

# Trinity College Women's Center

## Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 2 Spring 1999

### "Out" At Trinity

By Beth Miller-Lee

Heterocentricity is assuming that heterosexuality is the normal experience of all people. It means leaving homosexual consciousness out of formal and informal discourse because heterosexuality is assumed. I'm afraid the last two issues of The Women's Center Newsletter have done just that.

Now, including every person in every discussion about everything is ridiculous and fosters some of the better satires about being "politically correct." Including the gay community on campus, however, is not about being hip, liberal or cautious about being sued for discrimination. It is about creating a safe, supportive and tolerant environment for all Trinity students. It is also about facing fears about people who are "different."

One lesbian female student has had alarming experiences at Trinity. She has endured homophobic epithets written on her door and telephone harassment. She did not report these verbal assaults and does not know who was responsible. People once yelled "get out of here faggot" from a dorm window at her. At one party, an individual approached this

woman and asked her, in front of people, if she would like to "make-out" with or "feel-up" another female in the room. The respondent didn't know what to do and left the party.

"Verbal assault is commonplace here," said Dr. Steve Valocchi, Department Head of the Sociology Department. "I have to say it has improved. I'm not describing a static situation, though changes have been slow." Valocchi added that in general, like the rest of society, Trinity is homophobic.

Sophomore Jeff Green is active in the E.R.O.S., (Encouraging Respect of Sexuality - formerly known as *The Gay Straight Alliance*). He added: "Even friends of mine who know I'm out will still say stuff like "that's so gay" or "that's queer." If there was more discussion about it, if this was a more open campus, people would be more aware. I don't want to say, just "politically correct," where everyone is trying not to offend each other, but actually thinking about these issues, what it means to other people who might be around you." Green is impressed with the interesting courses related to homosexuality and the support and sensitivity of Trinity faculty.

Beyond verbal abuse, some gay/bisexual students cautiously

### Letter From the Director

This summer, as you work, play or continue taking classes, be aware of the status of women and the treatment of women around you. Pay attention to issues in your workplace like childcare, pay equity and equal benefits. Look for the policy on sexual harassment - if one exists, is it accessible and user-friendly? If you travel, notice how women are viewed in the culture. Are billboards full of half-clad women? Do theaters advertise violent porn shows? Is the "Red-Light District" a tourist attraction? How many women hold government seats? Education about women and their rights doesn't begin and end in the classroom. Take a little time this summer to be an observer of your cultural surroundings - you may learn something new!

Laura Lockwood

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# Sisterhood is Global

## News from Around the World

### Unsolved Murders in Juarez Mexico

According to reports from *LatinoLink Enterprises Incorporated*, over the past 5 years, 184 women's bodies have been recovered in the Chihuahua Desert, Mexico. Of these women, aged 13-25, eighty were raped. "Such victims are often found with a breast mutilated or severed," according to *LatinoLink*. Despite the outrage of women protestors, like Esther Chavez Cano, victims' families, federal Mexican congresswomen and women's rights activists, the importance of the case has been diminished. "...[T]he governor of Chihuahua, Francisco Barrior Terrazas, supported city authorities' declaration that the murders had been solved. He said, "It's been very well handled." Barrior also said that there is no evidence that the murder rate for women is any higher than in other Mexican cities.

According to *LatinoLink*, the latest victim was found this past February in a drainage canal. She was 13-year-old Irma Angelica Rosales. "Many victims, like Miss Rosales, had migrated to Juarez from cities to the south. She arrived in January, moving into a mud shanty with her brother. He paid \$20 for a false document stating that she was 16, enabling her to get an assembly job at the plant where his wife worked, **Electrocomponentes de Mexico**. She had trouble adjusting to factory discipline, and on Feb. 10 was suspended for a day for talking. On the morning of Feb. 16 she quit her job, plant officials said, but her sister-in-law said Miss Rosales told her in a tearful conversation at the plant that she had been dismissed. "Go straight home on the bus," the sister-in-law said she told Miss Rosales. "Don't walk, its dangerous."

