

OutSmart
Houston's Gay & Lesbian Monthly Magazine

JANUARY 1999 • COMPLIMENTARY

**TIME
IS ON
OUR SIDE**

30 Years of Houston Gay History

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
A Really Progressive Dinner
The Very Gay Legislature

Do THE Time Warp

Where We've Been in 30 Years

by Melissa Valenzuela

It's astounding. Time is fleeting. Madness takes its toll—and it has for the gay community in the past 30 years. In the beginning—the very beginning—there were drag queens. From the dazzle of the Diana Foundation's beautiful, flamboyant she-sters of the 1950s to the roaring political quests of today, the gay community has been through it all. But the gay community did not peek much from behind the closet doors until the 1970s, when *OutSmart* begins its look at where the gay community has been.

YEAR: 1970

MILESTONE: Integrity Houston founded
HAPPENING: Even as political allies dwindled to a short demise, Integrity survived and thrived, in part because of its honest realism that a radical calling to restructure society was too ambitious during this confining era. Members of Integrity met faithfully at the old Holy Rosary Church on Travis where they mounted assertive political strategies for homosexual rights.

YEAR: 1973

MILESTONE: Houston Gay Political Coalition
HAPPENING: Making political waves of its own was the GPC, a painful nag to City Council. On two occasions, members demanded an end to job discrimination and police harassment, recognition of gay minorities by the Human Relations Council, and a proclamation designating June 24-30 as Gay Pride Week. They were met with impudent resistance, including these words from Councilman Frank Mann, "You're abnormal. You need to see a psychiatrist instead of City Council."

YEAR: 1975

MILESTONE: Texas Human Rights Foundation challenges sodomy article 21.06
HAPPENING: With no hope that Texas legislators would repeal 21.06 during this year's legislation, the foundation filed *Baker vs. Wade* in the U.S. District Court. Its handpicked plaintiff, Donald Baker, went up against Dallas' elite Christian devotee Henry Wade. Baker filed suit claiming 21.06 violated his constitutional right to privacy and equal protection under the law. His case was not heard until 1981, when the court unanimously ruled in favor of Wade.

YEAR: 1977

MILESTONE: Human Rights Rally
HAPPENING: More than 3,000 gay and lesbian protesters gathered in the Depository Bar parking lot on McGowen Street and marched by candlelight to the Houston Public Library to protest Anita Bryant's visit to Houston. The Oklahoma beauty queen, known for her antigay crusades, sang with patriotic gusto at the Texas Bar Association's annual dinner at the Hyatt downtown. The demonstration has been touted as the gay community's first collective political act.

YEAR: 1978

MILESTONE: Town Meeting I
HAPPENING: Sponsored by the GPC, political guru Ray Hill co-organized Town Meeting I in the Astroarena, where 4,000 gays and lesbians set resolutions dealing with homosexual issues. Main speaker Frances "Sissy" Farenthold, twice Texas gubernatorial candidate, told the crowd, "No one is free unless we are all free." This spirited idealism quickly dissipated with controversy surrounding media actions in the arena. Roaming cameras poked fear into many participants who still lived the closeted life.

Timeline

1953

• Diana Foundation

1965

• Albatross

1967

• Roaring Sixties (lesbian bar, closed 1975)
• Tumblebugs (became T.H.E.M.)

1968

• Golden Nugget
• Promethean Society
• Red Room Bar
• Texas Homophile Educational Movement (T.H.E.M., first gay nonprofit organization to be chartered)

1969

• Miss Camp America
• Texas Riders

1963

• Roaring Twenties (closed 1975)

1966

• Galleon Bar

YEAR: 1979

MILESTONE: First Gay Pride Parade
HAPPENING: Commemorating the famous Stonewall Riots, Larry Bagneris co-organized the community's first concerted effort from protest to pride. More than 20,000 people attended the landmark event, but discrepancy haunts this annual celebration. Roughly 200 members of the now-dead Gay Activist Alliance of the University of Houston marched down a two-block stretch in 1976, staking claim to the first gay pride parade.

YEAR: 1980

MILESTONE: Mary's Lounge raided
HAPPENING: Just as Gay Pride Week began, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission and Houston police officers raided Mary's Lounge, arresting 61 people and using what the then-manager called "Gestapo tactics." Asst. Police Chief Tommy Mitchell said police responded to calls from the public, and the arrests were routine enforcement of the law. Congressman Mickey Leland accused the department of harassing gays; all charges were dropped.

YEAR: 1982

MILESTONE: AIDS Foundation Houston opens
HAPPENING: When AIDS mysteriously began to plague American livelihood and HIV-case management remained scarce, AIDS Foundation Houston emerged as the first community-based organization solely dedi-

cated to HIV-related issues. In a reactive stance against AIDS, AFH set out to reduce the transmission of HIV and to remain one step ahead of this deadly disease.

