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Loving More Annual Conference Retreat  
September 12, 2009  
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### **Polyamory in Media's Spotlight**

#### I. Introduction

- A. Name and personal poly history
- B. Present poly family configuration
- C. Activism and media background
  - 1. Co-founded CPN, board member 5 years
  - 2. Co-founded ITCR, ITCR board member 6 years
  - 3. Past NCSF board member and Media Committee Member
  - 4. LM board member
  - 5. UUPA board member
  - 6. Community advisor to CARAS – Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities
  - 7. Website: Practical Polyamory.com and blog at practicalpolyamory.blogspot.com
  - 8. Media experience
    - a. Interviewed for DC Fox Channel 5 segment on polyamory
    - b. Interviewed for Baltimore WBAL (NBC affiliate) for news segment on polyamory broadcast on Valentine's Day
    - c. Newspaper and magazine articles with quotes:
      - i. Newsweek Online, July 2009 –It seems that Newsweek caught so much heat from the leaders of the (Save Traditional) Marriage Movement as a result of this article that the subtitle "America's Next Romantic Revolution" was removed from the article and is replaced with the words "Polyamory—relationships with multiple, mutually consenting partners—has a coming-out party." This article upped the visibility of polyamory tremendously and placed it front and center in the ongoing debate about same-sex marriage.
      - ii. Baltimore Sun, Sept. 2005
      - iii. Salon.com, June 2007

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- iv. Gay City News, Oct. 2007
- v. Washington Post, Feb. 2008
- vi. Chicago Sun-Times, March 2008

## II. Stats/Facts

- A. More than 215 media events that focused on or referenced polyamory and poly-related subjects over the past 44 months per Polyamory-in-the-News Blog – More than 50 in 2009 from May to September, with a significant rise in events outside the U.S.
- B. 20 marked as unfriendly to polyamory (many many more unfriendly blog comments.)
  - 1. "We need to have a debate right now about what this means for children... because having multiple unrelated adults passing through will open them up to a much higher risk of physical and sexual abuse," said Elizabeth Marquardt, director of the Center for Marriage and Families in New York City. – From St. Pete Times article “A love triangle? Try a hexagon” published 2/18/07
  - 2. Bill O’Reilly recently commented on polyamory with his “Culture Warriors,” Gretchen Carlson and Margaret Hoover after viewing a clip from the Family web series by Terisa Greenan; also commented in a separate show in May 2009 in which he made the tired old analogy with bestiality (with specific references to marrying turtles and ducks.)
  - 3. Wall Street Journal Op Ed on August 3, 2009, by Robert P. George entitled "Gay Marriage, Democracy, and the Courts: The culture war will never end if judges invalidate the choices of voters." in which he first attempts to persuade the reader that if the courts and not the voters are permitted to define marriage, the culture war will worsen and marriage will become abortion's twin issue and yet another never-ending cause of societal discord.
  - 4. Jenny Block debated Glenn Stanton of Focus on the Family on Fox News in May 2009
- C. 24 marked as LGBTQ related
- D. 21 marked as including an activism focus
- E. 27 advice columns – Big Issue as to whether advice is accurate or not
- F. Celebrities from wide range – Academy Award winning actress Tilda Swinton, World’s most famous investor and second richest man, Warren Buffett, and retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor
- G. Minx – 211 podcasts in four years
- H. Cities, States and Countries Represented
  - 1. Boston
  - 2. Chicago
  - 3. Colorado

4. Florida
5. Kansas City
6. Mississippi
7. New Mexico
8. New York
9. SF Bay Area
10. Seattle
11. Wash. DC region
12. Canada
13. U.K.
14. France
15. Portugal
16. Argentina
17. Australia
18. New Zealand
19. China
20. South Africa
21. Mexico
22. Brazil
23. Chile
24. Poland
25. Uruguay
26. Russia
27. Columbia
28. Israel

### III. Challenges Meeting Media's Requests

- A. Interest is at an all time high, to the point that LM and I have trouble keeping up with requests.
- B. Most start out looking for groups to interview and film, preferably under 35 years old and with kids
- C. People aren't out
- D. Finding local people for local newspaper articles to give local context (Chicago) Local, visible, locatable community organizers are crucial to our being able to supply locals to local media outlets.

