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Prof to speak on LGBT issues in shadow of marriage debate

By Nikita Redkar

Even though marriage equality advocates have made progress in recent years, members of the LGBT community worry that a legislative win for gay marriage would minimize movement support for other issues the LGBT community faces.

The Texas A&M Department of Women's and Gender Studies has invited New York-based lesbian organizer and attorney, Urvashi Vaid, to discuss the future of the LGBT movement. Vaid will be discussing issues like the violence and discrimination that may continue to face the nation's LGBT population even with progress in marriage equality.

Women's and gender studies junior Emily Thompson said sociocultural change cannot be enacted through legislation and doesn't happen overnight.

"People's minds don't change just because there's a new law," Thompson said. "There is a fear that once marriage equality is achieved, it will be the end of GLBT movement and end of support given by allies."

Thompson said while she doesn't believe the demise of the LGBT movement is approaching, the state of the movement is something worth considering.

Joan Wolf, associate professor of women's and gender studies, said the punchline of Vaid's presentation will answer to what extent marriage has usurped conversation over other equally pressing issues.

"The GLBT movement has become so focused on gender that it lost sight of some

very important issues of homosexuality in American culture," Wolf said.

Thompson said LGBT violence is still a concern, and referenced the murder of a transgender woman that occurred over the weekend in California. Thompson said in light of the murder, it is imperative to address injustices against LGBT people beyond the scope of marriage.

"When people are killed for no reason other than their identity, it is definitely a necessity to explore the future of GLBT," Thompson said.

Dan Humphrey, assistant professor of film studies and women's and gender studies, said Vaid has a challenging yet optimistic vision for America as a whole.

"[Vaid] believes in connecting all people together, despite their background," Humphrey said.

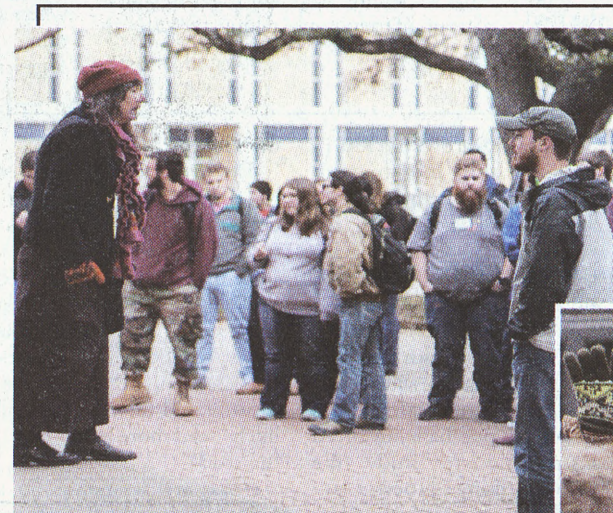
Wolf said she supports the lecture being held in College Station, remarking that Texas A&M is often exaggerated as being a closed campus.

"We have a student body with a broad range of opinions and ideological inclinations," Wolf said. "Most are quite open to having this kind of conversation."

Thompson said she hopes the lecture is an opportunity for A&M's LGBT students to feel safe and welcome.

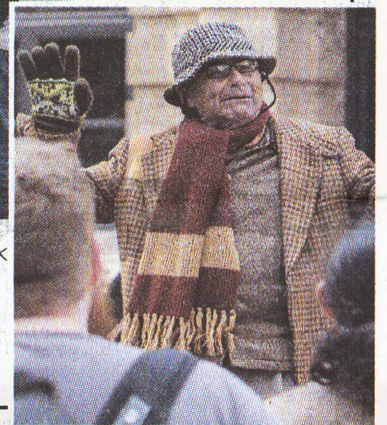
"It makes a very large difference just to hear stories they can relate to and to feel safe discussing the kinds of things they wonder about, though not necessarily out loud," Thompson said. "Sociocultural change is not always quantifiable, but no less important."

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