

# the CHALLENGER

A Publication of the Harper College Honors Program

Issue 2 ♦ March 2002

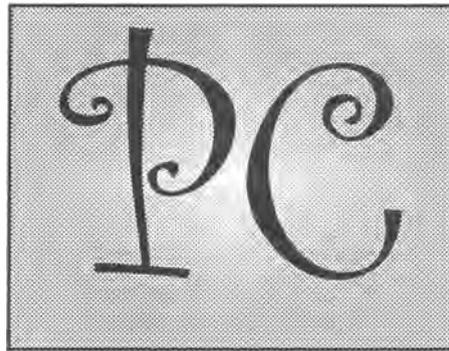
## Stockbrokers and Patriarchs

by Patrick Chartrand

I was new to Harper College when I happened to stumble upon a small flyer reading: *Multicultural Retreat, Lake Geneva, \$10 for food and lodging.* "Wow!" I said to myself. "I could really have a blast up there." I made my way to the multicultural affairs office and found some information on the retreat. The focus was discussions on diversity for a couple of hours a day. A friend signed up to go with me.

The retreat, in my mind, officially began when I entered Harper at 8 a.m. on October 4. The meeting point for all the students participating in the retreat was the Multicultural Affairs office.

As I approached the office, I found myself to be the only Caucasian in sight; I enjoyed this feeling of being unique. Making our way to the bus, I looked around and saw a few more Caucasians walking in back of me. I had lost my uniqueness.



With a three-hour ride ahead and a bus full of rowdy college students, we were ready. We arrived in Lake Geneva a little past noon and made our way to the dining room. A buffet with a variety of different dishes was warm and ready to be eaten. Our counselors announced we had 20 minutes for lunch and that the discussions would follow.

The room was a large, open room with dim lighting and large white pieces of paper, about ten feet apart, pinned to the walls, each with red writing at the top. Everyone took a seat and the discussion began.

One of the counselors explained to us the meaning of the retreat. "We are here to learn about each other and ourselves." He explained diversity (in a nutshell) and how culturally rich and diverse the retreat turnout really was. Everyone introduced themselves and gave a brief explanation of why they attended the retreat.

Our first exercise was to walk around the room and look at what race/ethnicity/sexuality had been written in red at the top of each page. I looked at a few: "Caucasian," "Hispanic," "Lesbian," "African American," and so on. For the exercise, we were to go around the room and write down stereotypes that we have heard about each category. I found it fascinating that everyone knew of at least one stereotype for each classification.

After the exercise was over, the counselors rounded up the papers and posted them at the front of the room, where they began to lead an exchange on different stereotypes of each culture. I was very curious why some students thought that all Caucasians were rich and well-educated. I was intrigued and had a handful of questions regarding these preconceived notions.

We were given one hour for dinner, so my friend and I made good use of our time by eating and then preparing sleeping arrangements for the night.

Once dinner was over, everyone hustled back into the large room for a lively exercise that counselors and past retreat members had enjoyed.

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# From the Editor

Deborah (Debby) Abbott  
Senior Editor

Six months have passed.

When brainstorming for themes we wanted to explore, each member of *The Challenger* team expressed an interest in revisiting feelings and seeking outcomes from the devastation of 9/11 (2001).

This issue will explore language differences and barriers, examine power and the -isms, review a Harper Multicultural Retreat from a personal perspective, recall Harper's workshops on terrorism and ESL students' experiences, and revisit the issue of diversity in the workplace, including the appropriateness of Affirmative Action.

If you read this newsletter from cover to cover – which we hope you do with all issues of *The Challenger* – we expect that you will occasionally nod your head and other times say out loud, "Not me!" However, you might find something else, something that reaches deep down into the place where your heart, mind and soul meet...a challenge for you.

Meet your own diversity issues head-on and as leaders for now and the future, find ways to help others fight their own!

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## challenger staff: our labels



Deborah Abbott

- German, English, Irish, Native American Indian... "Mutt"
- Female, unmarried but with significant other
- Computer Geek, People Person and Mother to the World



Charles Kostomiris

- 100% Greek
- Male, Single (yeah, baby, yeah)
- Music Lover, Writer and All Around "Jerk"



Stephanie Pierucci

- Italian, German, English
- Female, practically engaged
- Socratic and Constant Reader, Devout Christian (with many flaws)



Patrick Chartrand

- French Canadian, Irish, ...
- Male, taken
- Cocky, Playful, Natural Born Leader

# Fear Factors

By Deborah Abbott

Power. Where does it come from?  
How can I get some?

