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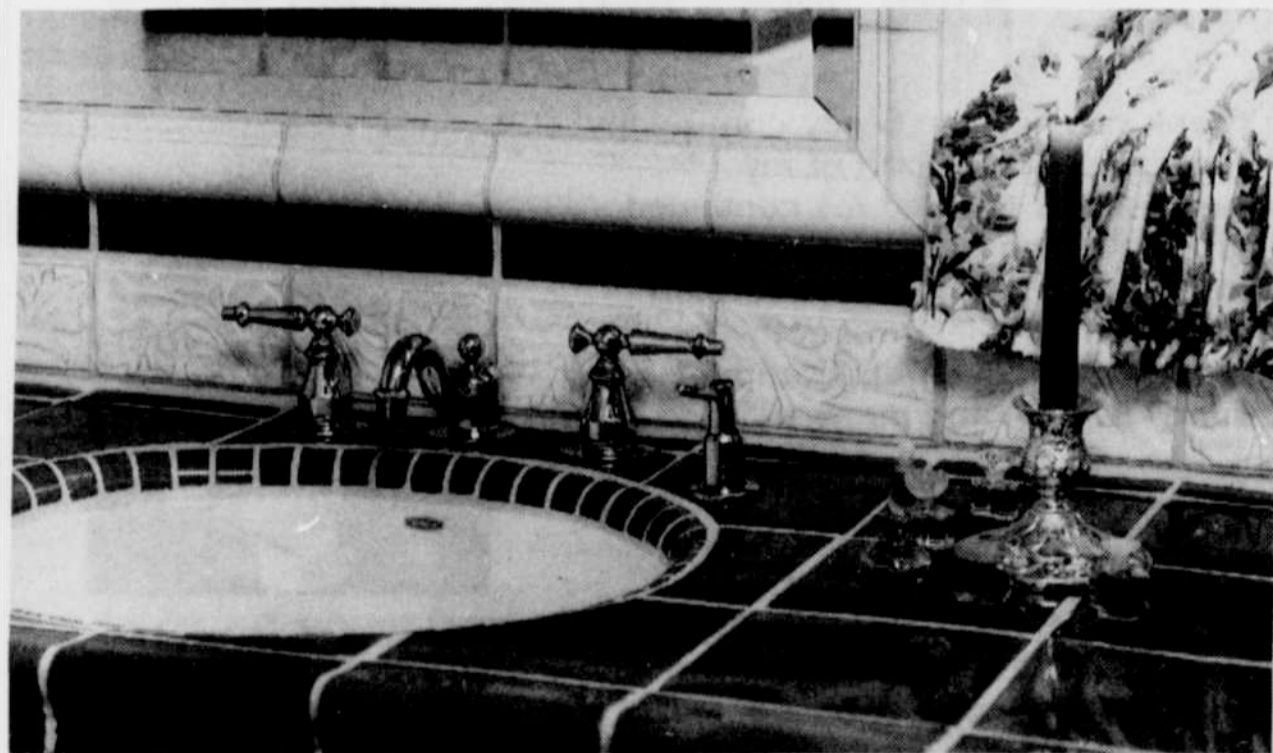
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national news

Journalists pull out

Controversy prompts relocation of NLGJA convention

by Richard Shumate

The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association has decided to pull its 1995 convention from Los Angeles in the wake of California's approval of an initiative cutting off public benefits to undocumented aliens.

The NLGJA's national board, at the urging of its Southern California chapter, made the decision in solidarity with the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, which killed plans for a convention in San Diego.

"It was an important statement to make in regard to human rights," says Alan Acosta, deputy city editor of the *Los Angeles Times* and co-president of the Southern California chapter. "It just seemed that we should consider seriously what our own role would be since the NAHJ had pulled out of Denver."

The NAHJ moved its 1993 convention from Denver to Washington, D.C., after voters in Colorado approved Amendment 2, which prohibited cities and counties from extending civil rights protections to lesbians and gay men. The amendment has since been struck down by the Colorado Supreme Court.

Last November, voters in California approved Proposition 187, which denies education, welfare and non-emergency medical care to illegal immigrants. Many Latino/a groups, including the NAHJ, view the measure as a racist attack.

