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Clark University LGBTQ+ History

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Students of "Sexuality and Textuality", Spring 2018

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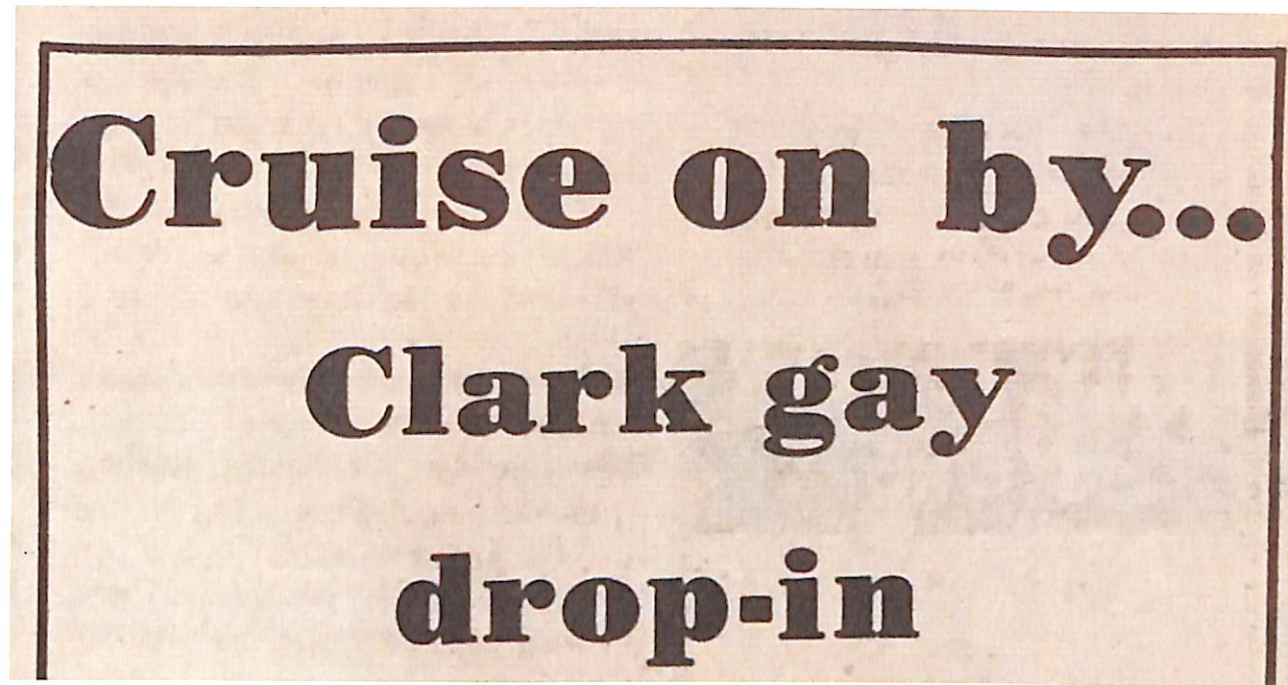


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Clark University LGBTQ+ History



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and the students of

"Sexuality and Textuality" (Comparative Literature 132) Spring 2018

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We dedicate this work to all those with queer memories:

*Yes, Atthis, you may be sure
Even in Sardis
Anactoria will think often of us
Of the life we shared here, when you seemed
The goddess incarnate
To her and your singing pleased her best
Sappho*

The 1970s: On the Forefront

After the 1969 Stonewall Uprisings in New York City, when lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans and queer people (LGBTQ people) resisted a police raid on a bar where they gathered, social attitudes toward homosexuality began to change dramatically. The American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973, meaning that same-sex desire was no longer a mental illness. In 1974, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the right to privacy outlined in Roe v. Wade meant that state laws against "unnatural and lascivious acts" were "inapplicable to private, consensual contact between adults," essentially decriminalizing homosexual sex in the Commonwealth. (Only in 2003 would the Supreme Court of the United States follow this line of reasoning and overturn sodomy laws nationwide). Clark University was on the forefront of this social change: faculty and students were remarkably early in organizing student groups, classes, and conferences on gay and lesbian topics.

Someday, someday men and women will rise, they will reach the mountain peak, they will meet big and strong and free, ready to receive, to partake, and to bask in the golden rays of love.

This is our goal, come help us rise. The Clark Gay Alliance, Box 2118.

Figure 1: Advertisement for the Clark Gay Alliance in the Scarlet, February 20, 1975

COMING OUT....

and admitting to yourself that you're Gay and attracted to people of the same sex will probably be the most difficult singular moment in your life; it can be filled with anguish and pain at first before you recognize the emergence of something new and beautiful within. Coming Out is a transformation, a metamorphosis from something shallow and cold to something deep and warm.

**clark gay drop-in
148 wright hall box a-70 gayline x-7287
6:30 - 10:00 p.m. sun. thru thurs.
12:00 - 4:00 p.m. wed.
wednesday nite is women's nite
(6:30 - 10:00 p.m.)**

Figure 2: The Scarlet, February 6, 1976

The Clark Gay Alliance

The Clark Gay Alliance was one of the earliest gay student organizations in the country. The first references to the Clark Gay Alliance in *The Scarlet*, Clark University's student newspaper, appear in 1975, although there are earlier references to gay and lesbian activities taking place off campus.¹

During its time as a club on Clark's campus, the Clark Gay Alliance served as "a political and social support group for gay and bi-sexual people on campus." The club offered peer counseling services and community to gay students and advocated for university policy that supported these students concerning housing on campus and discrimination.²

Within a year, the Clark Gay Alliance reorganized itself as the "Gay People at Clark," based in an officially recognized Gay Center. There were drop-in hours where students could receive support, meet with each other, and learn about safe spaces in the city. The Gay Center also had a library of gay books and periodicals for students. The general purpose of both the Clark Gay Alliance and the Gay Center was to challenge homophobia on Clark's campus and reduce the stigma around being gay.

The gay student organizations at Clark became a support for gay students throughout Worcester. Worcester Polytechnic Institute's gay alliance, also founded in 1975, used the Clark Gay Alliance's mailbox, although they insisted that they had not been "infiltrated by Clark

¹ "Out of the Closets and Into the Streets," *The Scarlet*, October 22, 1973. "Gay Union Established," *The Scarlet*, March 22, 1974.

² "Clark Gay Alliance Dissolves," *The Scarlet*, November 21, 1975.

students.”³ In October of 1975, the WPI Gay Alliance announced it had gone dormant, and advised gay students at WPI to contact the Clark Gay Alliance.⁴ Similarly, a September 1975 advertisement in *The Scarlet* indicated a desire to create a “Clark – Holy Cross Gay Student Association.”

The formation of the Clark Gay Alliance came eight years after the first organization for gay students in the United States, the Student Homophile League, started at Columbia University in 1967. At least seven students had to join the group publicly in order for it to be recognized.⁵ One of these students was Thomas Doughton, who came from the Worcester area. The creation of the group created a national controversy, with a front-page article in *The New York Times*.⁶

According to one study, there were about two hundred gay student organizations in the United States by the time the Clark Gay Alliance was founded.⁷ At the time, there were at least 3000 institutions of higher education in the US, meaning that fewer than 10% of colleges and universities had a gay student organization like Clark.

Organizations such as the one formed at Clark were uncommon for several reasons. College administrations were overwhelmingly unwilling to fund or support gay student organizations due to their highly controversial status. Additionally, the formation of a gay student organization required members who were willing to come out as something other than straight publicly. This was difficult because openly asserting oneself as part of the LGBTQ+ community often meant putting oneself at risk socially, economically, and politically.

³ “Gay News,” *Newspeak*, May 13, 1975.

⁴ “Gay Alliance Dormant,” *Newspeak*, October 7, 1975.

⁵ Beemyn, “The Silence Is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12.2 (April, 2003): 205-233.

⁶ “Columbia Charters Homosexual Group,” *The New York Times*, May 3, 1967.

⁷ J. Lee Lehman, “Gay Students,” *The Gay Academic*, ed. Louie Crew (ETC Publications, 1978) p. 59.

In *Zami*, her “biomythography,” Audre Lorde described how deeply closeted students had to be in the 1950s:

I realized in profound shock that someone else besides me in the Village gay-girl scene was a closet student at one of the Uptown (meaning past 14th Street) colleges. We would rather have died than mention classes, or tests, or any books other than those everyone else was discussing. This was the fifties and the gulf between the Village gay scene and the college crowd was sharper and far more acrimonious than any town-gown war.⁸

The arrival of gay student groups in the 1970s and 80s allowed for political organizing and mobilization that were instrumental in the gay liberation movement of the twentieth century. Clark’s Gay Student Alliance campaigned for political rights for gay students and connected students to safe spaces in the area. Gay student organizations further allowed for community building and provided gay students with social and political support.

Gay Center

The Gay Center attempts to generate an overall awareness of gay and bisexual issues on campus and to provide speakers, films, dinners and coffeehouses. A library of gay books and periodicals are available to the entire Clark community in the Gay Center Office, which is located in the basement of Sanford Hall.

For more information please contact Box A-10.

Figure 3: Clark Student Handbook 1976

⁸ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982), p. 177.

Funding the CGA

In 1975, *The Scarlet* had a feature called “Pissed-Off,” a well-known space for students to submit anonymous complaints about campus. October’s posting included sentiments such as “Why aren’t the lights outside ever turned on?” and “Why is the granola at Jefferson always so stale?” There was also a section of comments targeted at Clark’s gay community, asking “Why do most of the boys on campus have boyfriends?” and “Why did the gay alliance get \$440 for their budget?” This was likely a response to the newly formed Clark Gay Alliance (CGA).

Paul Camic, a Clark student at the time, gave his response to these remarks in the next Issue of *The Scarlet*. As the treasurer of the CGA, he spoke mostly on the comment that the club got too much funding, or even any funding at all. His reply was campy, sarcastic, and witty, justifying the budget because the alliance “likes parties and imported wine and not cheap stuff like Taylor’s.” His sarcastic tone really got the message across to students that if they thought the University was wrong for giving this club any funding, they needed to read that back and realize how ridiculous they sounded. Members of this community would not take any form of hate speech and would not back down from anyone who challenged their place of belonging on Clark’s campus.

Clark Gay Alliance Justifies Budget

To the Editor:

There were two choice questions which caught my eye in last week's "Pissed Off", namely, "Why do most of the boys on campus have boyfriends?" and "Why did the Gay Alliance get \$440 for their budget?" Interesting questions to say the least, one might call them provocative or even discussion provoking!" To supplement (sic) my anger, disgust, frustration and sense of hopelessness with non-Gays on campus I am responding in hope of making the Clark Community AWARE of their subtle and not-so-subtle put downs and trite remarks regarding Gay People here.

Most of the boys have boyfriends on campus because (take your pick) 1) most of the boys are Gay, 2) boys are getting to know each other, not as competitors, but as sensitive human beings or 3) the girls on campus are hung up about sex which forces the boys to look at each other. How about this?! Let's run a contest and see why most of the boys on campus have boyfriends. We could offer prizes and a lot of other neat stuff. Fun, fun! And look, there are other questions to ask, "Why do most of the girls have girlfriends?" "Why are most straight "Boys" afraid of Gay boys?" (Or, why are they afraid of themselves?"

Now to answer the easy question, "Why did the Gay Alliance receive \$440 for their

budget?" We received that enormous amount of money because we like parties with imported wine and not cheap stuff like Taylor's. We received all that money because we're all so promiscuous and we all advertise ourselves in the personals of The Real Paper. We received all that money because we don't like the music at straight dances so we must have our own. We received all that money for condoms and foam. . .Gee, I almost forget, we don't use that stuff.

Now, let's be serious, why do YOU think we received that unbelievable amount of money? (put your thinking caps on) Let me give you some hints: If you are Gay on campus and want to know more about yourself where do you go? (the Goddard Library has 3 books) You might try one of our monthly workshops which are organized to provide information to all members of the community, Gay and non-Gay. We have guest speakers at our workshops and they do cost money.