International Wire Group, in Mishawaka, Indiana owns **Electrocomponentes de Mexico**, the *maquiladora* plant in Juarez where many of the victims worked, reports *LatinoLink*. In "Feminists Decry Police Handling of Murders in Border City," Thaddeus Herrick credits the clash between independent "*maquilas*" (female factory workers) and unemployed men in "Mexico's machismo culture" may be the reason for the murders. He also reports on the sexualized work atmosphere. "The factories prefer women, reasoning that they are more suited to the assembly line than men. Work is repetitive and turnover high. Those who study "*maquilas*" say female workers are sexually harassed, from having to show used sanitary napkins to prove they are not pregnant to competing in factory beauty contests."

According to the July/August issue of **RESIST Newsletter**, women's attempts to organize unions at *maquiladora* plants, like the one in Juarez, have been terrorized. "Most *maquiladora* workers earn about four dollars per day, below the minimum needed to support an individual at a decent standard of living, much less provide for a family. Workers who attempt to organize independent unions, democratic caucuses in the official unions or who take strike action usually find themselves fired, blacklisted, sometimes kidnapped and beaten." Most of the bodies found were female employees of Juarez's *maquiladora* factory, **Electrocomponentes de Mexico**. Despite the continued protests of victims families and activism of activists, the murders remain unsolved.

Information provided by *LatinoLink* and **RESIST Newsletter**

For more information contact [latino@latinolink.com](mailto:latino@latinolink.com)

# Everything Your Ever Wanted to Know About Sex at Trinity But Were Afraid to Ask

By Sara Getman

Sexual activity has different meanings for different people. In a recent survey the Women's Center conducted, respondents gave a range of definitions to what they consider sexual activity. Some students classified sexual activity as anything after kissing, and others thought of sexual activity solely as intercourse. Though it seems that Trinity students regularly engage in sexual activity, the Trinity Community does not usually engage in open, active, productive or meaningful discussion about sex.

Trinity students do discuss sex among close friends. Respondents to the survey stated that the topic of sex comes up often with friends. However, many respondents stated that although they do discuss sex with their partners, this discussion often takes place after the act. This and the lack of general openness in the Trinity community, both lead to sex taking on this sort of uncomfortable tinge- as a topic to hold under-cover. And, when this happens, people become uncomfortable, secretive, and unsure about this topic which is a very important, special, exciting part of our lives. Thus, the survey the

Women's Center conducted and this article that is based on it, both seek to open up this topic and make it possible for students to actively, positively share their thoughts about this part of life.

Three-fourths of the respondents to the survey were satisfied with their sex lives. Those who stated they were unsatisfied explained why. One individual made the comment that at Trinity "there is no genuine care for the person an individual engages in sex with, generally speaking." Another individual stated that she was dissatisfied because at Trinity so much of sexual relationships revolve around alcohol.

Alcohol does seem to play a major role in people's sexual lives here at Trinity. One could draw this conclusion simply by observing the social scene at the parties on Friday and Saturday nights. Many respondents stated that alcohol causes them to feel less inhibited. Others said it makes them feel more liberated or more willing to take control during sexual activity. Another respondent said that "I am often more likely to make the first move while intoxicated." Why is it that at Trinity, a major portion of the student body seems to need a drug to allow themselves to be sexual? Sex and sexual activity are meaningful, incredible experiences; and as Oscar Wilde said "... it (alcohol) increases passion but decreases performance." Imagine how wonderful our sexual

experiences would be if more of them took place sober, and hey, we might actually remember them too.

The relationship between love and sex seems relatively undefined by respondents to the survey. Many respondents felt that it isn't necessary to be in love to have sex. But, one individual summed up the general consensus of the respondents to this survey by saying that "I think the two (love and sex) can and do exist separately. But, sex with love is worlds better."

For the most part, men believed that women have an easier time enjoying an active

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WAGNERMAN © '93 BOSTON GLOBE



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govern their behavior to protect others from discomfort. Freshman basketball player, Fatou-Maty Diouf, spoke about the daily isolation and relentless attention to behavior she tolerates as a bisexual woman. "The last thing I want is to have any member of my team think I am checking them out in the shower. The last thing you want to do is make people uncomfortable. I got injured and we had to go away and we had communal showers. I didn't play, so I didn't have to shower and I was so relieved. It's such a stress on you for every little thing."

Diane Martell, Director of the First Year Program, remarked on the absence of a visible gay student community on campus and expressed concern for new students needing peer support. "About two years ago a big group of students graduated who were either gay, bisexual or very gay friendly and when they left, it left a big void. That seems to happen in waves every three or four years: there's a community that comes together and then they graduate and the new students have nobody."