Diversity. Whether you know it or not, even in the United States of America, where you fall in the scheme of things makes a difference. The balance of who has power can create a fear in those who do not.

How old are you? Perhaps others feel that you are too decrepit to make your own decisions, or that you do not have enough experience. This is called AGEISM, prejudging someone simply by what age he/she is, categorizing that person and determining that you know what is best for him/her.

What gender are you? Although women received the right to vote in 1919, it has only been during the last 20 years that women in the USA feel more empowered. Yet, as we have seen overseas, many cultures do not give women basic rights. Judging a person's capabilities on gender is SEXISM.

What is your sexual preference? Even in what North Americans like to call "enlightened times," what people do in their own homes—behind closed doors and between them and God—is judged by humans on this planet. This is not so commonly called HETEROSEXISM.

What is your heritage? Unless you have a special power usually reserved for comic books and advanced scientific research, your genetics were determined by your parents and you had no choice in who they were. A common representation is an iceberg: only 5% of a person is the visible part; the other 95%—culture, values and actions—is not. Yet people often prejudge using RACISM.

What do you consider bodily health? Think of all the mothers who say to the doctor, "Please just tell me the

baby has 10 fingers and 10 toes." Nonetheless, a Deaf swimmer ranked high in the last Summer Olympics and nearly every person born with 10 fingers and 10 toes will one day be unable to use some part of her/his body. (Consider yourself *temporarily ablebodied*.) This prejudice is titled ABLEBODYISM.

Symbols are a big part of our lives. Think of Hitler. He said that tall blonde and blue-eyed people were the correct race to procreate. He then forced Jewish people to wear two yellow triangles, one up and one down. The pink triangle was forced on gay men and black triangle for a lesbian, prostitute or woman who refused to bear children. In this way, anyone walking down a street could immediately prejudice people.

Many of us today can understand the same passion caused by seeing a symbol. An apple with a bite out of it brings joy to Macintosh computer users. Golden Arches make some people's mouths water. How many people in the United States sprouted red, white, and blue paraphernalia to show heightened patriotism?

One of the most "power-full" words in the English language is ALLY. With -isms, an ally is someone who becomes educated enough to overcome her/his fear(s). As in wars, allies support and fight for the oppressed. A true ally also assists others to unlearn a practiced -ism.

Your challenge in this lifetime is to take yourself out of your comfort zone. Visit a club. Meet a new person. When you hear someone say, "That's Gay!" (or any of the other stereotypes), ask what he/she meant to get him/her to consider the words that were said.

How much does your heart rate race when you are the minority? ♦

This box contains a list of stereotypes that are simply presented here for your information. They do not represent opinions of the staff of *The Challenger*.

**Italians are loud and can't talk without their hands.**

**People over 60 are feeble-minded.**

**Jewish people are stingy.**

**Gay men talk with a lisp.**

**Mexicans are lazy.**

**Women are weak.**

**Irish do nothing but drink.**

**Deaf people can't drive.**

**Greek men are dominant.**

**Handicapped people can't have jobs.**

More to the point,  
***What is your diversity fear factor?***

# A Tale of Two Muslims

by Stephanie Pierucci

For many people, emotions ran high throughout the week following September 11. I interviewed two people for whom the emotional strain still has not ceased. Both Muham Khan (president of Muslim Student Association, Speech Team member, and Honors Society) and Azhar Sheikh (Honors Society, Phi Theta Kappa) dealt with increased prejudice of Middle Easterners who live in the United States in brave and unique ways. Read on to see how their social and spiritual lives have been affected by 9/11.

## AZHAR SHEIKH

S.P: Have you received more harassment or sensitivity about your being (Pakistani) Muslim because of 9/11?

A.S: Sensitivity. My friends joke about it, but it is open and comfortable. I say to (Joe) Fortin (friend), "Hey, Nazi!" because he's German. But people know he isn't a Nazi as much as they know Osama isn't my uncle.

S.P: Do the Osama jokes offend you?