Other activities which are geared to the over 200 Gay students here are peer-counseling, dances, potluck suppers, rap groups and an extensive referral service with Another Way Drop In Center. All of us in the Gay Alliance are most willing to answer any questions that you may have. Drop us a line at Box A-70.

Paul M. Camic,
Treasurer CGA

Figure 4: Letter to the Editor of the Scarlet, October 16, 1975

The Gay Liberation Movement

ID & ND 120

THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Fall, 1975

Mr. Koelsch

Movements of minority protest and liberation in America have frequently arisen to challenge conventional scholarly, legal, religious, clinical and popular wisdom. This course will examine one such movement of recent times, the emergence of homosexuals as a minority protest group. The historical and social matrix of gay liberation, its internal development, and its institutional and intellectual effects will be studied in a context of societal response to alternative life-styles in America.

Note: Classes will normally meet Monday and Wednesday from 1:30 to 2:45. Occasionally, because of periods to be missed, they will meet on Fridays at the same hour. There will be at least one Friday field trip. Consciousness-raising activities, such as zaps of Deans' offices, are strictly extra-curricular.

Figure 5: Beginning of William Koelsch's Syllabus for ID/ND 120, "The Gay Liberation Movement" (1975)

In the fall of 1975, Professor William A. Koelsch taught a course called "The Gay Liberation Movement." At this time, one survey found only six institutions in the nation with courses in gay studies; put another way, 97% of the surveyed institutions did not have courses devoted to the subject.⁹

Born in 1933, Koelsch was a Clark University professor whose research focused on the history of geography as well as the history of higher education. He completed his bachelor's degree at Bucknell University in 1955. He went to the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University in 1959 to get his master's degree and then completed his PhD in History from the University of Chicago in 1966. After completing his

⁹ Louie Crew, "Before Emancipation: Gay Persons as Viewed by Chairpersons of English," *The Gay Academic*, ed. by Louie Crew (ETC Publications, 1978), p. 41.

PhD, he joined as an assistant professor of history and geography at Clark University in 1967.

While at Clark, Koelsch published *Clark University, 1887-1987: A Narrative History* in 1987. Still the standard reference work when questions come up about Clark's past, this book focused on Clark's history. While writing this book, Koelsch founded the Clark University Archives.

Koelsch's course on the Gay Liberation Movement focused on the "emergence of homosexuals as a minority protest group." The topics outlined in the syllabus include "Liberated Gay Male Lifestyles" and "Liberated Lesbian Female Lifestyles," as well as "Homosexuality as a 'Natural' Phenomenon" and "Homosexuality as a 'Cultural' Phenomenon."

Assigned readings included Peter Fischer's *The Gay Mystique: The Myth and Reality of Male Homosexuality*, Troy Perry's *The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*, Sydney Abbott and Barbara Love's *Sappho Was a Right On Woman: A Liberated View of Lesbianism*, as well as Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*.

There were several prominent visitors to the class, including activist and author Allen Young, who spoke on his call for action, "Out of the Closets: A Gay Manifesto."

In a speech given on the occasion of his retirement, Koelsch remembered bringing a transsexual to speak to this class: "the class met, saw there was a woman beside me, and settled down. I introduced the speaker, who then began in a man's voice. Needless to say, at that point a dropped pin would have sounded like a rifle shot... identity issues are never far from the surface, and I believe that all of us

grew enormously in our own self-understanding in that absorbing 75 minutes."¹⁰

A note from Paul Camic, one of the leaders of the Clark Gay Alliance, showed how important the course was to the students.

William Koelsch Phd.
professor of geog. history

Clark Gay Alliance
box 2118
Clark University

Dear Dr. Koelsch,

The word "ecstatic" would not be enough to describe our feelings toward your consideration of having a course on "The Gay Liberation Movement". There will be two members of the CGA at your office on the 30th anniversary at noon. I cannot possibly thank you enough for asking us to see you. With many thanks and love,

Paul M. Camic
for the Clark Gay Alliance

ps. The Clark Gay Alliance and sympathetic friends, both gay + straight, are all very enthusiastic. The people (although few) that have heard from the meeting are most interested. I feel the course, if offered, will be well received.

Figure 6: Letter of Appreciation for Koelsch's 1975 Course, Clark University Archives

¹⁰ William Koelsch Files, Clark University Archives

A. Nolder Gay

During a 1973 sabbatical, William Koelsch became personally involved with the quickly expanding gay movement. He rented an apartment in Boston in order to be closer to the cause. While there, he began to write a column for the *Gay Community News*, a newly published newspaper, under the pseudonym A. Nolder Gay (An Older Gay).

The column usually featured many of Koelsch's personal experiences. He created a campy type of humor and sarcasm in his writing to surround and expose the ridiculousness of these very real experiences. His writing allows for comedic relief in a tense and unsure time. Koelsch, as A. Nolder Gay, was able to address difficult conversations while offering advice within the gay community using this approach

The *Gay Community News* originated as a local paper during the early stages of the gay liberation struggle. The paper was a resource for the community while reporting on a wide selection of gay and lesbian affiliated news. It provided knowledge on subjects such as prisoners' rights, AIDS, and gay rights.

The first A. Nolder Gay column published appeared in issue #13 of the *Gay Community News* on September 1973. For the next 15 years, various other gay papers featured the essays, such as *Esplanade*, *Integrity Forum*, and *Bay Windows*.

"Professor Gay," a column that appeared in 1974, focused on his work as a teacher at a university. In it, he rejected the idea that a gay professor should "develop a gay studies course, shift [their] research to gay topics, become the unofficial counselor to gay students." He was skeptical of the idea that a gay professor should aspire to become a role model, declaring, "the underlying assumption, that twenty-year-

olds get their models of ideal relationships from their professors, gay or straight, is simply ludicrous.”¹¹

In 1978, Koelsch compiled his best columns from the *Gay Community News* and *Esplanade* into a book entitled *The View from the Closet: Essays on Gay Life and Liberation*. In 1990, Koelsch published a second book entitled *Some of My Best Friends: Essays in Gay History and Biography*.

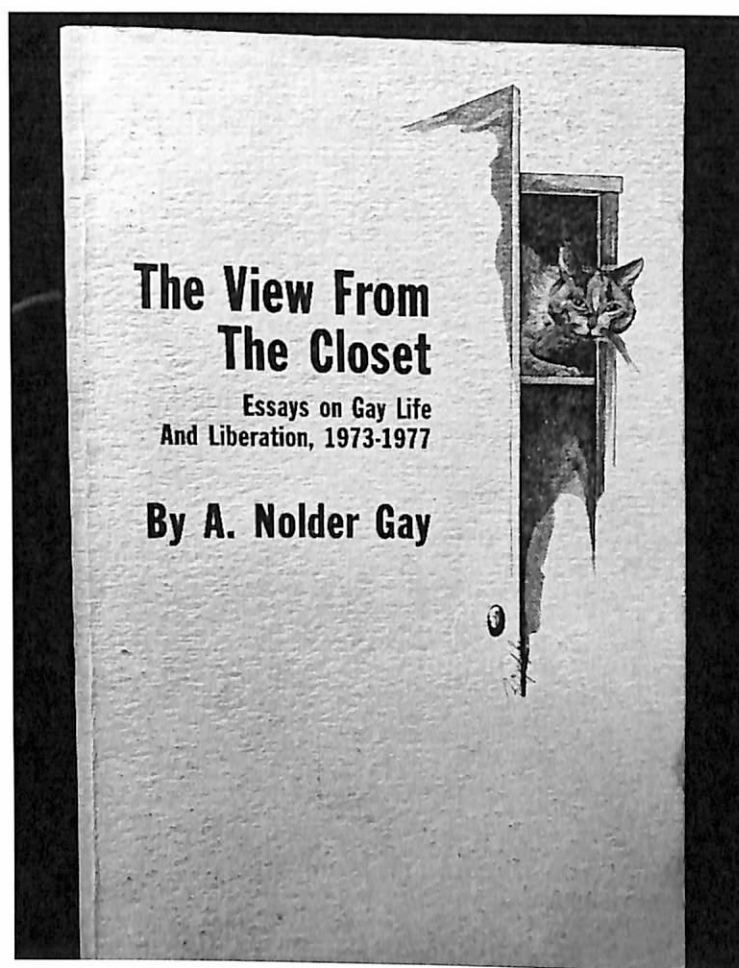


Figure 7: A. Nolder Gay, *The View from the Closet* (1978)

¹¹ A. Nolder Gay, *The View from the Closet: Essays on Gay Life and Liberation, 1973-1977* (Boston: Union Park Press, 1978), p. 5.

The 1976 New England Gay Conference

From March 26 to March 28, 1976, Clark University had the honor of hosting the fourth annual New England Gay Conference (NEGC). The year's motto was "Our Diverse Selves," as the organizers of the conference were devoted to representing the multitudinous experience of the twentieth-century gay. Lorraine Martinez, one of the coordinators of the conference, explained to the *Worcester Sunday Telegram* that the aim of the diversity outlook was to exhibit how "gay people are just as diverse as people who smoke cigarettes" and to accentuate "acceptance and openness."¹² Seeking to highlight the intersectionality of modern gay life, the conference hosted workshops spanning such topics as civil rights for the gay community, gender identity, mental health, religion, race, and sado-masochism.¹³

Clark University made clear that "the Dean's Office at Clark has announced their full support for the conference," adding that "all the profits from the conference will go to the Clark Scholarship Fund."¹⁴ Publicity for the conference was far-reaching: an announcement even showed up in the March 1976 edition of the *Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter*.¹⁵

The conference began with a performance by the Boston Ballet on March 26, 1976, lending the event an air of sophisticated engagement. Fifteen comprehensive workshops took place throughout the

¹² Polly Pruneau, "300 Attend Homosexuals' Conference at Clark U," *Worcester Sunday Telegram*, 28 Mar. 1976, p. 25.

¹³ "The 4th Annual New England Gay Conference Schedule of Workshops and Activities." *The Scarlet*, 26 Mar. 1976, p. 13.

¹⁴ "N. E. Gay Conference to Be Held at Clark." *The Scarlet*, 11 Mar. 1976.

¹⁵ *Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter*, Mar. 1976, p. 6.

remainder of the day, exploring both men's and women's issues, such as "Men's Assertiveness" and "Women Loving Women." There were talks about recreation and activity within the gay community, as well as workshops devoted to poetry and understanding the gay self through personal writings. An additional groundbreaking workshop centered upon the topic of sado-masochism, a topic that continues to be taboo into the twenty-first century. The second day wrapped up with a performance by the singing duo Jade and Sarsaparilla.

The third day on March 28 commenced with a talk about the possibility of a New England Gay Clearing House, an institution that would "provide legal services, an information service for parents of gays, counseling for newly established gay groups and an exclusive library of gay literature for the New England gay community."¹⁶

One key goal of this conference was to turn the gay community of New England into a hub of activism and awareness, and so the last formal event of the day focused on "lobbying for civil rights for homosexuals in Massachusetts." Conference coordinator Martinez pointed out in the *Worcester Sunday Telegram* that "Gay liberation is becoming more important," claiming that "every presidential candidate has mentioned it his and her campaign this year." Nonetheless, she continued, "That's not acceptance yet. But at least we're noticed."¹⁷

¹⁶ "Gay Conference at Clark a Success." *The Scarlet*, 1 Apr. 1976.

¹⁷ Polly Pruneau, "300 Attend Homosexuals' Conference at Clark U," *Worcester Sunday Telegram*, 28 Mar. 1976, p. 25.

Four prominent activists of the time lent their talents to enhance the conference's content:

Loretta Lottman

Loretta Lottman generated excitement at the commencement of the conference with her keynote speech, as her reputation as a feminist and gay activist was well known at the time. She also hosted "Our Invisible Selves," one of the workshops devoted to using poetry and writing as tools for communication and discovery.

