

Jamestown Community College's Weeks Gallery, in collaboration with LakeArts Film Festival, will present an ArtParty on June 15, 2012. This multi-faceted event also opens the LakeArts Film Festival's *Politics Goes to the Movies* programs (visit lakeartsfoundation.org).

The ArtParty begins at 6 p.m. on June 15 with the opening of Barbara Proud's exhibition, *First Comes Love: Radical Spirits, Civil Rights and the Sexual Evolution* (visit firstcomeslove.org), in the Weeks Gallery. At 6:30, Proud will present a slide talk in JCC's Robert Lee Scharmann Theatre.

Zili Misik, an all-female, Afro-Caribbean band, will perform at 7:15 in the Scharmann Theatre. Several publications have characterized the group as: "Boston's hottest band...best world music...Most Stylish Bostonians, and Mystical Misik: Zili finds that rare spiritual groove." (visit zilimisik.com).

The ArtParty reception, which begins at 8:30 in the Scharmann lobby and Weeks Reception Hall, includes hors d'oeuvres and wine and beer tasting.

Tickets for the all-inclusive ArtParty are available through JCC's FSA bookstore box office, 716.338.1187, or at the door. Prices are: premium theatre seating, \$25; general seating, \$15; and JCC/FSA members - general seating, \$10. The bookstore is open Monday to Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Fridays, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event is made possible by JCC, JCC Faculty Student Association, JCC Foundation, LakeArts Foundation, Arthur R. Gren Company, and Southern Tier Brewing Company.

Weeks Gallery activities continue at 9 a.m., on June 16 with the screening of Proud's *First Comes Love* short video and Bill Moyers' video interview, "Theodore Olson and David Boies on Same-Sex Marriage" in JCC's Scharmann Theatre. The program, free and open to the public, features a presentation and question and answer period with panelists Barbara Proud; Melissa Goodman, a senior litigation and policy counsel at the New York Civil Liberties Union, where she conducts and coordinates litigation, policy, and advocacy work on LGBT issues; and Bob Reeder, a Chautauqua resident and active member of Parents, Families and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG). Reeder also served on PFLAG's national board. The panelists will be available in the Scharmann lobby after the morning program and before the 1 p.m. screening of *Milk*.

After the screening/presentation, Planet Earth Catering Company will serve box lunches (\$10) in the Scharmann lobby from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Box lunches must be pre-ordered before 3 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13, through the FSA bookstore box office, 716-338-1187.

LakeArts Film Festival will screen *Milk* at 1 p.m. on June 16 in JCC's Scharmann Theatre. The biographical film by Justin Lance Black highlights the life and struggles of Harvey Milk, a gay rights activist and politician who served as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Milk and Mayor George Moscone were assassinated by Dan White, another San Francisco supervisor, on November 27, 1978. Tickets for the *Milk* screening are \$10 and are available through lakeartsfoundation.org, JCC's FSA bookstore box office, 716.338.1187, or at the door.

The Sixties counterculture, an outgrowth of the Fifties beat generation, hailed experimentation, liberation, and alternative lifestyles. Baby boomers supported, en masse, many of the radical spirits from their parents', grandparents', and great-grandparents' eras. Their new American Dream became a pluralistic vision that evolved by expanding and enforcing civil rights and by stretching social norms.

The growth of civil rights and civil liberties was long overdue. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony fought for women's rights in the mid-19th century. In 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren brought a unanimous decision from the U.S. Supreme Court in support of Brown in the Brown v the Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas. This ruling struck down segregation and discrimination and put wind in the sails of Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and others.

Many Americans – young and old, and from all walks of life – worked for equality. These *radical spirits* advocated critical change, sacrificed their time and energy to challenge the status quo, and risked their careers and safety as they marched, staged sit-ins, and petitioned those in power. Change evolved step by step and then advanced rapidly.

In the political light of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Bob Dylan wrote "*The Times They Are A-Changing*" that includes these famous lyrics: "Come gather 'round people/Wherever you roam/And Admit that the waters/Around you have grown ... For the loser now will be later to win ... Your old road is rapidly agin' ... The order is rapidly fadin' ... For the times they are a-changin'." For many, this song was an anthem for the '60s Zietgeist and great transformations. For others, time stood relatively still; their cause has just now come alive.

Stepping back in time, several civil rights pioneers are frequently overlooked; in 1950, Harry Hays founded the Mattachine Society, the first national gay rights organization. The Daughters of Bilitis, a national lesbian organization, emerged in San Francisco in 1955.

