

**BOX 2.16 DOUBLE LIVES**

[B]eing on the DL [down-low] means they may have sex with men but don't see themselves as gay. It means they may maintain relationships with women while secretly engaging in sex with men, but they're not going to label themselves bisexual either. For this generation, spoon-fed on hip-hop's hypermasculine culture, those labels just don't fit, are too politicized. . . . And in socially conservative black communities, where being gay is generally tolerated—so long as it's not too pronounced—that works just fine.

Steven Gray, "Brothers in Arms: By Day, They're the Guys on the Block. But Come Friday Night, It's Time to Head Out and Hook Up at Jenny's," *Washington Post*, August 31, 2001.

If you're a man and you're influenced by hip-hop and you're intimate with another man, you're a homo thug. . . . Whether the homo thugs want to identify themselves as gay is a different story. A lot have issues—you know self-hatred and all that. Some of these men deal with full-on, 24/7 drag queens, and they do not believe that they are gay. They still consider themselves straight. Every homo thug has your hard side and then you have your softer side, that you might be comfortable with behind closed doors.

Rapper Caution, in Jane Spenser, "Is Hip-Hop Ready for a Gay Rapper?" *Newsweek*, [www.news.com/news](http://www.news.com/news) (June 25, 2001).

may be an even greater burden. Denied prominence in cultural and intellectual affairs, black lesbians are also nearly invisible in the popular mass media. Still, the hate crime murder of fifteen-year-old black lesbian, Sakia Gunn, in Newark in 2003 sparked a public display of grief and pride among her African American lesbian high school peers that is evidence of new attitudes and a promising emergence.

*Question 22: Can black gays and lesbians find safety in the gay community?*

In the larger gay community, gay and lesbian African Americans face racism, tokenism, and sexual objectification. Outright racism may be the easiest to combat. Most have good role models, strategies, and ready allies for fighting racism. Liberal tokenism is also being effectively challenged.

Avoiding becoming a fetish is perhaps more complicated. Of course, not everyone who finds excitement in the body of the "other" is exploitive, yet the potential

**BOX 2.17 COMING HOME**

I ask you brother, Does your mama really know about you? Does she really know what I am? Does she know I want to love her son, care for him, nurture and celebrate him? Do you think she'll understand? I hope so, because I am coming home. There will be no place else to go that will be worth so much effort and love.

Essex Hemphill, "Introduction," in *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*, ed. Essex Hemphill (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991), xxx.

for objectification is real. It takes honest communication to tease out the power issues when partners of color are exoticized in interracial relationships. Because the antiracism struggle is familiar to them, it may be more comfortable for homosexual black people to fight racism in the gay community than to seek affirmation in a homophobic black community. Still, many gay and lesbian African Americans have called on their peers to return home to engage proudly in that effort. (See box 2.17.)

*Question 23: Do lesbians and gays of Latin descent face the same identity issues?*

Gay Latinas and Latinos also wrestle with gender, family, cultural survival, and religion. Like their African American counterparts, they find the price of remaining in their community is often silence. (See box 2.18.)

Latinas who value their traditional honored roles as daughters, wives, and mothers do not easily give them up. They understand that coming out as lesbian

**BOX 2.18 A SILENT PRESENCE OR AN ODD ABSENCE**

The Hispanic cultural stance on homosexuality can be reduced to a popular saying: *¡jostate no yan corazón que no siente ¡y! hat the eyes don't see the heart doesn't feel!* says Maribel Ornelas Quiñero. . . . All of our families knew that hard dresser who would do all the women's hair. . . . Everyone has that little who's no longer part of the family. That's difference. *Es así*—or that way. . . . No one ever deepens the conversation of what is it.

Aldrea Elliott, "Living a Dual Life," *Miami Herald* (June 11, 2002).

can be viewed as a threat to the strict Latin gender and religious systems and, indeed, to cultural survival. They also fear losing a special bond with their mothers, who are often role models in the struggle against racism, poverty, and sexism.