In the early seventies, Lottman was instrumental in the emerging battle to represent homosexuals on television, especially in a positive manner. She established Gay Media Action in 1973, "which monitored television programs and protested antigay stereotyping." The grassroots campaign that she organized in 1974 crusaded to cancel a homophobic episode of a popular television program at the time. In 1975, Lottman appeared before the National Association of Television Program Executives in order to make her case for creating a more humanistic portrait of gay characters on TV.¹⁸

Lottman had been an active participator in a previous New England Gay Conference held in 1975 in Provincetown, Massachusetts.¹⁹ From October 10 to 14, 1975, she was a panelist on "the nation's largest gay commemoration of the U.S. Bicentennial... the Bicentennial Conference on Gays and the Federal Government."²⁰ There, she spoke on such

¹⁸ William N Eskridge, "Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet: Establishing Conditions for Lesbian and Gay Intimacy, Nomos, and Citizenship, 1961-1981," *Hofstra Law Review*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1997, p. 904.

¹⁹ Abe Haruvi, "Report: N. E. Gay Conference," *Gay Community News*, 29 Mar. 1975, p. 1.

²⁰ "National Experts Gather: Major Gay Bicentennial Meeting to Convene," *The Chicago Gay Crusader*, p. 4.

issues relating to the Federal Government's legislation, and how it affected gay lives.

Thomas Doughton

Thomas Doughton was a noted gay activist who led the "Third World Workshop." Doughton, who often spelled his name "Dotten" when writing or speaking about homosexual topics, was a man of African American and Native American descent from Worcester who received his bachelor's degree from Columbia University, where he was one of the founders of the first gay student group in the country, the Student Homophile League.²¹

Back in Worcester, Doughton led the fight in June, 1974, to prohibit "discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of sexual preference or orientation." Interestingly, he likened the plight of the gay community to that of the black community: "As a homosexual I find myself as much a pariah, an outcast, as I was when I was black and there existed no laws to protect me."²² Although the ordinance ultimately failed to pass, Doughton's comparison of blacks and gays was an important claim.

In the talk he gave at Clark, which appeared that same year in *After You're Out*, Doughton continued to think about the relationships of racial and sexual identities. He explained that he had embraced the gay movement because "only gay liberation appeared to offer me freedom as both a black and a faggot."²³ However, the gay liberation front did not offer willing acceptance. The racial tensions within the gay community may not have been readily apparent; nevertheless, they pulsed beneath the surface. Doughton came to realize that being a gay

²¹ Martin Duberman, *Has the Gay Movement Failed?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), p. 41.

²² "Worcester Gay Ordinance?" *Gay Community News*, 15 June 1974.

²³ Thomas Dotten [=Doughton], "Nigger in the Woodpile," *After You're Out: Personal Experiences of Gay Men and Lesbian Women*, ed. by Karla Jay and Allen Young (Pyramid Books, 1978), p. 218.

person of color was a completely separate struggle for justice. When he moved to Boston area, he saw that the mainstream community marginalized and largely ignored most of the people of color. In order to remedy this inequity, Doughton then decided to “advocate and participate in separate Third World conferences and organizations” in which he continually fought for the rights of men and women of color who did not have an equal voice in the gay community.²⁴

Currently, Doughton is a Senior Lecturer at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at the College of Holy Cross; he recently gave a talk at Clark reviewing his days as an activist.

Ann Maguire

Ann Maguire was a powerhouse in the gay community and has been crusading for improved rights since the 1970s. She lent the conference her inimitable force of will and intelligence in the forms of two workshops: “Community Health” and “Gays and Mental Health.”

The GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) cited Maguire as a figure who “helped build the political and cultural infrastructure of the gay community.” Maguire managed the political campaign of Elaine Noble, who in 1974 went on to become Massachusetts State Representative as “the country’s first openly gay or lesbian state level elected official.” This election had happened only two years before the 1976 NEGC, and the victorious energy that Maguire brought along with her after the win was an empowering force for the conference.²⁵

²⁴ Duberman, Martin. *Has the Gay Movement Failed?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), p. 41

²⁵ “GLAD to Honor Ann Maguire at 37th Annual Summer Party in Provincetown,” *GLAD: Legal Advocates and Defenders*, 22 June 2018, www.glad.org/post/glad-to-honor-ann-maguire-at-37th-annual-summer-party-in-provincetown/.

Ann Weld-Harrington

Ann Weld-Harrington was another speaker to contribute her talents to the New England Gay Conference of 1976. She provided a workshop on Bar Politics in which she discussed “some of the hidden policies behind the bars.” This was a reiteration of a workshop she had given at the third annual New England Gay Conference in 1975, which she helped organize.

In 1970, Weld-Harrington co-created the Gay Activists Alliance of Cleveland, an organization in which she held a co-chairperson position for four years. During that time, she “fought hard in the courts and on the streets to keep police and hoodlums out of gay bars.” As of November 1976, Weld-Harrington was a candidate for Selectman of Provincetown.²⁶

Conclusion

Looking back to the year 1976, the New England Gay Conference was a source of education, a breeding ground for inventive political ideas, and an incubator of empowerment for the gay community at the time. One disgruntled lesbian did find some faults: “I was very disappointed with the whole program, from where it was held, to the shit-food served, to the very poor accommodations.”²⁷ Most other attendees and administrators, however, gave the conference positive reviews. Over 300 people attended the conference, including “approximately thirty-five people from New York, Baltimore, Seattle, and even one person from Berlin, Germany.” *The Scarlet* reported that “this year’s [conference] was definitively, qualitatively superior to any of the previous conferences.”²⁸ The attention paid to diversity was a driving

²⁶ Ann Weld-Harrington, “Candidate,” *Sojourner*, Nov. 1976, p. 2.

²⁷ “The New England Gay Conference – An Open Letter,” *Hummingbird*, 1976, p. 13.

²⁸ “Gay Conference at Clark a Success,” *The Scarlet*, 1 Apr. 1976.

force of the conference's success. Where "in the past, conferences tended to lump all gay people into one group," this year focused on nurturing all factions of the gay community. Lorraine Martinez reflected on the experience expressively: "Everyone who came... really wanted to be here, they got really involved... A lot of effort is being put into the workshops. It's really invigorating."²⁹ The conference's ability to incite excitement and generate new interest in gay topics was an admirable feat.

²⁹ Polly Pruneau, "300 Attend Homosexuals' Conference at Clark U," *Worcester Sunday Telegram*, 28 Mar. 1976, p. 25.

The 4th Annual NEW ENGLAND GAY CONFERENCE Schedule of Workshops and Activities

(NOTE: All events take place in the Academic Center, Clark University unless otherwise noted.)

FRIDAY, MARCH 26

8:15 p.m. The Boston Ballet performing one piece by Tchaikovsky and one piece by Scott Joplin ("Rags").
Tickets are \$3.00 Atwood Hall

SATURDAY, MARCH 27

9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m. Conference registration, Academic Center. \$1.00 registration fee.

10:00 a.m. — 10:30 a.m. Opening speech entitled "Diversity not Divislyty" by Loretta Lottman

10:30 a.m. — 12:00 p.m. **FIRST SET OF WORKSHOPS**

1. **GAY CIVIL RIGHTS.** A presentation of the rights Gay people DO have and what rights under the constitution we are denied. Rm. 320.
2. **GENDER IDENTITY (TV., TS., TG.).** A look at the sexual continuum. What is masculine? What is feminine? Rm. 218.
3. **GAYS AND THE MEDIA.** Joe Abreu speaks on how one can work through the media to promote a Gay perspective. Rm. 410.
4. **SMALL CITY AND TOWN GAYS.** Yes, dykes and faggots do exist five miles outside of Boston and they are organizing! Rm. 202
5. **WORKSHOP ON SADO-MASOCHISM.** A workshop lead by Phil Alleyn and Joan Bridi-Miller for both women and men. Rm. 222
6. **COMMUNITY HEALTH.** What do you know about your body? Lead by Sanford Reder, M.D. and Ann Maguire. Rm. 133.

12:00 — 1:30 Lunch

1:30 - 3:00 SECOND SET OF WORKSHOPS.

1. **GAYS AND MENTAL HEALTH.** A discussion lead by Richard Pillard m.d., Ann Maguire, and Holly Humphreys, of therapy methods and situations and where to train to get help. Rm. 320.
2. **WOMEN LOVING WOMEN -** A symposium on sexual awareness lead by Ellen Gardner. Rm. 218.
3. **BAR POLITICS.** Ann-Weld Harrington speaks on some of the hidden policies behind the bars. Rm. 410.
4. **RURAL RECREATION.** Get out of the bars and into backpacking, hiking, cross - country skiing, and snowshoeing. A demonstration with COMPLETE equipment. Rm. 202.
5. **THIRD WORLD WORKSHOP.** A talk entitled "Nigger in the Woodpile" lead by Tom Dotton and others. Rm. 222.
6. **PANEL ON RELIGION.** B'nai Haskalah, Dignity, Integrity, and MCC present their positions. Rm. 133.

3:15 — 4:45 THIRD SET OF WORKSHOPS.

1. **GAYS IN ACADEMIA.** A.G.A.U. presentation... Rm. 320
2. **MEN'S ASSERTIVENESS.** If you are tired of being manipulated come see Peter Dunn speak on how to be a stronger individual. Rm. 218.
3. **WOMEN'S CONSCIOUSNESS.** Remember, "Know Thyself" - (Freud, Clark Univ., 1909?). Rm. 222
4. **URBAN RECREATION.** First talk, then action. A discussion lead by Don Meuse and others followed by an optional game of volleyball, paddleball, or squash. Rm. 202
5. **GAY YOUTH.** With Project Lambda. Rm. 410.
6. **WORKSHOP ON SADO-MASOCHISM.** Lynn Rosen leads a second workshop on this popular topic. Rm. 133.

4:45 — 5:00 Housing Registration. Rm. 320.

5:00 — 6:30 **POETRY WORKSHOP.** Poetry readings by the Good Gay Poets and members of the Clark Univ. Community. Rm. 218.

5:00 — 6:30 John-Michael Williams speaks on male masturbation. Rm. 133.

5:00 — 6:00 At this time a few rooms are available for ad hoc workshops. (Rooms 320, and 410.)

7:00 — "Our Invisible Selves". A poetry/writing workshop lead by Loretta Lottman. To quote Loretta: "This could be a work session where we could read a little to each other and talk about why so many people write poetry and so few show it to anyone else." **ONLY THOSE PEOPLE WHO BRING SOME PERSONAL WRITING ARE ALLOWED TO COME TO THIS WORKSHOP.** Room number to be announced.

9:00 p.m. Concert: Jade & Sarsaparilla. \$1.00 Women's Gym in Jonas Clark Hall.

SUNDAY, MARCH 28

10:30 a.m. **Future Goals?** What to do with "our" diverse selves"? Perhaps a New England Gay Clearing House? Rm. 320

12:30 — Brunch, compliments of the Mail Box — At 282 Main St., Worc.

1:30 — **GAY LEGISLATION —** Lobbying for the Mass. Gay Civil Rights Bill. Rm. 218

1:30 — The rest of the day is devoted to additional workshops proposed by people/groups attending the conference. If possible, and if requested, some of the old workshops may also be able to be repeated at this time. We, the conference organizers, urge you to take advantage of the great number of rooms available to say what is on your mind.

Figure 8: The New England Gay Conference, The Scarlet

The 1980s: Fighting for Lives and Rights

Ronald Reagan's sweeping Electoral College victories in 1980 and 1984 signaled a conservative shift across the United States of America that pushed back against the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. The emergence of HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s changed the trajectory of gay liberation. The LGBTQ+ community at Clark responded by building coalitions, fighting AIDS, and demanding equality.

