1995

H&H Committee Mid December Meeting Details

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Minutes for Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism  
December 14, 1995

1. Meeting was convened at 12:05pm.

2. Attendance: Gary Burkholder, Bill Bartels, Holly Nichols, Carla Pickering, Marie Rudd, Gwendolyn A Spencer, Andrew Winters, Jacque Lynne Washkwich

3. Minutes for the December 1 meeting were approved.

4. Transgender Issue  Gary presented comments from Julie (a transgender URI student) concerning inclusion of transgender in the title. The first three paragraphs were read (this is a direct statement of her text): “I think that a lot of queer groups are on a bandwagon right now to change names to be more inclusive about issues that are very important, but many of the groups doing this really have no clue about these issues. So I have mixed feelings about this. While it is a good idea to take a hard look at these issues, I fear that some groups are just changing the name just to say “look, we’ve done this” but not moving any further in terms of educating itself about transgender issues.

However, in the long run, none of this really matters - what a name change will do is to tell transgendered people that we are welcome to join the group and that it is there for us. This will, in turn, have the effect that when one of us joins we will feel entitled to have our issues addressed and the group will be forced to deal with these issues one way or another”

The text in its entirety will be made available at the next meeting

Next, Gwendolyn presented (I will do my best to capture the conversation between Gwendolyn and the committee. I apologize for any omissions, they are not intentional. Also, I don’t use quotes. Unless otherwise noted, the comments presented are Gwendolyn’s). She stated that the name change doesn’t really matter. A group can embrace issues of transgender issues, but the name doesn’t have to be reflective of this. There are pros and cons. The major “con” is that transgender is an issue of gender, not sexuality. Gwendolyn’s response to this is that without gender, there would be no sexuality. There has been much discrimination against transgender people inside and outside of the gay community. It is a problem in San Francisco right now.

Transgender issues are the same as gay issues. Minnesota is the only state to include “transgender” in their civil rights bill. In Rhode Island, transgender people are not protected. RI removed this portion of the bill to help bolster its chances for passage. This issues are there, they are real, and they affect drag queens and kings, cross-dressers, and female impersonators. Transgender is perceived by a lot of people to be the same as gay. There is a fine line between gay and transgendered. In the past year, 2 known transgendered people have been killed. In Rhode Island, there has been only one, and that happened in late 1992 or 1993.

On experience at RIC College: Gwendolyn was the only openly transgendered person at RIC. There were others, but they were not out. GLOBE (RIC’s equivalent to the GLBA) tended to become exclusively gay and lesbian, at the exclusion of transgender
and even of bisexuals. For the most part, Gwendolyn said she didn’t have a bad experience at RIC. She lost only one acquaintance. She became transgendered during her time at school, so professors knew her as both genders. She got no hate letters, and professors were generally good about it. She said that GLOBE couldn’t handle the transgender issue. One male said: "Why do you want to be a woman? I like being a man.” A female told her: “You have had male privilege, you are not like us.”

Bill asked about lobbying by transgendered community for rights. Gwendolyn said that transgender makes up about 10% of the gay community, and there are about 1000 transgender people in RI, 100 or so she personally knows. Those who participate in organizations do so outside of the state, for fear of loss of job and family. People don’t realize that transgender involvement in the gay civil rights movement was significant until the late 70’s. They are always at parades, demonstrations, etc. Female-to-male transgender is more accepted than male-to-female transsexual: the first is considered a “step up” and the latter a “step down”. People also don’t realize that transgender men were the ones being beat up and put into paddy wagons at Stonewall, the macho men just looked on. The gay community, over time, began kicking out extremes, including transgender. This is when transgendered people began to organize and lobby more for themselves. Gwendolyn emphasized that there is room in the civil rights movement for everyone, we are all fighting for the same thing. In the March on Washington in 1993, there was a 40 person contingent. Transgender were not allowed to turn right into the mall. Gwendolyn overheard one of the marshall’s state that “We don’t want to confuse people”. At Stonewall in NYC, initially, no transgender were allowed to march. Then, to allay criticism, it was decided that they could march, but without banners. When some transgendered legal people threatened the organizers, the transgender community was allowed to march with banners. In Texas, which is currently trying to pass civil rights legislation, the transgender community rallied, and forced the GLB community to listen to their concerns. HRCF refused to include transgender inclusion in their statement. Transgender reps were not allowed time to testify. Gwendolyn felt that, on a national level, things are coming around, but it is slow, and she realizes that change is slow.

