

## Psychoanalysts Hold Annual Conference; Discuss Removal of GID Diagnosis

The American Psychoanalytic Association (APSAA) held its 93<sup>rd</sup> annual conference in San Francisco the week of June 23-27, 2004, to correspond with the city's Gay Pride Week celebrations.

One of the workshops held on June 27<sup>th</sup> is "What Is Our Psychoanalytic View of Gender Today?" with a panel chaired by Dr. Joseph D. Lichtenberg, a founder of the Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy.

The panel is to consist of Dr. Judith Fingert Chused, a psychiatrist at the George Washington University School of Medicine; Dr. Kenneth Corbett, a writer on gay issues and a gay activist; and Dr. Adrienne Harris, editor of *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*.

Dr. Corbett is quoted in the Lesbian & Gay New York newsletter in 1997 as supporting the removal of Gender Identity Disorder from the DSM as it relates to children. According to Dr. Corbett, "I think it's a very problematic diagnosis. I think pain can collect around gender, but I think we haven't been careful enough to distinguish the pain from the gender. We also have not been careful enough to distinguish the politics and the history that inform our ideas about gender—in the case, specifically about effeminacy."

Dr. Corbett has created a theory called "proto-gay childhoods" and argues that some adult homosexuals may have exhibited childhood behaviors that are distinct from heterosexual or bisexual childhoods. According to Corbett, "The diagnostic category of GID is sufficiently problematic that it certainly seems possible that at least some proto-gay childhoods are mistaken for GID."

Panel member Dr. Adrienne Harris is an editor of *Disorienting Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Reappraisals of Sexual Identities*, as well as numerous books and papers on feminism and the peace movement. Harris was a contributing writer to *Gender In Psychoanalytic Space*, which was reviewed by UCLA Lecturer Robert Samuels in the *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society* in March, 2003.

Samuels quotes Dr. Harris as stating that gender is a contradictory core experience that often transforms before our eyes. She urges psychoanalysts to develop an open theory of gender that can change over time. According to Dr. Harris, gender is merely a "necessary fiction." Another contributing writer to *Gender In Psychoanalytic Space* refers to gender as a "false truth." ■