



MAINE LESBIAN/GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE

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TOLL FREE: 1-800-55-MLGPA

August, 1995

No Place for Hatred

On July
13 over
500
people
attended
a rally
at
Portland

City Hall sponsored by the Portland Police Dept. Bias Crime Task Force. (The Task Force is vice chaired by MLGPA President Karen Geraghty.) The purpose of the rally was for Portland to stand together as a community intolerant of the hate crimes committed against the city's diverse minority population. The Bias Crime Task Force asked for solidarity as they spoke out against these acts of violence in our neighborhoods.

The most recent reported incident of violence in the gay community occurred on July 1st outside of Blackstone's, a Portland gay bar. (see accompanying story on William Clark, the man who was attacked).

Speakers at the rally included representatives of the minority communities most affected by hate crimes: Karen Geraghty of MLGPA, Meyer Bodoff of the Jewish Federation, Moses Sebunya of the NAACP and Noor Ayanle Osoble, a Somali immigrant. The Attorney General, Portland's Chief of Police, Portland's Superintendent of Schools and area clergy were also on hand to denounce the recent attacks in Portland.

Victim Fights Back

William
Clark is
the gay man
who was
viciously

attacked outside of Blackstone's on July 1. Karen Geraghty met William after the rally at City Hall and arranged to talk with him and discuss the attack and resulting legal issues on July 14.

William is very pleased with the response of the gay and non-gay community, as well as with his interactions with the Portland Police and the Attorney General's Office.

The attack has changed how he feels when he is out in public. He's "jumpy" now when out on the street. He thinks he has suffered some psychological damage as a result of the beating; but that in the long run he will be a stronger person for learning how to survive.

William is interested in turning his experience into activism. He would like to put a real face to the much debated statistics on hate crimes. He would also like to teach people to feel good about themselves - no matter how others treat them.

**THANK YOU FOR RENEWING
YOUR MEMBERSHIP! YOU ARE
THE ONLY WAY WE CAN DO
WHAT WE DO!**

**Young
Men who
have
Sex
with
Men
Develop
Ways to
Protect
Selves,
Peers**

Under the
joint
sponsor-
ship of
two
agencies
of Maine
gov't. -
the Dept.
of
Education
and the

DHS' Office on AIDS - a group of young men (including a 23 yr old MLGPA board member) and other relevant professionals were together for intensive discussion and planning on July 16 - 19 at the Breckenridge Conference Center in York. Their task was to analyze causes for so many very young men in Maine being at risk of, and dying from, HIV/AIDS and possible preventive strategies.

Building an atmosphere of great trust, the young men shared their motivations and experiences, and that of their peers. This provided an important foundation for planning ways to "market" safer alternatives to young Maine men - particularly in rural areas where the risk is highest (50% of Maine's infection), and interventions which would increase the chance that the "target" population would respond to the marketing.

The content and outcomes of their discussion were striking and moving - - to numerous to detail here. The group's insights were quite profound, and it was not good news to the young men that they would have to "compromise" on so much of what they wanted changed: for example, that it would have to be mediated through the political process.

The young men feel largely ignored by the powers that be - even within the gay community. A motto about gay youth emerged from their discussions: "Most Infected. Least Protected."

There was no more striking insight from their discussions than how interrelated youth risks are with larger societal dynamics. When 25% of those surveyed have been forced out of their families' homes (often due to their coming out) some must resort to supporting themselves, to a large extent, through prostitution entailing high risk sex. When society and its representatives denigrate their sexual orientation, youth develop low self esteem, which may lead to suicide, or at the very least to self-destructive behaviors and risks (some engage in unprotected anal intercourse and drugs). For the target population there is often an inevitability about an early death from AIDS: "this is my destiny." Such feelings are antithetical to using the networks of helping programs. In order to do so, the youth must have good self-esteem, not fatalism.

The conference identified a number of arresting additional contributors to the low self-esteem of sexual minority youth: Regarding sex education in schools, "every other person in school gets to learn about their sexual functioning as if they count. Gay youth need the same but do not get it." A further aspect of this problem is that even if the gay sex education were furnished, many youth who are gay will already have dropped out due to oppression and low self-esteem.

The youths noted the relative scarcity of wholesome gay adult role models. *They argued that passage of the Civil Rights Bill is crucial to making such gay mentors more visible and more readily accessible - - exchanging knowledge, sharing stories.*

There is a scarcity of Outright groups - only two are currently functioning, and these only in the larger cities. There is a crying need for rural Outright groups, where the highest concentration of at-risk youth and behaviors are located.

The latter two paragraphs also illustrate interventions which could significantly enhance the self esteem of sexual minority youths, and therefore reduce the susceptibility to unsafe sex, which the Conference's youth labeled "a kind of suicide."

For the final two hours of the Conference a dozen adults in the field (including three from MLGPA) were invited from diverse organizations to receive and react to a summary of the youth's deliberations. Joni Foster and Steve Fleming, the conference coordinators, considered this gathering and format one of the most unique in the country. Concerted efforts will be made to try to turn the deliberations into actions by Maine governmental agencies, by non-governmental organizations, and by the youths, themselves.

**Support
the Gay
Press
in
Maine**

The
Community
Pride
Reporter
deserves
your
support!