A Latina lesbian's sexuality violates the cultural norm that women do not discuss sex or expect sexual gratification. She may be viewed as an insult both to women who accept sexual conventions and to the men who thrive on them. She may appear to have adopted Anglo values. The Catholic Church's attitude compounds her condemnation.

*Question 24: Do Latino men face the same pressures?*

Latino men are allowed greater sexual freedom, but they still risk everything by coming out. (See box 2.19.)

Not all Latino men who have sex with other men are stigmatized. The critical factor is the role one assumes in the sexual act. Only the man who takes the passive role is thought to be homosexual (*passivo*, *cochón*, *joto*, or *puto*). Because he chooses the presumably inferior female position he can be degraded, bashed, or even killed, sometimes by the very man who has slept with him. The *activo* (also *muyate* or *machisto*), on the other hand, suffers no stigma because he is seen as merely taking advantage of the universal male privilege of dominance.

**BOX 2.19 NO SAFETY**

More than 100 gays, lesbians and transsexuals were killed in Brazil last year as a result of hate crimes; the largest number recorded of any nation.

Rapora, Brazil's Leader in Gay Hate Crimes, *United Press International*, April 23, 2002

"There is no location in the country where you can be openly gay without being harassed." In a Mexico City human rights activist said. The Pasadena court granted asylum to a gay cross-dresser named Giovanni Hernandez after he had been repeatedly beaten and raped by Mexican police. Just last month, most newspapers covered the story of a privately operated swimming pool in the city of Aguascalientes that displayed an entry sign that read "No Dogs, No Homosexuals."

Wendy Patterson, *A Life of Fear for Gays*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 12, 2000

**BOX 2.20 PRESSURE POINTS: GOD, COMMUNITY AND THE RELATIVES**

It took Lelyas Andino seven years to overcome her religious and cultural prejudices and to accept the fact that her son, Pablo Andino, was gay. "It was such a horrendous, horrific, incredibly impossible idea that I would like even entertain it. . . . We were quite normal, yet, how you typical upper-middle class Catholic Cuban-American family in Miami," she says.

Magaly Morales, *She Fights Bias for Gay Sons Sake*, *Tallahassee Democrat*, July 23, 2002

"[Francisco] turned to prostitution at the age of 16, after his parents and aunts threw him out of their home for being gay. . . . When [Alex Sánchez] finally came out to his family, they threw him out of the house and called him a curse, and a shame to the family, to say the least. . . . My mom was crying and disappointed. When she found out, she called my girlfriends' parents to tell on us in order to separate us," says [Joette] Carrillo, a 15-year-old Alhambra resident.

Gabriela Hasbun, *Under Our Wings*, *Terraviva Magazine*, April 2002

An older Mexicano/Chicano generally dominates a younger effeminate male. The majority of these young men (*maricóns*) begin these practices before puberty, usually with relatives, but they do not always remain passive as they get older.

Effeminacy may be tolerated as comic and macho homosexual behavior can be condoned as long as it is not advertised. When a Latino comes out, however, his identity, like lesbianism, is seen as an assault on family, church, and community. Whether or not a man having sex with other men voluntarily takes on a "gay" identity depends on a number of factors, including: outward virility, social class/mobility, exposure to white gay culture, and capacity for survival as a cultural outcast.

The burdens of conforming to community norms are intense. Many Latina lesbians and gay Latinos maintain their status only by staying in the closet, often marrying and having children as a lifeline. (See box 2.20.)

*Question 25: How does being Asian American relate to homosexual identity development?*

Because Asian American cultures represent a range of Asian traditions, it is difficult to generalize. We can say, however, that many gay and lesbian Asians

### BOX 2.21 FAMILY FIRST

I would have no daughter-in-law or grandchildren to visit. . . . I was ashamed. I thought of my son as being one of those gay people who do unnatural things. My family and friends would find out. They would think that I raised a Bakla or Binabae—a man who acts like a female. In the Philippines, homosexuals are looked upon as bad people. They don't belong anywhere. There isn't even a word for "gay" in Tagalog. The words are all derogatory.