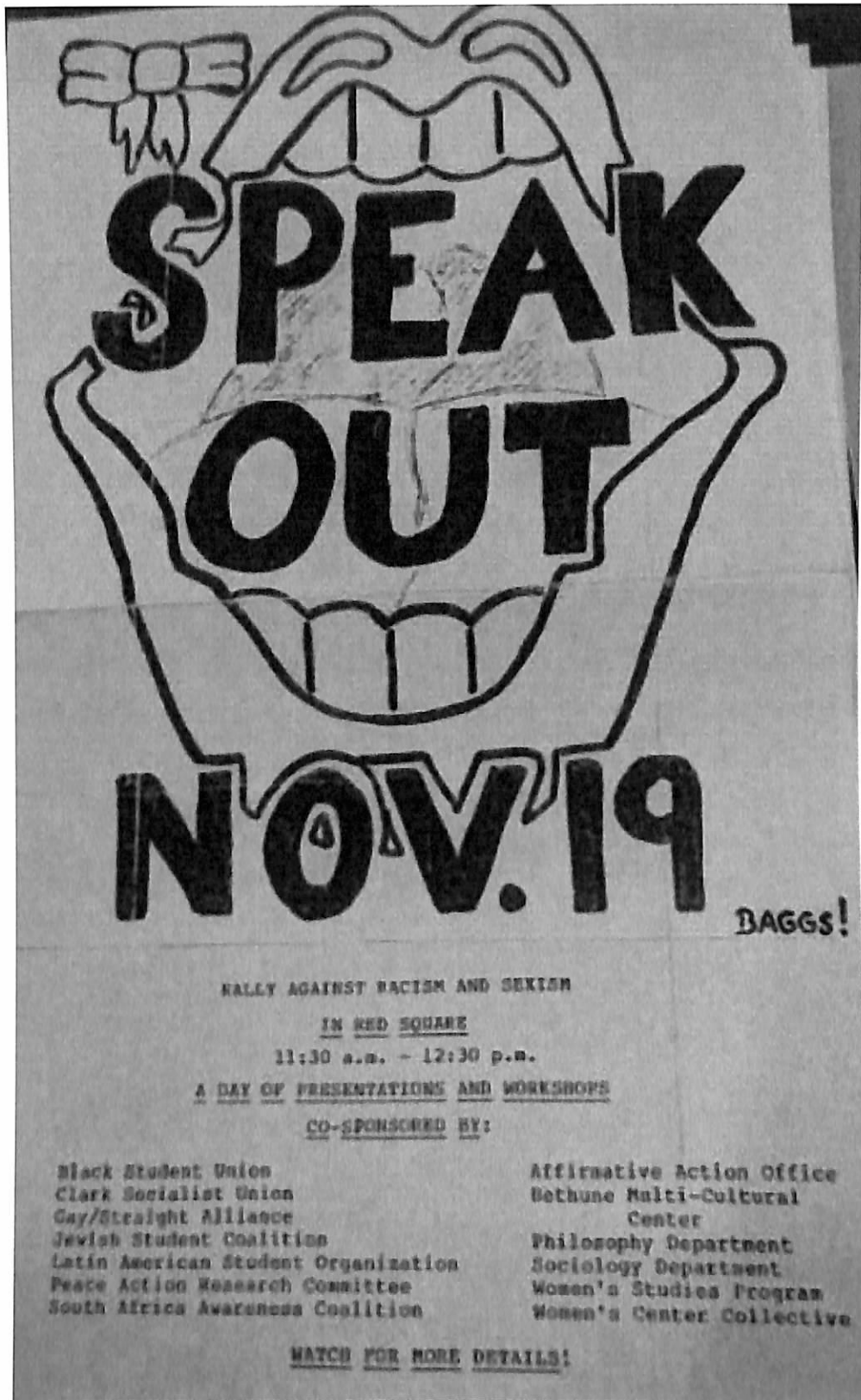


Figure 9: Poster for 1985 Demonstration

Coalition Building

On November 19, 1985, a rally called SPEAK OUT was held at Clark which aimed to be a day for students of racial and sexual minority groups, as well as their allies, to speak out against racism and sexism displayed on campus. Along with the Gay/Straight Alliance, the Black Student Union, the Clark Socialist Union, the Jewish Student Coalition, the Latin American Student Coalition, the South African Awareness Coalition, the Woman's Center Collective, and other clubs sponsored the event.

At this point in time, Clark GSA (which was no longer an abbreviation for "Gay Student Alliance," but rather for "Gay Straight Alliance") stood out amongst its neighbors, being the "only organized gay group operating between Amherst and Boston," according to an article in *The Scarlet* titled "Gays and Straights: Vive la Différence."³⁰ Whether or not it is true that there were no other organized gay groups in central Massachusetts, it is significant that the people at Clark felt that way.

At the time, Dominic Carota and Andrea Ellis led the GSA. Both held high hopes that the group would be a positive influence on the atmosphere at Clark. Despite this aspiration, however, Carota recognized that "the student population had a long way to go." According to the same article in *The Scarlet*, it was not uncommon for out queer students at Clark to be faced with harassment and even physical confrontation when expressing their sexuality. The GSA could not even hang up posters for their club without homophobic students tearing them down and replacing them with new posters reading, "Fags and Lesbos Unite," with the letters GSA crossed out at the bottom.³¹

³⁰ Jennifer Ernst, "Gays and Straights: Vive la Différence," *The Scarlet*, 2 October 1986.

³¹ Kat Frischer, "Minority Rights and Wrongs," *The Scarlet*, 23 April 1987.

In 1987, the student group changed its name to the GLBSA: The Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Straight Alliance.³² While the group itself was becoming more inclusive, the rest of the student body unfortunately was not. Some students remarked that they had bottles thrown at them, and thus did not feel safe walking home alone. Despite this fear-inducing behavior, students within the GLBSA continued their mission, even influencing members of the faculty to join in the fight for queer students and thus become more intersectional. The Dean of Minority Affairs, Christine Maddox-Wiley, stated that although her area of expertise was working with racial minorities, she couldn't fight for her rights if she didn't "fight for other people's also."

Audre Lorde would be proud of this progression towards intersectionality, since she remembered "how being black and gay and lonely felt" during her childhood, as she explained in her "biomythography," *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*.³³ Although the 1980's were a time of struggle for queer Clarkies, it was a time of slow but progressive change. The influence of gay student groups such as the GSA, later the GLBSA, and eventually BiLAGA, carrying on the legacy into the 1990s, had an impact on the university that is evident in its inclusivity today. Being a part of gay student groups may have been scary for students, but as Lorde would put it, "Maybe that is all that bravery is, a stronger fear of not being brave."³⁴

³² Debby Hutchinson, "The Battle Against Homophobia," *The Scarlet*, 23 April 1987.

³³ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982), p. 176.

³⁴ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982), p. 93.

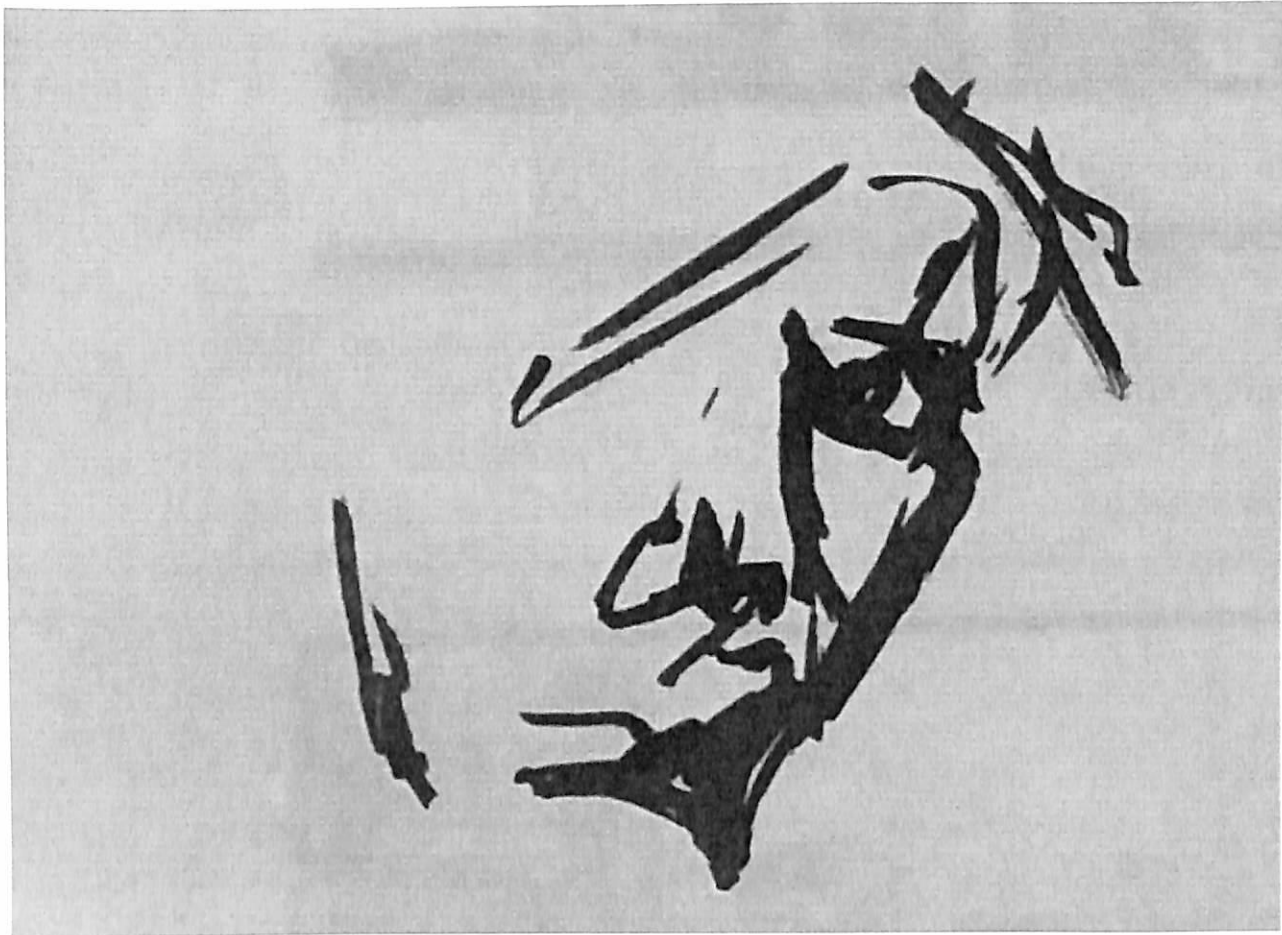


Figure 10: Illustration by Jessica Schunmann, "Gay at Clark," *The Alternative*, May 1986

Equal Opportunity

In 1986, thanks to efforts of the GSA and disruptive faculty members like Professor William Koelsch, as well as like-minded alumni, President Richard Traina and the Board of Trustees included "sexual orientation" in the University's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Statement.³⁵ The following year, the University published the actual anti-discrimination clause in the Clark Student Handbook and

³⁵ Andrea Ellis and Dominic Carota, *1986 Announcement on Non Discrimination*. Clark University Gay, Lesbian and Straight Alliance, 1986.

implemented the policy. Clark's culture of homophobia, however, was unsurprisingly much harder to shake.