E. Providing good spokespeople who will put our best foot forward

#### IV. Examples: Broadcast Media

- A. BREAKING NEWS: September 14, 2009 – Alan says, “MTV will finally air its months-in-the-making, hour-long documentary on twenty-something polys. Many people worked hard to pull this off, and we have high hopes. The title is ‘True Life: I’m Polyamorous.’”
- B. Oprah, TLC, and a variety of other well-known televised programs, as well as documentary filmmakers, continue to seek subjects for interview and featuring in upcoming films and programming.
- C. July 2009 Milwaukee local NBC affiliate profiles Young Milwaukee Polys group
- D. June 2009 S.C. Gov. Mark Sanford Scandal - News conferences and unfolding of affair story creates opportunity for Loving More press release that illustrates how such love affairs can be conducted more ethically.
- E. April 2009, Stephen Colbert interviewed Catholic legal scholar Douglas Kmiec. Kmiec argues for the state to stop trying to define marriage to exclude gays. Colbert challenged him about allowing relationship contracts among three people.
- F. March, 2009, Current TV, Al Gore’s cable TV network, featured NYC poly attorney and activist Diana Adams
- G. February 2009, WJRR, Orlando (Unenlightened jocks making unenlightened remarks)
- H. Tyra Banks Oct. 2008
- I. Fox’s Morning Show with Mike & Juliet
- J. South Africa’s Bush Radio
- K. South Africa’s Channel 3, and “3 talk with Noeleen”
- L. WE (Women’s Entertainment network)
- M. TV-Novosti (Moscow)
- N. Nederland 1 TV
- O. KPFA Radio (queer love, San Francisco)
- P. Voice of America (Worldwide internet, television and radio broadcasts)
- Q. Compartir l'amor: A triad in Spain, Entre Línies, Canal Tres TV, Barcelona
- R. El Universal TV, Mexico
- S. CBS4 TV in Miami broadcast a polyamory piece in November, 2006, some of which was filmed undercover by a journalist posing as a new PolyCentral group member. I’m told that the statement at the end of the piece that said local organizers were invited to speak on camera and they declined is untrue.
- T. Michael Baisden radio show – syndicated to the African American community
- U. Rev. Barry Lynn’s “Culture Shock” talk radio show – he’s a civil libertarian and exec director of Am United for the Separation of Church and State

- V. Oprah has promised a poly show
- W. Several poly-focused reality shows are being shopped around or are in development, including HBO and Showtime.
- X. Good morning America
- Y. Robyn Trask of Loving More does too many radio interviews to list.
- Z. CunningMinx on Q101 in Chicago with talk jocks (example of how local print article can lead to other local opportunities)
- AA. NBC's Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip (plot line)
- BB. CBS 2008 summer hit "Swingtown)
- CC. The Bad Old Days of Polyamory in the Media
  - 1. Daytime talk shows in the late 1990s – usually highly unfavorable
  - 2. Producers intentionally stirred up audience against polyamory and encouraged audience members to say disrespectful and unkind things
    - a. Sally Jesse Raphael (not good)
    - b. Leeza Gibbons (also not good)
    - c. Montel (one good, one not)
    - d. John Walsh (Good)
    - e. Penn & Teller (Good)
    - f. Dr. Keith Ablow Show
- V. Examples: Stage
  - A. All My Love, Chicago, opened in March 09
  - B. Multiple O, Madison WI, Spring 08
  - C. The Pied Pipers of the Lower East Side, NYC, 2007
  - D. Other movies too numerous to mention
- VI. Recent Examples: Film
  - A. Vicki Cristina Barcelona, Woody Allen
  - B. Poly category at CineKink film festival, Lisa Vandever, NY
- VII. Examples: Print Media
  - A. Books (last 12 months)
    - 1. Open: Love, Sex and Life in an Open Marriage – Jenny Block
    - 2. Opening Up – Tristan Taormino
    - 3. The Polyamory Handbook – Peter Benson
    - 4. The Ethical Slut, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

