

City and County of San Francisco



Edwin M. Lee
Mayor

Human Rights Commission

Contract Compliance
Dispute Resolution/Fair Housing
Small and Micro Local Business Enterprise
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and HIV Discrimination

Theresa Sparks
Executive Director

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Advisory Committee Minutes of the January 18, 2011 Meeting

Committee Members Present: Commissioner Cecilia Chung, Alex Baty, Bart Broome, Corrin Buchanan, Samer Danfoura, Allison Laureano, Amos Lim, Joseph Peralta, Bianca Polovina, Poonam, Ray Rudolph, Mark Snyder, Lindasusan Ulrich, Vaughn Villaverde, and Amy Whelan.

Committee Members Absent: Ruby Cymrot-Wu, Mark Dunlop, Elizabeth Labeledz (excused), Mark Murphy (excused), and Fayaz Rajani.

Staff Present: Nadia Babella.

Guests Present: Marty Rawlings-Fein and Heather Cassell.

1) **Call to Order and Roll Call:**

Allison Laureano called the meeting to order at 5:37pm. Nadia Babella called the roll. Quorum was achieved.

2) **Public Comment For Items Not on the Agenda:**

No public comments were made.

3) **Approval of the Minutes (Action Item):**

Samer Danfoura moved to approve the October 19, 2010 minutes. Joseph Peralta seconded. Motion was approved. Samer Danfoura moved to adopt the November 15, 2010 minutes. Lindasusan Ulrich seconded. Motion was approved.

4) **Review and Approval of Bisexual Invisibility Report (Action Item):**

Lindasusan Ulrich gave brief presentation and overview of the report. As background, in 2007 the LGBT Advisory Committee took on the topic of bi invisibility. In early 2008, there was a panel presentation on the topic followed by series of meetings with community members. Ms. Ulrich recognized Marty Rawling-Fein for keeping the ball rolling and Cecilia for pushing the group when they needed it. The Bi

Invisibility workgroup put together a survey. She also thanked researchers and community members who let them use their stories and research in the report.

The report acknowledges that word bisexual is not ideal. It does not take into account multiple genders and assumes binary gender. Other words like pansexual or fluid are not widely used yet. To date, there is no best practice in terms of terms.

In early 1990 there was a lot of bi education. In 1993 added word "bisexual" was added to the name of the Advisory Committee. The next year, the bi community was an ally to the transgender community adding their name to the Committee. Ms. Ulrich stressed that it's critical to acknowledge all the people who came before to pave the way. She stated that this is the first report of its kind by a governmental body. It took a long time to put together because there was pain associated with putting it together and uncovering some of the findings. The bi community faces poor health outcomes and discrimination from both mainstream and lesbian gay community. They are not served by organizations. The surveys pointed out that that bisexuals were not served at all. Invisibility isn't a matter of wanting to feel welcome but has real consequences. For example, there is greater depression, hypertension, smoking among bisexuals.

Surveys show that the bisexual community is the single largest population within LGBT community. The numbers are even higher among youth. She urged us to understand this in light of youth suicides. She stated that when we see 2 women together as a couple, we see lesbian, 2 men as gay, man and women as heterosexual; however, anyone or all can be bi.

Most HIV and STD prevention programs don't address bisexuals. Bi women with monosexual partners (lesbian or heterosexual men) experience more domestic violence. In non urban area, lesbian and bi women had same measure of frequent mental distress. In urban areas, on the other hand, lesbian measure of mental distress is less, but for bi women it is doubled. Statistics also show economic disparity. Nearly half of bi women and one third of bi men seriously considered suicide.

There are very few if any bi services. In 2008 and 2009 not a single grant went to bi specific issues. Essentially there has been zero funding for 2 years in a row for largest group in LGBT community. Moreover, the dearth of funding is not called out as a trend.

The report recommends educating the public, city officials, and working with the Department of Public Health to make sure data and brochures address needs of bi, trainings include information about bisexuals, and ensuring that panels include bisexual speakers.