A.S: No, jokes are jokes.

S.P: Did you fear coming to school after the 9/11 attacks?

A.S: Well, I was shocked, not fearful. But no one acted differently.

S.P: What about after Daniel Pearl, the journalist, was murdered by Pakistani terrorists?

A.S: On (the second) Eids [see footnote] of this year, I talked with my mom . . . I was frustrated, about terrorism. Pearl was doing an interview with terrorists, saying something like, "I was born a Jew, and I always will be a Jew." Then they killed him. The Islam religion is supposed to teach tolerance. It gives me no pride. They ruined the name of the Islamic religion.

S.P: How does President Bush's statement of the terrorists being 'evildoers' sit with you?

A.S: Evildoers justify bad and use the name of God to do it. He is talking about people without compassion committing crimes to humanity.

S.P: What role does Islam play in your life?

**"Evildoers justify bad and use the name of God to do it."**

A.S: When I was younger it was a way of life. I was more religious because I simply did what I was supposed to do. Now it's a guidance when I make decisions. We [Muslims] talk to God. I could do it [pray] the formal way, but there are times when I just need to talk to God without going to church. I pray in my car. I just sit and talk to God.

S.P: What did you feel like during this recent string of Muslim holidays? Did you feel differently about celebrating them?

A.S: Honestly, yeah. Ten percent of me felt, "Why did it have to be us?" These are the same people whose religion talks of patience and virtue. But, my walking into a temple doesn't make me who I am. My dad taught me to be open about these things. When I was growing up he dropped me off at this couple's house for them to look after my brother and me. They were Jewish, but they would still babysit us and treat us nice; we still call them Grandma and Grandpa. We knew to be open. That's the real Islam way, not this crap the terrorists pull.

## MAHAM KHAN

S.P: I realize that a lot of Muslim women receive harassment because of the hegavs [headpieces] they wear; did you?

M.K: No, people don't really identify me as Muslim because I don't wear the hegav. People usually think I'm Italian or Mexican.

S.P: What about your friends?

M.K: One of my very close friends was walking down the hallway the day after 9/11 at Harper and someone pulled her hegav off enough to expose her hair.

S.P: How did she react?

M.K: She got really angry and ran to the bathroom until they were gone. I hate the fact that people feel they have to pity women who wear hegavs. I say don't pity them, but admire them for what they're doing. It takes more courage to put your complete self forward. I was a part of the student panel for the "Women In Islam" presentation at Harper and another panel for faculty.

S.P: Would you say that you have received more harassment or more sensitivity about your being Muslim because of 9/11?

M.K: People who know me have shown me more sensitivity. They know who I am and know that's not what I am, a terrorist. Strangers, people who don't know me well...I did get more questions, some confrontations as to what Islam is about.

S.P: Did the confrontations make you uncomfortable?

M.K: I like the opportunity to educate more people than I ever would have. There's more satisfaction in teaching.

*Muslim continued from page 4*

S.P: How does President Bush's statement of the terrorists being 'evildoers' sit with you?

M.K: I agree with him completely. That's exactly what they are, evildoers. They're not religious crusaders; they are not Muslims. Their actions are evil, regardless of what purpose, or what claim they're fighting for.

S.P: Were you afraid to come to school after 9/11?

M.K: No. My parents would not let me come to school. I argued with them because I didn't want people to think I'm scared to be Muslim. Muslims have no reason to hide.

S.P: How did you feel after Daniel Pearl was killed?

M.K: What happened is a horrible incident, but people forget journalists put themselves in situations like that every day. Journalists got killed in Nazi Germany, too. Of course