The graduation of active students has left E.R.O.S. floundering with internal struggle and limited membership. Like some women's groups on campus, there is often a struggle between being a support group or an activist group. Lack of E.R.O.S. membership makes it difficult to support both of these needs. According to Valocchi, a Lesbian/Gay Studies [LGS] Department would provide a place and

environment to foster the fuller development of student groups, thereby sustaining both support and activist factions.

Valocchi, Green, Diouf and Martell support the creation of a Trinity LGS Department. "It's going to happen. Dean Baker actually announced it as a curricular initiative," said Green. Though Baker is gone, there are many faculty and administrators actively promoting a LGS Department. When asked who he thought might resist this department, Green answered, "the trustees or alumni." "We [E.R.O.S.] did a table at homecoming. It was right outside the football game. We had cheese and crackers and everyone would just come up for the food and they would ask, 'What is this about?' So this one guy almost dropped his glass of wine [when we told him]: 'I don't believe in that! I'm a fundamentalist Christian!' I said, 'It's O.K. You can still eat the cheese.'"

Valocchi stressed a need to acknowledge LGS as a legitimate intellectual pursuit. "It's necessary if this institution is committed to its main mission to educate the students: that a complete liberal arts education requires this. Some faculty look skeptically on these developments. They see them as places for people to feel good about themselves, whether it be courses in Women's Studies, Jewish Studies, or Lesbian/Gay Studies; 'Let's get together and feel good about being marginalized.'" Establishing a Trinity LGS program will put primacy on LGS scholarship and, as a "side-effect," will

support gay student groups and promote tolerance through visibility. Visibility will create familiarity. Familiarity will destroy ignorance.

Students should resist the tendency to be pointlessly "politically correct" and genuinely tolerant. "Trinity is very, very P.C.; trying to be so correct. People do it in the classroom and then do not do it socially." Diouf added a personal story about coming out to a friend who told her he needed time to process his feelings about her bisexuality. Diouf wishes more people would be honest instead of being "politically correct" and dishonest about their fears, misconceptions or difficult emotions about gay/bisexual friends or classmates.

What is the point of saying the "right" thing in class about "Homosexuals" and then screaming "faggot" at a someone across the quad? Stop using homosexual slurs. Tell your friends not to when they do. Do not be complicit in tolerating the enforced invisibility of homosexuality on this campus in classroom discussion, daily life or campus publications.

Fear festers where difference is not acknowledged and tolerated. Accepting and supporting gays does not hurt anyone. Not accepting gays, lesbians and bisexuals does hurt people. The recent murders of Matthew Shepard and Billy Jack Gaither exemplify fear corrupted into homicidal hatred. Breaking the silence about gay men and women on this campus is the first necessary step to avoiding festering fear and dangerous hatred. It is an essential step in honoring Trinity's diversity.

# Changing

by Sara Getman

It takes different women different periods of time to recognize their power and to realize their potential. This process is full of obstacles, trials, accomplishments and emotions. This process took my Mom forty-eight years, it took my best friend seventeen, and it took my cousin about twelve. It has taken me nineteen years to become the woman I am. And, only now am I really beginning to develop into the woman I will be.

This journey is really the journey of growing up. And, for women in particular, it is a really challenging journey. My experience has been a unique one, personal to my life. However, the basic structure of the journey is central to all women. It involves a series of revelations, lots of experiences, and lots of mistakes. For women in particular, this journey also involves a lot of pressures and a lot of judgments.

The first thing that happened to me, like many other women, was that my body started to change. When I was growing up I never thought about how I looked. My Mom had to practically force me to brush my hair. I ran around like a wild child, I ate like a horse, and I was always, always happy. But, suddenly, I started to gain weight and care about how I looked. I brushed my hair without my mom's comments and I became really conscious of my changing body. I didn't like any of this one bit. Due to this, and a variety of other reasons, I had my first encounter with the world of eating disorders. I didn't feel ready to physically become a woman and when you're a young teenager it really isn't an easily accepted thing to grow and change in the ways that I was. The world around you generally expects you to mature mentally, but to remain childish with the

perfect slim figure physically. And, for many women, this obstacle is an extremely hard one to overcome, myself included.