YEAR: 1985

MILESTONE: Born into Heaven
HAPPENING: Heaven, with its glowing lava lamps, sunken dance floor, and hard-bodied go-go dancers, opened its doors to the wild, the prep, the young, the old. Tragically, this Pacific Square

store. And in its 10th year, the owning duo reluctantly sold this female haven to Texans living in Salt Lake City, Utah, subsequently blessing Mormons with their first gay and lesbian bookstore.

YEAR: 1991

MILESTONE: The Paul Broussard murder
HAPPENING: The community received a wake-up call when 10 young men from The Woodlands beat and killed Paul Broussard after he left a popular gay nightclub. Gay activists mobilized for swift punishment against the men, but only one received jail time while the others each received 10 years probation.

YEAR: 1992

MILESTONE: *Texas Triangle*
HAPPENING: This brainchild of publisher and editor Kay Longcope was recognized for its sharp journalism standards and staunch resistance of sex and bar advertisements.

Longcope's commitment to this "cleanliness" cost her in 1996, when the newspaper fell to financial woes, and big gun Todd Cunningham of Angle Media rescued this failing newspaper. With his entrance came the sex advertisements and Longcope's exit.

YEAR: 1993

MILESTONE: Texas Association of Transsexual Support
HAPPENING: TATS was formed to meet the specific needs of transsexuals, either male-to-female or female-to-male, and those who have yet to make



milestone met its fate in 1997. A burning building sent screaming queens out the doors, but loyal patrons have nothing to worry about. Rumor has it that the booming club will soon resurrect as South Beach.

YEAR: 1988

MILESTONE: Inklings
HAPPENING: Tucked in a renovated red-brick house on Richmond, Inklings Bookstore was the peril of co-owners Annise Parker and Pokey Anderson. It stood as the only lesbian-specific book-

1970

- Integrity/Houston
- KPFT Radio Station
- Krewe of Olympus - Texas
- Nuntius Publication (discontinued 1977)
- Round Table Bar (closed 1973)
- University of Houston Gay Liberation Front (folded in 1973 and did not have official university sanction)

1971

- Hi Kamp

1972

- Dignity/Houston (Catholics)
- Houston Motorcycle Club
- Mary's Bar
- Montrose Gaze Community Center (September 1972)
- Poppa Bear (tourist drag show bar on Market Square, closed 1973)

1973

- Gay Radio Show (8 weeks of programming)
- Houston Council of Clubs
- Houston Gay Political Coalition
- Just Marion and Lynn's Bar
- Metropolitan Community Church Study Group of Houston (predecessor of MCCR)

1974

- Contact
- Texas Gay Task Force



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such operative changes. It's not all about fun for these guys/gals; the group assists graduate students with research and practical experience about transsexuals.

YEAR: 1995

MILESTONE: The Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

HAPPENING: The chamber helped gays and lesbians move into the big-business, networking mecca of Houston. It furthered the community's economic spirit when it mixed big business and small entrepreneurs during Empower, a gay business expo.

YEAR: 1997

MILESTONE: First Nighttime Parade

HAPPENING: Houston made national history with the city's first nighttime parade. Gays and lesbians were "glowing with pride" as decorated floats and cars streamed down the Westheimer strip, celebrating both homosexuality and relief from the blistering June heat.

YEAR: 1998

MILESTONE: Mayor Appoints Gay Liaison

HAPPENING: Mayor Lee P. Brown made gay history when he appointed Matthew Eastus as the city's first gay liaison. Bearing the responsibility of helping Brown mix with the gay locals, Eastus shared some glory with Annise Parker as she gained notoriety as the city's first lesbian City Council member at the end of 1997.

Information obtained from the Charles Botts Memorial Library of MCCR and the Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center. Research assistance provided by Steve Brown. Next month, OutSmart continues with more of Houston's gay and lesbian timeline history.

1975

- Gay Activist Alliance (University of Houston)
- Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus
- Lambda Center A. A.
- Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection (MCCR, Houston chartered)
- Point Blank Times (continued until 1978)
- Southwest Courier
- Swamptrash
- This Week in Texas (TWIT)
- Update Weekly (aka Update Texas Weekly)
- Wilde N' Stein Radio Show (became Gay and Lesbian Voices)

1976

- First Gay Parade in Houston (June 20, sponsored by the Gay Activist Alliance)
- Colt 45's
- Ducks Softball Team
- Integrity (Episcopalians)
- Leathermen
- Montrose Star
- R.E. Search Warrant

1977

- Anita Bryant Protest March (June 16, Houston Human Rights Rally)
- Ray Hill Becomes First Openly Gay Candidate for Houston City Council
- Gay Unitarian/Universalist Caucus
- Houston Human Rights League
- Lutherans Concerned for Gays
- Texas Conference of Clubs
- Wilde and Stein Bookstore

WHERE WE ARE GOING

What community organizations are doing in 1999

by Melissa Valenzuela

Just as triumphant and grand as where we've been, where we're going screams "out with the old and in with the new." As community organizations leap into the new year, expect some changes, whether it's expanding old services or creating some new ones. *OutSmart* takes a look at some of these growing organizations and how 1999 will lead them into the next millennium.

