

September, 2010

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- **Jamie Bergeron: New Assistant Director of LGBTQ Initiatives**
- **LGBTQ Mixer**
- **Alumni Spotlight**
- **Meet the Interns**
- **Upcoming Events**
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# Out & About

## A Greeting From Colgate’s New Assistant Director of LGBTQ Initiatives

Hello! It is a pleasure to introduce myself to you as we kick off the Fall 2010 semester together. I am so grateful to be on campus during this exciting time. Across campus students are learning about LGBTQ lives and queer concepts in their courses, the student clubs are planning LGBTQ events, and campus offices are requesting Safe Zone trainings weekly. I have no doubt that we will move forward to increasingly make Colgate a welcoming and safe place for LGBTQ students, and that the Colgate tradition will honor and support our LGBTQ identities, families, and community.



As I become more familiar with Colgate, I am struck by the enthusiasm of the LGBTQ students to support one another and to be agents for change. Their impact on campus can be seen from day one—for example, student performances in the First-Year Orientation series “In Your Company” highlight LGBTQ student experiences. Through this Out & About Newsletter, I hope to continuously provide the alumni community with a window into the important work done by students and staff on campus to further our interest in LGBTQ inclusion and support. Please contact me at anytime, [jbergeron@colgate.edu](mailto:jbergeron@colgate.edu)

### LGBTQ Mixer

**By: Dena Robinson ‘12**

On Tuesday September 7th, I had the pleasure of attending the 2010 LGBTQ Mixer at Donovan’s Pub. The Mixer brought together LGBTQ-identified students and allies from across campus and was a huge success. Students and faculty alike shared their stories and it was wonderful to catch up with old friends. In addition, the Mixer was a place for different organizations to share their events.

For instance, Sisters of the Round Table (SORT) is looking into bringing up feminist theorist, Bell Hooks, to campus and plans on working closely with LGBTQ Initiatives and Advocates. Advocates and LGBTQ Initiatives also have programming planned for National Coming Out Week in October as well as the Transgender Awareness week. Keep your eyes peeled for wonderful programming and have a glorious fall!



## Alumni Spotlight

Elisa E. Burns, MD, '78 lives in Westchester, NY with her partner of 18 years, Meryl Allison, and their Jack Russell Terrier, Socrates. They live full time in Westchester and spend as much time as possible at their summer home in Provincetown, MA.

After her undergraduate experience at Colgate, which she describes as “a truly great time which prepared me very well,” she went on to medical school at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. Elisa later joined the Mt. Kisco Medical Group. She currently practices as a gynecologist and gynecologic surgeon focusing on robotic surgeries.

Elisa and Meryl married legally in Massachusetts in July 2010 and had a Jewish wedding in NY in September. Elisa is very happy to say that their families on both sides were in attendance for the wedding. She remembers that she was closeted for most of her experience at Colgate and says, “being gay is not a political statement, sometimes it seems like it, but really it’s very personal. I think if more people and alumni were out, it would seem more comfortable to be out at Colgate and after as an alum.” Elisa looks forward to being involved with the Colgate community for future events.

If you’d like to be featured in Alumni Spotlight, please contact LGBTQ Initiatives at [jbergeron@colgate.edu](mailto:jbergeron@colgate.edu).

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## “I Belong”, Leeander Alexander ‘12

When I came to Colgate, I didn’t really know what to expect. I was under the assumption that I would just get my degree and that would be that. However, I was mistaken. In my first year I experienced homophobia, racism, heterosexism, classism, sexism, basically any type of -ism that comes to mind. I was in a whirlwind- my mind was raced with complex curiosities and my soul was weighed with anger and confusion. I thought I would be at peace. I thought the battle was over. As it turns out the battle had just begun.

I don’t exactly fit into the majority here. First, I am gay in an apparent majority heterosexual atmosphere and second I am black in a predominately white institution. Coming here, it seemed my identity was always at war. My blackness was at war with the ignorance that stereotyped me as “ghetto”, “unintelligent”, and “unworthy” to be here. My gayness was at war with the invisibility that queers like myself on campus experience and with slurs being thrown that pierced my soul like a knife does flesh. I began to ultimately question why was I here. Maybe I didn’t belong here. Maybe I should leave.

