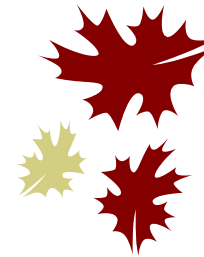


# PRISM Pride Letter

November 2011



Prism



Prism

**PRISM Pride Letter**  
Holmes Student  
Center, 7th Floor  
[www.niuprism.com](http://www.niuprism.com)

Editors: Tasha Shawver & Kyle Urbashich



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*National Coming Out Day*

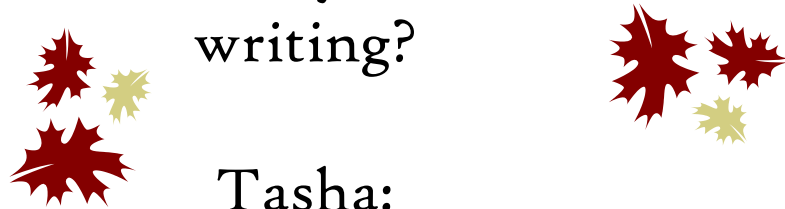


*E-Board is Coming Out of the Closet!*

# WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE PRIDE LETTER?

Feedback?

Want to submit your artwork or  
writing?



Tasha:

editor@niuprism.com

Kyle:

coeditor@niuprism.com

Or visit our webpage:

www.niuprism.com



# Upcoming Events

Wednesdays are Community Gatherings

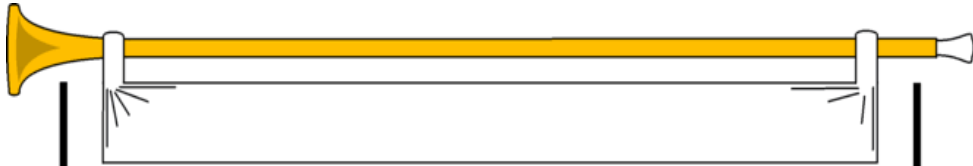
Be on the lookout for information about:

\*Steak and Shake Fundraiser  
Date and Time TBA

\*Comedy Show on November 18th,  
Currently said to be held in Players  
Theater in the Stevens building.  
Time TBA

\*Casino Night in February

To see other Upcoming Events please see our website:  
<http://www.niuprism.com/upcoming-events.html>



Dear Readers:

It's that time of the year again where the trees are turning colors and the once summer air lingers with a brisk breeze. It's the time of the year when Starbucks gets most of our attention because of their delectable Pumpkin Spice Latte – but that's beside the point. This time of the year is what many look at as the “kick off” to the holidays. Being the November issue of the Pride Letter, we want to take a moment to talk about the prominent concept of thanks and being thankful. In America, we are constantly on the go. Commuting from work or school, to taking care of our everyday priorities, we often take for granted a lot of things we would normally treasure, or consider a “prized possession.” Take a moment to think about what means most to you and how sometimes you might not recognize it as such when life has you wrapped up. In this month's letter, you will have a chance to read a piece *On Life, Love, and the Pursuit of Happiness* which outlines how one boy lost everything that ever meant something to him. After reading the piece, we urge you to take the time to gauge what you are thankful for and make an effort to keep these things in your focus throughout the holidays. All in all, take the time to enjoy the holidays and do something that will make you happy. We've all worked really hard this semester and it's time to take a break and relax with the people who mean the most to you!

Cheers!

Tasha Shawver and Kyle Urbashich  
Pride Letter Editors

When we arrived, we were kind of scared at first but we soon began to notice that everybody was very nice. After I was introduced to everyone, I took some time for myself to get used to my new surroundings.

My siblings and I lived at the Home for over nine years of our lives. Without the Home, I don't think I would have had the opportunities to volunteer, to succeed in school, form the life-long relationships I have made and most importantly, to be a kid again. The staff at the Home provides great care for those who are in need. They teach you all the essential skills that you need for when you are ready to leave the Home and provide a safe, nurturing environment in which to learn and grow.

After leaving the home, I continued to prove to myself that I could be the best that I can be, despite my background. As an undergraduate studying Business Administration here at Northern, I truly believe there's nothing better than receiving an education. Being the first in my family to attend college, I take pride in myself knowing that I was able to be a positive change in my family, but also be the positive influence for my younger siblings.

Before I end tonight, I want to make very clear my thanks to the Illinois Masons and the staff at the Home. Although moving to the Home has been a rough time for me, I am glad that I was placed here. The Home has changed me as a person. With the upcoming holidays, I urge you to take a moment and evaluate what is meaningful in your life. Imagine your life turned upside down, with the people who are supposed to love and protect you, quickly fading out of your life. I'm thankful for my strength and courage to overcome my adversities. What are you thankful for?