Professor William Koelsch's June 1986 letter to Dominic Carota of the GSA discussed the obstacles barring the implementation of a non-discrimination clause, indicating that President Traina was "not hostile to the idea, but some Trustees" were. Koelsch pointed out that other universities had "adopted it, notably Yale."³⁶ Students from the GSA followed up on this hint, collecting letters from their peers at Harvard and other universities, documenting the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the non-discrimination clauses of peer institutions. These efforts came to fruition in form of the 1987 institutionalization of the Equal Opportunity Statement (EOS), barring discrimination on basis of sexual preference or orientation in the Clark Student Handbook.³⁷

This change in policy, however, did not end Clark's culture of homophobia, which did not, in any shape or form, immediately lessen after the acceptance and adoption of the new policies. A May 1986 article in a Clark student newspaper, *The Alternative*, called "Bridging Misconceptions and Misunderstandings: Being Gay at Clark," underscored the constant compromises that queer Clarkies made daily to conform to Clark's heterosexist standards, "concerning social acceptance and ultimately Gay Civil Rights."³⁸

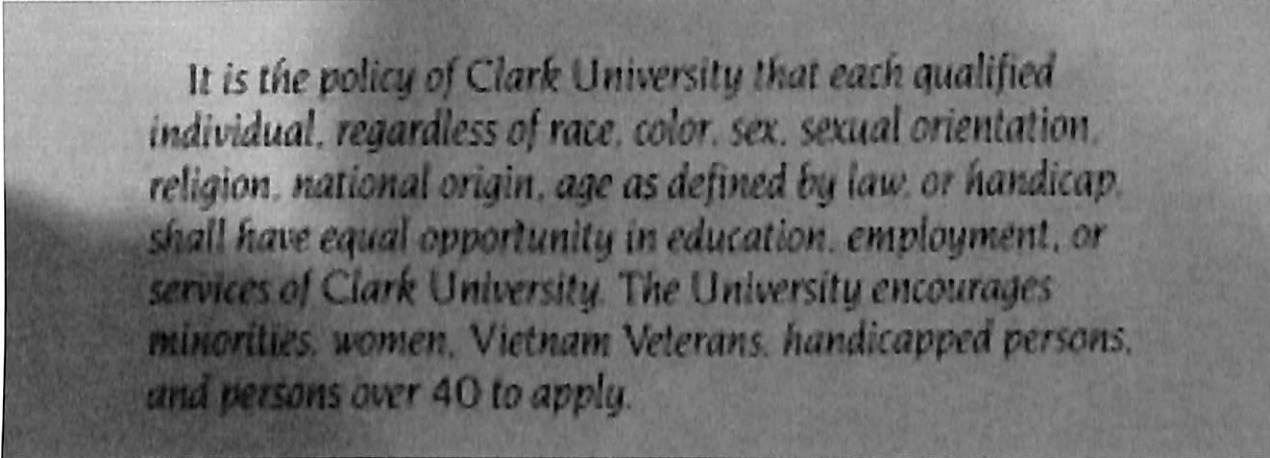
Furthermore, an article written by Debby Hutchinson in Clark's *The Scarlet* in April 1987, after the change in policy, titled "The Battle

³⁶ William Koelsch, "Letter from William Koelsch to Dominic Carota concerning the GSA." Received by Dominic Carota, June 1986. Letter.

³⁷ Mona Olds, *1987 Dean of Students Policy Change*. Clark University, 1987.

³⁸ Robert L. Allison, et al. "Bridging Misconceptions and Misunderstandings: Being Gay At Clark." *The Alternative*, May 1986.

against Homophobia,” criticized the delayed action of Traina’s administration and the lack of knowledge of and empathy for gay rights on campus.³⁹ It emphasized the surplus of homophobic instances on campus: a poster with “FAGS & LESBOS UNITE” on campus, while posters for the Gay/lesbian/bisexual/straight alliance [GLBSA] were torn down. In response, the Dean of Minority Affairs at the time, Catherine Maddox-Wiley declared, “I’m not sure what type of minority [gays] are...My forte is racial minorities.”⁴⁰



It is the policy of Clark University that each qualified individual, regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age as defined by law, or handicap, shall have equal opportunity in education, employment, or services of Clark University. The University encourages minorities, women, Vietnam Veterans, handicapped persons, and persons over 40 to apply.

Figure 11: First inclusion of "sexual orientation" in nondiscrimination clause of student handbook, 1987

³⁹Debby Hutchinson, "The Battle Against Homophobia," *The Scarlet*, 23 Apr. 1987.

⁴⁰ Debby Hutchinson, "The Battle Against Homophobia," *The Scarlet*, 23 Apr. 1987.

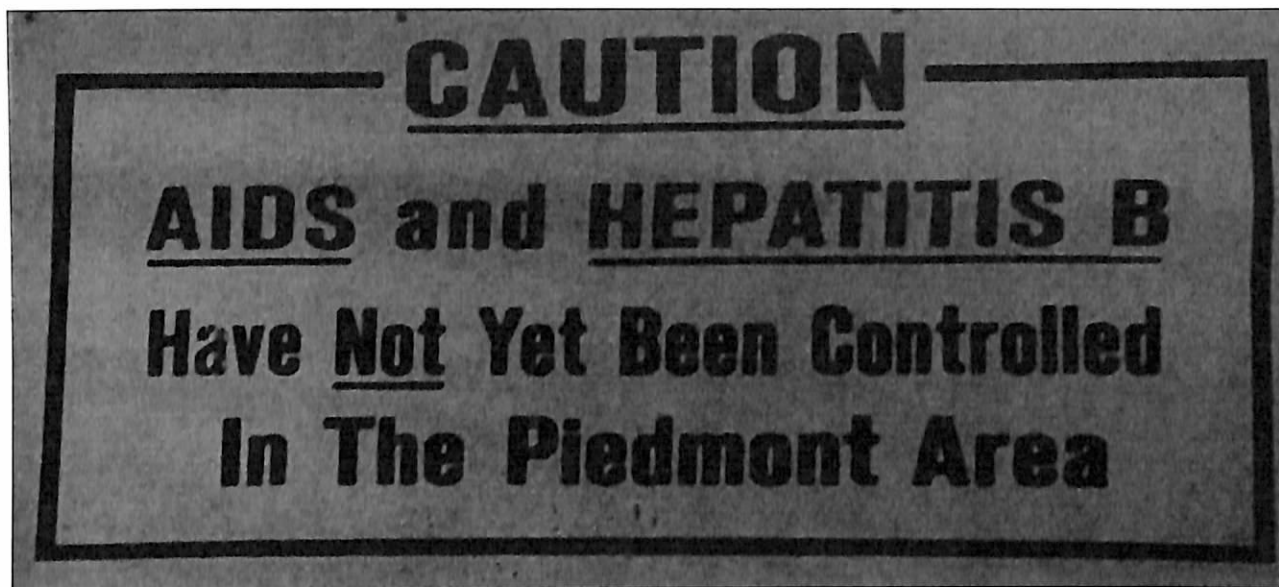


Figure 12: Billboard near Clark campus, 1987

AIDS

In 1987, *The Scarlet* reported that this cautionary sign was just four blocks from Clark's campus.⁴¹ In his book, *Replacing Citizenship: AIDS Activism and Radical Democracy*, Michael P. Brown discussed this very sign:

A friend and I walk slowly along Piedmont Street, an inner city neighborhood in Worcester, Massachusetts. It is a hot and humid New England summer day in 1986. As we approach the infamous corner of Main Street and Piedmont, an intersection well known for sex and drug trades, the decayed urban landscape seems washed out by the haze. Yet clearly I can see a large white billboard above a boarded up three-decker. It reads something like "Warning! AIDS and Hepatitis B Have Not Been Controlled in the Piedmont Area!" We scoff at the usefulness of the city's outreach strategy. I am sure the stark billboard did little to

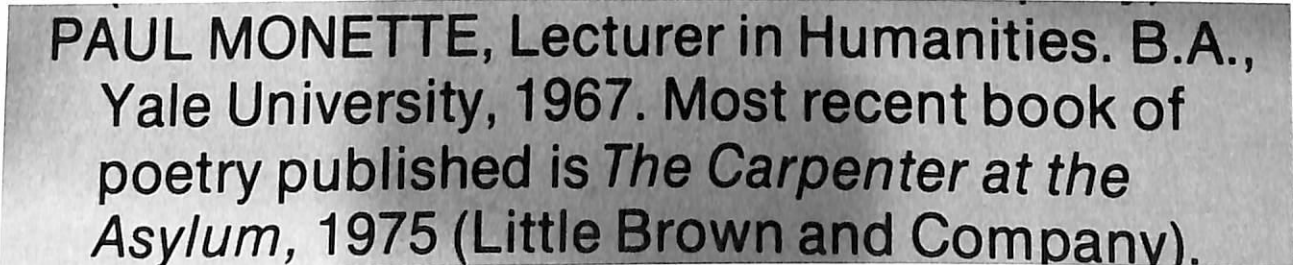
⁴¹ Scarlet Cover Story, *AIDS Project Worcester: A Man and His Crusade*, October 1, 1987

promote the lives of the citizens under its Spartan face, many of whom speak Spanish, not English.⁴²

Brown was incorrect in his supposition that this billboard was a city effort – in fact, a private citizen had put it up. But he was accurate in depicting the multilingual characteristic of the neighborhood. He was also correct in noting that drug dealing and prostitution were rampant in this area, just a few blocks from Clark University.

AIDS became prominent in the early 1980s. For gays, especially gay men, HIV/AIDS arrived just at the time that they were beginning to disentangle the connection between homosexuality and disease. Already in 1911, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* had shown the depth of the tradition of linking same-sex desire with sickness. HIV/AIDS reinforced these connections.

At the same time as *The Scarlet* was posting on the billboard, Paul Monette, who had taught at Clark in 1975/76, was completing his AIDS memoir, *Borrowed Time*, which was one of the first literary accounts of the disease. Monette channeled all the emotions associated with loving someone and losing them to a disease, as he wrote this account of the last two years spent with lover, Roger Horwitz, who died of AIDS in 1986.⁴³



PAUL MONETTE, Lecturer in Humanities. B.A., Yale University, 1967. Most recent book of poetry published is *The Carpenter at the Asylum*, 1975 (Little Brown and Company).

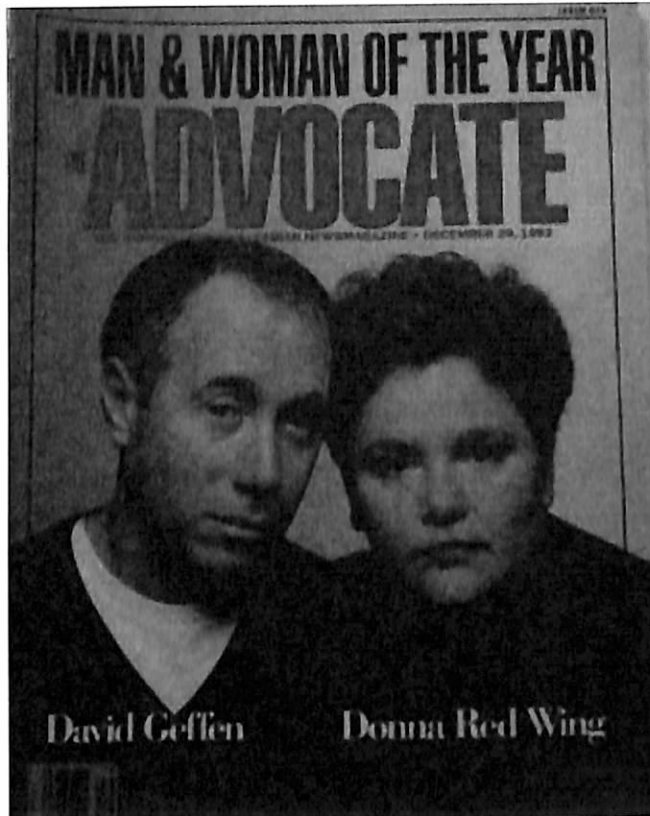
Figure 13: Paul Monette in the catalog of Clark's College of Continuing and Professional Development, 1975-76

⁴² Michael P Brown, *Replacing Citizenship: AIDS Activism and Radical Democracy* (New York: Guilford Press, 1987), p. 1.

⁴³ Paul Monette, *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988)

The Lesbian Continuum at Clark

It is particularly noteworthy how many lesbian activists made an impact at Clark and in Worcester in the 1980s.



Perhaps Worcester local, Donna Red Wing, made the biggest splash. After earning a bachelor's degree from Assumption College, she got a master's degree through COPACE at Clark in 1987. A woman who truly embodied the motto, "Challenge Convention and Change the World," she became Executive Director of the Lesbian Community Project in Portland, Ore., National Field Director for both the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance

against Defamation, as well as Policy Director for the Gill Foundation.⁴⁴ Red Wing "spent a lifetime advocating for the poor, abused children, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, against war, bigotry, hatred and violence." The Religious Right denounced her as "the most dangerous woman in America."⁴⁵ In contrast, the national gay and lesbian magazine, *The Advocate* named her "Woman of the Year" only a few years after she graduated from Clark. She never forgot

⁴⁴ "Resume," *The Advocate*, June 21, 2005, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Bleeding Heartland, April 18, 2018. <https://www.bleedingheartland.com/2018/04/18/iowans-remember-donna-red-wing/>

her roots, coming back to speak at Worcester Pride events in 1993 and 1997.

