TEXAS PRIDE: THE FORMATION OF DALLAS' GAY COMMUNITY, 1966-2003

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation draws upon the works of John D'Emilio in *Sexual Politics and Sexual Communities* and John Howard in *Men Like That* to explain the formation of Dallas' gay community during the second half of the twentieth century. According to D'Emilio, wartime mobilization during World War II provided many gay men and lesbians the opportunity to meet individuals who shared similar desires and identities for the first time. Following the end of the conflict, D'Emilio argued several of these individuals remained in coastal cities where they formed their own communities and homophile organizations. Through his work, Howard suggested men in conservative small, rural communities found opportunities to form both intimate and sexual relationships with other men throughout the last half of the twentieth century.

In 1966, Phil Johnson, a veteran of World War II, organized Dallas' first homophile organization. In many ways, Johnson epitomized the men and women highlighted throughout D'Emilio's work, but unlike those individuals, Johnson returned to Dallas where he eventually formed the city's first homophile organization, the Circle of Friends. By exploring the ways in which Johnson initially deviated from D'Emilio's framework, we find that gay men and lesbians were able to build a community in Dallas during the last half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, this dissertation contends that rather than railing against the existing political system, community organizers embraced "the Dallas Way," which enabled them to forge a civil rights movement in Dallas while also contributing to the overall national movement.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Mark and Brenda Dotson.

Not only did y'all always believe in me, but you were also the first and the most important teachers in my life.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

My dissertation argues that the development and the characteristics of the gay and lesbian community in Dallas, Texas add to the national narrative of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) civil rights movement. Early activists in Dallas recognized popular demonstrations and protests along the east and west coasts would not be well received by those in Dallas. Therefore, community leaders specifically sought to forge their own path to civil rights and equality. Ultimately, this philosophy, known as "The Dallas Way," a more conservative and subtle approach to activism, sets the Dallas gay civil rights movement apart from others. Finally, by studying the events and obstacles activists faced in Dallas, we can better understand the nuances the gay civil rights movement in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century.

With the emergence of social and cultural history in the mid-to late-twentieth century, historians reconceived the American past through previously overlooked lenses.[1] Prior to the early 1980s, historians rarely, if ever, considered the creation, impact, or contributions of the gay and lesbian communities in the United States. But in 1983, John D'Emilio published *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, which established the dominant narrative for the rise of LGBT history in the United States. Within this seminal work, D'Emilio suggested that port cities along the east and west coasts of the United States offered safe havens for gays and lesbians following the end of World War II. D'Emilio argued that wartime mobilization enabled gay Americans to meet and

[1] Historians credit British historian E.P. Thompson for providing the framework for social history. In 1963, Thompson published *The Making of the English Working Class*, which was the first of its kind to focus on the lives of ordinary, working-class citizens.

interact with other gay people. Due to the lack of social or cultural acceptance in middle America, many of these gay Americans decided to remain in coastal cities where they formed homophile organizations and communities. In conjunction with the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, many of these coastal communities became pillars of liberalism in the United States.

Perhaps D'Emilio's most notable contribution was refuting the argument that gay and lesbian communities rarely existed prior to the Stonewall Riots in June of 1969.[2] For the vast majority of Americans, gays and lesbians were either closeted or existed on the periphery of society prior to the summer of 1969. Even many of the founding members of organizations like the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance failed to recognize that gay men and lesbians worked to form social and activist communities long before Stonewall. In addition to illustrating the communities prior to Stonewall, D'Emilio framed the members of these communities as people who recognized that they were "members of an oppressed minority" who had a shared identity based on "systemic injustice."[3] Drawing upon Marxist theory, D'Emilio envisioned the homosexual community as an oppressed "class," which facilitated the rise of a collective homosexual "consciousness."[4]

According to D'Emilio, the Second World War served as a flashpoint to create gay and lesbian communities. The mobilization of the war effort facilitated the movement of gay and lesbian Americans to urban areas where they met others who

[2] John D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of the Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983): 1.
[3] Ibid, 4-5.
[4] Ibid, 11.

shared similar sexual identities and/or behaviors.[5] Because many of these Americans came from more socially conservative and isolated locations, they remained closeted in their hometowns. When they joined American military units or relocated to urban areas for job opportunities provided by wartime mobilization, many LGBT Americans discovered that they were not alone in their feelings and desires. At the end of the war, many homosexuals opted to remain in large urban settings where they formed relationships and communities rather than return to their rural, conservative hometowns and, ultimately, the closet.

D'Emilio argued that the rise of McCarthyism in the 1950s led to the mobilization of gays and lesbians politically. When the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) outed and villainized homosexuals working in the federal government, homosexual activists formed groups like the Mattachine Society, One, and the Daughters of Bilitis. David K. Johnson, in *The Lavender Scare*, illustrated that members of HUAC and Congress believed that homosexuals lived deviant lives and maintained a weak constitution and moral compass. Due to these conditions, McCarthyites believed that homosexuals could be easily manipulated by Soviet agents and, therefore, they should be removed from federal government to preserve national security.[6] By the 1960s, anti-war and political activism served to further mobilize many of these early homophile organizations. According to D'Emilio, the increase in political

[5] Ibid, 25.

[6] David K. Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 115.

activism and demonstrations set the stage for the 1969 Stonewall Riots and future political activism within the gay community.[7]

Since 1983 when John D'Emilio published *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, the vast majority of LGBT scholarship has veered from a national narrative to an attempt to understand the dynamics of local communities. In many ways, local scholars worked to improve upon, refute, or validate theories presented within the national framework of the LGBT civil rights movement. Due to the watershed moment of the Stonewall Riots, which took place in New York City in 1969, many of the early local narratives of LGBT history focused on towns and communities along the eastern seaboard.

In 1993, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis published *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold,* which highlights the experiences of lesbians living in Buffalo from the mid-1930s to the early 1960s. Through a social constructionist model,[8] the authors asserted that working-class lesbians in Buffalo forged communities in which they could express themselves both in the clothes that they wore and the people they dated.[9] The authors argued that lesbians in Buffalo had not simply adopted "femme" or "butch" roles in an effort to emulate or mimic heterosexual relationships.[10] Rather, these women participated in homosexual relationships, which were based on attraction and not the desire to simply to recreate heteronormativity.[11] Prior to Kennedy and Davis'

[7] D'Emilio, 174-76.

[8] The social constructionist theory contends that objects and ideas only have value because society at large has constructed a system to assign value. Furthermore, societies and civilizations have established social hierarchies based on gender and identity.

[9] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.

[10] Ibid, 2.

[11] Ibid, 326.

contribution to the historiography of homosexuality in America, the majority of narratives focused primarily on the experiences of gay men. Through their work, Kennedy and Davis not only expand our understanding of gay communities prior to the Stonewall Riots, but they also highlight the unique perspectives of women during this era.

In an attempt to understand homosexual communities outside of an urban setting, Ester Newton studied a "gay mecca" in Cherry Grove, Fire Island, located just off the coast of Long Island, New York.[12] Unlike the working-class lesbians in Buffalo who often met discretely in bars and at house parties, gay men and lesbians in Cherry Grove lived completely transparent lives.[13] Newton argued that this visibility was possible because Cherry Grove was a popular vacation spot for members of New York's theatre companies. As the vast majority of the people in Cherry Grove shared similar sexual preferences and feelings, they did not feel the need to remain closeted in this safe haven. Therefore, the experiences at Cherry Grove add a richness to the historiography by illustrating an early community where homosexuals did not have to hide their identities or feelings.

Furthermore, Newton suggested the openness of living life in Cherry Grove enabled gay men and lesbians to establish at least one reference point for what it meant to be gay, from the types of clothing people could wear to their mannerisms.[14] Unlike Cherry Grove, most major cities and states enacted laws that forbade homosexual

[12] Esther Newton, Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 9.
[13] Ibid, 3.
[14] Ibid, 11.

activities, which ranged from wearing clothes of the opposite sex to sexual behaviors like sodomy. In addition to providing a safe space for gay men and lesbians to express themselves however they wished, Cherry Grove also provided a place in which people could connect to one another not only with a common sexual identity, but also outside of common "categories like race, class, or gender."[15]

In the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, local narratives for LGBT history multiplied to include locations like Philadelphia, Mississippi, Chicago, and Detroit. In *Men Like That*, John Howard challenged D'Emilio's paradigm of homophile communities being formed after the urbanization and industrialization of an area or region.[16] According to Howard, since the end of the Second World War men in small, rural areas found opportunities to participate "in intimate and sexual relations with other men" in Mississippi.[17] Additionally, Howard challenged D'Emilio's notion that there was a shift from a focus on homosexual acts to a homosexual identity. Howard argued that men in Mississippi between the mid-1940s and the early-1980s came to understand "both acts *and* identities" as homosexual.[18]

Howard's focus on homosexual activism in Mississippi is one of the most significant contributions to LGBT historiography because he highlights the often-overlooked experiences of gay men in the rural South. Not unlike other regions in the post-World War II era, Mississippi saw the rise of a homophile movement in the 1950s

[15] Ibid, 326.
[16] John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 12.
[17] Ibid, xi.
[18] Ibid, xviii.

and the creation of the Mississippi Gay Alliance (MGA) in the 1970s. But it also witnessed the creation of homophile or gay-affirming churches, which enabled gay Mississippians to achieve "greater levels of community solidarity and political power" in the 1980s.[19] Howard attributed the success of these churches to the fact that they "rarely responded to a narrow gay movement driven by identity politics."[20]

In 2009 Margo Canaday added to the national narrative of homosexuality in the United States. In *The Straight State*, Canady argued that the federal government grappled with homosexuality long before McCarthyism in the 1950s. From the start of the twentieth century, the American government considered the moral and social impact of same-sex attraction through immigration policies, military requirements, and welfare qualifications. Canaday did not challenge or dispute D'Emilio's assertation surrounding the rise of gay communities following World War II, but she recognized that the federal government established policies to limit the rights of homosexual Americans well before World War II.[21]

My research indicates that while, in some instances, gay men and lesbians in Dallas fit within the overall frame supplied by John D'Emilio, in other respects, their trajectories resonate more powerfully with the people studied by Howard. Just as gay men in rural Mississippi adopted more socially and politically conservative methodologies, gay and lesbian community leaders in Dallas purposefully chose to build and foster a civil rights movement that would thrive within the cultural norms of the

[19] Ibid, 231.
[20] Ibid, 231-32.
[21] Margot Canaday, The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 258.

region. For example, when gay men in the seventies organized Dallas' first politically driven organization, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, they carefully cultivated the philosophy of "the Dallas Way." This philosophy was a roadmap for creating change in the city by working within the existing social and political landscape of Dallas. These organizers rejected radicalism and opted for a more nuanced approach to civil rights. Therefore, by building upon the concepts introduced by Howard, my research illustrates this more conservative approach could extend into an urban space.

In the first chapter, I outline the life of Phil Johnson, a young, war veteran, who organized the Dallas homophile organization, the Circle of Friends. Though the Circle of Friends was not the first of its type in the country, it was the first homophile organization in Texas. Additionally, the Circle of Friends deviated from other homophile organizations in two very important ways. First, because the stated purpose of the organization was to meet both the social and spiritual needs of the gay community, almost half of the founding members were heterosexual, religious leaders. And secondly, the Circle of Friends did not serve any political or activist role in the lives of its members or the community at large. The organization simply offered a place of refuge for gay men during an era when homosexual conduct was extremely taboo.

Similar to other homophile organizations across the country, the Circle of Friends almost exclusively served the needs of gay men. By the summer of 1970, Circle of Friends members recognized the need for a more inclusive, spiritual place in Dallas.

After learning about the Metropolitan Community Church[22] (MCC) in California, a core group of people worked to establish a branch of the church in Dallas. Within the year, MCC-Dallas established a congregation and began holding services in various members' homes. By 1973, MCC-Dallas opened their doors in Bryan Place, a neighborhood located in Old East Dallas.

Chapter two outlines the rise of political activism within Dallas' gay community during the seventies. During the mid-1970s, five members of the gay community came together to form Dallas' first politically motivated homophile organization, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus. Through this organization, gay and lesbian Texans attempted to use the power of their vote to influence favorable legislation in both local and state elections. In order to be politically successful, it was necessary for the gay community to become more visible in Dallas. Though they experienced a great deal of push back, Dallas' gay community began hosting pride parades and holding community rallies in the city.

In chapter three, Religion and Politics, I explore the impact of religious and conservative ideals on the gay civil rights movement in Dallas during the late seventies. With the rise of the Moral Majority, many ministers became more comfortable addressing social issues from their pulpits and religious leaders in Dallas were no exception. As prominent, local ministers condemned homosexuality, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus used educational efforts, like hosting conferences, to publicly challenge

[22] The original Metropolitan Community Church was formed in Los Angeles, California in 1968 under the leadership of Rev. Troy Perry. The Church's core focus was to serve and meet the needs of the gay community.

homophobic rhetoric. These conferences often hosted notable keynote speakers, like Harvey Milk,[23] who energized and inspired Dallas' gay community.

In addition to formally challenging religious objections to homosexuality, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus worked with other political and gay organizations from around the state to pool their resources to create a more equitable society. While these organizations fought for civil protections, their biggest challenge was the repeal of Penal Code 21.06, Texas' sodomy law. As long as 21.06 was the law, gay men and lesbians lived in fear of being "outed" or arrested at any moment. While advocating for change in their local community was paramount, several members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus participated in the first National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights in October 1979.

Chapter four, Navigating the Law and the Political Landscape, explores legal challenges to the Texas penal code during the late-seventies and the early-eighties. Within months of the National March on Washington, two significant legal challenges occurred in Dallas. First, a group of men arrested for public lewdness at a gay disco opted to fight misdemeanor charges rather than simply accepting a plea agreement, which offered the men relative anonymity. Secondly, Donald F. Baker filed the first federal court case challenging Texas Penal Code 21.06 in the fall of 1979. Baker's attorney argued the law had "a chilling effect" on his client's personal relationships, but, more importantly, the law violated "the integrity and dignity" of all gay people in Texas

[23] Harvey Milk was the first openly gay elected official in California. As a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Milk proposed and passed a gay rights ordinance in 1978. Ultimately, Milk served about eleven months on the board before he was assassinated in November 1978.

as "it declare[d] that homosexuals [were] criminals." As gay activists became more vocal during the fight for civil rights, political officials became more responsive to the gay community. In the summer of 1981, the Dallas Gay Alliance[24] achieved a major milestone when they hosted a townhall meeting with the newly elected mayor, Jack Evans. Prior to Evans, no mayor had ever agreed to any public meetings or townhalls with the gay community in Dallas.

In chapter five, A Community in Crisis, I outline the fracturing of the gay community's most prominent organization, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, and the impact this had on the overall civil rights movement. In the spring of 1981, some of the caucus' board members advocated for a restructuring of the organization. As the caucus expanded its focus outside of the political arena, several members believed the organizational name no longer reflected their intent within the community. After a contentious debate, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus evolved into the Dallas Gay Alliance. For many members, the name change seemed like a natural evolution of the organization, but for some of the most active women, simply using the word "gay" overlooked the work and commitment of the lesbian community.

While changing the name of the caucus created tension within activist leadership, the growing AIDS epidemic threw the entire community into a tailspin. As the disease became more prominent in coastal cities, Howie Daire, founder of the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, raised concerns about the risks of AIDS exposure in Dallas. In an

[24] Following a restructuring of their goals, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus became the Dallas Gay Alliance in May 1981.

effort to spread awareness, the Dallas Gay Alliance hosted community forums and advocated for the use of preventative measures, like using contraceptives or limiting the number of sexual partners.

Though I explore the early years of the AIDS crisis within chapter five, my last chapter, The AIDS Epidemic in Dallas, specifically details the collective action taken by several organizations to address the needs of those living with disease in Dallas. Though local health officials initially worked with gay organizations to educate people about the risks and symptoms associated with the virus, very little state or local funding was used to address the disease early on. As a result, in 1983, the Dallas Gay Alliance established a community resource center, which offered an information network for AIDS patients. Fearing that their voices were not being heard, a group of activists in Dallas formed the Gay Urban Truth Squad (GUTS), which used public demonstrations to rally support for an increase in AIDS support.

In conclusion, my research explores some of the most influential organizations and leaders within Dallas' gay community during the second half of the twentieth century. Throughout the dissertation, I relied heavily on three types of primary sources: documents created by community organizations and/or leaders, local gay publications, and publications from mainstream media outlets. By comparing the information within each of these sources, I was able to more fully understand the social and political climate in Dallas during this era.

While these sources helped create a rich narrative, there are certain limitations to them. As the majority of gay community leaders and activists were more affluent, white

people, we often lose the experiences and contributions of poorer individuals and people of color. Though this dissertation does little to address any issues of class or race, members of the Dallas Gay Alliance made an attempt to address this issue by creating and sponsoring suborganizations for underrepresented communities. For example, in 1982 the DGA established the Hispanic Task Force. Although there was an immediate interest in this group, members quickly grew frustrated and dissatisfied with the demands of the alliance. Unfortunately, the DGA required their subgroups to go through the main organization's board before they could host any events or activities. Therefore, in an effort to gain more autonomy, the HTF disbanded and members formed a new organization, the Gay and Lesbian Hispanic Coalition of Dallas (GLHCD).[25]

Though we know other organizations, like the GLHCD, existed in Dallas, I have found very little archival information about them. Without a doubt, people of color and poorer individuals lived and participated in Dallas' gay community during this entire era, but without documentation, it is extremely difficult to definitively tell their stories. Unfortunately, those writing and producing local, gay publications were very similar to the socio-economic status and race of the people operating the most influential gay organizations in Dallas at the time. As a result, these publications rarely covered any of the activities or events of smaller organizations.

Again, due to these limitations within the archives, this research prominently reflects the experiences of affluent, white individuals. While I explore the contributions

[25] "Dallas' gay Latinos have come a long way," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 24, No. 35, Ed. 1, January 18, 2008: 28. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.
https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth238995/m1/28/

of influential lesbians, like Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong, the vast majority of the narratives come from men. Since organizations like the Dallas Gay Alliance and the Oak Lawn Counseling Center were predominantly organized and ran by men, these individuals were more frequently highlighted by both local, gay publications and mainstream news outlets.

Without a doubt, bars and bathhouses significantly impacted gay communities in the United States during the twentieth century. With that being said, my research only features these locations when exploring the relationship between the gay community and the Dallas Police Department. This approach was chosen because the organizations highlighted within my research operated outside of these locations. For example, the founding members of the Circle of Friends, Dallas' first homophile organization, purposefully designed the group as an alternative to the bar scene. Although the Dallas Gay Alliance never mentioned any policies in regards to these businesses, I got the impression the most visible members would have avoided these locations. Since the philosophy of "the Dallas Way" was so integral to the organization, members cultivated and maintained the image of well-groomed, respectable individuals. Because this image was important to the organization and police raids were so unpredictable, any arrest of a DGA leader would have damaged the alliance's reputation and, more importantly, their effectiveness.

CHAPTER II: PHIL JOHNSON AND THE ROOTS OF THE GAY MOVEMENT IN DALLAS

Within his seminal work, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of the Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, historian John D'Emilio explained that wartime mobilization enabled many gay and lesbian Americans to meet people who shared similar sexual interests and desires for the first time in their lives. As the war ended, rather than returning to a life of solitude, D'Emilio argued many of these Americans opted to remain in coastal cities where they formed their own communities and organizations. Phil Johnson was one of these Americans that encountered openly gay men and women for the first time during his wartime service. Unlike those who remained in those coastal cities, though, Johnson decided to return home following the end of this military service. While he spent some time in New York City, Johnson ultimately decided to build his life in his home town, Dallas, Texas.

In addition to planting his roots in Dallas, Johnson also decided to lay the foundation for Dallas' gay community. In 1966, Johnson formed the city's first homophile organization, the Circle of Friends and following the Stonewall Riots in 1969, he sold his business in order to become a full-time activist. Within three years of this decision, Johnson helped organize a gay-affirming church, the Metropolitical Community Church, and he led Dallas' first gay pride parade. Without a doubt, many leaders, organizers, and activists contributed to the gay and lesbian movement in Dallas, but the seeds of that movement were sown and nurtured by Phil Johnson. By exploring

Johnson's experiences prior to, during, and after the war, we are able to better understand the social and cultural climate in Dallas prior to the Stonewall Riots.

Before his enlistment in the United States Army, Phil Johnson recognized his sexual preferences and desires differed from those of his family and friends, but he had never felt comfortable enough to act upon those desires. During his wartime service, though, Johnson encountered openly gay men and women for the first time in his life and, through these experiences, he learned that gay people could live normal, productive lives. These realizations drove Johnson later in life to work towards building a safe and inclusive community in Dallas.

Although Johnson returned to Dallas after completing his military service, he maintained contact with homophile communities through newsletters and magazines from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. Predominately, Johnson relied on these publications to keep him connected, even if marginally, to a gay community. For several years, Johnson hoped that someone would form a homophile organization in Dallas. After reading about San Francisco's Society for Individual Rights (SIR) and their work with local ministers, Johnson connected with Doug McLean, a Methodist minister in Dallas, and formed the Circle of Friends, Texas' first homophile organization, in 1966.

Despite the fact the Circle of Friends was not the first organization in the nation to affiliate religious leaders with a homophile group, this alliance was significant for the survival of the group in Dallas. Almost a year before meeting McLean, Johnson attempted to start an organization on his own. Unfortunately, he was strongly discouraged by a friend, who suggested that forming a homophile organization would

make Johnson a target for local law enforcement officials. After meeting McLean, Johnson recognized that by holding meetings on church property police officers would refrain from harassing the group.

In the post-World War II era, many Texans strongly held on to their religious beliefs and affiliations. According to a survey conducted by the National Council of Churches in 1952, Texas ranked second in the country in terms of the number of congregations in a state. Furthermore, the same study concluded that over fifty-four percent of Texans and forty-nine percent of residents in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex belonged to a church.[1] Because of this reverence for religion in Texas, Johnson noted that the Circle of Friends benefited in two very important ways. First, most Texans would strongly disapprove of a police raid on church property, and second gay men and women who desired to continue practicing their religion would be drawn to the group.

Phil Johnson's life experience from growing up in Dallas to soldier to activist led him to understand the factors that would allow a Dallas-based homophile organization to have the best chance at success. By growing up in Dallas, he understood how the city and Texas at large worked. Johnson understood that religious affiliation and reverence were important to Texans during the mid-twentieth century. Coupled with his experiences in the armed services with other gay men and women, Johnson possessed the knowledge and drive to be one of Dallas' first openly gay activists.

[1] National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration and Analysis by Counties, States, and Regions*. *Ser. A-E* (New York: National Council of Churches, 1956), 396.

Phil Johnson, the son of working-class parents, lived the first two decades of his life exclusively in Dallas. As a young boy, Johnson appeared to differ little from the other boys in his neighborhood and school classes. By the age of five, Johnson noticed that he developed a stronger attachment to his friends than the other boys he knew and, at eight, he experienced his first heartache when Gene, his best friend, moved from the neighborhood.[2] As a teenager, he wondered if he was a late bloomer until he discovered *The Home Medical Advisor*, a book that changed his life. As he was scanning the book, he came across a word he had never heard. The word was 'homosexual,' and as he read the explanation Johnson immediately recognized that the definition described him. Immediately, a feeling of happiness filled Johnson as he now had a word to describe himself and, more importantly, he knew he was not alone in his feelings.

Despite his euphoria, Johnson also recognized that one did not go around announcing that they were a homosexual. Young Phil reasoned that he had never heard this word—not from his parents, teachers, or ministers. Therefore, he assumed that this was not something that should be discussed. Johnson admitted that this was an enormous burden to bear for a thirteen-year-old, but it would inspire him to help those who struggled with this when he was older.[3]

By May 1943, Phil Johnson graduated high school but had not been drafted into military service like some of his classmates. For a bit, he worked at the North American

[2] Gerald D. Saxon, *Phil Johnson: An Oral History Interview* (Dallas Public Library, 1983), 1-10. Manuscript. Box 64, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[3] Ibid, 11-12.

Aviation Plant, a defense factory, in Grand Prairie, Texas.[4] In 1945, Johnson enlisted in the United States Army and went off to basic training. Johnson, who had always been rather small, determined that the Army would make a man out of him, primarily, because that was their reputation and by the end of his military service, Johnson figured he "would be like all the other guys."[5]

Johnson recognized his sexual identity set him apart from the vast majority of people he knew, but, clearly, he also acknowledged that he failed to meet society's basic standards of masculinity, which often included aggression, independence, and a dominating demeanor.[6] While gender expectations and performance vary among communities and regions, Johnson would have understood the social cues and norms that working-class men faced in Dallas at the time.[7]

After he completed basic training, Johnson and his unit waited to be shipped overseas. A few days before his deployment, his sergeant called him out of the ranks. Instantly, Johnson assumed that he was going to be dishonorably discharged[8] because he "had the impression that people could look and tell" that he was a homosexual. In front of his unit, the sergeant asked if he could, in fact, type and take shorthand. He confirmed that he could and he was instructed to report to Headquarters Company immediately. Johnson grabbed his M-1 rifle and began to run to his new unit. Once

[4] Ibid, 4.
[5] Ibid, 19.
[6] E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 285-286.
[7] Cecilia L. Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62.
[8] John D'Emilio. Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 24.

again, the sergeant yelled for him. Upon his return, the sergeant grabbed the rifle from his hands and said, '"You're not going to need this where you're going. You're going to be a titless WAC."'[9]

As Johnson entered headquarters, he found his new commanding officer sitting behind a desk smoking a cigar. Johnson compared him to "a stuffed olive, as he was a mountain of fat that exceeded the confines of the office chair." Though the sergeant saw him enter the room, he did not immediately acknowledge Johnson. After asking for a second time where he should report, the sergeant slapped down his papers and replied, '"Mercy, girl, where did you come from? Where have you been all my life?"'[10]

Johnson explained that this moment changed his life forever as he had never met an openly gay[11] person and he had not expected to meet any in the United States Army. As the commanding officer, who the unit referred to as "Mother Stella,"[12] introduced him to the rest of the unit, Johnson was christened "Phyllis" or sometimes "Sweet Phyllis." While stationed at Fort Ord, near Monterey, California, Johnson worked with several other openly gay men. Through his estimation, he figured that about half of the company was gay, but none of them hid it and they did not fear retaliation. More than likely, "Mother Stella" protected the headquarters company from retribution or criticism because he was well respected in the Army.[13]

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[9] Saxon, 21.

[10] Ibid, 22.

[11] This is also the first time Phil Johnson had ever heard the word "gay." While working in the headquarters unit, his commanding officer introduced him to the word. "Mother Stella" told him they did not use the words homosexual, queer, or faggot. They were gay.

[12] Johnson never referred to the sergeant of headquarters company by his real name. He only ever called him "Mother Stella."

[13] Saxon, 24.

Initially, Phil Johnson disliked working in the company because most of the other gay G.I.s were very "campy."[14] While the campiness was irksome to him, Johnson recognized that his co-workers were loving, considerate, efficient, and, most importantly, pleasant. The G.I.s from his previous unit consistently griped about everything from the food to the weather. In addition to the pleasant co-workers, Johnson enjoyed the benefits of being part of a permanent cadre, which afforded him the opportunities to go into town at night and to take a three-day pass to San Francisco.[15]

According to historian John D'Emilio, the mass mobilization of American society during World War II enabled "the articulation of a homosexual identity and the more rapid evolution of a gay subculture."[16] D'Emilio argued that those who accepted their homosexuality prior to wartime mobilization used the period to strengthen their way of living and to meet other homosexuals, regardless of whether they were already out of the closet or simply waiting to cross the threshold. For those who were coming to terms with their sexuality and desires, the war effort offered them the freedom of meeting others with same-sex attraction.

As a young teenager, Phil Johnson had stumbled upon *The Home Medical Advisor*, which offered him peace of mind that he was not the only person in the world that experienced same-sex attraction. But ultimately, joining the Army and being placed within the headquarters company changed Johnson's life. For the first time, he saw gay men express themselves openly without hiding their feelings or personal lives.

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[14] In Phil Johnson's words, "to 'camp' means the ridiculous, the outrageous, a take-off on the normal, ordinary, everyday, particularly in the sacrosanct of society."

[15] Saxon, 23.

[16] D'Emilio, 24.

Furthermore, his time at Fort Ord allowed him to embrace, explore, and express his homosexuality when he used his three-day passes in San Francisco. Therefore, Johnson's military experiences allowed him the space to openly explore his sexual identity, which enabled him to be more himself.

In May 1947, after completing two years in the United States Army, Phil Johnson returned to Dallas. As for most veterans, transitioning back into civilian life was difficult and frustrating, but for Johnson, it also meant returning to the closet. From his previous experiences in Dallas, he recognized that being openly gay was not an option at this time. He knew that it would limit his ability to find a job and housing. The first summer he returned to Texas, Johnson worked as a camp counselor at Camp Woodland Springs. Due to this job, in particular, he was "deeply in the closet," because people already suspected that counselors had ill-intentions and if people knew he was gay, they would assume that he wanted to seduce their children while encouraging them to be gay.[17]

In the fall of 1947, Phil Johnson enrolled at the University of North Texas in Denton. Like many other G.I.s returning home from war, Johnson used his G.I. Bill to attend college where he studied psychology. While in Denton, Johnson remained in the closet and was not very happy in life. He believed that gay people "were useful, productive citizens," but he would be better off being straight.[18] Due to a driving force

[17] Saxon, 28.
[18] Ibid, 29-30.

to learn about human motivation, Johnson majored in psychology. He thought if he could learn to psychoanalyze himself, he could eventually become heterosexual.

During his first year of college, Johnson's mother, Lily, passed away suddenly. He decided that he needed to leave Denton, which was about 30 miles north of Dallas, and return home to help his father and his little sister, Mary. In the fall of 1948, he enrolled at Southern Methodist University (SMU) and studied dancing, which had become his passion.[19] While at SMU, Johnson studied every type of dance that was offered. His goal was to become a complete, well-rounded professional dancer. If he was not at school dancing or helping out at home, he was working out at the local YMCA.

Following one of his workouts, Johnson stopped into Skillern's, a local drug store and soda shop. As he was sitting at the counter enjoying a drink, a young woman approached him and struck up a conversation with him. Eventually, she asked if he had ever been to Club Reno and he informed her that he did not go to bars because he did not drink. By the end of their conversation, she insisted that he go to Club Reno because it was "his kind" of bar. Because the conversation lingered with him, Johnson eventually made his way over to Club Reno. As soon as the doors opened, he understood what she meant by "his kind" of bar.[20]

Club Reno was located on the corner of South Ervay and Wood, near the SMU campus. Initially it opened in 1945, but in the summer of 1947, it became the bar where

[19] Ibid, 29-30.
[20] Ibid, 32.

gay men and women would gather in Dallas. When Phil Johnson entered the club, he noticed it was "sleazy, dirty, grimy, tiny, filthy, crowded, and smoky." He described the clientele as being "campy and screamy."[21] While Club Reno tolerated homosexual behavior, this was definitely not Johnson's scene.

After studying dance at SMU, Johnson decided to move to New York City. While in the city, he figured he could continue taking dance classes while auditioning for various theater productions. By moving to the East Coast, Johnson once again had access to a growing gay community. Unlike Johnson, many gay ex-servicemen and women did not return home after the war. In an attempt to maintain their connection to other gay people, they moved to port cities, like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York, which had been open to homosexual behavior during the war effort. As veterans flooded into these cities, they established their communities within urban neighborhoods. As with many communities, residents began to find ways to make social and romantic connections. In New York, a group of gay servicemen formed a social organization, the Veterans Benevolent Association, in 1945. It is estimated that some of their parties and dances attracted upwards of 400 to 500 homosexuals.[22]

Phil Johnson never indicated that his intentions to move to New York were an attempt to revive or relive the openly gay lifestyle that he experienced during the war. For the two years he spent in Dallas, he remained closeted, even after he discovered Club Reno, a bar frequented by homosexuals. During his only year at SMU, Johnson

[21] Ibid, 31-33.
[22] D'Emilio, 32.

committed himself to studying and learning as many dance techniques as possible. Therefore, his decision to move to New York appeared to be motivated by his career aspirations rather than a need for social inclusion.

In 1949, using his G. I. Bill benefits, Johnson enrolled in the Sherman School of Dance, which was located in Carnegie Hall.[23] While in dance school, Johnson met other veterans who also used their benefits to learn and practice the arts in the city. According to Johnson, ninety percent of the students in his classes were men. In addition to sharing a love for dance, the majority of his classmates were also gay. He fondly recalled that it was very similar to being back at Fort Ord. They had their own language, they were close, and they all had the same interests. Eventually, Johnson and a classmate, Ralph, acquired an apartment on West 80th Street in Greenwich Village, which they considered to be a safer, more accepting neighborhood. While living in the city, Johnson became active within the gay community.[24]

After living in New York for two years, Johnson concluded that he would be unable to earn a living as a dancer. As his money and prospects ran out, he used his last bit of money to hitchhike back to Dallas. In August 1952, Johnson accepted a job as an inhalation therapist at St. Paul's Hospital. While he was technically closeted during his tenure at the hospital, Johnson met many doctors, nurses, and staff members who were also gay.[25]

[23] Saxon, 6.
[24] Ibid, 35-38.
[25] Ibid, 44.

During his second year at the hospital, items came up missing from the residence hall set aside for the nuns and many on staff suspected one of the window washers. In an attempt to prove the window washer was a thief, the hospital administration decided to administer a polygraph test to the young man. Despite the fact the test was inconclusive, the administration dismissed the window washer from his job. Upon lobbying from the nuns, the hospital implemented a policy that required every new employee to submit to a polygraph test. All current employees were aware that the test included the question, "Are you a homosexual?" Concerned, Johnson requested his boss, an anesthesiologist, to use his influence to get the question dropped off the test. He pointed out to his boss that if the test were to be administered to current employees, he would lose all of his male nurses, many of his female nurses, employees in the X-ray and laboratory departments, his one inhalation therapist (himself), and even the parking lot attendant. Johnson's boss promised to get the question removed, but years later a friend of Phil Johnson's applied to the hospital and was asked the question.[26]

Dallas was certainly not the only city in the country where employers would question their employees about their sexuality. For much of the twentieth century, federal laws did not offer any protection from employment discrimination based on an employee's private sexual life. In fact, the federal government employed fear-mongering and intimidation to convince gay employees to leave their jobs. If they refused to leave, governmental agencies threatened to fire them based on moral turpitude.[27]

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[26] Ibid, 44-45.

[27] Margot Canaday, The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 215.

Not only were gay men and women targeted in the workplace, but several state and local legislative bodies passed laws and codes that specifically targeted them as well. In the nineteenth century, the most popular laws prevented people from wearing clothes intended for the opposite sex. The introduction of these laws provided law enforcement officials the power to regulate and intimidate members of the gay community for decades. Although the city of Dallas did not pass any cross-dressing codes or statutes, police officers often used any opportunity possible to demoralize and control the gay community.

For example, in 1960, a group of gay men was traveling to a party and two men in the back of the car kissed each other. Unfortunately, two Dallas police officers had been following the car. Immediately, they pulled the men over and demanded that they all exit the car. After searching the men and car, the officers found nothing that incriminated the men. Not satisfied with their search, one of the officers demanded that the driver open the trunk and the driver asked if the officer had a search warrant. The officer replied, “this is my search warrant” and struck the man with his flashlight. A homeowner in the neighborhood witnessed the exchange and implored the officers if all of this was necessary. Enraged, the officer pointed his flashlight and shouted, “you get your fuckin’ ass back in that house or I’ll give you some of the same.” Naturally, the homeowner retreated into his house. The officers arrested the men for drunk and disorderly conduct. On the way to the jail, the officers called the men "queers" and "fags." They were also sure to tell the driver that he'd better say he fell if anyone asked

about the cut on his face or they would find him and kill him. Of course, when the police captain asked the man about his face, he replied that he had fallen.[28]

Because Dallas did not have any homophile organizations, Phil Johnson joined several homophile groups across the country throughout the 1950s and early-1960s. For over twelve years, he waited to join a more localized group, but it appeared no one in Dallas was willing to form an organization.[29] On December 31, 1964, Johnson held a dinner party for five friends, and at that party, he suggested that they form their own organization in Dallas. He told them they did not have the influence to change laws or to rally people to vote, but they could have a social club that would provide local gay men and lesbians a place to meet outside of bars. As bars were prime targets for police raids, the group agreed that establishing a safe space for socialization was of paramount importance. Additionally, though integrating the group within the religious culture of Dallas will be significant for the Circle of Friends, during this early planning phase, Johnson had yet to consider this.[30]

Since the group was so small, they agreed to name their organization the Circle of Friends. Because Johnson had joined homophile organizations across the country, he knew that to be considered a legitimate group the Circle of Friends needed to apply for a charter from the state of Texas. With this goal in mind, Johnson approached a friend of

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[28] Phil Johnson, "7 True Gay Tales from the Texas of Yesteryear," *This Week in Texas*, February 5-11, 1988 (75). Clipping. Box 62, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[29] Phil Johnson belonged to One (based out of Los Angeles), the Mattachine Society (of San Francisco and Washington, D.C.), and the Janus Society (of Chicago).

[30] Carl Davis, "Steps in Time: With Rita Wanstrom and Phil Johnson," *This Week in Texas*, January 23-29, 1987: 54-59. Clipping. Box 62, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

his who was a lawyer and also happened to be gay. After explaining that the Circle of Friends wanted to be chartered by the state, a lawyer and friend urged Johnson and the group to reconsider. He implored Johnson to not "start a gay organization in Texas, [because] it's not like Los Angeles or Chicago." The friend reminded him that he owned a dance studio[31] and that local officials would target him until his business collapsed.[32]

After considering the advice of counsel, Johnson and the rest of the Circle of Friends decided that forming the first homophile organization in Texas might not be a great idea. Ultimately, Phil Johnson would not forget about the Circle of Friends. In the summer of 1966, he came across an advertisement in a gay newspaper based out of San Francisco that offered Johnson and, potentially, the Circle of Friends some hope.[33]

In May of 1964, a group of gay men in San Francisco met in the home of Bill Plath to discuss the formation of a new gay organization, the Society of Individual Rights (SIR), that would fight against police entrapment, but also provide members with various activities and events designed specifically to appeal to the gay community.[34] By the fall of 1964, the state of California incorporated the organization as a nonprofit. Unlike other homophile organizations in the United States, SIR adopted the language used by African American civil rights organizations, like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) or the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), to outline

[31] After working at the hospital for over five years, Johnson had saved enough money to open his dance studio.

[32] Saxon, 50.

[33] Ibid, 51.

[34] Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Society for Individual Rights," in *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History in America, vol. 3*, ed. Marc Stein (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 132.

the goals of both the organization and their members. Within a monthly magazine, *Vector*, president Bill Beardemphl assured members that SIR would provide legal counsel for those targeted by authorities, work to build alliances with local churches, and provide information about the rights each gay person had as a citizen of both California and the United States.[35]

Doug McLean, a Methodist minister from Dallas, traveled to San Francisco and visited with several gay organizations, including the Society for Individual Rights. During this trip, McLean posted an advertisement in a gay newspaper stating that he was interested in forming a gay organization, similar to SIR, in Dallas. Immediately, Phil Johnson reached out to Doug McLean, the assistant minister for the First Methodist Church, and told McLean about his idea for the Circle of Friends. Through McLean, Johnson met three other local ministers, the assistant minister at the First Presbyterian Church, an Episcopalian minister, and a Lutheran minister, who referred to themselves as "street ministers"[36] that was very interested in establishing a connection with the gay community in Dallas.[37]

In October of 1966[38], five gay men and four non-gay ministers formally organized the Circle of Friends. The gay members of the organization were wary of their names being associated with a homophile organization. Therefore, they decided to utilize pseudonyms on all membership forms and documents associated with the

[35] Ibid, 132-133.

[36] According to Phil Johnson, street ministers were religious leaders who believed they needed to meet people where they were at rather than waiting on them to show up to a church one day.

[37] Saxon, 51-52.

[38] Johnson consistently claimed that the Circle of Friends was formed in 1965, but from his oral interviews and newsletters, the organization did not come together until the fall of 1966.

organization.[39] Additionally, they all agreed to hold meetings and events on church grounds and at least one of the ministers would be present at organized events. The Circle of Friends were betting that local and county police officers would be unwilling to raid their meetings as long as they were on church property.[40]

Initially the Circle of Friends intended to meet the needs of the homosexual community in three very specific areas. First, the organization sought to educate "the general public, the Church, and the Law Enforcement Authorities" about the gay community in Dallas. By achieving this goal, they would make strides toward their second goal, which was to prove that homosexuals could be "useful and productive" citizens that benefited the community writ large. And finally, the Circle of Friends would assist homosexuals to meet their personal, spiritual, and, if need be, legal needs. By offering meetings and events outside of bars, the Circle of Friends not only significantly reduced the threat of police raids, but they also created a safe space which allowed members to discuss any problems they faced in their personal and professional lives. The ministers offered spiritual direction and support to those who wanted it. Furthermore, when possible, the organization assisted members in accessing "employment, education, housing, and temporary financial help on a loan basis."[41]

In their first year of existence, the Circle of Friends sought to positively impact their community at the local level, by educating ministers and Christians about

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[39] Phil Johnson, "Letter to Texas Gay Task Force from Phil Johnson," January 20, 1978. Letter. Box 477, folder 1, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[40] Saxon, 51.

[41] The Circle of Friends, "Newsletter," no.1, October 1967: 1. Newsletter. Box 65, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

homosexuality. In February 1967, members of the organization attended the meetings of the National Council of Churches conference in Dallas. Throughout the week, the Council proctored sixteen different discussions, one of which was entitled "the Church and the Homosexual." Members of the Circle of Friends met with about thirty men and women, who ranged from ministers to Christian-based social workers to theology students. Following the discussions, Circle of Friends members reported that the overall feedback was positive and that many expressed that their preconceived ideas and opinions about homosexuals had shifted positively.[42]

During their first year they not only participated in roundtable discussions at religious conferences, the Circle of Friends established important relationships with both the Munger Place Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church. In 1967, Reverend John Brand and the Munger Place Church started a call-in, an anonymous counseling service, known as Contact. Reverend Brand reached out to the Circle of Friends to help phone operators better understand those who used Contact as a way to discuss their homosexuality. In the end, members of the Circle of Friends offered to come in and assist when these calls came in.

In an attempt to introduce Dallas to ministers recently transferred from small, rural communities, the Presbyterian Church asked the Circle of Friends to participate in a series of orientations. Following an evening of discussion, some of the members took the ministers to several locations in Dallas where the gay community gathered. According to an account by the Circle of Friends, these ministers "were nearly all

[42] Ibid, 1.

ignorant" about the homosexual community. By the end, one minister said his eyes had been opened and others admitted that they had previously counseled homosexuals, but had failed to provide any meaningful service. Perhaps most impactful for members of the Circle of Friends, one of the ministers admitted that he had a gay uncle that lived with his partner for over thirty years. After talking to the members, this minister stated that he could now understand his uncle and, finally, respected him for the first time in his life.[43]

The Circle of Friends did not contain their community building to the Dallas/Fort Work area in their first year. From August 17-19, 1967, the president of the organization attended the third National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations (NPCHO) at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Twenty-five homophile organizations attended, but the Circle of Friends was the only one from the American Southwest. During the conference, attendees agreed to specific policy statements that needed to be addressed at the federal and state level.

Historian Margot Canaday noted that the passing of the McCarren-Walter Act in 1952 enabled immigration officials to either deport aliens or to bar them from entering the United States based on moral turpitude. Two decades before the passing of McCarren-Walter, the American court system defined moral turpitude to include acts "of baseness, vileness, or depravity in the private and social duties which a man owes to his fellow man."[44] Additionally, Canaday noted that the Senate Committee on the Judiciary

[43] Ibid, 2.
[44] Canaday, 218.

attempted to amend McCarren-Walter by considering "the homosexual alien as a class of person," which would remove the requirement of criminal convictions or accusations at the state or local level.[45] The Committee determined that the federal government could prevent psychopaths, which included homosexuals and sexual perverts, from immigrating to the United States. By 1965, Congress passed a new immigration act, the Hart-Celler Act, that barred immigrants labeled as "sexual deviants" from the United States.[46] While Congress discontinued the use of terminology like "psychopaths," the intent to prevent homosexual immigrants from coming or remaining in the United States was clear.