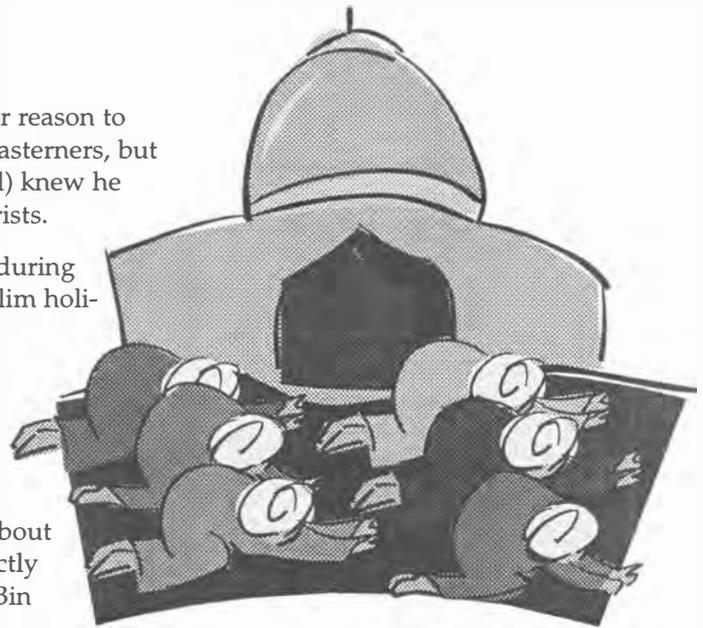
people will have another reason to look down on Middle Easterners, but it isn't unique. He (Pearl) knew he was messing with terrorists.

S.P: What did you feel during the recent string of Muslim holidays?

M.K: I have never been more proud of being a Muslim in my entire life.

S.P: What do you feel about your religion being directly connected with Osama Bin Laden?

M.K: The first thing that comes to my head is, "Oh great, he's a Muslim." People are going to associate him with Islam, but people knew what was going on in Afghanistan. Nobody cared until America fell into it. People knew that he was a bad leader and the Taliban regime was corrupt. ♦



**Footnote:**

There are two Eids in one Muslim year. One of them celebrates the end of fasting after Ramadan, the other remembers the Old Testament sacrifice of Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son for God.

*Retreat continued from page 1*

Counselors divided attendees into two different groups: the Alphas and the Betas. One group was led out into another room where the counselor explained the exercise.

Each group was given their own language and culture. Ours was stockbrokers who only spoke by spelling out first and last initial followed by any vowel. The amount of times you spell it out indicates the amount of stocks you are offering another member of your culture. For example, with my initials (PC), if I wanted a stock with the number 3 on it, I would say, PACA PACA PACA.

Stockbrokers were given cards that symbolized wealth and the object was to have seven sequential cards. If you earned a set, then you received points for your effort.

The other group was a patriarchal society that could only mention male

titles, such as uncle, brother, father, grandfather. You could speak English to them, but just not mention a female title. If you did so, you were kicked out of the room.

Neither group knew what the other culture was, so it was very interesting when each group sent "explorers" to the other room where explorers would learn the other culture and report back to their group. After three trips—and many bootings by the Betas' patriarchal society—the two groups got together to share their findings of one another's culture. It was surprising how accurate each group's findings were about the made-up cultures.

For the rest of the night, I was able to meet different people from other cultures while sitting beside a campfire eating s'mores.

Morning arrived quickly and there were only four hours for additional learning before we left. The discussion went into details about hate crimes—stories were told and statistics given. The morning was both very informational and fun.

The buses arrived and we were off back to Harper College by 1:30 p.m. The return trip was more lively than the first, and everyone was chatting. Before I knew it, we were back on campus, telephone numbers were exchanged, and future multicultural friendships established.

I learned about the many cultures that make Harper College. I highly suggest going to the retreat to anyone interested in diversity. ♦



by Trygve Thoreson  
Honors Coordinator

Diversity, multiculturalism, America as patchwork quilt, rainbow coalitions—let me announce myself as firmly, squarely, enthusiastically, passionately in support of all of the above.

And now that that's over with, allow me to ask an impertinent question. Can we talk about something else, please?

For the last 15 to 20 years or so, the American educational system has been awash in multiculturalism, to the point that it sometimes feels as if we're drowning.

School curricula have been transformed to include voices from previously excluded racial and ethnic groups; diversity workshops have been routinely required for students, staff, faculty, administrators; hiring committees have been told to scour the country for good minority candidates; various forms of cultural insensitivity have been (rightly) condemned and vilified.

From my point of view, the sea of change is most visible in the scholarly work that comes pouring out of our research universities. Is it even possible now to earn a humanities degree in anything other than the ruling cultural-studies quadrumvirate of race/class/gender/ethnicity? I wonder.