Carla commented that, even if we don’t include “Transgender” in the title of the brochure, the Committee needs to look at the issue.

Bill commented about the tradeoff between the principle of equality and the practical politics involved in passing legislation. Gwendolyn acknowledged that the transgender issue tends to damage the agendas for civil rights legislation. In Rhode Island, 2 house reps told William Fitzpatrick and Frank Gashon: “If transgender wording is not excluded, the bill would be killed before it even gets to the floor.” Gwendolyn is not happen about what happened, but understands why it did. She said that many are mistrustful of the Alliance because of what happened in the House during debate on the bill.

Andrew commented that transgender people are still targets of heterosexism and homophobia.

Gwendolyn stated that transsexuals are a small part of a larger transgender community.
Marie wanted to know how we should include transgender in our organizations. Gwendolyn made the analogy that transgender people are today where gay and lesbian people were in the 50's and 60's. They feel they have no voice, that they have no say in any of the issues. 90% of the gay community feels that transgendered people are fetishists. What we can offer is a place where transgender people can go and where they would feel welcome.

There was some brief discussion about how the GLBA and H&H committee could work together to educate ourselves in this issue.

5. It was decided that the decision for including "Transgender", as well as the issue concerning whether to include committee members as personal contacts in cases of homophobia, should be decided at the first meeting of the winter semester, when more people are there to engage in the debate. Gary will make all changes to the brochure with those two exceptions.

6. Jacque drafted a response letter to the Journal concerning the placement of an article on gay and lesbian teenagers between two articles on AIDS. She wondered if we as a committee wanted to submit the letter. Because of the attendance, we did not feel we could make a decision for the whole committee. Individuals interested will sign on the letter, and Jacque will mail it to the Journal, with copies to Gordon Smith and the Front Page editor.

7. Bill is going to look into getting a larger room.

8. The next meeting is January 19, 1995, 12:00.

9. Meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.
Attendance 12/14/91

Henry Nichols
Carlos Pickering
Mara Hadd
Gwendolyn A. Spencer (guest)
Andrew Vincent
Bill Bailey

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Next
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Transgenders
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transgendered people ha
that happened in late 1995.
On experience at i
person at RIC. There wen
the GLBA) tended to beco
Meeting convened @ 12:05
Minutes approved.

- Transgender: Victor did not make it (weather).
  - Antrei provided handout on Transgender.
  - Gwendolyn Spencer (Victor)
  - Gay read statement from Transgender person
  - Prompt: The statement will be distributed next Monday.
  - Name change doesn't really matter.
  - Embrace issue — Co-Context, but don't see any handout.

- Should have been changed.
  - Con: Gender vs Sexuality
  - But: Why, why would have sex or gender?

- Need outside gay community
  - Problem in St. Paul.

- Transgender: Same as gay issue
  - Minnesota and state are. "Man" vs state protection.
  - RT: Transgender not protected (P? removed this from)
  - Issue there, issue real.
  - Affected: Drag que, lgbt, crossdressers, etc., impacted.
Transgender perceived as big gay by a lot of people.
Their fine line between gay & transgender.

Last year, 2 trans killed inledo.
Only 2 in RI, late 52-53.

Exp @ RI College
6. was only open transgender at RI.
There were others, but they weren't out.
Group became exclusive (64).
For most part, didn't have too much trouble.
For acquaintance, had to make promises like good about it.