Their cause, after decades of slow motion progress, is coming of age; there is still much to be done. Same-sex couples, in comparison to heterosexual couples, lack over one thousand federal benefits, face discrimination, and suffer abuse.

Dylan's lyrics resonate with new meaning as support for the LGBT cause (from left and right, from religious and secular institutions, and from every generation) gains critical mass. The Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act is a milestone. Across the nation – from New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts to the District of Columbia and across to Iowa and further on to Washington state – marriage equality acts have been passed.

New laws, rulings, and norm changes, combined with support from unexpected sources, are featured in the daily news. The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals noted, "Proposition 8 served no purpose, and has no effect other than to lessen the status and human dignity of gays and lesbians." In a February 13, 2012 TIME magazine article titled "Conservative Identity Crisis," David Von Drehle wrote: "According to some pollsters, young evangelical Christians are drifting away from the social agenda of their parents, especially over issues like same-sex marriage." Many traditional churches opened up years ago by welcoming gays and lesbians and by promoting some into church hierarchies.

Like the causes of women and African Americans, LGBT advances are not without fierce ideological debates. Americans are resilient; fears dissipate; and compassion and tolerance make us stronger ... not weaker. Canadians and Europeans have moved on; they look for Americans to do the same. In the not too distant future, many envision that gay and lesbian rights will be perceived as fundamental rather than progressive interpretations of the constitution, just as African American and women's rights are now perceived.

President Obama recently recognized several civil rights luminaries. Harvey Milk, the martyr for the LGBT move-

ment, was awarded the 2009 Presidential Medal of Freedom. The press release noted: "Milk is revered ... globally as a pioneer of the LGBT civil rights movement for his exceptional leadership and dedication to equal rights." Milk's integrity as a politician and his visionary work transformed his imaginative thinking into practical politics. Billie Jean King, the tennis star who defeated Bobby Riggs in the Battle of the Sexes, also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her pragmatic innovations as a feminist/LGBT radical.

Barbara Proud's *First Comes Love: Radical Spirits, Civil Rights, and the Sexual Evolution* exhibition presents images, stories, and information in support of same-sex marriage rights. Each step, each voice, each critical thought, and each change of mind and heart enlightens the American Spirit. The following B. Proud essay (an edited version) presents her vision.

—JAMES D. COLBY, director of exhibitions and galleries

First Comes Love explores relationships in LGBT communities across the nation, beginning regionally and expanding across the country to show that same-gender marriage will pose no threat to the "sanctity of the marriage." In fact, LGBT couples often consider themselves "already married," just without the same rights as heterosexual couples.

Because of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), same sex couples in dedicated relationships – many for 20, 30, 40 years or more – are denied the 1,138 rights of heterosexual couples. (Note the *Del and Harriet* photograph on the inside cover of this brochure. They have been married for 42 years.)

These rights include inheritance and tax benefits, health care and hospital visitation rights, equal immigration status, and child adoption and property rights,

etc. In states where same sex couples may marry, DOMA denies federal benefits. It is time to recognize that every citizen is entitled to equal rights.

Text, photograph, and video will bear witness that the couples documented in this project have endured the highs and lows, challenges, victories and defeats, births and deaths, loves and losses that all couples face after years together. Every couple builds a life and forges bonds of commitment that can only endure with pure love for and dedication to another person. All couples (heterosexual and same sex) stand together "for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health" and withstand the test of time. Inequitable marriage laws discriminate (and disempower).

The video interviews tell stories ... and show a broad spectrum of the LGBT community; they present an intimate view of each couple as they share the landmarks of their journeys. This work shows individuals as diverse as the human race itself; they share a common bond – to commit to a lifetime of love.

Black and white portraits help break down stereotypes; homosexuality is often characterized by drag queens, gay pride parades, and rainbow flags. The couples I document live ordinary lives made extraordinary by their endurance of the attitudes and policies that foster prejudice, inequality, and intolerance.

This project focuses on the positive nature of same-sex relationships and highlights the similarities, the equality if you will, between heterosexual marriage and the LGBT experience. The project will show a side of the story that has not yet been told ... the one that shows already existent long-term dedicated relationships, ones that are in no way a threat to families or to traditional marriages.

— BARBARA PROUD, artist, educator, and activist

Del and Harriet **42 YEARS**



Weeks Gallery Jamestown Community College
525 Falconer Street, PO Box 20
Jamestown, NY 14702-0020
Return Service Requested

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
JCC

Below, *Gabe and Lee*, together 22 years; cover image, *Michael and Dan*, together 36 years



FIRST COMES LOVE:
Radical Spirits, Civil Rights, and the Sexual Evolution

B.P.R.O.O.D.