Belinda Rayos Del Sol Dronkers-Laureta. "Out, Coming Together." *Asian Week* [San Francisco, Calif.], November 23, 2001.

Discrimination at the workplace is the norm. . . . But the most painful rejection occurs at home. The typical Korean family won't think twice before summarily disowning its gay members.

Glen Choi. "Church Offers Special Haven for Korea's Gay Community." *Korea Herald*, February 12, 2001.

feel estranged from native communities that regard homosexuality as white and Western. Among Chinese Americans, for example, a person's actions may be limited by reverence for ancestors and strict ideas of role and duty, particularly to family. Self-exploration of any kind is considered too individualistic. Sexuality of any kind is not discussed publicly.

Unless one is Christian or Islamic, Asian negativity toward homosexuality has nothing to do with sin. Rather gayness is frowned upon because it appears to put individual needs before gender role and family duties. Women are expected to be deferential daughters, wives, and mothers; men are supposed to further their lineage and provide for the family. To reject these obligations is shameful. Having gay or lesbian children indicates a failure of parenting, especially for women, who are held responsible for child rearing. (See box 2.21.)

In Thailand men must marry, have children, and not be effeminate in public, yet they can have gay relationships on the side. In Vietnam, male homosexuals, *lai cai* (half man-half woman) are seen mostly as transvestites. Nevertheless, in late 2002, thirty gay men found having sex in a massage parlor were sent to an "education centre." In Japan, male-centered heterosexuality abounds in ubiquitous unembarrassed pornographic display. Homosexuality is acknowledged, sometimes depicted, but not understood or accepted. (See box 2.22.) Even the family of deceased writer Yukio Mishima, known to the world as homosexual, successfully sued to block publication of his gay letters.

### BOX 2.22 JAPAN: NO WAY OUT

[F]ew Japanese truly understand what homosexuality is, even though the media is at times awash in gay topics. . . . All utilization and little information, and popular. . . . To come out is considered by the vast majority of homosexuals to be suicidal. . . . Society demands that men be married by a certain age. [F]or most male homosexuals, their orientation must remain a closely guarded secret, or society . . . will crush them.

Scott Gordon. "Examining the Marginalization of Male Homosexuality." [book review] *Daily Yomiuri* [Tokyo, Japan], March 18, 2001.

In large cities on mainland China, some gay men gather in bars and discos, but most lead double lives, meeting for clandestine sex in parks and bathhouses. The gay rights movement, whose members call themselves *tongzhi*, or "comrades," is led from abroad. Although the old "mental illness" diagnosis has been officially revoked and the Internet (where gay sites aren't banned as they are in South Korea, for example) is enhancing communication, traditional pressures still make life difficult. (See box 2.23.)

In India Hindu fundamentalism, harsh laws, prying police, and dangerous hoodlums add to the familiar Asian burdens of mandatory marriage. Most urban

### BOX 2.23 OLD CHINA YIELDS SLOWLY

I thought I was mentally sick. I took a lot of herbs, and even followed some traditional prescription by wearing baked scorpion, lizards, and toads. Apparently it didn't work. [Hu Zhong] added I met a lot of gay people [in Beijing]. It made me feel good and normal because I was not alone. For many years, ordinary folks near people of the same sex having a sexual relationship as a social disease like gambling or prostitution or syphilis. [Gay activist] [Fang Wang] says. . . . Gays are still constantly subject to harassment, blackmail and arrest by the police. . . . After I got home, my mother knelt in front of me and cried. She said I brought disgrace to the family and she would kill herself if I do this again. [Jason Li] said I hated myself, but I couldn't change. If I come out to my wife, she will leave me and take my son away.

Wen Huang. "China's Gay Community in 'Half-Fight.'" *Boston Globe*, April 29, 2001.