The value of such emphasis is, of course, obvious. America's history of brutal oppression of many groups (African Americans, Native

# Diversifying the Conversation

Americans, women, Chinese, Jews, Irish, and others) has led to serious prejudices that have become deeply embedded in the American grain. It will take concentrated, sustained effort to extract ourselves from all this ugliness, and, I readily acknowledge, the American educational system (top to bottom) will have to continue to play a leading role.

But while we do this necessary work, can we also remember that many vitally important aspects of our lives have little, if anything, to do with issues of cultural diversity?

The question of what makes for a happy (successful? well-lived?) life seems to me essential for any thoughtful person, and while cultural issues may be related, I would argue that anyone can tackle the question from, well, a diversity of angles, not all of them culturally situated. A botanist interested in the process of photosynthesis can, for the time he or she is in the laboratory, remain quite oblivious to issues of social diversity. Two plus two *does* seem to equal four, and the equality we speak of there has nothing whatever to do with Brown v Board of Education. When I speak to a colleague or a student over coffee, I want to feel I'm having a conversation with a person, not engaging in an act of cultural exchange.

And maybe that's how we'll know when the dream of multiculturalism has become a reality. When we can just the hell stop talking about it. ♦

# Equality through Separation?

by Charles Kostomiris

Diversity is an important thing to have in one's life. It helps broaden our horizons and open our eyes to new realities. It also helps us deepen our understanding of one another, and what motivates us to do what we do. Through this common understanding, we can better understand ourselves, and help shape who we are.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson passed a law to help ensure diversity in the workplace, and further protect the efforts of the civil rights movement. The law became known as "affirmative action." Executive order 11246 requires federal contractors to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, creed, or national origin."

Back in the sixties, affirmative action was seen as the only way to make sure that equality was being practiced. But here we are over 35 years later; our nation has come a long way from our unfair and oppressive past. Is there still a need today for affirmative action?

The pro affirmative action people believe that affirmative action helps to counter the unfairness against women and people of a different ethnicity by providing opportunities for equal employment. They also believe that affirmative action can increase the chances of a diverse workplace. And strict hiring policies and regulations also alleviate any biased impressions and evaluations, since employment decisions are based on factual information.

The people standing against affirmative action believe that affirmative action violates the achievement of more qualified individuals by allowing opportunities for hiring the less qualified. Also, any individual bene-

*Equality continued page 7*

fitting from it may feel devalued because of the way they got their job. And if this country is going to move forward as one, how will further separating and classifying us help us in the long run?

I believe that the need for affirmative action is very circumstantial. It depends highly on the capacity of the work being performed. For example, a firefighter needs to be in top physical condition to do his job. If the situation should arise that a firefighter needs to pull another firefighter 500 feet to safety through a building that's burning and caving in, would you trust a less qualified individual with your life? In this particular situation, the firefighter would need to be as strong as an ox. It is a physiological fact that testosterone is needed to produce muscle. It is another physiological fact that men have more testosterone than women. So obviously, a physically fit male fire fighter would be better equipped to face this situation than a physically fit female fire fighter.

Another example is in the medical field. God forbid you had a heart attack at 3 a.m. and you needed to have a quadruple bypass operation to save your life. Wouldn't you rather have a more qualified doctor performing the operation than someone who just got in because they were the most qualified (insert your favorite minority here) doctor? Affirmative action has no place in emergency work situations. When someone's job relies on them to be a hero, you need the best you can get.

Affirmative action was very much needed back in the 60s, but this country has come a long way in the past 38 years. Today, affirmative action is about as outdated as the right to bare arms. A better-qualified individual will always be in demand in his or her field, and cannot be penalized by the ashes of a very dark past. ♦

# Where we were on 9/11

## Patrick

I was sitting down in my English class when all of a sudden, someone came into our room and announced that "America is under attack!" The anonymous stranger then invited my whole class to join him in watching the breaking news on the big screen television in A Building. My classmates followed him and, as we came closer to the television, a huge crowd had emerged and everyone was sitting and standing in silence, listening to the horrifying news that the World Trade Center had been hit with an airplane. After the news had been announced, there was a lot of commotion. Within five minutes, two deans told everyone to go home. I went home in shock that such an atrocity had occurred. The reminder of my day was devoted to watching every unraveling minute of the tragedy on CNN.