Due to the lengthy history of anti-homosexual immigration policies, NPCHO pledged to lobby Congress to reconsider the provisions that excluded and deported homosexuals that applied for citizenship. NPCHO did not limit its sights on the legal status of future immigrants or current aliens. Collectively they called for homophile organizations to rally police departments to end methods of entrapment for the express purpose of arresting homosexuals for violation of "moral" laws.[47]

Like in many other cities across the country, gay men and women in Dallas consistently faced discrimination and entrapment from local and county law enforcement officials. During the early twentieth century, local and state legislative bodies passed laws that targeted people that deviated from social norms. By passing these laws and statutes, law enforcement officials had free reign to monitor, harass, and arrest

[45] Ibid, 219.
[46] Ibid, 247.
[47] The Circle of Friends, 6.

homosexuals in their communities. In some cases, police officers went out of their way to arrest gay people in the privacy of personal residences. For example, in 1954, a group of gay men and women attended a private party near Love Field. Late into the night, police officers entered the residence and those in attendance immediately fled. Some people hid in the chicken coops and others sought shelter under the house, but in the end, most of the partygoers spent the rest of the night in police custody.[48]

Prior to the late sixties, churches frequently condemned and exiled parishioners who engaged in homosexual behaviors. Troy Perry, a devout Christian and homosexual, attempted to bridge the gap between the church and those shunned from the Christian community. At the age of fifteen, Perry dropped out of high school and the Baptist Church ordained him as a minister.[49] For several years, Perry preached across the Southeast and the Midwest. Following marriage to the daughter of a prominent minister, the Perrys moved to Chicago, Illinois, where Troy led a small Pentecostal congregation. Eventually, some of the elders in the congregation discovered that Perry was engaged in an affair with a man. One of the elders confronted Perry and expelled him from the church. After being offered a job with a plastics firm, Perry left Illinois and relocated his family to Torrance, California.[50] By the mid-1960s, Perry recognized that he could no longer pretend to be heterosexual. Consequently, he divorced his wife and turned

[48] Johnson, "7 True Tales," 77.

[49] Diane Anderson-Minshall, "Finding Family, Finding Freedom: Reverend Troy Perry and his friend Robin Tyler have been advocating for change for half a century," *The Advocate*, no. 1091 (June 1 2017). https://tinyurl.com/bdz8v8bw

[50] Ken Cyr, "Profile: Troy Perry," *Community News* (Fort Worth/Dallas, Texas), Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1974: 3. Newsletter. Box 459, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

away from religion. Like many homosexuals, Perry firmly believed his homosexuality and spirituality could not co-exist.[51]

While Perry enjoyed living as an openly gay man, he recognized that his spiritual needs were not being met. After a failed suicide attempt, Perry fell to his knees and prayed to God for the first time in years. Almost immediately, he felt comforted. Through discussions with friends and neighbors, Perry decided that he would return to his faith and his ministry by starting a church that people from all walks of life could attend. After placing an advertisement in the Advocate, a national gay newspaper based out of Los Angeles, Perry delivered his first sermon in years to about twelve gay men in his home in the fall of 1968.[52] By the following year, Perry moved into a theater in Los Angeles and officially established the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.[53]

While Perry worked to bring Christianity to gay men and women in Southern California, the Circle of Friends continued meeting at various church facilities in Dallas. Though the ministers within the Circle of Friends worked to establish relationships between the Church and the gay community, many gay men and women did not feel welcomed or accepted within the congregation of the churches. By 1970, members of

[51] Martha Sawyer Allen, "The Love of God," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minnesota) April 6, 2002. https://tinyurl.com/3m5pbvv2

[52] Cyr, "Profile: Troy Perry," 3.

[53] Troy D. Perry, "Gays and the Gospel: An Interview with Troy Perry," *The Christian Century* 113, no. 27 (September 25, 1996). https://tinyurl.com/y7e9su2x

the Circle of Friends began taking the steps to open a church in Dallas that allowed gay men and women to "worship in their own church."[54]

Through gay newspapers and publications, like the *Advocate,* members of the Circle of Friends read about the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) and Reverend Troy Perry in Los Angeles. At the beginning of 1970, Richard Vincent and Victor Pass visited Perry in California and proposed the idea of starting a branch of the MCC in Dallas.[55] Later that spring, Ruth (Rob) Shivers and Myra Rae deVerse met with Perry and continued to impress upon him the need for a gay-friendly church in Dallas. Though congregations of the MCC opened in San Diego and San Francisco, Perry was not yet ready to expand the new church beyond California.

Determined to open their church, twelve members of the Circle of Friends gathered at the home of Ruth Shivers on Thursday, July 30, 1970. Shivers, an ordained minister, delivered her sermon from a doorway as the small group had split between two rooms. The group continued to meet in Shivers' home for several weeks until Reverend Ed Courson, the Assistant Minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas, offered the use of a small coffee house/used bookstore, the Attic Window, to the group. While

[54] Phil Johnson, "Dallas Roots: The Queer Choir/The Queer Church," *This Week in Texas*, August 26-September 1, 1988: 33. Clipping. Box 62, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[55] "A Quarter Century Creating Hope," *Cathedral of Hope: 1970-1995, A Generation of Faithfulness*, July 1995: 6-25. Box 483, folder 36, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

the group was excited to move into a more permanent space, the owners of Avon Cleaners objected to a queer[56] church moving into "their" neighborhood.[57]

As the small group struggled to find a home, not everyone within the gay community embraced the idea of an accepting or affirming church. During this early phase, some gay men and lesbians referred to the group as "a bunch of queens trying to play church."[58] In the fall of 1970, the First Unitarian Church of Dallas offered the use of their Normandy Chapel for $25 per service. Because the congregation had little funds, Richard Vincent, a member and ordained minister, covered the fee. The group appeared to be settling nicely into their new space when Reverend Troy Perry visited them just before Christmas. Following his sermon, Perry met with members of the Dallas "study group."[59] Perry's presence and stories about the first gay pride parade in Los Angeles after the Stonewall Riots captivated and inspired those in attendance.[60]

Almost a year into their experiment, the Dallas "study group" received a full charter, which was the first outside of California, from the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Church on May 20, 1971. The first order of business for the MCC-Dallas was the election of their minister. Though Shivers primarily led the group over the last ten months, the congregation elected Richard Vincent as their first Pastor.

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[56] While it is unlikely the business owners would have used the word "queer," this is the wording used by Phil Johnson in 1992.

[57] Phil Johnson, "A Brief History of the Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas," August 19, 1992. Timeline. Box 63, folder 7, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[58] Ibid.

[59] At this point, the small congregation had not been incorporated into the Metropolitan Community Church.

[60] Johnson, "A Brief History."

Almost immediately the elections created a rift among the parishioners. Some of the women believed that Shivers was denied the position because she was a woman. While this might have been the case, all of the records indicate that the election was fair and that the majority elected Vincent. Rather than split the newly formed church, Shivers and the other women continued to attend services and their involvement in church activities.[61]

Like many men and women who served in World War II, Phil Johnson met other homosexuals for the first time in his life. Through his military placement at Fort Ord, Johnson not only lived and worked with other gay men, but the experience also allowed him to spend long weekends in San Francisco, a fast-growing location for gay men and women service members to meet up and form relationships. Following his departure from the military, Johnson spent a couple of years living within a growing gay community in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan. But by returning home, he recognized that he could not live openly as a gay man in Dallas, Texas.

In an attempt to stay connected to the gay community, Johnson joined homophile organizations, such as One and the Mattachine Society, in coastal towns of Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. In addition to paying for a membership, he also opted to receive magazines and newsletters from the organizations and independent, gay journalists. Johnson was determined to remain informed about the issues and activities of the gay community.

[61] Ibid.

During the post-World War II era in America, gay men and women in urban areas along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts formed various organizations to unify the homophile community. In some cases, these groups served social purposes and others worked to establish civil liberties for homosexuals. Though, these organizations did not exist in a vacuum as many of their ideas and practices drifted to various parts of the country through newsletters and magazines. And while connected through these means, organizations like the Circle of Friends found ways to make their specific homophile group work within the context of their specific city or region.

After reading about the Society for Individual Rights and seeing Reverend Doug McLean's advertisement looking to create a similar organization in Dallas, Johnson recognized that this alliance would be the perfect pathway for the Circle of Friends. By working with McLean and other ministers, the Circle of Friends worked to destigmatize gay men and women and to educate the straight community in Dallas. Additionally, the organization also afforded closeted gay men and women the space to meet and socialize with each other.

By the early seventies, many of the members of the Circle of Friends longed to join a local church, but they rarely felt comfortable in the established churches of Dallas. After learning of the Unitarian Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Church and Reverend Troy Perry, an openly gay minister, four members of the Circle of Friends decided that Dallas needed a branch of the MCC. After four years of participating in the Circle of Friends, Ruth Shivers held the first meeting of what would later officially become the Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas. Though it faced hardships in

the first few years, the MCC-Dallas became a place where a person's spiritual identity did not have to war with their sexual orientation.

Unlike more radical organizations and activists on the east and west coasts, Phil Johnson and the Circle of Friends adapted the formation of the gay community to the social and cultural norms of a more conservative city like Dallas. Therefore, within their first five years, the Circle of Friends established the roots of the gay community in Dallas. In addition to creating a safe space for closeted gay men and lesbians, they also worked to destigmatize homosexuals by speaking at church-sponsored programs and conferences.

CHAPTER III: GROWING VISABILITY AND ACTIVISM OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY IN DALLAS, 1972-1977

In this chapter, I examine the growing visibility of Dallas' gay[1] community as they organize the city's first gay pride parade and as younger, more activist oriented members establish the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC). I will continue to explore the impact of religion on both the development and the perceived image of the community. By 1977, the DGPC openly championed civil equality at the local, state, and national level.

During the 1950s and 1960s, most Americans rarely, if ever, discussed sexuality and they certainly did not talk about homosexuality, nor were they concerned with the rights of gay men and women. Because local and state laws specifically targeted homosexual conduct, newspaper coverage focused on the criminality of homosexuals without covering the entrapment practices used by officers or the brutality they inflicted upon suspects. Furthermore, journalists often legitimized stigmas against gay men and women by quoting psychiatric diagnoses of homosexuals as mentally and morally ill. Reporters interviewed respected police officials who expressed their commitment to "clean up" local neighborhoods by ridding the streets of "fairies" and "fags."[2]

[1] Initially, homophile organizations avoided the use of the word "gay." Following the Stonewall Riots, activists began using "gay" more frequently. According to Donald W. Cory, gay men and women used the term almost exclusively as a way for closeted people to identify other closeted people. Donald W. Cory, "Take My Word For It," in *The Language and Sexuality Reader*, edited by Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick (London: Routledge, 2006), 36.

[2] Edward Alwood, "The Role of Public Relations in the Gay Rights Movement, 1950-1969," *Journalism History* vol. 41, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 17. https://tinyurl.com/yvu9w9kj

As evident in chapter one, this perception of homosexuality began changing in the 1960s as Americans became more dependent on television for their news coverage and entertainment, leaders of homophile organizations, such as Frank Kameny and Jack Nichols of the Washington D. C. Mattachine Society, Lars Larson of the Mattachine Society of New York, Phyllis Lyon of the Daughters of Bilitis and Randy Wicker of the Homosexual League of New York, began appearing on talk shows in an attempt to one: bring awareness to the struggles gay men and women often faced and two: challenge the misconceptions often made about homosexuals. In March 1967, during primetime CBS aired *CBS Reports: The Homosexuals*, which was the first national platform to voice personal narratives of gay men and women. In addition to attracting nearly forty million viewers, newspapers, like the *Washington Star* and the *New York Times*, praised the program for shedding light on the social problem of discrimination against homosexuals.[3]

As the national narrative around homosexuality appeared to soften, New York police officers raided a local bar, the Stonewall Inn, which catered to gay community, in late-June 1969. While officers assessed[4] the bar's patrons, a crowd formed along Christopher Street. As police officials placed gay men and women in police vans for transport to the local precinct, the crowd swelled and became increasingly vocal of their distain of police harassment. Eventually, someone within the crowd threw a brick at police officers and a riot broke out in front of the Stonewall Inn. For five days, gay men,

[3] Ibid, 18.

[4] Patrons were often lined up and required to provide identification, most often a driver's license or other state issued identification. This allowed the officers to determine if the person violated any crossdressing codes.

lesbians, and crossdressers continued to riot in Greenwich Village,[5] but unlike previous riots in the United States, major newspapers not only covered the events, but they were also more critical of law enforcement and more sympathetic to the gay community.

Historian John D'Emilio argued that the uprising at the Stonewall Inn mark the official transition of homophile organizations to gay rights activist groups. For almost two decades after World War II, gay men and women forged relationships and built communities, but they did not collectively organize to challenge laws or the elected officials that created them. The Stonewall Riots served two very important purposes for the gay rights movement across the United States. First, media exposure both prior to and during the riots thrust the plight of "the homosexual" into mainstream consciousness. Second, gay men and women began fighting for both social and judicial equality, which ultimately required them to publicly acknowledge their sexual orientation for the first time in American history.

Though the Stonewall Riots happened over fifteen hundred miles away, the reverberation was felt within the growing gay community in the Dallas. Unfortunately, most Dallasites were unaware of the riots because local papers rarely picked up stories that included the words "gay" or "homosexual."[6] But because he subscribed to various gay newsletters and magazines, Phil Johnson was well aware of the conflict in New York. Frustrated by the void of gay activism in Dallas, Johnson decided he would take on this role. Six months after the Stonewall Riots, he sold his business, which afforded

[5] The Stonewall Inn is located on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village.

[6] Gerald D. Saxon, *Phil Johnson: An Oral History Interview* (Dallas Public Library, 1983), 57. Manuscript. Box 64, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

him the freedom to come out of the closet and to become more of an activist in Dallas. Johnson believed that he could do more for "the world by working for gay people."[7] Therefore, during the 1970s, Johnson worked to expand the influence and membership of the Circle of Friends (COF), he helped organize Dallas' first gay pride parade, and he actively participated in the growing gay community in the city.

One year after the Stonewall Riots, gay activists in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago organized marches to both remember the actions of those who facilitated the uprising and to demonstrate their refusal to return to the closet. On the second anniversary of the riots, members of the Circle of Friends gathered for a campout and a midnight hayride. Johnson recalled members shouting various gay slogans, but only the cows, chickens, and pigs heard their voices.[8]

By the spring 1972, Ruth Shivers, COF member and co-founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, approached Phil Johnson about organizing Dallas' first official gay pride parade.[9]

In order to hold a sanctioned parade, the Circle of Friends needed a permit from the Dallas Police Department. Johnson recalled being "scared to death" when they applied for the permit, which was ultimately granted due to a lack of legal reasons to not issue it.[10] Approximately a week before the march, Doug Fain, a city councilman, found

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[7] Ibid, 47.

[8] Ibid, 60.

[9] Dallas' gay pride parade of 1972 was the second gay pride celebration in the American South. According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Georgia Gay Liberation Front held a gay pride parade in Atlanta in 1971. Other southern states began holding pride parades at various points during the 1980s-1990s.

[10] Phil Johnson, "A Decade of Gay Pride," (date unknown). Box 62, folder 4, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

out about the parade and was appalled that an event like this could happen in Dallas. Earlier in the month, Dallas hosted an evangelical conference, Explo '72. Over five days, attendees heard lectures on various topics ranging from sexual morality to building better relationships with their parents. Reverend Billy Graham, the nation's most famous evangelical minister, referred to the event as "a religious Woodstock."[11] Fain lamented that a gay pride parade would follow a massive Christian conference in Dallas.

Once the public became aware of the impending gay pride parade, members of the City Council, the City Manager's Office and the Mayor's Office received telephone calls from citizens opposed to the parade. Mayor Wes Wise noted that his office received about fourteen protests calls, but that was not nearly as many as he received when the city refused to move Halloween celebrations from a Sunday to a Saturday. Following an emergency, closed-door session, Alex Bickley, the city attorney, announced that the city "vigorously protests it," but the parade would go on as scheduled because parades and marches were protected as freedom of speech in the Constitution.[12] Ultimately, Councilman Fain made it clear that he opposed the event on the grounds that "it [the parade] would only give more notoriety to the whole thing [homosexuality]," and the parade also served as a public safety risk because "someone is going to get shot out there."[13]

[11] Edward B. Fisk, "A 'Religious Woodstock' Draws 75,000," *New York Times,* June 16, 1972. https://tinyurl.com/mrycyfsd

[12] "Council debates but allows downtown 'gay' parade," unknown, June 1972. Box 71, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[13] Ibid.

On June 24, 1972, the morning of the parade, Phil Johnson made his way to the Kennedy Memorial Plaza, the designated staging area. Upon his arrival, he noticed that several drag queens "in their gold lame dresses and their big boobs and their coiffured wigs—these elaborate wigs—and their elaborate make-up" arrived before everyone else.[14] Ruth Shivers, the parade marshal, decided that Johnson would lead the group. Johnson placed banners on either side of his car that read "Our Community/Nuntius, the Gay Newspaper of Texas"[15] and prepared to guide about seventeen cars and floats down Main Street. Just prior to the parade starting, a "beautiful, beautiful black drag queen" steadied herself on the fender of Johnson's car and sang gay songs throughout the parade.[16]

Despite Councilman Fain's fears, participants in Dallas' first gay pride parade did not face violence during the procession. According to a newspaper report, about 130 people marched and the parade featured representatives of gay organizations from Houston, Austin, San Antonio, Oklahoma City, and Iowa.[17] Those who attended the march had varying opinions on the event and of homosexuality in general. Robert Hartmann stated that he could not relate to those who marched "because most of them have severe emotional problems," but Mrs. Tony Thornton posited that she had "nothing against these people" because "no one stops me from loving my husband."[18]

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[14] Saxon, 61.

[15] At the time, Johnson published Our Community; Nuntius was a gay newspaper based out of Houston.

[16] Saxon, 61.

[17] Marc Bernabo, "Gays March Proudly," *Dallas Morning News*, June 25, 1972. https://tinyurl.com/u8sdeja6

[18] "200 'gay libbers' march downtown," unknown, June 1972. Box 71, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

The only vocalized protest during the event came from Mrs. Addie Barlow Frazier[19], who walked the entire two-mile route behind the marchers. Frazier, a leader within a Dallas chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, carried a sign that read "God's Word Demands Legal Execution of Homosexuals."[20] As she made her way through the route, onlookers cheered her on and encouraged her to continue her protest. When reporters approached her for a statement, she demanded, "get away from me, you scum." Once she realized the reporters were not gay, she gladly answered their questions. She told the reporters that she favored laws that allowed for the execution of homosexuals. Frazier backed up her claim by encouraging people to "read the Bible, Exodus 20 and 13."[21]

In spite of Addie Barlow Frazier's protests and damnation, the participants of the parade were elated with the day's outcome. Councilman Doug Fain, on the other hand, predicted that another pride parade in the Bible Belt would result in God's wrath on the city and that "Dallas would lie in ruins."[22] Ruth and Chris Shivers decided to test Fain's theory as they began organizing a pride parade for June 1973.

Unlike the previous year, the parade of 1973 did not garner much attention from members of the City Council or from Dallasites in general. In fact, one of the local newspapers ran an article detailing plans for the parade and provided Chris Shivers'

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[19] Addie Barlow Frazier often used the pseudonym, Dixie Leber. Presumably because Dixie is a common term for the South and Leber is "rebel" spelled backwards.

[20] Phil Johnson, "Dallas- First Gay Pride in Texas," *This Week in Texas*, July 6-July 12, 1984. Box 62, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[21] Bernabo, "Gays March Proudly."

[22] Phil Johnson, "A Brief Timeline of Gay and Lesbian History." Presentation, Dallas Resource Center, April 2 & April 8, 2006. Box 64, folder 5, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

contact information for anyone who wanted to participate.[23] During the preparations for the parade, local police officers offered some resistance to the organizers. Due to fears associated with being identified as gay, some people were hesitant to participate in the march. Johnson and Ruth Shivers decided they would make a papier-mâché dragon, like those in Chinese festivals, for those who wanted to march in anonymity. Prior to the parade, a group gathered in a local park to test out the dragon. At some point, a couple of police officers approached the crowd and asked them what they were doing. Shivers responded that they were preparing for the upcoming gay pride parade and they were testing their "dragon of prejudice." The officers instructed the group to disperse, but she quickly "responded, 'No, we're not going to do it. We're not doing anything. We're just using the park.'" Taken aback, the officers threatened to have the group arrested, but the group was undeterred. They refused to leave and informed the officers that they had every right "to use the park just like anyone else."[24] Much to the surprise of the group, the officers left and did not bother them for the rest of the day.

Despite the planning and the announcement in the newspaper, the second pride parade was fairly mediocre. According to reports, the parade lacked the joy and fervor of the first. Most of the marchers held signs that protested biases against homosexuals in employment and housing opportunities, but fewer onlookers attended the event. Perhaps the first parade drew more attention because the Explo '72 had just left town or, maybe, more people were concerned as this was the first time gay men and women openly

[23] "Parade Slated for Gay Week," unknown, June 1973. Clipping. Box 71, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[24] Saxon, 68-69.

expressed themselves in a public space. Either way, the second march was "more of a procession than a real parade."[25]

Tensions in Dallas' gay community ratcheted higher in August 1973 when news broke of the shooting of serial murderer Dean Corll in Houston, Texas. For several years, Corll hosted gatherings with adolescent boys who "were forced into sodomy or subjected to other sexual assault and then were killed."[26] Prior to the shooting, Corll enlisted Wayne Henley and David Brooks to provide a steady supply of boys for him. On the night of the shooting, Corll turned on Henley and two of his friends, Tim Kerley and Rhonda Williams. Apparently, Henley angered Corll by bringing a girl to his house. After convincing Corll that he would help kill Kerley and Williams, Corll untied Henley, who shot Corll five times while he was distracted.[27]

Although all of Dean Corll's assaults and murders occurred in and around Houston, the story captured the attention of the nation. According to a national survey from 1970, about seventy percent of respondents believed homosexuals were "dangerous as teachers or youth leaders because they [tried] to get sexually involved with children."[28] Therefore, most heterosexual Americans erroneously believed that gay men were prone to and participated in pedophilia. As a result, many media outlets described Corll as the leader of a vast, deviant homosexual ring. Within a week of Corll's death,

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[25] "Marchers Not Gay About Discrimination," *Dallas Morning News*, June 1973. Box 71, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[26] James P. Sterba, "Texas Toll of Boys Rises to 27 In Nation's Biggest Slaying Case," *New York Times*, August 14, 1973. https://tinyurl.com/mryy3dzy

[27] Skip Hollandsworth, "The Lost Boys," *Texas Monthly*, April 2011. https://tinyurl.com/ycyctf9u

[28] Gregory Herek, "Facts about Homosexuality and Child Molestation," Sexual Orientation: Science, Education, and Policy, University of California-Davis, accessed August 4, 2019, https://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/facts_molestation.html#note1.

the Dallas police department announced they had uncovered a national homosexual ring that exploited teenagers and young men at the apartment of John Paul Norman. Captain Bennie M. Newman, commander of the Police Youth Division, assured people that Dean Corll had no connection to Norman.[29]

Because of the vast media attention on Corll and the assumptions of a connection between homosexuality and pedophilia, much of the gay community in Dallas laid low during the late summer and early fall of 1973. Despite all of the negative attention surrounding homosexuality, three members of the gay community, Steve Jonsson, Pat, and Zita,[30] participated in a panel discussion at Southern Methodist University (SMU) about the political and social problems faced by the gay community during the fall semester of 1973. Additionally, the panel answered questions students had about homosexuality and the gay liberation movement, both in Dallas and the nation.

Naturally many students inquired about Dean Corll, the connections between homosexuals and pedophilia, and Corll's relationship to the gay community. In an interview for the student newspaper, *The Daily Campus*, Jonsson likened Corll to "a homosexual version of Jack the Ripper" and Zita noted that the gay community has "sickies, too." Jonsson also argued that following the death of Corll, the Dallas police department increased raids on gay bars and "gay prostitution places" to illustrate to the

[29] "Alleged Homosexual Ring Found in a Raid on Apartment in Dallas," *New York Times*, August 16, 1973. https://tinyurl.com/yc4dfadf

[30] These are pseudonyms. Phil Johnson often used the name "Steve Jonsson," especially when he wrote letters to the editors of local newspapers. The legal names of Pat and Zita are unknown.

people that they were doing a better job of monitoring the gay community than Houston had.[31]

Though the Corll saga drove many gay men and lesbians underground, Phil Johnson continued to expand the influence and membership of the Circle of Friends. Three years earlier, he had sold his business to dedicate his time and energy into building the gay liberation movement in Dallas and he was determined to not let the movement die. Johnson decided that one way to grow the organization was to host more social events. In the spring of 1974, the Circle of Friends hosted the Fruit Bowl, a football match between the Dallas Diesel Dykes and the Ferocious Flaming Faggots of Ft. Worth.[32]

While on the surface the Fruit Bowl may seem insignificant, but it actually illustrated the growth of the gay movement in Dallas. Almost a decade prior, Phil Johnson's friend urged him to abandon the idea of the Circle of Friends. Once established, the members of the organization used pseudonyms to protect their economic and social futures. Furthermore, in the early years, all meetings were held in church facilities because they feared police raids and retaliation. But by the mid-seventies, the gay men and women not only attended social events in public spaces, but they had also hosted the first two gay pride parades in Dallas.

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[31] Jan Carroll, "Homosexuals explain political, social problems," *The Daily Campus* (Dallas, Texas), November 29, 1973. Box 71, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[32] "Flaming Faggots vs. Diesel Dykes," *Community News*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fort Worth/Dallas, Texas, May 1972: 8. Box 459, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

As Phil Johnson and Ruth Shivers worked to organize the gay men and women of Dallas, Richard Longstaff planted the first roots of a gay community in Dallas when he opened his clothing store, Union Jack, on Cedar Springs in the Oak Lawn neighborhood. Word quickly spread throughout Dallas' gay bars that Longstaff was gay and that he tailored his business towards the needs of the community.[33] Within a couple of years, Frank Caven and Charley Hott, Caven's business partner, opened the first gay bar, the Old Plantation, on Cedar Springs.[34] By the late-seventies, other gay entrepreneurs opened restaurants, stores, and nightclubs along Cedar Springs. Cedar Springs' reputation as "a gay enclave" spread through gay newspapers and newsletters throughout Texas and into the surrounding states. The interest in the area combined with Southwest Airlines offering "peanuts fares," twenty-five-dollar airline tickets, resulted in gay men flying into Dallas each weekend to party on Cedar Springs.[35]

In the spring of 1976, the organizational structure of the gay community began to shift in Dallas. On April 23rd, the Gay Organization of Dallas (GOOD)[36], formerly the Circle of Friends, held its final membership meeting. According to Phil Johnson, the organization struggled because their goals were too "nebulous." They simply set out to

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[33] Mike Anglin, *Richard Longstaff*, transcript of an oral history conducted on March 31, 2014, The Dallas Way: An LGBT History Project, December 8, 2017. https://tinyurl.com/yc6f8fke

[34] David Baur, "Lords of an Underground Empire," *D Magazine*, June 1979. https://tinyurl.com/3e99ftah

[35] David Taffet, "Cedar Springs: Evolution of a gayborhood," *Dallas Voice*, vol. 30, no. 35, ed. 1, January 10, 2014, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth706867/, University of North Texas Libraries, Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[36] Johnson changed the name of the Circle of Friends to the Gay Organization of Dallas (GOOD) in the hopes of attracting more members. He stated that some people had no idea what the COF was because the name wasn't clear. By changing it to GOOD, people would understand that it was a gay organization. Unfortunately, because "gay" was in the name, people complained that they couldn't join as they would be outted.

do whatever they could, the best they could, without getting arrested.[37] But because neither the Circle of Friends or GOOD were designed to be activist driven, younger people began to seek other avenues that met both their social and activist needs.

Participating in a more activist driven movement was very important to some of the younger members of the gay community. Many of these men and women grew up watching civil rights protests on their televisions in the sixties. They saw African Americans challenging segregation and protesting for the right to have their voices heard through the vote. Doubly, many lesbians read the feminist works of Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem and watched as women held protests, such as the notable the Miss America pageant where women symbolically threw away feminine products. Influenced by the civil rights movement and the women's movement, young, gay adults looked to join organizations that allowed them to challenge social and political barriers that limited the rights of their community.[38]

In the spring of 1976, Dallas activists Neal Nichols and James Chumley attended the Texas Gay Conference III in Houston. While at the conference, they met leaders from Houston's Gay Political Caucus, which worked to collectively organize the community on gay issues.[39] When they returned to Dallas, they held an open meeting at the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) and proposed the formation of a political organization. Some in attendance objected to using "political" in the name of the

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[37] Saxon, 57.

[38] Tina Fetner, How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism, vol. 31 of Social Movements, Protests, and Contention, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xi.

[39] Louise Young, "Founding of the DGLA," presentation notes, *The 20th Anniversary of the Dallas Gay Alliance*, Dallas, Texas, June 7, 1997. Box 2, folder 33, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong Papers (The Dallas Way), University of North Texas Special Collections.

organization. They feared alienating people with varying political beliefs. Once votes were tallied, the group officially became the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC), the sister organization to that in Houston. Also at that first meeting, the group elected Chance West as the first president and Helen Harvey as the first vice president.[40]

From the outset, the DGPC outlined their purpose: to pool resources from the gay and straight communities in order to advocate for equal treatment under the law for all persons, "regardless of affectional or sexual preferences."[41] First and foremost, the caucus worked to register and to educate voters within the gay community. During each election cycle, the DGPC screened candidates regardless of their party affiliation. Generally, the screening process included interviews with candidates to determine their positions on issues related to the gay community. If the DGPC endorsed a candidate, then they would offer to support the candidate with community volunteers.[42] Initially, the caucus solely focused on local elections, but over time as the organization grew, so did the breadth of their recommendations.

On June 26 to commemorate the Stonewall Riots and gay pride, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus held their first rally in Exall Park across from Villa Fontana, a well-known, local gay bar. Reverend Jim Harris of the MCC specifically recommended the park due to the lack of public bathrooms. He warned that if a rally were held in a park with public facilities, members of the Dallas vice squad "would entice, entrap, and arrest

[40] Phil Johnson, "Dallas Gay Alliance: Fifth Birthday Celebration," May 11, 1981. Timeline. Box 62, folder 68, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[41] Chance West, "The Dallas Gay Political Caucus," 1976. Memo. Box 62, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[42] Ibid.

innocent young men."[43] Around 300 people attended the rally, which featured free food and drinks, live music, and speakers. During the event, Mary Jo Risher discussed her recent experiences within the court system and the impact her sexuality had on the jury's decision to grant custody of her youngest son, Richard, to her ex-husband, the boy's father.[44] Ultimately, the Exall Park rally brought the gay community together to celebrate their diversity in a public space.

Though the pride rally appeared successful, attendance at monthly meetings for the next three months was sparse. During this time, the leadership committee and the few who showed up worked to create by-laws for the organization and they began compiling information for the first voter recommendation guide, which they distributed in October for the upcoming local, state, and national elections in November.[45] On October 27, 1976, the Dallas Vice Squad raided a local bathhouse, Club Dallas, which resulted in the arrest of five gay men. Within the next several weeks, the gay community rallied together to protest police discrimination and the DGPC became a focal point for organization and activism in Dallas.

Although the Stonewall Riots shed light on the harassment of gay men and women by police departments, vice squads across the country continued to raid known bars and clubs that catered to the gay community. Because they were private clubs, bathhouses were very popular among gay men. Many believed that the distinction of "private club" shielded members from police raids. As a result, gay men with political

[43] Johnson, "Dallas Gay Alliance: Fifth Birthday Celebration."

[44] Amelia de Luna-Owsley, "Risher v. Risher," *Handbook of Texas Online*, August 6, 2020. Published by the Texas State Historical Association. https://tinyurl.com/yv2upy2x

[45] Phil Johnson, "History of the Dallas Gay & Lesbian Alliance," (date unknown).

or business connections often avoided bars, which were frequently targeted by the police, and opted to meet in private homes or bathhouses to maintain their anonymity.[46] Though advertised as health spas, these businesses actually served as a place for gay men to meet and have sex. Once patrons bought their memberships, staff members explained that the bathhouse served as a meeting spot for gay men and "you're not to take offense if someone propositions you."[47]

In addition to arrests made in the Club Dallas raid, the vice squad discovered a map that identified "at least 23 more clubs and bars in the downtown area."[48] Furthermore, the police department planned to use one of the arrests as a test case before the courts to determine if private clubs were actually public spaces. The argument over public and private spaces greatly affected the charges the defendant would face. According to state law, sexual acts between individuals of the same sex constituted "homosexual conduct," a Class C misdemeanor that could result in a fine up to $200. Engaging in sexual acts in public, regardless of sexual orientation, resulted in the charge of public lewdness, a Class A misdemeanor that could result in a fine of up to $2000 and/or a jail sentence of up to one year.[49] Either way, those arrested at Club Dallas faced criminal charges, because the Texas law allowed public officials to regulate the private lives of gay men and lesbians.

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[46] Karen Wisely, *Ruth (Rob) Shivers*, Oral History Collection 1911, April 29, 2016, 82. Transcript. UNT Oral History Program, University of North Texas Libraries.

[47] Saxon, 72.

[48] Robert T. Garrett, "Vice squad crackdown: Police aim at gay clubs," *Dallas Times Herald*, November 2, 1976. Clipping. Box 74, folder 16, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[49] Ibid.

The regulation of private lives by the state had been common practice in Texas since the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1860 Penal Code, Article 342 prohibited sodomy or "the abominable and detestable crime against nature." If found guilty of this deviant act, a defendant faced no less than five and no more than fifteen years in the state penitentiary. By 1943 state legislators expanded the law to prohibit oral and anal sex between straight and gay couples and between humans and animals. For those who engaged in such "lewd or lascivious" behavior, they faced a felony charge and confinement in a state prison for two to fifteen years. [50]

Initially legislators suggested the classification for homosexual conduct to be a Class A misdemeanor, but law enforcement officers and opponents argued that the punishment was too lenient. Those that opposed suggested that the best way to reduce the rising crime rate was to apply stiffer penalties and punishments of crime. Furthermore, the spread of religious fundamentalism in the state energized both voters and those elected to public office. This movement resulted in ordinary citizens ignoring the advice of legal and political experts and increased the legislating of moral values.[51]

During the Sixty-third Session of the Texas Legislature, law makers proposed Penal Code Section 21.06, commonly known as the Homosexual Conduct statute, to criminalize sexual acts, both oral and anal, between same-sex individuals. The new code decriminalized oral and anal sex acts between opposite-sex individuals and completely

[50] Jonathan David Carroll, "In and Out: Is It Curtains for the 140-Year-Old Sodomy Statute?," *Austin Chronicle* (Austin, Texas), August 11, 2000. https://tinyurl.com/yfed6uvs

[51] William N. Eskridge, Jr., *Dishonorable Passions: Sodomy Laws in America, 1861-2003* (New York: Viking, 2008), 302.

eliminated references to bestiality. Section 21.06 was not universally popular among legislators. During a debate within the House subcommittee, legislators contemplated decriminalization of all sodomy, but they concluded that the move would be too controversial among the public. In the final meeting of the Senate subcommittee Frank Stovall, a member of the Young Socialist Alliance, argued the establishment of a law to regulate the privacy of homosexuals and the homosexual body violated the spirit of the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). In the end, both houses approved the addition of Penal Code Section 21.06 and on June 14, 1973 Governor Dolph Briscoe signed the code into law.[52]

Following the raid on Club Dallas, D. L. Burgess, the director of the vice section, vowed to use more manpower to prevent and eliminate homosexual behavior in Dallas. Furthermore, Burgess reassured citizens that the Dallas Police Department was, in fact, "enforcing all of the laws on the books."[53] Burgess' threats and blatant willingness to use police officers to target and harass them infuriated the gay community. On November 8, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, the Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights (DAIR), and the Metropolitan Community Church hosted a rally of more than 400 people at the MCC.

While addressing the crowd, Rev. Troy Perry argued that the gay community was not seeking special treatment from the Dallas Police Department, but they refused to be treated like second-class citizens. In addition to calling for the end of targeted raids on

[52] Ibid, 303.
[53] Garrett, "Vice squad crackdown."

gay clubs and bars, Perry demanded that laws restricting sexual acts between consenting adults should be overturned.[54] Rev. James C. Harris, of the MCC – Dallas, noted that under the direction of Burgess, the vice squad intensified their harassment of the gay community. Harris declared that Dallas' gay community would no longer allow the police department to oppress them. They planned to challenge police harassment and discrimination through legal avenues and public demonstrations. Ultimately, he declared that Dallas' gay community was "tired of paying first-class taxes and being treated like second-class citizens."[55]

In response to the increased police raids, business owners within the gay community formed the Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights (DAIR), with the express purpose of raising money to challenge Penal Code 21.06. With a goal of $50,000, business owners, like Richard Longstaff and Frank Caven, hosted benefits in their stores, bars, and nightclubs. Additionally, they collected donations from the community and lobbied venders to donate to the cause.[56] For many business owners, collectively fighting against the existing laws benefited them both personally and professionally. By overturning 21.06, police raids of gay-owned businesses and popular establishments would end. Therefore, the gay and lesbian community would be able to publicly

[54] "Gays vow fight to change laws," *Dallas Times Herald*, November 9, 1976. Clipping. Box 74, folder 16, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[55] Joe Pouncy, "Gays protest police enforcement," *Dallas Morning News*, November 7, 1976. Clipping. Box 71, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[56] "DAIR," *Dallas Gay Political Caucus News*, December 1976. Newsletter. Box 2, folder 21, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong Papers (The Dallas Way), University of North Texas Special Collections.

socialize without fearing the police, which would economically benefit businesses in and around the gayborhood.

While the police department intensified their patrols of gay bars and bathhouses, members of the Dallas Motion Picture Review Board voted to address homosexuality in films. Though the Motion Picture Association of America, established in 1968, issued nationally recognized ratings, a panel of concerned, unpaid citizens met weekly to review movies and to issue ratings of either "suitable" or "not suitable."[57] In addition to overall rating of the movie, the panel also indicated what movie goers could anticipate while in the theater: S for sex, V for violence, L for language, D for drugs, and N for nudity. In December 1976, the review board addressed the issue of homosexuality in films by voting to include P for perversion to the list. Not all members of the panel felt that homosexuality needed to be addressed by the review board. Honu Frankel stated that many members of the panel feared that Dallas would "turn into the Sodom and Gomorrah of the Southwest" if children saw "anything resembling homosexuality on the screen."[58]

In response, Steven Wilkins, parliamentarian of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, issued a public statement opposing the inclusion of P in the rating scale used by the movie review board. Wilkins cited recent movement within professional organizations, like the American Psychiatric Association, the American Bar Association, and the American Federation of Teachers, that no longer considered homosexuality "to be a

[57] Elizabeth Kastor, "It's a Wrap: Dallas Kills Film Board," *Washington Post*, August 13, 1993. https://tinyurl.com/2p968tjh

[58] "Dallas review board adds new letter – 'P'," *The News* (Port Arthur, Texas), December 13, 1976. https://tinyurl.com/2cdbjd93

psychological disorder nor a perversion."[59] While the Dallas Movie Review Board claimed their intention was to protect children and families from witnessing homosexual behavior, their use of the word "perversion" rather than "homosexuality" spoke volumes about their the board's opinion of homosexuality. Wilkins emphasized that gay men and women in the area held various occupations and contributed in a number of ways to the community writ large and the labeling of homosexuality as perverse only intensified "the erroneous and malicious opinion" of the gay community.[60]

As it turned out, 1977 was a big year for the gay community, both nationally and in Dallas. Despite their increasing presence in the gay community, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus faced its first major challenge when Chance West resigned his position as president of the organization in mid-January. He cited the lack of time and energy to devote to both his personal life and the caucus.[61] In accordance with the organizational by-laws Vice President Pat Cherry assumed leadership of the caucus.

At the February general meeting, executive board members of the caucus moved to ratify Cherry as their president. Per the by-laws, the nomination returned to the general membership for a vote, but they refused to confirm Cherry. Instead, members nominated Steve Wilkins, the parliamentarian, as the next president of the DGPC. Following a discussion among the executive board, they refused to confirm Wilkins. As

[59] Steve Wilkins, "Statement to the Dallas Motion Picture Review Board," press release, January 12, 1977. Box 62, folder 43, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Chance West, Chance West to Steve Wilkins, December 28. 1976. Mailgram. Box 532, folder 13, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

the group was clearly at an impasse, Jerry Ward, the volunteer coordinator, proposed suspending the by-laws and allowing the general membership to elect the next president. In the end, Wilkins became president of the DGPC and both Vice President Pat Cherry and Secretary Linda Lopez resigned from the organization.[62]

As it turns out, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong attended their first caucus meeting in February 1977. In the fall of 1976, after completing her doctorate in geography at the University of Colorado – Boulder, Young accepted a job with Texas Instruments and the couple relocated to Dallas. While living in Colorado, they were both active in the Gay Liberation Front and considered themselves to be very committed to the democratic process.[63] Once settled in Dallas, the couple began looking for opportunities to advance the gay civil rights movement in the city. After their first meeting, newly elected president, Steve Wilkins, met Young and Armstrong and strongly encouraged them to become active within one of the various committees. Within two weeks, Wilkins called Young and asked her to fill the position of secretary for the caucus.[64] Thus, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong continued their social and political activism through the DGPC.

Nationally, Anita Bryant, former singer and spokesperson for Florida Citrus Commission, rallied religious conservatives to protest an anti-discrimination ordinance,

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[62] "Parliamentary Fireworks Spark February General Meeting," *Dallas Gay Political Caucus News*, February 1977. Newsletter. Box 2, folder 21, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong Papers (The Dallas Way), University of North Texas Special Collections.

[63] Karen Wisely, *Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong*, Oral History Collection 1743, February 4, 2010, 31-36. Transcript. Oral History Program, University of North Texas Libraries.

[64] Louise Young, "Eulogy for Steve Wilkins, President of the Former Dallas Gay Political Caucus (Now the Gay and Lesbian Alliance), 1977-1978," January 28, 1995. Speech. Box 78, folder 25, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

which would protect homosexuals in Dade County, Florida. In December 1976, the Dade County Commission unanimously approved of the anti-discrimination ordinance, which provided legal protections for gay people in the areas of housing, public accommodations, and employment. Due to Bryant's protests, the commission voted on the measure again in January and it again approved of the ordinance with a narrow vote of five to three. Following the second vote, Bryant chastised the commission for condoning immorality and discriminating against her "children's rights to grow up in a healthy, decent community."[65] As a result of this vote, Bryant set out to highlight, in her view, the dangers homosexuality posed to children and communities across the country.

