

NCHRF NEWS

THE NORTH CAROLINA HUMAN RIGHTS FUND
P.O. BOX 10782, RALEIGH, N.C. 27605

According to a report in *The Washington Blade* (9/19/86), a slick 32-page booklet entitled "AIDS: Civil Rights or Civil Wrongs" is currently being distributed to legislators on Capitol Hill — proposing, among other things, that gay bars and "any other areas where homosexuals congregate" be closed.

The text opens with a forward comparing AIDS to the "Black Plague." It goes on to provide a lengthy discussion of the gay rights movement, attributing its beginnings almost entirely to then Communist Party member Henry Hay. The booklet also contends that gay men "regularly ingest saliva, semen, urine and feces" and that "many of these encounters involve total strangers."

Noting that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as a mental disorder from its diagnostic books, the booklet goes on to blame the APA for "its role in the spread of AIDS." The booklet was produced by something called the National Perspectives Institute which identifies itself on the inside cover as a non-profit "scholarly research" organization based in Chesapeake, Virginia.

The author of this brochure had to do some homework to learn about former Community Party member Harry Hay and his creation of the Mattachine Society in the 1950's. (Mattachine eventually threw Hay out, founder or no, for being "too radical.") And that person had to deliberately decide to distort the information, to imply that homosexuality in the United States is a communist plot.

Durham activist Mab Segrest, in an article about the devastating 1984 elections, has commented: "It seems clear that the Moral Majority and the Congressional Club will use our mere presence here, exaggerate and distort it, whatever we do: laying low is not an option... we can't go to the legislature and get positive results from politicians if we have not educated their constituencies."

In an article in this issue of *The Front Page*, Lightning Brown suggests the tide of anti-gay sentiment in North Carolina may be beginning to reverse itself. We certainly hope so. Still, the politically ambitious will probably continue to take advantage of the random ignorance and anti-gay prejudice that exists as long as it is profitable. There is good reason to believe that unless we fortify our gains — now — we stand to lose them again. With adequate support, the N.C. Human Rights Fund can do a lot of the needed work.

History & Strategy

The strategy of the N.C. Human Rights Fund has grown and changed since 1979. The Fund's original purpose was to provide legal assistance to lesbians and gay men in cases relating to their sexual orientation or activities, and unable to bear the costs for adequate legal representation themselves.

As NCHRF grew and faced the limitations set by the enormous costs of direct legal assistance and the practical difficulties of raising adequate funds for this purpose, several changes in emphasis evolved.

First, in 1983, direct legal funding was limited to cases which could have a chance to set precedents and accomplish broadly applicable legal results. Second, later in the same year, NCHRF expanded its educational activities, focusing on the legal profession. (The Fund's subsequent "Legal Guide" is an excellent outcome of this work; copies are available to members and contributors.)

Finally, in 1984, NCHRF assumed primary responsibility among lesbian/gay organizations within the state for education of legislators to increase support for revisions in the state's Criminal Code which would abolish the North Carolina "Crime Against Nature" law.

The last of these priorities met disappointment in 1985 after dramatic clashes with highly organized Right-wing Fundamentalist groups at sessions of the Criminal Code Study Commission. Failure of the State Legislature to implement legal reforms

affecting gay people has reduced our hopes of reform through that body for at least the next five years.

Another adjustment in strategy resulted from a series of anti-gay decisions by federal courts, culminating in the Supreme Court's determination in the Georgia Sodomy Law case that reform of discriminatory laws cannot be accomplished by federal judicial review. The Fund's legal education and legal referral services will continue, but hope of broadly applicable precedents will be limited. The danger of further adverse court decisions remains ominous.

Beginning in 1982 with support from the Chicago Resource Center, the Fund for Southern Communities and generous member contributions, the Fund has documented violence and discrimination (with valuable assistance from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force), to share with legislators, public officials, lesbian/gay advocates and the press. To date, NCHRF's discrimination files contain nearly 240 cases. These have been used to argue the case for repeal of

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The Front Page

"There is not one member of the gay community who hasn't benefitted positively from the changes over the last 30 years. Yet we still hear, 'I don't like the gay community here very much.' To which we must respond, 'But my dear you are the gay community!'"

Editor Emeritus: Hildy Johnson
(*Emeritus* means only here in spirit)

Editor & Publisher: Jim Baxter

Editorial Associate: Lightning Brown

Sales Manager: Will

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The *Front Page* is dedicated to reporting the events and news of importance and interest to the individuals and organizations that make up the lesbian and gay communities, and to all others who share a concern for the full freedom, equal opportunity and right to expression of all people.

The aim of *The Front Page* is to represent the whole of the gay community, but that goal is only possible with readership participation. Those readers with the ability and willingness to write, share a responsibility for the growth and development of the gay community through this publication.

Whether you have experience in journalism or only desire to learn, your energy can contribute to your community paper. Anyone interested in writing or working on the paper: please call (919) 829-0181.

This publication encourages discussion of community concerns. Comments, criticisms, and information are always welcome. We encourage unsolicited contributions from our readers: all we require is that your work be thoughtful and sincere, that it make sense, and if it's typed and double-spaced, so much the better! (Sorry, but due to the tremendous volume of mail received, unsolicited works cannot be returned.)

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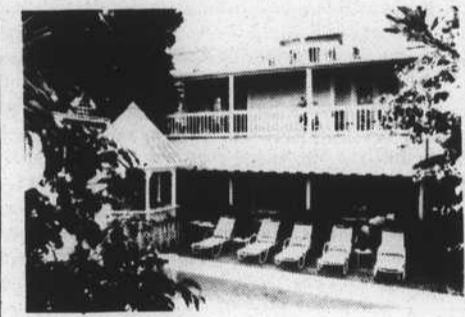
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