Globe couldn't handle it.
Male: "Why do you want to be a woman, I like being a man."
Female: "You have had male privileges, you are not like us."

Police on X6 Lobby for right.
-X6 in 1970s & Gay Community
-1990s & RI
Know 100 personally.

Those who participate in orgs do so out of support of love of the family.
Transgender fight gay rights movement up until last 70's.

They're always there.

(assuming role of opposite gender, are you gay on agenda?)

Female/male accepted more readily than male/female in GLBT community (Outsideedges, Outsidegays)

Stonewall: Transgendered when the riots began. But it's not a Big deal.

From lags to males men. Just labels.

Transgender fight gay community kicked out extremes

started working on their own.

From a civil right for everyone, to an fight for the same thing.

1993: Marches West - 40 person contingent.

Marchers not allowed to continue on to the mall. Overhead one say: "We don't want to confuse people".

Stonewall no hundred will march at all.

This is a march "w/banners, after threatened legal action."
HRCP refused to include Transgender inclusive.
16 reps weren't allowed time to testify.

National trend: They are compared, but it is slow.

Carla: Even if we don't include it in the table, we need to look at the issue.

Full exemplary equality for all vs practical politics.

Gary: Issue is, at damage, aggra. Someone to include.

In RE: No X6 person asked to testify.
2 in home of Rep. 4th, Kelly Fritzpatrick. If X6
ready, not excluded. Would be killed before it even
gets where I am. Not happy with what happened,
but I understand why it was done.

Many mistrust full of Transan because it's (what happened
in PA)
XG, still susceptible to targets. Heterosexual,

Transgender small community. In transgender community.

College students. How do we use? Should include this now.

Given XG now, where gay people were in the 50s-60s.

To feel safe, they need queer anything, ally voice.

How should we as a committee deal with XG community?

Gay: 90% perception. Trans community: XG as fetish people.

What can we do? Some places to go, where there are.

Other, whether? Where they would feel welcome.

 Might get bigger now.

I think that a lot of queer groups are on a bandwagon right now to change names to be more inclusive about issues that are very important, but many of the groups doing this really have no clue about these issues.

So I have mixed feelings about this. While it's a good idea to take a hard look at these issues, I fear that some groups are just changing the name just to say "look, we've done this" but not moving any further in terms of educating itself about transgender issues.

However, in the long run, none of this really matters-- what a name change will do is to tell transgendered people that we are welcome to join the group and that it is there for us. This will, in turn, have the effect that when one of us joins we will feel entitled to have our issues addressed and the group will be forced to deal with these issues one way or another.

So, basically, I think it's a good idea to change the name, regardless of what else happens. However, you should all be prepared for the fact that other changes might follow. This more or less obligates you to make sure that you include at least one speaker/workshop on transgender issues when you have a weekend-long forum. It also means you should occasionally have in-group discussions about gender issues. I'd be glad to help facilitate or arrange such a discussion sometime in the spring term if people are interested-- I've been lecturing on gender issues since '93 and educating myself on them since October of 1990, when I first came out to myself about my transsexualism.

Oh, as a side note: This is by no means uncontroversial in the transsexual community. While some transsexuals regard themselves as queer or radical sex activists, a good many just want to fold themselves into the mainstream of society after their operations. This isn't all unlike the split between groups such as queer nation and the assimilationists in the gay rights movement in the late 60's/early 90's. Obviously, the assimilationists, transsexuals do not particularly care for the idea of being included in queer groups. But I don't personally think that this should be a problem. People who feel that way would never come to your group to begin with. The name change isn't for them. It's for those of us who feel marginalized, and for yourselves as well. There's a lot that various queer communities could learn from one another and we devote a lot of energy towards infighting. But that's just part of life-- I'm just thrilled that we finally are large enough to no longer be the fringe group, but instead to have fringe groups of our own.

--Julie