Red Wing devoted her life to fighting “compulsory heterosexuality,” a term made famous by lesbian poet and essayist Adrienne Rich, to whom Clark University offered an honorary degree in 1981. Rich publicly declined the offer, however, because she concluded that the institution had failed to protect women who had come forward in a sexual harassment case. As she wrote, “I do not believe that a university which takes lightly the dishonoring of women among its students, staff and faculty, can do honor to me.” She explained that accepting the honorary degree would make her feel that she would “be used as a token feminist, as a screen for the realities for women’s status within the university” if she accepted the degree.⁴⁶

More controversially, the British lesbian feminist Sheila Jeffreys, taught for one year at Clark University on a Fulbright Fellowship in 1986.⁴⁷ Jeffreys has proven controversial. For example, Jeffreys described “feminists who sleep with men... as collaborating with the enemy.” Jeffreys has also been a critic of the transgender movement, publishing a book in 2014 called *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism* in which she explains why she is “opposed to what she calls ‘transgenderism’ and what Janice Raymond named ‘the transsexual empire,’ or the transgender people, advocates, and medical systems that provide transition-related medical care.”⁴⁸ Although Jeffreys has had a major role in advocating for lesbian rights, she has excluded others from the community.

⁴⁶ Adrienne Rich to President Mortimer Herbert Appley. Reprinted in *Equal Times*, April 19, 1981, p. 8.

⁴⁷ “Lesbian History,” *The New York Woman*, February, 1986.

⁴⁸ Hypatia Reviews Online, 2014

The 1990s: Taking a Place at the Table

William Jefferson Clinton's presidential victories in 1992 and 1996 signaled a swing in the pendulum toward more progressive social values. While gay and lesbian rights remained controversial throughout the nation, the LGBTQ+ community established itself at Clark University, hosting events and conferences, winning domestic partnership benefits for faculty and staff, and earning PhDs.

BiLAGA and the Gay 90's

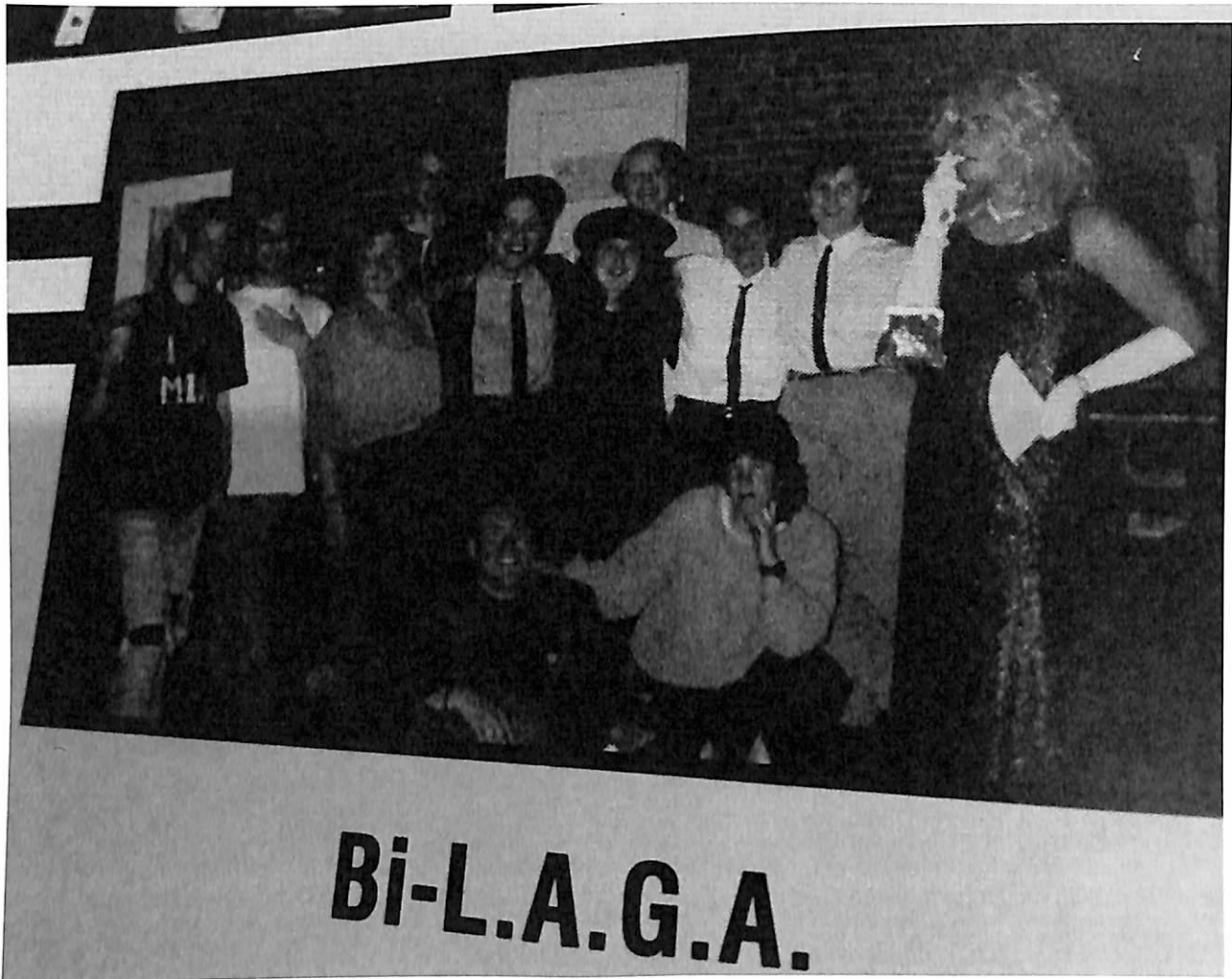


Figure 14: BiLAGA's Picture in the 1990 edition of *Pasticcio*, Clark's Yearbook

Clark's Lesbian and Gay Alliance changed its name to the Bisexual Lesbian and Gay Alliance in the fall of 1989. BiLAGA remained an important and active student group through much of the 1990s. Peter Kim ('91) wrote an annual report for the group in February of 1990, reflecting and recording the club's events during the fall semester of 1989. The club's activities included an awareness week and a trip to Washington to view the AIDS quilt. They formed a Lesbian, Bisexual

Questioning group (LBQ), which was exclusively for women and an extension of BiLAGA. Kim's account reported about various events that the group planned, some going well, others either not having a large turn out or having complications relating to individuals. Then as now, it seemed to be a struggle to keep up students' interest and participation.⁴⁹

The photo of the group in the 1990 *Pasticcio*, Clark's yearbook, looked particularly snazzy. The 1991 *Pasticcio* also has a photo of BiLAGA, looking more serious, with a description calling it "a politically and socially aware support group." A 1993 article in *The Scarlet* quoted one of the members of BiLAGA stating, "We are a support group when needed [although] we cannot justify being solely a support group." The article describes how the group provides a variety of things, such as: support, awareness, information, and fun activities for the LGBTQ+ community.⁵⁰

There certainly were still issues of homophobia to confront. In 1990, one gaggle of gays – unaffiliated with BiLAGA or a group for queer allies, FLBGA (Friends of Lesbian, Bisexual, & Gay Alliance) – "zapped" the Office of Career Counseling for "not providing enough information about gay issues."⁵¹

In anticipation of Worcester Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Pride in 1994, BiLAGA worked together with the Worcester State Lesbian, Bisexual, & Gay Alliance (LBiGA) to host the Worcester Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Film Festival in Atwood Hall (plus one night in Jefferson). On each Friday of April, 1994, they played a different feature film pertaining to queerness such as: *Thank God I'm a Lesbian*, *For a Lost Soldier*, *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Love of Lesbian Lives*, and *The*

⁴⁹ Found in a 1990 folder on BiLAGA in the Clark Archives.

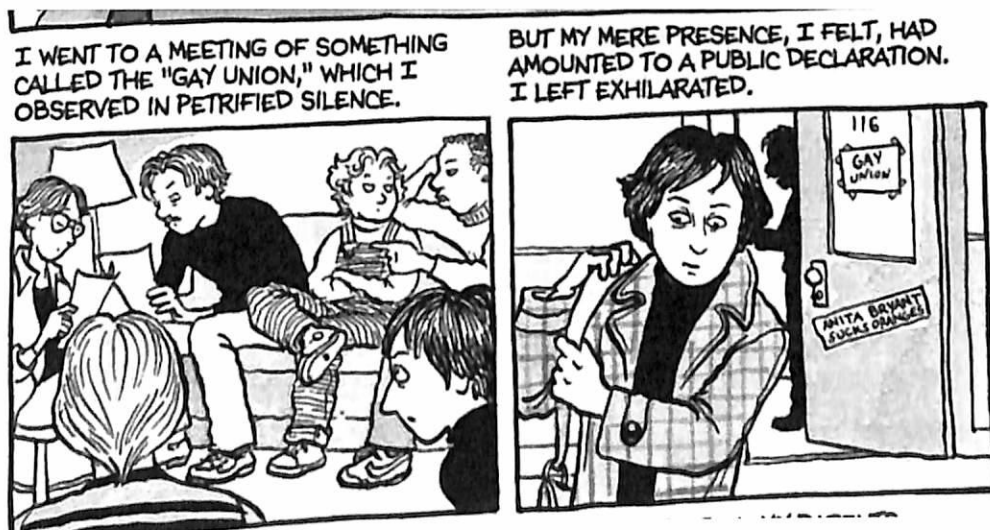
⁵⁰ Karen B. Laveson, "BiLAGA: Acceptance Is the Best Support." *The Scarlet*, 4 Mar. 1993, p. 5.

⁵¹ Samantha Honig, "Gay Rights Group 'Zaps' OCC Files," *The Scarlet*, 8 Mar. 1990.

Wedding Banquet. Shorts included *Bar jeder Frau* (Bad Girl Bar) and *The Dead Boys Club*. The festival, which received coverage in Boston's gay press, demonstrated BiLAGA's willingness and ability to work with other student and community groups.⁵²

One of the biggest and most noteworthy events that BiLAGA hosted was the 1996 New England Bisexual, Transgender Student Leadership Conference, which featured noted activist Michelangelo Signorile, author of *Queer in America*, and included workshops on spirituality, sexuality, gay history, substance abuse, and safe sex, among other topics. It was designed "to teach the students leadership skills and help them fight homophobia," as well as to network with other queer groups in New England.⁵³

In her autobiographical memoir, *Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel describes how important her student group was for her as she began the process of coming out.⁵⁴



BiLAGA served a similar function for Clark students in the 1990s.

⁵² "Friday, April 1 'Thank God I'm a Lesbian.'" Bay Windows: Boston's Gay and Lesbian Newspaper, vol. 12, no. 13, March 24-March 30, 1994.

⁵³ Peter Kim, "Bisexual, Lesbian, and Gay Alliance," Clark University, Worcester, MA, 4 Feb. 1990.

Johnnean Wilson, "Clark to Host Gay and Lesbian Conference This Weekend," *The Scarlet*, 22 Feb. 1996, p. 12.

⁵⁴ Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), p. 76.

CLARK UNIVERSITY

AFFIDAVIT OF DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP FOR BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY

I. DECLARATION:

We, _____ and _____
(Print Employee's Name) (Print Partner's Name)

certify that we are domestic partners in accordance with the following criteria:

II. CRITERIA:

1. We are each other's sole domestic partner and intend to remain so indefinitely; and we are not legally allowed to marry under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
2. Neither of us has a spouse who is currently utilizing Clark benefits.
3. We are not related by blood to a degree of closeness which would prohibit legal marriage in Massachusetts.
4. We are at least eighteen (18) years of age and mentally competent to consent to contract.
5. We have resided together in the same residence for at least one (1) year; and intend to reside together indefinitely.
6. We are jointly responsible for each other's common welfare and financial obligations.
7. It has been at least one (1) year since either of us have filed a statement of termination of a previous domestic partnership affidavit.

