

## guest editorial

### Our youth are ready

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. That's a fancy way of saying it's our birthday, too. We'll be talking a lot this year about our past accomplishments and our vision for our future to our members and friends. In organizational years, 25 seems older, wiser and more informed. Because of our longevity, people will treat us with great respect for our experience.

It is a pity, then, that our movement does not treat gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth leaders of that same age with that same respect. They, too, have accomplishments and experience. They, too, bring their energy and vision to our movement. The best of these youth leaders are challenging some of our movement's long-held ideas about sexual orientation and gender identity. And the reality is that many of these organizers are starting their work in their early teens. Youth does not equate to inexperience.

In junior highs, high schools and colleges across the country, youth organizers are building unprecedented alliances with straight students. They form school and campus organizations, advocate for inclusive school curriculums and demand school safety. They are anti-racist workers, welfare and immigrant organizers, state lobbyists and candidates for public office. They stand at the frontlines of the gap between cultural changes and real civil rights.

Young people continue to be the target of Right-wing organizing. Fifteen school-related bills moved through state legislatures in 1997. The highlight was Connecticut's enactment of legislation banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation for students. It became the third state to do so, following Minnesota and Massachusetts. Three other favorable bills failed to become law. Importantly, 11 unfavorable measures were brought to the table, but none became law. They dealt primarily with restrictions on school curriculum, such as teaching abstinence-only HIV prevention or forbidding the discussion of GLBT- and HIV/AIDS-related materials altogether. Despite these suc-

cesses, the Right's efforts to silence youth organizers are growing in city after city and state after state.

It is timely then, that today's GLBT movement is being shaped and transformed by youth leadership. NGLTF has seen first-hand the fruits of their labor. NGLTF has long been at the forefront of supporting campus and youth organizing. The Task Force launched its campus project in 1987 and our 1997 Creating Change conference served as the birthplace for the National Consortium of Directors of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resources in Higher Education. NGLTF's annual Youth Leadership Institute and youth and campus tracks at our annual Creating Change conference have been home for some of the nation's best youth organizers.

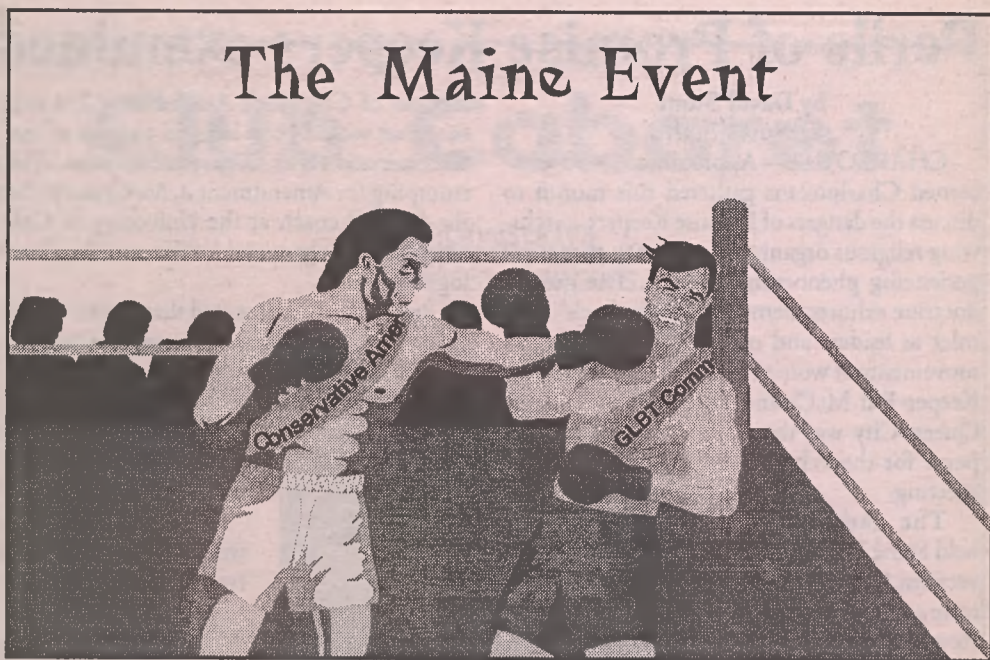
From that vantage point, we've seen and experienced the age gap. Last summer, we had the idea that our reunion of Youth Leadership Institute graduates should be planned by youth for themselves. They planned a retreat at the historic Highlander Center, known for its long history and ties to the civil rights movement. They also planned the day long youth intensive at Creating Change, which brought youth from around the country together. Both of these events were wildly successful, due mostly in part to the fact that they were youth designed and youth lead. But that's not the moral to the story.