### BOX 2.24 INDIA: CHARADES AND SHACKLES

[F]ew of the hundreds of men who turn out for the weekly parties in Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta are openly gay. Even though they have sex with men, a majority would probably not identify themselves as homosexuals—a charade that is bolstered by Indian culture's emphasis on conformity. . . . If you are a woman and gay, you are really at the bottom of the totem pole," [Angeli Gopalan] said. While men are generally given free rein in India, women's movements are restricted—particularly in rural areas.

Marion Lloyd, "Out of India's Antigay Closet," *Boston Globe*, October 24, 1999

gay men prefer to lead a double life, while in remote villages, both identity-informing gay concepts and social opportunities are scarce. Indian lesbians are subject to even greater cultural restrictions. (See box 2.24.) The Indian term for gay male sex is *musti* (mischief), boyish fooling around that may continue into adulthood but cannot be deeply romantic or take the place of marriage. Pakistani men also may have quiet gay affairs as long as they do not detract from their family obligations.

In sum, across Asia and the Mideast the experiences of gays and lesbians are not uniform and are in flux. Where there have been advances, the influence of the West and the Internet and the importance of income are undeniable. (See box 2.25.)

*Question 26: How can gay and lesbian Asians answer the charge that homosexuality comes from being exposed to the West?*

Some have tried to find homosexual precedents in their own cultural histories. They have researched gay male relationships in the Chinese tradition of the "shared peach" (fourth century B.C.) and the "cut sleeve" (sixth through first centuries B.C.). Others have uncovered homosexuality in Hindu erotic texts and sculpture, and lesbians in the *Mahabharata* and before the Aryan invasion.

Many point to the male-to-female transsexuality of the Indian *hijra*, some of whom are hermaphrodites and others deliberately castrated. Alternately feared, mocked, or respected, *hijras* dance and bestow blessings at village births and weddings.

There is little comfort for most of today's gays and lesbians in the apparently mandatory fusion of gender identity and sexuality in such traditions, whether in India or elsewhere. (In Roman Britain, for example, transsexual priests of the Greek goddess Cybele castrated themselves and wore jewelry, colorful female robes, and turbans or tiaras.)

### BOX 2.25 PAN ASIA AND MIDEAST

[I]t is true that the Internet has opened things up considerably for many gays and lesbians in Asia. "Most of the growth [in the gay community in Asia] has been within the middle classes because there has been a lot of overseas travel and it has become quite an international network," says [Dr. Alison Murray].

Helen Signey, "Homosexuality: That Unspeakable Western Disease," *Sydney [Australia] Morning Herald*, February 18, 2001.

It was the only free space to express our ideas," says [Maheer] Sabry, who got online in 1997 and immediately became a cyber-activist. "The Egyptian media likes to say homosexuality came through the Internet from the West, but the forums and discussion groups were all Egyptians."

Mubarak Dahin, "Courage in Adversity Personified," *Gay Windows*, [Mass.], May 9, 2002.

*Question 27: Don't homosexual Native Americans point to the "two-spirit" people as their predecessors?*

Some tribes do have "two-spirit" (or *berdache*) traditions. Not all were identical, but the general pattern was one in which males (and more rarely females) were permitted from childhood to adopt the dress and role of another gender. Many homosexual Native Americans who suffer the condemnation of their tribes' adopted Christianity are eager to find validation in the earlier two-spirit practice. (A similar pattern of missionary-induced homophobia has been noted in the indigenous Hawaiian experience, where the transgendered sacred healers, *mahu*, were once revered.) One must ask, however, whether the two-spirits were actually homosexual and how their tribes regarded them.

Two-spiritness was rooted in gender presentation, primarily in labor and clothing, rather than in erotic desire. The tradition was demonstrated chiefly in men dressing like women, doing women's work, and occasionally "marrying" men. On the other hand, men who now and then had sex with other men, but did not prefer women's social role, were not deemed two-spirits. And without two-spiritness, homosexual conduct was thought ridiculous or evil. So, like the *hijras*, two-spirits were more about gender than sexuality. Also, like the *hijras*, they acted as shamans, particularly regarding rites of marriage.