- B. Articles in newspapers from small towns to large cities
1. College Newspapers –
    - a. The Daily Californian (UC Berkeley)
    - b. The University Register (University of Minnesota at Morris)
    - c. The Brandeis Hoot
    - d. The Silhouette (McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario)
    - e. University of MD The Diamondback
    - f. Washington University in St. Louis's Student Life
    - g. University of Southern Miss. The Student Printz
  2. Smaller newspapers like
    - a. New York Press
    - b. Chelsea Now (NYC)
    - c. Jackson TN Sun
    - d. Austin, TX American-Statesman
    - e. Providence (Rhode Island) Journal
    - f. West Ender, Vancouver
    - g. Staten Island Advance
    - h. Raleigh NC News & Observer
    - i. New York Sun
  3. Major Newspapers like
    - a. The Oklahoman
    - b. Chicago Sun-Times
    - c. Washington Post
    - d. New York Times (Multiples)
    - e. New York Post
    - f. New York Daily News
    - g. St. Pete Times
    - h. Palm Beach Post
    - i. Seattle Times (multiples)
    - j. Hartford Current
  4. International Print Media
    - a. Denmark, Jydske Vestkysten
    - b. Mexico, Opción Bi

- c. Chile, Terra
  - d. The Globe and Mail (Canada's biggest)
  - e. National Post (Canada)
  - f. Johannesburg, SA The Sunday Times
  - g. London Times
  - h. London Daily Telegraph (Conservative)
  - i. Glasgow Herald
  - j. Shanghai Daily
  - k. El Mundo (Spain's most conservative)
  - l. El País (Spain's most liberal)
  - m. La Vanguardia (the largest newspaper in Barcelona and Catalonia)
  - n. Estadão, the second largest newspaper in Brazil
  - o. Brazil, Folha da Região
  - p. Público, Lisbon, Portugal
5. Glossy Magazines like:
- a. New Scientist
  - b. Harper's Bazaar
  - c. Glamour
  - d. Ladies Home Journal
  - e. Esquire
  - f. Redbook
  - g. Marie Claire
  - h. Cherrie (Australia)
  - i. Time (Multiples)
  - j. The Advocate
  - k. Psychology Today (twice)
  - l. Heeb Magazine (Irreverent Jewish Life and Culture)
6. Alternative/arts/entertainment papers
- a. Baltimore Citipaper
  - b. Creative Loafing, Sarasota, FL (Multiple articles)
  - c. Village Voice
  - d. New York Spirit
  - e. Style, Richmond, VA

- f. Albuquerque Alibi
  - g. Kansas City, MO The Pitch
  - h. Greensboro NC's Yes! Weekly
  - i. Toronto's Eye Weekly
  - j. Capital Xtra GLBT (Ottawa)
  - k. San Francisco Bay Guardian (many times)
  - l. Whole Life Times
  - m. Seattle's The Stranger (Mistress Matisse many poly articles)
  - n. Boston's The Bostonist
  - o. Vancouver's The Georgia Straight
  - p. New York Press
  - q. Orlando Weekly
  - r. Onkruid ("The Weed") (Amsterdam)
7. Tabloids:
- a. Sunday Observer (London)
  - b. The Guardian (London)
  - c. Closer (also UK)
  - d. New York Magazine
  - e. Daily Mail (London)
8. Advice Columnists and the Like
- a. Steve Pavlina – Online guru “Personal Development for Smart People” came out as poly and opening his marriage on his blog spring 2009
  - b. Dear Prudence – Slate.com
  - c. Miss Poly Manners online
  - d. Ask Serolynne online
  - e. The Polyamorous Misanthrope online
  - f. Control Tower (Mistress Matisse) online and print
  - g. Dan Savage (also The Stranger) online and print (Many times)
  - h. Dear Margo (who first spoke disrespectfully of poly and later published an update, which proves that writing letters to uninformed “experts” is very useful). In a recent question from an MFM threesome looking for advice of finding a second female partner, she gave reasonably good advice, making sure to sign her name followed by “Nonjudgmentally.”
  - i. Ask Dan and Jennifer – American Chronicle online newsmagazine



- j. Miss Manners, online and print (multiples)
- k. Andrea Nemerson of San Francisco Bay Guardian, online and print

