancing ages!)

Sunday morning saw the completion of the weekend with new member Larry Wexler elected to the Steering Committee, and a career-mentoring panel for students in conjunction with OAAAA and OAFA in the works for next September’s Alumni Council weekend. We look forward to seeing you in Oberlin in the fall!

## Coming Soon... Midge's Retirement

---

Midge Brittingham '60, the Executive Director of the Alumni Association, will be retiring after 27 years of service to Oberlin. She is also the founding sponsor of OLA, for which we are forever grateful

Write to OLA. Tell us about your special relationship with Midge—stories, jokes, special moments. We will compile your letters to present to her upon her retirement this winter. Please send all correspondences to:

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

Also, feel free to send them directly to anyone on the Steering Committee or, of course, to Midge directly—please refer to the masthead of this newsletter for details.

Thanks for helping to make her retirement from Oberlin even more special!



## Out?

---

If you are truly comfortable being out, would you be willing to sign up as an Out Alumni? This would mean you would be willing to be a mentor AND be identified as an Out alumni through Career Services. Students and alumni would feel free to contact you for mentoring or specific career counseling.

Please consider it. The more visible we are, the easier the transition for our colleagues and friends.

Contact us, specifically stating that you are willing to be an Out Alumni at:

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

**And**, sign up to be a mentor with the Oberlin Online Community. For instructions, log onto:  
<http://www.oberlin.edu/career/Alumni/ocstudents/mentor.html>



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)