## On Life, Love, and the Pursuit of Happiness

by: Kyle Urbashich

My life before coming to the Illinois Masonic Children's Home at LaGrange in December 2001 was pretty tough. It was not very similar to other nine-year-olds. My day consisted of acting as the father for my younger brothers and sister. My dad worked the night shift at a job in downtown Chicago and usually returned late at night, which caused him to sleep through the day with minimal interaction with us kids. My brothers, sister and I mostly did whatever we wanted and got around on our own with very little discipline.

My family's relations worsened by the day; it got worse because my dad and I barely communicated because of all the time he had to spend working. Due to my dad's lack of interaction with me, I really couldn't build trust with him and therefore decided not to listen to him and to be independent. Also during this time I was trying to care for my brothers and sister because everyone was gone for the day and the only other person we had at home was our grandmother, whose health was deteriorating.

During the day we could go outside and so we took advantage of this a lot. We ran around the neighborhood and did whatever we pleased. About this time everything seemed to fall apart in almost every respect. Although we were supported by our grandmother, financial problems were still a big issue in my family. Even though we all wanted to care for and look out for each other, it really didn't seem that way when everyone was preoccupied and too busy to talk to us. In all, life was not the best at home and my siblings and I needed a better place to go live.

In December 2001, my siblings and I were admitted to the Illinois Masonic Children's Home in LaGrange and were glad to be relieved of a lot of the stress from our family situation. We knew at the time it was the best place for us, so we didn't give our parents a hard time about it. When we arrived at the Home, the staff had checked our belongings and given us our rooms, blankets and made sure we had other useful items that we needed.

## *Presidential Address*

PRISM is really off to a great start this year and the community is taking notice! All of our events have had a big difference in the number of people that show up and we couldn't be more excited about it. We have a great group of people all with awesome individual ideas that we are really excited to be able to work in to making PRISM an entirely new organization while still hanging on to what has brought us to where we are today.

Something that we are going to start working a lot more on is catering specifically to our community. After all, that is what our organization is all about! This not only means that we are going to be having events with a lot of other organizations to gain ideas and build ties around campus in that way, but it also means that we want to hear our community speak up! We want people to let their voice be heard and tell us what kind of things they would like to see PRISM do. We have so many ideas and plans internally, but we also want to hear what the community wants to see and what they hope to gain by coming to our events. We are very open to new suggestions and love working with any and all new people that have an idea they want to make bigger.

Just remember that our office is on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the Holmes Student Center, right down the hall from the LGBT Resource Center and our door is always open. Don't hesitate to stop by and pitch us an idea or just come by to chat, we love hearing whatever it is that's on your mind. Most importantly, we want everyone to remember that we are an organization driven by our community so let us know what we can do help you or make your experience even better and we'd be so glad to help out.

Marc Romero Jr.  
Prism Co-President

Sammi Johnson  
Prism Co-President

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The place for rainbow political commentary.



## Santorum's Jihad

By: Khaled Ismail

Though no longer relevant as a presidential candidate—not that he ever even was, Rick Santorum, former United States Senator from the commonwealth of Pennsylvania has officially waged the equivalent of a modern day Jihad on the LGBT community. Almost everything that has come out of his mouth throughout his career, and in his ongoing failed campaign, fits exactly the definition of his last name (Google Santorum if you want the definition). Most recently, at the Republican presidential candidate debate in Orlando, Florida on September 22, 2011, Stephen Hill, a gay soldier deployed in Iraq sent a video asking the candidates if they “intend to circumvent the progress that has been made for gay and lesbian soldiers in the military?” The audience booed the soldier, and then Santorum answered by saying:

“I would say any type of sexual activity has absolutely no place in the military. The fact they are making a point to include it as a provision within the military that we are going to recognize a group of people and give them a special privilege to, and removing don't ask don't tell. I think tries to inject social policy into the military. And the military's job is to do one thing: to defend our country...”

siblings to hang out with acquaintances I barely knew, or gossiping about a really good friend of mine behind their back sent me to "chemical pass-times," I'll call them. Instead of trying to correct my own behavior, whether by humbly apologizing or doing something selfless to regain a friend's or family member's trust, I would turn to more and more shallow friendships that I knew would offer me more and more substances to help forget this guilt.

