

# **LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA**

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## **Documents Online**

**Title:** Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities Meeting Minutes

**Date:** October 20, 1979

**Location:** LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES  
238 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

MINUTES

October 20, 1979  
Pittsburgh, PRIDE '79

1. Update on the Alleghany Voluntary Deviate Intercourse Case: David Donaldson  
David described the case in detail for non-council people attending the Pride '79 Conference. Briefs will be submitted by the end of December. The case may be argued in April. The case is going to the Supreme Court not the Superior Court. There was general discussion of the case especially of support from various churches.
2. Department of Welfare Update: Dr. Mary Cochran  
Dr. Cochran described the history of our activity with the DPW. The Secretary is expected to approve an internal task force on gay issues along with a list of suggested members. Council members will be notified when the task force is approved. The three priorities of the task force are producing a report on discrimination against sexual minority persons in the Department, developing training for all DPW staff, and dealing with complaints from citizens about discrimination.
3. Department of Aging: Tony Silvestre for Dr. Ken George  
Dr. George met with the new Secretary of Aging and discussed issues of sexuality as they impact on older people. The Secretary invited Ken to draw up a curriculum for training Departmental staff. In addition, meetings on the needs of older people are continuing in Philadelphia. A number of projects are being planned. They will affect people in Philadelphia and in the state.
4. Announcements:  
Helen Seger, Executive Director of the Women's Commission announced that the commission is looking into sexual harassment of women at work. They will be documenting the problem. Cases should be sent to Helen Seger, 512 Finance Building, Harrisburg, 17120.  
Mary Nancarrow is organizing the Council's committee on employment.  
State Police Commissioner Dunn has said that he is unable to meet with us at this point. We will pursue this matter.
5. Panel: RACISM, SEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA Brenda Fraser, Tony Henry and Louise Oncley  
The speakers were very well received; the consensus on the part of members was that the issues raised deserve careful consideration by our Council. It was agreed that the issue will be the focus of our December meeting. Louise Oncley's presentation and a report by Tony Henry are attached.

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NB THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL IS ON FRIDAY EVENING AT 7PM AT THE FRIENDS CENTER, ROOM 32 AT 15th STREET AND CHERRY STREET IN CENTER CITY PHILADELPHIA, DEC. 7.  
WE ARE ASKING THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE.

RACISM, SEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA

PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SEXUAL MINORITIES

OCTOBER 20, 1979 - PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

BY

LOUISE G. ONCLEY

I'd like to take this opportunity to look at racism, sexism and homophobia in a functional sense. That is, how do racism, sexism and homophobia function in our society?

First--A couple of conclusions up front:

1. Racism, sexism and homophobia are designed to function as control mechanisms--To establish and preserve the existing power elite.
2. What is at stake here is a question of legitimacy of power in what is supposed to be a pluralistic, classless society.

Lets look at the last conclusion first. "Us" and "them" have been traditional dichotomies for a long time. These dichotomies have always served to reinforce a power base. Are you a Greek? (Hooray for the good guys!) or a Pagan? (Boo!) Are you a Christian? or a Heathen? Are you a Jew? or a Gentile?

Now--Will the real men please raise your hands?

That is the "us" and "them" of today--real men are the group that is eligible for power.

There seems to be some evidence that the first "Us--Them" distinction--in the political power context--was men and women. Some social analysts maintain that that distinction as a political (power) distinction formed the conceptual base for the others that followed. Oppression of women became the model for group oppression generally.

There is, at least, evidence that when our own great nation needed a legal model for the status of slaves--in a country whose ideal was that "all men are created equal" and have a God-given right to the pursuit of happiness--it was

difficult to explain how slaves could be excluded. So, they turned to the model of women (and children) and the concept was that of "chattel."

(A side note on language--chattel comes from the same root as "cattle" and "husbandry" is the management of farm animals--and, of course, wives.)

Anyway, a slave could be a slave, because he/or she had no more legal standing than a wife.

Only real men are entitled to power. And that power, historically, is enforced and perpetuated with all the tools at hand--the law, threats of violence, economic control, emotional control and, the most important sub-structure--The Family.

Ah, the family. The basic social structure. Counted by the Census Bureau in "households"--each with a "head." (You gotta know who's the real man there.) The family, where children are taught who's "us" and "who's" them. Where they're taught to obey, and conform to behavioral norms, sex roles. Where those who "step out of line" are punished, even if their offense is not illegal--punished by disapproval or even violence by those they are most intimate with.

And here's a key point--not only women are controlled by the family structure and the doctrine of the real man. White males are controlled, too. They get to be real men in their family even if they can't be powerful any place else. And they pay for this privilege--by working at crummy jobs to support the family that makes them real men.