On March 26, 1977, Margaret "Midge" Constanza, Presidential aide to Jimmy Carter, met with two dozen gay rights activists to discuss the repeal of discriminatory laws aimed at homosexuals. Upon hearing the news, Anita Bryant protested the meeting and scoffed at the idea of discussing "their [homosexuals] alleged 'human rights'" at the White House. Bryant's core argument posited that homosexual rights were moral and, therefore, should not be discussed or decided in the political arena. By permitting these discussions, Bryant claimed that the government legitimized homosexuality and suggested to children "that being a homosexual or lesbian is not really wrong or illegal."[66]

Due to an increasing demand for equality, Anita Bryant formed Save Our Children Incorporated, one of the largest anti-homosexual organizations in the country,

[65] "Bias Against Homosexuals Is Outlawed in Miami," *New York Times*, January 19, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/d3vn9zz2

[66] "Anita Bryant Scores White House Talk with Homosexuals," *New York Times*, March 28, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/mrx85s6c

in the spring of 1977. Recognizing that anti-discrimination measures would not stop in Florida, Bryant mobilized national support using conservative, religious arguments.[67] She claimed that if God condoned homosexuality, he "would have made Adam and Bruce." Furthermore, Bryant erroneously claimed that the anti-discriminatory measures in Dade County would require school districts to hire gay teachers who would "proselytize and possibly molest children." Combining religious rhetoric and stoking fears of pedophilia, Bryant quickly gained support across the country. During its first five months, Save Our Children Inc. received more than 20,000 letters and $40,000 in donations from more than forty states.[68]

Despite arguing that gay rights should not be discussed in the political sphere, Bryant and her supporters determined to block the Dade County ordinance by putting it on the ballot for a referendum in June. The protestors needed a minimum of 10,000 signatures, which they exceeded six times over. In addition, Save Our Children received encouragement and support from then Florida Governor Reubin Askew who stated that "the homosexual lifestyle" did not "approach a constitutional right" and that he personally did "not want a known homosexual teaching" his children.[69]

Though Anita Bryant and the Save Our Children coalition received national support, gay organizations across the nation rallied support of those living in Dade County. Organizations in New York City hosted a fundraising party at the Waldorf

[67] Young, "Eulogy for Steve Wilkins."

[68] B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., "Miami Debate Over Rights of Homosexuals Directs Wide Attention to a National Issue," *New York Times*, May 10, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/3c49f4wf

[69] Ibid.

Astoria Hotel. In San Francisco, gay bars started a "gaycott" of Florida orange juice.[70] During their April meeting, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus decided to support the Dade County Coalition, one of the pro-gay rights organizations in Miami, both financially and in spirit. Members of the DGPC collected fifty-seven dollars at the meeting and planned future fundraisers. In a letter to the coalition, President Steve Wilkins offered to send DGPC members to Miami if they needed boots on the ground and invited members of the Florida coalition to visit Texas when they needed "to get away from it all."[71]

In addition to collecting money during their monthly meeting, caucus members set out to write letters to the Dade County Commission, and to Anita Bryant. Kay Thomas wrote to Ruth Shack, the commissioner who originally introduced the anti-discrimination ordinance, praising her for standing up for "the human rights of people to love."[72] In a letter to Bryant, Brian Halliday offered a contribution of zero dollars for her "worthless hate campaign." Additionally, Halliday criticized Representative Clay Smothers, from District 33-G in Dallas County, for inviting Bryant to Texas to testify before the legislature "in favor of a piece of homophobic legislation" he introduced in 1977.[73]

In an attempt to connect to Bryant and her husband, Bob Green, on a more personal level, James Chumley addressed his letter to Mr. and Mrs. Green. Chumley

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Steve Wilkins, Steve *Wilkins to Dade County Coalition*, April 22, 1977. Letter. Box 537, folder 4, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[72] Kay Thomas, *Kay Thomas to Ruth Shack, April 11, 1977*. Letter. Box 537, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[73] Brian Halliday, *Brian Holliday to Anita Bryant*, April 4, 1977. Letter. Box 537, folder 13, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

urged them to reconsider their position on the anti-discrimination ordinance even if "it might involve a public apology." He argued that he did not choose his sexuality, but he was entitled to have a partner and the right to proclaim his love to that person in public. Chumley reassured Bryan and Green that people, regardless of sexual orientation, should not have the right to sexually molest children. In fact, most states already established laws preventing molestation. If the Save Our Children coalition were truly concern about the welfare children, then they should lobby for more legislation to protect kids from physical abuse rather than focusing on a person's sexuality.[74]

While the Dallas Gay Political Caucus wrote letters and held funding raising events for the Dade County Coalition, the *Dallas Morning News'* editorial column criticized those who spoke out against Anita Bryant. In a previous edition of the paper, Rod McKuen, singer and poet, announced he was joining in the fight against Bryant and the Save Our Children coalition by hosting benefit shows around the state. Additionally, McKuen suggested that Bryant should stand down or he would encourage comedians to make as many jokes about her as possible.[75] The editorial department criticized McKuen for personally attacking Bryant rather than attacking her opinions surrounding homosexuality. The editorial piece also noted that many entertainment outlets had in fact distanced themselves from Bryant because of her work with Save Our Children.[76]

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[74] James Chumley, *James Chumley to Anita Bryant and Bob Green*, April 13, 1977. Letter. Box 537, folder 4, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[75] "Poet McKuen Joins Fight for Gay Rights," *Dallas Morning News*, May 3, 1977. Box 73, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[76] "Target: Anita Bryant," *Dallas Morning News*, May 4, 1977: 2. https://tinyurl.com/343ndav4

Though the editorial piece did not directly praise Bryant or her cause, it clearly generated some controversy in Dallas as debates over the Save Our Children Campaign appeared within subsequent pages of the editorial section of the *Dallas Morning News*. In a letter to the paper, Jack J. Haptonstall, a local resident, pointed out that "poets and comedians poked fun at Noah" until it started raining and they made fun of Daniel in the lions' den, until "the kingdom was weighed and was found wanting, and the country was destroyed." As for Haptonstall, he certainly appreciated those with faith, which included Anita Bryant.[77] In another letter, Dale Smith of Irving proclaimed both natural and Biblical laws were clear on the "absolute wrongness of homosexuality." Furthermore, the wrath of God would soon be upon American culture because so many claimed Bryant a "bigot for taking a stand against the most degraded form of sexual perversity."[78]

As the referendum election drew near, some news stories centered the Dade Country argument as a liberal attack of traditional, American values. Jim Treloar, Times Herald reporter, recounted atrocities committed by Nazi soldiers during World War II against both Jewish people and homosexuals, who were forced to wear lavender triangles to denote their difference. Treloar stated that American homosexuals liked to "haul out the gas chamber story and cry "Fascist!" when they were opposed on political and civil rights issues. In the same piece, Treloar quoted Ruth Shack who claimed that cities who had adopted similar anti-discriminatory ordinances had not reported "bad

[77] "Letters: Anita Defended," *Dallas Morning News*, May 12, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/3dd9kj3z
[78] "Letters: Wrath Expected," *Dallas Morning News*, May 17, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/yc6nnm9m

experiences." Treloar contended that Shack was not being completely honest, because "Mr. Johnson," of Minneapolis, demanded that the Big Brothers organization not disclose his sexual orientation to the families of prospective little brothers. After reviewing the case, the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights agreed that the revelation of Johnson's sexuality violated his rights. Treloar emphasized the decision resulted in the deception of parents and that Big Brothers staff members were required "to study homosexuality at a center called 'Gay House.'"[79]

Anita Bryant declared "the laws of God and the cultural values of man" were vindicated when voters in Dade County voted 2-1 to repeal the anti-discrimination ordinance on June 7, 1977. While at a victory party, Bob Green pulled Bryant, his wife, closer to him and kissed her. He then stated, "that's what heterosexuals do."[80] Throughout the campaign, Bryant and the Save Our Children coalition repeatedly stated the ordinance was "an open invitation" to recruit children.[81] Therefore, Green's actions and statement at the celebration indicated that heterosexual behaviors were totally acceptable, while homosexual behavior remained deviant and unacceptable for reputable citizens.

Two days after the election, Dick West, the editorial director of the *Dallas Morning News*, published an anonymously written opinion piece entitled, "Anita

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[79] Jim Treloar, "Anita 'obeying God's will' in crusade against gay rights," *Dallas Times Herald*, May 29, 1977. Box 73, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[80] "Miami voters repeal gay rights ordinance," *Dallas Morning News*, June 8, 1977: 1. Box 73, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[81] "Miami gay rights vote near," *Dallas Times Herald*, June 5, 1977: 18. Box 73, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

Victorious." The author praised Bryant "for her courage and stanchness" to organize an entire campaign to deny the rights of a minority group. Additionally, they expressed shock that Bryant's campaign was successful because this was the era of "the age of 'minority rights.'" The author ruefully chided the lengths governments, from the local to the federal level, were taking "to affirm and enforce the rights" of African Americans, women, and the disabled. But unlike "blackness and femininity," they contended that homosexuality was a "condition of the mind and spirit," which could be corrected, that offended "against the laws of nature." The author concluded that homosexuals certainly had rights as taxpayers, but "when they flaunt their abnormality" or demand laws to protect it, good, moral citizens were required to "gently but firmly say no."[82]

For over a week, the *Dallas Morning News* did not print any opinion pieces regarding Anita Bryant, the Dade County referendum, or the Save Our Children campaign. But on June 18, almost the entire editorial section featured opinion pieces or letters to the editor. Robert Oaks, of Arlington, criticized the paper for publishing the "Anita Victorious" editorial piece and questioned if the majority of voters should actually determine the civil rights of minorities, like African Americans, Jewish people, women, and homosexuals.[83] Steve Wilkins, President of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, challenged the misinformation provided about homosexuals in the previously published editorial piece. Wilkins accused the *Dallas Morning News* of fanning the flames of hatred, bigotry, and oppression against the gay community. In order to prevent

[82] "Anita Victorious," *Dallas Morning News*, June 9, 1977. Box 73, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[83] "Letters: A New Editorial Low," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/wb83krhr

future gaffes, Wilkins offered to educate the paper through an open dialogue between the DGPC and the *Morning News*.[84]

Although several letters criticized the paper for publishing an inflammatory piece on homosexuality, others applauded the Morning News for the lead editorial. Mrs. R. L. Nix, of Wills Point, said she was tired of "sickies" attempting to convince society they are not really sick. Nix further condemned "the flagrant flaunting" of homosexuals as that is offensive to the majority.[85] Delores Winder, of Arlington, praised the paper for "the direct, quiet way" they delivered the truth about the situation in Miami. According to Winder, God placed courage in His people to finally stand up for morality in the United States. Finally, Jack Ledbetter, of Dallas, proclaimed that God was victorious in decision handed down by the voters of Dade County. After confirming that he was the product of sexual relationship between a man and a woman, Ledbetter concluded that heterosexual relations were the only ones sanctioned by God.[86]

In an effort to push her own religious and political agendas, Anita Bryant created a discourse in which both the evangelical and non-evangelical communities feared homosexuals. By cherry picking scriptures from the Bible, Bryant proclaimed homosexuals committed abominations before God and, therefore, would fail to cross through the pearly gates into heaven. For those less likely to agree with her religious condemnations, Bryant preyed on some of parents' most basic fears. Her stories of homosexual recruitment suggested that young boys would become overtly feminine and

[84] "Letters: Editorial Misinformed," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/wb83krhr

[85] "Letters: Fed Up," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/wb83krhr

[86] "Letters: God Victorious," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/wb83krhr

flamboyant while young girls would adopt masculine appearances and behaviors. As for those children that resisted conversion to homosexuality, Bryant peddled the false narrative that gay men and women wanted to sexually abuse children.

Following her victory in Miami, Bryant vowed to help those across the country who wanted to oppose anti-discriminatory laws and ordinances in their communities. Almost immediately she received requests from Texas, Virginia, and New Hampshire. Meldrim Thomson, Governor of New Hampshire, praised Bryant's commitment in opposing gay rights measures. Thomson noted the work of Save Our Children illustrated that Americans continued to be good "God-fearing, decent people."[87] Reverend Joe West, pastor of San Antonio's Town East Baptist Church, invited Anita Bryant to help him and the congregation energize "the silent majority" in the city. Rev. West claimed the entire country suffered from a moral crisis, which homosexuality was only the tip of the iceberg. According to West, by demanding equality, activists within the gay civil rights movement infringed on the rights of the majority. [88] As the first to take a national stand against the civil protections of homosexuals, Bryant became a beacon for those looking to preserve the morality of America.

In the spring of 1977, the Texas State Bar Association (TSBA) invited Anita Bryant to perform the national anthem at their annual conference in Houston in June. As the anti-discriminatory ordinance debate heated up, leaders of the association worried

[87] "Gay rights conflict widening," *Dallas Times Herald*, June 9, 1977: 12-A. Clipping. Box 73, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[88] Carlton Stowers, "Invitation to Anita Bryant Disturbs San Antonio Gays," *Dallas Morning News*, June 12, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/2dnr6zv4

about the divisiveness of Bryant's rhetoric and decided to cancel her appearance. Unfortunately, this move angered many TSBA members across the state and they pressured the board to reinstate Bryant on the schedule. Because of these protests, the executive board of the TSBA once again invited Bryant to perform the national anthem at their annual conference, which was held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel.[89]

As the convention drew near, the Houston Gay Political Caucus (HGPC) organized the Houston Human Rights Rally, which featured speakers, a march, and a candlelight vigil, through the streets of the city, past the Hyatt Regency Hotel, and ending in the Houston City Hall Plaza. Executive board members of the HGPC invited gay activists and members of civil rights organizations from across the country to join the protest. In Dallas, Steve Wilkins organized "a contingent of hundreds and hundreds of gays and lesbians" to participate in the rally and vigil in Houston.[90] Reaching Out, a Dallas based gay newspaper, covered the cost of a charter bus to facilitate local residents getting to the event. Once Bryant realized the HGPC had organized a counter protest, she claimed to fear attacks from militant gay activists. During a press conference, Bryant claimed "the voices of a radical minority" verbally harassed her, her husband, and "the normal majority" following the defeat of the anti-discrimination measure in Florida. In addition to verbal assaults, Bryant complained that gay activists and their supporters were actively working "to blacklist her as an entertainer and destroy her career."[91]

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[89] Carl Freund, "Vocalism Hurting Gays, Anita Says," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/yc87pff2

[90] Young, "Eulogy for Steve Wilkins."

[91] Freund, "Vocalism Hurting Gays."

In an attempt to ease tensions at the conference, both the Houston and Dallas Gay Political Caucuses offered to provide their members as body guards for Bryant and Bob Green, her husband, but they declined the offer.[92] Louise Young of the DGPC reported that almost thirteen thousand people protested in Houston, but newspapers reported a crowd of about 3,000 to 4,000 people. The crowd featured a diverse group of people from Catholic priests and nuns to women's rights activists and, even actress Liz Torres of "Phyllis" and "All in the Family."[93] Many of the protesters wore black armbands with inverted pink triangles, a clear reference to the gay men and women targeted in Nazi Germany, and others carried signs. Collectively, the group sang songs of protest, such as "We Shall Overcome," and songs associated with American principles of freedom, like "God Bless America" and "The Star-Spangled Banner."[94]

Just over two-weeks later, Bryant continued her tour of Texas in Brownwood, a town about 170-miles southwest of Dallas. In mid-June, Groner Pitts announced Anita Bryant as the feature entertainer of "Freedom Night '77," the city's Independence Day celebration, on July 3. Pitts, as project chairman of the event, noted that bringing Bryant to Brownwood was not a political statement. In fact, they had booked her well before the Save Our Children initiative. Additionally, the committee had not considered cancelling the appearance based on Bryant's views regarding homosexuality. Overall,

[92] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "Press Release," June 1, 1977. Memo. Box 537, folder 15, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[93] "3,000 Gays Protest Appearance of Anita," *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/43y7y8jx

[94] "Bearing Witness to Our Humanity," *The Advocate*, July 27, 1977. Clipping. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/yv67pkzw

Pitts stated that the citizens of Brownwood were "proud to have Miss Bryant honor the community with this special program" because they endorse the right to freedom of speech.[95]

At their June meeting, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus decided to avoid using confrontational protests as a means to get their message out to the public. Instead, they opted to use "The Dallas approach," in which the DGPC employed "a low-key, well-dressed effort" to work within the existing political system.[96] As a result, the DGPC approach became the antithesis of those being used by more radical organizations along the coasts. For example, unlike most national organizations, the caucus did not blindly endorse the "gaycott" of Florida citrus products. Instead, Secretary Louise Young reached out to Arthur Darling, the Publicity Director of the Florida Department of Citrus, to understand the department's policies regarding gay employees and their willingness to publicly support equal rights. Darling stated that Citrus Commission would remain neutral on the issue of homosexuality and they did not endorse Anita Bryant's viewpoints, but they believed that she had the right, under the First Amendment, to express her opinion. On some level, the "Dallas approach" worked well with Darling. At the end of their conversation, he praised Young for her positive approach and told her that she "was the only rational gay individual" he had spoken with

[95] "Bryant to Sing in Brownwood," *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/5n9ar5te

[96] Brooks Egerton, "Peaceful Pressure: Gay and Lesbian Alliance marks 20 years of pushing for acceptance, protection," *Dallas Morning News*, June 7, 1997. https://tinyurl.com/2p8y95zs

about the boycott.[97] By the summer of 1977, the DGPC did not support the "gaycott" of Florida citrus products as they believed it "would be counterproductive and would deny her [Bryant] the right to work," which was a right that employers frequently took away from gay men and women.[98]

Due to a concerted effort to maintain a peaceful, business-like approach to resistance, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus declined the idea of having a physical opposition to Anita Bryant in Brownwood. Instead, they voted to buy a one-page advertisement in the *Brownwood Bulletin* on July 3, the day of Bryant's performance. Following a membership vote, Don Baker, the Director of Education for the DGPC, drove to Brownwood to meet with Craig Woodson, the President of the paper, and Paul Arnold, advertising agent for the paper. During the meeting, J. Edward Johnson, a local lawyer, assisted Baker in negotiating an agreement to print "Speaking of Freedom," a public service announcement.

The announcement wove together the ideologies featured within the Declaration of Independence and the powerful narrative that these ideas inspired migrants to seek out the United States, the land of the free. The caucus pointed to American's core belief "that all people are created equal" and that these rights were given to them "by their Creator." Because of this philosophy, the United States became the "leader of the free world," which inspired people "to pursue their chosen goals unrestricted by political pressures or religious persecution." Next the DGPC noted all people recognized the

[97] Louise Young, "Conversation with Mr. Art Darling, Florida Citrus Commission Publicity Director," July 27, 1977. Notes. Box 537, folder 4, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[98] Egerton, "Peaceful Pressure."

Statue of Liberty as a "beacon to the oppressed, a symbol to all who seek the freedoms for which she stands."[99]

After drawing a connection from the basis of the Declaration of Independence to the modern image of the United States, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus juxtaposed the image of the Statue of Liberty to the actions of Anita Bryant. Lady Liberty promised freedom to all who saw her, but Bryant used a microphone to condemn people who were different. The announcement argued that Bryant, unlike Miss Liberty, did not base her arguments "upon self-evident truths, but rather upon a distortion of the facts." The DGPC found it more alarming that Bryant conducted "her campaign in the name of Jesus Christ, whose abiding directive to His followers was that they love one another." Instead of following that directive, she "entered into a crusade of persecution and discrimination." They ended the advertisement by stating "when the rights of one minority are violated, the rights of all Americans are in jeopardy."[100]

In the end, Anita Bryant's appearance in Brownwood went exactly how Groner Pitts had anticipated. Approximately 12,000 people attended the "Celebrate Freedom" events and no visible protests occurred. Though billed as a nonpolitical appearance, Bryant frequently referenced her relationship with Christ between the twenty songs in

[99] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "Freedom PSA from the Gay Political Caucus," July 3, 1977. Clipping. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc304817/m1/1/?q=%22speaking%20of%20freedom%22: accessed July 12, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[100] Ibid.

her set.[101] Indeed, she did not discuss ordinances or political affiliations, but because her political opinions were based on her religious ideology, Bryant spent the entire evening espousing her political opinions.

According to a report in the *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, in spite of measures taken to host a nonpolitical event, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus attempted to entice Bryant into a political argument by opposing her appearance with a full-page political advertisement in the local paper. Lloyd Stewart, a Star-Telegram reporter, described Anita Bryant and Bob Green, her husband, as "stoic" considering the calls to boycott Florida orange juice and all of the protesters at public appearances. When asked about the caucus' advertisement, Green refused to address it directly, but he produced a news clipping from Miami showing that sales of Florida citrus products had increased almost 20% since the launch of the Save Our Children initiative.[102] Apparently both Green and Stewart saw an increase of sales as Americans using capitalism to cast their vote of support for Bryant.

Bob Green refused to address the advertisement in the *Brownwood Bulletin*, but the Dallas Gay Political Caucus quickly received feedback from opponents from across the state. Within days, the caucus received a get-well card postmarked from Abilene, Texas. [103] The author of the card offered their apologies to the caucus for being so "sick"

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[101] Tom Anderson, "Brownwood captivated by Bryant," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 4, 1977. Clipping. Box 62, folder 43, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[102] Lloyd Steward, "Anita says fight was worth the price," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 4, 1977. Clipping. Box 62, folder 43, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[103] The card was addressed to the "Queer Political Caucus" and did not have a return address.

and wasting their money on an advertisement in the *Brownwood Bulletin*. Unfortunately, the people of Brownwood did not like "abnormal, queer, cock sucking, and screwing odd balls."[104] The DGPC also received an annotated version of their advertisement from an anonymous member of Houston's League of Decency. The author asked the caucus to place another advertisement addressing the "seduction of young men" in the *Brownwood Bulletin*. They also suggested that "history condemns" homosexuals "as an abomination" and that homosexual acts were "against nature." Despite the Declaration of Independence outlining unalienable rights from the Creator, homosexuals were not permitted to commit "rape and death to young boys."[105]

As the greeting card did not have a return address, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus had no way to respond, but the envelope containing the annotated advertisement from the *Brownwood Bulletin* had a return address for the League of Decency. In an effort to continue The Dallas Approach, Floyd Baker,[106] the Director of Education, offered a very professional and calm response to the returned advertisement. He thanked the author for contacting the caucus and expressing their personal beliefs, but explained that their opinions "were indictive of the very purpose of the advertisement." Baker suggested they "take a few minutes" to visit their local libraries and that they would find their "accusation [of homosexuals preying on young boys] unfounded and untrue." In

[104] Unknown to Queer Political Caucus, July 5, 1977. Greeting Card. Box 78, folder 25, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[105] League of Decency to the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, date unknown. Annotated advertisement. Box 78, folder 25, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[106] Donald Floyd Baker often used variations of his name in the early days of the caucus. This allowed him to maintain some form of anonymity to protect his career.

fact, Baker continued, "over 90% of all child molestation is done by heterosexuals." Baker assured the author that gay men and women in America did not demand "special privileges," but rather "the same rights as other Americans."[107]

While Anita Bryant and the Save Our Children campaign dominated the first half of 1977, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus engaged with their local, state, and national representatives on political issues regarding their civil rights. In the spring of 1977, Rev. Jim Harris, of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), announced his run for Dallas City Council. During his campaign, Harris vowed to bring down the rising crime rates in Oak Lawn and East Dallas and to end prostitution on Cedar Springs through the regular patrolling by uniformed police officers.[108] During a question-and-answer forum at the Dallas Press Club, Harris confirmed that the MCC served as an affirming church for the gay community, but he pushed back against the accusation that he represented the gay community. Harris stated he intended to represent the entire community regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.[109] Despite the heavy canvassing, Harris lost the election to incumbent William Cothrum by more than 5,000 votes.[110] As the elections were held at the height of Bryant's popularity with the Save Our Children initiative and news reports consistently reminded voters that he ministered

[107] Floyd Baker, Dallas Gay Political Caucus to League of Decency, July 15, 1977. Letter. Box 78, folder 25, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[108] Rev. Jim Harris Campaign Fund, *Rev. Jim Harris For City Council Place 5*, 1977. Box 537, folder 6, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[109] Henry Tatum, "Cothrum, Harris Differ on E. Dallas Backzoning," *Dallas Morning News*, March 16, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/yeytyn7s

[110] "Final Tallies," *Dallas Morning News*, April 4, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/45tayss4

to the gay community, Harris was very unlikely to win a seat on the City Council. Though he lost, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus appreciated Harris' willingness to speak for inclusion and advocacy during his campaign. To show their appreciation, members voted at their April meeting to donate $200 to Rev. Harris to help him cover any remaining expenses he incurred during his campaign.[111]

At the state level, Governor Dolph Briscoe spent the spring and summer of 1977 preparing to run for re-election for a third time. Unfortunately, Briscoe's popularity among Texas voters was waning and many news outlets predicted that Attorney General John Hill would challenge him in the primary.[112] As rumors spread about Hill's potential candidacy, leaders from the Texas Gay Political Caucuses[113] reached out directly to Hill and Bruce Goranson, a staff member within the Hill campaign office. Goranson indicated that Hill might be sympathetic to the gay cause if the caucuses could mobilize a significant amount of the community to vote. Goranson envisioned "a quiet, organized effort in the gay community to elect John Hill" as the next governor of Texas.[114] Though he did not specifically indicate why, Goranson, as a gay activist,[115] most likely recognized that an endorsement from the Texas Gay Political Caucuses

[111] Louise Young, Dallas Gay Political Caucus to Rev. Jim Harris, May 2, 1977. Letter. Box 537, folder 13, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[112] Stewart Davis, "Briscoe to Seek Third Term," *Dallas Morning News*, June 12, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/364vskf5

[113] When the Houston and Dallas caucuses worked together, they represented themselves as the Texas Gay Political Caucuses.

[114] Bruce Goranson, *Bruce Goranson to Gary Van Ooteghem*, April 5, 1977. Letter. Box 537, folder 11, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[115] "1980 Gay Parade Co-Chairs Chosen," *Bay Area Reporter*, vol. 10, no. 5 (February 28, 1980): 9. Accessed July 11, 2019. https://archive.org/details/BAR19800228/page/n7

would be a difficult hurdle for Hill to overcome for some voters. In 1978, Hill defeated Briscoe in the primary, but was unable to overcome Republican Bill Clements.

Following the defeat of the anti-discrimination ordinance in Dade County, leaders from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), the National Gay Task Force, the Gay Rights National Lobby, and Dignity[116] decided to host a conference that brought gay and lesbian leaders together from across the nation.[117] Conference organizers hosted the National Gay Leadership Conference at the First Unitarian Church in Denver, Colorado from July 29-30. During his announcement, Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the UFMCC, invited gay leaders and activists from all over the country to attend the event. There were a couple of delegations. Steve Wilkins and Louise Young represented the Dallas Gay Political Caucus[118] and Richard Longstaff, owner of Union Jack, and Ray Hardin, owner of Villa Fontana, attended for the Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights.[119]

The conference offered community leaders an opportunity to hear speakers from the national organizations and to meet other grassroots activists from across the nation. During the opening ceremonies, Ginny Apuzzo of the Gay Rights National Lobby warned community leaders of the growing right-wing political movement and their activists, like Anita Bryant, who aimed to block gay rights protection and to promote

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[116] Dignity was an organization for gay Catholics.

[117] Sue Lindsay Roll, "Gay rights advocates meet in Denver," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 30, 1977. Clipping. Box 77, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[118] Louise Young, *The Dallas Gay Political Caucus to the Arrangements Committee for the National Gay Leadership Conference*, July 24, 1977. Letter. Box 77, folder 2, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[119] Anglin, *Longstaff*.

discriminatory legislation in both state and federal governments.[120] Additionally, conference leaders designed workshops that enabled members to share effective methods of bringing significant gay rights into the public and elected officials from the local to the national level.[121]

In addition to attending workshops and discussions, attendees voted on resolutions that had been drawn up during the conference. Prior to voting on the resolutions, board members informed the members that a majority votes were required for the measure to pass. Additionally, none of the resolutions would be binding, but were designed to illustrate the intent and opinions of those attending the conference. Those in attendance voted to endorse a boycott of the Florida Citrus Commission until they made a statement in favor of gay civil rights, a boycott of the Coors beer, a statement against the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children and the continued connection of homosexuality to these crimes.[122]

During the spring of 1977, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) called for a boycott of Coors beer while the Brewery Workers Local 366 went on strike in Golden, Colorado. Unlike previous strikes, members of the local opposed the Adolph Coors Company's demand that employees submit to physical exams and lie detector tests without notice. If workers

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[120] Louise Young, "Dallas Organizations Participate in National Gay Leadership Conference, August 1, 1977." Press release. Box 77, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[121] Al Smithson, *The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to the Dallas Gay Political Caucus*, July 8, 1977. Letter. Box 77, folder 2, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[122] "National Gay Leadership Conference," *Dignity*, vol. 8, no. 8, August 1977: 1. Box 77, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

refused to comply, their employment would be terminated. Union leaders and workers considered these demands a violation of their human rights. Specifically, the union argued that questions regarding a person's sexual orientation, how frequently they change their underpants, and if they had ever smoked pot as invasive and irrelevant to their ability to complete assigned tasks.[123]

In addition to the Coors Company demanding workers submit to lie detector tests, gay rights organizations were equally concerned with Holly Coors, CEO Joseph's wife, involvement with The King's Ministries, an organization based out of an Episcopal church in Denver. In a pamphlet regarding homosexuality, The King's Ministries claimed that homosexuality could be prevented and that thousands of people "have become ex-gay," which allowed them to serve Christ rather than live a life of sin. Through their outreach, the King's Ministry aimed "to return to the historic Christian understanding of the Gospel, with its clear teaching about sin and forgiveness."[124]

After learning of Coors' business practices regarding lie detector tests, questions about homosexuality, and Holly Coors connection to anti-homosexual organizations, Ray Hardin was committed to seeing a Coors boycott through in Dallas. On their drive back to Dallas, Richard Longstaff and Hardin discussed the Coors boycott and the potential impact the gay community could inflict upon beer sales. Hardin figured that

[123] Brewery, Bottling, Can and Allied Industrial Union – Local No. 366, "Background Paper: History of the Strike," 1977: 1-2. Box 63, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[124] The King's Ministries, "EPISCOPALIANS CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR CHURCH AND ABOUT THE TRUE LIBERATION OF THOSE WHO DESIRE AND NEED RELEASE FROM THE BONDAGE OF HOMOSEXUALITY," Denver, Colorado. Box 63, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

Coors accounted for approximately half of the beer sales in Dallas' gay bars. For liquor sales, Absolute vodka dominated the gay scene, but unlike Absolute, Coors did not heavily promote themselves or their products to the community or the bar owners. Hardin and Longstaff concluded that Coors took the gay community for granted and just assumed they would always make a lot of money in the gay bars.[125]

Previously, many of the gay rights leaders had been hesitant to endorse or to participate in the "gaycott" of Florida orange juice. While they were frustrated with Anita Bryant and the Save Our Children campaign, they refused to participate in the boycott because it would do little to directly affect Bryant. The boycott would hurt the economic prospects of farmers, migrant workers, and factory workers and these people were not protesting the anti-discrimination ordinance or making policies pertaining to gay men and women. On the other hand, the Coors boycott made sense as the company violated their worker's rights to privacy and Holly Coors used the profits of the company to proselytize and spread misinformation about homosexuals.

Ray Hardin, like many others in the gay community, had become increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement towards equality, but organizing a boycott of beer allowed him to feel like he was making a statement.[126] Hardin hit the ground running when he returned to Dallas. He reached out to the other bar owners to outline the causes behind the Coors boycott and most quickly agreed to participate. The Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights (DAIR) produced flyers announcing they had joined the National

[125] Karen Wisely, *Richard Longstaff*, Oral History Collection 1817, August 4, 2013, 14-15. Transcript. UNT Oral History Program, University of North Texas Libraries.

[126] Ibid.

Gay Leadership Conference and the AFL-CIO in the boycott of Coors beer. DAIR charged the Adolph Coors Company for violating the privacy rights of workers through the use of lie detectors and they condemned Holly Coors for her endorsement of literature containing anti-gay remarks and her financial support of anti-gay organizations.[127]

While DAIR and the Dallas Gay Political Caucus joined the National Gay Leadership Conference in the boycott of Coors products, some bar owners and community members questioned the motives of the protest. Linda Lopez, former Secretary of the DGPC[128], Rodney J. Smith, and Jerry G. Thomas drafted an open letter to the gay community questioning the motives behind the boycott. Primarily they opposed the premise of demanding the collective community to come together to boycott a product or company. They argued methods, which required individuals to abandon their freewill to achieve the defeat of bigotry and oppression, were in fact a form of oppression.[129]

Initially, some DAIR members suggested that the boycott should be done on an individual basis. More disturbingly, the letter continued, some members requested proof, outside of that provided by labor unions, that the Adolph Coors Company violated

[127] Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights, "PLEASE…DON'T BUY COORS BEER," 1977. Flyer. Box 63, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[128] Lopez resigned her post the night the Board of Directors failed to confirm Pat Cherry as President of the organization. The same night Steve Wilkins was nominated as President from the floor and later confirmed by a membership vote.

[129] Linda Lopez, Rodney J. Smith, Jerry G. Thomas, "WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIGOTS GONE," August 1977: 1. Open Letter. Box 63, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

the individual rights of their workers. Until these claims could be confirmed, these members were uncomfortable making demands of a boycott within the gay community to pressure the Coors Company. Rather than considering these options, Ray Hardin, President of DAIR, assured members that the boycott would continue as scheduled. If any owner of a gay bar refused to discontinue sales of Coors beer, DAIR promised to picket and protest these establishments until owners complied.[130]

Lopez, Smith, and Thomas bristled at the "gestapo tactics" the DAIR leadership were willing to use to ensure that Dallas' entire gay community complied with the boycott. In their assessment, the leaders of DAIR became the oppressor of the gay community. They refused to compromise or to allow individual choice despite the fact they claimed to be an alliance of "individual rights." Lopez, Smith, and Thomas concluded that those who once opposed bigotry had taken up the mantel of bigots within their own community.[131]

Lopez, Smith, and Thomas attempted to oppose the actions of DAIR in the only local gay paper, *Reaching Out*, but they were quickly challenged. As the core membership of DAIR were business owners, Hardin implied to the editors of the paper that printing anti-DAIR materials or articles would result in local, gay businesses pulling their advertisements from the paper.[132] By losing their advertisement revenues, *Reaching Out* would find it nearly impossible to stay in business.

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[130] Ibid, 1.
[131] Ibid, 2.
[132] Human Rights Foundation, "Our Heritage, Our Right," 1977. Flyer. Box 63, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

As Hardin attempted to squash any opposition to DAIR and the boycott, five more bar owners[133] collectively distributed flyers demanding more information about Coors' discrimination, both in their factories and in their political donations, of gay people. At a DAIR meeting, Hardin announced that the Coors family donated large sums of money to prevent protective legislation in California, but he was unable to provide any details surrounding the bill or when/if it had been blocked. When pressed on this issue, Hardin simply replied, "We'll get it." Without this information, the five dissenting bar owners questioned why they would deny their patrons the individual freedom of drinking Coors beer.[134]

Joseph Coors, the Executive Vice President of the Adolph Coors Company, attempted to address accusations of the company supporting anti-gay campaigns in California in the spring of 1977, almost two months prior to the National Gay Leadership Conference. In a letter to a California tavern owner, Coors noted that "the rumor" of Coors supporting anti-gay campaigns and legislation in the state were "completely and absolutely false." Coors implied that "some elements," presumably the labor union, worked to undermine the legitimacy and creditability of the company by spreading falsehoods "without a single thread of substantiating evidence." While the Coors Company worked "to uphold the American enterprise system," they maintained a strict policy "to take no position for or against controversial issues of the nature of the

[133] The owners were: Joe Moren of Tex's Ranch, Joe Elliot of The Jugs, Andi Taylor & Vi Tonnemaker of The Highlands, and Ray Martin of The Maidenhead.

[134] Joe Moren, Joe Elliot, Andi Taylor, Vi Tonnemaker, and Ray Martin, "D.A.I.R. denies freedom of press!," 1977. Flyer. Box 63, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

gays, abortion, and ERA" because these issues were not fundamental to the operations of the business, "but instead concerned with the freedom of the individual."[135] Despite Joseph Coors' attempt to defuse tensions between the Colorado brewing company and gay activists, many communities across the nation continued their boycotts well into the fall and winter of 1977.

Though the Coors boycott fractured parts of Dallas' gay community, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus attempted to unite the community through the four pillars of their organization: the repeal of Texas Penal Code 21.06, educating the greater Dallas community about homosexuality, the establishment of city ordinances to protect gay men and women, and to offer support and services to homosexuals in Dallas.[136] The leadership of the DGPC organized the first "DGPC Week," from September 30-October 10, to raise money to achieve their aims. During these eleven days, the caucus hoped to raise $10,000 by hosting a community picnic, a theatrical performance, a skating party, and a dance contest.[137] In addition to raising money to work toward civil protections of the gay community, the events also offered an avenue to unite those divided on the Coors issue.

The planning committee for DGPC Week decided to host an opening rally at the Metropolitan Community Church on September 30. As the DGPC attempted to build

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[135] Joseph Coors, *Joseph Coors to Unknown California Tavern Owner*, May 1977. Letter. Box 63, folder 2, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[136] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "DALLAS GAY POLITICAL CAUCUS PRESS CONFRENCE PRESS KIT," September 21, 1977: 1. Press Kit. Box 537, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[137] Ibid, 2.

connections with the heterosexual community, they extended invitations to their United States Representatives, their Texas state Senators and Representatives, both of Texas' United States Senators, locally elected city officials, and journalists and reporters from local media outlets. Unfortunately, none of the elected officials attended the rally, but extending these invitations signaled that Dallas' gay community had organized and intended to be more politically active. For the keynote address, the caucus brought in Massachusetts State Representative Elaine Noble, the first openly gay politician in the United States and member of the Gay Rights National Lobby. During her address, she predicted the difficulty the gay rights movement would have over time and advised the only way to move forward would be "working with the political system."[138]

In the middle of DGPC Week, the United States Supreme Court upheld a Washington state court ruling that allowed school districts to dismiss teachers and staff members based solely on their sexual preference. In response to this ruling, Nolan Estes, Dallas ISD Superintendent, announced that any district employee discovered to be homosexual would be asked to resign immediately.[139] According to an editorial in the *Dallas Morning News*, Estes' policy was "prudent" because an educator's "lifestyle" could not be "separate from his classroom performance in public schools."[140] Herb Cooke, the Executive Director of the Classroom Teachers of Dallas, disagreed with the Superintendent's statements and argued that teachers, like every other citizen, had every

[138] Kathy Deitsch, "NOBLE SPEAKS AT DALLAS RALLY," October 7, 1977: 2. Commentary for Texas Gay Task Force. Box 537, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[139] Karen Wisely, *Harryette Ehrhardt*, Oral History Collection 1843, July 9, 2012, 11. Transcript. UNT Oral History Program, University of North Texas Libraries.

[140] "Gay Policy Prudent." *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/yxacatm3

right to privacy. Furthermore, an employee's personal life was not in the purview of the district until "it interferes with the person's ability to carry out his duties as a teacher." Cooke conceded that Estes, as superintendent, could suspend employees for questionable behavior, but all citizens in the United States were afforded the right to due process before the district could terminate faculty members.[141]

Within days of Superintendent Estes' declaration, Eric Miller, a *Dallas Morning News* reporter, interviewed "John,"[142] a gay teacher working within the Dallas Independent School District. John confirmed that he was gay and that he knew several gay men and women who worked for the district. By his estimation, about a tenth of the district's teachers were gay and it was "absurd" to believe that a single, gay teacher had a greater influence on a child than their parents, peers, and the church. John concluded that if teachers influenced a child's sexual preference, then most homosexuals should have been heterosexual "because most of their teachers were heterosexual."[143]

Unfortunately, the vast majority of Americans only assumed that homosexual men and women were driven by sexual desires, which prevented them from having "normal" relationships or holding down respectable jobs. Additionally, some people viewed homosexuality through a religious lens, which made it increasingly difficult to see gay men and women as anything other than immoral. As a result, many parents and

[141] Eric Miller, "Officials Defend Gay Teachers," *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/3bk5mj8e

[142] The teacher assumed the name John for the interview as he was at risk for being fired for being gay.

[143] Eric Miller, "Gay Estimates 10% of City Teachers Are Homosexual," *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/3bk5mj8e

administrators feared having homosexual teachers in the classroom. John surmised that ignorance continued to drive fear and discrimination against homosexuals.[144]

Following Eric Miller's interview with John, Superintendent Nolan Estes clarified his stance on homosexual teachers. He asserted that a teacher's sexual preference was "their business," much like their political preferences. DISD would not dismiss teachers for their political positions and they would not target homosexual teachers, unless they were "confirmed to be approaching students with sexual intent."[145] While advocating for the protection of students from sexual abuse was appropriate, Estes continued to stigmatize homosexual teachers as predators within the school system. Rather than drawing a firm line in the sand by stating that any teacher, regardless of sexual orientation, would be dismissed for engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior with students, Estes specifically noted that those teachers that approached students with homosexual intent would be removed from the classroom.

Throughout the month of October, readers of the *Dallas Morning News* debated the social and moral repercussions of providing gay men and women with protections in the workplace. At the end of the month, the paper asked Dallas residents if homosexuals should have equal rights in all fields of employment. Of those polled, fort-nine percent opposed equal employment opportunities for gay men and women. According to Mozelle Hornburg, the Bible had been very clear on homosexual conduct. Therefore, she would not allow homosexuals to work in a field that provided them access to or

[144] Ibid.

[145] Julie Anne Booty, "Estes Softens Gay Stance," *Dallas Morning News*, October 11, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/2p9amdkh

influence on young people. Thirty percent of those polled believed qualifications or performance should be the only factor used to when evaluating a homosexual employee and twenty-one percent were undecided on the issue.[146]

Although boycotts, Anita Bryant, and employment debates dominated most of the year, gay men and women in Dallas continued to face discrimination and hardships in their everyday lives. Because of their visibility, gay bars became prime targets for opponents looking to lash out at the gay community. Bar owners had become familiar with bomb threats, threatening telephone calls, and the occasional case of arson. For example, in the early hours of October 27, an unknown arsonist set fire to Dimension 3, one of the largest gay discos in Dallas at the time. With little evidence, J.E. Tuma, chief arson investigator, implied another gay bar owner had committed the attack on Dimension 3. Tuma surmised that bar owners or the gay community did not take arson seriously as it was "just on of the games gay people play."[147]

Within two weeks of the fire, the gay community rallied together and held a fundraiser for Dimension 3 on November 9, 1977. Organizers planned to use the donations to rebuild the club and to replace costumes used by the club's female impersonators. Prior to the event, Ray Hardin, president of DAIR, invited Drs. Jack and Harryette Ehrhardt to the event. Dr. Harryette Ehrhardt served on the school board for Dallas Independent School District at the time. Following Superintendent Nolan Estes' statements regarding homosexual teachers, many leaders within the gay community

[146] "49% Reject Job Rights for Gays," *Dallas Morning News*, October 31, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/yckr3nvt

[147] Don Fisher, "Bomb Threats to Gay Bars Cited," *Dallas Morning News*, November 1, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/5y4fwv5v

reached out to her to request her support in protecting Dallas' gay educators. Not only did the couple attend the benefit, Dr. Harryette Ehrhardt donated several evening gowns for the club's performers.[148]

Two days after the event, the *Dallas Morning News* published an article on the front page of the paper that focused on Ehrhardt's donation and appearance at the Dimension 3 benefit. Almost immediately, people began threatening the Ehrhardts and their children. In response, the Dallas Police Department stationed a squad car outside of their house for more than a week and the Ehrhardt's youngest child, a kindergartener, had a police officer escort her to and from school.[149] Despite this attention, neither of the Ehrhardt's regretted attending the benefit or being associated with Dallas' gay community. While some school board members and politicians weighed the risks and benefits of taking a public stand on the issue, Ehrhardt cared less if voters re-elected her or not. Her primary focus was standing up for those who were discriminated against and doing what she and her husband thought was the right thing.[150]

Following the next school board meeting, Julie Anne Booty, a reporter for the *Dallas Morning News*, asked trustees about Ehrhardt's decision to attend the fundraiser. Most agreed that the Ehrhardts had every right to attend the event, but most either "disagreed with her philosophical support of the gay community" or outright condemned the decision. Trustee Jill Foster admitted she "wouldn't touch this (issue) with a 10-foot poll" and Trustee Brad Lapsley lambasted Ehrhardt for being "very irresponsible and

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[148] Julie Anne Booty, "Trustee Attends Gay Club Benefit," *Dallas Morning News*, November 11, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/ryk2xjdp

[149] Wisely, *Ehrhardt*, 47.