SISTERS

In 1999, the gay community's African-American sisters are moving—literally.

SISTERS, an African-American women's organization, is relocating its monthly meetings from the Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection to the Hollyfield Foundation Conference Center, 2700 Albany. President Shirley Gray said the move is a direct result of the group's growing membership in the past year.

"We want to be somewhere where everyone can reach us. We have members

throughout Houston, and the Hollyfield Center is a more central area," said Gray.

Beginning strong in the new year, SISTERS will hold a "How to Love Yourself" presentation with guest speaker Sue Long of the Montrose Counseling Center on Jan. 10, in conjunction with the group's monthly meeting. Then, on Feb. 19, just a few days after its 6th anniversary celebration on Valentine's Day, the group co-sponsors the Lesbian Health Fair.

With 100 current members, Gray anticipates SISTERS will continue to grow in 1999. The group's agenda includes completing its request for nonprofit 501(c)(3) status, expanding its outreach services, creating a Web site, and conducting a membership drive. SISTERS provides African-American women outreach support on health-care issues, spirituality, legal and financial matters, and other services. It also hosts game and movie nights.

"We want to contribute to a more diverse community," said Gray. "We are

primarily an African-American organization, but it creates a safe, comfortable environment for all women to share, nurture, and foster kindness."

SISTERS meets every second Sunday of the month, 5-8 p.m. For more information, call 713/801-0027.

AVES

In 1989, Amigos Volunteers in Education and Services, Inc. (AVES), was created to counter an increase of AIDS/HIV in Latino/a gays and lesbians. What began as a small, disease-prevention service, AVES is now a fully operational educational and advocacy organization which tries to strengthen cultural awareness about Latinos/as within the gay community.

"For Latinos/as, there really are no culturally specific services in the community. We try to be a liaison for the Latino community. We want to give them access to services that are queer specific, linguistically specific, and culturally specific," said Alex Morua, the organization's client services administrator.

1978

- Houston Town Meeting I (June 25)
- Ray Hill wins Hill vs. Houston law case in U.S. Supreme Court
- Bunnies on the Bayou
- EPAH (Executive and Professional Association of Houston)
- Gay Resources Services of U. of H (formerly Gay Activist Alliance)
- Gulf Coast Transgendered Community
- Houston Pride Band
- It's About Time
- LXIX (bar publication)
- Montrose Activity Center
- Montrose Counseling Center
- Montrose Mining Company Bar
- Montrose Patrol
- PFLAG - Houston (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
- Houston Pride Week Calendar
- Upfront America (aka Upfront)

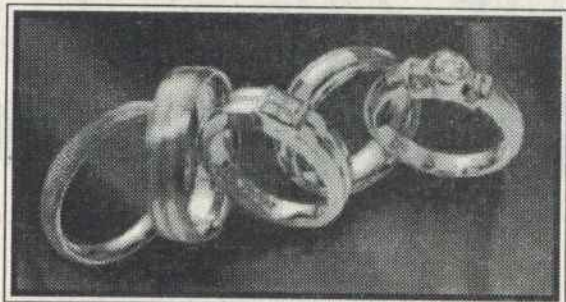
1979

- Beginning of Gay/Lesbian Pride Week Parades With Celebration of Tenth Anniversary of Stonewall (June, first co-chairs Carol Fennema and Bill Puryear)
- Organizational Office for First National March on Washington, D.C., established in Houston
- A Capella Caucus (Church of Christ)
- Astro Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf
- Church of Christian Faith
- Gay Men's Chorus of Houston (Montrose Singers)
- The Main Event
- We Are Women

1980

- Black and White Men Together (Houston)
- CHE (Citizens for Human Equality)
- I/H, Inc. (formerly Integrity Houston)
- Insight
- Kindred Spirits Bar
- Montrose Softball League
- Montrose Sports Association
- The Montrose Voice (now the Houston Voice)
- Pegasus
- Pride Committee (organized as year-round group)
- Texas Bay Area Gays

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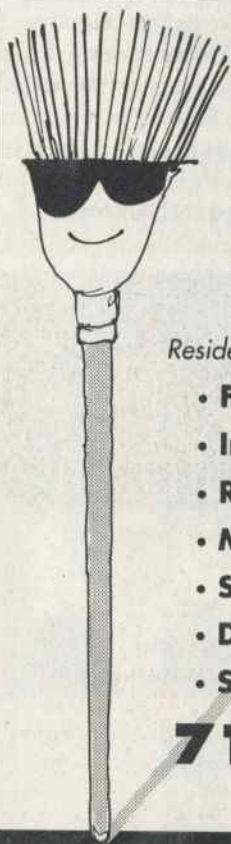
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For 1999, AVES' agenda includes creating a teen clinic. Financed by a \$100,000 grant, the clinic will provide HIV-positive female adolescents with educational services related to HIV/AIDS treatments, sexuality and birth control information, as well as obstetrics/gynecological services and a clerical training and job placement program.