Because the family is so important, supporting the family is conscious, intentional public policy. And not just any family. Read the analysis of any proposed law, tax, policy, economic change, etc. They always talk about the effect on "the average family." The mythical "average" or "typical" family for which social policy is designed is composed of an employed (for wages) husband, a non-wage-earning wife, and 2 children at home. This pattern, far from being typical, represents only about 6% of all families. To the extent that your personal living arrangements differ, you lose.

Housing codes, and the housing industry, insist that we live in boxes

designed for the "typical family." Just try to find an apartment for three adults, each of whom wants an equal-size bedroom, or four apartments with a shared kitchen. Or try to build such housing--if you can get past the housing codes, you won't get financing.

And why is it so much simpler to get married than to get divorced?

The Establishment Want You In a Family.

The Myth of the family is drummed into us from all sides. If you're not in the right kind of family, you're one of them. And, conversely, since minorities, women, and gays are them, obviously we are not in families.

If the facts do not support that last statement, it must be supported by myth and law.

We're all familiar with the myth of the non-existence of black families, perpetuated by sociologists (mostly white male) who study its "pathology." We hear the myth of the "women's libbers" who are "anti-family" and the feminist movement which is responsible for the break-up of the American family. Gays, of course, (so the story goes), avoid families entirely and spend their lives cruising. Ironically, the lesbian mother who wants to keep her kids, finds that all the legal force that the "pro-family" structure can muster, are stacked against her.

To some extent, we all buy into these myths. And we buy into the underlying myth, that our decisions about our family structure are individual choices, rather than limited choices imposed by the powers that be.

Before I go on, let me spend just a minute on another element of social control, one which has been mentioned earlier--violence. The particular form of violence I want to talk about is rape. This is a common thread in racism, sexism, and homophobia, but for each group there is a different myth. The myth of the black man as rapist, the myth of the gay man as rapist (but since he's not a real man, he rapes children). And the threat that women of all races,

gay or straight, have learned since they were children--that they will be victims of rape if they don't have a real man to protect them. (Of course 25-30% of married women are beaten by their real men--in California 1/3 of female murder victims have been killed by their husbands.)

So--real men are entitled to power. Women, obviously, are not real men. Black men are not real men, originally because they were chattel, and now because of their mythological absence from the family. Gay white men, however, are the worst--they could have been real men, but because of (check one) choice, sickness, or sin, they are not. In fact, the myth goes, they are all effeminate.

What happens in all this to straight white men who are not part of the power elite? They buy into these myths because--

--They'd rather identify as real men than as "them."

--They get to be real men in their families if they work hard.

--They can get a higher hourly wage and more job security than minorities, women, or gays (which should take their minds off the fact that they'll never make \$200,000 a year).

--Someday, their son could be President.

Thus, it is not just minorities, women, and gays who are victims of racism, sexism and homophobia. It is the 97% of us who are not part of the power elite.

The message is "Know Thy Place."

Furthermore, when any of us begin questioning the legitimacy of the power of the 3% who run our lives, they set us fighting against each other. Blacks versus women (who gets the dispensable job they have targeted for affirmative action?), Black men versus white powerless men (e.g. The Weber Case), and Jews versus Blacks.

A "trouble-maker" from one group is associated with another group--all feminists are Dykes, non-black civil rights supporters are nigger-lovers (look what happened to Jean Seberg).

And we're all "Commie wierdo preverts."

Which brings me to the major issue. There are no personal, or one-group solutions. Racism, sexism and homophobia are not separate problems which we can rectify. They are requirements of the system and must be perpetuated if the 3% is to maintain its power.

Any group which thinks it can "make it" on its own, any group which plays "our problems are more important than yours," any group which preaches separatism, cannot develop effective strategy.

All that such groups do is to buy in to the strategy of the power elite.

What, then, must we do? It seems to me that the approach is two-fold.

We must work with ourselves to be sure that we understand what's going on, so we don't buy the myths, about our own or other groups.

And we can take on the power elite with all the tools at hand. We can fight with money, with the law, with our voices. But we must fight together.

We will never be real men. We don't want to be real men. But if we work together--We can define our own choices. We can develop effective strategies. We can have power. We can be free.

# Third World lesbians and gays building coalition

(Continued from page 5)

tional gay youth organization which includes both Third World and white youths.

The presence of about a half dozen participants from Mexico gave the conference an international flavor as attention was turned to the desperate plight of gays in most Latin American countries. Concern was expressed about the treatment of gays in some socialist countries, such as Cuba, where there is still hostility to gay lifestyles.

The concern of the participants for gays in Latin America was a motivating factor in the decision to hold the 1981 conference in Mexico City. The 1980 conference will be held in San Francisco.

