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Gill Foundation reveals initiatives

by Scott Swenson
 Special to Q-Notes

DENVER—The Gill Foundation, one of the nation's leading funders of GLBT and HIV/AIDS organizations and programs, has announced plans for an impressive philanthropic campaign to develop and broaden leadership for the GLBT movement. The new effort, dubbed The Gill Foundation 21st Century Initiatives, is part of an overall 40 percent increase in the Foundation's grantmaking budget for the year 2000.

The three projects comprising the 21st Century Initiatives include:

People of Color Initiative: to increase racial justice through funding and technical assistance to people of color organizations and multicultural leadership development in all GLBT organizations (\$1 million over five years);

Statewide Organizing Initiative: to develop and strengthen statewide GLBT nonprofit organizations (\$1.5 million over five years);

Community Center Initiative: to strengthen existing GLBT community centers and build new centers in non-urban America (\$2 million over five years).

"The Gill Foundation 21st Century Initiatives represent an effort to identify and focus resources on specific communities within the GLBT movement. In order to ensure these initiatives are a success, we will be working with leaders within those communities to plan and develop strong programs," said Katherine Pease, executive director of the Gill Foundation.

For the People of Color Initiative, the Foundation is convening a diverse group of people of color leaders from organizations around the country to help plan and implement the project. Similar meetings will be called next year to establish the statewide organization and community center initiatives.

Tim Gill, founder and president of the Quark software company, started the Foundation in 1994 in response to Colorado's anti-gay Amendment Two ballot measure. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$14 million to GLBT and HIV/AIDS organizations throughout the country.

In addition to its grantmaking program, the Gill Foundation also supports a training program — the OutGiving Project — that provides technical assistance to organizations in the GLBT movement.

For more information on the foundation or the initiatives, call (303) 292-4455 ext. 1218. ▼

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Report documents rise of bigotry

by Nancy Coleman
 Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—During the trial of Aaron McKinney, lawyers defending Matthew Shepard's accused killer resorted to the familiar tactic of blaming the victim. Preparing a so-called "homosexual panic" defense, they planned to suggest that Shepard might have provoked his own murder by making a sexual advance toward their client — implying that any "real man" in similar circumstances might react the same way.

Although the judge ultimately disallowed the controversial defense for legal reasons, the attempt stood as a chilling reminder of the climate of bigotry and intolerance facing GLBT Americans.

In addition, the warped wranglings of the trial were an appropriate backdrop for the release of *Hostile Climate*, the sixth nationwide chronicle of anti-gay discrimination compiled by the People for the American Way Foundation (PFAW Foundation). The report details almost 300 incidents in 47 states, more than twice as many instances as reported in the 1998 edition.

The states that reported the highest number of incidents were California (31), Texas (18), Florida (17) and New York (15) — North Carolina and South Carolina reported five and four incidents, respectively — but the epidemic of underreporting makes it impossible to know how many additional situations went undocumented.

Occurrences related to marriage and family issues — such as same-gender marriage, adoption, child custody and foster parenting — more than doubled from 20 in 1997 to 42 last year. In the area of education, which includes incidents that occurred in secondary schools or colleges, the number again more than doubled, from 34 in 1997 to 76 in 1998. The report further details incidents in the following categories: anti-discrimination ordinances (32), censorship (20), "culture wars" or situations related to public events such as protests or parades (36), employment (36), politics and government (44) and religion (32).

"Since Matthew Shepard's death, we have been asking ourselves, as a nation, 'How have we arrived at such a place, where someone could commit such a heinous, heartless crime?' The answer, as this book reveals, is that we start down this path whenever we deny people their basic human rights and dignity," said Carol Shields, PFAW Foundation president.

Hostile Climate documents many events that are shocking not simply because they are anti-gay, but because they communicate an unconscionable callousness toward human life. For example:

• A float in Colorado State University's homecoming parade mocked Matthew Shepard

as he lay dying five miles away in the local hospital. The float featured a scarecrow lashed to a fence — the same way Shepard was found — with the words "I'm Gay" painted on the front and "Up My Ass" on the back.

• Paramedics in Washington, DC stopped life-saving care to a car accident victim when they discovered that she was transgendered. She later died at the hospital when a doctor failed to perform routine medical procedures.

The report details how the Religious Right demonizes GLBT citizens while claiming to be moderate and representing average Americans. For example:

• In California, State Sen. Pete Knight launched a ballot initiative campaign that would prohibit the state from recognizing same-gender marriages, even though they are already outlawed in California and are not recognized in any other state. While Knight claimed that the initiative was not anti-gay, incidents of violence increased in Oregon, Maine and Colorado when those states put gay civil rights to a vote. The campaign is continuing and California voters will decide the question in March 2000.

• Religious Right organizations attacked *The Sissy Duckling*, a gay version of the ugly duckling story written by gay actor and playwright Harvey Fierstein. A psychologist on James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* radio program charged that the show created gender confusion in the minds of children, leading them to think: "I can get as crazy as having sex with animals because anything is possible and I don't know if I'm a guy or a girl."

Hostile Climate details more than twice as many instances as reported in the 1998 edition. *Hostile Climate* shows how the Religious Right's message that GLBT Americans should be reviled and excluded is received and amplified at the state level:

• In Oklahoma, the legislature debated a bill that would have prohibited gays and lesbians from working in public schools. The lawmaker who sponsored the proposal said his goal was to "drive [gays] back in the closet like the way they were."

• The Christian Coalition in Florida, while trying to repeal a non-discrimination law, distributed a fraudulent document purporting to be a "Gay Manifesto." It warned: "Homosexuality must be spoken in your churches and synagogues.... [Homosexuals] will in all likelihood expunge a number of passages from your Scripture and rewrite others, eliminating preferential treatment of heterosexual marriages...."

• Rev. Gabriel Jose Carrera's campaign for state representative in Hartford, CT against openly bisexual Rep. Evelyn Mantilla charged that Mantilla wanted to teach "anal sex" and "lesbian love" to school children. One of his campaign posters included a vulgar term for lesbian in Spanish that was placed over a bull's

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