

GLAAD Media Reports

Muppet Love

by Al Kielwasser, GLAAD/SFBA

According to the show's well-known theme song, "Everything's A-OK" on Sesame Street. Not so, according to homophobic parents who are raising a fuss about series regulars Bert and Ernie. Fearful that these two puppets are gay, parents across the country are calling for Bert and Ernie to be evicted from the home they have shared for years on public television's most famous street. Typical of the paranoid plaintiffs is an Arizona grandmother who recently wrote to the editors of TV Guide, "It was reported to me that Bert and Ernie are gay. My grandchildren will not be watching Sesame Street anymore, and I hope you will relay that message to executive producer Michael Loman."

Responding to such complaints, Children's Television Workshop (CTW), which produces Sesame Street, issued a press release boasting that "Bert and Ernie do not portray a gay couple and there are no plans for them to do so in the future. They are puppets, not humans." The Cheers 'N' Jeers column in the December 25 issue of TV Guide argued, "It's a shame CTW had to (issue that statement). Maybe it's time for Sesame Street to tackle the subject. Kids and a few parents need to learn that a person's sexual orientation really shouldn't matter."

In fact, Sesame Street could serve as a fantastic vehicle for early intervention, combating the ignorance that breeds homophobia. About half of all children in the United States between the ages of two and five watch an average of three episodes of Sesame Street per week. English language versions of the program are broadcast in more than 40 countries and there are a number of foreign language versions (including Plaza Sesame in Mexico, Bonjour Sesame in France and Sesamstraat in the Netherlands). A gay or lesbian character, whether puppet or human, would fit nicely within the multicultural neighborhood that forms the backdrop for the program's various educational snippets.

Sesame Street aspires to instill an appreciation for diversity. Unfortunately, this admirable goal is crippled by the producers' intention to keep a "heterosexuals only" sign hanging over Sesame Street. Advise the show's producers to lift that ban. Contact: David V.B. Britt, President, Children's Television Workshop, 1 Lincoln Plaza, New York 10023; (212) 595-3456; FAX (212) 875-6110.

And while you're at it, you might drop a note to the editors of TV Guide for once again supporting lesbian and gay issues in the magazine's Cheers 'N' Jeers column. Write: Letters Department, TV Guide, Radnor, PA 19088.

Mickey Outpaces "Sesame"

While the producers of "Sesame Street" find themselves in a quandry over showing reality to its viewers, the Walt Disney Company has taken space in the February/March issue of Out magazine, a national queer publication, to advertise a boxed CD collection of Annette Funicello songs. No doubt the Disney Company will be in for the same right-wing onslaught of hate as others. You can do your part to thank Disney by writing: Michael D. Eisner, CEO, The Walt Disney Company, 500 S. Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521.

Hold the Pepperoni, Add the Homophobia


Tom Monaghan, CEO of Domino's Pizza, has announced that James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, is the recipient of the not-always-annual Domino's Pizza Humanitarian Award. (Focus is one of the most homophobic and hate mongering groups in America and occupies a \$27,000,000. complex in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It regularly supports everything from censoring gay/lesbian art to hate legislation.)

A call to Domino's Public Relations Department elicited the remark that "we want to sell pizza to everyone," and that Mr. Monaghan "personally chooses" the recipient of the Humanitarian Award. GLAAD is currently encouraging individuals to call their local Domino's Pizza outlets to voice their dismay. Your comments may also be directed to: Domino's Pizza, P.O. Box 997, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106; (313) 930-4500; CEO Tom Monaghan FAX (313) 663-7922; Marketing FAX (313) 668-1946; Public Relations FAX (313) 668-4614.

New Series for Youth

Chelsea House Publishers has issued their new catalog which includes two new series for and about lesbian, gay and bisexual youths. "Issues of Gay and Lesbian Life" includes 25 books on topics from AIDS, African-American l/g culture and coming out. The second series, "The Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians," includes 30 biographical books. Contact: Chelsea House, 300 Park Avenue South, New York 10010; (800) 848-BOOK. ▼

Keep On Marching!™



STONEWALL

JUNE 26 1994

On June 26th, 1994, the International March on the United Nations to Affirm the Human Rights of Lesbian and Gay People will take place in New York City. It promises to be one of the largest human rights marches in history.

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Make your plans NOW! You can help make Stonewall 25 a success!

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\$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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Make checks payable to: STONEWALL 25. Send to: 208 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011.
For more information call: 212-439-1031. To order STONEWALL 25 collectable and wearable merchandise call: 800-IS-PROUD. For travel or accommodations: 800-216-1880.

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