Figure 15: Domestic Partnerships at Clark, Worcester Historical Museum

Quality Health Benefits for Domestic Partners

Beginning June 1, 1993, Clark University introduced benefits to the domestic partners of faculty and staff who were not allowed to marry under Massachusetts law.⁵⁵ A few years earlier, in 1990, the University had turned down a request “to consider spousal equivalents in same-sex couples,” because it wanted to reach “further agreement on the principles.”⁵⁶

In a talk at the first annual meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Community Coalition of Central Massachusetts (GLCCM) on October 14, 1993, Kate Chelsey, then Director of Communications at Clark outlined the process of negotiating the bureaucracy of large institutions in order to achieve benefits for same-sex couples.⁵⁷

Some of the concerns of the institution regarding the costs of this benefit proved to be correct. Dianne Williamson reported in *The Telegram and Gazette* that Harvard Community Health levied an additional 1% surcharge on Clark’s insurance when the policy was adopted. Local insurer Fallon Community Health did not. Clark stuck by its decision, although Lynn Olson, the Director of Human Resources at the time, expressed outrage at the extra charge.⁵⁸

Clark University was certainly not the first institution to offer domestic partnership benefits (that honor apparently went to *The Village Voice*, which started offering domestic partnership benefits in 1982⁵⁹), but it

⁵⁵ “Clark Extends Benefits to Domestic Partners,” press release, May 3, 1993, Worcester Historical Museum.

⁵⁶ Memo of November 13, 1990, Worcester Historical Museum.

⁵⁷ The first annual meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Community Coalition of Central Massachusetts, transcript found in the Worcester Historical Museum

⁵⁸ “Insurer’s surcharge unhealthy; 1% for gay, lesbian couples doesn’t add up” *Telegram & Gazette* 13 September 1994

⁵⁹ The first annual meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Community Coalition of Central Massachusetts, transcript found in the Worcester Historical Museum

may have been the first large institution in the Worcester area to do so. In a May, 1983, column in *Worcester Magazine*, Al Toney and Josephine Ross implied that Clark's policy was new to the area: "Clark University recently passed such benefits. It's time for other employers in Worcester County to do the same."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Al Toney and Josephine Ross, "It's Time for Gay Employee Benefits in Worcester County," *Worcester Magazine*, May 28, 1993.

Angela Bowen



Figure 16: Angela Bowen at Clark University, from her *New York Times* obituary, July 22, 2018

Angela Bowen was a Black lesbian feminist writer and dancer. She was the first person at Clark University to earn a PhD in Women's Studies in 1997, an experience that she described in an essay, "My Experience in Women's Studies Doctoral Training at Clark University," published in *Feminist Studies* in 1998.⁶¹ For her PhD, she wrote the first dissertation

⁶¹ Angela Bowen, "My Experience in Women's Studies Doctoral Training at Clark University," *Feminist Studies* 24.2 (Summer 1998): 374-386.

on the Black lesbian feminist, Audre Lorde: *Who Said It Was Simple: Audre Lorde's Complex Connections to Three US Liberation Movements*. Janette Greenwood led the dissertation committee, which also included Cynthia Enloe, Elizabeth Hadley Freydborg, and Dorothy Kauffman. As she indicated in the Introduction to her dissertation, she approached Lorde in terms of Black Liberation, Women's Liberation, and Black Lesbian and Gay Liberation: "By scrutinizing with a lesbian conscious eye Lorde's published literature and her various stances in relation to the movements, I reveal a threefold manifestation of that dialectic with a holistic understanding of the 'personal is political' principle."⁶²

After leaving Clark, Bowen became a celebrated professor in the English and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies departments at California State University, Long Beach. In 2014, her wife Jennifer Abod released a documentary about Bowen's life entitled *The Passionate Pursuits of Angela Bowen*. Four years later, Bowen passed away following a battle with Alzheimer's, leaving behind a long legacy of activism.⁶³

⁶² Angela Bowen, *Who Said It Was Simple: Audre Lorde's Complex Connections to Three US Liberation Movements, 1952-1992*, dissertation, Clark University 1997, p. 3.

⁶³ Neil Genzlinger, "Dance Teacher and Gay Activist Is Dead at 82," *The New York Times*, July 22, 2018.

After 2000: Gender (R)evolution

Sexuality continued to be a battlefield after 2000: the Supreme Court of the United States overturned sodomy laws in 2003, overturned the Defense of Marriage Act (which had defined marriage for federal purposes as exclusively between a man and a woman in 2013), and guaranteed the right to marriage in 2015. Massachusetts had recognized gay marriages in 2004. At Clark the LGBTQ+ Community worked to acknowledge its diversity and become more inclusive. Much of the energy of the LGBTQ movement at Clark began to shift toward questions around gender identity and trans people.

Testimony from the Pasticcio:
Gay Groups, Drag Balls, and Rocky Horror Picture Show

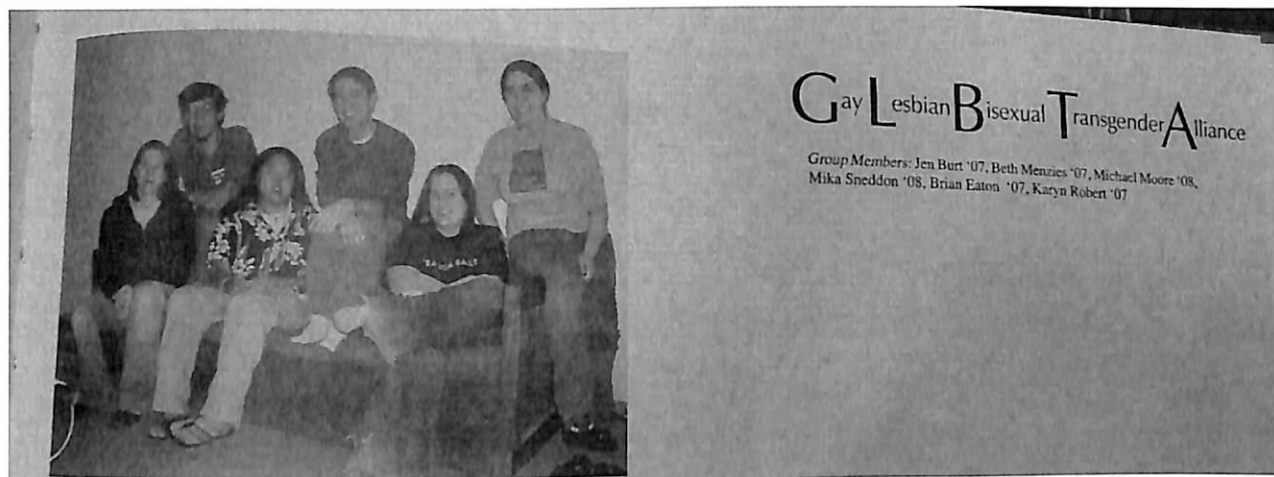


Figure 17: The GLBTA in Pasticcio 2005, Clark's Yearbook

From 2000 to 2010, gay students made occasional appearances in Clark's yearbook, *Pasticcio*. Sometimes these were straightforward pictures of gay groups, such as, for instance, the 2005 group portrait of members of what by then was called the GLBTA (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance). In 2009, LGBTQ+ students reorganized with a new name, OPEN.

Additionally, the Halloween Ball became associated with the LGBTQ+ community in these yearbooks. If nothing else, there would always be mention of GLBTA when it came to the Halloween festivities. Some years the Halloween Ball was specifically called a Drag Ball (in 2005, 2007, and 2008) and other years it was just, well, a Halloween Ball. There was no mention of the Balls in 2000, 2001, or 2002.

The annual showing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* has become a tradition on campus for both queers and non-queers alike. However, it's only been around since 2000, at least in any official capacity. The

2004 yearbook reported that the showing of *Rocky Horror* on Halloween became a tradition four years earlier, although it was not mentioned in yearbooks until then. Afterwards, it showed up in every yearbook up until 2008.

In general, the yearbooks proved to be a limited source of information about the state of queers at Clark in the early 2000s. Was there harassment? Was the faculty accepting? Were queer students shunned by their peers? It's not clear. What is clear is that there was, at the very least, a small, relatively active queer community here at Clark in the early 2000s. It held popular parties on Halloween, and its organizations were often included in the list of clubs in the yearbook. Some folks were brave enough to claim membership in that community via posing for the club picture or by proclaiming it as one of their clubs in the senior portrait section.

Visiting Speakers in the Twenty-First Century



Figure 18: Michael Sam at Clark, The Scarlet, December 8, 2016

As the 2000s progressed, the issues at the forefront of the LGBTQ+ movement became those of inclusion, particularly in addressing how LGBTQ+ people of color had been excluded from the mainstream movement, and in bringing awareness to transgender and non-binary identities. Clark University has a long history of inviting many diverse speakers onto campus to share their knowledge in a public forum. Since the early 2000s, many of these academics have presented on queer topics that encompassed a wide variety of experiences and subjects. Here are just a few examples of the many speakers who have been to campus in recent years.

On April 11th, 2013, Jennifer Finney Boylan, a trans advocate, spoke at Clark. Her 2003 memoir, *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders*, was a bestseller. At the time she was at Colby College; now she is the Writer in Residence for the Barnard College at Columbia University and a frequent contributor to the editorial page of *The New York Times*. From 2013-2017, she was the Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of GLAAD, the national watchdog organization that ensures the media is not producing anti-LGBTQ content. Boylan spoke about her experience in transgender advocacy work, telling students to “be loving first, before you know anything” because “you don’t have to know everything about someone who is strange to you before you can be open and loving.”⁶⁴

Other speakers were more traditionally scholarly, focusing on historical topics. Dr. Andrew Wackerfuss, from the United States Air Force spoke on October 15, 2015, spoke on his book, *Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Party*. Although the Nazis persecuted homosexuals, they also valued close bonds between men, such as existed among the Stormtroopers.⁶⁵

Also in 2015, the historian Shaun Jacob Halper gave a lecture called “Is Homosexuality a Form of Genius? Reconsidering the Masculinist Wing of the First Homosexual Rights Movement in Central Europe.” This was part of an event called “The German Discovery of Sex,” in which three academics came to Clark to speak about the emergence of modern categories of sexuality in nineteenth-century Germany.

Janet Mock, a nationally recognized transgender advocate, MSNBC commentator, and author of a bestselling memoir, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More*, spoke in

⁶⁴ “Transgender Author, Advocate Urges Clark Community to ‘Be Loving First,’” *Clark Now* | Clark University, April 12, 2013.

⁶⁵ Andrew Wackerfuss, *Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Party* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2015).

2015. Mock spoke to a packed lecture hall about her memoir, which detailed her life as a poor, multiracial, trans woman. Her book was both a way to tell her personal story, and a way to enlighten a larger population towards the struggle that transgender people go through in America.⁶⁶

On November 29, 2016, the Clark University's Speaker Forum brought Michael Sam to campus. Sam was the first openly gay NFL player to be drafted, having come out publicly in 2014. Originally drafted for the St. Louis Rams, he was dropped after training, where he was picked up by the Dallas Cowboys.⁶⁷ Although they eventually dropped him as well, in part due to the media uproar regarding his sexuality, Sam continued to play for a year. He decided to retire early to protect his mental health.⁶⁸

These are only a few of many significant and influential queer speakers who have attended Clark throughout the years. In *Zami*, Audre Lorde observes, "it was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference, rather than the security of any one particular difference."⁶⁹ Many people with diverse backgrounds and beliefs have shared their experiences with the larger Clark community. In providing Clark students with a chance to come together to learn about differences, these speakers – gay, straight, cis, and trans – have all contributed to the history of queer culture at Clark and helped Clarkies come to understand "the very house of difference."