Native American women who acted like men were seldom called two-spirit. Girls were generally discouraged from complete gender crossing. In those rare

cases when they did, the pattern was similar to the male one: childhood visions, unconventional work preference, cross-dressing, and cross-marriage. It was also believed that such women did not menstruate.

Some anthropologists object to the term *cross-gendered*, that is, adopting the role of their "opposite." Claiming that gender roles were not so rigid, they prefer *third gender*, neither male nor female.

As to treatment, tribal reaction varied. Sometimes objects of ambivalence or approval, two-spirits could also be stigmatized and tormented. In the intertribal warfare of the far-flung cultures of the Americas, East Asia, and Islamic Africa, vanquished men were compelled to adopt women's dress and work and to submit to the sexual advances of the victors. And within the tribe, certain men underwent initiation and lost status, wife, and children, if they had them. They might be treated like village whores, providing an outlet for young and unmarried males. By the late nineteenth century, perhaps provoked by Christian missionaries, families were ashamed to have their men become two-spirits and spurned those who persisted.

It is understandable that multiple minority gays and lesbians would look for sexuality roots in their own people's histories. However, both Asian and Native American gay rights claims that depend on ambiguous precedents are ultimately weaker than those based on human rights arguments. Because past practices are so often used to deny rights, no liberation movement should depend on them.

#### Question 28: How do Arab/Muslim people negotiate these issues?

As is the case in other groups, rigid gender roles, family expectations, and conservative patriarchal culture and religion usually complicate gay identity acquisition. If they don't want to be disowned, young people have to stay in the closet and engage in a straight charade. Women particularly have little physical freedom, whereas men may fool around discretely. (See box 2.26.)

#### BOX 2.26 OVERLOOKED ACTS

There is a conditional permission for [male-on-male] erotic games or even rape as an exercise of male power. Pretend it is a joke or a put-down and you can get by. But call it true love or honest and real sexual desire and you are in trouble. If you fail to prove that your ultimate desire is dominating a woman, you would be considered a suspect.

Saviz Shafiq in Jack Nichols, "Saviz Shafiq: Trans Gay Pioneer." [Interview] Greenwich Village Gazette, September 16, 1999.

#### BOX 2.27 BEATEN IN BODY AND SPIRIT

East, West (an American) and his Palestinian boyfriend [Ahmad] moved into Ahmad's West Bank village. . . . [I]n one day we found a letter under our door from the Islamic court. It listed the five forms of death prescribed by Islam for homosexuals, including stoning and burning. We felt in Israel that same day. Now they live in hiding—mostly from Ahmad's brothers who have searched for the couple in Tel Aviv and threatened to kill Ahmad. A 17-year-old refugee from Nabulis named Salah [a pseudonym] spent months in a [Palestinian] prison where interrogators cut him with glass and poured toilet cleaner into his wounds. . . . I've tried to kill myself six times already. Says Salah.

Yossi Klein Halevi, "Refugee Status," *The New Republic*, August 19, 2002.

[Muna Hawatme] testified [her] family members hit her, kicked her and verbally abused her until she kissed her father's feet and promised to change her sexual orientation. . . . [Her brother] held a large knife toward her. "And he said: You going to die tonight."

Mehel Janovsky, "Family Culture and Law Meet in a Utah Court Case," *New York Times*, April 24, 2000.

Nobody knows how many gays are languishing in Egyptian jails. . . . But because of this [cultural] taboo against homosexuality, Egyptian human rights groups have shunned such cases, leaving it to a handful of local gay activists to raise legal fees and provide other support.

Josh Hammer, "One Man's Tale," *Newsweek International*, www.msnbc.com/news (February 16, 2002).

Because the "traditional family" is seen as the cornerstone of a moral society (even in a more sexually liberal country like Lebanon), openly homosexual people are often appallingly treated in their native countries and their adoptive ones. (See box 2.27.)