Then, I discovered my sexuality. I had my first series of serious boyfriends. I experienced kissing, and touching and all of the emotions that go along with those experiences. I fell in love, or what I thought was love, over and over again. Many times, I wanted to experiment further but I always felt the pressure to "be good" and maintain a "good reputation," and that I "should wait." And, for a very, very long time I did. Often women are thought of as "the virgin or the whore." Finding the middle ground, and having the courage and confidence to act only as you choose is difficult.

Next, I discovered drugs and alcohol. And, this is an area I think I will be exploring for a while. Particularly for women, getting drunk and being 'wild' is considered really irresponsible and really negative behavior. Smoking pot and enjoying it is really something that women in particular are not "supposed to do" by a lot of people's standards. However, I will proudly admit that I enjoy these activities and experiencing these parts of life. As human beings they are parts of life that we can choose to experience. It seems like a huge part of growing up is learning when are good times to choose to experience them, and how to experience them responsibly.

I also realized my personal beliefs and feelings about issues in our society. I realized my limits and my needs. After a lot of trial and error, I realized that I can't do everything, nor do I want to. I realized that I need time to myself, but I need to balance that with being social. I figured out how to distinguish between what really makes me happy, and what other people think makes me happy.

For women, I think the most important revelation of our growing up journey is that we

can do whatever we want to, whenever we want to, and the only person that can control our lives is ourselves. As an individual, other people will influence me, contribute to my life, and be a part of it, but ultimately I am in charge of it. As a woman I can choose to conform to the way society wants me to be; or I can be the person I want to be. For many women, this revelation happens in college, and this is true for me. I have finally figured out that I don't want to fit into that 'social mold.' I have discovered my personal secret to being the person I want to be. Now, I am learning how to balance that with the opposition I receive from those around me. I have figured out how to positively accept that opposition and learn from it.

Realizing that as a woman you can be as strong, or as intelligent, or as sexual, or as independent, or spiritual, or as anything else, as you want to, is an amazing revelation. Realizing that only you can define who you are is a hard thing to figure out. For me, and I think many women must agree, these two things have been the best part of becoming the woman I am.

"Let the world  
know you as you  
are, not as you  
think you should  
be, because  
sooner or later  
if you are posing,  
you will forget  
the pose, and then  
where are you?"

Fanny Brice

sex life and women believed that men have an easier time enjoying an active sex life. However, the reasons for these beliefs were very different. Men believed that women have an easier time because "if a woman wants to have sex it is much easier for her to find a willing partner than it is for a man to." Women believed that for men, there is less of a stigma about them engaging in "too much sex." One respondent stated "women are either the virgin or the whore." This feeling was echoed in similar comments in other surveys. It seems that this must be negative for both men and women. Such a stigma makes it more difficult for both sexes to enjoy active, and healthy sex lives due to pressures from the outside world.

These issues, love, alcohol, satisfaction, discussion and gender- are all aspects of the topic of sex. As we explore them, we can become more comfortable with this topic, which would be beneficial to us as a community.

"We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same."

Anne Frank

## If Men Could Menstruate

by Gloria Steinem

*This satire was published by MS Magazine, VII, in 1978.*

A white minority of the world has spent centuries conning us into thinking that a white skin makes people superior - even though the only thing it really does is make them more subject to ultraviolet rays and to wrinkles.

Male human beings have built whole cultures around the idea that penis envy is "natural" to women - though having such an unprotected organ might be said to make men vulnerable, and the power to give birth makes womb envy at least as logical. In short, the characteristics of the powerful, whatever they may be, are thought to be better than the characteristics of the powerless - and logic has nothing to do with it.

What would happen, for instance, if suddenly, magically, men could menstruate and women could not? The answer is clear - menstruation would become an enviable, boast-worthy, masculine event:

Men would brag about how long and how much.

Boys would mark the onset of menses, that longed-for proof of manhood, with religious ritual and stag parties.

Congress would fund a National Institute of Dysmenorrhea to help stamp out monthly discomforts.

Sanitary supplies would be federally funded and free. (Of course, some men would still pay for the prestige of commercial brands such as John Wayne Tampons, Muhammad Ali's Rope-a-Dope Pads, Joe Namath Jock Shields - "For Those Light Bachelor Days," and Robert "Baretta" Blake Maxi-Pads.)

Military men, right-wing politicians, and religious fundamentalists would cite menstruation ("men-struation") as proof that only men could serve in the Army ("you have to give blood to take blood"), occupy political office ("can women be aggressive without that steadfast cycle governed by the planet Mars?"), be priests and ministers ("how could a woman give her blood for our sins?") or rabbis ("without the monthly loss of impurities, women remain unclean").