#### VIII. Examples: Online Media

- A. Loving More Magazine went electronic in summer 2009
- B. ABC News.com article in June 2009, Very fair, include a heading “Polyamorists Value Fidelity”
- C. In May 2009 a reasonably friendly article on polyamorous triads appeared in the moderately prestigious Daily Beast by Abby Ellin, who regularly writes the "Vows" column for the New York Times. The Daily Beast is the news site published by Tina Brown, former editor of Vanity Fair and The New Yorker.
- D. May 2, 2009, also in the Daily Beast, an interview with Dossie Easton on the just published 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Ethical Slut.
- E. Bi-Net USA Op Ed 4/26/09, “Are Bisexuals the Glue that Holds Poly Together?”
- F. Datingish - A dating advice site for young people
- G. “Family”, prolific Producer Terisa Greenan’s poly web series of a MMF triad in Seattle with 17 episodes out since Nov. 2008 and more on the way
- H. More and more articles in GLBT online media about how polyamory is conducted in same-sex relationships of more than two (which must make same-sex marriage advocates rather uncomfortable.)
- I. MomLogic
- J. The Frisky (women’s sex and love webzine)
- K. WomenBloom.com
- L. Salon.com (highly respected and widely read general interest online magazine)
- M. Regina Lynn’s Sex Drive, her former column on Wired.com
- N. Huffington Post articles (2); also, Jenny Block writes columns there from time to time
- O. WebMD
- P. Babble.com (“the magazine and community for a new generation of parents”)
- Q. AlterNet
- R. AfterEllen.com (news on lesbian and bisexual women in entertainment and the media)
- S. Your Tango Magazine (Online women’s magazine about love and relationships); Jenny Block writes columns there from time to time
- T. ABC News.com (great article in August 07)
- U. Minx’s Polyamory Weekly Podcast
- V. Beki Rosenthal, a/k/a Miss Polyamory Podcast
- W. American Chronicle

- X. Discovery Channel News
- Y. CNN (Multiples)
- Z. American Sexuality Magazine (Published by the National Sexuality Resource Center)

#### IX. Advertising Media

- A. Calvin Klein billboard causes a stir in NYC because it features four scantily-clad models in a sexually-charged situation
- B. Remy Martin billboard ad in DC with one man and two women snuggling close.
- C. Pampers UK educational video draws analogy between how toddlers feel when they hear of a new sibling on the way and how a husband would feel being introduced to his wife's new love

#### X. Why all this interest?

- A. Media is always seeking new material
- B. Media is often interested in controversial subjects – controversy sells.
- C. Sometimes media is looking to focus at least partially on the sex, because as we all know, sex also sells.
- D. “The Strange Credibility of Polyamory”

November 27, 2007

By San Francisco queer activist and theorist Pepper Mint.

- E. Polyamory has a certain credibility these days. Media outlets interview poly people and actually present it with a positive spin....
- F. The current credibility of polyamory is in fact odd....
- G. We live in a culture that is still puritanical, where mere positive mention of masturbation is enough to have you removed from the Surgeon General's office, where infidelity is grounds for impeachment....
- H. The positive shine to polyamory does not seem to apply to other mixed-gender nonmonogamy movements, like communal marriage, swinging, open relationships, or BDSM-based nonmonogamy. The wide media exposure of polyamory does not seem to make sense, given that the actual numbers of practicing poly people are likely somewhat less than these other movements, and polyamory is not nearly as well-entrenched in the culture....

##### 1. Reasons according to Pepper:

- a. Polyamory is new(ish). While the word polyamory has been around for 18 years now, that is relatively young in terms of mixed-gender nonmonogamy movements: swinging is around 50 years old, open relationships are about 35 years old, and communal marriage has been popping up occasionally for over a century.