#### Question 29: Isn't religion a central issue for people coming out?

Orthodox Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Mormon creeds do not accept homosexuality. Hindus are encouraged to have only procreative sex. (In 1998, Hindu

**BOX 2.28 DON'T ASK...**

"Mother, Dad and family I have committed suicide." [the suicide] note began. ... "As I believed I was Christian, I believed I could never be gay." ... The people who dressed him for burial were struck by the sight of his knees, deeply callused from praying for an answer that never came.

Mark Miller, "To Be Gay—and Mormon," *Newsweek*, [www.msrb.com/news](http://www.msrb.com/news) (May 8, 2000).

The plight of gay students at right-wing religious schools is a painful one. Suicide is not infrequent. . . . [The students] are also told at a lot of these schools that they can find change if they draw close to God. . . . [They] are regularly forced to reveal the identities of other students they believe may be gay and are coerced into ex-gay programs, where "treatments" can include electroshock therapy.

Erin O'Brian, "The Right Spot," [book review] *Southern Voice* [Atlanta], August 16, 2001.

[Shalom] tried behavioral therapy, wearing a rubber band around his wrist and flicking it every time he felt attracted to a man. He went to Israel, where a rabbi told him to eat dates and recite a psalm every day. When that failed, he entered Aesthetic Realism, a New York-based group that works with gay people to change their sexual orientation. . . . [I] felt emotionally raped. He says I couldn't keep acting. I decided to accept it. At 31, I came out to myself.

Naomi Grossman, "The Gay Orthodox Underground," *MOMENT*, [www.momentmag.com](http://www.momentmag.com) (April/May 2001).

fundamentalist mobs ransacked theaters in India that showed *Fire*, a film about two Indian housewives who have an affair.) The Chinese Falun Gong, struggling against their own oppression, still believes God will eliminate homosexuality in the Earth's final days. The Catholic and Mormon churches make some distinction between homosexual persons and sinful homosexual acts. Jewish orthodoxy deems desire irrelevant.

Rome still classifies homosexuality as a "disorder" and advises repentance and cure, despite the revolution at its very front door. Mormons, who cannot get into the highest level of heaven unless married, are offered deprogramming or excommunication. Orthodox Jews and Protestants are presented with the "cures"

**BOX 2.29 THIS IS EUROPE TOO**

[Croatia's first Gay Pride parade], that gathered amid tight security some 200 people, rather supporters than homosexuals themselves, also showed that opposition to homosexuality is still strong here as at least 15 persons supporting the event were beaten up. . . .

"Croatian Homosexuals Step Out from Shadow to Demand Equal Civil Rights," *Agence France-Presse*, July 18, 2002.

Gays have been the targets of threats by right-wing groups. Only a small proportion of people who are gay dare to tell family, friends and colleagues.

Carlotta Gall, "BUCHAREST JOURNAL: It's Still No Breeze for Gays," *New York Times*, October 17, 2001.

Slovak employees fire homosexuals with impunity, especially homosexual teachers who are thought to be unsuitable to work with children.

Matthew J. Reynolds, "Slovak Gay Leaders Take Case to Deputies," *Slovak Spectator* [Braislava], March 20, 2001.

of prayer, aversive conditioning, and psychological counseling. "Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality" ("JONAH") and "Nefesh" are the new Jewish "ex-gay" ministry. Being gay and staying in these churches, synagogues, or mosques means being ignored or alternatively being pathologized or demonized. (See box 2.28.)

In Eastern Europe gay people suffer the condemnation of Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the historic antipathy of once-communist states. (See box 2.29.)

Such hostility from fundamentalist churches can evoke a defensive antireligious response from the gay community. Thus, gays and lesbians may find little peer support for remaining in their denominations.

Welcoming congregations and gay religious organizations make it easier to reconcile one's sexuality and one's spiritual roots. (See appendix A.)

**Question 30:** *What other pressures make it hard for multiple minority people to integrate their sexualities with the rest of their identities?*

Prejudice in the gay community and homophobia in their native cultures are the most obvious obstacles, but multiple minority people also must grapple with the