Therefore, the lesson that I would like to say at the end of all this is no rail against drugs or alcohol (though I do think addictions or dependencies of any kind need examination), but purely a plea that you respect your own boundaries when you here that "Jiminy Cricket" on your shoulder. While it might be more cool, sexy, or badass to take another shot, hit, pill, etc. and go along with whatever idea has you all queasy, the majority of the time the damage caused outweighs the greatness of whatever "experience" you undertook. I've let myself or my loved ones down too many times to treat this issue lightly and know that I can struggle with these kinds of choices daily that mark path toward maturity and adulthood, aka INDEPENDENCE!

With all that, have fun, try new things, grow, love, laugh, meditate, write, sing, draw, dance, cook a goddamn good meal for that cutie or for your best friends, BUT please respect your own ideas of right and wrong and those you love (especially your own self)!  
Have a super-gay year NIU!

Curtis Valasek, class of 2011

# Advice From an Alumni

## What do Former NIU LGBT Students Have to Say to All New Students?

Having had the experience of transferring into NIU from a private, religious institution (that actually asked me to leave due to my homosexuality, but that's a whole other article), I can compare how I "did school" at each and pick out the lessons that I see through all of it. Certainly, my level of "outness" differed between the two schools, but I can say that living in the closet had VERY few perks, in my experience. Except for the handful of derogatory statements that I heard but brushed off quickly at NIU, my gay life there felt like a blossoming moment after living for two years always watchful of who knew what about me; living in that fear can really destroy one's confidence and lead one to miss out on too many opportunities for growth and self-exploration. Now, in retrospect, should I have exploded on to the gay scene at NIU as I did? That's a question that I am still toying with, but for the sake of this article on lessons learned and wisdom hopefully gleaned, it becomes the subject at hand.

While I cannot deny that years of repression of my sexuality lead to this aforementioned "explosion" into freedom, extremes are still extremes and can lead to equally extreme consequences. Now, luck also plays into the mix, because I thankfully did not end up with poor grades, broken friendships, or some disease that would follow me to my grave. In the least, though, my relationship with my family soured during this time and my lifestyle didn't fit with the ideals I had set for myself. One might say that since one doesn't fully know themselves right out of high school, a few years of exploration are good. In fact, I agree with the statement (and encourage you all in this regard), BUT there were more than several times where I found myself living a life against my own sense of inner-morality. As individuals, we all have different limits and sometimes we might not have a strong awareness of our boundaries until we cross them, but when I continued habits or lifestyles that were beyond my own limits, a vicious cycle began. The guilt I felt for letting myself down after pursuing a guy I knew was trouble, blowing off my

First of all, DADT gave no special privilege to anyone. Those soldiers fighting for your rights and freedom to be an idiot got nothing but equal recognition in order to secure the same benefits for their families as their fellow servicemen and women. You are right Senator Santorum, the military's job is to defend our country. That would make your job as president—heaven forbid—to support them in every way. At least support them enough to tell a room full of people that they should be ashamed of themselves for booing an American soldier overseas fighting for them.

A follow up question was asked by the debate's facilitator asking "what you would do with soldiers like Stephen Hill?"

"What we are doing is playing social experimentation with our military right now. That's tragic. I would just say that going forward we would reinstitute that policy if Rick Santorum was president. That policy would be reinstated as far as people in, I would not throw them out because that would be unfair to them because of the policy of this administration. But we would move forward in conformity with what was happening in the past.

Which was- sex is not an issue. It should not be an issue. Leave it alone. Keep it to yourself whether you are heterosexual or homosexual."

It sure makes my heart melt how highly this man upholds standards of fairness. What he calls a social experiment has already been done in numerous other countries for over two decades now. Get with it. Additionally, Santorum's obsession with bringing up gay sex and soldiers showering together makes me wonder who really needs to be banned from the military.

Unfortunately what senator Rick Santorum doesn't understand is that DADT did not stop soldiers from showering together. Instead, it stopped them from sharing who they send

letters home to. DADT impeded on unit cohesion and effectiveness because of the fear of discovery that gay and lesbian soldiers lived in. Don't Ask Don't Tell did nothing but ruin military morale. I guess when all is said and done; it does not matter whether he gets it or not because people like Rick Santorum are worth as much as the wasted air time they get for a few months while they live a lie.