At these two NGLTF events and in countless initiatives in state after state, the youth had no problem stepping up to the plate with all they had to offer. Rather, the barrier they faced was adults refusing to step aside so that youth could lead. Some adults think they know what's best for young people. Some are waiting for youth to "pay their dues" before assuming a leadership role in our movement. And some are threatened by the new ideas and conventions that GLBT youth are bringing to the table. We adults are the ones who have a lot to learn.

We don't have to wait to find out what the future brings. The future of our movement is with us today. As NGLTF moves into its 25th anniversary year, we do so with a rich history. But we also move forward with new vision. A vision, informed by youth, that all things are possible. ▼

— Kerry Lobel.

*[The writer is executive director of NGLTF.]*



## The Maine Event

## letters

### Bell, book and scandal

I applaud your publication and reporter for your investigation and non-bias report of the information contained in your article dated February 7, 1998 ("Community Yellow Pages embroiled in a number of disputes across US"). However, I find it necessary to respond to several inaccuracies.

In paragraph one, it states that the Community Yellow pages is in "...a maze of lawsuits;" in actuality we are defending ourselves in only two lawsuits which were brought by Paula McDonald [at] Perennial Publications, Inc., one in Florida and another in Georgia.

Moving to page 12, under the heading "Disputes," office manager for the Seattle Gay News, Randy Spohn stated "...they make hundreds of appointments and don't tell anyone who they really are." Our appointment setters are trained to clearly state our corporate identity and that we produce a directory for the Gay and Lesbian community in (the City's Name).

Regarding Jeff Ofstedahl's quote, "I talked with an ad rep (from GCYP) last week and the funny thing is that they're now claiming to be printing fewer copies (than was originally quoted in GCYP sales brochures), but the ad rate has increased." According to my ad reps on staff, currently none has ever talked with Jeff in the past. In addition, we still claim the same distribution numbers as last year; between 30,000 and 60,000 directories in each city are distributed. Yes, ad rates have gone up to offset the increase in production costs — printing, labor and materials.

Further down in the article, I was quoted as saying "One of the last meetings both Paula McDonald and [GCYP employee Jim Wells] attended was a discussion on beginning a bi-monthly publication in the Phoenix area" to compete with *Echo*. Paula and Jim were not even employed by the company at that time. The reference was made to ex-employees Pam Lipski, Finance Manager, Raymond Lockett

and Scott Effner, production staff members and others. They were the employees I was referring to that were terminated in June or July, not Paula or Jim.

Later, Paula was questioned if she had first-hand knowledge of GCYP incongruities in distribution amounts, she stated, "While I was working there, the media kits said 75,000 [directories would be distributed] and, no, they did not distribute 75,000." My response to Ms. McDonald, as the Assistant Publisher, is why not? Paula McDonald was the Executive Vice President of the company and in charge of operations. The owner and publisher, Marci Alt, was rarely in the Corporate Headquarters, as during that time period she traveled to open and train the new staff members in each of our cities. Paula was Marci's right hand. Marci had trusted Paula to run her company and I might add paid her very well. When she left, her salary and bonuses were more than \$70,000 annually.

The Portland Directory. Yes, I was late in the delivery of the Portland directory. Portland has received 15,750 copies of the 1998 directory as of February 2, 1998. This reflects the first run of the minimum of 30,000 for the year. To compensate for our error, the entire cycle for Portland has now changed to be an annual delivery in late January/early February. In addition, we have sent a letter to the advertisers stating that they will receive a 25 percent discount when they renew for the 1999 edition.

Paula's termination. Yes, Paula did submit a 30 day resignation to leave the end of October 1996. But, before the 30 days was up a prior contract which was renewed by Paula with a trade amount in excess of \$4000 was discovered. The contract and trade agreement were found under the calendar mat on the Sales Manager's desk in Atlanta. Paula had instructed the staff to not turn the contract into the Corporate office until the last day of sales for Atlanta. Paula had improperly entered into a contract with a dentist for trade. Paula had used the trade for her personal use without the approval of Marci Alt, so Marci requested that she leave before the completion of the 30 day  
*See LETTERS on page 15*

## QNotes

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