⁶⁶ "Transgender Rights Activist Janet Mock Advises: 'Listen to Yourself'," *Clark Now | Clark University*, October 28, 2015.

⁶⁷ "'Stay True to Who You Are'." *Clark Now | Clark University*, December 8, 2016.

⁶⁸ Jared Dubin, "Michael Sam, First Openly Gay Player, Retires for Mental Health Reasons," *CBSSports.com*, 15 Aug. 2015.

⁶⁹ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982), p. 226.

Clark University's Gender Blind Housing Policy

In Spring of 2006 Clark undergraduate students Jeffrey Chang and Allison Clancy submitted a 73-page proposal to Denise Derrigrand, then the Dean of Students.⁷⁰ They secured over 200 hundred signatures in support of the new policy. In the wake of massive campus-wide support, the University implemented gender-blind housing beginning in the 2007-2008 academic year.⁷¹

At the time, the policy was clearly stated on the University's website, so much so that students at Wheaton College cited it in their "Gender-Neutral Housing Proposal" of 2009. They quoted Clark's policy as follows:

Gender blind/neutral housing is a housing option that has no restrictions about the gender of roommates. This means that a male student and a female student can jointly choose to live together in a double room. Under this plan, different sexed roommates are never randomly assigned. Now, like any roommate request, Clark's Residential Life and Housing Office will only honor requests made by both parties mutually. Gender blind/neutral housing will be offered side by side to traditional housing in mixed class halls. This option is not available to first-year students.⁷²

In addition, Wheaton College further quoted the Clark policy as being particularly concerned with questions of gender diversity:

⁷⁰ Chang, Jeffrey & Clancy, Allison, "Gender-blind/neutral housing," March 20, 2006. Clark University Archives.

⁷¹ "Dorms to Go 'Gender-Blind,'" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, December 12, 2006.

⁷² Proposal to Allow Gender-Neutral Rooming at Wheaton College (2009), p. 15.

This housing choice provides options for transgender students in the process of discovering their gender identity, gay or bisexual students, students who feel uncomfortable rooming with members of the same sex, intersexed students who do not wish to be identified by any sex, and students who feel they would be more compatible with a roommate of a different gender. This policy helps create an environment that acknowledges, appreciates, and respects the diverse nature of the Clark student body, while giving students more options in finding a roommate who is truly compatible.⁷³

Despite the emphasis on gender-diversity in the conceptualization of the policy the media, which covered it quite heavily, portrayed it as a relentlessly heterosexual story of boys living with girls. WCVB TV headlined its story, Clark 21st School to Have Co-Ed Housing.” They brought the issue to the point: “Co-ed dorms are a standard feature on most campuses, but what about students of the opposite sex sharing the same room?”⁷⁴ CBS Boston reported, “Men and Women to Room Together at Clark University.”⁷⁵ The *Boston Herald* reported that Harvard was still considering adopting such a policy, while Clark had plunged ahead.⁷⁶ The Associated Press noted that Jeffrey Chang had “co-founded the National Student Genderblind Campaign, a group that is pushing for gender-neutral housing.”⁷⁷

At the time of approval, Clark joined a cohort of about twenty other colleges and universities in the United States that had gender

⁷³ “Proposal to Allow Gender-Neutral Rooming at Wheaton College” (2009), p. 15.

⁷⁴ “Clark 21st School to Have Co-Ed Housing,” WCVB TV, December 12 2006.

⁷⁵ “Men and Women to Room Together at Clark University,” CBS Boston, December 8, 2006.

⁷⁶ Marie Szaniszlow, “Co-Ed Rooms Make Grade: Harvard Eyes Allowing Opposite-Sex Roommates,” *Boston Herald*, December 13, 2006.

⁷⁷ Michelle R. Smith, “Colleges Are Allowing Co-Ed Dorms,” *Associated Press*,

neutral/gender blind housing policies.⁷⁸ Clark University was at the time one of the more expansive schools in terms of its policy. Today, approximately 159 institutions have gender neutral housing policies.⁷⁹ Multiple institutions, including the University of Washington and Wheaton College, have used Clark as a policy reference for gender blind housing.⁸⁰ Mariana Alana Anderson, a Clark alumna, wrote a lengthy master's thesis at the Ohio State University on the subject in 2011, referring extensively to Clark's policy as well.⁸¹

First-year students were not included in the original policy. The academic year of 2017-18 expanded first-year residency to doubles, singles, and suites in Dana and Hughes Hall, and limited JSC Hall to upperclassmen. Suite style living offered "an opportunity to venture into gender neutral housing" and allowed "first-year students to say that they want to share a space with someone of the opposite gender" said Director of Residential Life and Housing Adam Keyes.⁸² Before the gender-blind housing policy, suites were the only places that could be gender-neutral. However, since suites were not previously offered to first-years before 2017 and the policy did not include first years, they were left out entirely. With this recent residency change, first years can get a taste of gender-neutral housing.

Lastly, the lack of awareness for the policy in general might just kill this hopeful idea. In 2009 when Wheaton College was proposing gender-neutral housing, they sourced the policy from an official Clark University Residential Life and Housing web page under: <https://www.clarku.edu/offices/housing/genderblind.cfm>. Sadly, this

⁷⁸ "Dorms to Go 'Gender-Blind,'" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, December 12, 2006

⁷⁹ "Home Suite Home?" *The Scarlet*, April 7, 2017

⁸⁰ In addition to the Wheaton College proposal cited above, see "University of Washington Gender-Neutral Housing Advisory Committee" (2011), p. 37.

⁸¹ Mariana Alana Anderson, "Implicit Inclusion Is Not Enough: Effectiveness of Gender Neutral Housing Policies on Inclusion of Transgender Students," Ohio State University Master's Thesis, 2011.

⁸² "Home Suite Home?" *The Scarlet*, April 7, 2017

link leads today to a 404 error: page not found. At some point Clark had a dedicated space for the policy, but now no longer mentions gender-blind housing anywhere. Currently the archived Wheaton policy proposal is the easiest place to find the full text of Clark's policy. Without a platform for the policy, current and potential students will be unaware of their right to this housing accessibility. To ensure a prosperous and progressive future for gender neutral/gender blind housing Clark needs to reinstate awareness of and pride in the policy.



Coed rooms make grade: Harvard eyes allowing opposite-sex roommates

By Marie Szaniszlo
Wednesday, December 13, 2006

Harvard is considering making its dorm rooms gender-neutral - meaning brainiacs of both sexes would be able to bunk together - a spokesman for the Ivy League university told the Herald yesterday.

"It is something that is on the table," said Robert Mitchell of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The debate comes amid a nationwide move toward coed dorm rooms, including a decision Monday by Clark University in Worcester to allow men and women to room together beginning next fall.

"The discussion about gender-neutral facilities is an ongoing one. There are already gender-neutral suites, floors and entryways," Mitchell said. "And wherever possible, we have created gender-neutral single occupancy bathrooms. (The dorm policy change) is something that is on the table."

Clark also already has some gender-blind suites and floors, and next year will allow all students except freshmen to choose to live with someone of the opposite sex.

The change was spearheaded by sophomores Jeffrey Chang and Allison Clancy, who gathered 200 signatures for their campaign.

"I had lived next door last year to Allison, and we were close friends. We had the same sleeping time, we did our homework together," said Chang, a 19-year-old government major from Livingston, N.J. "So when it came time to choose roommates for this year, we asked if we could room together, but we were turned down. They did not give us a reason."

Chang spent a month researching the issue and submitted a 70-page proposal that finally convinced Clark officials.



Jeffrey Chang, 19, helped convince Worcester's Clark University—which already allows gender-neutral suites—to allow coed rooms. (Staff photo by Lisa Hornak)

Figure 19: Clark Student Jeffrey Chang Featured in Article about Gender-Blind Housing

The TransExperience at Clark University



Trans people have been around for centuries.⁸³ Recognized in multiple different cultures all around the world and from many different time periods, the trans experience has varied in every situation. The discussion regarding trans rights as well as the awareness of the hardships many trans people face has risen in popular discourse, whether it be through Caitlyn Jenner on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, legislation protecting trans rights, or student

groups becoming more prominent on college campuses. The image to the left was the logo of a club on Clark University's campus called Umbrellas. The club was formed in 2016 after splitting from Clark University's LGBTQ+ club, OPEN, to create a safe space specifically for trans/NB/GNC students, and a place to be able to advocate for trans/NB/GNC needs both on and off campus. The goal of Umbrellas was to promote "trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming ([...] trans/NB/GNC) awareness and positivity." Umbrellas advocated for Clark faculty and students to have mandatory education in regards to trans/NB/GNC students and their experiences. They also argued for changes in Clark University's Title IX policies to make them more inclusive towards these students and helped push for local and state-level policies to be passed, such as nondiscrimination protections in public places for trans/NB/GNC people. Ultimately, however, it proved

⁸³ Trans may refer to any gender-identity that may include, but is not limited to, transgender, transsexual, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, agender, and more.

difficult to main two student organizations, and Umbrellas and OPEN merged to form PRISM, the current LGBTQ student organization.

Clark University has a history of making strides for representation and education of trans issues. In 1975, Professor William Koelsch brought in a trans speaker to his class on the Gay Liberation Movement, where the speaker had the chance to tell their story to the students. Koelsch noted in his retirement speech that "it was a truly extraordinary event, one of the most moving in which [Koelsch was] ever involved in."⁸⁴ Even though Koelsch referred to the speaker with the wrong pronouns in the speech and during that class, showing the limit of his understanding and knowledge of trans issues, a positive representation of a trans person at that time was a good start for Clark's campus.

However, just because Clark University has been open to the trans community for some time and continues to be so, there are still improvements to be made. While Clark's campus may be filled with some amazing allies to the trans community, many would like to see faculty, administration, and students be more respectful and knowledgeable in regards to pronoun/name usage or change, rooming requests, bathroom usage for trans/NB/GNC people. They would also like to have university-wide policies be more inclusive of those who are trans/NB/GNC.

In 2015, Clark University's *The Scarlet* reported that the administration had not addressed issues such as preferred names, pronouns, and housing. Clark had the option for students to submit a preferred name, which would only be used on certain platforms, the class roster not being one. This left some students in a position of extreme discomfort, with their birth name/'deadname' being announced to the class for attendance and requiring them to address it with the professor one-on-

⁸⁴ Koelsch files, Clark University Archives.

one, in front of the entire class, or to never correct it. Faculty had received training to help with “sensitive” topics such as name and pronoun use, but many professors still ignored preferred pronouns if asked, or would not even ask their students and assume what pronouns their students use.

In regards to housing, Clark promoted their “gender blind housing” policy as a way to help provide housing situations for trans/NB/GNC students. Gender blind housing was, however, not accessible for first-year students, and did not take into account *other* ways in which housing can be improved for students. Some expressed the hope that the University would “choose to allow transgender students to live in single rooms for the same price of a double [...], allow transgender students to live off-campus without the typically-applied \$1,000 fee, or allow transgender students to live together.”⁸⁵ These solutions were proposed by trans students and for trans students, hoping to prevent housing situations that have the high likelihood of increasing dysphoria.

However, despite what is *not* in place, Clark is in the very slow and tedious process, of bringing these issues to light, and hopefully resolving them. The University also seems to be building a repertoire of queer classes and programs in which trans art, literature, and politics are explored and presented to students of all identities. With exposure to the trans experience, whether through conversations in student group discussion or in class, and with attention being brought to trans issues both on and off campus, the trans experience for Clark University will hopefully only improve.

⁸⁵ “Transgender Students Find Clark Structurally Unwelcoming,” *The Scarlet*, April 23, 2015.

Final Thoughts:

In her groundbreaking essay, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” Adrienne Rich declares that the “closing of archives and destruction of documents” is one element of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality.⁸⁶

We hope we’ve opened the archive a little! We encourage you to preserve more documents!

⁸⁶ Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs* 5.4 (Summer, 1980), p. 638.

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