# Halloween 2011

## Afternoon Specter By Michael Sunderman.

One look  
Two lives  
Eternity between  
Last glance  
Of a false promise land  
I once lived in those eyes  
A place of obsession  
A place of awakening  
A shard of self that I still can't name  
Was lodged in that twisted place  
And as I was ripped away from my beloved poison I  
took with me  
That splinter of self  
It was years till I learned to love the pain that splinter  
did onto my soul  
So now as I see into the eyes that I made my prison  
The eyes you have made your life  
I wonder  
What you see  
In our  
Last glance  
Eternity between  
Two lives  
One look

This Time  
By Michael Sunderman

You are war crimes set to a metronome  
Obituaries spoken with jump ropes  
You are violins on the titanic  
And I'm syncing  
To the tune of you pied piper smile  
Sinking  
Beneath the weight of every heartbeat wanting to walk back-  
wards  
And run an eraser across a blackboard chest  
But you did not use chalk  
I hold hate speech in my cheek and death camps in my skull so  
it can't find me  
You have turned my heart into a hand grenade  
And stole my pin  
It wants to shatter every bitter bone  
Pick every wary lock  
Because it doesn't know any better  
My heart is a child  
and it doesn't know any better  
Then to beat with the soldier's heel instead of the wave breaks  
My heart is a child  
and it doesn't know any better  
Then to follow the carnivals songs of forgiveness  
My heart is a child  
Because only children walk well known roads expecting to find  
somewhere new  
I just hope this time  
It Learns

*Gemstones*  
By: Galea Rain

Rubies glistening through the seams  
Each one drips out caressing subtle curves  
Beauty in the essence of life  
Pushing against the opening  
They wish to flow free  
With a reflective light and a quick flash of steel  
Multitudes of rubies spill forth  
With their freedom comes a feeling of relief  
A crashing break through a wall of tension

Sparkling sapphires fall from a raging ocean  
Faster and faster escaping angry wells  
Each sapphire precious and fragile  
All holding a heart wrenching story  
A taste of the sea they are born from  
They carry the weight of the world  
Like raindrops from the sky  
Puddles of pain remain

Diamond, a gem as cold and hard as ice  
Nothing can pierce it  
With each attack the fortress is built  
Hidden within is the most precious gold  
As warm as the sun, protected by ice  
A silver key no longer fits the lock  
No one dares to touch it  
Lest they too harden

For more works or to give feedback find Galea Rain on Facebook

# Thanksgiving Word Search



A V P J T A L G N I Q J S T U  
 S I Z O P J N U N M J B H U R  
 E Q P P T I W D X G U A J I S  
 V G L O S A I C F E N T W U W  
 A E S S C A T G U K W K U S S  
 E N E M N U J O S X H Y I A M  
 L L F S A U N G E S V X R J A  
 B W J E K Y I R A S Z J B U R  
 C I E T A V K U O Y V A R G G  
 I S I T I S Q G A C O R N S L  
 D H P N Y S T E T S N Y E P I  
 E B G S E I R R E B N A R C P  
 R O O X M K Y E K R U T H N H  
 Y N S S T U F F I N G F P I F  
 D E V U N L S D W O X B Q Y F



TURKEY	CORNUCOPIA
THANKSGIVING	PILGRIMS
INDIANS	PIE
AUTUMN	FEAST
LEAVES	CIDER
BLESSING	STUFFING
SQUASH	POTATOES
WISHBONE	YAMS
ACORNS	APPLE
GRAVY	CRANBERRIES

## Carved By Michael Sunderman.

I have a broken heart like a broken record and all I want is to skip to the part where  
 I can hear myself over your laughter and where I can find myself behind your regret  
 I need to forget you  
 I need you in the rear view mirror of my dreams  
 It's time for me to leave Warsaw  
 For somewhere warmer  
 Somewhere that the sun's glare off my skin is so strong that my hands forget what the moon looks like  
 Somewhere that I can burn black like the serial number you carved into my bark  
 Like a math problem with a solution they are afraid to teach  
 I will carry your numbers far outside the borders of those soap bubble memories we shared  
 They are bursting you know  
 Each one exploding against the summer breeze  
 What felt like a lifetime  
 What felt like a friendship  
 Showing their true colors  
 As drops of soap upon the midday pier  
 I am tired of apologies that ooze from my lips and drop one by one into the well  
 I have been filling since before I knew how to let you hurt me  
 You smiled as I cut each one from my chest and threw them like coins to a wishing well  
 But my truth is far stronger than the holes I carved for you  
 And I will gather every shard of soul you sent stones through and mend them with my blood  
 So that on the nights that I lie awake smoldering in his arms I will cast a crimson universe on to the walls and we will star gaze in till the air is too cold and the sheets are too warm for us to be satisfied with just seeing the stars  
 and I will look down and see your cipher etched on my skin and be glad  
 For most remember the bread crumbs  
 But forget where they lead