[150] Booty, "Trustee."

naïve." He surmised that the gay community in Dallas had their own 'Anita Bryant' in Dr. Harryette Ehrhardt. Despite emphatically arguing she attended the benefit as a private citizen, both Foster and Lapsley claimed that Dr. Ehrhardt had been invited because of her position on the school board and for those who saw her there, "they saw school board."[151]

While most people living in Dallas maintained negative opinions and stereotypes of gay men and women at the end of 1977, gay people in Dallas made significant strides during the early- and mid-seventies. In 1972, Ruth Shivers and Phil Johnson organized and participated in Dallas' first gay pride parade, which provided an opportunity for those living in Dallas to publicly come out. Because of the first parade, more people became actively involved in various gay organizations, from the Circle of Friends to the Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights to the Dallas Gay Political Caucus. Through these groups, gay men and women in Dallas discovered they were not alone and that others shared similar experiences and struggles. Perhaps more important, these organizations provided people with a collective voice and helped to focus the gay community on specific goals, such as redefining the general public's opinion of homosexuals and civil rights equality. By 1977, gay leaders, such as Ruth Shivers, Phil Johnson, Steve Wilkins, and Don Baker, established a strong foundation and infrastructure that fostered growth within the community for the next several decades.

[151] Julie Anne Booty, "School Trustees Divided over Member's Appearance at Gay Fund-Raiser," *Dallas Morning News*, November 12, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/ttneeyfe

CHAPTER IV: RELIGION AND POLITICS, 1978-1979

Although hosted five years before Anita Bryant publicly opposed the equal rights ordinance in Dade County, Dallas' participation in Explo '72 marked the importance of conservative, Christian values to many people living in the city. As outlined in chapter two, the evangelical conference brought approximately 75,000 teenagers and young adults into Dallas. According to reports, Explo '72 was the largest public demonstration of the Jesus Movement, a growing shift towards the intertwining of evangelicalism and conservative political ideologies.[1] Both locally elected and religious officials were excited for Dallas to host the event. Obviously bringing in a large number of visitors provided an economic boost, but many officials viewed the selection as legitimization of religious commitment within the city. In fact, while other locations were considered, organizers of Explo '72 ultimately chose Dallas because of "its reputation for being a center of spiritual activity."[2]

Following the completion of Explo '72, many people in and around Dallas wrote letters to the *Dallas Morning News* praising their coverage of the conference without hiding their support for traditional, Christian values. For example, one reader, Charlotte S. Dearien of Dallas, noted that national news outlets failed to properly cover the "gigantic demonstrations for Christ," but consistently covered "factions of young people and their demonic demonstrations and drug-ridden festivals." Presumably due to her

[1] Edward B. Fiske, "A 'Religious Woodstock' Draws 75,000," *New York Times*, June 16, 1972. https://tinyurl.com/mrycyfsd

[2] Helen Parmley, "100,000 Guests Will Attend Rally," *Dallas Morning News*, March 11, 1972. https://tinyurl.com/mthn8fry

perceived decline of religiousness along the coasts, Dearien concluded that an event like Explo '72 could not have ever happened "in any far Eastern or far Western American city."[3] Interestingly, even in the wake of Dallas' first gay pride parade, most readers continued writing letters to the editor about their approval of Explo '72 and its coverage, but they mostly ignored the pride parade.

Therefore, prior to Anita Bryant and the Save Our Children campaign, the average newspaper consumer in Dallas only occasionally saw stories about homosexuals. Of those few articles, local reporters focused on the criminality of homosexuality and rarely reported anything that remotely resembled support or approval of the gay community, which would entice readers to express their opinions with to newspaper editors and the community writ large.

Though activists had built the gay liberation movement for almost eight years, the Save Our Children campaign thrust the gay liberation debate into the national scene. Furthermore, Bryant's declared crusade against gay rights stoked long held stereotypes that connected pedophilia within homosexuality, but more importantly it reframed oppositional arguments through the lens of religious ideologies. Clearly Anita Bryant had not conceived of nor developed the theological arguments that were used in opposition to homosexuality. But as a famous performer, Bryant used her national platform to promote an anti-homosexual conservative, evangelical doctrine that was very appealing to many people living in Dallas and, as a result, many ministers began

[3] "Letters: National Press Ignored Explo?," *Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 1972. https://tinyurl.com/2mymdy6z

condemning homosexuality from their pulpits. As a result, leaders within Dallas' gay community made a concerted effort to counter religious condemnation in the city through education and the mobilization of voters.

By the late-seventies, some of the world's largest churches were based in the affluent North Dallas neighborhood of Highland Park. For example, the Highland Park United Methodist Church, which was the largest Methodist Church in the country, and the Lovers Lane United Methodist Church collectively served to almost 19,000 members. Highland Park Presbyterian, with almost 7,000 members, was the second largest congregation in Dallas and the largest Presbyterian Church in the United States.[4] Dr. Clayton Bell, the senior minister at Highland Park Presbyterian, had a considerable amount of influence in Dallas. In addition to presiding over the second largest Christian church in Dallas, Dr. Bell also served as a trustee on the Board of Directors for the Presbyterian Hospital and through his brother-in-law, the Reverend Billy Graham, Bell maintained strong relationships with many of the national evangelical leaders.[5]

On the morning of February 19, 1978, Dr. Clayton Bell delivered a locally televised sermon outlining the condemnation of homosexuality and the appropriate responses Christians should have to the issue. Bell noted there was no clear explanation for why some people experienced homosexual desires and others did not. Despite this uncertainty, he questioned if Christians should "look at right and wrong through reason, our intellect, science including psychiatry, observations in nature, the prodding of our

[4] "North Dallas churches disprove image," *Dallas Morning News*, October 27, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/ycxd4s2h

[5] John Marks, Reasons to Believe: One Man's Journey Among the Evangelicals and the Faith He Left Behind (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009): 142.

conscience, [and] cultural mores" or "through the Word of God." Bell asserted "the Bible [was] the only infallible guide" for Christians and in matters related to right and wrong the Bible served "as the final authority" on all issues.[6]

By citing passages from Genesis and Romans, Dr. Clayton Bell argued, "God's purpose for sex [was] the answer to loneliness" and through divine design the female body complimented that of the male. Ergo "homosexuality [was] the result of a sin-dominated nature" and any opposition to that was the result of judging right and wrong through the lens of "pleasure and selfish gain."[7] To further emphasize the threat homosexuality inflicted upon society, Bell referenced the London based Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE), which advocated for lowering the age of consent below seventeen and demanded legal and social acceptance within the British legal system.[8] Despite the fact every major homosexual organization discredited PIE, Bell used the English organization to associate pedophilia with homosexuals and, ultimately, to incite fear of homosexuality among his congregation and television viewers.

Additionally, Dr. Bell declared that man progressed from idolatry to immorality and "immorality to homosexuality and on to a catalog of sins." Through this argument, Bell strongly implied any acceptance of homosexuality placed Christians on a slippery slope that inevitably lead to an increase of sin and debauchery. He conceded that the United States Constitution guaranteed gay men and women the right to enjoy life,

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[6] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY: A RESPONSE TO DR. CLAYTON BELL," May 1978, 2. Essay. Box 537, folder 7, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[7] Ibid, 3.

[8] "Yes, Virginia, there is a PIE," *National Review*, vol. 29 (October 28, 1977): 1221-22. https://tinyurl.com/3f7km9zn

liberty, and property, but as God-fearing men and women, it was their duty to recognize sin and the Church's responsibility "to help [homosexuals] in overcoming their sin." Bell concluded that Christians "must neither judge and condemn nor condone" gay men and women, but through "love and concern" the Church would lead them "to a godly state of celibacy or of heterosexuality."[9]

Concerned with Dr. Clayton Bell's "traditional, negative approach" and condemnation of homosexuals, the Religion and Life Committee, a sub-committee within the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC), confronted Bell in an essay by highlighting "new challenges from scientists and respected Biblical and theological scholars" in regards to the Church's position on homosexuality. In addition to preparing their response to the sermon, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus invited Dr. Bell or a member of his staff to meet with them for an open discussion about homosexuality, but he declined and the caucus was unable to connect with any of his staff.[10]

After outlining the sermon, the DGPC systematically addressed fallacies within Dr. Clayton Bell's assessment of homosexuality. First, members of the Religion and Life Committee challenged Bell's definition of a homosexual "as 'one who desires sexual contact with persons of the same gender.'" At best, Bell's assessment was inane and rudimentary and at worst, his comments reduced gay men and women "to the level of desire alone," which completely eliminated an individual's "personality, attitudes,

[9] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY," 3.
[10] Ibid, cover page-2.

development of character, [and] emotions." Next, they addressed Bell's argument that Christians could only rely upon the Bible for infallible guidance and direction. In response, the caucus referenced Reverend George F. MacLeod who stated, in *Only One Way Left*, "the [continued] revelation of God in history [was] recognized by Presbyterians as complementary to Holy Scripture."[11] Therefore, as believers developed a greater understanding of the world around them through reason and scientific exploration, they were able to better understand their Creator.

The caucus built upon this argument by pointing to the many evangelical congregations in the American south that "refused to acknowledge the findings of science" and their vigorous opposition to "the teaching of biology based on natural selection." Those Christians rejected the theory of evolution because it threatened "their perspective of the Creation." Consequently, the true fallacy of their doctrine centered upon "man's limited and frequently stubborn view of" God's Word and their inability to consider scientific discovery a part of God's design. Therefore, Christians who accepted that scientific advancements were from God should also accept emerging psychological data, which concluded that gay men and women were not abnormal or sick.

As they continued their argument surrounding science and religion, the committee referenced works by Father J. J. McNeill, psychotherapist and theologian, and Reverend Dr. W. Norman Pittenger, theologian. Both McNeill and Pittenger questioned if the affirmation of homosexuality and the expression of "it positively in a commitment to another person" qualified as "sinful." Finally, the caucus cited scientific studies that

[11] Ibid, 4.

suggested an inability "to change a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual one." Therefore, the caucus argued religious leaders and organizations who pressure gay men and women into heteronormativity "should consider whether sin [was] involved in putting pressure" on people.[12]

In regards to Dr. Clayton Bell's argument of idolatry leading to homosexuality,[13] the caucus argued that it was "hard to believe that all homosexuals arrived at their present position via an idolatrous route, while some heterosexuals have not." Furthermore, these convictions promoted "a holier-than-thou attitude," which drove many homosexuals away from the church and God's word. Additionally, they referred to D. S. Bailey, a Biblical scholar, who stated "these passages undoubtedly relate to the vices which were common in the degenerate pagan society at the time." Consequently, Bailey argued, "the Bible knows nothing of inversion as an inherited trait or an inherent condition due to psychological or glandular causes." Therefore, disciples, such as the Apostle Paul, perceived examples of homosexuality in the Bible as "evidence of perversion" because they did not have the scientific framework to understand it. The caucus concluded by quoting Father Paul Shanley[14], who stated "the greatest sin surrounding homosexuality [was] the Christian community's lack of charity and justice towards gays."[15]

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[12] Ibid, 5-6.

[13] During his sermon, Bell referenced the Apostle Paul's writings to the Romans in Romans 1:26-27.

[14] Shanley's quote is from his tape "Straight Talk about Gays."

[15] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY," 8.

On April 1, 1978, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus along with six other sponsors[16] hosted a one-day conference, "Homosexuality: Questions for Church and Society," at Northaven United Methodist Church in Dallas. Conference organizers designed panels and discussions to address their short and long-term objectives, like building relationships and fostering communication between the religious and gay communities.[17] In addition to writing out their objectives, organizers invited and booked well-respected academics and theologians to present at the conference. For example, Dr. W. Norman Pittenger, the keynote speaker, taught at King's College, housed within the University of Cambridge, and was an internationally known theological scholar and author of more than fifty books, which included "Making Sexuality Human" and "Gay Lifestyles."[18]

The Dallas Gay Political Caucus also brought Dr. Ralph Blair, a psychotherapist from New York City, in for the conference. Dr. Blair served as the director of the Homosexual Counseling Center and edited the Homosexual Counseling Journal. During the conference, Blair hosted workshops that addressed homosexuality and the relationship between parents and their children. Additionally, at the end of the conference, Blair sat on a panel with Dr. Pittenger and Steve Wilkins, president of the DGPC, and answered questions from attendees.[19]

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[16] The other sponsors were Bethany United Presbyterian Church, Casa View United Methodist Church, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Midway Hills Christian Church, Northaven United Methodist Church, and First Unitarian Church of Dallas.

[17] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "Homosexuality: Questions for Church and Society," April 1, 1978, 3. Conference Outline. Box 78, folder 8, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[18] Ibid, 4.

[19] Ibid, 4-5.

In addition to featuring nationally or internationally known scholars, the caucus also invited several theological and academic scholars from local universities to lead workshops at the conference. Among those invited, Dr. Robert Oaks, an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Texas at Arlington, presented his research on homosexuality in colonial America. Dr. Victor P. Furnish, a professor of New Testament in the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University (SMU), outlined references to homosexuals in the Bible and the importance of proper translations of the text. Also from the Perkins School of Theology, Dr. Robert E. Elliott lead a discussion covering issues and expectations of human sexuality in the modern world.[20]

As the conference grew closer, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus encouraged members from the gay, straight, and religious communities to attend the one-day event. They advertised the conference in both the *Dallas Morning* News and the *Dallas Times* Herald. Additionally, the DGPC invited reporters from both papers and the local ABC and CBS affiliates to cover the conference.[21] Furthermore, as the conference was within two months of Dr. Clayton Bell's sermon on homosexuality, the DGPC invited Bell and his staff to the event and to engage in discussions with Biblical scholars surrounding his stance on the issue. Unfortunately, no one from Highland Park Presbyterian Church responded to the invitation nor attended the conference.[22]

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[20] Ibid, 4-5.

[21] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "Untitled," April 8, 1978, 1. Press Release. Box 78, folder 8, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[22] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY," 1-2.

In the end, more than 200 people attended the conference. In a press release to the *Advocate*, a national gay publication, the Texas Gay Task Force and the National Gay Task Force, the caucus surmised that the event was "the first time anything of this magnitude [had] been done in [their] part of the United States." Furthermore, the caucus hoped that the conference served as a "catalyst" for the local community to study, learn, and discuss homosexuality and religion in their homes and churches. Perhaps more importantly, they hoped gay organizations would host similar conferences around the United States.[23]

Due to the importance of religion in the lives of Dallasites, leaders of the DGPC strongly believed gay rights organizations and activists would not achieve their aims without confronting and answering the concerns of the religious community. Moreover, members of the caucus saw themselves as both part of their neighborhoods and the greater Dallas community. This connection and dedication to their community inspired them to work towards civil liberties without engaging in radical demonstrations or protests, which might lead to divisiveness and discord in the city. As a result, the caucus worked tirelessly "within the "system" to accomplish [their] goals" by investing time, energy, and resources into educating people about their "lifestyle."[24]

While the Dallas Gay Political Caucus committed themselves to educating the community, they did not lose focus on changing the political climate in the state. In the spring of 1978, Political Action Committee of the DGPC drafted a resolution calling for

[23] Ibid, 1-2.
[24] Ibid, 2.

the repeal Texas Penal Code 21.06, which criminalized homosexual acts performed in private spaces. In an attempt to sidestep the moral objection to homosexuality, the resolution framed the penal code as unenforceable as it required "violating a person's privacy." Once the draft was completed, they distributed the resolution with instructions on how to introduce resolutions at the precinct level many to many of the gay organizations across the state. Of the political committees that considered the resolution, the 15th District, which encapsulated the Montrose area of Houston, adopted a modified version of the resolution and the 14th and 16th Districts, Austin and San Antonio respectively, approved of the original draft. Though the DGPC was unable to secure support for the resolution from any of the Dallas districts, they were confident the measure would be reintroduced at the State Democratic Commission in the fall of 1978.[25]

As the DGPC became more active in Dallas, they also began engaging with other gay organizations around the state. This increased involvement in activism allowed them to not only develop personal and business relationships, but to also exchange ideas and strategies for demonstrations, protests, and local community building techniques. By the fall of 1977 three members of the caucus, Steve Wilkins, Lee Knapp, and Brian Halliday, accepted leadership positions within the Texas Gay Task Force (TGTF).

[25] Louise Young, "District Conventions Consider 21.06 Repeal," *Dallas Gay Political Caucus News*, vol. 2, no. 2, May/June 1978, 2. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

On June 21, 1974, a group of gay men and women formed the Texas Gay Task Force after the police harassed them at an event in Fort Worth, Texas.[26] Similar to the DGPC, the task force aimed to educate the public about "the structures and realities of gay life" and "to insure human and civil right for all gay people" through a grassroots movement to abolish laws that discriminated against homosexuals and to introduce beneficial legislation at the state level.[27] Due to the size of Texas, the TGTF divided the state into five geographical regions: North, South, Central, East, and West. Recognizing that gay men and women often faced different challenges, the task force required each region to elect one male and one female representative to the coordinating council.[28]

In addition to hosting scheduled membership and coordinating council meetings, the TGTF also hosted an annual conference, which rotated each year. In 1978, Dallas hosted Texas Gay Conference Five, which featured workshops and panels that revolved around the theme "Education before Legislation." Specifically, the task force focused on "practical and informative" topics that related to different aspects of "the Gay life style" and how the TGTF intended to address any discrimination through political action.[29] In addition to the breakout sessions, Steve Wilkins and Lee Knapp, coordinators for the North region and co-chairs of the conference, arranged to bring in

[26] Texas Gay Task Force, "Texas Gay Task Force," *Setting Sites on Human Rights: Texas Gay Conference Five*, June 1978, 2. Conference program. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[27] Phil Johnson, "Texas Gay Conference I: 1974," date unknown, 1. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[28] Texas Gay Task Force, "Texas Gay Task Force," 2-3.

[29] "TGC 5," *The Dallas Gay Political Caucus News*, vol. 2, no. 2, May/June 1978: 1. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

Harvey Milk, the first openly gay City Supervisor in San Francisco, as one of the conference's featured speakers.[30]

The afternoon before the conference, Kathy Deitsch, one of the original founders of the TGTF and a coordinator of the South region, released a statement declaring that lesbians and gay men, both in Texas and the United States, were committed to the fight for equal rights. Furthermore, though they "[had] been under heavy attack" from conservative and/or evangelical organizations in the last year, gay men and women refused to "be intimidated back into the closet."[31] In fact, the TGTF planned to use money raised from conference registration fees for lobbying efforts during the 1979 legislative session. Therefore, the co-chairs of the conference urged everyone to participate in the event. In order to increase enrollment and protect attendees' identities, the task force encouraged people to register as "John or Jane Doe" and restricted members of the press from taking photographs during the conference.[32]

The Texas Gay Task Force estimated that a few hundred people attended the Texas Gay Conference 5.[33] For the nationally known keynote speakers, organizers estimated the crowd swelled to around 350 people.[34] Harvey Milk, one of the

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[30] Brian Halliday, "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE," unknown date. Press release. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[31] Kathy Deitsch, "Texas Gay Conference Five," June 9, 1978. Press release. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[32] Steve Wilkins, "The Conference," *Dallas Gay Political Caucus News*, vol. 2, no. 2, May/June 1978: 1. Box 78, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[33] The task force allowed people to attend without officially registering. Therefore, the exact number is unknown.

[34] "TGC5 Stresses Unity, Political Action," *Upfront*, vol. 1, no. 6, June 23, 1978. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/Houston80s/Upfront/Upfront-V1-6.compressed.pdf

conference's most anticipated speakers, discussed the importance of community organizing. Through grass roots mobilization and community outreach, Milk became the first openly gay man elected to public office in California. Prior to his election, Milk organized the Castro Street Fair and the Gay Democratic Club, both based in San Francisco. Despite being elected as a City Supervisor, Milk continued advocating for the gay community through various programs and initiatives.[35] During an interview with Noah Nelson, a local television reporter, Harvey Milk reminded viewers that the American system could and should work for all people, including gay men and women.[36]

While pooling resources to influence potential and elected officials with the Texas Gay Task Force at the state level, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus continued striving for equality in their community. During the 1978 Democratic Primary, the caucus' political action committee endorsed Charles Rose for State Representative.[37] Rose, an automotive mechanic, challenged incumbent Clay Smothers, who had been elected rookie of the year by his peers in the House during the previous session.[38] During the campaign, Rose focused on the incumbent's record, which, according to

[35] "TGC5 Speaker Profiles," *Upfront*, vol. 1, no. 6, June 23, 1978. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/Houston80s/Upfront/Upfront-V1-6.compressed.pdf

[36] KXAS-TV (Television Station: Fort Worth, Tex.). [News Clip: Gay (Rights conference)], video, June 10, 1978, 10:00 p.m.; Fort Worth, Texas. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1125927/m1/: accessed August 20, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[37] "Viv & Louise: The Power of Activism," *The Dallas Way: an LGBTQ History Project*, July 28, 2018, http://www.thedallasway.org/stories/written/2018/7/28/viv-louise-the-power-of-activism

[38] Lee Jones, "Lively candidates keep runoff voting interesting in state," *Houston Post*, June 3, 1978: 9A. Barbara Jordan Scrapbook, June 1-December 10, 1978. Book. (https://tinyurl.com/4w2k2fey: accessed August 21, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas Southern University.

Rose, failed to reflect the concerns and needs of the district. Specifically, Rose accused Smothers using his time in Austin to curry favor with conservative organizations and "pushing himself into a national figure."[39] Despite the endorsement and support from the DGPC, Charles Rose was unable to defeat Smothers during the primary.

During his time in the legislature, Smothers staunchly supported Section 21.06 of the state penal code. Though he represented the predominately African American district of Oak Cliff, Smothers drew the majority of his support and praise from white, conservative politicians and voters. For example, the Freedoms Foundation, a right-wing organization based in Pennsylvania, recognized Smothers with one of their annual awards in 1978. As his conservative reputation grew, Smothers became a frequent speaker at anti-women and anti-gay rights events.[40] For example, during rally in Houston hosted by the Pro Family Coalition, Smothers "called for 'victory over the perverts in this country' and demanded the right 'to segregate myself from these misfits and perverts.'" Throughout his address, the crowd cheered heartily for Smothers and, at times, interrupted him. Following one of the interruptions, he compared the enthusiasm at the rally to that of a Black Baptist Church.[41]

Though Smothers did not explicitly correlate his religious beliefs with his political positions during his speech, those in attendance had already drawn those conclusions. Furthermore, the Pro Family Coalition rally coincided with the National

[39] Dotty Griffiths, "3 foes claim Smoothers ignores needs of district," *Dallas Morning News*, April 11, 1978. https://tinyurl.com/2cvn558c

[40] Ibid.

[41] Judy Klemesrud, "Equal Rights Plan and Abortion Are Opposed by 15,000 at Rally," *New York Times*, November 20, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/458h4fpz

Women's Conference, which brought feminists and activists to Houston where they discussed legislative agendas centered around women. Attendees of the Pro Family rally voiced their concerns about feminism and their fears of the implementation of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which some believed would result in the drafting of women, the blurring of gender identity, and the destruction of home life. Phyllis Schlafly, one of the strongest and most ardent opponents of the amendment, spoke of "the antifamily goal" of the feminist movement when she declared "American women [did] not want ERA, abortion, lesbian rights, and they [did] not want child care in the hands of the government." While some attendees brought their Bibles to the rally, organizers passed "large cardboard buckets…across the rows of the faithful," which smacked heavily of religious overtones.[42]

When Anita Bryant began protesting Dade County's anti-discrimination ordinance, Jerry Falwell, televangelist and founder of the Liberty University, quickly endorsed the Save Our Children campaign and publicly encouraged other ministers to join them in "the battle" against homosexuality. Falwell hypothesized the damnation of the United States if Christians idly allowed "liberal groups" to demand government recognition and protection of the civil rights of "militant" homosexuals. Furthermore, Falwell argued homosexuals defied God's plan for men and women as "research [showed] that homosexuality [was] not an inborn desire." As if the fear of hedonism and moral decay were not enough, Falwell drew connections between gay men and

[42] Bill Curry, "Multitude of Voices on Women's Issues," *Washington Post*, November 20, 1977. https://tinyurl.com/2h6h7spd

pedophiles when he claimed "homosexuals proselyte...innocent and impressionable" children as it was "the only way they [could propagate] themselves." [43]

Following Bryant's "victory" in Dade County, Falwell developed the "Clean Up America" (CUA) campaign, which directly targeted homosexuality, abortion, and pornography. In addition to promulgating the belief that homosexuality was "a theological sin, a psychological perversion and a criminal threat to children" on his nationally syndicated television show, "The Old-Time Gospel Hour," Falwell placed CUA surveys in local and national newspapers and magazines, including *T.V. Guide*, which reached its peak in 1978 with twenty-one million copies published each week.[44]

In the off chance he failed to reach people concerning the Clean Up America initiative, Falwell's home congregation, the Thomas Road Baptist Church, initiated a mass mailing campaign that distributed CUA pamphlets across the country. Throughout the pamphlet, Falwell claimed that immorality was ruining the fabric of American society and "decent people" needed to come together to put an end to the degradation of American values. Through this appeal, Falwell encouraged readers to complete a short, three question survey to confirm that they opposed all of the following: schools teaching the homosexual "lifestyle" to students, the "murder of 1½ million unborn babies each year," and the removal of "pornographic" images from print and video media.[45] These overtly leading questions resulted, according to Falwell, in a "16 to 1" support of his

[43] "Grass Roots America Stands," *The Journal Champion* (Lynchburg, VA), vol 1. no. 2, May 26, 1978. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=paper_78_80

[44] Christopher Ogden, *Legacy: A Bibliography of Moses and Walter Annenberg* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1999), 326.

[45] Jerry Falwell, *Cast Your Vote to Clean Up America!* (Lynchburg, VA): 1-2. Box 498, folder 1. *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

crusade to bring morality back to the United States. With this end in mind, Falwell challenged "fundamentalists…to lead the fight and clean up their town."[46]

As Jerry Falwell brought fundamentalism to the forefront of American politics in the mid-1970s, it is crucial to understand the difference between fundamentalist doctrine and mainstream Christianity. Though Falwell became one of America's most notable fundamentalist ministers, the core foundation of fundamentalism began with a small group of men in 1905. The main and most importance difference between the two forms of Christianity centered on the interpretation of scripture. Fundamentalists unquestionably believed the Holy Spirit directly influenced the writing of Biblical scripture, which therefore was "without error and accurate in all details." As a result, scripture was the foundation of fundamentalism and followers must adhere to all teachings and be prepared "to defend it to the death and attack those who compromise its stand."[47]

During the mid-1970s, mainstream media outlets reportedly claimed there were "50 thousand evangelicals in America." Much to their chagrin, fundamentalists were included in these numbers, but they maintained their commitment "to the basics of Christianity" set them apart from more "liberal" evangelical followers. According to an article in *Christian Life* magazine, fundamentalists and evangelicals differed on about a half dozen different points, which included "a friendly attitude towards science, a more tolerant attitude toward varying attitudes on eschatology, an increased emphasis on

[46] "Grass Roots America Stands."

[47] "We Are Fundamentalists," *The Journal Champion* (Lynchburg, VA), vol 1. no. 2, May 26, 1978, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=paper_78_80

scholarship, and a reopening of the subject of Biblical inspiration." Those committed to the fundamentalist doctrine vowed to maintain their beliefs "even when scholarly men question [their] positions" and they refused to "fellowship with men who question[ed] basic Christianity." In the end, one fundamentalist preacher implied that true followers should be willing to "go to jail or give up his life because he is a fundamentalist."[48]

Despite rising rhetorical and political opposition from various religious factions, both the Dallas Gay Political Caucus and the Texas Gay Task Force continued working towards the repeal of Penal Code 21.06 in the fall of 1978. During the Texas Democratic state convention, members of the state's first Gay Caucus introduced a measure to repeal 21.06.[49] In addition to changes in the criminal code, the Gay Caucus looked to introduce resolutions that would bring legal protections for gay and lesbians in employment, housing and public accommodations, and in parental rights in regards to child custody and visitation agreements. Unfortunately, John Hill, the 1978 Democratic gubernatorial candidate and ostensible head of the party, openly opposed the repeal of 21.06 and was unwilling to support any concerns presented by the Gay Caucus.[50]

Gaining the support of Democrat John Hill became a moot point for members of the Gay Caucus in November 1978 when Texas voters elected Bill Clements as their next governor. Despite their inability to impact the state elections, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, the Lesbian Task Force of Dallas' chapter of the National

[48] Ibid.

[49] Carolyn Barta, "Hill to take party's reins at convention," *Dallas Morning News*, September 14, 1978. https://tinyurl.com/28acpavr

[50] "Homosexuals plan role in Texas," *Dallas Morning News*, September 16, 1978. https://tinyurl.com/dm38dzyu

Organization for Women (NOW), and the Texas Gay Task Force sponsored an evening with activist Del Martin at the First Unitarian Church in mid-November. Martin, co-founder of the Daughters of Bilitis, spoke to about 100 people on the struggles and accomplishments of the early gay and lesbian rights movement in the United States. Additionally, Martin discussed the recent defeat of the Briggs Initiative, which sought to ban gay and lesbian teachers from California classrooms, and outlined why she believed they had been successful in California despite recent defeats in Kansas and Minnesota.[51]

As the Dallas Gay Political Caucus and the Texas Gay Task Force lobbied political candidates for recognition of civil rights and the elimination of oppressive legislation, a group of eight professors from area universities formed the Gay Academic Union of North Texas (GAUNT), which served as a chapter affiliate with the national organization.[52] In 1973, a group of gay scholars met in a Manhattan apartment and unwittingly began laying the foundation for the first Gay Academic Union (GAU). Throughout the afternoon, they discussed the struggles of being gay within the academe, both in regards to research interests and in social situations. Unlike other activist organizations, members of GAU were not necessarily fighting to be publicly out, but rather they were seeking "the espousal of one's gay identity…within the context of one's life work, when the private self and the public role come together."[53]

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[51] Phil Johnson, "Chronological History of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus," 10. Timeline. Box 63, folder 9, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[52] "What is the Gay Academic Union, North Texas?," *Gay Academic Union North Texas Newsletter*, vol. I, no. 8 (May 1979), 3. Newsletter. Box 68, folder 14, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[53] John D'Emilio, Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University (New York: Routledge, 1992), 121.

Similar to the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, members of GAUNT believed understanding and acceptance could be achieved through education. In February 1979, Dr. Edra Bogel, an English professor at North Texas State University, and Dr. Bill Beauchamp, a Foreign Language professor at Southern Methodist University, announced GAUNT planned to facilitate a six-week adult education course entitled "Being Gay in Contemporary America." Bogel noted that the average person understood very little about gay men and lesbians. Therefore, they relied on misconceptions, which often resulted in negative opinions and stereotypes.[54] Without addressing these negative opinions directly, there would be little to no movement towards an equitable social and legal system. Unfortunately, fundamentalist ministers in the area fueled a large portion of the hate and misunderstanding concerning the gay community in Dallas. From the pulpit, they cited anti-homosexual scriptures without detailing the complexity of translating ancient texts or providing any historical context to the messages being presented.

Almost a year after Dr. Clayton Bell delivered his sermon concerning homosexuality, fundamentalist and televangelist James Robison referred to homosexuals as "despicable" and claimed that "homosexuality [was] a perversion of the highest order" on his syndicated television show, "James Robison Presents." Additionally, Robison quoted the *National Enquirer* when he claimed that gay men actively seduced young boys and lead them into prostitution. Robison also drew a correlation between the

[54] "Church offers gay lifestyle classes," *North Texas Daily* (Denton, Texas), vol. 62, no. 1, ed. 1 (February 16, 1979): 6. Newspaper. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth1004039/m1/6/: accessed September 5, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Special Collections.

Jonestown suicides,[55] the Zebra killings,[56] and the Harvey Milk assassination to the sinfulness of a "city, where, 'the gay activists laugh and joke about it being the Sodom and Gomorrah of America.'"[57]

Following the conclusion of Robison's sermon, "A Nation that Forgets God," members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus contacted WFAA station manager David Lane and requested and received an allocated time on Channel 8 for the caucus to respond to Robison's claims. Within the codes of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Robison violated the Fairness Doctrine when he failed to offer "a balanced presentation of a 'controversial issue.'"[58] Additionally, WFAA's board of directors determined they would no longer air "James Robison Presents" as a part of their weekly line-up, but per their contract with Robison, they would allow him to continue recording his weekly sermons, which were broadcasted to more than eighty different locations, in their studios. According to Lane, the station had previously warned Robison for making derogatory and defamatory remarks about religious

[55] Cult/Religious leader Jim Jones based his church, the People's Temple, in San Francisco from the mid-1970s until they moved to Guyana. In November 1978, Jones directed his congregation to consume a cyanide-laced drink, which resulted in just under 1,000 deaths.

[56] From October 1973 to April 1974, a group of African American, Muslim men, who called themselves the "Death Angels," committed fifteen racially motivated murders and eight attempted murders.

[57] Campbell Read, "James Robison: Some Issues," p. 1, May 10, 1979. Memo. Box 74, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[58] Campbell Read, "Robison versus the Homosexual Community," p. 1, March 17, 1979. Memo. Box 74, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

organizations, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Christian Science Church, and "community groups" during his sermons.[59]

Naturally, Robison claimed the cancellation of his show violated his First Amendment right to the freedom of speech, which the government had no issue of protecting for "newspapers, entertainers, publishers (including pornographers), and radical groups." As a result of the WFAA decision, Robison hosted a press conference from his headquarters in Hurst, a suburb between Dallas and Fort Worth, where he claimed no opposition to allowing the DGPC an opportunity to respond to his claims on air. According to Robison, his main concern was the inability of "Bible preachers" to point out the moral decay of the country.[60]

Though Robison claimed during his press conference that he did not object to a response from the DGPC, his comments to news outlets within the Southern Baptist community were very different. Robison noted "the gay community [had] no right to demand equal time" because calling homosexuality a sin was "a Christian principle." Therefore, as a minister, he had "the privilege as well as the responsibility to preach what the Bible said." Robison suggested the idea of allowing the caucus to respond

[59] Bruce Buursma, "Anti-gay evangelist taken off TV," *Dallas Times-Herald*, March 3, 1979. Clipping. Box 76, folder 27, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[60] James Robison, "JAMES ROBISON PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT," Spring 1979. Memo. Box 494, folder 40, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

would be the equivalent of allowing him time to respond to themes depicted in "Soap," which, according to Robison, had "a tendency to gain sympathy for gay activists."[61]

As news spread about the cancellation of "James Robison Presents," Dallasites flooded local papers with letters of support for both Robison and the WFAA. M. W. McMurray, of Richardson, chided David Lane for limiting the scope of Robison's sermons and for cancelling the show. Conversely, Steve Jonsson,[62] of Dallas, commended the station for removing "James Robison Presents," because ministers should not be allowed to openly attack other religious organizations or gay citizens. From another perspective, B. J. Glascock surmised the decision to cancel the show was based on "commercial" conflicts rather than a moral one. Glascock argued that he found it hard to believe the station found Robison "controversial," when the ABC affiliate regularly aired shows like "Soap" and "Three's Company" and promoted advertisements for brands like "Playboy." He concluded that Robison's messages were "bad for their business" as "sex and perversion [were] their stock and trade."[63]

Though Glascock claimed WFAA aired advertisements for "Playboy," there was little evidence to support that claim, but Robison certainly used the cancellation of his show and the outrage among religious supporters as a referendum on morality in the United States. In addition to claiming a violation of his First Amendment rights,

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[61] Helen Parmley, "Robison Cancelled by WFAA For Homosexuality Remarks," *Baptist Press*, vol. 79, no. 36, March 5, 1979. http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/4800,05-Mar-1979.pdf. Crediting the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

[62] Note that Steve Jonsson is a pseudonym often used by Phil Johnson.

[63] "Views on cancellation of Robison," *Dallas Times Herald*, March 10, 1979. Clipping. Box 76, folder 27, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

Robison argued members of the DGPC had been the only complainants of his message. Furthermore, he suggested the caucus refused to believe that homosexuality was a sin and, therefore, called for the cancellation of his program. Dennis Plemmons, of the DGPC, pointed out the caucus never requested for the show to be cancelled, but they did ask for equal time to respond per FCC guidelines. DGPC members were concerned when Robison "left the boundaries of theology," specifically when he "blamed homosexuality for crimes ranging from child molestation to murder." Ultimately, Plemmons concluded the televangelist simply wanted "unrestricted authority" to share his opinions "on human behavior, whether factual or not."[64]

By early May, David Lane, WFAA's station manager, reached out to Robison and offered to bring "James Robison Presents" back into the station's weekly lineup, but only if Robison was prepared to follow FCC guidelines. Robison rejected the offer and indicated he intended to proceed with his petition to the federal commission to determine if his message had truly violated federal guidelines. Furthermore, Mike Huckabee, a spokesperson for Robison, suggested that going back on the air without a ruling from the FCC would be a "concession" to Robison's "deeply held convictions" and a loss of "integrity." While they prepared for an FCC hearing, the James Robison Evangelistic Association (JREA) formed a coalition, the National Call to Arms Committee, to

[64] "Homosexuals deny criticizing show," [unknown], April 1, 1979. Clipping. Box 76, folder 27, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

organize a $15 million fundraising initiative to produce a primetime special, "End of Outrage," which Robison would use to address several controversial social topics.[65]

In reality, the cancellation of "James Robison Presents" was a gift to both Robison and the greater evangelical community. Other than granting him carte blanche authority over the content in his programs, Robison benefitted more from the publicity and controversy over the cancellation. In an attempt to capitalize on controversy and to raise money for Robison's legal defense fund, employees of the JREA organized a "Freedom to Preach" rally in the Dallas Convention Center on June 5, 1979. While preparing for the rally Robison extended an invitation to Anita Bryant to perform, but later rescinded the offer due to concern for her safety. Robinson claimed they had received numerous threats against him and Bryant, but Robison's attorneys, on the other hand, suggested that Bryant's presence would potentially "'cloud' the real issue" at hand and garner too much support or attention for the homosexual community.[66]

In the days leading up to the rally, the JREA purchased advertisements that centered Robison's censure as fight against government oversight and an attempt to prevent broadcasters from denying preachers the ability to teach "God's word." In one of the ads, readers were asked if they were willing to stand up for freedom of religion. Below that over 150 Dallas area ministers listed their names and church affiliations in support of Robison's "fight for freedom." At the bottom of the advertisement, readers

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[65] John Rutledge, "Robison Rejects WFAA Offer to Reinstate Program," *Baptist Standard*, May 2, 1979. Clipping. Box 76, folder 27, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[66] "Robison Cancels Bryant, Gets $1,000 a Month From Criswell," *Baptist Press*, vol. 79, no. 80, May 17, 1979. http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/4845,17-May-1979.pdf. Crediting the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

were encouraged to send in a small form for a free bumper sticker, which allowed them to show their support for Robison.[67]

As it turned out, the "Freedom to Preach" rally was a huge success for James Robison. According to Mike Huckabee, more than ten thousand enthusiastic Christians attended the "Freedom to Preach" rally. Huckabee claimed that the energy and excitement from the crowd had been so electric that he "was almost frightened by it." He also suggested had they encouraged the crowd to tear down the WFAA's building, the "audience would've taken the last brick off the building."[68] Throughout the rally, attendees were encouraged to make their support known by contributing donations to cover Robison's legal fight against WFAA. By the end of the night, the JREA raised $82,685 in one-time donations, which was added to a previous pledge of $1,000 a month from the First Baptist Church in Dallas. [6970]

Though most historians associate the inception of the Moral Majority movement with the Rev. Jerry Falwell, Huckabee claimed Robison's "Freedom to Preach" rally marked the true beginning of the conservative Christian movement. He argued the legalization of abortion, the visibility of homosexuality, and the push for feminism and gender equality of the seventies served to propel conservative Christians towards political activism.[71] Conservative Christians ultimately viewed the cancellation of

[67] "Advertisement," *Dallas Morning News*, June 2, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/j4rk2rer

[68] Ariel Levy, "Prodigal Son: Is the wayward Republican Mike Huckabee now his party's best hope?," *The New Yorker*, June 28, 2010. https://tinyurl.com/2p98k2vb

[69] "Robison nets $82,685 from rally," *Dallas Morning News*, June 8, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/4vjcka66

[70] "Robison cancels Bryant."

[71] Levy, "Prodigal Son."

"James Robison Presents" as the opening shot in the social war that had been building since the sixties.

Despite the fact Robison read from a *National Enquirer* article during his sermon, he and his organization successfully painted the cancelation of his show as an anti-religious maneuver of an overreaching federal government organization. Within a week of the "Freedom to Preach" rally, David Lane acknowledged a second attempt to negotiate the reinstatement of Robison's program. As WFAA and Channel 8 were characterized as "anti-God" by several speakers during the rally, Lane felt increasing pressure to resolve the station's conflict with Robison. In an interview following the rally, Lane noted that WFAA aired several diverse religious programs and their opposition to Robison was rooted in his continued violation of the Fairness Doctrine. At the time, Robison's representatives indicated an interest in bringing "James Robison Presents" back to the Dallas market, but they were unwilling to drop their case against the Federal Communications Commission.[72]

During a city crusade service at the First Baptist Church in Dallas, both Lane and Robison announced the return of Robison's broadcast to WFAA by the end of the summer. During their joint press conference, Robison stated that he had "a clear understanding" of the stations programming policies. Additionally, Robison staunchly argued he was "in no way…compromising" his beliefs or religious message to bring the show back to the Dallas market.[73]

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[72] "Evangelist says TV show return to be discussed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 9, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/3thcz3v2

[73] "Robison to return to Channel 8," *Dallas Morning News*, June 27, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/r2pkykak

While James Robison spent the summer hosting rallies and press conferences about government censorship in the American south, leaders within gay communities across the nation prepared for the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.[74] Collectively civic leaders from across the country formed the National Coordinating Committee to establish "a nationwide network to synchronize regional efforts," with the goal of getting one million gay men and women to Washington, D.C. in mid-October.[75] Without a doubt, most Americans were cognizant of the political strife between gay rights organizations and traditional, conservative voters. Therefore, march organizers feared a small turnout "would be a humiliating setback" for the movement.[76]

Initially the Dallas Gay Political Caucus had not intended to participate in the national event, but following an impassioned plea from Terry Tebedo and Bill Nelson, Tebedo's long-time partner, the caucus decided to invest time and energy into organizing a local delegation.[77] In addition to asking for support from the DGPC, Tebedo and Nelson tirelessly worked to publicize the event by passing out flyers and pamphlets encouraging people to attending the march.[78]

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[74] Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of Struggle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 410-412.

[75] National March on Washington Committee, "Invitation to join the National March on Washington," 1979. Pamphlet. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc276223/m1/2/: accessed October 24, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[76] Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 411.