Needless to say, I did not leave. Why? I refused to run from a challenge. Colgate challenged me and questioned who I was to the point where I began to question myself. Who was I? What am I about? What is my passion? These seeds were planted in me my first year. Since then, I have watered, fertilized, and bathed sunlight on these seeds to watch them grow- grow into who I was as a person and what I am about. Being an openly black gay male here at Colgate has given me a new perspective about my life and instilled in me a burning passion that I am beginning to explore. I am the first person to declare the LGBTQ minor. I am an active member of queer/diversity/feminist activism on campus. I want to go into activism once I graduate. All of these things about me I learned because Colgate challenged me to do what it ultimately challenges of all students: challenge yourself to find yourself. I accepted the challenge. I guess I do belong here after all.

## “In Your Company”, Caden Polk ‘12

When I stepped on stage to speak for In Your Company this year, I was absolutely terrified. My hands were shaking with the worst fear I’ve ever experienced. Backstage, I kept asking myself why I signed up for this.

I did it because I couldn’t be afraid, nor did I want others to fear the new adventure they’re starting. Sometimes, I feel like we forget who are actually in our company- that our company of friends (and strangers) are, in part, just many aspects of ourselves dressed with blonde or brown hair, female, male- or somewhere in-between (or neither!). I wanted to perform to remind people of the humanity in one another, and to cherish our differences most.

I had no idea what my new peers would say, how they would react to hearing about the life of Colgate’s first open transgender man (and perhaps even the first transgender person they’ve ever encountered). Scenes from *Boys Don’t Cry* played over and over in my head and all I could think about was how I would explain to my mom getting a serious butt kicking after the performance somewhere in the dark nooks of Colgate.

I’m infinitely humbled to say that the response I received brought me to tears. Hug after hug, handshake after handshake, positive feedback flew. I had prepared myself all summer, and in many ways my entire life, for negative feedback- yet none came. This class of 2014 has given me new hope to Colgate’s future. Their ability to accept, not tolerate, and seek out knowledge about one another is absolutely inspiring.

My experiences here at Colgate have been similar to many students in the way it’s been contained with ups and downs. Being a trans guy on Colgate’s campus has inspired me to be more active within the queer community to help create positive change in attitude and administration on campus.

With each day, I find myself more and more thankful to have stepped upon that stage.

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**Caden Polk** is a Junior at Colgate from St. Louis, Mo. He is majoring in Philosophy and Religion, with a concentration in Ethics. As an active member of the Colgate community, he is involved in many student groups, including Sisters Of the Round Table as a Senior Advisor, the Black Student Union as Co-Vice President and Colgate Advocates as Vice President. Caden is also a Residential Advisor for West Hall and an OUS Residential Academic Coach. Although unsure of the particular path he wants to take in life, Caden wishes to pursue a career that enables him to help others to the best of his ability.



A NEWSLETTER FOR  
COLGATE LGBTQ ALUMNI

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## Upcoming Events

### Fall 2010 Events

**Family Dinners:** Informal gathering every Tuesday, 6:00-7:00 Frank Dining Hall Conference Room

**Guest Speaker: Justin Spring**—Secret Historian: Reclaiming an Invisible Gay life in Mid-20th Century America. Tuesday October 26th at 7:00pm 217 Lathrop Hall

### National Coming Out Week Events:

Oct. 13, 14, 15: Coming Out Door of Support display in Reid Athletic Center, Case/Geyer Library, Frank Dining Hall and O'Connor Campus Center

Oct. 14: Women's Studies Brown Bag Discussion: Coming Out as LGBTQ, 11:30am, WMST Center

Oct. 15: Coming Out Door burning and bonfire, 7:00pm, Whitnall Field

Oct. 16: Annual BBQueer hosted by Neal Rosenberg '73, 2:00pm, 46 Broad Street in Hamilton. Please RSVP to [jbergeron@colgate.edu](mailto:jbergeron@colgate.edu)!