AVES, which provides services to an 11-county area, also expects to expand its mental health services, specifically for same-sex domestic violence victims.

In 1997, AVES served more than 20,000 people. Most of the group's outreach success comes from its mobile street program, where the Latino gay community is directly hit by AVES volunteers. The organization also provides case management, early intervention, support groups, crisis intervention, food vouchers, and limited financial assistance for individuals and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

"1999 is really also about building on our previous programs, more about expansion," said Morua. AVES is located at 4126 Southwest Frwy, Ste. 1717. For more information, call 713/626-2837.

PFLAG

The legacy of Parents and Friends of Lesbians And Gays (PFLAG) is not unknown. From mounting a simple, yet effective billboard campaign in 1996 to showing pride in the annual parade, PFLAG's contributions to the gay community have been nothing less than monumental. And in 1999, the group undoubtedly continues with such kind efforts.

Just before its first meeting of the new year

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www.pflaghtx.org

PFLAG explodes with an advertising campaign in 13 community newspapers.

1982

- First Safe Sex Pamphlet in U.S. Published in Houston
- AIDS Foundation Houston
- Club Scene
- Community Gospel Center
- Gay Fathers/Fathers First
- JR's Bar and Grill
- New Freedom Christian Church
- Outrage
- The Ripcord Bar
- Silver \$ Times (publication)

1981

- Gay and Lesbian Switchboard of Houston
- Montrose Clinic
- The Royal, Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star

1983

- Montrose Directory
- Out In Texas
- Rich's Dance Club
- Texas Gay Rodeo Association
- The Group (Theater Workshop)

on Jan. 10, PFLAG explodes with another advertising campaign in 13 community newspapers, including the *Katy Sun*, the *Clear Lake Sun*, the *Kingwood Observer*, the *Pasadena Citizen*, the *Alvin Journal*, and the *Village News*. The ads will run throughout February.

"We want to let people know we're present, whether they come to the meetings or not," said Jeanne Edmonds, co-president of PFLAG. "It's important for people to know that we're out there, that there is support."

Foremost on the group's agenda is community outreach. PFLAG, with 325 current members, will be visible at church gatherings throughout the Houston area, even extending to the Woodlands, Tomball, Conroe, and Beaumont.

"In 1999, we would like to reach more parents and family members with love, acceptance, and celebration. Reaching parents is still very important to us; it is the basis of our foundation," said Edmonds. "We're going to be working within churches and going through ministers and people active in their churches."

PFLAG will also dive into the political arena during the upcoming legislation in January. Although it has yet to formulate anything concrete, the group is trying to find a way to be most helpful against the anti-gay adoption proposal.

To consummate the group's activities in 1999, PFLAG will host a conference to educate school administrators and teachers of area independent school districts about homosexuality. The conference will enlighten educators about gay youth and serve as a supportive resource, Edmonds said.

PFLAG meets every first Sunday of the month at the Christ Church Cathedral, 2 p.m. For more information, call 713/867-9020.

ASIANS AND FRIENDS OF HOUSTON

Co-founder and former president Kurt von Richthofen describes Asians and Friends as a social and educational organization that serves as an alternative to the bar scene. Yet the group also uniquely maintains a social conscience while broadening cultural diversity within the community.

Since its inception in 1992, Asians and Friends has promoted diversity by presenting monthly educational programs on multiculturalism and

opening its organization to all people regardless of their nationality or ethnicity.

"This is a good organization, so certainly we want to concentrate on making this an even better organization, but there really isn't anything particular," said von Richthofen. "This is really a positive experience for people. It's a chance to make people feel better about themselves."

The group currently has 100 members, but it is quickly growing. Members have aggressive recruiting efforts to take well into 1999, including posting fliers, hosting regular Friday night movies, and holding Sunday brunches. They also work closely with other organizations, such as AIDS Foundation Houston, to make themselves more visible while giving back to the gay community.

For more information and meeting location, call 713/772-3757.

MONTROSE COUNSELING CENTER

On the heels of its 20th anniversary in December, the Montrose Counseling Center (MCC) is expecting great things for the coming year. While continuing to focus on the needs of the gay and lesbian community, the center also plans to create new service positions and increase funding.