Winnie Wier and Bruce Balboni

work really hard to provide us with news about what's happening in our community and that can't be an easy task. CPR only has about 200 subscribers, yet they print 5,000 copies of the paper to distribute! (We were shocked at this news!!) Advertising makes up the rest of the cost to put out 5,000 copies.

We think it's really important to have this forum in our community and we want to encourage you to subscribe. Please just take a moment to fill out the enclosed Subscription Form and send it in. Include a note to Winnie and Bruce and let them know what a valuable service they are providing to our community. I am sure they would like to hear some encouraging words. (And they also take constructive criticism very well, just for the record!)

**1996
Elections
Loom for
Dirigo
Alliance
& Members**

The
work of
the
Dirigo
Alliance
(of
which
MLGPA

is a founding member) hardly slackens during the long, hot summer.

The Board and its Executive and Targeting Committees are hard at work on three major issues:

I. Identifying the most promising candidates for the Maine House and Senate in '96. Numbers of Dirigo's friends in the Legislature will be "term-limited" out. It is Dirigo's task to identify candidates (including former legislators) who, if elected, would support the priorities of Dirigo's member organizations. To maintain the

progressive mantle in the House and Senate, Dirigo not only seeks to keep the current proportion of progressive legislators, but to get an additional fifteen elected. A challenging goal, especially in these times.

II. Dirigo faces another major challenge: deciding whether to endorse a Congressional candidate in the upcoming primary for the 1996 race in the 1st Congressional District. Much depends upon the relevant policies of Dirigo's member organizations.

III. Dirigo continues to give top priority to getting big money out of politics. A major tool in this effort is the Maine Clean Elections Coalition (MCEC), which Dirigo (including MLGPA's Betsy Sweet) was instrumental in bringing into existence. The major objective of MCEC is to see that a referendum is put before Maine voters concerning campaign finance reform. (This issue is being considered at the federal level as well. Recently President Clinton and Speaker Gingrich tentatively agreed that a Federal commission should be established to study this question.) On Dirigo's part, the presumption is that getting big money out of politics will (a) result in legislators being less beholden to powerful, big-money interests, and (b) make it more possible to elect progressive legislators who, in turn, would be more sympathetic than "fat cats" candidates to Dirigo organizations' issues (such as the Civil Rights Bill). Betsy Sweet has agreed to represent MLGPA in the work of the MCEC.

Lest the summer be all work and no play for Dirigo, the Alliance has invited all its

organizational members, and all the candidates it backed in the last election, to a "Swimmin' and Jumpin' Potluck Dinner" at Ellie Goldberg's hilltop, on August 12. Fun will be intermingled with discussion of (a) Issue I., above, and (b) a recap of the legislative session that just ended, and ideas about how to work together better in the next session of the present legislature.

**MLGPA
Annual
Meeting
and Board
Elections**

We will
hold
our
annual
meeting
on
Sat.,
Sept.

16th at the UU Church in Augusta.
This meeting is particularly
important because we will be
electing officers and board
members for the coming year.

If you are a member of MLGPA you can run for any seat on the Board. (You can challenge someone who holds an existing seat or run for a vacant seat.) We are very interested in new board members. You do not have to have any previous board experience, but you do have to be serious about leadership. We are particularly interested in people with a broad vision of the gay community who are willing to work pro-actively within the community to create change. It is a dynamic and exciting environment, and what you get from the experience is directly related to what you are willing to invest.

We have scheduled our August board meeting a little differently so that you can come and check us out! The August meeting is on Saturday, August

19th. We are having the meeting at one of our members homes in Hope. She has a pool and a trampoline so after the meeting we can have a swim party and potluck.

Please call 1-800-55-MLGPA (800-556-5472) and leave your name and address (speak slowly!) and we will send you a map and more details about the day.

**5,000
Copies
of
MLGPA's
Anti-Gay
Violence
Survey
Sent Out**

A copy of our anti-gay violence survey was distributed with CPR's current issue.

Please encourage your friends to fill them out and send them back to us. All information that identifies respondents will be kept completely confidential. The results of the survey will be used during the upcoming referendum campaign and during the next legislative session. It is very important that we get a high volume of responses.

**Follow-
up
Survey
of
Legis-
lators**

We are in the process of following up with current legis-

lators to determine the effect of last sessions lobbying strategies. In future newsletters we will update you on our findings.

**Want a
Job??**

Maine Won't
Discriminate
(MWD) is
looking for

people who want a job doing field work for the campaign this fall. If you are interested, please contact Amy Pritchard at 1-800-761-1788. The most important skill you need for this job is commitment to defeat of the referendum. This is a great opportunity -give Amy a call!!

Other MWD News:

They have a fabulous new cookbook with recipes from all your friends. It is available for only \$8.00. Call the MWD office and order yours today!

The initial polling is complete and message development is underway. We have been told that "sample wording" for message is being circulated now and should be decided upon within the next few weeks.

If you haven't joined a local chapter of the campaign - please call either MLGPA at 1-800-556-5472 or MWD at 1-800-761-1788 and we will let you know the local chapter closest to you.

**Important MLGPA Dates
to Remember:**

**Sat. Aug. 19th, Monthly
Mtg. in Hope, ME, 2:00
PM. Pool party to
follow. 1-800-556-5472
for directions/info.**

**Sat., Sept. 16, Annual
Mtg (incl. Elections),
UU Church, Augusta,
12:00 noon**



**MLGPA Celebrates Pride '95 with our NEW BANNER!!
Thanks Jayson!**

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