Month of October: Check out the special LGBTQ collection featured at the Colgate Bookstore!

## Meet the Interns!

The Office of LGBTQ Initiatives is dedicated to supporting students of all sexual orientations and gender identities by enhancing diversity and visibility throughout the greater campus community. In addition to collaborating with the student run LGBTQ clubs on campus, interns work on a variety of projects throughout the year to help reduce homophobia and heterosexism, including National Coming Out Day, Safe Zone trainings, Big Gay Weekend, and various individual projects as well. Here are our current interns for the year:

**Benaë Beamon '11** is a current senior, who has worked with LGBTQ Initiatives in several different capacities in her time at Colgate. A religion major with a philosophy minor, Benaë hopes to ultimately work in NGO's that focus on issues of sexual ethics within a global context. She is very pleased to be working once again with so many other great interns who are eager and ready to create exciting new initiatives and programming on campus.

**Jane Kelly '11** is a Geography major and Art & Art History minor. She hails from New York City and has a soft spot for anything that references the urban. During her time at Colgate she has traveled to Australia with the Geography Department and done donuts on black ice with the Ski Team. She has been involved with LGBTQ Initiatives since fall 2009 and is excited to conduct Safe Zones with the rest of the staff this fall.

**Ben Pollok '11** helped establish his high school's Gay/Straight Alliance in ninth grade, and continued his involvement in LGBTQ activism with state-wide Safe Zone presentations to high school administrators and faculty and volunteering in the offices of Russ Feingold and Tammy Baldwin. His dedication to advancing LGBTQ equality has endured here at Colgate, leading him to serve as the senior adviser to Colgate's Advocates as well as an intern with LGBTQ Initiatives. He is a Mandarin Chinese and International Relations double major, and involved in the Admissions Office, Club Tennis, and student government. You can also find him wandering the Seven Oaks Golf Course listening to synthpop, or watching an episode of Glee for the umpteenth time.

**Eugene Riordan '11** is currently a senior, double majoring in Peace and Conflict Studies and International Relations. When he's not out and about, he's conducting the Pep Band, chairing Lambda, playing in the Wind Ensemble, curling on the Club Curling team, choreographing and teaching the Ballroom Dancing club, mentoring First-Years as a Link, volunteering at the Hamilton Food Cupboard, or working in the Library in LASR (along with going to class sometimes). He tries to include queer topics in his academics as much as possible, and is currently looking at possibly working in global LGBTQ rights. In his free time, he likes to read Science Fiction or Fantasy novels, go hiking, or play games on the internet.

**Andrea Finley '13** is a returning intern here in the LGBTQ offices for her second year. Andrea is an enthusiastic sophomore who prides herself in working with individuals of the LGBTQ community. Andrea enjoys focusing on raising cultural and impact awareness within the issues of the LGBTQ community. Outside of her involvement with LGBTQ awareness, Andrea loves playing jazz piano and writing poetry. Andrea plans on double majoring in sociology and psychology. Let's be honest... Andrea is what we call an amazing woman!

**Melissa Melendez '14** is a freshman this year. She was a part of the summer OUS program and is currently undecided on a major. She was born in Philadelphia and raised in the Bronx. Colgate is definitely different than being in the city that never sleeps. She is currently dedicated to NCBI, CSA and LASO. She is still exploring other clubs like Urban Theater, Belly Dancing and more. She is excited for this school year and hopes to make Colgate her own.

**Mitch Tucci '14** is a freshman planning on majoring in Biochemistry. He is involved in the student-run theatre group on campus, Masque & Triangle, and recently, became a member of one of Colgate University's acapella groups, The Dischords. From Slate Hill, a small New York town similar to Hamilton, Mitch is quite used to the isolation of Colgate. He is extremely excited about his future here at Colgate and furthermore with the LGBTQ Initiatives Office.