MCC hopes to add a case manager to its LIFE Program to assist women with chronic illness or victims of hate crimes, sexual abuse, or domestic violence. The center currently offers case management for people with HIV/AIDS.

"We need a continuum for those clients in the LIFE Program going through counseling so that a case manager may help them with various psychosocial crises," said Sean Carter, development and marketing manager. "With this program addition, the client would not have to spend



1984

- Adoption and Repeal of Ordinance to List Sexual Orientation on City Employment Discrimination
- Four Seasons
- FrontRunners Houston
- Houston Outdoor Group (HOG)
- Lavender Letters

1985

- AIDS Interfaith Council
- HeartSong
- Heaven Dance Club (closed 1997)
- Houston Forum
- Houston Pride
- Texas Forum
- The Wand (aka Womynspace)

1986

- LOBO Bookstore
- Omega House
- PWA Coalition

1987

- Bering Community Service Foundation
- DIFFA/Houston (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS)
- H.A.T.C.H. (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals)
- Lady Victoria Lust PWA Holiday Fund (became PWA Holiday Charities in 1997)



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counseling time dealing with issues such as eviction, physician visits, medication assistance, etc."

MCC also wants to develop its Lesbian Health Outreach Program, which reaches lesbians in Harris and surrounding counties, by moving its current part-time outreach worker into a full-time position.

"Education and prevention have become very important in the lesbian community," said Carter.

On Mar. 12, MCC will host its annual fund-raiser, titled "Bringing in the Green." The event will be held at the Waldo Mansion and is expected to raise \$20,000. The donations will be used for services not funded by the government.

For more information about MCC and its many services, call 713/529-0037, or visit the center at 701 Richmond.

H.A.T.C.H.

Since its inception 11 years ago, the Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) has emerged as a top resource for gay and lesbian youth. And recent membership trends suggest the group will continue to grow in 1999.

"We have a lot planned for 1999. We're anticipating all kinds of big change. It's just going to be an explosive year," said Carol Petrucci, the group's first newly appointed program director.

"We've already seen an increase in the number of teens served, so we'll look at increasing our volunteers, and get a better coordination of our training efforts, as well as make a stronger connection with the schools," she added.

The foremost priority for H.A.T.C.H. is creating ongoing training efforts for its current group facilitators. Approximately 40-50 teens attend Friday night H.A.T.C.H. meetings, Petrucci said.

H.A.T.C.H. also wants to expand its outreach efforts by continuing to build relationships with school counselors and by opening its mentoring opportunities to involve parents and leaders in the community.

"We want to work on doing the best that we can with what we have to stabilize the organization," said Petrucci. "In January, we will be looking at long-range planning for the next 3-5 years and at the priorities for the organization."

For more information and meeting location, call 713/942-7002.

1988

- Amiga (group for Latina lesbians)
- The Assistance Fund
- Body Positive
- FIRM (Foundation for Interfaith Research & Ministry)
- Inklings Bookshop (closed 1998)
- NAMES Project Houston
- Pacific Street Bar

1989

- American Option
- AVES (Amigos Volunteers in Education and Services)
- Houston Wrestling Club
- Kolbe Project
- Santa Fe Bar & Patio
- Texas Invitation Tournament

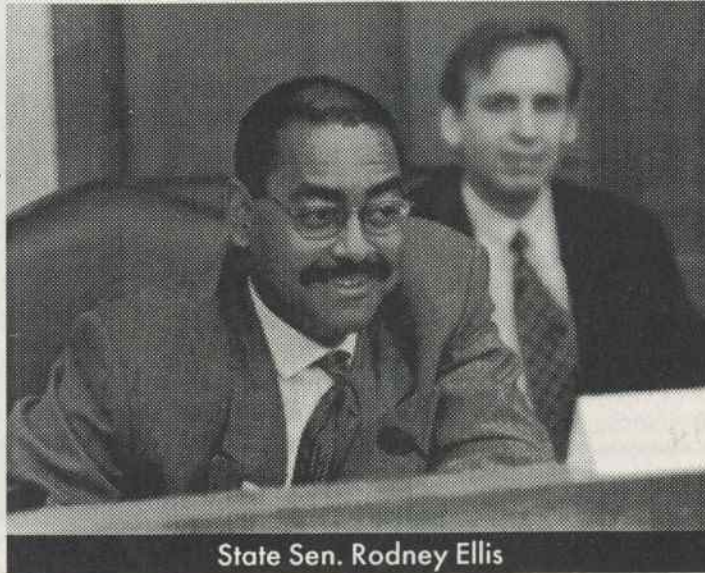
What We Must Do

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS PREPARE FOR THE 76TH LEGISLATURE

by Melissa Valenzuela

During the 76th Legislature, opening on Jan. 12, local gay and lesbian political organizations will lobby against several antigay proposals, as well as push for stronger legislation in support of gay rights. With the recent slaying of James Byrd in Jasper, the arrest of two Houston men accused of violating the sodomy statute, and the fearful consequences of Rep. Warren Chisum's (R-Pampa) antigay adoption proposal, these organizations will mount aggressive 1999 legislative agendas.

