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H&H Committee Mid January Meeting Details

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Minutes for the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism
January 19, 1996

1. Attendance: Gary Burkholder, Brent Rheinhardt, Adria Evans, Al Lott, Albert Anderson, Melissa Lovering, Carolina Tejera, Brie Taylor, Wally Sillanpoa, Marie Rudd, Dana Shugar, Nancy Azar, Jacque-Lynne Washkwich, Gwendolyn Spencer, Amy Black, Andrew Winters, Bob Conklin, Mary Cappello, Bill Bartels.
2. Minutes for the December 14, 1995 meeting were approved
3. Update on the Symposium: Committee members were given a list of proposals received to date. A letter has been sent to all submitting stating that the initial review was complete, that we were unable to provide travel expenses, that housing would be provided wherever possible, and that people should contact us by February 1 to confirm continuing interest in the conference. We have received 1100.00 in commitments for cosponsorship to date, with Richard Katzoff, SEC still outstanding.
4. Due to complications with Joan Nestle's recovery, she has requested to postpone her speaking engagement until later in the semester. The committee decided that Tuesday, April 2 would be a good night and would work in conjunction with the upcoming symposium. Dana will get back to Joan to see if this evening is satisfactory. She is also going to check with Women's Studies and Honor's Colloquium to ensure there is no conflict
5. The committee agreed to include contact people in event of harassment, when a person might want to speak with someone who can help them to deal with the incident. Jeannie Powell, Andrew Winters, and Bill Bartels agreed to be those people. Their names and numbers will appear in the brochure.
6. There was much further discussion about the Transgender Issue. (Again, I apologize for any omissions that may occur. I will attempt to transcribe as accurately as possible the text of the discussion. If anyone feels that what I wrote is not accurate, or misrepresented what was intended, please bring it up for correction to the minutes before approval at the next meeting.)

Bill: There are two issues I see. First, should we include the term transgender on the front of the brochure. (Bill read a quote from Julie from the previous minutes concerning being accepted in groups on campus.) The question is, are GLB groups truly welcoming? Second, University policy on non-discrimination doesn't include transgender. Since we are a subcommittee of the Affirmative Action committee, do we have the authority to change our statement of purpose to include transgender without pursuing this through the administration?

Wally: Sexual orientation can include transgender. It is not a good idea to start with the administration. If the group agrees that we should include transgender, then so be it.

Jacque: I remind you from the discussion last time that Gwendolyn made the statement that it is an issue not of sexuality, but of gender, which is included in the university non-discrimination policy.

Mary: We should use this opportunity to set a precedent.

Bill: Then it is agreed that we can make that decision on our own. Now, issue 1

Dana: Is our hesitancy centered on a lack of education and understanding? Our goal is educating the campus. If we are hesitant because we don't know, we should educate ourselves and that can be an ongoing process (through symposiums, etc).

Bill: My concern is that other gay and lesbian groups will not be welcoming to transgender community.

our decision - is it contingent on what other groups decide?

Bill: Mary: The brochure represents all groups. Bill requested to hear from people in the GLBA on this issue.

Al A: Last year, this issue was discussed, specifically concerning revising the name. We decided not to change the name. The GLBA was a name that was starting to become known on campus, and we felt it was not appropriate to change the name at that time. I think that lack of education on transgender issue also affected the outcome of that decision. I personally have no problem welcoming transgender people in the organization. I don't understand all of the issues, goals, and politics of that community. I think there are significant commonalities with gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

Bob: I have not experienced anything that would indicate to me that the group would not be welcoming to transgender people. I haven't detected any feelings or opinions that would indicate that transgender people would not be welcomed.

Al L: Are we dependent on the decision of other groups?

Mary: We are advertising all other groups, we are trying to get consensus on this issue with other groups listed in the brochure.

Dana: We seem to be off track. We should just tell other groups what the brochure will read, then groups can agree or not agree to be listed in it. Representatives need to go back to their own groups, the group needs to debate the issue and make a decision for themselves on how they want to handle it.

Al A: We (GLBA) are meeting on Tuesday, we can discuss the issue and make a decision on it then.
Wally: The committee needs to settle this business. What is our stand? We have political issues: Do we wish to include and make welcome transgender people? Don't wait for the other groups to decide. Good luck to the other groups, but we need to decide on this issue for this group.