Ms. Ulrich stated that there is a great deal of interest about this report. She stated that she's ready to move away from defending her existence to exploring unique gift that bi's bring to the world.

Questions/comments from the Committee members included:

- Committee members congratulated Lindasusan and the workgroup. They learned a lot from the report.
- Suggestion to include information about bi families and working with COLAGE

- There were recommendations regarding formatting and appendix
- The public health focus was very good

Samer Danfoura moved to adopt the report; Poonam seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Public comments included:

- Marty Rawlings-Fein (former Committee member and member of the bi workgroup) thanked Lindasusan. This will change lives in terms of how people will see things.
- Heather Cassell stated she will have a report on this in the Bay Area Reporter.

The Committee discussed the process for getting it in front of the Commission. The report will be agendized and presented to Commission.

5) Review and Approval of Alternative Family Report (Action Item):

Bart Broome provided background and summary of the report. The idea to have a town forum to recognize and celebrate alternative families in the LGBT community was introduced to the Committee 2 years ago by Samer Danfoura. Many human relationships fall outside of parent, child, partner, or sibling relationships. The LGBT community is impacted, but also former foster youth, youth in general, and senior. A town forum was organized by the Committee in October of 2009. About 50 – 70 people attended. Panelists included: Kathy Sakimura, Judy Appel, Samer Danfoura, and Melanie Rowen. Distinguished guests included: Assemblymember Tom Ammiano and Supervisor David Campos.

The panelist addressed the following three questions:

1. What kind of non spousal relationships exist?

Judy Appel discussed what it means to be a family? She came up with a great definition of “a family is a network of mutual commitment.” This would include caretaker relationships, collectives, emancipated youth communities, co-parenting relationships that include 3 or 4 parents, and grandparents taking care of children. “Golden Girls” is an example of an alternative family relationship. Alternative families are out there and need protection.

2. What legal obstacles do alternative families face?

Obstacles included owning property, lack of rights in hospital and institutional settings, employment benefits, etc. Mutual committed non-romantic people do not get these benefits. Family law is designed to protect families, but not alternative families.

3. What can be done to support alternative families through legal and other means?

Mr. Broome outlined various models including the Colorado law model and the Province of Alberta, Canada model. Part IV of the report has legislative proposals. It is divided into state and local proposals. State laws include: 1) Caregiver cooperative 2) Designated beneficiaries which would mimic the Colorado law 3) Declaration of kinship, which would allow for the filing of a declaration to say we two adults are siblings of choice and would give equal standing as other biological siblings, and 4) Amend CA domestic partner law to extend to opposite sex under 62 and remove intimacy. Local proposal Laws include: 1) Local registry which could affect rent control, hospital visitation, etc. 2) Amend local domestic partnership law to eliminate need for intimacy 3) Provide family law contracting center to have boiler plate contracts at county clerk, and 4) Designated parent.

Advisory Committee members asked questions and commented on the report. Committee discussed expanding co-parenting relationships beyond 2 people. The report will add link to the movie "Family Time" COLAGE put out.

Mark Snyder commented that the word "alternative" can be problematic. COLAGE makes a point not to use it because of the history of referring to the LGBT community as having alternative lifestyles. It might have a marginalizing effect. It was recommended to use "familial bonds" instead of "family-like" in the introduction. Prior to the forum, the committee struggled with the word "alternative." Title of the report need not be the same as the title of the forum as long as there's an explanation. Suggestion was made to address problems with language and limits in language by adding an intro about language. Language that was discussed as possible titles included "chosen family", "diverse familial structure," and "unrecognized family relationships."

It was recommended that we should look at new Obama administration rules on hospital rights to see how that affects some of the ideas. It was also brought up that saying that children might not comprehend coparenting is not accurate and adultist.