From gay marriages to job protection for transgenders, they have targeted gay issues expected to ignite controversy between the two political parties. *OutSmart* takes a look at the legislative agendas of four local organizations and the Austin giant the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas (LGRL) as they spearhead antigay legislation to garner wins for the gay community.



State Sen. Rodney Ellis

THE HOUSTON GAY AND LESBIAN POLITICAL CAUCUS

When Clarence Bagby was elected as the caucus' president, he enacted the Legislator Matching Project, which pairs constituents throughout Harris County with their district legislators. Since then, the project has resulted in an increase of constituent-legislator communication.

"It is far more meaningful for one or several constituents to call their district legislators than for some president or

leader of an organization to call them," said Bagby. "This way, through the program, legislators hear directly from constituents whether they support or disapprove of a certain proposal."

The caucus will use this proactive network system to combat upcoming legislative issues, specifically hate crimes. During the past two legislative sessions, efforts to include sexual orientation and other identifying characteristics of groups such as race and ethnicity dissipated with political bureaucracy and conservative opposition. Teaming

with Sen. Rodney Ellis (D-Hous.), who helped pass the hate crimes statute in 1993, the caucus expects legislators will consider passing stronger legislation to end hate crime violence because of the slayings of Byrd and Matthew Shepard in Wyoming.

"We believe that of all the items on our legislative agenda, the hate crimes bill is definitely going to be one to get a lot of attention," said Bagby. "It is going to be a lot harder to not pass this bill when you have the sister or mother [of James Byrd] asking legislators to pass it."

1990

- The Gentry Bar (closed 1998)
- Houston Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages
- Lambda B.S. RAG
- Lambda Roller-skating Club
- Lesbians Over Age Fifty (LOAF)
- Prime Timers

1991

- Houston Voice
- LiB (Lesbians in Business)
- Q-Patrol
- Rotheudt/Dizinger Foundation

1992

- Asians and Friends
- Bayou City Boys Club
- BiNet Houston
- Crossroads Market
- John Steven Kellett Foundation
- Log Cabin Houston
- Texas Triangle

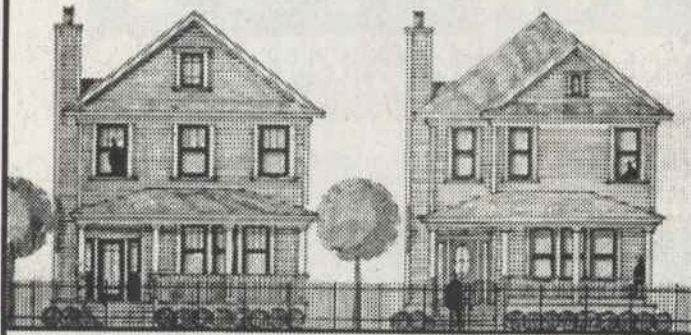
1993

- AIDS Alliance of the Bay Area
- Black Tie Dinner - Houston
- Just For Us
- Lesbian Health Initiative (L.H.I.)
- Milam House
- National Leather Association - Houston
- Texas Association for Transsexual Support
- Steven's House

1994

- Hollyfield Foundation
- Houston Area Bears
- It's Time, America (Transgendered)
- OutSmart
- Rainbow Ranglers
- SISTERS (group for African-American lesbians)

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The caucus released a one-page legislative agenda that also includes preventing the passage of the Chisum proposal; protecting Texans from discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity in employment; pushing for legislation that allows hate crime victims the opportunity to sue for civil penalties; and increasing funding for AIDS/HIV services.

To volunteer or for more information, call 713/521-1000.

LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS OF TEXAS

On the right side of this legislative battle stand members of the Log Cabin Republicans of Texas (LCR). While they continue to be discounted by other lesbian and gay political organizations for their party preference, LCR has mounted a legislative agenda to persuade legislators under the elephant tent to repeal anti-gay legislation.

"We've learned in Washington, D.C., that the most effective way to begin to lobby Republicans on gay issues is to be a Republican," said Rich Tafel, executive director of the group's national office.

With that premise in mind, LCR has appointed Steve Labinski as the group's registered lobbyist for the legislation.

"We intend to have an active lobby presence during the session because it is so important that Republicans understand that equal rights is an American virtue that should be upheld by all political parties," said Labinski, also the group's president.

LCR has created a mammoth legislative agenda to lobby against proposals that "promote government-enforced discrimination against gays and lesbians." It will, however, specifically target Chisum's anti-gay adoption proposal.