## Deborah

It was surreal. I woke and turned on the television for the weather instead of the radio. I saw hardened reporters who were frightened. When I saw the second plane hit Tower 2, my stomach plummeted. Fear gripped me and I woke my boyfriend; we held each other and watched as the Pentagon smoldered. Then I called a friend who just retired from the US Department of Health and Human Services to see what I could or couldn't do, then dressed and came to Harper. I was in *The Harbinger* office, beginning to cover the event and write an article on being calm, when faculty and staff walked through the halls and told all of us—very seriously—to leave the building. The next 48 hours were in front of the television at home, trying to take it in.

## Stephanie

I was in speech class. When leaving home, my Gramma ran after my car screaming, "The White House is on fire!" I turned on the radio and heard about the plane hitting the Pentagon. When I arrived at school, some friends immediately rushed into my room and told me that the World Trade Center had been hit. The class went into another room and about 50 students and a few faculty members watched the towers go down. One of my most profound memories was the shock and horror on people's faces. My generation had lived a rather uneventful life. The [Harper] bomb threat occurred. I went to work to see if I had to go in that evening. Of course, I did. I then went to my other job to see if everybody had made it to work. A cashier had a nephew in the Trade Center, so I hung out at Sears for a few minutes. Then I prayed at church, and went to work, the whole time utterly shocked that so many people were having a dinner out and not glued to the television, as I so hoped to be. An eventful, tragic, and memorable day altogether.

## Charles

On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was here at Harper College. I'll never forget how meaningless it seemed to be, learning Astronomy when Americans were dying every second. The teacher kept going, even though no one really paid any attention. After class was over, woman came around and ranted and raved and yelled through the halls, "Everyone get out." We learned later what she was alluding to, the bomb threat.

## Discussion Topics & Dates

- April 10 American Culture vs. Other Cultures  
April 17 Careers in the Arts  
April 24 Homosexuality and Adoption  
May 1 Censorship in the Media  
May 8 Political Correctness  
May 15 Food and Fun!

## Upcoming Events

- April 19  
1-5 p.m., Architectural Tour  
("Trygve's Tour")  
May 10  
1 p.m., Honors Society Softball Game  
Faculty vs. Honors Society  
May 25  
Adopt-a-Highway #2  
10 a.m., parking lot 1

## Honors Information

Honors Society Meetings  
Wednesdays 3:30-5 p.m. in L329

Honors Program/Phi Theta Kappa Office: L334 (open to Honor students)

Honors Society Web Site:  
<http://www.harper.cc.il.us/cluborgs/honors/honors.html>

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Assembled by  
Patrick Chartrand

## It's a Discrimination Nation

by Charles Kostomiris

46% of prison inmates in 1999 were black and 18% were Hispanic.  
*source: The Sentencing Project*

In 1999, racial prejudice was the most common motivation for hate crimes.  
*source: Federal Bureau of Investigation*

Of the hate crimes reported to the FBI in 1999, 1,411 incidents were attributed to prejudice against the victim's religion; 1,317, against his or her sexual orientation; 829 against ethnic or national origin; and 19 against disabilities. *source: Federal Bureau of Investigation*

Of the 9,802 hate crime victims reported by the FBI in 1999, 82.8 percent were people. The remainder were businesses, religious organizations or other targets. Of the total victims, 56.3 percent were targeted because of their race. Blacks were by far the most frequent victims of hate crimes, numbering 3,679 or 37.5 percent of all victims. *source: Federal Bureau of Investigation*

Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are 4 times more likely to commit suicide than their "straight" peers. *source: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*

African American motorists are 6 times more likely to be stopped than white motorists. *source: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*

85% of teachers oppose integrating lesbian, gay, and bisexual themes in their curricula. *source: Massachusetts Governor's Commission On Gay and Lesbian Youth*

40% of minority children attend urban schools, where more than half of the students are poor and fail to reach even "basic" achievement levels. *source: The Washington Post*

75% of people committing hate crimes are under the age of 30. One in three are under 18. *source: Federal Bureau of Investigation*

Women hold only 5% of senior management positions in the private sector. African American, Latina, and Asian women hold less than 1%. *source: US Department of Labor*

Hate crimes committed against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals increased almost 60% between 1991 and 1997. *source: Human Rights Campaign*