[77] Mike Anglin, "Terry Tebedo," *The Dallas Way: An LGBTQ History Project*, January 4, 2018. http://www.thedallasway.org/stories/written/2018/1/4/terry-tebedo?rq=terry%20tebedo

[78] Mike Anglin, "William H. "Bill" Nelson," *The Dallas Way: An LGBTQ History Project*, May 10, 2015. http://www.thedallasway.org/stories/written/written-stories/2015/5/10/william-h-bill-nelson

Despite the growing visibility of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, many gay men and lesbians in Dallas were less than enthusiastic about publicly standing in support of gay rights. Neither the city nor the state had adopted any measures aiming to protect homosexuals from discrimination in either the work place or public housing. As a result, many people opted to silently support the march through monetary donations, but refused to personally participate.[79]

In September 1979, Bill Nelson's political activism and professional life collided. Nelson and Tebedo represented the North Texas Committee for the March on Washington at the Dallas County Democratic Party's Fun Fest during Labor Day Weekend. By the end of the month, Charles Maples, principal of W. T. White High School in DISD, discovered students sharing an article in *This Week in Texas* featuring Bill Nelson, a teacher at W. T. White, wearing a shirt encouraging participation of the upcoming march. Maples chastised Nelson's public activism as a violation of the moral and ethical standards for Texas educators. As a result, Maples issued an official letter of reprimand and warned Nelson to remember that his actions "must be consistent with the wholesome image of teachers expected by the community and … the Dallas Independent School District."[80]

[79] "Sponsor a Gay to D.C.," *The Battlecry*, vol. 1, no. 3, September 14, 1979. Periodical. Box 62, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[80] Charles Maples, *Charles Maples to William H. Nelson*, September 21, 1979. Letter. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc851786/: accessed January 2, 2020), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

Despite personal challenges and difficulties getting people to publicly engage, Tebedo and Nelson continued to publicize and rally support for the march. Late in the summer, they received significant support from the Dallas Alliance for Individual Rights (DAIR) who donated the proceeds from their annual fundraising event to pay for twenty billboards to promote the National March on Washington in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. According to members of the North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, their billboards were "the first…in the history of United States" to prominently feature "the words 'lesbian' and 'gay'…in such a wide-ranging advertising campaign."[81]

Though local organizations and community members supported Dallas' grassroots movement for the National March on Washington, most local attendees were required to secure their own transportation to and accommodations in Washington, D.C. Despite these financial obstacles, hundreds of gay men and lesbians from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex traveled more than a thousand miles to make their voices heard in the nation's capital.[82] In addition to participating in the march, the North Texas Committee hosted a "Texas style Bar-B-Que," which provided local attendees the opportunity to meet other gay men and women from both across the state and nation.[83]

[81] "BILLBOARDS UP!!!." *The Battlecry*, vol. 1, no. 5, October 5, 1979. Periodical. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc276185/m1/2/: accessed November 15, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections

[82] "Homosexuals given send-off to Washington," *Dallas Morning News*, October 13, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/3kmvt2r3

[83] "Lone Star Washington Bar-B-Que," *The Battlecry*, vol. 1, no. 5, October 5, 1979. Periodical. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc276185/m1/1/: accessed December 28, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

In one of the largest peaceful, political demonstrations of the 1970s, protestors took to the streets and rallied around the base of the Washington Monument to hear activists call on the nation's leaders to support protective legislation for gay and lesbian Americans. In addition to demands for federal protections, Adelle Starr, a member of Los Angeles Parents of Gays, urged families to support their gay and lesbian children. Starr noted that by standing together they would "challenge the attitudes that destroy, the attitudes that have caused violence, bloodshed, suicide, and even murder."[84]

While the 1969 Stonewall mark the beginning of the gay rights movement, the 1979 March on Washington became the first effective use of a national grassroots movement by gay and lesbian activists and their supporters.[85] Perhaps more importantly, though, the march provided visibility for an often-hidden minority. By illustrating the number of those willing to participate, attendees comforted those who believed they were alone and signaled to the country that they interact with gay people without even knowing it. For example, an unnamed physician from Dallas stated she came to D.C. to stand up for her community and to show that "if there were no gay health professionals, there would be no health care."[86] Clearly the health care system would not have collapsed without gay providers and support staff, but this sentiment implied that gay people participated in all walks of life.

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[84] Gary N. Reese, "Gays Celebrate in Washington: Prominent speakers call for acceptance, dedication," *The Daily Texan*, October 23, 1979. Periodical. Box 62, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[85] Ibid.

[86] "Homosexual rally draws thousands: 50,000 turn out in Washington to demand civil rights protection," *Dallas Morning News*, October 15, 1979. Clipping. Box 62, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

For the most part, march participants remained peaceful and respectful throughout the day. According to Elinor Moore, a tourist from Crescent City, California, the demonstrations "add[ed] spice to the day." Unfortunately, not all lookers-on enjoyed the march quite as much as Moore. One counter-protester, who refused to be identified, held a sign encouraging the marchers to "Repent or perish – II Peter, 2:12."[87] Additionally, a group of conservative, Christian ministers hosted a press conference where they identified all "homosexuals as sinners and urged them to repent." Following their press conference, the Rev. Jerry Falwell spoke at a prayer meeting and asked "Christians nationwide" to pray for homosexuals by '"asking the Lord to deliver them from their lives of perversion."' Falwell also emphasized that the Lord had not created "Adam and Steve," but rather "Adam and Eve." Furthermore, Falwell fiercely advocated that homosexuality was an assault on the American family.[88]

By the fall of 1979, Rev. Jerry Falwell had successfully established the Moral Majority, a non-partisan political coalition, with the expressed goal of restoring traditional, Judeo-Christian values in the United States. Therefore, Falwell's personal perceptions and statements served to discourage thousands of Christians from supporting any governmental protections for gay and lesbian Americans. As the Moral Majority mobilized Christian fundamentalists to vote, it became increasingly difficult to persuade elected officials to support gay rights legislation.

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[87] "Gays demand more civil rights at capital rally," *Dallas Times Herald*, October 15, 1979. Clipping. Box 62, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[88] "Homosexual rally draws thousands."

Despite the mobilization of conservative voters, some gay and lesbian activists attempted to voice their concerns and opinions to their federal representatives the day after the march. According to Bettie Naylor, a lobbyist with the Human Rights Advocates based in Austin, estimated about 150 Texans remained in the capital to visit various congressional offices. Unfortunately, only about a third of Texas' congressional leaders took time to meet with their constituents. The remaining leaders opted instead to send aides in their place. Kathy Deitsch of the Texas Gay Task Force admitted "she did not expect to find many steadfast friends for her cause among Texas congressmen," but she hoped gay activists in Texas could make progress with local and state officials, which became the focal point for the Dallas Gay Political Caucus in the next decade.[89]

[89] "Gays meet with Texas delegation," *Dallas Times Herald*, October 16, 1979. Clipping. Box 62, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

CHAPTER V: NAVIGATING THE LAW AND THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE, 1979-1983

In the wake of territorial expansion, westward migration, and the American Civil War, American society experienced a myriad of changes during the mid-nineteenth century. Due to these changes, local officials across the country enacted laws that enshrined the social stratification of their communities. In addition to establishing Black Codes and, later, Jim Crow laws to control the lives of Black people, many municipal governments also passed cross-dressing statutes, which, they argued, would limit and control public indecency. According to sociologist Clare Sears, in the twentieth century these cross-dressing laws became "a key tool for policing lesbian, gay, and transgender communities."[1]

As local law enforcement departments increasingly relied upon cross-dressing statutes and sodomy laws to police homosexuals, gay men and women across the country became more cognizant of police presence throughout the twentieth century. Because of these laws provided police officers with probable cause, they had the authority to stop and question gay individuals at any time. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for officers to use entrapment practices to lure individuals into committing crimes. As a result, a culture of fear and distrust of police authority grew among homosexuals.

[1] Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 3-5.

Similar to organizers in other cities, gay community leaders in Dallas went to great lengths to circumvent conflicts with the police department. As explained in chapter one, Phil Johnson and Reverend Doug McLean purposefully held all Circle of Friends meetings on church property because they assumed police officers would not conduct raids at these locations. Additionally, leaders within the Circle of Friends went through the proper steps to apply for a permit for Dallas' first gay pride parade in 1972. Furthermore, in 1976, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC) specifically chose to host their first rally in Exall Park because there were no public toilets, which eliminated the possibility of undercover officers attempting to "entice, entrap, and arrest innocent young men."[2]

By the close of the seventies, Dallas gay rights activists became increasingly vocal about discriminatory practices at the local, state, and national level. Initially, they focused on the rhetoric used by ministers to disparage and villainize homosexuals. Due to their ability to unify the community at the time, the DGPC focused their efforts on confronting anti-homosexual messages through education and reason. For example, the caucus hosted a conference to specifically address homophobic claims made by Dr. Clayton Bell of Highland Park Presbyterian Church. Through a series of panels and workshops, attendees heard about homosexuality from the perspective of leading religious scholars and medical professionals.

[2] Phil Johnson, "Dallas Gay Alliance: Fifth Birthday Celebration," May 11, 1981. Timeline. Box 62, folder 68, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

In addition to education, the DGPC organized peaceful protests against Anita Bryant's Save Our Children Campaign and they spoke out against defamatory claims made by televangelist James Robison. Though these individuals were willing to be more visible and vocal about injustices, many gay men and women in Dallas remained closeted because they feared repercussions associated with the label of "homosexual." Thus the status quo of fearing law enforcement remained a constant in Dallas. At least, until the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in October 1979.

It is reasonable to assume the march had a sizable impact on the gay community in Dallas, as within a couple of months two very significant events occurred. First, a group of men arrested at a gay disco for public lewdness opted to fight misdemeanor charges rather than accepting a plea agreement, which would have provided them relative anonymity. From all accounts, this was the first instance of gay men challenging public lewdness charges in Dallas.[3] Secondly, Donald F. Baker filed the first federal court case challenging Texas' sodomy law in the fall of 1979. As a result of these two incidents, the relationship between the gay community and the Dallas legal system became extremely tenuous and sometimes erupted into violence.

For decades members of Dallas' vice squad conducted raids at well-known hangouts for gay men. Often, plain-clothes officers used entrapment practices to arrest men at local discos, bathrooms, and adult theaters. By the fall of 1979, Vice Squad

[3] Campbell Read, "Cops Raid the Village Station," *D Magazine*, January 2010. https://tinyurl.com/yy897msd.

Captain Don Milliken continued directing officers to engage in "homosexual patrols" in Dallas. Admittedly, Milliken recognized efforts to control sex work and the distribution of narcotics were "more important," but he knew the people of Dallas did not "want that [homosexual acts] going on."[4]

Though many advocates criticized the techniques used by the vice squad, officers argued they were merely enforcing the law. Others, also, acknowledged they enjoyed the raids and likened their job to "a big game hunt." One officer admitted that catching a masturbator was "like getting a little bream," but arresting a groper amounted to landing "a big bass." During patrols, officers posed as average citizens while looking for men "who appear[ed] 'hungry.'" Once they had located "a hungry one," the officer would move closer, "play with themselves," and flirt with the target. If the suspect were to make a pass at the officer, he would be arrested for public lewdness. An unnamed officer admitted being "grabbed '[was] disgusting, but you get such a satisfaction out of putting them [gay men] in jail.'"[5]

Within two weeks of the national march, members of the Dallas vice squad raided the Village Station, a popular gay disco, and "arrested fifteen men for public lewdness."[6] Prior to the fall of 1979, approximately eighty-five percent of public lewdness charges ended with guilty pleas as defendants did not want "the notoriety of a trial." Being publicly identified as gay could potentially cost a person their career,

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[4] Doug J. Swanson, "How the Dallas vice squad fights homosexuals, public lewdness," *Dallas Times Herald*, November 18, 1979. Clipping. Box 78, folder 10, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Steve Blow, "Last Oak Lawn settlers brought controversy," *Dallas Morning News*, December 9, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/yysyp62p

home, family, and, in some cases, their life. For example, an undercover vice squad officer arrested Robert Sego, a guidance counselor at North Mesquite High School, for public lewdness inside a J.C. Penney's restroom. Following the arrest, a local Mesquite newspaper published the charges against Sego and within days he committed suicide.[7]

Despite the risks associated with being outted, a handful of those arrested at the Village Station decided to fight their charges and, as a result, they became the first to stand up to the Dallas Police Department.[8] In February of 1980, the first two defendants appeared in separate trials before Judge Chuck Miller's misdemeanor court. During one of the case's closing statements, Marshall Gandy, the prosecuting attorney, told the judge an acquittal of the defendant would amount to saying "the police [were] lying." Apparently Judge Miller was not compelled by the prosecution's evidence nor the implications of a not guilty verdict as he acquitted both men in each case.[9]

Following the acquittals, Henry Wade, Dallas' long-time District Attorney, was dissatisfied with Miller's ruling as he instructed his office to begin looking for more favorable forums to try the public lewdness cases. In an attempt to conceal this sort of "forum shopping," the District Attorney's office claimed Judge Miller held a bias against the police department. In early March, assistant District Attorney A. W. Arnold II petitioned Miller to dismiss the remaining charges, which were granted by the judge the same day. Following the dismissals, the District Attorney's office refiled the six cases in the County Criminal Court of Judge Ben Ellis. After reviewing the cases, Judge Ellis

[7] Swanson, "How the Dallas vice squad."
[8] Read, "Cops Raid."
[9] Ibid.

"returned the cases to Miller's court." When questioned about the forum shopping accusations, Wade stated "'I don't think we've got a chance before him (Miller). We can file in any court we want.'"[10]

On May 7, assistant District Attorney Winfield Scott filed a motion asking Miller to recuse himself from hearing the remaining cases associated with the Village Station raid. Initially, Miller denied the motion stating judges could only be disqualified if they had a personal relationship or interest in the case, which he had neither. Though certain he could conduct a fair and balanced trial, Miller eventually recognized the public attention surrounding the cases had created "a cloud" of suspicion that would linger regardless of the rulings. Therefore, by May 20, Judge Miller "transferred the cases to maintain 'the highest level of public trust in the judiciary and its rulings.'" Miller resisted the transfer for as long as possible "'solely on the principle that forum shopping…cannot be condoned.'" According to John Albach, an attorney for one of the defendants, the transfer of the cases was "a tremendous indication of the power of the District Attorney's office [wielded] over the judges and the entire justice system."[11]

By late-August, the District Attorney's office began prosecuting the remaining defendants before various judges within the Dallas County Criminal Court system. While the two cases in February received minimal attention from both the press and the community, the social and political climate elevated the remaining trials. In fact, it appeared that some people within the District Attorney's office wanted to try the cases in

[10] Christi Harlan, "Hearing to study county charges of judicial bias," *Dallas Morning News*, May 10, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/y27m73ey

[11] Christi Harlan, "Transfer of cases riles judge," *Dallas Morning News*, May 21, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/y3zk9a4o

both the criminal court and the court of public opinion. For example, an unnamed assistant District Attorney discussed the cases before his church congregation and encouraged members to attend the trials as a show of moral opposition to homosexuality. Additionally, a local minister used his power of the pulpit to bring attention to the cases and to announced trial dates during Sunday services. Due to this minister's highlighting of the cases, a local woman came to the courthouse to show her support for traditional values.[12]

During the trial of one of the accused, Richard Schwiderski, defense attorney Don Maison invited a young man and woman to "gyrate in a musicless dance" to illustrated that the defendant and his friends were merely dancing "the rock" at the time of their arrest. According to news reports, the women in the courtroom were horrified by the scene as they clutched their Bibles during the demonstration. Assistant District Attorney Bob Phillips dismissed the witnesses as "perverts" and, instead, focused entirely on the testimony of undercover vice officer John W. Przywara. Przywara stated he "charged Schwiderski with lewdness because [he] allowed his male dance partner to touch his genitals for three minutes." During closing arguments, Phillips argued that tolerating public lewdness on the dance floor would be the result of "new heights in idiocy in terms of law enforcement."[13] Phillips concluded that the case extended beyond the Schwiderski case when the defense insisted on elevating a "parade of perverts" as actual witnesses in a courtroom. Despite Maison's best attempts, Judge John Orvis

[12] Christi Harlan, "Public lewdness case offers parade of surprises," *Dallas Morning News*, August 29, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/yxtdhp4w

[13] Christi Harlan, "Bible-toters watch 'parade of perverts,'" *Dallas Morning News*, August 29, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/y6kkmxkw

determined that Schwiderski was guilty of public lewdness under the existing laws in Texas.[14]

Tension and unusual antics were not limited to the trial against Schwiderski. During the trial of Jim Rouse Howell, one of assistant District Attorney Winfield Scott's co-prosecutors allegedly challenged a defense witness to a fistfight outside of the courthouse. According to three members of the audience, the witness "used an expletive to describe a prosecutor" to which the assistant district attorney "retorted with obscene language," raised his fists, and invited any objectors to "step outside." After several invitations to convene in the parking lot, another assistant district attorney finally removed his colleague from the situation. Despite several eye witness accounts to the exchange, Scott stated he did not "remember (the assistant) even being in the courtroom during the trial and [he did not] recall anything remotely similar to that" happening.[15]

In addition to crude exchanges and threats of violence from the prosecuting attorneys, Scott repeatedly characterized gay men and women as "perverts" and social pariahs throughout Howell's trial. Rather than focusing on the incident in question, the prosecution used their time and resources to vilify the gay and lesbian community. While addressing Judge Berlaind Brashear, Scott noted "he could not explain the willingness of the defendants and their witnesses to testify 'except that it [seemed] to be (in) vogue to come out of the closet, and that [seemed] to be some type of folk-hero-type

[14] Harlan, "Public lewdness case."
[15] Ibid.

thing, to get up there and tell the world 'I'm gay and I'm proud of it.'" He even theorized that gay men and lesbians "[got] some type of warped kick out of these trials."

Finally, during his closing arguments, Scott clearly outlined his personal opinion of the defense's witnesses and the gay community when he concluded that "these women, some of them, and some men, call these defendants gentlemen. And I submit to you, your honor, that they are nothing more than perverts engaged in repulsive, disgusting, outrageous obscene behavior in public." In the end, Scott's approach to the trial was effective as Judge Brashear found Jim Rouse Howell guilty of public lewdness.[16]

While pushing back against the charges of public lewdness and challenging the authority of the Dallas vice squad served to incrementally improve the lives of gay men and women in Dallas, Donald F. Baker was about to embark on a path that would potentially affect the lives of homosexuals both in Dallas and across the nation. On November 19, 1979, Baker filed a federal lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Section 21.06, also known as the sodomy law, of the Texas Penal Code. Baker noted the law had "a chilling effect" on his personal relationships, but more importantly "the law [was] an indictment of the integrity and dignity of all homosexuals in the state" as "it declare[d] that homosexuals [were] criminals."[17]

According to the Texas State Penal Code in 1979, the sodomy law criminalized "deviant sexual intercourse" between same-sex partners, but this very specific version of

[16] Ibid.

[17] Mary Barrineau, "Homosexual says state law produces 'chilling effect,'" *Dallas Times Herald*, November 21, 1979. Clipping. Box 73, folder 1, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

the law was fairly new. Six years prior, during the 1973 legislative session, Texas lawmakers updated the language of 21.06 by including the phrase "of the same sex," which effectively allowed heterosexual couples to engage in these so-called deviant sexual practices, and specifically criminalized homosexual behavior.[18] James C. Barber, Baker's attorney, noted the state defined "deviant sexual intercourse" as "any contact between any part of the genitals of one person and the mouth or anus of another person" of the same sex, even "in the privacy of their own home."[19]

Barber argued Texas' sodomy law violated several of Baker's constitutional rights such as the First Amendment, the right to privacy, and protections outlined within the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. During an interview, Baker noted that the sodomy law was "based solely on religious objections to homosexual conduct, without any clear secular purpose," which imposed religious norms on gay men and lesbians in Texas.[20] Due to a lack of legal precedent on the issue of gay rights, Barber also believed Baker's case could potentially reach the United States Supreme Court, which could effectively influence federal protections for gay men and lesbians.[21]

In addition to securing the right to privacy for homosexuals in Texas, the reversal of Texas' sodomy law had larger implications. For gay men and women who sought to enter into some public service sectors, decriminalization of homosexuality was of the

[18] Texas Penal Code § 21.06 (1973), https://tinyurl.com/y5pq83e7.

[19] James C. Barber, James C. Barber to Mort Schwab, August 7, 1978. Letter. Box 73, folder 1, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[20] Norma Adams Wade, "Suit challenges homosexual law," *Dallas Morning News*, November 20, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/yyrw3lem

[21] Steve Blow, "'Perfect plaintiff' hits trail for homosexuals," *Dallas Morning News*, November 21, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/y3vkwtmf

upmost importance. For example, during the hiring process, the Dallas Police Department eliminated potential candidates if they engaged in any criminal behavior. In addition to interviewing individuals, the department also required them to submit to a polygraphy examination. Since 21.06 criminalized homosexual conduct, gay individuals frequently broke the law when dating or maintaining a relationship with a partner. As a result, when completing the polygraph phase of the interview, a member of the gay community could either attempt to lie about their homosexuality or they could admit to being gay, which automatically disqualified them for the job.[22]

While the *Baker* case loomed in the court system, gay men and women in Dallas attempted to live a normal and full life. Unfortunately, at times, their presence in public spaces drew negative attention from some members of the heterosexual community. For example, in the spring of 1980, a several gay men and women took advantage of the first warm, sunny day by gathering at Queen's Point, a small peninsula on Lake Dallas.[23] For the most part, the day was uneventful, but at dusk things quickly changed. According to eye witnesses, a group of men arrived at the beach and began hurling insults, like "faggots," "queers," and "dykes," and debris at the remaining beach attendees. Wielding chains and bottles, four of the attackers made their way toward the crowd. Amidst the

[22] Norma Adams Wade, "Homosexual says police ignored his qualifications," *Dallas Morning News*, March 20, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/y3eujlr6

[23] According to local legend, a drag queen named Peaches and a group of friends staked out an overgrown peninsula on Lake Dallas known as Queen's Point in the late-1950s. Queen's Point was a common meeting spot for gay men and women for several decades.

chaos, Mitchell Cox Hill fatally stabbed Wesley Earl Hill, a gay man, twice in the chest.[24] Almost as quickly as the altercation started, it was over.[25]

By that fall, Mitchell Cox Hill pleaded not guilty to the charge of murder. During his trial, Gary P. Patton, Hill's defense attorney, argued that Wesley had attacked another man, which led Mitchell to believe "he 'was being threatened with unlawful deadly force.'" Unfortunately for Mitchell, several other witnesses testified that Wesley had not attacked anyone and, in fact, had not even participated in the altercation at all. After two days of testimony, a jury found Mitchell Cox Hill guilty of voluntary manslaughter, which carried a ten-year sentence within the Texas Department of Corrections, but because Mitchell had "never been convicted of a felony," the jury "recommended probation of the penitentiary time." After the trial, members of Wesley Earl Hill's family were disappointed in the leniency of the verdict. When they questioned the district attorney about the sentencing, he suggested "that this legal slap-on-the-wrist was probably due to the fact that the victim was gay."[26]

Unfortunately, acts of violence and discrimination were not limited to ordinary citizens, but rather they also came from the very people who pledged to serve and protect the people of Dallas. As previously discussed, vice squad officers often lured gay men into compromising situations in an effort to make an arrest. Again, due to the

[24] Despite having the same surname, these men are not related.

[25] Phil Johnson, "Texas Gay History: If Ye Break Faith with Us who Die, Wesley Earl Hill—Murdered April 20, 1980," *This Week in Texas*, August 30-September 5, 1985: 38-9. Clipping, Box 62, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries*, the University of North Texas Special Collections.

[26] Ibid.

social stigma associated with homosexuality, many of those arrested refused to dispute charges, file complaints, or even testify on behalf of themselves or their friends.[27]

In some cases, though, tensions between vice officers and gay men became deadly. In the spring of 1980, Otis K. Griffith, an undercover vice officer, picked up an African American sex worker, Donald Ray Rodgers,[28] who "agreed to perform an unnatural sex for $15." According to Griffith, once he had informed Rodgers he was a cop, Rodgers became angry and attacked him. In the midst of a struggle, Griffith discharged his weapon, which fatally struck Rodgers in the side.[29] Though there were no independent witnesses to the struggle, two witnesses gave affidavits that they saw Griffith attempt to revive Rodgers. As a result of their statements, internal affairs Captain William Newman was satisfied with Griffith's actions and deemed the shooting was justified.[30]

While police officers often faced difficult and stressful on-the-job situations, Griffith had already accumulated a history of violent altercations with African American men. Three years prior to Rodger's shooting, Griffith and three other officers assaulted an African American man, Claude Washington, in front of his home. According to the officers, they approached Washington about his excessive speed on the highway. The officers alleged the conversation escalated and Washington threw a coffee mug at them.

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[27] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, "WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF POLICE HARASSMENT……..?," January 14, 1980. Press Release. Box 74, folder 2, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[28] At the time, Rodgers was using the name Denque Rodgers.

[29] John Rutledge and Ray Bell, "Vice officer kills man dressed as woman," *Dallas Morning News*, April 25 1980. https://tinyurl.com/5uyun73c

[30] Barry Boesch, "Shooting seems 'justified,'" *Dallas Morning News*, April 26, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/3zs4hcs6

In an attempt to defend themselves, one of the officers struck Washington on the side of his head with a heavy flashlight. Per a statement by Mary Washington, while her husband was on the ground, the officers choked him and stomped on his chest and stomach. As the altercation continued, Mrs. Washington pleaded with the officers and begged them not to kill her husband. Of course, Washington disputed the officers' version of events and, months later, a jury agreed and found Washington not guilty on two separate assault charges.[31]

Unfortunately, the aggressive actions of police officers like Otis K. Griffiths in Dallas were fairly common. Additionally, widespread homophobia and intolerance often resulted in officers aggressively approaching gay men at any sign of suspected physical affection. For example, patrolman William Miller witnessed Doug Greeson being affectionate with a man, John S., in his car. According to Greeson, neither he or John participated in any "touching below the waist." As Miller approached, he demanded them to exit the vehicle and referred to them as, "stinking fags!" Greeson pointed out that they were not violating any laws, which lead Officer Miller to strike him in the face and on the back of the head multiple times.

Following the incident, Miller went into a neighborhood store to use the phone. Greeson followed him into the store and asked why the officer "had roughed him up." Again, Officer Miller approached Greeson, grabbed him by the arm and pushed him into a rack of potato chips, which caused Greeson to injure his head. Once several squad cars

[31] Scott Parks, "Police beating lingers with victim for years," *Dallas Morning News*, September 17, 1979. https://tinyurl.com/bd7bubst

arrived on the scene, Miller ordered the other officers "to book Greeson" and John, because he was "one of them," as well.[32]

Despite Doug Greeson's claims of police brutality, the Dallas district attorney's office pursued both aggravated assault and public lewdness charges against Greeson. Once the case finally came before a judge, the clerk of the local store had moved out of state, which left John S. as Greeson's only witness. After hearing the details of the case and the testimony of John S., Judge John Mead convicted Greeson of aggravated assault. In a letter to Glenn King, Dallas' Chief of Police, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus argued the incident with Miller ruined Greeson's life. While attempting to clear his name, Greeson went bankrupt and was forced to drop out of graduate school at Southern Methodist University. But more importantly, he "lost the love...he once had for Dallas" due to the "homophobic attitudes of a police officer who [had] never received any sensitivity training with regard to the homosexual community."[33]

Leadership within the Dallas Gay Political Caucus firmly believed the most effective way to create change in the city required them to work within the existing political system, otherwise known as "the Dallas Way." While some DGPC members felt comfortable publicly addressing the discrimination faced by the gay community, many others preferred a more "low-profile approach," which usually meant donating money and resources to the caucus. As a result, the DGPC fostered relationships with organizers and elected officials at the local and state level. Because the majority of gay

[32] Donald F. Baker and Campbell B. Read, Dallas Gay Political Caucus to Dallas Police Chief Glenn King, February 26, 1980. Letter. Box 74, folder 2, Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[33] Ibid.

men and women in Dallas were "among the nation's most conservative" homosexuals, "the Dallas Way" approach was extremely effective. [34]

For example, in an attempt to curtail violence and discrimination from police officers, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus organized alliances with other concerned citizens and called for a civilian review board, which would review community complaints about policing practices.[35] Although creating an independent, community driven review board of the police department was a longshot, the calls for more civilian involvement did not fall on deaf ears. During the summer of 1981, community members called for an expansion of an existing organization, the Dallas Police Advisory Committee. At the time, the DPAC solely focused on cases in which officers injured or killed individuals. Dallas Jackson, a local resident, urged the DPAC to reorganize as the Dallas Citizens/Police Relations Board, which would expand its review umbrella to include "police harassment and civil rights violations." Dr. Campbell Read, a long-time leader within the gay community, noted that the internal affairs division of the police department completely refused to investigate several complaints of police misconduct lodged by homosexuals.[36]

As the Dallas Gay Political Caucus worked towards building a better relationship with local law enforcement, they also continued to pressure elected officials to be more

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[34] Michael Ennis, "What do these Rugged Texas He-Men have in Common?," *Texas Monthly*, June 1980: 215. Box 67, folder 50, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[35] Henry Tatum, "Blair sees 'hypocrisy' in police board foes," *Dallas Morning News*, May 1, 1980. https://tinyurl.com/y4rz69p2

[36] Henry Tatum, "Police advisory panel seeks new name," *Dallas Morning News*, July 1, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/y6ktvk5v

responsive to the gay community. In the spring of 1980, the Political Action Committee of the DGPC introduced Project '80, which sought to inform and mobilize the gay vote during the primary elections of 1980. In addition to voting, the PAC encouraged voters to attend their local precinct meetings on election night. At those meetings, precincts elected representatives to their party's state convention. By flooding their local precincts with voters from the gay community, the committee hoped they could increase their influence on party platforms at both the state and national level.[37] Overall, Project '80 failed to drastically change the political climate in Texas or the United States. For the most part, caucus members predominately used the primary elections as a means to become delegates of the Democratic Party, which struggled to make political gains during the Reagan Era.[38]

Despite the rise of conservatism in American politics, the Dallas Gay Alliance, formerly known as the Dallas Gay Political Caucus,[39] continued to press for better representation from locally elected officials. In the summer of 1981, the caucus achieved a major milestone when they hosted a townhall with the newly elected mayor, Jack Evans. Prior to Evans, no Dallas mayor had ever agreed to any public meetings or townhalls with the gay community. In fact, Evans specifically requested to meet with the group during one of their monthly meetings. During his address, Evans noted that

[37] Dallas Gay Political Caucus, *PROJECT '80: for gay eyes only...*, nd. Pamphlet. Box 65, folder 21, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[38] Michael Mims, *William Waybourn*, Oral History Collection 1808, May 22, 2013, 25. Transcript. UNT Oral History Project, University of North Texas Libraries.

[39] The organization restructured their goals and formally changed the name on March 9, 1981. The reasons for this change will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

"change [would] come and gays [would] be accepted in Dallas," but the only way to achieve "a spirit of unity" would be through mutual understanding between all parties.[40]

According to newspaper reports, approximately 500 people filled the Metropolitan Community Church for Evans' address. While the crowd applauded his hopefulness about acceptance of the gay community in Dallas, some pushed back on issues like police harassment and misconduct and the exclusionary practice of barring gay men and women from employment with the fire and police departments. Evans noted that he fully "support[ed] the police department," but he was willing to invest in "sensitivity training" for officers. Additionally, Evans argued that Dallas was a "progressive" city and that everyone ought to have "an opportunity" to contribute to their communities.[41]

While Mayor Jack Evans believed in the progressiveness of Dallas, it appeared local law enforcement officers did not share his sentiments. In a statement to the *Dallas Morning News*, Dick Hickman, the president of the Dallas Police Association (DPA), argued that police departments could not "knowingly employ anyone who violates the law" and the mayor had no authority to override that standard. Hickman also noted that Glen King, the Chief of Police, firmly refused to hire homosexuals "as long as it [was] a violation" of the state law.[42] Furthermore, Russell Perry argued Evans' meeting with the Dallas Gay Alliance extended the homosexual community a certain amount of "status"

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[40] Esther M. Bauer, "Evans becomes first Dallas mayor to address gays," *Dallas Morning News*, July 14, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/yc8dubxr

[41] Ibid.

[42] "Police oppose Evans on hiring homosexuals," *Dallas Morning News*, July 15, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/5n8wxmrr

that they should not have. Perry strongly implied that Evans should curtail future interactions with the DGA because the people of Dallas simply did not want to become "another San Francisco." Additionally, Alex Bickley, of the Dallas Citizens Council, advised the mayor to be more cautious with all future town hall meetings. Due to the criticism received over the town hall, Evans reported he would "be a little more selective of [his] audience" in the future.[43] In the end, it appears that Dallas was not as progressive as Evans had thought.

In addition to protesting police harassment and lobbying for basic civil rights, gay and lesbian activists prepared for the opening arguments in the *Baker v. Wade* case. On June 15, 1981, Judge Jerry Buchmeyer became the first federal judge to oversee a challenge to a state sanctioned sodomy law.[44] As previously stated, Baker argued Texas' sodomy law violated his "right to privacy, due process, and equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the first, fifth, ninth, and fourteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution."[45] During the trial, Dallas County District Attorney Henry Wade and Dallas City Attorney Lee Holt argued that the sodomy statute existed because homosexuality was "undesirable" in society at the time. Judd Marmor, a Los Angeles-based psychiatrist, testified that the American Psychiatric Association no longer recognized homosexuality as a "psychological disorder" and that "people [did] not

[43] Sam Attlesey, "Mayor Evans shakes city establishment with outgoing style," *Dallas Morning News*, July 19, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/3bhuzm7w

[44] "Revoking Sex Law May Affect 25 States," *Avalanche-Journal*, Lubbock, Texas, August 19, 1982. Clipping. Box 67, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[45] Texas Human Rights Foundation, "Fed. Court Trial on Texas Homosexual Conduct Law Starts June 15," June 1981. Press release. Box 65, folder 28, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

choose to be homosexual." Marmor also noted that "anti-homosexual teachings [were] 'religious based'" and, in his professional opinion, there were not any "adverse side effects" to being gay.[46]

On the second and final day of trial, James Grigson, a Dallas-based psychiatrist, disputed Marmor's testimony regarding the psychological impact of homosexuality. Grigson claimed that homosexuality could be cured and the removal of the statute would create "less anxiety" within the gay community, which would result in fewer people seeking "help and a cure."[47] Grigson suggested the Texas sodomy law reflected "society's attitude" towards homosexuality. Additionally, he argued the removal of the statute would imply the state approved of homosexuality. Under those circumstances, Grigson suggested the social climate "'would be harmful to the growth and development' of children" because homosexuality goes against "the normal biological drive." During his closing arguments, James Barber, Donald Baker's attorney, asked Buchmeyer to declare the statute unconstitutional "because the state had not shown 'a compelling state interest' for having the law" other than the "incredible" testimony of Grigson, which defied the growing body of academic and medical literature regarding homosexuality.[48]

As attorneys debated the constitutionality of Texas' sodomy law in the courtroom, citizens debated the social acceptability of homosexuality in the court of

[46] Doug Nogami, "Homosexuality 'victimless crime,' sociologist testifies at statute trial," *Dallas Morning News*, June 16, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/y2w64fwt

[47] Doug Nogami, "Grigson calls homosexuality 'pathological illness,'" *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/4rxebyu4

[48] Ibid.

public opinion. Clearly many people within the Dallas Metroplex were interested in and closely followed the Baker case. In one letter to the editor of the *Dallas Morning News,* M. C. Lassiter, was appalled by Dr. James Grigson's suggestion that the state should legislate an "illness" as a crime.[49] While Lassiter's letter strongly suggested Grigson's arguments were weak and baseless, Doris Kent, argued they "should leave the business of psychiatry in the hands of reputable professionals." Additionally, Kent noted that the state often criminalizes illnesses and specifically pointed towards the illegal nature of kleptomania, which she wondered if Dallas would soon see a movement dedicated to relaxing laws against theft.[50]

Of the letters sent to the *Dallas Morning News,* Floyd Parker's commentary was the most biting against homosexuality and the gay civil rights movement writ large. Parker decried calls for action to accept a person's "sexual preference," as if it were as simple as preferring "blondes, brunettes, whites, blacks, yellows, talls, shorts, thins, or fats!" Rather, he continued, the movement towards acceptability and "respectability of homosexuality and homosexuals" was forcing people to overlook "sexual perversion, no more, no less, *not* sexual preference." Parker suggested that the citizens of Dallas County should create a plan to obstruct "all efforts to 'legalize' sexual perversion" and they should seriously reconsider supporting any public official that openly sought the "favor or support of those who practice perversion."[51]

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[49] "Letters: Grigson Testimony," *Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/2p8fj5p3

[50] "Letters: 'Criminal' Illness," *Dallas Morning News*, July 3, 1981. https://tinyurl.com/8au3dybn

[51] Floyd Parker, letter to the editor, *Dallas Morning News*, July 28, 1981, https://tinyurl.com/yxdsjpzh.

Almost fourteen months after hearing the arguments in the *Baker v. Wade* case, Judge Jerry Buchmeyer determined the Texas' sodomy law, which specifically applied to couples of the same sex, was unconstitutional. According to the ruling, Texas Penal Code 21.06 violated Donald Baker's constitutionally guaranteed rights to both privacy and equal protection under the law.[52] Within the fifty-three-page decision, Buchmeyer conceded that homosexuality energized feelings of "fear and disgust among many people," but those strong emotions did not justify upholding the statute. Buchmeyer noted that Henry Wade, the District Attorney for Dallas County, admitted he could not explain why the law only pertained to sexual acts between people of the same sex, which was explicitly discriminatory. In fact, Wade's only justification for maintaining the law was to protect the "state's legitimate interest in 'morality, decency, welfare, safety and procreation.'"[53]

Naturally, Buchmeyer's decision sent shockwaves across Dallas and the rest of Texas. In an interview, Baker called the federal ruling "the greatest thing that could ever happen to gay rights." Robert Schwab, president of the Texas Human Rights Foundation, praised the decision and declared the days of treating gay men and women as second-class citizens were finally over.[54] While gay rights activists relished in the

[52] Doug Nogami, "Law against homosexuality rejected," *Dallas Morning News*, August 18, 1982. Clipping. Box 67, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[53] "State Sodomy Law Overturned," *Daily Telegram*, Temple, Texas, August 18, 1982. Clipping. Box 67, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[54] "Homosexual Rights Advocates Hail Reversal of Sodomy Law," *Valley Morning Star*, Harlingen, Texas, August 19, 1982. Clipping. Box 67, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

victory, unsurprisingly some people in Dallas strongly questioned Buchmeyer's decision. In a *Dallas Morning News* editorial piece, an anonymous writer noted that 21.06 was "rarely enforced," but the removal of the law served to both legitimize and normalize homosexuality despite it being "deeply opposed by society." The author continued by pointing out that people have a right to privacy, but that right comes with some limitations. They argued that private actions often have public consequences. Therefore, society was compelled to make moral judgement calls in certain arenas like the classroom and the ranks of law enforcement.[55] Though the anonymous writer shrouded their complaint of the Baker ruling as a moral, yet secular judgement of homosexuality, several citizens lambasted Judge Buchmeyer, the decision, and gay activists for defying "God's laws."[56]

As previously discussed, the Dallas Police Department maintained a firm policy against hiring anyone who engaged in criminal activities or behaviors. Therefore, as long as 21.06 remained the law in Texas, gay men and women could not openly serve with the department. Following Judge Buchmeyer's decision, Donald Baker and other gay activists in Dallas began to call for an immediate reversal of the policy. Despite Buchmeyer's ruling, which effectively decriminalized homosexuality, Billy Prince, Dallas' Chief of Police, publicly stated he would continue the policy of excluding gay

[55] "Homosexual Law: Wrong Decision," *Dallas Morning News*, August 21, 1982. https://tinyurl.com/y5sclhjz

[56] A. Hall, letter to the editor, *Dallas Morning News*, August 31, 1982, https://tinyurl.com/y5m62e9u. Paula Aldridge, letter to the editor, *Dallas Morning News*, August 28, 1982, https://tinyurl.com/y57q8otl. Paula Perrin, letter to the editor, *Dallas Morning News*, September 1, 1982, https://tinyurl.com/y2u78hny.

men and women from his department because the job was "very sensitive."[57] Unsurprisingly, in a memo to Analeslie Muncy, Dallas' City Attorney, Prince "strongly recommended" an appeal to the Buchmeyer decision. He argued the appeal was "imperative" because the decision had a "detrimental effect...on police department personnel policies."[58]

While the leadership of the Dallas Gay Alliance formally requested that Chief Prince reconsider his position on the homosexual hiring ban,[59] several concerned citizens wrote letters to both the police department and local newspapers commending Prince on his commitment to continue excluding gay men and women from the force. In one such letter, Francis E. Lawhead, praised Prince for taking a stand against "the 'cock-suckers'" and offered his prayers and support for the "decent, honest and respectable police department" of Dallas.[60] In a similarly salacious letter, Rick Vehon declared that Buchmeyer's "cowardice" decision placed the world on the road to becoming the next "Sodom and Gomorrah." Vehon lamented the extension of civil rights "to mentally unstable people" and likened the overturning of 21.06 to declaring "child pornography and abuse" legal and acceptable. Ultimately, Vehon suggested the state should increase

[57] "Texas sodomy law," *Longview News-Journal*, August 19, 1982. Clipping. Box 67, folder 51, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[58] Billy Prince to Analeslie Muncy, September 28, 1982. Memorandum. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[59] Bill Nelson, Dallas Gay Alliance to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, September 18, 1982. Letter. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[60] Francis E. Lawhead to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, August 20, 1982. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

the penalties for homosexual conduct, that way all violators could go to "prison where no one would question their "bend over" mentality or their philosophies."[61]

Prior to Judge Jerry Buchmeyer's decision in the *Baker* case, members of the Social Justice Department, a sub-committee within the Dallas Gay Alliance, organized meetings with Levi Davis, the Assistant City Manager, to discuss the importance and value of diverse neighborhoods and communities in Dallas. During one of these meetings, Davis pledged to issue a statement from the City Manager's Office to the Dallas Police Department. Davis implied the memorandum would recognize "the gay community as a segment of the greater Dallas community, which [was] entitled to equal treatment under the law."[62]

After months of radio silence from the City Manager's Office and no issuance of a memorandum, two members of the DGA, Bill Nelson and Ann Brown, finally secured a meeting with both Levi Davis and Billy Prince.[63] Despite the breakdown of communication with the city and Prince's position on the hiring of gay police officers, the Dallas Gay Alliance continued looking for ways to work with both organizations. Through collective action, the DGA believed a comprehensive plan of action would soften the relationship between the gay community and the police department.

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[61] Rick Vehon to the *Dallas Morning News*, August 18, 1982. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[62] Dallas Gay Alliance to Levi Davis, August 31, 1982. Letter. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[63] Bill Nelson, Dallas Gay Alliance to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, November 2, 1982. Letter. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

During their meeting, Nelson and Brown suggested ways in which the DGA could publicly praise the police department and the city for working with the gay community. For example, the organization could issue statements about "adequate street lighting in the Oak Lawn area" and they could highlight "effective and visible public relations" when police officers would be needed at special events, like rallies and parades. Naturally, Davis and Prince were more than willing to agree to these items, which took little to no effort on their part, but they were less enthusiastic when asked to create pamphlets, brochures, and training classes to educate police officers on the gay community.[64]

According to Davis, the police department had not ever produced and would never create materials for "special interest groups" and he was unwilling to open "the 'Pandora's Box' that might result" if that policy changed. In response, Brown emphasized that several other departments across the country had used these methods with some success. She specifically highlighted a brochure from the Seattle Police Department that educated the gay community about crime prevention methods. After reviewing the pamphlet, Prince noted that this type of material might be acceptable, but he did not commit to any production in the future.[65]

[64] Dallas Gay Alliance, "SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THE GAY COMMUNITY," Summer 1982. Memorandum. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[65] Dallas Gay Alliance, "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE," Fall 1982. Press Release. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

Within the last fifteen minutes of the meeting, tensions increased between both parties as the topic of hiring practices came up. Nelson and Brown referenced a survey conducted by Mel Boozer and the National Gay Task Force concerning hiring practices by police departments. In response to the survey, Prince indicated his department did not have "any policy concerning sexual preference or orientation with respect to hiring and promotion of police officers."[66] As this response completely contradicted all public statements made by Prince, Nelson asked for clarification on the current hiring processes by the department. Prince conceded that the department continued to reject all homosexual applicants.[67] He concluded that citizens needed to maintain confidence in officers and because most people were uncomfortable with homosexuality, the hiring of gay officers would "alienate segments of the general population."[68]

At the end of the meeting, Chief Prince warned Nelson and Brown about pressuring city officials to drop all questions regarding sexuality during the hiring process. Prince stated that the Dallas Gay Alliance "'could not have their cake and eat it too.'" If the DGA wanted to pursue any educational trainings or future liaisons with the department, they "must drop the pressure to employ gays."[69] Through this ultimatum, Prince essentially threatened to withhold equitable policing practices from the gay

[66] Billy Prince to Mel Boozer, August 9, 1982. Letter. Box 483, folder 60, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[67] In reality, the Dallas Police Department did not have a written policy that specifically related to homosexuality. Rather, the department refused to hire anyone that engaged in criminal behavior. As 21.06 criminalized homosexual conduct in Texas, the police department used this to support their ban on the hiring gay people.