Male radicals, left-wing politicians, mystics, however, would insist that women are equal, just different, and that any woman could enter their ranks if she were willing to self-inflict a major wound every month ("you MUST give blood for the revolution"), recognize the preeminence of menstrual issues, or subordinate her selfness to all men in their Cycle of Enlightenment. Street guys would brag ("I'm a three pad man") or answer praise from a buddy ("Man, you lookin' good!") by giving fives and saying, "Yeah, man, I'm on

the rag!" TV shows would treat the subject at length. ("Happy Days": Richie and Potsie try to convince Fonzie that he is still "The Fonzy," though he has missed two periods in a row.) So would newspapers. (SHARK SCARE THREATENS MENSTRUATING MEN. JUDGE CITES MONTHLY STRESS IN PARDONING RAPIST.) And movies. (Newman and Redford in "Blood Brothers!")

Men would convince women that intercourse was more pleasurable at "that time of the month."

Lesbians would be said to fear blood and therefore life itself - though probably only because they needed a good menstruating man.

Of course, male intellectuals would offer the most moral and logical arguments. How could a woman master any discipline that demanded a sense of time, space, mathematics, or measurement, for instance, without that in-built gift for measuring the cycles of the moon and planets - and thus for measuring anything at all? In the rarefied fields of philosophy and religion, could women compensate for missing the rhythm of the universe? Or for their lack of symbolic death-and-resurrection every month?

Liberal males in every field would try to be kind: the fact that "these people" have no gift for measuring life or connecting to the universe, the liberals would explain, should be punishment enough.

And how would women be trained to react? One can imagine traditional women agreeing to all arguments with a staunch and smiling masochism. ("The ERA would force housewives to wound themselves every month": Phyllis Schlafly. "Your husband's blood is as sacred as that of Jesus - and so sexy, too!": Marabel Morgan.)

Reformers and Queen Bees would try to imitate men, and pretend to have a monthly cycle. All feminists would explain endlessly that men, too, needed to be liberated from the false idea of Martian aggressiveness, just as women needed to escape the bonds of menses envy. Radical feminists would add that the oppression of the nonmenstrual was the pattern for all other oppressions ("Vampires were our first freedom fighters!")

Cultural feminists would develop a bloodless imagery in art and literature. Socialist feminists would insist that only under capitalism would men be able to monopolize menstrual blood . . .

In fact, if men could menstruate, the power justifications could probably go on forever.

If we let them.

Reprinted from "The Complete Collection of Men Jokes," <http://www.menjokes.com/mens.html>, 26, April, 1999



# Womyn's Space

## Dancing the Shout to the True Gospel or The Song Movement Sisters Don't Want Me to Sing

*Rita Mae Brown*

I follow the scent of a woman  
Melon heavy  
Ripe with joy  
Inspiring me  
To rip great holes in the night  
So the sun blasts through  
And this is all I shall ever know  
Her breath  
Filling the hollows of my neck  
A luxury diminishing death.

## *The Way Towards Each Other*

*Jeni Couzyn*

*The way towards each other is through our  
bodies.  
Words are the longest distance you can travel  
so complex and hazardous you  
lose your direction.*

*Time is no way either. A river mouth it opens  
to a mixing of waters, a tidal  
diffusion, never  
a consummation*

*In our bodies we are fallen in a thorn thicket.  
Out is a tearing apart, a letting of juices  
Inside though is a pathway, a tremulous  
compensation -  
the possibility of touching.*

## Rape Poem

*Marge Piercy*

There is no difference between being raped  
and being pushed down a flight of cement steps  
except that the wounds also bleed inside.

There is no difference between being raped  
and being run over by a truck  
except that afterward men ask you if you enjoyed it.

There is no difference between being raped  
and being bitten on the ankle by a rattlesnake  
except that people ask you if your skirt was so short  
and why you were out alone anyhow.

There is no difference between being raped  
and going head first through a windshield  
except that afterwards you are afraid  
not of cars  
but of half the human race.

The rapist is your boyfriend's brother.  
He sits beside you in the movies eating popcorn.  
Rape fattens on the fantasies of the normal male  
like a maggot in garbage.

