

professional misdeeds.

The thousand-word press release trumpeting Paras' selection was accompanied by a highly unusual five pages of "testimonials" from selected leaders. The package was curious for the number of omitted elements normally contained in such a document. There was virtually no mention of personal data, such as where she was born or her age. It omits her long years of membership in the Marxist group Line of March, her sojourn to Cuba as part of a Marxist brigade, and her deportation from the Philippines for anti-government activities.

Her principle identification, in the first line of the release, was as a San Francisco Health Commissioner, a political appointment to an advisory body that meets once a month and carries a modest honorarium. Her highest-paying and most professionally responsible previous job, as deputy director at Shanti Project, wasn't mentioned until the final sentence of the document.

The "testimonials of support" from various leaders seemed to fall into two categories. The most effusive testimonials came from Dr. Mitchell Katz; Elizabeth Birch, the new executive director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund; Torie Osborn, former executive director of NGLTF; Carole Migden, supervisor of the city and county of San Francisco; and Kevin Cathart, executive director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Many of the more prominent names signed on to a much blander statement pledging to work with

NGLTF. Those included Virginia Apuzzo, Suzanne Pharr, Steve Lew, Kate Clinton, Mandy Carter, Urvashi Vaid, Carmen Vazquez, and Jeff Richardson.

Most prominently among the missing of those testifying to the worthiness of Paras were the national AIDS organizations: ACT UP, AIDS Action Council, the National Association of People with AIDS, the National Minority AIDS Council, and the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention.

They simply were not asked.

"I'm not surprised that they didn't target or focus on AIDS organizations, because I've never known NGLTF to be a player

on AIDS," said Alexander Robinson, president of NTFAP and Washington lobbyist on gay, lesbian and AIDS issues for the ACLU.

"I don't think it is significant that they chose someone who briefly worked in an AIDS organization," he explained, "I think they will continue in their same pattern of giving AIDS cursory attention."

NAPWA executive director Bill Freeman found that prospect "real disconcerting, because the health challenge that our community faces is clearly HIV disease. NGLTF has not made AIDS any kind of a priority."

Paras does not seem likely to change that focus of the task force. An interview she did with *The Washington Blade* states, "Paras cited AIDS as one of about 20 issues 'of enormous importance' to the gay movement which she believes NGLTF must address."

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The incredible shrinking task force

Two more senior employees leave NGLTF, while one very controversial one joins the staff

by Bob Roehr

Legislative director Tanya Domi, on administrative leave without pay and working in Nepal, faxed her letter of resignation to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force on Nov. 30. Executive director Peri Jude Radecic, who was supposed to return to the job of director of public policy, added her own resignation later that day. She is staying on through a brief transition period.

How many people work full time for the task force? "I'm not sure, hang on one second," said spokesman Gregory Fisher on Dec. 6. He turned away from the phone and shouted the question to others. Then he covered the receiver and then, after a long, silent pause, the official word came back, "Twenty-two full time and one part-time consultant."

The executive director's office has been a veritable musical chairs since Urvashi Vaid left in late 1992. Since that time the names Scotch taped to the door have been: Peri Jude Radecic (on a three-month acting basis), Torie Osborn (who announced her resignation after less than six months on the job), Radecic again (who, after nine months, said she would only fulfill her one-year contract), and now Melinda Paras.

Senior personnel left NGLTF in three waves this year. The workplace organizing position has been vacant since George Kronenberger retired for medical reasons. Financial constraints brought

June layoffs for Marj Plumb, director of the lesbian health project; Martin Hiraga, director of the anti-violence and sodomy reform projects; and senior accountant Robert Rodriguez.

Late summer saw a resignation by communications director David Smith, with board member Gregory Fisher filling in on a temporary and unpaid basis.

Spokesperson Robin Kane, director of finance Deborah Cox, and director of the Creating Change conference Ivy Young all left in early September.

NGLTF adopted a 1994 budget of \$4.3 million at its board meeting in September 1993. It soon realized that budget projected an overly optimistic increase in revenue and operations. It has been reduced by 40 percent—in three increments, at board meetings in January, May and September—to the current level of \$2.6 million.

Yet, by this fall, the board still projected a large deficit at the end of the year. This reflected a continued decline in revenue from its small-donor-income stream of memberships, direct mail gifts, and fees for attendance at events such as the Creating Change conference.

Only two large individual gifts totaling \$300,000 have rescued NGLTF from ending the year in the red. Those two gifts represent more than 10 percent of the organization's income for the year.

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