The following was proposed, seconded and approved. Pass the report with the following changes:

- Change title from "Beyond Marriage: Recognizing Alternative Family Relationships" to "Beyond Marriage: Unrecognized Family Relationships"
- In the introductions, change "family -like" to "familial"
- Insert discussion on the difficulty of using words, such as " alternative" to describe unrecognized families
- Rewrite paragraph on p. 39 regarding children and comprehension of coparenting. Bart Broome and Samer Danfoura volunteered to work on redrafting the language.
- Add COLAGE website and film "Family Time" to part V
- Delegate authority to staff to approve changes in paragraph on p.39.

6) 2011 Recruitment

The Advisory Committee is looking for new members for the upcoming term. Poonam reported that the application deadline is 10 days from today on January 28. She urged Committee members to reach out

to unrepresented or underrepresented communities on the Committee, including transgender community, bisexual community, Latino/a community, African America community, seniors and people with different abilities.

7) Workgroup Report

a. LGBT Asylum

Bianca Polovina thanked everyone for coming to November panel, which turned out to be a great success. Fayaz Rajani wrote an excellent op-ed in the BAR about the issue. We are now in contact with the asylum office about conducting a series of trainings. Our meeting time has changed to the first Thursday of the month. Next meeting is on February 3, at 5:30.

b. Alternative Family/Senior LGBT

Ray Rudolph reported that the workgroup met and looked at recommendation of new Commissioner Mark Kelleher, who suggested that we can take the topic of intergeneration connection to the radio to reach a broader audience, for example NPR or KQED and that he would be happy to connect us with contacts. We can do a version of our earlier panel on the radio. Another idea is to take the panel to senior community centers. The group meets on second Wednesdays of each month; next meeting is on Feb. 9 at 5:30.

c. Housing Rights

Alex Baty reported that the group met in December. We looked at the idea of putting together a panel for February's meeting on why housing is a human right. We looked at model resolutions from other jurisdictions/countries. We're looking for speakers in academia, but it's been hard to find anyone because of the holiday season.

d. Outreach

Outreach Committee is busy recruiting for the upcoming term.

e. Bisexual Invisibility

Report got approved an hour ago!

8) Members Reports on Activities in the Community (Discussion Item)

Lindasusan Ulrich reported that the White House is putting together a task force to address bullying and suicide among LGBT youth.

Bianca Polovina reported that on February 15 and 16 a tour of Palestinian queer activists will be in town. The February 15 even will be at Mission High School (18th and Dolores) and Cherrie Moraga will be moderating. The February 16 event will be in Oakland in the Community Conversation Pro Arts Gallery with an after party to follow.

Amos Lim reported that there is a new book coming out on binational same-sex couples. Proceeds will benefit organizations working on equality. He will forward link to Nadia Babella to pass on to Committee members.

Joseph Peralta reported that the 50th anniversary of amnesty international conference is coming up. He will research if there's a way to work the Commission into the conference.

Amy Whelan will be joining NCLR as staff attorney.

9) Commissioner Report (Discussion Item)

We have a new Commissioner, Tom Pier. Commissioner Chung stepped down as Chair and the new chair is Michael Sweet and the vice chair is Doug Chan. We now have 4 LGBT Commissioners: Julius Turman, Todd Mavis, Mark Kelleher and Commissioner Chung. Chair Sweet will assign Commissioners to this Committee. Commissioner Chung is interested in creating horizontal leadership and rewriting the bylaws to give more leadership to Committee members.

Commissioner Chung has been asked to be on the Attorney General "Smart on Crimes" transition committee to advise her on LGBT issues. There are various committees looking at LGBT issues, elder issue and it's important that we adopted our reports. If you have any ideas to pass along to the AG, please contact Commissioner Chung or Nadia Babella.

10) Staff Report (Discussion Item)

We have hired 4 new temporary positions to work on the equal benefits backlog.

11) Old/New Business

12) Announcements

13) Adjournment

Commissioner Chung ended meeting at 7:38pm. Meeting was adjourned in Commissioner Chung's honor to thank her for her work.