Fear of rape is a cold wind blowing  
all of the time on a woman's hunched back.  
Never to stroll alone on a sand road through the  
pinewoods  
never to climb a trail across a bald mountain  
without that aluminum in the mouth  
when I see a man climbing towards me.

Never to open the door to a knock  
without that razor just grazing the throat.  
The fear of the dark side of hedges,  
the back seat of the car, the empty house  
rattling keys like a snakes warning.  
The fear of the smiling man  
in whose pocket is a knife.  
The fear of the serious man  
in whose fist is locked hatred.

All it takes to cast a rapist is to be able to see your  
body  
as jackhammer, as blowtorch, as adding-machine-gun.  
All it takes is hating that body  
your own, your self, your muscle that softens to flab.

All it takes is to push what you hate,  
what you fear onto the soft alien flesh.  
To bucket out invincible as a tank  
armored with treads without senses  
to possess and to punish in one act,  
to rip up pleasure, to murder those who dare  
live in the leafy flesh open to love.

# The Hate Crimes Prevention Act

A hate crime is defined as a violent act causing death or bodily injury "because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, or disability" of the victim (Human Rights Campaign data). The fact that Americans are assaulted because of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability is unacceptable. Currently, laws are not in place which allow for the prosecution of criminals who commit acts such as these. However, laws are in place which allow for the prosecution of criminals who attack based on racial, religious, or ethnic bias. Only in rare circumstances can the federal government investigate and prosecute hate violence against gays, lesbians, or bisexuals.

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act would amend current federal law to include prosecution of crimes committed due to real or perceived sexual orientation, gender, and disability. Thus the FBI would be able to investigate and prosecute violent hate crimes against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Current law already allows investigation and prosecution on the basis of race, religion, national origin and color.

One example of crime outside federal jurisdiction, that could have been prosecuted under the proposed Hate Crimes Prevention Act was an incident that occurred in January of 1996 in Texas. Two men in Houston stabbed a gay man thirty-five times, killing him. Evidence showed that the assailants were outspoken opponents of gay rights who had traveled to Houston in part to commit violence against gay people.

Federal prosecutors should be empowered to punish violence based on prejudice. Because the majority of states don't have comprehensive hate crimes laws, the Federal government needs to have jurisdiction over local, state, and federal authorities. This would ensure that hate crimes are dealt with and that the criminals who commit them are prosecuted.

FBI statistics show that although rates of most violent crimes are decreasing, the incidence of hate crimes reported continues to be extremely high. Reported anti-gay hate crimes are on the rise. These hate crimes, committed against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals make up the third-highest category of hate crimes reported to the FBI. They currently represent 14% of all hate crimes reported. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs reported a 6% increase in reported anti-gay crimes for 1996, while violent crime continues to decrease nationally.

Thus, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act is necessary. It would amend current legislation to allow federal officials to investigate and prosecute cases in which the hate violence occurs because of the victim's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

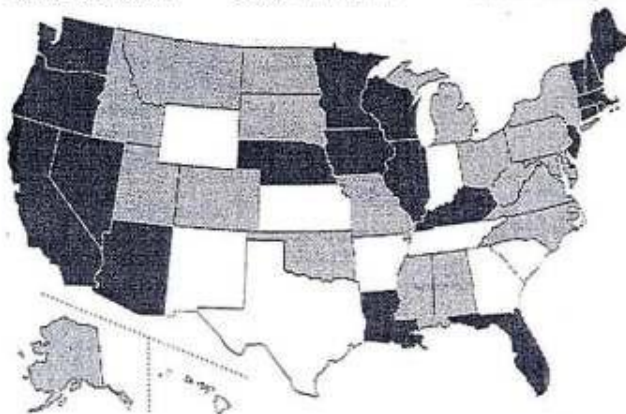
For more information refer to <http://www.hrc.org>

## INDICATORS

### Hate Crime Legislation in the U.S.

Although 40 states have some form of hate crime legislation, only 21 include crimes based on sexual orientation. Ten states, including Wyoming, either have no hate crime provisions or do not identify hate crimes by specific category.

- ☒ Laws include crimes based on sexual orientation.    ☐ Laws do not include crimes based on sexual orientation.    ☐ No hate crime laws or none based on specific categories.



Note: Maryland and Utah require data collection for crimes based on sexual orientation, but do not specify such crimes in penalty laws.

Source: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force