

To march or not to march?

TO THE EDITOR:

The millennium approaches. And as it does, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community is right to focus on it as an opportunity. The symbolism of a new century can be a powerful one for all of us to bring the civil rights struggle for the lesbian and gay community front and center. Coupled with an election year, the turn of the century will present us with an opportunity to make history.

Consider our recent losses in Maine and Washington state. There are several lessons for us: We must be smart, move fast and work together; more needs to be done to bolster our statewide organizations; and educating swing voters will be key (polls tell us that predominantly these voters are married and live outside of urban areas).

It is in the context of these lessons that any proposed tactics for welcoming in the millennium must be evaluated. Several ideas are currently being considered. The Human Rights Campaign and Metropolitan Community Church, recognizing the opportunity that the new millennium presents, has called for a national march on Washington in the spring of 2000 [see related story on page 13]. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, along with the Federation of Statewide Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Political Organizations, recognizing the need to mobilize locally, has proposed a 50-state initiative in 1999.

As these proposals are considered, a key question emerges: How do we best utilize the valuable resources of our community to maximize the opportunity presented by the millennium? Remember that resources should be broadly defined to include time, energy and money.

A set of other more specific issues flows from the broader question above, each of which must be thoughtfully considered before moving forward.

1. If we are going to educate the public (with an eye on those swing voters) about hate-driven initiatives, we must have strong operations at the local level. Strong, vibrant state and local organizations, focusing their resources within, will be the linchpin. What strategy best addresses this?

2. In the year 2000, we have the opportunity to reshape the political face of America by electing both national and local candidates supportive of our civil rights. How are our financial resources best allocated? Perhaps our money needs to stay in the trenches, where we can focus efforts on fighting local and state ballot initiatives and electing supportive candidates.

3. Who will we be speaking to in the spring of 2000? When you consider that a new president and many new members of Congress will be elected later that year, a national march may be more effective the following year, when we have an opportunity to engage a new administration and a new Congress in the issues of our community.

4. Is there ample time/funding/organization

to mount successful statewide actions around the country? 1999 is just around the corner, and there is much work to be done.

We look to this letter as a means to expand a vigorous scrutiny of all ideas under consideration. We believe strongly that decisions are richer for the debate. Further, we as community leaders recognize our responsibility to engage our constituents in a public conversation on issues such as these, and we commit to developing both formal and informal mechanisms for that conversation.

The Human Rights Campaign, Metropolitan Community Church and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force deserve our thanks for identifying the turn of the century as the extraordinary opportunity it is. We can set a new tone for a new century. But we must all be careful to avoid setting our tactics before we have agreed on our goals.

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JUBI HEADLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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Where are they today?

TO THE EDITOR:

It would be interesting to know if any of your readers knows of or about several people that a writer is seeking in connection with a proposed book on early history.

If anyone has any information about these people, please contact the Homosexual Information Center West, Box 8252, Universal City, CA 91618; fax (714) 376-9312.

Charles W. Talley and/or Benny Norman Baker (arrested Dec. 31, 1966, at the Black Cat in Los Angeles).

Gerard Joseph Lavoie, George Fleuti and Clive Michael Boutilier Lavoie (fought deportation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in early 1950s and '60s).

Alvin Leon Buchanan and/or Travis Lee Strickland (challenged the Texas sodomy law in the early '60s).

Since our history is less than 50 years old, we can and must preserve it and such books as the proposed will help do this. Not many people at a gay bar in 1966, for instance, would think that in the late '90s they would be remembered as part of a history and deserve honor for their just being.

Thank you and any of your readers who may have ideas or help.

BILLY GLOVER, VICE CHAIR
Homosexual Information Center

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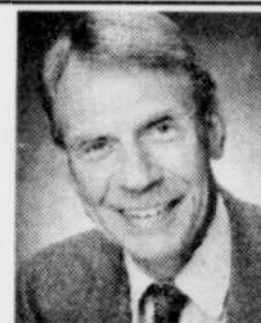
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