"Our number one priority will be to stop the proposed bill that would prevent gays from adopting children," said Labinski. "This sweeping ban against adoption of children by gay men and lesbians would be outright government intrusion into family decision-making."

LCR will also lobby against the anti-gay marriage bill, which Labinski describes as "a gratuitous slap in the face for all gays and lesbians, since existing laws already prohibit same-sex marriage."

LCR has chapters in Austin, Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio. For more information about the group's legislative efforts, call 512/467-9797, or check your local listings for area chapters.

STONEWALL DEMOCRATS

Although the Stonewall Democrats are just beginning to assimilate into something substantial, it has jumped on the legislative bandwagon to combat anti-gay proposals.

1995

- African American Lesbian and Gay Alliance (AALGA)
- Center for AIDS
- Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce
- Uncommon Legacy - Houston

1996

- AssisTHERs (care group for lesbians)
- Chase Bank of Texas, N.A., P.R.I.D.E. Team (Chase Employees Group)
- Garden and Yard Society (GAYS)
- Lesbians United in Coalition (L.U.C.)
- Queer Artists Collective (QuAC)
- SEAShell (Shell employees Group)

In January, just days after the Legislature opens, Stonewall will elect its officers for 1999 and create a legislative committee with a primary focus to identify legislative issues affecting gays and lesbians and to coordinate lobbying efforts. With a committee in place, the donkeys will determine which legislators to push and which legislators to support, especially on issues related to the current sodomy statute and job protection for transgenders.

"We have to make sure we have a presence and let our legislators know the gay and lesbian community is watching," said Francisco Sanchez, secretary of the Harris County Democratic



Stonewall Democrats combat antigay proposals.

Party. "Our legislative efforts have got to make an impact, especially to the not-so-gay-friendly representatives."

Stonewall's legislative agenda will require a lot of grunt work for members. The group is currently building a local program to identify and pair constituents with their district legislators. Then, on Jan. 27, the group teams with the Texas Gender Advocacy and Information Network to lobby on transgender issues.

Group members will travel to Austin, distribute information packets, and visit with legislative officials and their staffs. Stonewall also will join LGRL for its "Lesbian Gay Lobby Day" on Mar. 22.

For more information or to volunteer, call 713/521-4539 or 713/739-7785. The group's next meeting will be held Jan. 18, 7 p.m., at Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN-HOUSTON

The Human Rights Campaign in Houston (HRC) is supporting the battle against anti-gay Texas legislation in a different way—with money.

HRC will provide much needed financial support for the Lambda Legal Defense, which is providing lead attorneys for

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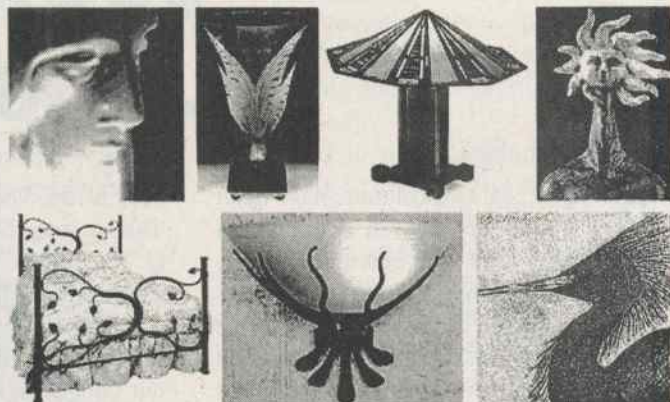
1997

- Annise Parker Election to City Council
- Empower '97 (gay and lesbian business exposition)
- Evening Gay/Lesbian Pride Parade
- G.A.N.G. (Gay Alumni/Noon Group over 40s)
- Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival
- Human Rights Campaign - Houston
- PWA Holiday Charities (began in 1987 as Lady Victoria Lust PWA Holiday Fund)
- SPECTRUM (Southwestern Bell employees group)

1998

- First Gay Liaison Advisor to Houston Mayor Appointed
- Stonewall Democrats
- Hollyfield Conference Center
- Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center
- Montrose TV
- Gold PAC

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Health

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Two years ago, when I began treatment, Dr. David Ho famously suggested that early drug therapy could eradicate—cure—HIV infection. Few now believe that antivirals alone will cure this disease. But Dr. Walker is proposing something different, if only slightly less dramatic. He's saying that early therapy might not cure the infection, but it might place the virus in "remission."

Is that what's happening to me? Is my virus in remission?

I haven't been off therapy long, and most observers—and not just the hardened skeptics—would say my situation is tenuous, that it's far too early to draw conclusions. In an e-mail reaction to this news, a close friend and ex-lover wrote, "Perhaps one shouldn't get over excited too soon." He's right.