The conference was a busy one with five general sessions, seven workshop periods, ethnic and gender caucuses, two periods of entertainment and a disco, in addition to the national march. Although the limited amount of time allotted to each activity in the crowded schedule was frustrating, participants utilized even the small amounts of free time for more meetings and planning sessions.

The high quality of the workshops reflected the time and careful planning that the workshop leaders put into developing them. Among them were such diverse topics as "The Role of the Homosexual in the Black Family," "Gay Teenagers," "Gay American Indian Information," "The Role of the Third World Lesbians and Gay Men

at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions," "Chicano Identity," "Alcoholism," "Surviving in Rural and Isolated Areas," "Racism in the Lesbian and Gay Community" and "Traveling Gay History Show: A Third World Gay History Project."

The General Sessions featured outstanding speakers, including black lesbian poet Audre Lorde and a representative of Washington, D.C., Mayor Marion Barry, who was unable to appear due to a last minute change in the conference schedule.

Washington, D.C., is the most advanced city in the nation in recognizing and protecting the rights of lesbians and gays. The speaker representing the mayor spoke of the city's strong human rights laws which protect gays from discrimination in housing, employment and public services and of how the city is deliberately placing openly lesbian and gay persons on key city commissions, including the police advisory board. The city is working with gay organizations to prepare a short film about homosexuals to use for public education. There will soon be posters appearing in the city's buses and subways proclaiming: "Someone in Your Life is Gay," as a result of recent court decisions. One person from San Francisco asked if Mayor Barry might not be persuaded to call their mayor to suggest some of these actions for San Francisco.

Among the entertainers per-

forming at the conference were The Naps, a group of women poets, dancers and musicians from New York's Salsa Soul Sisters; Blackberri, a guitar/blues singer; gospel singer Delores Berry; poet Ron Morgan; The American Indian Rhythm Band and many others.

There was a high sense of excitement throughout the conference engendered not only by the discussions being held but also by the very idea of this first national gathering of Third World gays. One Asian American woman stated this was the first time that she had ever been in a place with more than one other Asian lesbian. The determination to build organizations and communications networks which would strengthen the contacts made at the conference was clear.

Participants spoke of issues of special concern to Third World peoples on which they should jointly work. These included increasing the political involvements of Third World gays so that politicians would have to openly support their positions, the abuse of Third World gays by the criminal justice system and prisons, and the need for greater projection of Third World people in the gay press.

Participants took note of the special sensitivity of Third World peoples to the problems of oppressed groups. They called attention to the fact that of the 17 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, 14 are co-sponsors of the gay civil rights bill, H.R. 2074. There

were also expressions of disappointment that some Third World and radical groups still view homosexuality as a sickness and refuse to openly support the civil rights of gays. Participants recognized that they have a responsibility to make themselves visible as openly gay active members of such groups and to educate the other members on gay issues.

On the morning of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, about 200 of the conference participants marched from the Harambee House Hotel through the black community to the national march assembly area on the Mall. Along the route they chanted such slogans as, "Say it Loud, I'm Gay and I'm Proud" and "Third World Liberation."

As one might expect at an event as large as the national march, there were problems. When the conference participants reached the march assembly area they realized that the national march organizers had planned for Third World women to lead the national march and be followed by white women. No specific plans had been made for the rest of the Third World group. Several Third World men protested being split from the Third World women in the march line-up. A number of the women were in agreement and refused to go to the front of the march if the men could not march with them. As the march began, the now-mixed Third World group tried to fall in

behind the lead group of Third World women but were stopped by the marshalls. They waited until the white women passed and then the physically challenged (handicapped) and then marched as a Third World contingent in the parade.

In a conference session held on Monday, after the national march, participants complained about several aspects of the march. They decided to send an open letter to the march organizers calling attention to the fact that most of the Third World speakers and entertainers were placed towards the end of the rally, when people were leaving and noting the lack of Third World presence in some of the press conferences and other media events planned by the march organizers.

The National Coalition of Black Gays (NCBG) has committed itself to following through on the conference by compiling and distributing lists of the participating organizations and the new groups formed at the conference and resolutions presented at the conference. Further information can be secured by contacting Delores Berry or Billy Jones, Co-Executive Directors of NCBG, at P.O. Box 548, Columbia, Maryland, 21045 (telephone number: (202) 797-8877).

(Tony Henry is a member of the Third World Coalition of the American Friends Service Committee.)



# Report on the Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference

by Tony Henry

Over 600 Third World gays and their supporters from 39 states and Mexico gathered in Washington, D.C. Oct. 12-15 for the first Third World Lesbian/Gay Conference. Participants in the conference committed themselves to building a national network Third World lesbians and gay organizations and meeting again in 1980 and 1981.

The conference coincided with the Oct. 14 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. That massive march and rally drew over 100,000 people from all 50 states and several foreign countries. The national march was led by a delegation of Third World lesbians and included a section of Third World Conference participants. All the literature published by organizers of the march announced the Third World Conference.