[68] Dallas Gay Alliance, "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE."

[69] Ibid.

community if local activists continued to demand greater equality for those applying to the department.

Despite the warnings issued by Prince, the Dallas Gay Alliance continued to pressure the city and the police department regarding the employment of gay men and women. Almost six months after the *Baker* decision, the Dallas Police Department continued to exclude gay men and women from the force. Following a change in policy with the Houston Police Department and continued pressure from the Dallas Gay Alliance, Dallas city officials debated the merits and pitfalls of hiring homosexuals as police officers.[70]

According to newspaper reports, Bill Nelson pointed out that several other police departments across the country hire gay people and "it works out fine." Unsurprisingly, Chief Billy Prince refused to believe the city or members of the police force were ready to accept gay officers. Prince stated the reversal of the policy would be "bad for morale," as several officers indicated to him, they would "refuse to ride in patrol cars with or train homosexual officers." Dick Hickman, president of the Dallas Police Association, fully supported Prince's position and reiterated "we don't want them." Ultimately, Prince showed his personal biases against homosexuality when he argued that "maybe there was a reason it wasn't Adam and John instead of Adam and Eve."[71]

As city officials debated homosexuality and the police department, letter writers once again reached out to the *Dallas Morning News* and directly to Chief Billy Prince.

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[70] Carol Holowinski, "City reconsiders ban of gay police officers," *Dallas Morning News*, February 10, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/mp2tmftz

[71] Ibid.

In an opposition editorial piece, an anonymous writer argued that laws continued to exist that made "homosexuality in public a criminal offense." As a result, gay men and women could not serve on the department because their behavior and character were not "above reproach."[72] Unsurprisingly, this op-ed piece showed clear bias and was extremely misleading to the public. The only law the author could possibly be pointing to was Texas Penal Code 21.07, which addressed sexual acts in public.[73] Unlike 21.06, which only applied to homosexual conduct, this statute applied to all citizens. Therefore, the potential for criminality extended to both homosexual and heterosexual people and, using the reasoning set forth by the author, no one was fit to serve on the department.

Of the letters written directly to the police department or the city, the vast majority were in support of preventing gay men and women from service. In one letter, a retired school teacher and grandmother, Jewell C. Stevens, feared allowing gay men to serve with the department would result in victimization of men. She opined that a gay officer might randomly decide to take her son or grandson as a "'sex partner'" and, under those circumstances, she questioned "who would defend the innocent party." Stevens concluded that law enforcement officials had always been "friends and defenders" of young people and now kids will have to be warned about "being raped by

[72] "Gay Police Officers: But Not in Dallas," *Dallas Morning News*, February 11, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/46m83rkx

[73] Mike Stewart, Dallas Gay Alliance to the Editorial Board of the *Dallas Morning News*, February 15, 1983. Letter. Box 77, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

a homosexual maniac in uniform."[74] In a letter to the city manager, David Harkness, the chairman of a neighborhood watch group, agreed with all measures that kept homosexual people from serving on the police force. Harkness assured city officials that allowing "that deviant element in law enforcement" would be "counterproductive, irresponsible, [and] downright stupid."[75] Some people believed that gay activists had become too emboldened and they were pushing Dallas to extremes. In fact, many believed the gay community wanted the city to become the next San Francisco.[76] [77] In reality, gay activists in Dallas simply wanted to be defined based on their character and not their sexual preference or the activities they engaged in private.

Of the letters reviewed, only two individuals chastised city leadership for the homosexual ban within the police department. In an attempt to shatter two myths often association with homosexuals, Susan Hamilton pointed out that gay people were not inherently interested in pedophilia nor did they "'flaunt' their sexuality" in professional settings. As these attitudes were solely based on prejudice, Hamilton suggested that Chief Billy Prince should trust that his "professional Police Officers [would] remain PROFESSIONAL on and off the job."[78] Marcia Goldenfeld suggested that questions

[74] Jewell C. Stevens to the *Dallas Morning News*, February 11, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[75] David Harkness to the Dallas City Manager, February 14, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[76] O. Thedford to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 10, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[77] Hal Kinkeade to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 14, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[78] Susan Hamilton to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 10, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

regarding sexuality and/or sexual preferences were inappropriate and had no bearing on a person's ability to perform the tasks associated with law enforcement. In fact, Goldenfeld stated that if she were to be asked personal questions about her sexual activities or even her preferences for birth control methods, she would be highly offended.[79]

The real division over this issue centered on the private lives of homosexuals. Clearly, several people saw homosexuals as one dimensional, "perverts"[80] and, unsurprisingly, many of those opinions were rooted in religious ideologies.[81] Unlike their heterosexual counterparts, these letter writers did not afford gay men and women the right to privacy behind closed doors. They assumed homosexuals had no impulse control and were totally driven by carnal desires.

During the 1983 legislative session, Representative Bill Cavahra intended to address this issue when he introduced House Bill 2138, which would effectively reinstate the state's sodomy law. Though penalties for violation of 21.06 resulted in misdemeanor charges and a maximum fine of $200, H.B. 2138 called for felony charges

[79] Marcia Goldenfeld to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 14, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[80] Hal Kinkeade.

[81] Kevin W. Mannoia to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 16, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections. Jewell C. Stevens to the *Dallas Morning News*, February 11, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections. Mrs. H. J. Gordon to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 8, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections. Jean Jenney to Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince, February 11, 1983. Letter. Box 483, folder 59, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

for repeat offenders.[82] According to Cavahra, eighty-nine percent of Texans supported the homosexual ban. When questioned about the constitutionality of monitoring the private activities of consenting adults, Cavahra adamantly claimed the bill was not really about the violation of personal privacy, but more about preventing large groups of people from engaging in homosexual activities in public.[83]

As the legislative session neared an end, members of the Dallas Gay Alliance urged locally elected officials to oppose HB 2138 should it come to a vote.[84] Bill Hammond, Representative of District 109, predicted the bill was unlikely to make it out of the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence.[85] Whilst Hammond never committed to objecting to the bill, other elected officials from the Dallas Metroplex area did. According to Jesse Oliver, Representative of District 111, HB 2138 "represent[ed] a clear invasion" of the right to privacy, which he would oppose if it made it out of the subcommittee.[86] Additionally, Representative Patricia Hill, of District 102, pledged to oppose the bill once it reached the House floor.[87] In addition to reaching out to state representatives, Michael Stewart, President of the DGA, contacted his state senators. In response to Stewart's letter, Senator Oscar Mauzy, of the 23rd District, confirmed his

[82] Ruth Miller Fitzgibbons, "Out of the Closet and into City Hall," *D Magazine*, July 1983. https://tinyurl.com/y6srppkl

[83] George Kuempel, "Ceverha bill draws attention," *Dallas Morning News*, April 15, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/mpnhu4tm

[84] Of the letters on file, they are responses to Michael Stewart, the President of the DGA in 1983.

[85] State Representative Bill Hammond to Michael Stewart, April 25, 1983. Letter. Box 77, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[86] State Representative Jesse Oliver to Michael Stewart, April 21, 1983. Letter. Box 77, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[87] State Representative Patricia Hill to Michael Stewart, April 28, 1983. Letter. Box 77, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

belief that "responsible adults should be allowed freedom and privacy in their personal lives."[88] Unlike Mauzy, Senator John Leedom, of District 16, admitted that he and Stewart did not "see eye to eye" on the issue as he planned to support the bill if it were to reach the Senate.[89] In the end, HB 2138 never made it out of the subcommittee. According to Representative Terral Smith of Austin, passing another sodomy law was not possible due to Judge Jerry Buchmeyer's decision the previous fall.[90]

Within half a decade, the Dallas Gay Alliance made considerable progress at the local and state level. At the beginning of 1979, elected officials were unwilling to engage with members of the gay and lesbian community. As the national narrative surrounding gay rights began to change, young activists within the DGA found ways to adapt that progress for Dallas. They recognized the only way to make progress in "conservative Dallas" was "to work within the system." Therefore, alliance members used a grassroots approach to mobilize the gay and lesbian vote in precincts within the Oak Lawn district, the heart of the "'gay ghetto.'"[91] By researching and vetting potential candidates, the alliance informed local constituents about issues that would directly impact their community and encouraged them to harness their power by voting as a political bloc.[92]

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[88] State Senator Oscar Mauzy to Michael Stewart, April 19, 1983. Letter. Box 77, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[89] State Senator John Leedom to Michael Stewart, April 15, 1983. Letter. Box 77, folder 13, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[90] "Lawmaker says court rulings make sodomy ban impossible," *Longview News-Journal* (Longview, Texas), April 20, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/2swfpnra

[91] Fitzgibbons, "Out of the closet."

[92] In a few cities across the country, gay and lesbian communities successfully created solid voting blocs. In the following cases, these voting blocs successfully elected gay or lesbian candidates to various political offices. In 1974, Massachusetts voters elected Elaine Noble to the state legislature. (See David Mixner & Dennis Bailey, "Elaine Noble: Moxie" in *Brave Journeys: Profiles in Gay and Lesbian*

Clearly the alliance's approach to mobilization proved to be moderately successful by 1983. Though they could count the demise of HB 2138 as a win, the bigger victory was their ability to connect with and form alliances with elected officials. While some politicians, like John Leedom, did not agree with the aims of the alliance, they were still willing to acknowledge the organization. More importantly, though, elected officials from "conservative Dallas" found common values with the DGA and pledged to support those values in Austin. Unfortunately, the alliance had yet to make significant strides at the local level. Though they maintained constant communication with the mayor's office, members of city council, and the police department, they were unable to alter the hiring practices of the police department and they failed to form a coalition strong enough to pass a nondiscrimination ordinance.

Courage. New York: Bantam Books, 2000.) Also, in 1974, Kathy Kozachenko was elected to the city council in Ann Arbor, Michigan. (See Judith Cummings, "Homosexual-Rights Laws Show Progress in Some Cities, but Drive Arouses Considerable Opposition," New York Times, May 13, 1974: 17.) In 1977, Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. (See "Homosexual on Board Cites Role as Pioneer," New York Times, November 10, 1977: 24.) Though the DGA had not elected an openly gay official into office, they did use their collective power to support candidates that were friendly to their causes. This is a technique that was widely used by both the Dallas and the Houston Gay Political Caucuses.

CHAPTER VI: A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

During the early years of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC), a core group of members worked tirelessly towards civil protections and freedoms for gay men and lesbians living in Dallas. Most of these leaders, who were white, well-educated and financially secure, determined that working within the existing political, social, and economic structures in the city would be the best way to achieve their aims. As a result, they described this more conservative approach as "the Dallas way." Though this philosophy initially worked well, as the caucus grew and became more complex, rising members of the organization challenged the notion of "the Dallas way."

By the mid-eighties, Dallas' gay community experienced conflict and crisis on multiple fronts. New leadership within the Dallas Gay Alliance, formerly known as the DGPC, defied the notion of "the Dallas way." As a result, members of the old guard openly questioned and criticized top members of the DGA. As members of the DGA fought amongst themselves, a new, incurable disease known as AIDS spread throughout the community. Initially labeled as the gay cancer, anti-gay organizations in Dallas and across the state used AIDS as a reason to reinstate Texas' sodomy law and in August 1985 homosexual sodomy was once again illegal. As these challenges and conflicts amassed, it became clear that Dallas' gay community would have to overcome several obstacles if they wanted to continue fighting for civil rights.

Initially, most of the original members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus were white men. Because the group was more homogenized and had fewer members, the DGPC almost always universally agreed on everything. Though they did not

intentionally exclude women, in some ways, it was easier for gay men to find each other, and, therefore, they were able to efficiently organize. Gay men in Dallas often met in one of the several gay discos, bars, or bathhouses. Women, on the other hand, were not allowed in some bars or discos without a male escort and they certainly were not allowed inside the bathhouses. As a result, many gay women found a home in some of the feminist organizations in and around the metroplex. Due to this lack of inclusion or acceptance within the gay scene, many women in the Dallas area opted to participate in the local chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW) rather than getting involved with the DGPC.[1]

As the DGPC became increasingly involved with political activism, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong, two new transplants to Dallas, joined the caucus and quickly assumed leadership positions.[2] Both previously active within the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in Colorado, Young and Armstrong firmly believed that political activism and involvement were the keys to achieving equality for the gay community. Under the leadership and vision of Young and Armstrong, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus created their first formal mailing list of members and began hosting voter registration drives by the spring of 1978.[3]

Despite the impact both Young and Armstrong had on the organization, women continued to face rampant sexism from many of the male members and leaders within

[1] Karen Wisely, *Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong*, Oral History Collection 1743, February 24, 2010, 34. Transcript. UNT Oral History Project, University of North Texas Libraries.

[2] During the Spring of 1977, Louise Young became the Secretary of the DGPC. By June of the same year, Vivienne Armstrong became the Chair of the Political Action Committee.

[3] Wisely, Young and Armstrong, 36-38.

the caucus. During meetings and events, men commonly referred to women as "girls" and they often assigned more domestic tasks to the women. Young and Armstrong speculated that these sexist behaviors prevented other women from getting involved with the organization. Ultimately, though, they decided to "grit (their) teeth" and overlook the blatant sexism because they saw the caucus as a means to an end, which was gay and lesbian equality.[4]

In the early years of the organization, members, like Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong, found it more pragmatic to gloss over differing opinions about the organizational aims of the caucus. Rather than focusing on their differences, it was easier to unite against the controversies created by people like Anita Bryant and James Robison. But by 1980, relationships had frayed and the organization faced its first major internal dilemma. As the Dallas Gay Political Caucus grew, organizational leaders sought to expand the reach of the caucus by including more activities and committees outside of the political arena. For this reason, some members lobbied to drop the label "political" from their name.

In the spring of 1980, a board member, Bill Nelson, suggested that the group adopt a new name, the Dallas Gay Alliance (DGA). Nelson argued the organization no longer sought to merely "curry influence with politicians" and, therefore, needed a name that more appropriately reflected their goals.[5] Under the new name, Nelson and other members of the board hoped to continue to create committees and groups that met the

[4] Ibid, 38-39.

[5] Michael Mims, *William Waybourn*, Oral History Collection 1808, May 22, 2013, 26-28. Transcript. UNT Oral History Project, University of North Texas Libraries.

individual needs of the community. In the end, after a contentious debate, those in attendance voted to adopt the new name.

For some, like Nelson, the name change was a logical progression of the organization, but not everyone shared that sentiment. Specifically, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong, "the longest serving women members," found two major problems with the name change. First, they strongly opposed the sole use of the word "gay," which they argued either, at best, glossed over the importance of women in the community or, at worse, completely disregarded women altogether. In an attempt to prove their point, Young and Armstrong surveyed the women of Dallas regarding terms like "gay" and "lesbian." In the end, they found that non-activist women did not mind being labeled as "gay" or "gay women," but those engaged either politically or working within the gay rights movement overwhelmingly self-identified as "lesbian." Therefore, to adopt a new name that specifically excluded "lesbian" in the title was a complete slap in the face to those women working within the community.

In addition to the erasure of women, Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong strongly disagreed with the removal of "political" from the organization's name. While board members argued centering the organization around political activism might alienate some members of the gay community, Young and Armstrong wholeheartedly believed political engagement was the most likely way to secure civil rights in Dallas. Therefore, they were determined to fight for their place within the organization. Though members had already approved of the new name, Young and Armstrong presented their research findings to the group. According to the women, the meeting turned into "a

knock-down, drag-out" fight and those they had once considered allies now became rivals. In the end, Young and Armstrong continued to participate in the Dallas Gay Alliance for a while, but the contentious meetings and the complete refusal to even allow the word "lesbian" in the newsletters eventually drove two of the most active women out of the organization.[6]

While the Dallas Gay Alliance suffered through growing pains, their members were unaware that a fatal disease was silently spreading across the country and would soon wreak havoc in northeast Texas. In the spring of 1980, a man with "an ulcerating lesion, a lingering fever and profound weight loss" made his way from one hospital to another in New York City. Despite seeing several physicians, doctors were unable to determine the cause of his illness and, as a result, the young man died without any answers. Within three years of this incident, doctors determined the man was one of the first known victims of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), which was initially referred to as the "gay cancer" due to the high infection rate among homosexuals. Perhaps more disturbing, because of its connection to gay men, the medical community and mainstream media largely ignored the disease for over a year.[7]

By January 1983, health officials in San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles grappled with a growing AIDS epidemic, but Dallas, until this point, had less than ten confirmed cases. Coupled with the fact that the disease was spread through the exchange of bodily fluids and culture of casual sex within the gay community,

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[6] Wisely, Young and Armstrong, 38-43.

[7] B. D. Colen, "AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome," *Dallas Morning News*, January 25, 1983. Clipping. Box 520, folder 23, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

homosexual men, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), comprised approximately seventy-five percent of AIDS cases in the United States. In an attempt to stymy the spread of AIDS in Dallas, Dr. James Wheeler, an internal medicine and blood specialist, began hosting seminars to educate gay men about the dangers associated with the disease.[8]

Though Dr. Wheeler provided invaluable information through his seminars, men and women within the gay community understood the needs of those living with AIDS and worked tirelessly to establish systems of care and support. Just before the arrival of the AIDS crisis in Dallas, Harold "Howie" Daire, a former fourth-grade teacher and bartender, recognized gay men and women lacked access to supportive mental health services. Therefore, Daire, who held a master's degree in counseling from North Texas State University,[9] established the Oak Lawn Counseling Center in 1981. In an effort to provide optimal care to his clients, Daire spent months researching the best clinical practices by traveling to various counseling centers in both New York and California.[10]

Though Daire's initial vision for the clinic was to provide access to quality mental health services, the Oak Lawn Counseling Center soon became so much more to the gay community. Almost a year after opening the center, Daire attended a conference in Houston that focused specifically on the mental and physical health of gay men and

[8] Glenna Whitley, "Dallas gays fight stigma, cope with fear," *Dallas Morning News*, January 25, 1983. Clipping. Box 520, folder 23, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[9] In May 1988, North Texas State University transitioned to its current name, the University of North Texas.

[10] Buddy Mullino, "Howie Daire," *The Dallas Way*, November 24, 2017. http://www.thedallasway.org/stories/written/2017/11/24/howie-daire

lesbians. While at this conference, he learned of a deadly infection, commonly referred to at the time as gay-related immune deficiency (GRID),[11] that was rapidly spreading through urban communities in New York and California. Alarmed by this information and predicting the disease would eventually arrive in Dallas, Daire immediately designated the center's second phone line as a dedicated information line on the disease.[12]

Despite a handful of local gay men having already tested positive for AIDS, most public health officials in Dallas initially showed little-to-no interest or concern about the potential spread of the disease. Attitudes quickly changed after doctors suspected that John David Witherspoon, a local infant, had contracted the disease through a blood transfusion, which he received within months of his birth.[13] Recognizing that the spread of AIDS would not remain solely within the gay community, health officials in Dallas immediately discouraged local gay men from donating blood. In an effort to ease fears within the community, Bill Nelson, Vice President of the Dallas Gay Alliance, publicly encouraged gay men to refrain from all blood donations until health officials could develop an effective screening process for AIDS.[14]

Unfortunately, developing a screening process was far more difficult than initially expected. Representatives from the National Hemophilia Foundation urged hospitals and blood banks to simply ask donors about their sexual preferences. Through

[11] By 1986, the infection was officially identified as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

[12] Candy Marcum, "Candy Marcum," *The Dallas Way*, May 10, 2015. http://www.thedallasway.org/stories/written/written-stories/2015/5/10/candy-marcum-my-story

[13] Joann Schulte, "Infant facing tough times," *Dallas Morning News*, January 20, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/bd54ebhs

[14] Whitely, "Dallas gays"

this process, blood banks could either decide to run further tests on donations given by gay men or they could simply refuse the donation altogether. According to Don Baker, former President of the Dallas Gay Alliance, this method of screening overtly implied AIDS was "a gay problem," rather than a community health crisis. Dr. Margie Peschel, medical director of the Carter Blood Center in Fort Worth, emphatically reassured donors that her program would not implement any measures that would violate the privacy of potential donors.[15]

While community health personnel and doctors in the Dallas Metroplex grappled with solutions to protect both the privacy of donors and the health of blood recipients, health officials across the nation were also attempting to find effective ways of identifying and preventing the spreading of AIDS. In March of 1983, Allan Goldstein of George Washington University School of Medicine announced he had found a "quick, simple blood test" that would enable physicians to easily determine if a person had been exposed to AIDS. According to Goldstein, the test would enable doctors to screen their patients for the disease, but it also would allow blood donation centers to screen potential donors without violating their privacy.[16] Based on his research, Goldstein believed measuring the levels of thymosin alpha-1 in a patient's blood could identify their AIDS status, even if the patient was not currently exhibiting any symptoms of the disease.[17]

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[15] Debbie Mitchell, "Blood bank to screen donors for disease link," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 20, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/k7uz89fy

[16] "Test may detect AIDS exposure," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/b9nz6nz4

[17] "Blood test may screen people exposed to AIDS," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/6sked82p

As community leaders and health officials openly discussed their growing concerns about the spread of AIDS, a local organization, Dallas Doctors Against AIDS (DDAA), began to call for the reversal of Judge Jerry Buchmeyer's decision in *Baker v. Wade*, which ruled Texas' sodomy law violated gay individuals their constitutional right to privacy and equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. In a motion filed with the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the organization hoped to connect the recent spread of AIDS directly back to the gay community.[18] According to Don Campbell, an attorney for DDAA, the reinstatement of the sodomy law would serve to protect the public against the spread of AIDS. Due to the limited understanding of the disease, Campbell argued the state failed to introduce any medical information that would potentially link homosexual behavior and public health during the original hearing of *Baker*. Therefore, Campbell posited the appeals court should hear the testimony of medical professionals about the spread of AIDS and the potential threats to the community writ large.[19]

Though Campbell argued the call to reinstate the sodomy ban had nothing to do with bigotry, Don Baker, the complainant in the *Baker v. Wade* case, emphatically claimed the appeal was based on blatant prejudice.[20] In fact, reinstatement of the law would merely make sodomy illegal and would not actually prevent any homosexual conduct. Rather than working to find reasonable solutions to the growing AIDS crisis in

[18] Debbie Mitchell, "AIDS seen as excuse for biases," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 8, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/2mmprp88

[19] Debbie Mitchell, "Gay activist says disease is excuse," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 8, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/64wsy874

[20] Debbie Mitchell, "Bias, not AIDS, called reason for appeal," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 7, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/b9nz6nz4

Dallas, members of DDAA attempted to use the disease to vilify the gay community. According to Dr. Kevin Murphy, an infectious disease specialist at Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, establishing laws that prohibited sexual acts between two men would not "contribute anything toward preventing [the spread of] AIDS."[21] Therefore, if Dallas Doctors Against AIDS simply wanted to minimize the spread of AIDS, they would have introduced measurable actions that addressed intravenous drug use and the medical treatment of Haitian immigrants, both of which had been identified by the CDC to have high rates of infection.[22] In the end, the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the motion filed by Campbell. Elna Christopher, a spokesperson for Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox, explained the court based its decision on the well-documented spread of the disease among non-homosexual groups.[23]

Undeterred by the Fifth US Circuit Court's refusal to revisit the *Baker* decision, a group of anti-homosexual activists lobbied Texas lawmakers to revive the criminalization of homosexual acts. Using the surge of AIDS across the country, these activists pressured members of the Texas legislature by amplifying the relationship between the gay community and the disease. Representative Bill Ceverha of Richardson, a suburb of Dallas, readily embraced this line of reasoning. Ceverha argued a failure to establish legal barriers for homosexuals created the potential for a massive community health crisis. Therefore, if left unchecked and unregulated, homosexuality might result in "the demise of Western Civilization." Though the basis of Ceverha's

[21] Mitchell, "Bias, not AIDS."
[22] "Test may detect."
[23] Lawrence Young, "Mattox won't appeal sodomy law ruling," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 14, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/5m3tmvpp

arguments rested on the protection of public health, he admitted he was motivated by his moral objections to homosexuality. Ceverha posited that society, as a whole, maintained a set of social norms, which he intended to protect.[24]

By the end of May 1983, key people within the federal government publicly acknowledged their concern over the spread of AIDS. Dr. Edward N. Brandt, Jr., the Assistant Secretary for Health within the Health and Human Services Department, announced the disease was the department's top priority. As a result, Brandt pledged almost $2.5 million in grant funding for AIDS research. On Capitol Hill, Senator Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. of Connecticut proposed an additional $12 million as part of a supplemental appropriations bill. According to aides to Weicker, the funds would "increase federal spending on the disease by 83 percent."[25]

While some federal officials attempted to find solutions to the growing AIDS crisis, Texas legislators merely debated the merits of reinstating the sodomy ban. During a House Criminal Jurisprudence Committee hearing, Paul Cameron, a self-described expert on homosexual behavior, claimed gay people "carry and transmit a host of disorders," the worst being AIDS. Once again, Don Baker challenged the "myths and misunderstanding(s)" propagated by mainstream society.[26] The tropes associated with the gay community were not a fair and balanced representation of the community as a whole. In his attempt to dispel these assumptions, Baker explained to the committee that

[24] Ron Hutcheson, "Anti-homosexuality bill stresses health aspects," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 20, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/phfuz3mk

[25] "$2.5 million aimed at AIDS study," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 25, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/ssd6tzuy

[26] "Legislature," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 20, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/xnesmjnc

he had never visited a bathhouse and he universally viewed public sexual conduct as abhorrent. Annella Harrison, the mother of a gay man, also addressed the committee. Harrison urged members of the House to reject the bill because it was "dehumanizing" and only served as a method to spread shame and humiliation. [27] Finally, Baker argued that not only was Ceverha's bill "conceived in ignorance," but, in fact, the federal court had already addressed this issue.[28]

Ultimately, the bill never made it out of the committee, but its failure did not dampen the drive of some politicians, anti-homosexual activists, and a few Texans to limit the rights of gay men and women. In a letter to the editor of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Frank S. Applegate credited the softening of anti-homosexual legislation and restrictions for the enlargement and visibility of gay communities across the nation. Applegate argued the weakening of these laws enabled gay people to openly "entice…young men and women into their terrible web." He surmised "the fall of every civilization" embraced three major sins: homosexuality, incest, and child molestation. Applegate concluded these sins were "rampant" in the United States and failure to address them would result in its downfall.[29]

In addition to preventing an expansion of civil rights for homosexuals, Kay Bailey Hutchinson, a Dallas lawyer and future United States Senator, used homophobia as a tool to oppose the long-debated Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).[30] While she

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[27] Hutcheson, "Anti-homosexuality bill."

[28] "Legislature."

[29] "Voices of the people," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 11, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/9ts8ft5v

[30] The Equal Rights Amendment proposed that no state or federal law could discriminate against an individual on the basis of sex. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the

supported measures to protect the economic and property rights of women, she feared federal courts would broaden the scope of the ERA, which had the potential to include gay civil rights. According to Hutchison, women's rights really should not be "bogged down with equal rights for gays and lesbians."[31] While Hutchison was willing to eliminate second-class status for women, she was clearly comfortable maintaining that standard with members of the gay community.

Though the AIDS crisis threatened to derail the progress made by the Dallas Gay Alliance, organizational leaders continued working to secure civil liberties for their community. During the one-year celebration of the *Baker* ruling, the DGA hosted a symphonic band in Dallas' Reverchon Park. According to newspaper reports, approximately 300 people attended the event and though, Mike Stewart, president of the DGA, announced that it was "OK to be gay in Dallas," several of those in attendance refused to be filmed or photographed at the event. At the event, Don Baker acknowledged the growing concern surrounding AIDS increased the stigma of homosexuality, which created additional obstacles for both the community and the gay rights movement. Despite the growing "public fear" of the disease, the DGA continued sponsoring voter registration drives, organizing public events, and hosting AIDS forums for health officials and the people of Dallas.[32]

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amendment and sent it to the states for ratification on March 22, 1972. In total, only thirty-four of the required thirty-eight states had ratified the amendment by the end of 1976.

[31] Jack Z. Smith, "GOP conferees backing Reagan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 12, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/kktekkaa

[32] Warren Volkmann, "Concert pays tribute to gay rights court ruling," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 18, 1983. https://tinyurl.com/464stu9m

As the holiday season concluded, the Dallas Gay Alliance announced its key objectives for 1984. In anticipation of the upcoming election in the fall, the Alliance planned several voter registration drives, conducted a series of candidate screenings, and pledged to canvas neighborhoods for candidates endorsed by the DGA. In addition to organizing the political arm of the DGA, members of the political committee passed resolutions that called on the major political parties to both greatly increase funding for AIDS research and to provide more financial support for patient care.[33]

Without a doubt, the goals established by the political committee would benefit gay communities across the state and nation, but the Alliance also maintained focus on projects that would immediately enrich their local community. By the end of January 1984, the DGA announced the opening of the Dallas Gay Community Center on Cedar Springs in the heart of the growing, local gayborhood. Though the Alliance financially supported the center, they desired to create a place of support for anyone in the community. By design, the center offered a myriad of resources, from employment opportunities to screenings for sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, the center provided a space for various community organizations to host meetings and gatherings.[34] Before the opening of the center, organizations held their meetings at either the Metropolitan Community Church or in private homes or businesses.

[33] Don Ritz, "Dallas Gay Alliance Outlines Major Goals for 1984," *Dallas Gay News*, January 13, 1984: 1. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/23fn7e4p

[34] "Gay Community Center Opens," *Dallas Gay News*, January 27, 1984: 8. Creating the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/eknudjm3

Though the center addressed some of the needs of Dallas' gay community, it did very little to address the growing AIDS crisis.[35] As a result, the Oak Lawn Counseling Center continued to take the lead on the AIDS front. At a community forum held late in February 1984, Howie Daire, founder of the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, raised concerns about the rising risk of AIDS exposure in their community. According to Daire, Dallas saw a fifty percent increase in AIDS cases during the first two months of 1984 alone. While he acknowledged medical professionals were still unable to pinpoint the exact causes or a cure for the disease, Daire emphasized the importance of adhering to preventative measures, which included limiting a person's number of sexual partners and using contraceptives to avoid contact with bodily fluids.[36]

In addition to providing information about AIDS prevention, the community forum also illustrated "the insensitivity demonstrated to gay individuals by health care "professionals," insurance companies, and the U.S. government." According to Phil Gerber, a member of the community living with AIDS, local paramedics had refused to transport a man due to his AIDS status. After being denied services, the man's roommates took him to the hospital, where he died hours later in intensive care. Another man applied for a health insurance policy but was denied coverage simply because he was gay. Finally, Gerber noted that a man living with AIDS attempted to apply for Social Security assistance, but was repeatedly told that AIDS patients did not qualify for

[35] "DGA to Host Health Clinic at Community Center," *Dallas Gay News*, April 6, 1984: 8. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/36bfha7e

[36] Don Ritz, "Recurring Horrors of AIDS Unveiled at Recent Forum," *Dallas Gay News*, March 2, 1984: 6. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/ys4f9r9b

any services. After referencing documents and information released by the Secretary of Health, Margaret Heckler, local caseworkers finally allowed the man to file his claim, which was ultimately denied four months later.[37]

Gerber concluded that these reactions to people living with AIDS would certainly continue, but their community had to come together and support one another. During his call to action, Gerber encouraged people to get involved in local organizations, to contact their elected officials at all levels of government, and to volunteer to help those suffering from AIDS. Kay Peterson, director of Home Health Services of Dallas, explained that they did not require volunteers to have any formal medical training or experience. Through their program, Home Health Services provided several training courses for things like checking vital signs, recognizing and recording the onset of new symptoms, and administering medications.[38]

While getting involved in community activism and reaching out to elected officials was certainly needed, volunteering to provide medical assistance for someone living with AIDS was extremely important. As previously explained by Phil Gerber, AIDS patients faced discrimination in almost every aspect of their lives. Hospitals were hesitant to treat them, employers often found excuses to fire them, and insurance companies found ways to deny their coverage. Through programs like those provided by Home Health Services of Dallas, AIDS patients were able to maintain their dignity.

[37] Ibid
[38] Ibid

Additionally, they received support from people that did not fear or detest them and they avoided accruing massive medical costs associated with prolonged hospital stays.

In an attempt to address financial burdens created by an AIDS diagnosis, the Dallas Gay Alliance worked closely with a local insurance firm, Provident-American Insurance Company, to create a supplemental policy that specifically covered the illness.[39] While supplemental insurance policies were not uncommon, the AIDS Medical Expense Policy was the first of its kind in the United States. According to Mike Stewart, president of the DGA, the policy was developed with "significant" input from the gay community and people living with AIDS. At the time of the rollout, health officials had identified more than fifty cases in the city. As a result, the DGA hosted several community forums to explain the coverage and the costs associated with the plan.[40]

In early 1985, the CDC released a report outlining the prevalence of AIDS across the county. According to the data, two Texas cities, Houston and Dallas, ranked among the top ten cities with confirmed AIDS cases.[41] Considering the state's national rankings and the difficulty AIDS patients experienced with insurance coverage, the AIDS Medical Expense Policy should have been extremely popular. Unfortunately, though, the policy had very little impact on gay Texans and by June of 1985, Provident-

[39] Howard Taylor, Jr. "Insurance firm to offer state's first AIDS policy," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 11, 1984. https://tinyurl.com/33ncfece

[40] "AIDS Medical Expense Insurance Introduced," *Dallas Gay News*, June 8. 1984: 1. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/whc29ju8

[41] "AIDS Rankings: Houston is Sixth, Dallas is 10th," *This Week in Texas*, March 29-April 4, 1985: 11. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/zvydbath

American Insurance Company suspended the program citing a lack of interest from their consumers. Despite its inability to take hold in Texas, the AIDS Medical Expense Policy was innovative as it inspired insurance firms in other states, specifically California, to create similar policies.[42]

Shortly after the AIDS Medical Expense Policy expired, the CDC released updated information about infection rates in the United States. According to this data, Dallas County health officials reported eighty-one new AIDS cases within the first half of 1985. This number was particularly alarming because these new cases exceeded the total number of those recorded over the past four years.[43] Unfortunately, as AIDS infections reached record highs, Dallas' gay community encountered two major obstacles that not only detracted from the growing epidemic but also threatened to demoralize and divide the community.

In August 1985, the Fifth United States Circuit Court of Appeals issued a significant legal setback to the collective gay civil rights movement. In a nine to seven decision, the court overturned United States District Judge Jerry Buckmeyer's 1982 decision that declared Texas Penal Code 21.06, commonly referred to as the sodomy law, unconstitutional.[44] Without a doubt, Buckmeyer's decision invigorated gay civil rights activists across the nation, but the ruling was particularly important for Dallas' gay community. Not only had they successfully challenged the penal code, but the

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[42] "Taking On the Risks," *New York Times*, December 26, 1985. https://tinyurl.com/6czr4n75

[43] "Rapid AIDS Growth Seen in Dallas," *This Week in Texas*, August 23-August 25, 1985: 11. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/yb3ynjnm

[44] Debra Dennis, "Court's revival of sodomy law to be appealed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 27, 1985. https://tinyurl.com/ks9mbdbh

decision validated their philosophy of "The Dallas Way," which focused on working within the existing legal and political apparatuses to gain civil liberties for gay men and women. Following the Appeals Court decision, some members of the Dallas Gay Alliance saw weaknesses with the "The Dallas Way" philosophy. As a result, they called for a more direct approach going forward.

During the infancy of Dallas' gay rights movement, several young, educated professionals became the driving force of the movement. According to an article in *Dallas Life Magazine*, these leaders were "articulate and outspoken but not strident or confrontational, progressive in views but conservative in appearance and manner, they tailored their approach to fit Dallas." Don Baker, one of the most influential members of the Dallas' gay rights movement in the late-seventies and early-eighties, noted that activists on the East and West Coasts were far too confrontational and radical. Baker and his contemporaries believed this approach would not work in Dallas because their city and their members were much "more conservative in nature."[45] Therefore, the early board members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, which later became the Dallas Gay Alliance, developed their approach, "The Dallas Way."

Due to the work of those original members, the Dallas Gay Alliance became the largest and most influential gay rights organization in the region by the mid-eighties.[46] But as the organization grew and the old guard retired from leadership positions, a new

[45] Anita Creamer, "Divided They Stand," *Dallas Life Magazine*, May 17, 1987. Clipping. Box 520, folder 65, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[46] Based on DGA reports from the summer of 1985, the organization had approximately 600 members.

wave of activists emerged and they began to slightly stray away from the original core tenants of the alliance. The most notable and outspoken member was William "Bill" Nelson, who joined the DGA in 1979. Due to his active involvement in the alliance, members elected Nelson to be the president of the organization in 1984.

Shortly after Nelson took over the organization, he began demonstrating a more aggressive and, at times, controversial leadership style. The first indication of change occurred while Dallas hosted the 1984 Republican National Convention. Inspired by activists protesting for gay rights in San Francisco during the Democratic National Convention, Nelson suggested that the DGA sponsor portable toilets for the event.[47] To make matters worse, Nelson intended for the toilets to display the alliance logo alongside "A. Starke Taylor Memorial Porta-John," which nodded to the fact Dallas' mayor, Taylor, had relied on businesses and organizations to fund basic utilities for the national convention.[48]

Nelson claimed the suggestion of the memorial signage was "light-hearted" and "never intended to make fun of the mayor himself," but for many original members, the entire concept of sponsoring toilets was abhorrent in itself.[49] While former president Don Baker believed the idea "was in poor taste," both linking the gay community to restrooms and openly criticizing an elected official, much less the mayor, ran counter to everything the alliance had previously done.[50] As mentioned in chapter two, during the

[47] Creamer, "Divided."

[48] Bill Nelson, "SINCE YOU ASKED ABOUT THE PORTA-POTTY……," August 18, 1984. Memorandum. Box 520, folder 23, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[49] Ibid

[50] Creamer, "Divided."

early days of the alliance, organizers only hosted rallies in local parks that did not have access to public restrooms. They believed this best served them because it eliminated opportunities for police officers to arrest gay men on suspicion of "cruising."

Unfortunately, police departments and anti-gay activists often focused entirely on the sexual exploits of homosexuals rather than understanding that it was only a portion of a gay person's life. In an attempt to reform that image, early members of the alliance used their business and political connections to educate Dallas' straight community. Over time, these core members developed the philosophy that eventually became "The Dallas Way." While this philosophy did not translate as meekness, the DGA never openly targeted or mocked key political leaders in the city. Therefore, the mere suggestion of targeting A. Starke Taylor, the Mayor of Dallas, defied the alliance's longtime tradition of working within the existing political and business communities.

Due to an overwhelming amount of negative feedback about the portable toilets, Nelson decided to "flush" the entire idea, but, unbeknownst to him, the next controversy was right around the corner.[51] During the spring of 1985, a staff member of Sam Houston Elementary School brought Dallas ISD's adopt-a-school program to Bill Nelson's attention. They told Nelson the school was unable to secure a community partner for the upcoming academic year. Recognizing that Sam Houston served Oak Lawn neighborhoods, Nelson theorized adoption by the DGA could serve a dual purpose. Above all, participation in the program would provide much-needed support for local students and teachers, but also it would expand the philanthropic profile of the

[51] Nelson, "SINCE YOU ASKED."

alliance. During the DGA's annual board retreat, Nelson floated the idea to the rest of the leadership, who ultimately encouraged him to reach out to DISD Superintendent, Linus Wright.[52]

On June 19, Nelson formally requested a meeting with Wright to discuss both the adopt-a-school program and the alliance's desire to offer training and resources for the district's faculty and staff on issues concerning homosexuality.[53] Unfortunately, Nelson and the rest of the board failed to mention anything about the program or the potential for DGA involvement during their June meeting. As a result, when state and local newspapers reported on the DGA's interest in the adopt-a-school program in late June, many alliance members, including former leaders, were frustrated because the topic had never been discussed with them.

Needless to say, the general membership meeting for the Dallas Gay Alliance on July 8 was tense and fraught with protests and complaints, which ranged from the public perception of the gay community to questioning the decision-making ability of board members. In an impassioned speech, former board member Alan Ross objected to the adopt-a-school proposal because of "the numerous ways "recruitment" [could] be used against *all* gay people." While he did not object to the alliance working with and providing resources for the district, Ross believed the DGA should limit their

[52] Chuck Patrick, "Bill Nelson Interview," *This Week in Texas*, July 26-August 1, 1985: 34-37. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/ddf2aacx

[53] "Adopt-a-school plan appeals to gay group," *El Paso Times* (El Paso, Texas), June 30, 1985. https://tinyurl.com/frdk265f

interactions to counselors on the high school and junior high school campuses.[54] Don Baker agreed with Ross' assessment and reminded the board that "of all the issues that [were] related to gay rights, the one about homosexuality and children [was] the most sensitive."[55] Because of his early work with the alliance, Baker understood the power of these claims, which were often touted by Anita Bryant through her "Save the Children" crusade in the late-seventies.

While opposing the adopt-a-school program was paramount for many alliance members, others, like David Lewis, were deeply concerned with the lack of communication and transparency from the DGA's Board of Directors. Lewis, a former board member, was furious to learn about the alliance's interest in adopting Sam Houston Elementary from a local, mainstream newspaper.[56] Alliance member Richard Rogers emphatically criticized Bill Nelson and the Board of Directors for failing to communicate anything regarding the adopt-a-school program during the previous general membership meetings. Rogers reminded the board that Dallas' gay community was "more conservative" and the DGA had always "worked within 'the system'" to promote change.[57] Though supporting local schools was mainstream for many civic

[54] Alan Ross, "Dallas Gay Alliance: 'A Call for Unity,'" *This Week in Texas*, July 19-July 25, 1985: 22-23. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/br62vehx

[55] Don Baker, "Dallas Gay Alliance: 'A Call for Unity,'" *This Week in Texas*, July 19-July 25, 1985: 23. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/br62vehx

[56] David Lewis, "Dallas Gay Alliance: 'A Call for Unity,'" *This Week in Texas*, July 19-July 25, 1985: 24. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/br62vehx

[57] Richard Rogers, "Dallas Gay Alliance: 'A Call for Unity," *This Week in Texas*, July 19-25, 1985: 24. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/br62vehx

organizations, Rogers was concerned about the optics of a gay organization supporting a local elementary school. Of course, Rogers' concerns were valid as conservative and evangelical leaders frequently accused gay men of grooming and preying on young children.

