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# LGBTQ COMING OUT PLAY TO THE COMMUNITY as part of the URI GLBTIQQ Symposium 2011

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# URI FEINSTEIN PROVIDENCE CAMPUS URBAN ARTS AND CULTURE TOURS

## LGBTQ COMING OUT PLAY TO THE COMMUNITY April 6-9, 2011

*The Journey Out* – written and directed by Frank V. Toti Jr.

**What if you had to hide who you were** for fear of rejection or harm? **What if you felt growing up that you were somehow different** and different was not a good thing to be? **What if you had no one to talk to or look up to** who could help you shape and mold your life?

*The Journey Out* is a play, taken from the words and stories of older members of the LGBTQ community here in Rhode Island, as captured in a series of oral history interviews this past year. The play – set in a disco, a church and an AIDS support group – is a celebration of love, of faith, of courage – of women and men who fought and struggled for their right to live openly, to live without shame, to live authentically.

The production, which premiered in October at the URI/Feinstein Providence campus was a tremendous success. Calls came immediately from the community to tour the show so that those who are bullied and struggling with their sexual/gender identity can realize that they are not alone and that they can thrive. That those relatives and friends and neighbors who are supportive can gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be gay in today's world.

There is much humor, great joy and moments of loss in the gathered stories of the fifteen people whose lives are told on stage. An older woman coming out to her mother on Rhode Island Independence Day who receives her own surprise in return. A young Italian man whose mother wants to take him to see a priest after she finds out. A young girl who sees her future in the flying joy of Mary Martin as Peter Pan. Some of the people were embraced on their journey to liberation while other lost friends and families and their faith. But for each person, the telling of their story is an inspiration and celebration of the human spirit, a way to help other members of the tribe on their journey out. The cast includes Cynthia Glinick, Chuck LaFond, Sandra Slonim, Frank Toti, Clare Vadeboncoeur and pianist Gary Harris.

*The Journey Out* was written and directed by Frank V. Toti Jr. from months of interviews conducted by seven Rhode Island residents as part of a project conceived and supervised by Steven Pennell of the Urban Arts and Culture Program at URI/Feinstein CCE. With the assistance of grants and funding from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, Rhode Island Foundation's Equity Action, URI Providence Student Government Board, The URI Providence Campus Arts and Culture Program and the URI Multicultural Center, the project began in January 2010 and included interviews of 50 local LGBTQ community members. In addition to the oral history gathering and the creation of the play, the digital files, transcribed interviews and trove of memorabilia will become the Rhode Island LGBTQ Collection to be housed in the URI Library Archive for future study and research. The process of interviewing

will continue for those interested in sharing their stories, photographs, clippings and artifacts from their journey out.

**All performances are open to the general public and are free.**

**The play will be touring to various communities around the state April 6-9 @ 7pm.**

April 6 @ 7pm – Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol RI

April 7 @ 7pm – URI Kingston Campus, J Studio in the Theatre Fine Arts Building

as part of the URI GLBTIQQ Symposium

April 8 @ 7pm – Beacon Charter School, 320 Main Street, Woonsocket RI

April 9 @ 7pm – Pilgrim High School, 111 Pilgrim Way, Warwick RI.

For further information, please contact Steven Pennell at the URI Feinstein Providence Campus 80 Washington Street at 401-277-5206, [uri.artsandculture@gmail.com](mailto:uri.artsandculture@gmail.com) or visit [uri.edu/prov](http://uri.edu/prov).