Participants in the conference were enthusiastic about the meeting and excited about the possibility of increasing the public visibility of Third World gays and working together on their common concerns as Third World people. Many of the conferees spoke of their discomfort with the racism and sexism in the gay rights movement and of the need to address the problems of Third World gays and lesbians in an organized fashion.

The National Coalition of Black Gays, a group based in the metropolitan Washington, D.C.-Baltimore area, spent a year and a half organizing the conference. The success of their outreach was demonstrated in the sizeable delegations of Latin Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans as well as blacks who participated. The conference was held at Harambee House, a black owned and operated hotel in Washington, D.C. which features contemporary African motifs.

About 10 per cent of the people attending the conference were white. They were welcome in all of the conference activities except specific ethnic caucuses. The ethnic caucuses consisted of Latin, Jewish, American Indian, black, Asian American and non-Third World (white) caucuses.

Although the conference was predominantly black, the scheduled ethnic caucuses allowed groups to focus on their particular issues within overall Third World concerns. New national networks of Latinos, Native Americans and Asian Americans were formed at the conference. The black men's caucus created a national Committee of Black Gay Men. A youth workshop decided to form a na-

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# Legislature blocks gay rights

By William Ecenbarger  
Inquirer Harrisburg Bureau

11/19/79

Homosexuals are an emerging political force in Pennsylvania as they fight for civil rights and a measure of public acceptance, but there remains much suspicion and hostility towards their efforts.

Gays are coming out of the closet and entering the voting booth, and their support now is considered important to winning an election in Philadelphia, home of an estimated 200,000 homosexuals.

At the state level, former Gov. Milton J. Shapp placed Pennsylvania at the forefront of the states in fostering gay rights: Pennsylvania was the first state to have an executive order banning discrimination against gays by state agencies, it was the first to set up an official task force on gays, and it was the first to enact a regulation protecting gays from discrimination by insurance companies.

These pioneering efforts have been continued by Gov. Dick Thornburgh, though he drew heavy flack from the legislature earlier this year when he signed a proclamation for "Gay Pride Week" — a tradition begun by Shapp.

By a vote of 180-14, the House adopted a resolution urging Thornburgh to withdraw his proclamation "honoring sexual deviates," but the governor held his ground.

The controversy illustrates a continuing paradox in state government. While the executive branch is progressive on the gay rights issue, the legislative branch is medieval.

Indeed, the stand of the Pennsylvania General Assembly on gay rights is a measure of its immaturity, lack of sophistication, and downright ignorance. As an institution, the

legislature tends to attack those least able to defend themselves — hence, the strident rhetoric against homosexuals, who are perhaps America's most despised and oppressed minority.

And not even the sudden surfacing of the gay issue within its own ranks is likely to jar the legislature's attitude.

Last month Rep. David S. Hayes, a six-term Republican lawmaker from Erie County, was arrested and charged with drugging and homosexually raping a 17-year-old boy in a motel room near Pittsburgh. Hayes has been held for trial on various charges, including rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, indecent assault and corrupting the morals of a minor.

The reaction of Hayes' colleagues has been quiet revulsion, relieved only by occasional snickers. When other lawmakers were convicted and jailed on charges of mail fraud, obstruction of justice, bribery and other criminal acts, the reaction was tempered by a sense of the personal tragedy involved. There is little of this in the Hayes case.

It is not surprising that gay activists have lowered their expectations in the Pennsylvania General Assembly. For the first time in many years, there is no lobbyist registered to work in the legislative halls on behalf of gay causes.

The major legislative goal is the repeal of Pennsylvania's law against sodomy between consenting adults. Currently, state law permits oral and anal acts only between married couples.

A repeal bill was introduced during the 1977 legislative session, but it died when many of its sponsors shied

away from it following extensive publicity. One sponsor who did not wilt under pressure was former Sen. Henry Cianfrani (D., Phila.), who was never suspected of having gay tendencies. Explained Cianfrani: "People should be allowed to do what they want so long as it doesn't hurt anyone else."

As is so often the case, the judiciary may settle the issue in the absence of legislative action. An Allegheny County judge has ruled that the state law is unconstitutional because it applies only to married couples. The decision is expected to be appealed.

The judge reasoned: "Without the presence of a compelling interest,

the state has no right to invade the right of privacy of an individual. . . . If voluntary deviate sexual intercourse is such a threat to the public interest and so abhorrent to most people, then it should be regulated as to all citizens and not merely as to single citizens."

Meanwhile, gay activists continue to press for changes at the executive level of state government. Two current goals are expansion of alcoholism programs for gays (a special problem because gays are forced to spend so much of their lives in bars) and expanded benefits for homosexual state employees (such as medical insurance for gay couples).