While Rogers referenced working within "the system" several times, he never blatantly accused the Board of Directors of pushing the organization towards a less conservative approach. Gary Monier, on the other hand, noted that under the leadership of President Bill Nelson the DGA took "a change of direction" that bothered "a good majority of the Dallas gay community." Monier claimed previous presidents and boards of directors had "improved conditions of [Dallas] without controversy," but under the current leadership, members had to read about board decisions in both the straight and gay presses. He concluded that he and other members did not want to see the DGA fail, but they would only support an organization that represented them. Therefore, Monier demanded that "these controversial and embarrassing issues" end immediately.[58]

In an effort to provide as much context and clarity to the issues addressed during the July 8 meeting, the editors of the popular gay magazine, *This Week in Texas*, published many of the speeches and statements made that night. Additionally, the editors allowed DGA President Bill Nelson to respond to these statements. Perhaps in an attempt at humor, Nelson compared the controversy within the alliance to the one

[58] Gary Monier, "The Dallas Gay Alliance: 'A Call for Unity,'" *This Week in Texas*, July 19-25, 1985: 23-24. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/br62vehx

faced by the Coca-Cola Company after they introduced "new Coke."[59] According to Nelson, the Dallas Gay Alliance had evolved over time and the Board of Directors worked tirelessly to address the needs and concerns of the gay community. Nelson recognized that an organization as large as the DGA could not possibly achieve universal acceptance and praise from its many members, but he wholeheartedly welcomed criticism and feedback from the community. Finally, Nelson chastised criticism from non-active members and reminded readers that under his leadership, the alliance had more members and monetary support than ever before.[60]

In the end, the controversy that emerged over the adopt-a-school program culminated in a formal rejection from Dallas ISD's Superintendent Linus Wright. Wright explained that the district received more complaints from parents over this issue than any other. Therefore, he would not allow the Dallas Gay Alliance to adopt the Sam Houston Elementary School or any other school within the district. According to Southern Methodist University Law Professor Neil Cogan, DISD might have set themselves up for a legal battle as "the district [did] not specify what sort of organization [could] adopt a school." When asked about the DGA's position on the rejection, Nelson

[59] On April 23, 1985 the Coca-Cola Company announced they had changed the formula of their popular soft drink. Almost immediately consumers, strongly disliked the drink and began calling this reformulation "new Coke." By July 11, 1985, the Coca-Cola Company discontinued "new Coke" and returned to the original formulation. https://tinyurl.com/ddj7dwum

[60] Bill Nelson, "The Dallas Gay Alliance: 'A Call for Unity," *This Week in Texas*, July 19-25, 1985: 25. Crediting the JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/br62vehx

admitted the decision was disappointing, but he nor the alliance had any intentions of pursuing legal action against DISD.[61]

By the end of the summer in 1985, Dallas' gay community had endured a rapidly growing AIDS transmission rate, a legal setback with the reinstatement of Texas' sodomy law, and political in-fighting from its largest organization. As these tensions mounted, the community began to fracture into various pieces. Under the leadership of Bill Nelson, the Dallas Gay Alliance moved further away from "the Dallas Way." Nelson and by proxy the DGA adopted a more aggressive, activist approach in both policies and actions. This approach caused some of the original members of the organization to openly question Nelson's motives. Others simply invested their time, money, and interests in other local, gay organizations. Don Baker was perhaps the most vocal critic of Nelson. Baker strongly embraced the idea of "the Dallas Way" and Nelson's disregard for the philosophy drove a deep wedge between the two. Nelson often criticized Baker for his constant complaining about decisions made by the DGA despite Baker's lack of involvement with the organization. As these crises reverberated through Dallas' gay community, some feared the end of gay activism in the city was imminent.

[61] "Professor questions barring of gays from program," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 31, 1985. https://tinyurl.com/2x2nma6e

CHAPTER VII: THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IN DALLAS

Although physicians trace the onset of the AIDS epidemic to the early-eighties, it was not until the mid-eighties when the crisis came to Dallas. Initially, local health officials and gay community organizations worked together to educate gay men about the risks and symptoms associated with the virus. As the disease ravaged the gay community, local organizations, like the Dallas Gay Alliance, demanded more support and resources from their elected officials and the medical community. Fearing they were not being heard, some local activists formed the Gay Urban Truth Squad (G.U.T.S.), which protested through performative civil disobedience. As the virus became more prevalent in Dallas and across the nation, fundraising efforts were more successful making access to therapeutic treatments were more readily available. With pressure from activist organizations across the country, the federal government continually increased funding for AIDS research and support. As a result of these efforts, the United States experienced a decline in 1996 in the AIDS infection rate for the first time.

In an effort to address the fear and concern over rapidly rising AIDS cases in Dallas, local health officials and activists organized the AIDS Coordinating Committee, which included representatives from the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, the Dallas Gay Alliance, Dallas Hospice, the Dallas County Health Department, the City (Dallas) Health Education Department, and several area hospitals and clinics.[1] Through this committee,

[1] "Panel of 4 Doctors Update Latest AIDS Information.," *This Week in Texas*, October 25-31, 1985: 11-12. JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/ymr33x8u

health officials and gay activists devised several ways of educating a variety of people about the disease. In conjunction with the AIDS Coordinating Committee, Mayor A. Starke Taylor announced that Dallas would observe AIDS Awareness week from October 14-19. During this time, the committee sponsored several events designed to educate and spread reliable, scientific information about the disease.[2]

In an attempt to make workshops and forums more inclusive and accessible to the whole community, organizers specifically used city-owned spaces for most of the events. Unsurprisingly, this pragmatic approach completely aligned with the Dallas Way philosophy, which had long been fostered within the gay community. In fact, Dr. Charles Haley, a Dallas County epidemiologist, compared the AIDS responses of three of Texas' major cities: Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. Haley, who was not a gay activist and presumably had no knowledge of the Dallas Way philosophy, noted that both Houston and San Antonio experienced an AIDS "hysteria," but, despite an uptick in cases, Dallas continued to act rationally and "with a cool-headed response."[3]

During the final forum of the week, community members asked a panel of four physicians about current scientific trends associated with the disease. Many attendees voiced concerns about contracting the virus either via direct contact or through medical procedures, like blood transfusions. Dr. Kevin Murphy explained that some people contracted the virus and did not exhibit any immediate signs or symptoms. He also

[2] "Mayor Starke Taylor Makes Proclamation at Dallas City Hall.," *This Week in Texas*, October 18-24, 1985: 11. JD Doyle Archives. LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. https://tinyurl.com/frcx9vnd

[3] Ibid.

warned that AIDS, much like herpes, remained with the person for the rest of their life.[4] Despite the fact that Murphy compared the virus to another sexually transmitted infection, reports from the forum did not indicate any specific warnings about sexual contact or the recommendation for the use of prophylactics. While discussing risks associated with blood transfusions, Dr. James Shorey reassured attendees that the probability of contracting AIDS through a transfusion was about one in 170,000. Shorey attributed this low probably to the gay men who voluntarily refrained from blood donations at the beginning of the epidemic.[5]

Though forums and lectures were helpful to some, others needed a more hands-on approach to understanding the disease and the risks associated when interacting with a person living with AIDS. During a community service project, the Dallas Gay Alliance assembled twenty volunteers, both gay and straight, to help with home improvement projects for Richard Schmidt, a local man suffering from AIDS. William Waybourn, a DGA board member, emphasized that people needed to understand they could be around and interact with AIDS patients and "not go home with it."[6]

Without a doubt, hosting forums enabled the county to spread awareness about the virus, but health officials also desperately needed access to capital to implement programs to mitigate the spread of disease. Fortunately, by the end of AIDS Awareness Week, Dallas County received a federal grant of $240,783 from the Centers for Disease Control. According to county health officials, the grant would enable officials to "track

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] "Volunteers Aid Victim of AIDS," *Tyler Morning Telegraph* (Tyler, Texas), October 21, 1985: 6. https://tinyurl.com/eda3wm8

and counsel those who may have been exposed to the virus." Robert Hohman, Dallas' public health administrator, said the county would use the funds to hire individuals to gather statistical information and to do contact tracing. Hohman also stated that county epidemiologists would work with "high-risk groups, specifically the gay community, and encourage them to take the HTLV-III antibody test."[7]

Though several doctors and scientists claimed the antibody test confirmed an AIDS infection, many gay leaders and activists across the country strongly discouraged gay men from taking the test. In fact, the Dallas Gay Alliance had spent almost six months urging all gay men to refuse the test. In a newsletter from February 1985, the alliance informed the community that the antibody test did "NOT diagnose AIDS," but only indicated exposure to HTLV-III. Additionally, they claimed scientists had yet to equivalently demonstrate a direct correlation between HTLV-III and AIDS.[8] While the DGA certainly feared the behaviors that could result from false positives and false negatives, they were also concerned about the privacy of those being tested. The alliance warned no legal or civil protections existed that would guarantee the privacy of test results. As a result, insurance companies and employers could have used test results, whether accurate or not, to justify the denial of coverage or employment.[9]

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[7] Don Ritz, "County Plans to Track Those Exposed to HTLV-III Virus," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 24, Ed. 1, October 18, 1985: 1. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615618/

[8] Mike Richards, "DO NOT TAKE THE TEST," *Dialog*, Vol. 9, No. 2, February 1985: 1, 8. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc916046/m1/1/

[9] Ibid.

Regardless of the objections from leaders within the gay community, Robert Hohman insisted antibody tests would illustrate the rate of exposure in Dallas. In an attempt to reduce fears associated with the HTLV-III antibody test, Hohman said all personal information would "be kept confidential and testing [would] be voluntary." Unfortunately, Dr. Charles Haley indicated a court order could require him to release all data associated with the project. In an effort to promote contact tracing, Hohman suggested that individuals could use an alias when they were tested, but, when pressed on this claim, he admitted aliases created a significant obstacle for contract tracing.[10] Overall, Bill Appleman, executive director of the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, believed gay men in Dallas would refuse to disclose their sexual partners to county health officials. Since neither the city nor the county provided civil protections for homosexuals, disclosures had the potential to create economic and social insecurities for all parties involved. For these reasons, Appleman said the Oak Lawn Counseling Center would continue advising people to refuse the antibody test.[11]

Recognizing the challenges associated with the county's approach to contact tracing, the Dallas Gay Alliance attempted to tackle the AIDS epidemic directly. Through a joint partnership with the Foundation for Human Understanding,[12] the DGA opened the AIDS Resource Center (ARC) in the fall of 1985. Housed within the DGA's community center on Cedar Springs, ARC provided several twenty-four-hour hotlines

[10] Ritz, "County Plans."
[11] Ibid.
[12] The Foundation for Human Understanding (FHU) was a sister organization of the Dallas Gay Alliance. According to an article within *Dialog*, the official newsletter of the DGA, FHU was created specifically allow doners to make tax deductible donations tax deductible to the DGA. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1786829/m1/1/

for anyone needing information about medical referrals to community outreach organizations. Though the main goal of ARC was to provide valuable information about AIDS, DGA President Bill Nelson emphasized the inclusive aim of the project. He acknowledged the fear and frustration endured by Dallas' gay community for more than four years and he hoped the AIDS Resource Center would eliminate most of that strife for the non-gay community.[13]

On its surface, the creation of the AIDS Research Center was less than groundbreaking because ARC provided many of the same services the Oak Lawn Counseling Center (OLCC) had been offering for more than three years. Additionally, the services provided by OLCC were far superior to those offered by ARC. For example, the ARC hotlines only allowed callers to hear pre-recorded messages, which outlined various services.[14] OLCC hotlines, on the other hand, were staffed by licensed professionals during business hours and trained volunteers in the evenings. Furthermore, the center used funding from the Dallas County Health Department to hire a Physician Assistant, Diane Garcia, to monitor the AIDS information hotline. Using her medical training and knowledge, Garcia informed callers about high risks behaviors, provided information regarding the hotly debated HLTV-III antibody test, and counseled people after they received an AIDS diagnosis.[15]

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[13] Dennis Vercher, "DGA Announces Gay Resource Center," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 30, November 29, 1985: 1. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615566/m1/1/

[14] Ibid.

[15] Don Ritz, "Counseling Center Updates Community Services," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 35, January 3, 1986: 1. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library,

Despite trailing behind the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, opening the AIDS Resource Center was a significant step for the Dallas Gay Alliance. Since its inception, the DGA predominately focused its efforts on legal and civil protections for the gay community, but opening the center indicated a shift in focus towards the physical well-being of people in the community. In addition to starting the resource center, the DGA began hosting monthly AIDS information sessions in early 1986. During these events, community members had the opportunity to ask a panel of doctors a myriad of AIDS-related questions from evolving treatment plans to medical regimens.[16]

The shift in focus for the Dallas Gay Alliance occurred exactly at the right moment. In the fall of 1985, Dr. Robert Bernstein, the State Health Commissioner, announced the health department was contemplating including AIDS on the list of quarantinable diseases. Under this classification, the state would be able to curtail the behavior of "incorrigible" AIDS victims. Admittedly, Bernstein disliked the term "quarantine," but he said it was "the only applicable statute" the health department had to initiate the "'medical isolation' of AIDS patients who [became] a public health threat."[17]

In theory, DGA President Bill Nelson recognized the state's obligation to mitigate public health risks, but he strongly opposed the use of the word quarantine in

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https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615748/m1/1/

[16] "Not Just an AIDS Forum," *Dialog*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 6, 1986: 1. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584530/m1/1/

[17] "AIDS Search: New Word For 'Quarantine,'" *Tyler Courier-Times* (Tyler, Texas), November 27, 1985. https://tinyurl.com/4tf2jeyr

connection to AIDS. Nelson argued the term was neither "medically" nor "culturally" appropriate because unlike historically classified viruses, such as yellow fever, smallpox, and diphtheria, AIDS transmissions occurred through "sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood transfusions" rather than casual contact.[18]

Despite objections from the gay community, the Texas State Board of Health "tentatively approve[d]" the addition of AIDS to the quarantine list on December 14, 1985. Following this decision, the DGA encouraged their members to participate in a letter-writing campaign urging members of the Texas Board of Health "to reconsider the idea of quarantine" during a public hearing on January 13, 1986.[19] During the public hearing, approximately twenty people spoke out against the use of a medical quarantine for people with AIDS. According to DGA President Bill Nelson, the implementation of a quarantine measure would only drive AIDS victims further underground and provide them with an excuse to avoid treatment.[20]

In the end, the Texas State Board of Health members unanimously voted against adding AIDS to the quarantine list. Prior to the vote, Dr. Robert Bernstein, the State Health Commissioner, withdrew the quarantine guidelines he had submitted to the board. Bernstein noted the strong opposition from the gay community and admitted: "it wasn't worth losing the cooperation of the only people that [could] help reduce the incidence of

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[18] "AIDS Search."

[19] Mike Richards, "QUARANTINE?," *Dialog*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 6, 1986: 2, 11. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584530/m1/2/

[20] Dennis Vercher, "Texas Quarantine Proposal Draws Heavy Fire," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 37, Ed. 1, January 17, 1986: 1. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615793/m1/1/

this disease." Dr. Ron Anderson, a Board chairman and Dallas physician, argued driving AIDS patients into the shadows would be extremely detrimental to public health. Rather than relying on a medical quarantine, the Board of Health determined without proven treatments the best approach would be education about the disease and encouraging people to only engage in safe sex.[21]

While the Dallas Gay Alliance and other activists celebrated the blocking of an AIDS quarantine, those living with the disease often had very little to celebrate. As previously discussed, victims often lost their jobs or, at the very least, insurance coverage. These losses could quickly cascade into homelessness and poverty, which often intensified hopelessness and depression. For Rodney Self, the pressure of living with AIDS became too much to bear. While receiving treatment for tuberculosis, Self leaped from his sixth-floor room at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. According to the note he left behind, suicide was "the only way out of his suffering."[22] Though Self's death was the first official AIDS-related suicide at Parkland, DGA Board member William Waybourn indicated hospital staff anonymously confided that other suicides likely had previously occurred. Waybourn lamented Self's decision, but he also admitted counselors working with AIDS patients faced a difficult task as the disease was terminal. Unfortunately, the administration at Parkland Hospital refused to offer additional counseling services for AIDS patients, but they did check to make sure all windows were

[21] "Texas drops quarantine," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 40, Ed.1, February 7, 1986: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615880/m1/3/

[22] "AIDS patient commits suicide," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 47, Ed. 1, March 28, 1986: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615635/m1/3/

secure. A spokesperson for the hospital noted "fire codes [prohibited] barring" the windows.[23]

Despite Parkland Hospital's inability to truly address both the physical and mental health of their patients, organizations within Dallas' gay community continued raising resources, which allowed them to expand services to the community. For example, Beth El Binah, an organization for Jewish gays and lesbians, hosted a benefit New Year's Eve Ball for AIDS at the end of 1985. According to reports, approximately 350 people attended the event, which raised $8,000 for programs and research. The vast majority of this money, eighty percent, went towards the Oak Lawn Counseling Center's AIDS Project and the rest was donated to the American Foundation for AIDS Research.[24] Through this two-pronged donation, Beth El Binah supported the immediate needs of those living with AIDS in their local community and they supported scientific advancements towards treatments. Because of community support and donations, like the one given by Beth El Binah, the Oak Lawn Counseling Center celebrated the opening of a live-in care facility for people living with AIDS in the spring of 1986. Unsurprisingly, the gay community continued providing resources during the grand opening. By the end of the night, the OLCC received furniture, homewares, and more than $5,000 to help support the home.[25]

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[23] "AIDS victims becoming high risk suicide group," *New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung* (New Braunfels, Texas), March 25, 1986. https://tinyurl.com/4duyz8u4

[24] "New Year's Benefit Nets $8,000," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 37, Ed, 1, January 17, 1986: 10. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615793/m1/10/

[25] "OLCC holds Open House for AIDS care facility," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 48, Ed. 1, April 4, 1986: 12. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu;

As the OLCC celebrated the opening of the live-in care facility, the Dallas Gay Alliance worked to organize their own fundraiser, a fashion show and auction, benefiting the AIDS Resource Center. By the spring of 1985, the resource center provided direct support to AIDS patients by operating a local food bank and covering various living expenses through the Emergency Assistance Fund. According to William Waybourn, the AIDS Resource Center provided care for "about 25 PWAs (People with AIDS) on a regular basis" and without a major fundraising event, the ARC would "run out of money (for emergency assistance) by mid-June."[26]

Overall, the Dallas Gay Alliance's fundraising event, the "Fabulous Faces and Fashions" show, was an overwhelming success for both the gay community and the AIDS Resource Center. According to the *Dialog*, the DGA's newsletter, various businesses, hotels, manufactures, and restaurants donated hundreds of items and experiences for the silent auction. Additionally, organizers secured exclusive items from designers in New York and Los Angeles. As a result of these donations, the gala netted more than $30,000 for the AIDS Financial Assistance Fund. Due to the popularity of the event and the limited time allotted for performers, the Dallas Gay Alliance quickly began organizing a second benefit event, which would highlight the artistic talents of

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https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615859/m1/12/

[26] "Kim Dawson heads benefit for AIDS Resource Center: Center's Emergency Assistance Fund low on cash," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 51, Ed. 1, April 25, 1986: 14. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615726/m1/14/

local entertainers, for later that summer. Like the "Fabulous Faces and Fashions" gala, all proceeds from the second event would benefit the AIDS Financial Assistance Fund.[27]

While both the Oak Lawn Counseling Center and the Dallas Gay Alliance worked to address the needs of those living with AIDS, there was no indication that any conflict or rivalry existed between the two groups. In fact, because their organizational aims were as different as their fundraising practices, both organizations were successful in providing AIDS assistance in Dallas. To begin, the OLCC was a small, community-oriented service organization. As a result, they predominately relied on grant money or donations from third-party organizations to fund their programs. On the other hand, the DGA was the largest and oldest gay activist organization in Dallas. Though they pushed some social barriers in the late-seventies and early-eighties, the leadership of the DGA continually embraced the philosophy of the Dallas Way, which enabled them to build relationships with many well-connected and wealthy people in the city. Because of those connections, the Dallas Gay Alliance raised a significant amount of money for AIDS initiatives by hosting extravagant parties and gala events.

As AIDS transmissions in Dallas continued to rise, both the OLCC and the DGA searched for various ways, either through fundraising events or charitable donations, to not only keep their doors open, but also to expand services for those living with the disease. During the spring of 1987, community organizers felt a jolt of encouragement when the Dallas County Health Department announced they had received $425,000 in

[27] "Fabulous Faces and Fashions: Fashion Show Benefit Brings in $30,000 For AIDS Financial Assistance Fund," *Dialog*, Vol. 10, No. 6, June 1986: 10. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584113/m1/11/

federal grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and an additional $55,000 from the city of Dallas to help mitigate the spread of AIDS. Unfortunately, most of that hope dissipated rather quickly when organizational leaders received a detailed breakdown of allocated funds from the department. Based on all of the documentation provided, county health officials only reserved five percent of the budget to support the gay community. Without a doubt, the percentage was shockingly low, but gay activists were even more mystified because gay and bisexual men accounted for ninety-seven percent of all AIDS cases in the county.[28]

For more than five years, news outlets had reported on the spread of AIDS across the county and the globe. Initially referred to as the "gay cancer" or GRID, for gay-related immunodeficiency, the gay community had always been at the epicenter of the AIDS narrative. In an attempt to circumvent fear and any homophobic backlash, activists and organizers in Dallas hosted community forums and panels to educate both gay and straight people about AIDS. Additionally, rather than waiting for a legal mandate, the Dallas Gay Alliance, like several organizations throughout the country, advised gay men to stop participating in blood drives and donations for blood banks.

But despite all of these efforts, the gay community bore the brunt of hate and discrimination associated with AIDS. Gay men frequently lost their jobs, homes, and access to medical care. With nowhere to go for help, local gay organizations stepped in to provide support and care for these men and, just when these organizations believed

[28] "ONLY 5% OF AIDS FUNDS RECEIVED BY DALLAS COUNTY SPENT ON GAYS," *AIDS Update: The Newsletter of the AIDS Resource Center*, Vol. 1, No. 7, August 1986: 1. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584664/m1/1/

they would finally receive governmental assistance, the Dallas County Health Department seemed to overlook the most vulnerable in the community. As a result of this perceived injustice, Bill Nelson, President of the Dallas Gay Alliance, admitted that he had "lost confidence" in the county's ability to adequately address the AIDS crisis.[29]

Although the Dallas County Health Department provided marginal AIDS support to the gay community, Dallas City Councilwoman Lori Palmer recognized more could be done for those suffering from the disease. Palmer, whose district encompassed much of the gayborhood, brought together eighteen different community-based organizations to form the AIDS Access to Resources for Mobilization of Services (ARMS) Network. One of those organizations within the network, the Community Council of Greater Dallas (CCGD),[30] used its resources to apply for a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's AIDS Health Services Program. In the fall of 1986, Warren "Buck" Buckingham, the Associate Executive Director of the CCGD, announced the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded the AIDS ARMS Network a grant for $1.45 million. In addition to the grant, the network received additional financial support from various local organizations and businesses. As a result, the AIDS ARMS Network had a total funding of $2.2 million to use over four years.[31]

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Organized in 1940, the Community Council of Greater Dallas works to identify services and support needed within local communities. Once needs are identified, the council forms partnerships with local organizations, assists them in applying for resources, and establishes an action plans to address those needs. (ccadvance.org/mission)

[31] Don Ritz, "Dallas to receive Robert Wood Johnson grant: Money to be used to improve AIDS services in city," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 20, Ed. 1, September 19, 1986: 5. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615731/m1/5/

Unlike the resources provided by the local health department and because gay and bi-sexual men comprised the vast majority of cases in the region, the Dallas gay community received significant support from the AIDS ARMS Network. One-half of the money raised supported and maintained the network itself and the other half was split between the Oak Lawn Counseling Center (OLCC) and the AIDS Resource Center (ARC). According to Jackie Baker, of the OLCC Board of Directors, they used the funds to cover half of the cost of a second live-in care facility and they expanded the Buddy Program, which paired volunteers and people with AIDS (PWA). As for the ARC, organizers used the funds to expand their visitation program and they hired key staff members, like a financial coordinator and a volunteer coordinator.[32]

Without a doubt, the resources provided by the AIDS ARMS Network had a major impact on the gay community, but the overall aim of the network was to reduce stress on local hospitals. Because AIDS directly affected the immune system, PWA were highly susceptible to infections, which often resulted in frequent visits to the hospital. Though these illnesses could be devastating for someone living with AIDS, the risks were fairly minimal for healthcare providers and volunteers. As treatments for infections were fairly routine, health officials concluded that most PWA could easily receive treatment in their homes or at a community center.[33] Therefore, by offering

[32] Dennis Vercher, "Dallas receives grant for AIDS," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 25, Ed. 1, October 24, 1986: 5. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615741/m1/5/

[33] Dennis Vercher, "City officially notified of AIDS grant reward," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 25, Ed. 1, October 24, 1986: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615741/m1/3/

remote services to AIDS patients, hospitals were able to free up space and resources for more acute patients.

In addition to reducing unnecessary hospitalizations for PWA, the AIDS ARMS Network was also committed to establishing a presence within the gay community. To show that commitment, the organization opened an office in the heart of the gayborhood, on Cedar Springs, in January 1987. At this location, AIDS ARMS employees fielded referrals from medical providers, caregivers, patients, and family members. After confirming an AIDS diagnosis, care coordinators worked with clients by providing them with a list of available resources [34] In addition to staffing a care coordinator at the main office, the network also provided coordinators to the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, the AIDS Resource Center, and the Parkland Hospital AIDS Clinic.

Around the same time the AIDS ARMS office opened on Cedar Springs, the Dallas Gay Alliance announced a plan to limit involvement in the daily operations of the AIDS Resource Center. Though co-founded by the DGA and the Foundation for Human Understanding, support from the AIDS ARMS Network and funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation enabled the center to operate more independently. DGA President Bill Nelson noted they fully intended to maintain control of the administration of the center, but giving the AIDS Resource Center more autonomy allowed the DGA to

[34] "AIDS Network is now operational," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 37, Ed. 1, January 16, 1987: 8. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615814/m1/8/

refocus on the organization's original purpose, fighting for the civil rights of gay men and lesbians.[35]

Therefore, as the DGA worked with other gay organizations around the state to mount a second legal challenge to Texas' sodomy statute, 21.06, the AIDS Resource Center continued its efforts in assisting those living with the disease. As AIDS cases continued to escalate during the spring of 1987, the resource center anticipated depletion of their food bank supplies. In addition to using gay publications, like the *Dallas Voice* and *This Week In Texas*, to encourage donations from the community, the center applied to and was accepted into the North Texas Food Bank coalition. By joining this organization, the center purchased, at a reduced cost, items donated to the North Texas Food Bank. According to resource center predictions in February 1987, organizers expected their pantry would see an almost seventy-percent increase in clients by early summer.[36] Therefore, securing an alliance with the North Texas Food Bank was extremely important for the AIDS Resource Center and those utilizing their food pantry.

The securing of food resources insured the center's ability to care for those suffering from AIDS, but their ultimate goal was to prevent future infections. As an AIDS Educator with the center, Mike Richards argued ignorance was "the real cause of

[35] "DGA to 'get on with gay rights,'" *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 37, Ed. 1, January 16, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615814/m1/3/

[36] "AIDS Resource Center part of North Texas Food Bank," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 40, Ed. 1, February 6, 1987: 6. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615643/m1/6/

AIDS."[37] To address this issue, the Dallas Gay Alliance and the AIDS Resource Center hosted several information forums and distributed pamphlets to educate the community on the importance of safe sexual encounters. Without a doubt educating the gay community was key to prevention, but organizers at the resource center refused to limit the scope of their outreach.

In the spring of 1987, AD2, a non-profit advertising agency, selected the AIDS Resource Center as the beneficiary of its annual public service project in the form of services valued at $85,000. By working with AD2, the ARC hoped to address two very important issues through several public service announcements. First, they wanted to clear up the myths surrounding AIDS. And second, they looked to advertise the services available at the center. According to Richards, it was important that people were aware of available resources and that they understood that all PWA, not just members of the gay community, qualified for services.[38]

Attempting to reach the non-gay population was an extremely wise decision at this point during the AIDS crisis. Although gay and bisexual men continued to bear the brunt of the disease, officials at the Parkland Hospital AIDS Clinic reported a dramatic increase in the number of heterosexual men and women requesting to be screened for the disease.[39] Naturally, healthcare officials in Dallas were not the only ones concerned

[37] "AIDS Resource Center to distribute PSAs on AIDS," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 43, Ed. 1, February 20, 1987: 5. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615922/m1/5/

[38] "AIDS Resource Center to distribute."

[39] "More heterosexuals line up to have blood test for AIDS," *El Paso Times*, February 21, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/bvmp47m

about the growing number of AIDS cases among non-homosexual individuals. During a hearing of the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop expressed his concern about the rise in AIDS cases among African American and Hispanic communities across the county. In order to stymie the spread of the disease, Koop encouraged people engaging in sexual activity to use condoms. Additionally, the Surgeon General suggested that all of the major television networks to begin airing commercials outlining "the 'proper use of condoms from start to finish' to assure their effectiveness."[40]

Of those present during the subcommittee hearing, only a handful of Republicans strongly opposed the idea of advertising condoms on national television. According to Representative William E. Dannemeyer, a Republican from California, the promotion of condoms as a safe and effective measure to reduce the spread of AIDS was "a 'delusion'" because of their "potential for failure." Furthermore, Dannemeyer believed these types of commercials would "undermine efforts to promote abstinence, heterosexuality, and monogamy" across the United States.[41] Essentially, rather than heeding the advice of a medical professional in an effort to save lives, Dannemeyer and his Republican colleagues were more concerned about preserving traditional family values.

Republican Congressmen were not the only ones who scoffed at the Surgeon General's recommendations. Representatives from the three major television networks

[40] Leslie Maitland Werner, "Koop Urges TV Condom Ads to Fight AIDS," *New York Times,* February 11, 1987. https://nyti.ms/37VsgNI

[41] Ibid.

opposed airing condom commercials for the same reasons as Representative Dannemeyer. Ralph Daniels, Vice President for Broadcasting Standards at NBC, feared viewers would interpret the commercials as the network overtly condoning "sexual permissiveness." Alfred R. Schneider, Vice President of Capital Cities/ABC, concurred and strongly emphasized that "condom advertisements" were "too offensive to viewers who objected to contraceptives."[42] Though these televisions executives agreed with Dannemeyer's conclusions, they were not concerned about upholding any moral convictions. They were simply worried about losing viewers, which would ultimately impact their overall revenue.

Following the testimony and recommendations outlined by the Surgeon General, the Dallas Gay Alliance immediately encouraged their members to contact local news outlets about the potential impact of airing condom commercials. Despite the unlikelihood that any Dallas-based television stations or newspapers would run these advertisements, Bill Nelson argued that public health and safety should be the "primary concern." Therefore, concluded Nelson, support from all local media outlets would be their best chance to quickly educate the people of Dallas.[43] Although the gay community was unable to sway any of the television stations or newspapers to feature condom advertisements, these outlets did carry the Dallas Gay Alliance's public service announcement campaign.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] "DGA urges TV to show condom ads," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 43, Ed. 1, February 27, 1987: 6, 7. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615780/m1/6/

As the Dallas Gay Alliance and the AIDS Resource Center focused on educating the community writ large about ways to prevent the transmission of AIDS, the Oak Lawn Counseling Center encountered a major crisis, which could have potentially derailed the entire organization. According to Jay Johnson, the Executive Director of the OLCC, the organization was given a thirty-day notice to vacate three of their locations, which housed the vast majority of their AIDS services. [44] Ultimately, there are no indications the eviction was derived from hate or bigotry, they caused an extensive amount of stress for the people who worked at the center and to those that relied on their services.

Working with only a thirty-day notice, the OLCC Board of Directors scrambled to relocate their facilities with as little disruption of services as possible for their clients. While losing access to these buildings was less than ideal for the center and the gay community, those residing within the live-in care facility faced the biggest crisis, homelessness. Fortunately, one week after Johnson announced the eminent closure of these buildings, the PWA (Persons with AIDS) Coalition of Dallas, a newly formed organization, announced the purchase of a twenty-two-unit apartment complex in Oak Cliff, a neighborhood approximately ten miles southwest of Oak Lawn. Without a doubt, the purchasing of the facility, which they called A Place for Us, was major victory for the coalition. Naturally, it set an example and provided hope for other PWA coalitions across the nation. In fact, Stephen Beck, the Executive Director of the

[44] Dennis Vercher, "Counseling Center loses lease on 3 properties," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 3, No. 52, Ed. 1, May 1, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615888/m1/3/

National Association of Persons with AIDS, praised "the housing project" as "'a model program." Beck also noted that of the thirty different chapters, Dallas was the first to purchase a complex specifically for those battling AIDS.[45]

While inspiring other organizations across the nation was important, the PWA Coalition of Dallas sought to make the greatest impact in their community. Despite several of the units and some of the buildings needing serious renovations, the coalition recognized the urgency for the seven people living in the Oak Lawn Counseling Center's live-in care facility. Therefore, within days of announcing the purchase of the apartment complex, representatives from the coalition agreed to allow these individuals move into the complex at the end of May. In an effort to ensure a smooth transition for their clients, OLCC Executive Director Jay Johnson used community volunteers to renovate and repair the units assigned to them.[46]

Unfortunately, celebrations for "A Place for Us" were short lived. Soon after they announced the purchase of the apartment complex, the PWA Coalition of Dallas received a sizeable amount of backlash from Oak Cliff residents. In addition to being uncomfortable with AIDS patients in her neighborhood, Sherri Leach questioned why the city had not bothered to tell the community about the coalition or their plans for the complex. Since Oak Cliff housed a large number of Hispanic and African American

[45] Dennis Vercher, "Coalition to provide low-cost housing for PWAs," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Ed. 1, May 8, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615947/m1/3/

[46] Dennis Vercher, "OLCC accepts cooperative PWA housing agreement," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Ed. 1, May 15, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615587/m1/3/

families, Leach feared the city viewed their neighborhoods as a "dumping ground" for AIDS patients. Furthermore, Leach noted that prior to contracting the disease the residents of "A Place for Us" would never have chosen to live in Oak Cliff.[47]

In an effort to rally their community, Sherri Leach and Lil Carter canvassed Oak Cliff and collected more than 150 signatures protesting "A Place for Us." Initially, they planned on presenting the signatures during a city council meeting, but following several informal meetings with the PWA Coalition, the women agreed to halt their protest. Throughout these meetings it became increasingly clear that many Oak Cliff residents did not properly understand AIDS or the ways it was transmitted.[48] In fact, Leach indicated that several of her neighbors believed AIDS transmissions could occur through casual contact, such as shaking hands or brushing past someone on the street.[49] Unfortunately, despite several years of the AIDS epidemic raging across the country, most people outside of the gay community continued to lack the most basic understanding about the disease.

Daryl Moore, President of the PWA Coalition of Dallas, understood the concerns of the Oak Cliff community and he sympathized with their trepidation. Rather than overlooking the protests and continuing with their project, leaders of the coalition opted

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[47] "Dallas AIDS Apartments Harshly Criticized," *Tyler Morning Telegraph* (Tyler, Texas), June 11, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/yr8f2trw

[48] Dennis Vercher, "AIDS education promised in Oak Cliff," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 6, Ed. 1, June 12, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615904/m1/3/

[49] Dennis Vercher, "Neighbors drop protest of PWA facility," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 6, Ed. 1, June 12, 1987: 24. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615904/m1/24/

to work with Leach and Carter. Following a series of meetings, they announced a bilingual education program, which highlighted important information regarding AIDS.[50] Additionally, the coalition illustrated their commitment to the community by bringing in Dallas County Health Department officials to screen for diseases like sickle cell anemia.[51]

Though the PWA Coalition of Dallas was willing to educate and support their Oak Cliff neighbors, coalition leaders argued they did not have the resources nor ability to educate the entire city about the risks associated with the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.[52] Furthermore, despite the efforts of the AIDS Resource Center's public service campaign and calls from activists and the gay community to embrace commercials explaining the health benefits of practicing safe sex, many people in Dallas remained ignorant about the disease. Despite the willingness of community leaders and activists within the gay community to educate their neighbors about AIDS, it was unreasonable to expect those grappling with the disease to also bear the burden of disseminating reliable, scientific information to the entire city.

Therefore, to address these concerns, the Dallas County Health Department (DCHD) began organizing outreach programs and education initiatives, like the "AIDS Prevention Program," during the first quarter of 1987. Though DCHD had received more than $700,000 to address the AIDS crisis, program organizers struggled to

[50] Vercher, "AIDS education."

[51] Dennis Vercher, "Forum," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 7, Vol. 1, June 19, 1987: 27. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615686/m1/27/

[52] Vercher, "AIDS education."

meaningfully reach the people of Dallas.[53] According to Marc Lerro, a program volunteer coordinator, county officials simply "[had] their hands full." As result, Lerro reached out to local gay publications to solicit volunteer support from the gay community.[54] Therefore, even when county health agencies were tasked with educating the general population about AIDS, they continually relied on the gay community as a conduit for the process.

As community volunteers stuffed envelopes and posted informational flyers throughout the city, DCHD officials focused their efforts on providing clear, science-based information to healthcare workers. Through the AIDS Prevention Program, the county health department provided a pamphlet, *AIDS and the Healthcare Worker*, with specific guidelines for the treatment of AIDS patients in the spring of 1987. In addition to properly washing their hands and disposing of needles, healthcare professionals were encouraged to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) before coming into "direct contact with blood or secretions from AIDS patients." While the health department emphasized the importance of self-protection, officials also noted the use of PPE benefited patients as AIDS often ravaged their immune systems.[55]

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[53] Shelley Kofler, "AIDS Funding," NBC 5 News at 10pm, Fort Worth, TX: KXAS, January 12, 1987. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc854289/m1/

[54] "Dallas County Wants You," *AIDS Update: The Newsletter of the AIDS Resource Center*, Vol. 2, No. 2, February 1987: 4. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584399/m1/4/

[55] Dallas County Health Department, *AIDS and the Healthcare Worker*, Ed. 4, March 1987. Pamphlet. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, http://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc854019/m1/3/

As infection rates continued to rise, health officials relied more heavily than ever on the infrastructure established earlier in the decade by Dallas' gay community. In an effort to bolster one of these key programs, the Dallas County Health Department utilized grant funding to update and computerize the AIDS Hot Line, a service long provided by the Oak Lawn Counseling Center. Due to these efforts, callers had access to pre-recorded messages, which ranged from information about testing to safe sex practices, twenty-four hours a day. Additionally, when available, callers could also opt to speak directly with a community volunteer.[56]

Although funding for the hotline was important, training and retaining community volunteers was vital to the success of the program. By partnering with the Dallas County Health Department, the Oak Lawn Counseling Center expected an increase in the volume of their calls. In fact, almost immediately, county health officials encouraged their providers to promote the service to their clients. Additionally, DCHD included information about the hotline within all of their AIDS public service announcements. Therefore, as the update was announced, the Oak Lawn Counseling Center immediately began encouraging people to volunteer.[57]

In spite of their efforts, though, reports of infections continued to rise in Dallas County. By late August, almost two hundred cases had been reported in the area during 1987. According to health reports, this was a 66% increase compared to all of 1986.

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[56] "Counseling Center beefs up AIDS telephone hotline," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 12, No. 1, July 31, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615883/m1/3/

[57] Ibid.

Initially, Ann Freeman, program director of the county's AIDS Prevention Program, "was discouraged…given the massive education effort of the health department and other [community] organizations." Ultimately, Freeman rationalized the increase in AIDS rates materialized from those who had "been infected for five years or more," which was before much was known about the disease.[58]

Unfortunately, the educational efforts of county health officials and activists often failed to reach those unfamiliar with the gay community or those struggling with intravenous drug addictions. As a result, many Americans experienced an increase in fear and anxiety about the spread of AIDS. Additionally, some people promoted misinformation, which only amplified nervousness about the disease, across the metroplex and throughout the country. For example, an Arlington-based organization began spreading misinformation and conspiracy theories through a monthly newsletter, *AIDS Alert Medical Bulletin*, in the fall of 1987.[59] According to Bud Sullivan, marketing director for the publication, the federal government, medical experts, and media outlets conspired to withhold "facts about the transmission of the virus" from the American people. Finally, the newsletter also warned the virus could be transmitted through casual contact with an infected person or through secondary contact with everyday items like toilet seats or public benches.[60]

[58] "Dallas area leads nation with 73% jump in AIDS," *The Times* (Shreveport-Bossier, Louisiana), August 27, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/3zr8jndv

[59] Unfortunately, only one Associated Press article referenced this organization and they do not specifically name the group.

[60] "Misleading AIDS brochure prompts federal investigation," *El Paso Times* (El Paso, Texas), September 27, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/4cw54ftn

Sadly, the propaganda promoted within the *AIDS Alert Medical Bulletin* was neither groundbreaking nor uncommon. In fact, as medical experts attempted to counter the claims made by Sullivan's organization, a local pediatric physician, Dr. Robert J. Huse, experienced both personal and professional ruin after his positive HIV status became public. Despite faithfully serving his community for more than a decade, approximately seventy percent of Huse's patients ended their relationship with him. According to local medical professionals, the downfall of Huse resulted from "exaggerated fear" associated with misinformation regarding the transmission of the disease.[61]

Though it may have seemed like a constant uphill battle, health officials and activists recognized education was the best way to contain the virus. While infection rates in Dallas continued surging, other cities across the country managed to drastically reduce the spread in their communities. San Francisco, for example, reported a 20% infection rate in 1982 among gay men, but by 1987 new infection rates were less than 1%. Dr. David Werdegar, director of the San Francisco Public Health Department, credited their "progress to a very hard-hitting educational program." Rather than sterilizing information, San Francisco health officials utilized graphic "street language" and illustrative drawings "to teach people how to change risky sexual and drug-using behavior."[62]

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[61] Thomas Korosec, "How a deadly secret took a doctor's practice," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 27, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/bdxu3m7w

[62] Richard A. Knox, "Row grows over AIDS pamphlets," *Boston Globe*, November 30, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/yvh2mks5

Much like San Francisco, organizers at the Gay Men's Health Crisis, a nonprofit in New York, produced graphic comic books to illustrate the benefits of safe sex. In a targeted effort, the comic books were only distributed within city's most prominent gay bars and bathhouses. Unfortunately, though, at least one of the books found its way to Washington D.C. and into the hands of Jesse Helms, a Republican Senator from North Carolina. Appalled by the contents, Helms railed against the comic book and accused the nonprofit of using federal funds to promote "sodomy and the homosexual lifestyle."[63]

Though health officials and organizers in liberal cities like San Francisco and New York advocated for an unfiltered and direct approach to AIDS education, political leaders and health officials in more conservative areas of the county were clearly alarmed by these methods. After delivering his fiery remarks in Congress, Helms sought to specifically limit the scope of federal funding for AIDS educational materials. As a result, he proposed an amendment, which became known as the Helms Amendment, to a multi-billion-dollar appropriations bill for the 1988 fiscal year. Within in the bill, Congress allotted $310,000 million for AIDS education to the Centers for Disease Control. Based on the parameters of the amendment, any materials produced with federal funds were required to stress the importance of sexual abstinence and they could not "promote homosexuality or drug use."[64] Ultimately, though, the Gay Men's Health Crisis did not actually utilize federal funds for their comic book series, but Helms' moral

[63] "Gay Health Group Is Cleared in U.S. Inquiry," *New York Times*, December 2, 1987. https://nyti.ms/3FNFvza

[64] "Limit Voted on AIDS Funds," *New York Times*, October 15, 1987. https://nyti.ms/3FNFvza

crusade against homosexuality and intravenous drug use provided yet another barrier to AIDS education and prevention efforts.[65]

Frustrated by the constant barrage of misinformation and growing educational limits, a small group of activists in Dallas set out to "spread truth" through a newly formed "direct response group, Gays with G.U.T.S (Gay Urban Truth/Terrorist Squad)" in the fall of 1987.[66] Though the Dallas Gay Alliance sponsored the organization, participants aimed for a broad appeal by engaging people who were not already actively involved with local organizations. Inspired by groups like ACT UP in New York, Gays with G.U.T.S. purposefully set out to engage in peaceful, nonviolent protests.[67]

Of course, a commitment to peaceful protests did not imply an unwillingness to engage in dramatic public demonstrations. In fact, Gays with G.U.T.S. used street performance and demonstrations to confront AIDS misinformation while highlighting the harsh realities of the epidemic. During their first demonstration, the group targeted the Southwest Literature Distribution Company (SLDC), whose members promulgated ultraconservative ideas at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW). According to William Waybourn, president of the Dallas Gay Alliance, airline travelers often complained to their organization about the SLDC booth, which often displayed signs like

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[65] Spencer Rich, "ANTI-AIDS COMICS USED NO U.S. FUNDS," *Washington Post*, November 20, 1987. https://tinyurl.com/rbj2sjbe

[66] Tim Isaacks, "Gay response group interrupts LaRouche campaign at DFW," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 30, Ed. 1, November 27, 1987: 3. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615662/m1/3/

[67] Dennis Vercher, "Local organization forms to respond to homophobia," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 29, Ed. 1, November 20, 1987: 25. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615944/m1/25/

"Quarantine AIDS Now" and "Mosquitoes Don't Wear Condoms." Waybourn stated some of the reports indicated SLDC employees would yell "faggot" to those who refused to engage with them. Ultimately, he concluded the SLDC merely peddled fear and "panic" at the airport.[68] For these reasons, Gays with G.U.T.S. decided to confront the Southwest Literature Distributing Company.

