

# Getting

# the

Creating Change

# House

# in

comes to Portland

# Order

to eradicate racism

by Kim Stephenson



*"If our community doesn't have its own house in order, it is all the more difficult for us to build the coalitions with predominantly heterosexual organizations of people of color"*

—Lorri L. Jean

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force began, and remains, a politically pioneering organization, and Portland is lucky to play host to its annual conference Nov. 6 to 10.

Creating Change began in 1987 to push the political envelope and charge up more than 2,000 national queer activists. This year's gathering is sure to be one of its most profound. NGLTF always has been devoted to equality and freedom, and the Creating Change theme—"Building an Anti-Racist Movement: Working for Social and Economic Justice"—is evidence of this commitment and its expansion.

"A number of things led to this year's conference having a theme," executive director Lorri L. Jean says. "At Creating Change last year, a number of GLBT leaders from various communities of color approached us about taking some action to make the conference both more diverse and more relevant to people of color working for GLBT rights. Early this year, we began the process of talking with people of color leaders around the country and held meetings in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York.

"NGLTF established the theme because we felt that it was critical that we do so, given what is happening in our society and our world these days," she continues. "First, it is a critical issue for our movement. Racism is one of the most pervasive, divisive and damaging elements in our society, in our world and in our GLBT communities. The failure of our broader GLBT civil rights movement to eradicate the racism in our own ranks has been tragic. It has irreparably harmed many people, and it has diminished all of us."

Conference organizers hope to bridge the historical separation between white and non-white activists and build

better relationships between the queer movement and its allies. Keynote speakers will emphasize that we have many allies because all oppressions and "isms" are connected and have the same enemies. The conference will challenge activists to put an end to single-issue identity politics and to think and reach outside the white box to include agendas important to people of color.

Jean will open the conference Nov. 7 and introduce keynote speakers Carmen Vazquez, public policy director of New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, and Tim Sweeney, senior program officer of the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund in San Francisco. The two of them will engage in a lively, per-



*"Too many white people will walk right to the edge of the cliff with us, but they're not jumping—not unless someone can guarantee them a safety net"*

—Carmen Vazquez

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