

The White House Delegation

photographs and story
by David Dahlquist

On March 26, 1977, a delegation of openly gay citizens met, for the first time, with a presidential assistant in the White House. For nearly three hours, fourteen persons talked with President Carter's assistant for public liaison, Margaret (Midge) Costanza. They detailed various problems faced by gay Americans and received assurances of help in remedying them.

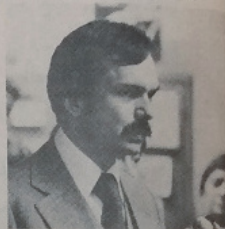
The delegation was carefully selected by the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) to provide a balance of interests and representation. This unique blend of diverse, intelligent, compassionate individuals is profiled below. We can all take pride in their courageous example.



CHARLES BRYDON, from Seattle, Wash., won both the Bronze Star and the Air Medal for Service, while an Army officer in Germany, Korea, and Vietnam. He is presently the Northwest manager of the AFIA Worldwide Insurance Company. He is also the president of the gay activist Dorian Group and is a member of the NGTF board of directors.

Brydon briefed the Administration on anti-gay military policies. He pointed out that, unlike most other Western democracies, the U.S. has homosexual persons from service in the armed forces. He asked the administration to immediately upgrade the less-than-honorable discharges of an estimated 75,000 persons discharged from the armed services for homosexuality since World War II.

He was promised a meeting with officials in the Defense Department.



BETTY POWELL, from New York City, is a former instructor of black studies at Fordham University and is currently an instructor in the school of education at Brooklyn College. She is the co-chairperson of the NGTF board, a member of the New York State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Human Rights, and a member of the steering committee of the Center for Cultural Pluralism.

Powell told the Administration that although the Civil Rights Commission has extended its jurisdiction to cover discrimination against such groups as the aging, the Commission has thus far declined to assume jurisdiction over lesbian and gay subgroups.

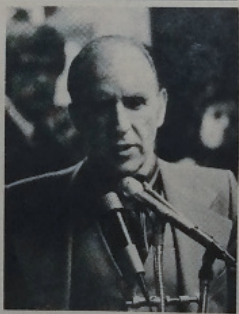
Powell was promised a meeting with officials of the Commission on Civil Rights.



DR. FRANKLIN KAMENY, from Washington, D.C., is a pioneer gay rights activist and a current commissioner on the D.C. Human Rights Commission. Kamenny began his activist role in 1957, after being ousted from his federal job as an astronomer. He has provided the impetus for several lobbying efforts which have ended successfully. These include the reversal of anti-gay policies within the Civil Service Commission, the reversal of the Defense Department's anti-gay security clearance policy, and the reversal of the American Psychiatric Association's sickness label. Dr. Kamenny is the founder of the D.C. Mattachine Society and is on the NGTF board of directors.

Kamenny told the Administration that although the major problems with the Civil Service Commission have been resolved, there are a number of government agencies that, through a varied pattern of legislative exemptions, are not administered by the Commission and thus are "very much a law, each unto itself, in these matters."

Kamenny was promised meetings with several government agencies. And it was to Dr. Kamenny that Ms. Costanza directed an apology from the White House because the letters he has sent to each American President since 1962, requesting such a meeting, were never even afforded the common courtesy of an answer.



GEORGE RAYA, from San Francisco, Calif., holds a bachelor's degree in political science and is an investigator for the child support bureau of the San Francisco District Attorney's office. A Chicano activist, a statewide lobbyist for gays rights legislation, and a college student senate chairperson, he is also the co-founder of the Gay Law Students Association at the U. of C.

Raya told the Administration that many HEW grants for research and social services have been severely limited in respect to gay issues and programs. He said it is vitally necessary that existing programs such as services to the aging and volunteer services be extended to meet the needs of the gay community.

