



### **Brett Krutzsch Receives LGBT Religious History Award**

The LGBT Religious Archives Network (LGBT-RAN) honors Brett Krutzsch with the 2014-15 LGBT Religious History Award. Krutzsch's "The Martyrdom of Matthew Shepard," was selected by the review jury to receive this award. The jury gave honorable mention to a second paper, "How to Have Christmas in an Epidemic," by Lynne Gerber.

Brett Krutzsch is a Ph.D. candidate in Religion at Temple University. He will defend his dissertation in March 2015 to Drs. Rebecca Alpert, Laura Levitt, David Harrington Watt, and Janet Jakobsen of Barnard College. He earned a B.A. from Emory University and a M.A. from New York University. Prior to starting his doctorate he was the Assistant Director of Global Programs at New York University. This year he is an Advanced Graduate Scholar at the Center for the Humanities at Temple University.

His dissertation, "Martyrdom and American Gay History: Secular Advocacy, Christian Ideas, and Gay Assimilation," investigates the role of religious rhetoric in facilitating American gay assimilation through an analysis of gay martyr discourses from the 1970s through 2014. The project principally examines the archives, narrative representations, memorials, and media depictions of Harvey Milk, Matthew Shepard, Tyler Clementi, and AIDS. Discourses of gay martyrdom reveal that secular gay advocates habitually employed Protestant Christian ideas in order to present gay Americans as similar to the dominant culture of straight Christians, a strategy that became increasingly prevalent by the end of the twentieth century after gays were blamed for spreading a plague through sexual licentiousness. "Martyrdom and American Gay History" also questions the politics of martyrdom and analyzes why some deaths have been mourned as national tragedies. Milk, Shepard, and Clementi, the three most commonly-invoked gay martyrs, represent a narrow fraction of gay Americans that only includes white, middle-class, gay men. Ultimately, the dissertation demonstrates how Protestant Christian ideas shaped and foreclosed possibilities for acceptable gay American citizens.

"The Martyrdom of Matthew Shepard" is an excerpt from one of his dissertation chapters. The paper analyzes secular gay and mainstream news archives from the first six months after Shepard died in order to make visible how his death, legacy, and related arguments for gay acceptance were framed by Christian ideas. The paper argues that Shepard's appeal was connected to constructions of him as Christ-like and as an upstanding young, Christian man. His posthumous notoriety reveals a historical moment when Christian ideas significantly shaped arguments for

American gay social integration. In turn, Matthew Shepard became an icon of the apparently ideal late twentieth-century gay citizen: a white, nonsexual, practicing Protestant.

Krutzsch is the eighth recipient of the LGBT Religious History Award that was initiated by the LGBT Religious Archives Network in 2005. It is the only award given for outstanding scholarship in this field. Krutzsch's paper was selected from among eleven papers submitted this year from scholars in the U.S., Canada, Denmark and the Netherlands. Jury members Dr. Joanne Carlson Brown, Dr. Heather Rachelle White and Dr. Bernie Schlager described Krutzsch's work as "outstanding analysis of material and sources; interesting thesis and topic with original thought not just reporting what happened or what was said."

Noting that this year's collection of papers was the highest overall quality ever submitted for this award, the jury decided to recognize a second paper with honorable mention. Lynne Gerber's "How to Have Christmas in an Epidemic" uses one moment in the MCC San Francisco congregation's struggle with AIDS, Christmas Eve 1989, to analyze the political and theological problems the congregation and its leadership faced in this period and how it sought to address them by drawing on a combination of liberation theology, progressive politics, and talk of angels and miracles. Gerber is Visiting Scholar at the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, University of California—Berkeley.

Submissions for next year's LGBT Religious History Award must be postmarked or received electronically by December 1, 2015. Complete information on submission guidelines for the award can be found at: [www.lgbtran.org/historyaward.aspx](http://www.lgbtran.org/historyaward.aspx).

The LGBT Religious Archives Network, a project of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion, is a ground-breaking venture to preserve the history of LGBT religious movements. It has two primary purposes: a) to assist LGBT religious groups and leaders in preserving their records in appropriate repositories; and b) providing an electronic information clearinghouse on LGBT religious collections and other historical source materials on its web site: [www.lgbtran.org](http://www.lgbtran.org).

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