

# Study says supposed affluence of gays and lesbians is a myth

by David Elliot  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—A report in the May issue of *Demography* on income levels among same-sex partners further refutes the myth of "gay affluence," a misconception that has been used to stereotype and discriminate against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people.

In 1998, the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) and the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies (IGLSS) issued a joint study entitled "Income Inflation: The Myth of Affluence Among Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Americans." Many of their findings were confirmed in the *Demography* report — conducted by four academicians in a separate, independent study.

"As the real outline of economic life for gay, lesbian and bisexual people becomes more defined through these studies, we see that stereotypes portraying our communities as only rich are distorted," said Ingrid Rivera-Dessuit, coordinator of NGLTF's Racial and Economic Justice Initiative.

"While the myth of affluence helps our communities gain the attention of powerful corporations, the real dangers lie in how the myths skew the political priorities of the movement and hurt our ability to advocate on issues of

economic justice."

"Income Inflation" suggested that discrimination based on sexual orientation may contribute to the fact that gay, lesbian and bisexual Americans earn less overall than their heterosexual counterparts.

"Despite popular myths, this information is not surprising given the high level of discrimination experienced by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, who come from all sectors of society, without regard to economic status, and experience discrimination that may at times affect their earning power," the report concluded.

Rivera-Dessuit pointed out that assumptions of disproportionate income among GLBT people have found their way into the courts in crucial civil rights challenges such as the Colorado Amendment 2 case that went before the US Supreme Court.

In that case, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia cited misused market research statistics on gay and lesbian people when he wrote that "high disposable income" gave gay people "disproportionate political power" and that Colorado voters should be permitted to rein in that power by banning anti-discrimination protections for GLB residents. Scalia's dissenting opinion in the case was joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Clarence Thomas.

Even when social science data provides a more accurate sketch of economic life for gay, lesbian and bisexual people, it is argued that same-sex couples, even with lower individual earnings, would still have more discretionary income than a heterosexual couple.

"The stereotype of gay or lesbian couples as 'DINKS' ('dual-income-no-kids') involves two assumptions," wrote "Income Inflation" author M.V. Lee Badgett, an economist at the University of Massachusetts. "First, that same-sex couples will have higher incomes than married couples, and second, that lesbian and gay men have no children."

Further research on household incomes of same-sex couples by Badgett has demonstrated that heterosexual-couple households and male same-sex-couple households have roughly equal incomes, however female same-sex couples bring home 18 to 20 percent less.

The economic picture for female same-sex households becomes more grim when it is factored in that at least 22 percent of lesbian couples have children, as reported by the *Demography* article.

Other highlights from "Income Inflation" — many of which are echoed in the *Demography* report — include:

- Gay men who work full-time earn as much as 27 percent less than heterosexual men in

terms of race, education, location, occupation and experience.

- Lesbians and heterosexual women have little income difference; however women as a category persistently make significantly less than their male counterparts.

- GLB people are found throughout the spectrum of income distribution.

Another report by the NGLTF Policy Institute, entitled "Out and Voting II," analyzed Voter News Service (VNS) exit poll data from 1990-1998. The report, authored by political scientist Robert W. Bailey, indicated that gay, lesbian and bisexual people earned, on average, less than others in the VNS sample. Report findings from "Out and Voting II" revealed:

- In 1990, 5 percent of voters reported income of \$100,000 or more while just 3 percent of GLB voters reported the same.

- In 1990, 38 percent of all voters reported income of \$29,999 or under while 43 percent of GLB voters reported that level of income.

- In 1992, 38 percent of voters reported income of \$29,999 or under while 51 percent of GLB voters reported that level of income.

- 1998 data show that approximately two-thirds of GLB voters reported incomes in the lowest three categories (i.e. below \$50,000) while only 53 percent of non-GLB voters fell into these categories. ▼

## Controversial therapy debate nixed

by Wanda Pico  
Special to Q-Notes

CHICAGO—The American Psychiatric Association canceled a discussion of so-called "reorientation therapy" — purported to turn gays into heterosexuals — that was to have been part of their national convention after two psychiatrists scheduled to participate backed out.

In explanation, the doctors said the topic carried too much political power for objective scientific debate.

The cancellation was protested by Exodus International, a conservative Christian group that claims to change sexual orientation utilizing such therapies.

John Paulk, board chairman of Exodus, said his group represents "a virtually unseen but sizable population" of former homosexuals now living happy heterosexual lives.

A self-avowed former drag queen, Paulk currently lives with his wife, Anne, a self-avowed former lesbian, and their two sons.

Dr. Robert Spitzer, the Columbia University professor who pushed for the APA's 1973 decision to remove homosexuality from the diagnostic manual of mental disorders, organized the ill-fated debate.

He stated that the only way to determine whether homosexual orientation can, in fact, be reversed for some people is through scientific study. He stressed that there is no scientific evidence showing that sexual orientation can be changed, but that there is also no evidence to indicate that it is impossible. ▼

# HEY GIRLS & BOYS

I'VE GOT SOME 411 FOR YOU! WELCOME ALL TO

# DIVAS

MY NEW CABARET & SHOW BAR LOCATED BESIDE SCORPIO. I'M MOVING MY SHOWCAST & CLIENTELE TO THE FORMER QUEEN CITY SALOON WHICH IS BEING SPECIALLY MADE OVER FOR ME & MY GIRLS. WE'LL BE OPEN 7 NIGHTS A WEEK BEGINNING IN JUNE AND WHILE I'M GONNA MISS OLEENS AFTER 20 YEARS THERE, I WANT YOU TO COME SEE ME AT MY NEW HOME SOON AS IT'S READY! SO WATCH FOR MORE DETAILS COMING UP & GET READY TO "KING" SIZE YOUR NIGHTLIFE. COME SEE US!

THANKS!

*Nasey King*



# DIVAS

2301 Freedom Drive  
Charlotte NC 28208  
704-373-9124

**SPEKTRUM**  
FAYETTEVILLE'S CHOICE IN NIGHTLIFE ENTERTAINMENT!

107 Swain Street  
(Bragg Blvd. & US 401-ByPass)  
Fayetteville, NC 28303  
Open at 8:00pm Daily!

**Serving family and friends  
throughout Southeastern NC**

Phone: (910) 868-HAPY (4279)

Visit our web site for more  
information about the club:

[www.geocities.com/spekfay107](http://www.geocities.com/spekfay107)