I'm reluctant to share this experience. I don't want HIV-infected people to make analogies between my situation and theirs and then decide to stop treatment. Most people with HIV don't start therapy until well after the resolution of acute retroviral syndrome, and therefore aren't subject to Dr. Walker's hypothesis. (In fact, since I started treatment after I'd become HIV-antibody-positive, I may not be subject to it myself.) I also feel awkward, embarrassed by the success of this little experiment, even if its results should prove transient. Perhaps as many as half of the people on treatment are either failing it, or never responded in the first place. And of those, many have struggled with this disease, lived with its painful consequences, far longer than I have.

But if there is any truth to Dr. Walker's theory, that's good news for all of us. It means that HIV is not, always and everywhere, a fearsome bastard from which there is no relief. If there are any circumstances under which the virus can be pounded into submission, this tells us something useful. Our common enemy is vulnerable. After two decades of thinking of the virus as unassailable, we can begin to think something new, something that, in Ralph Waldo Emerson's words, may serve to "encourage and fortify" us.

Paul Simmons, a registered nurse board certified in HIV/AIDS nursing, is director of information and advocacy at The Center for AIDS. His e-mail address is NursePaul@aol.com.

TravelOut

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Venice is world famous for glass-blowing and art, but most of the furnaces are now over on Murano, an adjacent Island. Good buys and exceptional quality is everywhere, but the short trip to Murano provides the opportunity to see the city from the lagoon.

After Venice, we headed to Bologna. We didn't have much time in Bologna, but did see an excellent Egyptian exhibit and an Etruscan and Villanovan collection at the archeological Museo. The evening we arrived, we walked a few of Bologna's many covered sidewalks. Bologna claims to be the most archaic city in the world. On our "passeggiata" (evening stroll) we came across the spectacle of the Duomo being blockaded by riot cops. The night before, a house full of immigrants had been evicted from the home they had been sharing, and during the day they entered the church and demanded sanctuary. Bologna is a university town (the world's oldest and the hotbed of all things liberal, leftist, and even communist). A crowd of students had gathered to show support for the immigrants.

From Bologna, we traveled to Ravenna. The mosaics in Ravenna are known as the world's best, and they certainly impressed me. The color palate used by the artists was as subtle as the palate used by any painter. Unlike oil paintings though, the mosaics give the scenes a luminosity that painters can only envy. The renditions of the saints, Magi, and life of Jesus were incredibly lifelike. The characters' cheeks even had a rosy blush in them.

We left Ravenna in the rain and headed to Umbria where we kept a much slower pace, even though our days were as full. But those are a tale for another day.

What We Must Do

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two men accused of violating the Texas sodomy statute. By pleading no contest to sodomy charges and paying an appellant bond, the two men and their legal defense team have begun to intensely and ambitiously challenge the 119-year-old law.

Strategically, HRC will push for legislators to repeal the sodomy law in similar lobbying efforts as other political organizations. But David Muck of the HRC Houston Steering Committee believes the group is most helpful raising legal funding.

"What we're going to be doing is going to affect legislation at the local and state

level," said Muck, who is also co-chair of the group's Federal Club, responsible for fund-raising.

HRC, with approximately 5,000 local members, is expected to raise more than \$300,000 in 1999 by hosting several monthly social events, including the annual HRC dinner on Mar. 20 and a private performance of *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* at the Alley Theatre on Apr. 1. The majority of revenue, however, will come from the Houston HRC Winter Gala.

HRC's local efforts mirror the long-time legislative campaigns against anti-gay legislation on national levels. The group is equally concerned with job discrimination, gay marriage issues, and hate crimes at all three levels of the political system.

For more information or to join HRC, call 202/628-4160, or visit <http://www.hrc.org>.

LESBIAN GAY RIGHTS LOBBY OF TEXAS

In the past year, lobbying giant LGRL has prepared for the upcoming legislation by continuously urging constituents to contact their legislators, distributing hate crime pledge cards, and conducting lobby training days for volunteers. Its primary focus for the upcoming legislation is to just keep working.

LGRL released a similar legislative agenda as the caucus and seems to be tackling all the issues set forth by legislators. Its agenda includes lobbying proposals about hate crimes, AIDS/HIV, gay adoptions, gay marriages, transgender issues, and non-discrimination in employment and education.

With its own Legislative Matching Project, LGRL mobilizes outreach efforts in each district in Texas when a proposal or bill arises affecting gay and lesbian rights. However, the group needs more volunteers for the program.

"With enough committed volunteers participating in programs such as LGRL's legislative matching, we will have a strong, comprehensive grassroots lobbying effort," said Dianne Hardy-Garcia, LGRL executive director.

The group is also sponsoring the "March for Our Families" on Mar. 21, followed by the "Lesbian Gay Lobby Day" on Mar. 22. LGRL encourages all supporters to visit Austin on those days to lobby their legislators.

For more information, call 512/474-5475, or visit lgrltexas@aol.com.