Bill: Bill read the statement of purpose.

Jacque: Emphasis seems to be on sexual orientation.

Wally: we need to take the lead here - we have an opportunity to provide some sense of leadership on this issue.

Bill: University policy uses sex vice gender. Policy itself is outdated.

Andrew: As GLBT folks, all victimized by the same system of oppression. Same misunderstandings, fear, we need to acknowledge this as a reality. We must all take a stand against oppression, bigotry, we need to raise our voice. It is an educational process as well. If we start from a place of minimal risk, we are making a big mistake. (Someone here made a statement about how gay, lesbian and bisexual people distance themselves from transgender community).

Mary: From the popular interpretation, all gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are transgendered people. We are seen as different. It is internalized homophobia that causes the tensions between GLB people and transgender people.

Bill: Are we ready to take a vote?

Wally: We are an educational committee, we educate the campus as well as internally, ourselves. We need to be educated in the presence of transgender people.

Jacque: We should really think about the consequences if we do NOT include transgender.

Dana: Can we schedule a special meeting to discuss this issue further? (Some discussion back and forth about having another meeting to continue the debate)

Bill: Are we ready to decide now?

Dana: I feel rushed. We meet, begin the discussion, get over inhibitions on this issue, then the hour is up. We need a longer meeting time.

Adria: When I got the minutes for the last meeting, I was hit with a thought: Do we include transgender because they are like gays and lesbians in the 60 s? This opened my mind. I would like to have something to read before that meeting. I don t know the issues. What is the real problem? I just don t know. I would like to read at least one good article.

Jacque: What are the consequences if we don t include transgender? We are the voice for outsider groups. If it doesn t happen here, where will transgender people find their voice?

Brie: I agree with Dana. It is not a simple problem. Transgender people need help too, but the problem needs to be clarified (in response to Adria).

Wally: I have 3 points to make. First, for clarification, what are the goals of transgender people? GLBT people have a common oppressor. The goal is to eliminate this oppression. Second, this discussion has been going on for the past ten years in the GLB community. All of us must be at least somewhat aware of the issue. Third, we discussed this last time, this time - how many times do we need to discuss this? I don t want to wait for someone to read something about it. I don t give anyone the opportunity to read something when I demand rights for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. I don t see a need to wait for other groups. We need to decide now.

Mary: I don t really feel like I know enough to feel comfortable voting right now.

Andrew: For everyone s information, there is a program on 20/20 tonight about transgender in the workplace.

Bill: Let s ask our guest if she has any comments about the discussion.

Gwendolyn: We have the same common oppressor, and gay and lesbian people are also our oppressors. I don t know how many of you know Leslie Feinberg, she has had difficulties. She has a foot in both camps, as a lesbian and as a transgender person. And Louis Sullivan, a female to male transgender person, who is no longer alive. We face the same oppressor: heterosexual community at large. Transgender people are the only people in this state who are offered no legal protections. They have no legal rights. Someone could say that they didn t discriminate because they were gay, but because they were transgender.

Wally: Transgender people feel discriminated by gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Our committee should NOT be part of this.

Gwendolyn: A national gay and lesbian legal organization put out a statement encouraging gay and lesbian groups to include transgender people in their names and in their activities.

Bill: We are out of time. Shall we compromise, and take one more session on this?

I have no problem voting now, but I feel the discomfort in the room.

an: I can vote now.

ry: I can vote now, but we should agree that the discussion needs to continue.

na: I just felt we were rushing to get to the vote.

I: Are people ready to vote?

an: Are we voting to include transgender in our statement of purpose, or to include it in the statement of purpose? If we include it in our statement, we can include it in the brochure.

I: All those in favor of including transgender in the brochure? (17 Vote yes, 2 abstain)

ria: I abstain only because I feel we are taking on a new matter, I am wondering what I do now, should we be taking this to the state legislature now? It is a much bigger step than just changing the name.

From the discussion and vote, transgender will be included in the statement of purpose and on the brochure.

Meeting adjourned 1:00pm. Next meeting will be February 2, 1996, Room 202, Memorial Union.

lot part of the minutes: I would like to recommend Leslie Feinberg s book, Stone Butch Blues , to any person interested in understanding the world of a transgender person. The book is incredibly powerful and says more than a hundred articles ever could).