

NGLTF'S VIOLENCE PROJECT
by Rick Rudy

Few cities have the resources to support their own anti-gay violence project. San Francisco is fortunate to have CUAV, and HTG is glad to have provided them a forum in the South Bay.

But violence against minorities is a nationwide problem: each neighborhood has its own minority population against which it may turn when the mood strikes.

The federal government, many states, and police organizations track such violence, publish statistics and have plans for combatting it, if the minority is strong enough to insist on its rights. Blacks, Hispanics, women, Asians, etc. have their lobbies and partake of such governmental protection. Gays and lesbians do not. Yet.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) established a Violence Project several years ago to document anti-gay violence and harassment, to publish these studies, and to work towards forcing the government to recognize the problem officially.

This project is very germane to the Task Force's mission, reconfirmed at the recent November 7-9 meeting of NGLTF's Board of Directors:

"The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is an educational and advocacy organization committed to securing legal, economic and social freedoms enabling lesbians and gay men to lead visible, productive and proud lives.

"NGLTF exists to provide national leadership to help create a society where all lesbians and gay men, indeed all oppressed people, can live openly, free from violence, bigotry, discrimination, and governmental indifference."

NGLTF's Kevin Berrill has published violence reports in 1984 and 1985, has authored a 30 page pamphlet "Dealing with Violence: A Guide For Gay and Lesbian People" (available from NGLTF, 1517 U Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009, @ \$3.50) and finally arranged to testify before the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, on October 9, 1986.

Here are some excerpts from his testimony:

"...Anti-gay violence has been around long before AIDS, but there is disturbing evidence that the AIDS and anti-gay violence epidemics may now be following the same menacing curve....Our government's response to anti-gay violence is similar to its initial response to the AIDS epidemic: such violence is viewed as solely a gay problem rather than as something that should concern us all.

"NGLTF undertook a study involving nearly 2100 persons in eight cities. The results were staggering: more than one-in-five gay men and nearly one-in-ten lesbians have been punched, hit kicked, or beaten because of their sexual orientation...

"...anti-gay violence is not only pervasive but increasing. Among 44 organizations reporting such violence to NGLTF in 1985, 38% claimed that anti-gay incidents were more frequent than in 1984...

"...Dee is still recovering from burns caused by acid thrown at her face as she was leaving from the LA Gay Community Center...Robert, from New Jersey, whose assailants beat him, extinguished cigarettes in his face, and then tied him to the back of a truck, dragging him in tow...Charlie Howard, Bangor, ME, who was thrown off a bridge to his

death by three teenagers.

"NGLTF makes the following recommendations:

"1) Increased research into anti-gay violence and its consequences.

"2) Legislation to combat anti-gay violence and more rigorous prosecution of cases involving gay and lesbian victims.

"3) Official monitoring of anti-gay incidents and other hate crimes.

"4) Improved police/gay community relations, and establishment of law enforcement policies to address anti-gay violence and other hate crimes.

"5) Adequate services for gay and lesbian crime victims.

"6) Educational programs to combat the prejudice that leads to anti-gay violence.

"7) Repeal of all sodomy laws and passage of legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

This Project and others sponsored by NGLTF (and others) need your support. Join NGLTF. And contribute generously.

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