- b. Polyamory is theoretically disconnected from sex. This is true both of the word itself, which focuses on the love ("amory"), and in the community, where the focus tends to be on relationship conceptualizations instead of sexual freedom.
- c. Some say that spokespersons separating sex and love when speaking publicly about polyamory is buying into sex negative culture.
- d. Polyamory activist Cherie VeArd left this comment on Pepper Mint's essay:
  - i. "The day when sexually exclusive monogamous couples can feel comfortable openly talking about the hot sex they had last night in public without it having negative ramifications.. is the day when polyamorists have more flexibility to talk openly about their sexual pursuits in the media without it having potential for serious repercussions for those living polyamorously. There are far too many families risking losing custody of their children for simply being polyamorous. We don't live in a sex-positive world, and trying to make changing those attitudes a primary goal of the polyamory movement - I think - has more potential for harm than good in the more immediate future."
  - ii. Cherie goes on to say: "The fight for a sex-positive society, and the fight for more tolerance for alternative family structures are two different battles that I view as being part of the same war. Right now, I feel there should be awareness that the other battles are going on so that we can incorporate that into our strategies.. but also awareness that trying to fight the two battles simultaneously under the same banner is premature."
  - iii. (Anita) The poly community is in its infancy in terms of becoming well-enough organized and funded to effectively advocate for its own interests. Taking on advocacy for both sex-positivity and tolerance/acceptance of polyamory are indeed well beyond our reach. There *\*are\** things we can be doing now, and one is to work with the media and become skilled at enhancing the outcome of media exposure, one media event at a time.
- e. Reasons according to Alan of the [polyinthemedia.blogspot.com](http://polyinthemedia.blogspot.com):
  - i. "All the world loves a lover" (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Romantic love brings out warm feelings in onlookers, including journalists, and we spend a lot of time talking about love with earnestness and idealism.
  - ii. "Character is everything" (Andrew Carnegie and others). The poly movement and its spokespeople put great emphasis on honesty, responsible behavior, high ethical standards, self-improvement through hard relationship work, self-discipline in hard situations, owning your own shit, and the need to "Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong" (US Marine Corps).
  - iii. The straight world notices these signs of good character in our movement and spokespeople, and tends to be at least grudgingly impressed.

## XI. Robyn Trask's of LovingMore's call for unity

### A. Robyn is often asked questions by the media that imply certain assumptions.

1. One of the most common is the perception that poly people are long haired, granola eating hippies still living out their experience of the 60's,
2. That we are sex-addicted deviants.
3. Is this the perception of polyamory the community wants portrayed?
4. Does it really matter?
5. Only when the polyamory community's diversity is demonstrated will it change these preconceived ideas.

### B. Ways to help:

1. By coming to Loving More when you are asked for or are considering a media appearance. Let LM help you by negotiating on your behalf.
2. Robyn has become skilled at working with the media so that spokespeople are treated well, compensated for their time, and not ambushed.
3. LovingMore is a good place to get advice and prepare for interviews or TV appearances.
4. Let LM know that you are willing to speak to the media and what kinds of media you are willing to do. For this we need pictures and bios.
5. Let LM know when you hear of a documentary, talk show, or other media looking for poly people. Chances are Robyn has already heard from and talked to them, but let her know anyway so she can help prepare those who are to be featured.
6. It is not Robyn's or LovingMore's goal to tell people how they should handle an interview or TV appearance. Instead the offer is made simply help put your best foot forward.
7. Talk shows, reality TV, and similar shows are entertainment media out there to make money. They are not journalists – it is easy to confuse the two.
8. LM also works with print media which is generally fair and easy to work with. TV entertainment shows, OTOH, thrive on sensationalism and have their own agenda.
9. The ultimate goal is to take advantage of the opportunity, influence the content, and minimize the exploitation.
10. The polyamory community is quite diverse, from its granola eating vegetarians to its sex crazed Republicans, looking to change the possibilities in personal relationships.
11. By working together as a community, a real impact can be achieved.
12. If the polyamory community is united, the media will have to at least meet interviewees partway to get people for their needs.
13. Email LovingMore, with "media" in the subject line, at [lovingmore\(at\)lovemore\(dot\)com](mailto:lovingmore(at)lovemore(dot)com). or call 303-543-7540.

- XII. In an effort along the same lines, Joreth in Florida has created a database to be used to match trained spokespeople and community members willing to be interviewed with media projects. A list of questions for the media about their projects has also been created so interviewees better know what to expect.
- XIII. Poly soundbites on NCSF's website – useful to supply to media members as a factual FAQ.
- XIV. Questions?