To maximize their exposure, Gays with G.U.T.S. organized their protest on one of the busiest travel days of the year, the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving.[69] Followed by local cameramen, activists marched through the terminal holding signs of protest, such as "The Leading Cause of AIDS Is Ignorance." Once they reached the SLDC booth, they passed out condoms and information about AIDS to holiday travelers. During the protest, Craig Holtzclaw, an SLDC employee, continually asked passersby if they were "fed up with gay-rights liberals."[70]

Though none of the local, mainstream newspapers described the protest as disruptive or dangerous, DFW's board of directors announced a plan during their December meeting "to prevent a clash" between organizations during the upcoming Christmas holiday. American Airlines (AA) representatives said they received complaints from holiday travelers after a "verbal battle…erupted" between representatives from both Gays with G.U.T.S. and the Southwest Literature Distribution

[68] Jerry Needham, "Groups take AIDS debate to DFW," *Dallas Times Herald*, November 26, 1987: B3. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[69] Isaacks, "Gay response."

[70] Needham, "Groups."

Company. In addition to their concerns with the confrontation, airline officials also believed the demonstration "posed a threat to public safety."[71]

Within weeks of their first demonstration, the organization simplified their name to the Gay Urban Truth Squad (G.U.T.S.) and took aim at their next target, the city of Dallas. According to the Dallas Gay Alliance (DGA) and G.U.T.S. activists, by the end of 1987, AIDS had claimed the lives of 610 people in Dallas County. Though the virus led to their deaths, the DGA and G.U.T.S. posited these lives were cut short "due to homophobic foot-dragging" of medical professionals and a lack of funding and support for "community-based, frontline organizations."[72]

In an effort to highlight the lack of support, G.U.T.S. activists drew 610 chalk outlines on the plaza in front of City Hall. Though they had received a permit for "an unspecified demonstration," officials determined the protest had defaced city property and a clean-up crew washed the outlines away within the hour. Upon hearing about the removal, DGA President William Waybourn acknowledged the city's response failed to surprise him. In fact, Waybourn concluded Dallas had failed to address the crisis at hand and this was simply another way "to wash their hands of it."[73]

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[71] David Webb, "Terminal clash concerns board: DFW panel aims to protect passengers, avoid future fights," *Dallas Times Herald*, December 2, 1987. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[72] Dallas Gay Alliance, "MEDIA FACT SHEET FOR GUTS (GAY URBAN TRUTH SQUAD)," Handout. December 1987. University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584752/m1/1/

[73] Sherry Jacobson, "'Bodies' sketched in chalk to symbolize AIDS deaths," *Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 1987. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

While organizers in Dallas protested the city and county's dismal attempts at curtailing the AIDS crisis, medical professionals across the globe tirelessly worked to understand the disease. Unfortunately, since there were no proven treatment regimens for those suffering with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) HIV or AIDS, often physicians were forced to merely treat the opportunistic infections commonly found among those suffering from the virus. Due to the lack of specified treatment, HIV and AIDS frustrated medical providers and their patients. Therefore, some physicians used experimental delivery methods of medications to treat certain underlying illness for those infected with the virus. For example, by 1988, some doctors across the country prescribed aerosolized pentamidine isethionate to treat *pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), which was "the most common lethal opportunistic infection" experienced by AIDS patients.[74]

Initially, medical providers at Dallas' Parkland Memorial Hospital also relied on aerosolized pentamidine isethionate to treat PCP. Though physicians prescribed the drug, the hospital did not have the equipment to deliver treatments. In an effort to defray those costs and to insure people had access to the drug, the Dallas Gay Alliance purchased the necessary equipment and began offering treatments at the AIDS Resource Center.[75] Unfortunately, within days of delivering the first treatments at the center, Dr. James Luby, the chief of infectious disease control at the hospital, formally announced

[74] Robert F. Miller, Peter Godfrey-Faussett, and Stephen J. G. Semple, "Nebulised pentamidine as treatment for *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia in the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome," *Thorax* 44 (July 1989): 565-569, https://tinyurl.com/2p83rctf.

[75] "AIDS center to offer treatment," *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), January 19, 1988. https://tinyurl.com/frzv6uet

that Parkland physicians would no longer write prescriptions for aerosolized pentamidine isethionate. Since the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had not approved pentamidine isethionate to be used in aerosol form, the costs associated with the drug were significant. As a result, hospital administrators determined the costs were just "too expensive."[76]

Unfortunately, prior to Dr. Luby's announcement, those living with AIDS in the region were already frustrated by their perceived lack of care and support from Parkland. For example, some AIDS patients reported waiting nearly twenty-four hours in the emergency room before they were seen. Others complained they had to wait over a month before they could meet with a physician. Parkland representatives reassured the gay community these wait times were normal and under no circumstance were AIDS patients being treated differently at the hospital.[77]

Obviously, hospital administrators, community leaders, and those living with AIDS were concerned about equitable access to treatment. Sadly, money was often the largest barrier for people. Though the federal government allocated funds to address the crisis, this was simply not enough to truly address the issue at hand. To make matters worse, public health agencies across the state did very little to supplement these funds. In fact, despite rising AIDS cases in the state, Texas' public health departments

[76] Sherry Jacobson, "Gay leaders criticize Parkland," *Dallas Morning News*, January 26, 1988. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[77] Kris Mullen, "AIDS patients want help," *Dallas Times-Herald*, January 26, 1988. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

nationally ranked fourth among states spending the least amount on resources during the epidemic.[78]

Nearly seven years into the national AIDS crisis, members of the Dallas Gay Alliance (DGA) and the Gay Urban Truth Squad (GUTS) rallied before the Dallas County Commissioners Court demanding an increase in local resources. As gay leaders lobbied the board, activists on the streets staged "an orthodox protest" with an effigy of an AIDS patient splayed on a hospital stretcher. Bill Hunt, co-founder of GUTS, argued they had spent years working "through the system," which gleaned minimal results. Since "being 'good little civic citizens'" failed to move local officials, GUTS, a suborganization of the DGA, embraced civil disobedience.[79]

Unfortunately, demonstrations and pleas for support failed to motivate the County Commissioners Court. Rather than allocating additional funds to address the AIDS crisis, city and county health officials spent the early portion of 1988 shifting blame between one another. By May of that year, the city had only spent $55,000 to support those living with AIDS. Conversely, officials in Dallas spent half a million dollars filling in a hazardous hole left by developers at the corner of Lemmon and Cole avenues.[80] Understandably, gay leaders and activists were appalled the city chose to

[78] "Texas Rates 4th In AIDS Cases But Few Spend Less," *Tyler Courier-Times* (Tyler, Texas), February 8, 1988. https://tinyurl.com/36rzmc76

[79] Ron Boyd, "GAY ACTIVISM TAKES GUTS: Gay Urban Truth Squad fights for rights with civil disobedience," *Dallas Times-Herald*, May 8, 1988. Clipping. (https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584189/m1/3/: accessed March 15, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, https://digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[80] Jeff South, "'Graveyard' recalls area AIDS deaths: Protesters cite a lack of funds to treat disease," *Dallas Times-Herald*, May 27, 1988. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

spend almost ten times more on a giant pit rather than actively working to curtail the spread of a deadly virus. But, adding insult to injury, the costly money pit was mere blocks from the AIDS Resource Center and a constant reminder of the city's priorities.

In an effort to illustrate this inequity, the Gay Urban Truth Squad (GUTS) transformed the vacant lot into a "mock graveyard," which featured 794 white crosses. These crosses represented the total number of people who died as a result of AIDS related illnesses in Dallas County. In juxtaposition to their first visual protest, which was less than six months prior, the new total exceeded the amount of space needed to recreate the City Hall plaza protest.[81]

While the crosses provided a visual representation of the impact AIDS had in the county, the timing of the protest was also strategic. As the rest of the city prepared for a festive Memorial Day weekend, approximately forty GUTS volunteers transformed the vacant lot into a sea of crosses. In addition to highlighting the rapidly rising death toll, GUTS coordinators sought to memorialize and honor AIDS victims who died while local officials shirked all responsibility of the epidemic.[82]

Although GUTS organizers believed honoring their dead during Memorial Day weekend was appropriate, others in Dallas disagreed. Within days of setting up the crosses, an anonymous caller suggested the city "should have filled the hole with bodies of dead (homosexuals)." Additionally, prior to a candlelight memorial at a nearby park, gay activists learned an individual had completely destroyed the crosses. Though they

[81] Ibid.

[82] Jeff South, "AIDS," *Dallas Times-Herald*, May 27, 1988. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

had no way to prove it, some GUTS coordinators believed the anonymous caller and the vandal were one in the same.[83] In spite of these obstacles, though, approximately 200 people gathered at Lee Park to celebrate the lives of those lost to AIDS. Following a series of speeches and songs, the crowd walked two blocks to the make-shift potters' field and began restoring the crosses. Bill Hunt, vice president of the Dallas Gay Alliance, implored the crowd to remember '"our hope must always exceed our grief."'[84]

Ultimately, the protests and demonstrations by the Gay Urban Truth Squad were very successful in highlighting the lack of monetary support from the Dallas City Council. Prior to the protests, the city council only allocated $55,000 to address the AIDS crisis. By the fall of 1988, though, Council members Lori Palmer and Craig Holcomb fought to significantly increase city contributions to just over $367,000. Through these funds, community organizations were able to offer support in a variety of ways. In addition to providing respite care for the children of those suffering from AIDS, the county also provided resources for dental care, housing support, and educational programs.[85]

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[83] Darrell Dunn, "Vandal hits crosses before AIDS service," *Dallas Times-Herald*, May 30, 1988. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[84] Todd Copilevitz, "Memorial service honor Dallas AIDS dead," *Dallas Morning News*, May 1988. Clipping. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584356/m1/1/?q=%22Dallas%20AIDS%20dead%22: accessed March 15, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[85] "AIDS Funding OK'D," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 21, Ed. 1, September 23, 1988: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615740/m1/3/: accessed May 25, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

As the Gay Urban Truth Squad applied pressure to city and county health officials, the Dallas Gay Alliance pooled their resources to advocate for more equity in access to healthcare treatment at Parkland Memorial Hospital, the only public hospital in Dallas county. Unfortunately, as AIDS cases continued to rise in the county, waiting lists became increasingly longer at Parkland. Recognizing that patients had an unknown, finite amount of time, the DGA demanded more from hospital administrators and medical providers. In an effort to illustrate the significance of the crisis, leaders of the Dallas Gay Alliance and their attorney, William Nelson, met with hospital officials in April 1988. During the meeting, Nelson informed administrators the alliance was prepared "to file suit against Parkland for failure to adequately provide for the health and welfare of AIDS patients."[86]

Following more than five hours of discussion, hospital administrators agreed to address some of the issues presented by the DGA. In an effort to address exorbitant wait times, administrators from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas agreed to assign eight additional part-time physicians to work at Parkland's AIDS clinic. Since Parkland officials vowed to at least double manpower at the clinic by July 1, the Dallas Gay Alliance agreed in good faith to this modest adjustment. Furthermore, hospital officials agreed to regularly utilize treatments of azidothymidine (AZT), the only FDA approved treatment for AIDS, and aerosolized pentamidine therapies for patients by the same deadline.[87] Though these concessions were moderate, the DGA and

[86] "Dallas Gay Alliance Pressures Parkland," *Dialog*, May 1988: 7. Linda Jebavy Mitchell Collection (The Dallas Way) (ARO881), University of North Texas Special Collections.

[87] Ibid.

their attorney viewed the agreement as the first step towards more complete care for AIDS patients.

Unfortunately, within a few short weeks of agreeing to these terms, a spokesperson from Parkland announced the hospital was unable to significantly shorten the AZT wait list and, therefore, they could not sustain their commitment to provide at least two physicians at the AIDS clinic. Enraged by this announcement, DGA President William Waybourn claimed lobbied by the gay community. Furthermore, he argued the hospital's statement was essentially "an admission of criminal neglect."[88] Both Waybourn and the Dallas Gay Alliance believed Parkland's actions were in direct violation of the Texas Indigent Health Care Act, the federal Hill-Burton Act, and the Medicare-Medicaid Act.[89] As a result, the DGA moved forward with a lawsuit against Parkland Memorial Hospital, the University of Texas Southwest Health Science Center, and the Dallas County Commissioners Court for failure "to deliver adequate health for persons with AIDS."[90]

According to the lawsuit, health care administers and officials in Dallas County discriminated against people living with AIDS in three distinct ways. First, the hospital's policies "rationed" access to AZT, the only federally approved treatment to

[88] Dennis Vercher, "DGA declared intent to file suit against Parkland: Alliance Leaders Fed Up With Delays At County's Public Hospital," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Ed. 1, May 13, 1988: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615646/m1/3/: accessed March 19, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[89] John Rogers, "DGA FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST PARKLAND HOSPITAL," *AIDS Update* (Dallas, Texas), Vol. 3, No. 7, July 1988: 2. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1584053/m1/4/: accessed May 14, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[90] Vercher, "DGA declared."

block the spread of AIDS in the body. As a result, the hospital maintained an extremely long waiting list of those medically eligible for treatment. In addition to limiting access to AZT, Parkland prevented physicians from prescribing aerosolized pentamidine isethionate as a therapy for *pneumocystis carini* pneumonia, the leading cause of death for those suffering from AIDS. Finally, the DGA called for an end to "bed controls," a policy which set limits on the number of admitted AIDS patients.[91]

Within hours of filing the lawsuit, Judge John McClelland Marshall issued a 30-day restraining order, which required Parkland "to deliver readily available medical treatments" to people with AIDS. Of course, the Dallas Gay Alliance was thrilled by this announcement, but Parkland officials were less than enthused. Dr. Ron Anderson, the hospital's CEO, explained that as "the county's only public hospital," Parkland was required to "balance the needs of AIDS patients with increasing numbers of other indigent patients."[92]

Rather than attempting to expand access to ATZ, Parkland representatives argued portions of the ruling directly violated the hospital's policies and procedures, specifically the use of aerosolized pentamidine isethionate. Although many privately practicing physicians regularly utilized this drug to treat AIDS patients suffering from pneumonia, the United States Food and Drug Administration had not authorized this treatment.

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[91] Dennis Vercher, "DGA rejects Parkland's offer to settle lawsuit: Case Is Scheduled for Trial Monday in State District Court," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 7, Ed. 1, June 17, 1988: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615559/m1/3/: accessed May 12, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[92] "Judge makes AZT available: Dallas hospital is ordered to provide drug to all AIDS patients," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 20, 1988. https://tinyurl.com/r7t5e74p

Unfortunately, Parkland strictly prohibited their physicians from utilizing any non-FDA approved treatments. Ironically, despite being in the midst of a legal dispute, Esther Bauer, a spokesperson for Parkland, argued prescribing any treatments without FDA approval created several legal vulnerabilities for both the hospital and its physicians.[93] By mid-June, attorneys for Parkland Memorial Hospital petitioned to move the case from state to federal jurisdiction. As the bulk of the lawsuit alleged violations of federal statutes, they argued the case was more suited for federal court. Upon learning about the petition, the Dallas Gay Alliance accused hospital officials of "judge shopping" because Judge Marshall "strongly criticized" Parkland for their treatment of AIDS patients earlier in the summer.[94]

Although the DGA initially bristled at the request for a venue change, they eventually agreed to pursue their grievances within the U.S. District Court. Eventually, the alliance recognized moving into federal jurisdiction enabled them to more broadly illustrate the dire situation AIDS patients experienced, not only in Dallas, but also around the country. Furthermore, the change of venue directly benefited the DGA in two specific ways. First, they attracted support from more established, well-funded organizations, like the American Civil Liberties Union and the AIDS and Civil Liberties Project. Secondly, with this additional support, the newly revised legal team for the alliance petitioned to include a class action lawsuit against Parkland Memorial Hospital with the current legal proceedings. According to the DGA, almost 28,000 people

[93] "AIDS ruling worries doctors," *Kilgore News Herald* (Kilgore, Texas), May 22, 1988. https://tinyurl.com/2kusjsat

[94] "Dallas hospital seeks different court in AIDS suit," *San Angelo Standard-Time* (San Angelo, Texas), June 19, 1988. https://tinyurl.com/45ejs4eh

diagnosed with AIDS in Dallas County were mistreated and/or received inadequate care from the only public hospital in the county.[95]

Perhaps in an effort to undercut the claims made against them, Parkland Memorial Hospital ultimately hired a second full-time physician, Dr. Steve Pounders, in mid-July for the AIDS clinic. Despite inadequate staffing being one of the core complaints of the hospital, William Nelson, lead counsel for the DGA, refused to drop the lawsuit against Parkland. In fact, Nelson believed the hiring of Pounders legitimized the complaints from the gay community. Furthermore, Nelson argued simply adding another physician to the clinic did not negate any damages incurred by those living with AIDS.[96]

In the end, U.S. District Judge Barefoot Sanders refused to recognize the Dallas Gay Alliance and its co-plaintiffs as a specialized class in their complaint against Parkland Memorial Hospital. In addition to dismissing their request for class action status, Sanders determined the arguments presented before him were not for the "court to determine," but instead should be public policies addressed by local and state-elected

[95] Dennis Vercher, "DGA seeks class action status in suit: ACLU becomes co-council in case," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 9, Ed. 1, July 1, 1988: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615773/m1/3/: accessed May 18, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[96] Dennis Vercher, "Parkland adds physicians to beleagered AIDS clinic: Move Won't Affect Suit Against Hospital, DGA Lawyer Claims," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 13, Ed. 1, July 29, 1988: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615651/m1/3/: accessed May 25, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

officials.[97] Following the release of Sanders' opinion, Parkland representatives framed the decision as vindication for "all of the allegations" made by the DGA.[98]

Although the lawsuit was dismissed, leadership within the alliance viewed the case as a victory for the gay community. In the year after the case was filed, overall health care for AIDS patients in Dallas County had improved. Prior to the lawsuit, the hospital's AZT waiting list was incredibly long and people died before they received treatment. According to DGA President William Waybourn, after the lawsuit was filed, Parkland treated AIDS patients "with kid gloves" and "were given the best care available." In fact, by the spring of 1989, Parkland provided more than 300 people with access to AZT treatments and medical services.[99]

While the case against Parkland moved through the legal system, several Dallas-based community organizations illustrated the impact of the AIDS crisis to the Texas Joint Legislative Task Force on AIDS in Austin. Bill Hunt, of the AIDS Resource Center, blamed the previous politicization of the crisis for the lack of resources and support from the state. As a result, he urged the Task Force to put politics aside and, instead, focus on the needs of some of the most vulnerable Texans. Hunt argued the lack of support from the Texas Legislature hampered community organizations from

[97] "Parkland AIDS suit is dismissed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 5, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/ebp26ddy

[98] "Judge Dismisses AIDS Suit Against Clinic," *Tyler Morning Telegraph* (Tyler, Texas), May 5, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/4uzusjyt

[99] "Parkland AIDS."

receiving federal funding. If state lawmakers refused to support these organizations, why would the federal government supplement these programs?[100]

After visiting several community organizations and facilities across Dallas, Texas State Health Commissioner Robert Bernstein admitted the state needed to provide more resources to bolster AIDS prevention and assistance efforts. Following the 1987 Texas Legislative session, lawmakers only earmarked $2 million to address the AIDS Crisis across the state. According to Bernstein, this amount was "ridiculous" and the state had "to do something." In an effort to address the crisis, Bernstein indicated the Health Department's proposed budgets for 1989 and 1990 included $24 million per year for AIDS prevention and treatment initiatives. Though Bernstein and other high ranking health officials argued for this funding, lawmakers had to approve the requests and, unfortunately, AIDS was "a difficult disease to beat the drums about in some quarters…some parts of the Legislature just don't listen."[101]

Though AIDS had become more prevalent among heterosexuals by the late-1980s, most Texans continued associating the disease with the gay community. Furthermore, as a fairly conservative state, many elected officials did not want to appear friendly or supportive of the gay community. As a result, it was extremely difficult to

[100] Tammye Nash, "Texas mustn't shirk AIDS commitment, panel told: State AIDS Task Force Will Tour Dallas Agencies Next Week," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 17, Ed. 1, August 26, 1988: 3. (http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615668/m1/3/: accessed May 25, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, http://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[101] Dennis Vercher, "State AIDS funding levels ridiculed by health chief: Bernstein said Legislature must vastly increase state funding," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 5, No. 28, Ed. 1, November 18, 1988: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615579/m1/3/: accessed May 25, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

get funding approval from the Legislature. Therefore, the consistent politicization of the crisis created an extremely costly social and economic crisis in Texas. For example, federal administrators often evaluated a state's financial commitment to the AIDS crisis before they allocated federal funds to the state. Since many viewed the Legislature's minimal support as "a low commitment to AIDS programs," Texas-based organizations and community programs often failed to receive assistance from federal initiatives.[102]

The lack of support from state and federal institutions and the dismissal of the lawsuit against Parkland Memorial Hospital dampened the hopes of many people living with AIDS. In addition to these obstacles, by the fall of 1988, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had only approved three treatment options for AIDS or any other medical related conditions.[103] Due to these limited options, people living with AIDS formed local, underground networks, known as buyers clubs, to import and distribute alternative and experimental medications from foreign markets. Following his own diagnosis in 1987, Ron Woodroof formed the Dallas Buyers Club (DBC), which became one of the most aggressive and controversial clubs in the United States.[104]

Through a membership model, people paid dues to the DBC and Woodroof used the money to stock his own personal "pharmacy" with drugs "from other countries, including Japan, Switzerland, and Sweden." Once these medications reached Dallas, the club provided a list of available treatments to their members. By the spring of 1989, the

[102] Ibid.

[103] Lawrence K. Altman, "F.D.A. Approves First Drug for AIDS-Related Cancer," *New York Times*, November 22, 1988. https://nyti.ms/3NPZSzs

[104] Bill Minutaglio, "Buying time: World traveler Ron Woodroof smuggles drugs—and hope—for people with AIDS," *Dallas Morning News*, August 9, 1992. https://tinyurl.com/26kr36n4

DBC provided almost sixty experimental treatments to more than 580 members. Admittedly, many of the participants in buyers clubs were "desperate" and willing to try almost anything to combat the virus. Recognizing the desperation, most FDA officials initially turned a blind eye to the buyers clubs. According to FDA spokesman Brad Stone, the agency allowed the import of "personal quantities" of AIDS medications as long as they were not on an "import alert list."[105]

By the summer of 1989, many AIDS activists and medical doctors believed they had uncovered a new treatment for the virus. Dr. Michael McGrath of San Francisco General Hospital completed an initial laboratory study on Compound Q, a plant-based drug from China. Based on his findings, McGrath claimed the drug only attacked cells infected with the AIDS virus. Additionally, he noted the drug also destroyed "macrophages, scavenger cells of the immune system that [were believed] to be the reservoir of the AIDS virus in humans." Though many found hope in McGrath's announcement, the FDA criticized the unauthorized study and warned against the use of Compound Q. Despite these warnings, though, buyers clubs across the nation began clamoring for the drug.[106]

Within two months of McGrath's announcement, doctors and AIDS activists withdrew their support for Compound Q following the results of an underground four-city study on the drug. According to Martin Delaney, one of the organizers for the study, physicians attributed two deaths and five instances of serious side effects with the

[105] "Experimental AIDS Drugs Dispensed," *Leaf-Chronicle* (Clarksville, Tennessee), May 18, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/epd45p34

[106] Gina Kolata, "AIDS Drug Tested Secretly By Group Critical of F.D.A.," *New York Times*, June 28, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/3etcpzft

drug. As a result, leadership among some of the largest buyers clubs in the country immediately removed Compound Q from their inventory lists and they pressed other clubs to do the same. In spite of these outcomes, warnings and pressure, Ron Woodroof argued "the drug was too important" to the most desperate in the community and, as a result, he refused to discontinue the sales. Woodroof concluded that waiting on future research of the drug meant very little to those without an immune system. Therefore, the DBC held steadfast in their commitment to make Compound Q available to anyone who wanted it.

In addition to Compound Q raising red flags for physicians and activists, FDA officials became increasingly concerned about the distribution and use of the drug. As previously mentioned, the federal organization was willing to overlook the importation of unauthorized medications as long as they were not on an alert list. With the rising concerns surrounding the use of Compound Q, the FDA added it to their import alert list. Due to the status change, both the U.S. Postal Service and U.S. Customs were now authorized to seize all shipments of the drug. Despite rising concerns, though, demand for Compound Q did not faulter, but rather increased. Woodroof theorized both the underground study and blacklisting of Compound Q increased demand. Though people were clamoring for the drug, Woodroof believed most people were "buying it for storage."[107]

[107] Jayne Garrison, "AIDS drug sold despite warnings," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 22, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/bdd9nvp9

As the FDA moved to limit distribution of Compound Q, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) attempted to execute the National Household Seroprevalence Survey, which would determine how many Americans were infected with the AIDS virus. In the late-summer of 1989, DHHS sent letters to 3,400 Dallas households requesting them to voluntarily submit to an anonymous blood screening. Additionally, health officials planned to ask participants about both their sexual and drug use histories. In an effort to incentivize and increase participation, DHHS would pay each participant fifty dollars. Unfortunately, due to the federal government's initial lackluster response to the AIDS crisis, those living with the virus, their allies, and activist organizations feared possible breaches of personal information would be detrimental for participants. Therefore, organizations, like the Dallas Gay Alliance, called for a complete boycott of the survey.[108]

William Waybourn, president of the Dallas Gay Alliance, criticized the federal government's willingness to spend between $25-million to $32-million on a national survey rather than utilizing those resources to actually treat AIDS patients.[109] Though the Dallas Gay Alliance was the first local organization to call for the boycott, soon national organizations, like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign Fund, championed the boycott as well. In addition to lamenting the lack of resources for those living with AIDS, some community leaders in Dallas balked at the notion of paying participants. In fact, the DGA commonly referred to this

[108] Bruce Lambert, "Dallas AIDS Survey Is Begun Amid a Furor Over Its Worth," *New York Times*, September 27, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/cutenp2x

[109] "Dallas trial is first step toward national survey of AIDS victims," *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, Florida), September 27, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/b23utfac

payment as "blood money." According to Reverend Michael S. Piazza of the Metropolitan Community Church, fifty dollars did not seem like much when folks had spent almost a decade watching their friends and loved ones die from the disease.[110]

In addition to promoting a "Just Say No" campaign, the Dallas Gay Alliance attempted to thwart the surveying process by offering rewards for uncompleted questionnaires. According to Waybourn, the DGA would pay $100 for the first blank survey and fifty dollars towards AIDS research for every incomplete survey presented thereafter. Following this announcement, Waybourn called upon the leadership in Dallas County to commit to the same donation amount for each survey they successfully completed.[111] Ultimately, gay activists were not frustrated by perceived overspending by the federal government. They simply disproved of how the money was being spent and they equated the misuse of funds with more death and despair in their community. The Department of Health and Human Services estimated the Dallas survey would take approximately three months to complete and activists in Dallas estimated without proper support approximately ninety people would die from AIDS during a three-month period.

In an effort to visually illustrate the loss of life, the Gay Urban Truth Squad (GUTS) placed ninety handmade "bodies" upon the steps of the Dallas County Health Department. During the protest, Bill Hunt outlined to reporters and onlookers the organization's opposition to the surveying of Dallas County. Hunt noted the "bodies"

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[110] Dennis Vercher, "HIV survey boycott urged by national leadership," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 6, No. 22, Ed. 1, September 29, 1989: 3. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapath615623/m1/3/: accessed August 10, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[111] "Dallas gay activists urge rejection of AIDS survey," *San Angelo Standard-Times* (San Angelo, Texas), September 28, 1989. https://tinyurl.com/2duruwp3

represented the number of lives the county would lose due to "inaction and government red tape" during the surveying process. Furthermore, even if the survey provided viable data, Hunt expressed concerns that neither the county nor the federal government had developed any plan of action to address the needs of people living with AIDS. Finally, Hunt expressed fears the surveying process would produce a false sense of security throughout the city. As all surveys were anonymous, the health department would be unable to notify those who had tested positive for the virus. Therefore, participants might erroneously assume they were negative without confirmation one way or the other.[112]

Though activists in Dallas and across the nation were critical of the National Household Seroprevalence Survey, their calls for a boycott of the study most likely negatively skewed the overall results. By the spring of 1990, preliminary results from the survey suggested the number of infected individuals in Dallas County were slightly lower than previously estimated.[113] With a lowered case count, opponents to AIDS research and funding could continue turning a blind eye to the crisis in Dallas and across the state. Unfortunately, overlooking and ignoring the AIDS crisis often resulted in poor funding from state and local governments. According to a report in the *New York Times*, the state of Texas spent a paltry fourteen cents per resident on AIDS funding in 1989.[114]

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[112] Tammye Nash, "GUTS zaps DCHD with CD Action," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 6, No. 22, Ed. 1, September 29, 1989: 5. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth615623/m1/5/: accessed August 10, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[113] "Dallas Official Critical Of AIDS Survey," *Tyler Courier-Times* (Tyler, Texas), May 13, 1990. https://tinyurl.com/3wmkvcvm

[114] Bruce Lambert, "In Texas, AIDS Struggle Is Also Matter of Money," *New York Times*, January 5, 1990. https://tinyurl.com/mvcxr93p

Though AIDS support was meager in 1989, members of the Texas Legislature attempted to further limit funding in 1990. At the end of the legislative session, elected officials established parameters that prevented AIDS support from going to organizations that promoted, lobbied, or engaged in activities that violated state law. Due to these new stipulations, the State Health Department determined organizations that lobbied to legalize homosexuality or "that had homosexuals among its employees, membership or board of directors" would not be eligible for funding. As a result of this decision, the Health Department denied the AIDS Resource Center's grant application for funds in 1990.[115] Appalled by the rejection, the Dallas Gay Alliance, which operated the resource center, appealed the Health Department's decision to Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox. The DGA argued without the nearly $54,000 grant they would be unable to sustain their food bank, which offered assistance to "more than 400 indigent patients and their families." Ultimately, Mattox struck down the restrictions tied to the $3 million in AIDS funding for 1990.[116] After reviewing the law, Mattox noted lobbying elected officials was not a violation of state law and, more importantly, "the composition of an organization's membership or board" could not be "determinative of the organization's eligibility for a grant."[117]

[115] Sherry Jacobson, "Mattox strikes down AIDS funding rules," *Dallas Morning News*, January 12, 1990. Clipping. Box 78, folder 33, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[116] Sherry Jacobson, "AIDS rules canceled: Action may let group be funded," *Dallas Morning News*, January 12, 1990. Clipping. Box 78, folder 33, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[117] Jacobson, "Mattox."

Although the State of Texas continued providing minimal resources for the AIDS crisis, non-profit organizations, activists, and notable celebrities devoted their time and effort to raise funds to help those most in need. In the spring of 1990, the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR) awarded Dallas' Nelson-Tebedo Community Clinic for AIDS Research $110,000. With these funds, the clinic established a community based clinical trial program, which not only provided important research data, but also allowed the organization to expand access to treatments.[118] At the same time, Bridge to Life, a non-profit AIDS awareness foundation in Dallas, organized an art show and a concert to raise funds for AmFAR, the Nelson-Tebedo Community Clinic, and Parkland Memorial's AIDS Outpatient Clinic.

According to Marisa Cardinale, special events associate director for AmFAR, celebrity involvement in AIDS activism and fundraising brought awareness to a larger audience. In the early stages of the epidemic, people predominately associated AIDS with homosexuality, but over time, as the virus effected more groups of people, including celebrities, Americans became more open to learning about and understanding the disease.[119] Capitalizing on their broader reach, for their first event, Bridge to Life named actress Linda Evans and musician Yanni as the guests of honor for the May 12 gala event at the Dallas Museum of Art. And for the second benefit, the Dallas

[118] "Dallas clinic gets emergency grant," *Dallas Voice*, Vol. 6, No. 39, Ed. 1, January 26, 1990: 5-6. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapath615716/m1/5: accessed August 25, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, https://texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

[119] Connie Benesch, "Benefit," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 20, 1990. https://tinyurl.com/4nzueabe

Symphony Orchestra joined Yanni for performance at the Starplex Amphitheatre almost a month later.[120]

Relying on grassroots fundraising efforts was the backbone for most community-based services in Dallas during the early-nineties. For example, community donations comprised almost 60% of the annual budget for the AIDS Resource Center. With these funds, ARC relocated into a larger facility in the fall of 1990. In addition to providing access to their food pantry, educational programs, and a 24-hour hotline, the new center also housed the Dallas Gay Alliance and Dallas Legal Hospice, which offered legal aid to terminally ill people.[121] In addition to direct support from donors, gala events and concerts allowed community organizations and activists to bolster support for those living with AIDS and the clinics that provided invaluable resources. Due to these grassroots efforts, the Nelson-Tebedo Clinic flourished. In fact, despite being located within a state that frequently failed to provide adequate resources for AIDS support and research, the Nelson-Tebedo Clinic was recognized in the early nineties as "one of the leading research facilities" in the United States.[122]

Throughout the eighties, community activists continued keeping the city council's "feet to the fire" and, as a result, by the end of the decade, council members allocated just over half a million dollars to address the crisis. Unfortunately, as organizations relied more heavily on grassroots donors and funding from federal grants,

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[120] Connie Benesch, "Yanni, Linda Evans plan two benefits for research," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 16, 1990. https://tinyurl.com/57cnhx7v

[121] Susie Steckner, "AIDS Resource Center in Dallas moving," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 15, 1990. https://tinyurl.com/28mex5y4

[122] "Six studies under way on AIDS drugs," *Kilgore News Herald* (Kilgore, Texas), September 10, 1990. https://tinyurl.com/hhs5twjv

local support from the Dallas City Council waned in the early-nineties. According to Rick Leggio, a member of Dallas' Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC), the combination of redistricting and an easing of community pressure resulted in the council cutting AIDS funding by eighty percent. Once these changes had been made to the budget, some council members were unwilling to support gay related organizations. Despite this resistance, Leggio used his position on the CDAC to educated city council members about the impact of AIDS across all demographics in Dallas. With these efforts, Leggio convinced the city council to increase AIDS funding from $118,000 to $450,000 for the fiscal year 1992-93.[123]

Ultimately, for most of the eighties, only the gay community and their allies concerned themselves with the growing AIDS crisis. Since the virus was initially labeled the "gay cancer," community leaders and organizers found it difficult to convince city councils and state legislatures to allocate funds to address the virus. Though activists had spent several years attempting to secure civil rights for gay people, homosexuality remained largely taboo across the country for most of the decade. As a result, most state and local officials recognized it was not politically advantageous for them to support funding for AIDS resources. Fortunately, by the early-nineties, the social and political dynamic surrounding homosexuality and AIDS started to change. As homosexuality became more mainstream, some state legislatures and major city councils passed laws and ordinances that protected the civil rights of gay people. These changes

[123] Clint Packer, "Increasing City of Dallas AIDS Funding: An Interview with Rick Leggio," *AIDS Update*, Vol. 9, No. 5, May 1994: 3. Briscoe Archives – Glen Maxey – 2011-042/20

enabled more people to publicly support funding for clinical trials and AIDS educational efforts.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Like most groups of people, gay Americans formed their own networks and organizations during the twentieth century. According to historian John D'Emilio, massive wartime mobilization to coastal port cities provided these Americans the opportunity to meet and interact with other homosexuals. Following the end of World War II, rather than returning to their more socially conservative homes in middle America, many of these people remained in these cities, like San Francisco and New York City, where they forged gay communities and early homophile organizations.[1] In conjunction with the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, many Americans equated these coastal cities with extremely liberal ideologies and movements.

In June of 1969 following a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, members of New York's gay community formed the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), the first gay political activist organization in the United States. In addition to hosting the city's first gay pride parade, the GLF advocated for social and political reforms in New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Furthermore, the GLF also protested with organizations like the Black Panthers. As Americans became more aware of the GLF and their political aims, more conservative folks cringed at signs advocating for "Gay Power" and balked as "flippity-wristed fellows" challenged cross-dressing statutes. Based on these reactions, it was clear this form of bold activism could only happen in New York or California.[2]

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[1]John D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of the Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983): 1.

[2] Sam Kindrick, "What If Women's Lib Joined Gay Lib Forces?" *Express and News* (San Antonio, Texas), September 5, 1970.

Despite conservative social and cultural norms, gay men and lesbians formed their own communities and networks throughout the south and Midwest during the twentieth century. In *Men Like That*, historian John Howard argued gay men were able to establish intimate personal relationships with one another in rural America following the end of the Second World War. Although not a rural community, many of the social norms described by Howard were prevalent in Dallas. As a result, these cultural expectations greatly impacted the foundation of the city's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) civil rights movement. For many people, including gay men and women, living in Dallas, religion was the cornerstone of their lives. Therefore, it was not surprising that religion played an integral part in establishing Texas' first homophile organization, the Circle of Friends.

After reading about Doug McLean, a Methodist minister from Dallas, and his work with homophile organizations in San Francisco, Phil Johnson contacted him about forming a social community for gay men in the Dallas. McClean and three other local ministers were eager to establish a connection with the gay community in Dallas. Through their relationship with Phil Johnson, these men organized the Circle of Friends in 1966. By this time, police raids on gay bars were familiar headlines across the country. In an effort to avoid this, the Circle of Friends hosted all of their meetings and events on church property and, as an additional measure of security, one of the ministers would be present at all organized events. Ultimately, the leadership of the Circle of Friends believed law enforcement officials would be unwilling to organize raids on church property.

Though some members of the Circle of Friends were willing to educate the straight community at religious conferences and events, the organization primarily supported the social and spiritual needs of Dallas' gay community in the late-sixties and the early-seventies. Following the Stonewall Riots and the rise of gay activism across the country, gay men and lesbians in Dallas organized the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, the first politically driven organization for homosexuals in the city. Unlike organizations along the coasts, the DGPC rejected radicalism and, instead, embraced what they called "the Dallas Way," a much more conservative approach to social and political change. Rather than making demands in the streets, the DGPC attempted to utilize their collective voice through the power of the vote. Though the caucus rejected radical tactics, they did advocate for more visibility from the gay community. As a result, they began holding community rallies, hosting gay pride parades, organizing voter registration and education events, and building relationships with various media outlets in and around Dallas.[3]

As Dallas' gay community became more visible and politically engaged, local ministers and religious leaders used their pulpits to condemn homosexuality. Rather than picketing churches and attacking religious communities, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus challenged homophobic rhetoric through educational avenues. In addition to planning educational and political conferences, the caucus also hosted notable gay activists, like Harvey Milk, in an effort to energize and inspire the gay community.

[3] "A Proposed Plan of Action for the Dallas Gay Political Caucus from January, 1980 to June, 1980," January 6, 1980: 5. Chart. Box 62, folder 62, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

While becoming more visible in Dallas, caucus leaders also formed alliances and relationships with other political and gay organizations across the state. Collectively these organizations fought for civil protections on the state level, but their biggest challenge was overturning Penal Code 21.06, Texas' sodomy law.

During the waning months of 1979, several members of gay community engaged in two significant legal challenges in Dallas. First, following an arrest at a popular gay disco, a handful of men contested misdemeanor charges for public lewdness. Prior to this incident, gay men routinely accepted plea agreements in order to maintain their anonymity. By challenging the charges, these men risked being publicly identified as homosexual, which could put their personal and professional lives in jeopardy. Secondly, Donald F. Baker filed the first federal court case, *Baker v. Wade,* that challenged the legality of Texas State Penal Code 21.06. According to Baker's attorney, the law classified gay men and lesbians as criminals and, as a result, it violated "the integrity and dignity" of those individuals.

As they waited for a decision in *Baker* case, Dallas' gay community experienced several growing pains. By the early-eighties, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus had evolved into the largest and most prominent gay organization in the city and, in 1981, several board members advocated for a restructuring of the caucus. Since the caucus had expanded beyond political activism, these members believed the organizational name no longer reflected their position within the community. After a heated and contentious debate, members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus voted in 1981 to change their name to the Dallas Gay Alliance. Most members viewed the name change as a natural

evolution of the organization, but for some of the most active women, utilizing "gay" without including "lesbian" overlooked the work and commitment of Dallas' lesbian community.

While activists argued about changing the name of the caucus, a more serious issue was silently moving into the gay communities across the country. Though AIDS was initially more prominent in coastal cities, Howie Daire, founder of the Oak Lawn Counseling Center, recognized the disease would soon sweep through Dallas. Working with the Dallas Gay Alliance, Daire organized community forums where he advocated for the use of preventative measures, such as using contraception and limiting the number of sexual partners. Despite Daire's work, AIDS devastated a large portion of Dallas' gay community.

As the AIDS crisis reached Dallas, several community organizations worked together to provide support for those living with the disease. Initially, state and local health officials worked with gay organizations to spread awareness about the risks and symptoms associated with the virus. Unfortunately, the lack of state or local funding limited the overall impact health departments had during the early stages of the epidemic. In an effort to meet the needs of their community, gay organizations worked to secure resources and support for people living with AIDS. For example, the Oak Lawn Community Center offered a variety of services, including counseling and housing for indigent people. Additionally, the Dallas Gay Alliance over several years opened a community resource center, a food pantry, and a local AIDS clinic.

Despite providing these resources, gay activists and community leaders became increasingly frustrated with the lack of financial support from both the city of and county of Dallas and the State of Texas. As the disease became more widespread, local organizations simply needed more resources to continue providing the most basic services. In addition to lobbying their elected officials for support, the Dallas Gay Alliance engaged in public protests and activism through the Gay Urban Truth Squad (GUTS). Though inspired by organizations like the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), GUTS protests and demonstrations were considerably less radical or confrontational. For example, in 1988, after city officials spent a half million dollars filling in a giant pit in a vacant lot, GUTS activists placed white crosses throughout the field to represent the number of people who had died as a result of AIDS in Dallas.[4] Additionally, the group erected a sign that showed the budget for AIDS resources compared to the amount of money the city spent on that vacant lot. As a result of this protest, the city of Dallas greatly increased their support for AIDS resources the following year.

Although AIDS has yet to be eradicated, greater access to treatments and medications significantly slowed the spread of the disease by the late-nineties.[5] Although the rate of infections fell, the virus left an indelible mark on Dallas' gay community. Unfortunately, some of the most outspoken activists and leaders within the

[4] Jeff South, "'Graveyard' recalls area AIDS deaths: Protesters cite lack of funds to treat disease," *Dallas Times-Herald*, May 27, 1988. Clipping. Box 76, folder 3, *Resource Center LGBT Collections of the UNT Libraries*, University of North Texas Special Collections.

[5] Lawrence K. Altman, "AIDS Meeting Ends With Hope for Experimental Drugs," *New York Times*, January 27, 1997. https://tinyurl.com/5n7s696h

Dallas Gay Alliance were among those who died from AIDS. Though they are gone, their names remain imbedded within the gay community in Dallas. Today community members can book medical appointments at the Nelson-Tebedo Clinic, named after Bill Nelson and Terry Tebedo, and they can find additional support and resources at the John Thomas LGBT Community Center.

By studying and exploring the gay community in Dallas, we create a much more refined understanding of the gay experience in the United States during the last half of the twentieth century. In addition to adding to the national narrative, this work improves our understanding of gay community building the in American South. This work has illustrated that community members not only worked collectively for equality, but they also used strategies that complimented existing social and political structures within the city. Because of this careful and nuanced approach, community organizers were able to make lasting changes for members of the LGBT community in Dallas.

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