"We feel strongly that we, and leaders of other Latino advocacy associations, must search [our] collective conscience before sending convention dollars into a state whose voters overwhelmingly endorsed legislation designed to punish undocumented immigrants, principally those from Spanish-speaking countries," says NAHJ president Gilbert Bailon of Dallas.

Acosta, also a member of NAHJ, says when Southern California NLGJA chapter members began discussing what they should do after the election, sentiment was "overflowing" in favor of asking the national board to move the convention. But he said the NAHJ didn't ask the group to make the change and that returning NAHJ's favor in Colorado was not the sole motivation for taking this stand.

"It was done because we believed it was the right thing to do," says Acosta.

National NLGJA president Roy Aarons says

national board members and leaders of other chapters around the country agreed overwhelmingly to the change. However, he says some were concerned that pulling the convention would amount to journalists taking sides on a controversial issue, conflicting with the profession's ethical standards that discourage such overt partiality.

"We were concerned about that. But what we are really doing is respecting the decision of a fellow journalism organization," says Aarons. "And given the climate in California, staying

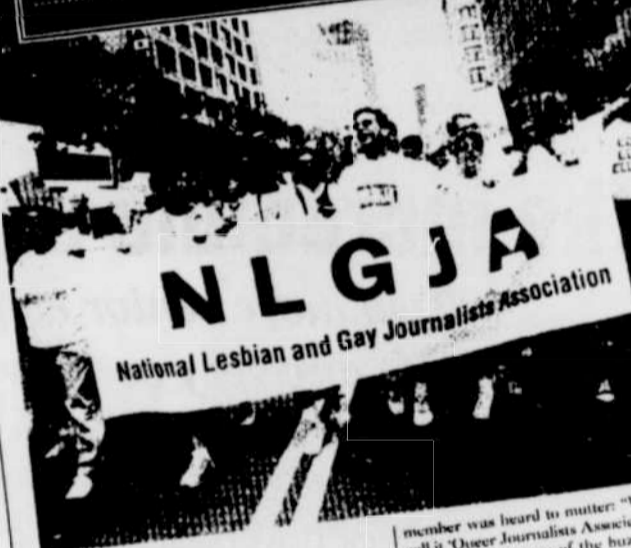


FROM THE PRESIDENT
The spirit and the substance
By Lynn Aarons
NLGJA President

How to capture the essence of Conference '92? There's no simple description for what happened in San Francisco June 25 to 28, from the opening reception to the bubble of love at the end of the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day Parade. If I were to try to boil it down to two words, they'd be: the spirit and the substance.

A kind of electricity crackled through the event, not easily explained, but ask anyone who was there. I couldn't see it from the podium, but several people told me that during the opening session, tears were running down cheeks as Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. — among journalism's most powerful — said on video it was OK, at last, to be openly gay at *The New York Times*. Why tears? I suspect because it tapped into our hunger for acceptance and held a promise of a brighter future not only at *The Times*, but throughout our

How GREAT IT WAS!



By Lee Stinson
Editor's Note: Lee Stinson is executive director of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and a member of NLGJA. He spoke at the NLGJA convention and was interviewed for Alternatives.

member was heard to mutter: "We still call it 'Queer Journalists Association'." "Queer" was one of the buzzwords of the convention. It's a show-off, get-used-to-it's not a word journalists use in print, unless it's in quotes. Your mother, and you, don't approve. — Lee Stinson

National NLGJA president Roy Aarons says national board members and leaders of other chapters around the country agreed overwhelmingly to the change. However, he says some were concerned that pulling the convention would amount to journalists taking sides on a controversial issue, conflicting with the profession's ethical standards.

there would have been a political statement as well."

The event was expected to draw 800 to 1,000 people to Los Angeles, providing an economic bounty "in the hundreds of thousands of dollars," says Acosta. Now, that money and those conventioners will be going to Washington, D.C., the alternate site.

"There is a sense of disappointment. We had put in a fair amount of work already on the convention," says Acosta. "But we had to look at what was most important—our own sense of fulfillment for hosting the convention or the issue involved."