Raya was promised a meeting with officials at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

REV. TROY PERRY, from Los Angeles, Calif., is the father of two sons and the founder and moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UF MCC). Perry is a member of the Los Angeles Commission on Human Rights and of the NGTF board of directors. He is an author and columnist and is listed in the current edition of *Who's Who in Religion*.

Rev. Perry talked to the Administration about the status of gays and religion. Among other remarks, he mentioned that some gay prisoners were not allowed to receive materials from MCC.



WILLIAM KELLEY, from Chicago, Illinois, is a management services administrator and a gay activist since 1965. He testified at 1972, 74, and 76 Democratic and Republican platform committees, is the co-founder of two Chicago gay rights committees and the founder of Chicago's *Gay Crusader*.

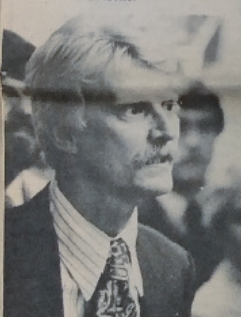
Kelley told the Administration that the Internal Revenue Service denies the applications of gay groups for tax-deductible status unless they agree not to state the view that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle.

Kelley was not promised a meeting with the IRS, since this is an independent agency not under Administration control. Ms. Costanza did, however, offer a pledge on behalf of the Carter Administration that "sensitivity to the rights of gay people will be very seriously considered in considering nominees for vacancies in this agency."

POKEY ANDERSON, from Houston, Texas, is a gay activist who last year narrowly missed pulling off an upset victory in her city's election for a Commissioner of Community Development. She won 41% of the vote as a write-in candidate, entering the race only two weeks before the election.

Anderson briefed the Administration on the problems which gays face in the U.S. prison system. Many federal prisoners, she said, have been denied the right to receive gay publications. Many others, she said, are denied equal educational opportunities.

She was promised a meeting in the Justice Department with Patricia Wald, Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs, and a meeting with the Bureau of Prisons.



DR. BRUCE VOELLER, from New York City, is co-executive director of NGTF. He is the father of three children and a former professor of biology at Rockefeller University. He is also a former president of the Gay Activists Alliance of New York and is currently a member of the Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL) board of directors.

Voeller, who co-led the delegation into the White House, presented the closing remarks at the three-hour meeting. "The recent event in Dade County, Florida," he said, "where lies and hysterics are being used as arguments to deprive lesbians and gay men of their civil rights, provide all the evidence needed to explain why, in a country dedicated to equality for all, so many forms of discrimination are still practiced by our federal government." He then went on to say that "the positive and friendly discussions we've just had, however, are cause for rejoicing that such calls to blatant bigotry will no longer reach sympathetic ears at the seat of our democratic government."

Ms. Costanza promised Voeller that a second meeting will be arranged in September of this year, at which time she will assess the progress made in resolving the issues raised.

JEAN O'LEARY, from New York City, is also co-executive director of NGTF. She is a former nun, and is currently a doctoral candidate in organization development at Yeshiva University. O'Leary was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1976, and is now a member of President Carter's 51.3 Committee for Women. She is also a member of the board of the New York State Human Rights Commission and the National Women's Political Caucus. She is the founder of Lesbian Feminist Liberation and is presently on the GRNL board of directors.

Co-leader of the delegation, O'Leary presented the opening remarks at the meeting. She said that "this is the first time in the history of this country that a President has seen fit to acknowledge the rights and needs of some 20,000,000 Americans." We are highly optimistic that it will soon lead to complete fulfillment of President Carter's pledge to end all forms of federal discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Ms. Costanza promised O'Leary that after the status meeting in September, she will "welcome a request for a meeting between NGTF and President Jimmy Carter, and will recommend such a request to the President."

CHARLOTTE BUNCH, a resident of Washington, D.C., is an internationally known lesbian-feminist author and theorist. She is the editor of *Quest*, a feminist quarterly. She is also a resident fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, a visiting scholar in feminist theory at the Graduate Theological Union, University of California at Berkeley, and a member of the NGTF board of directors.

Bunch was promised a meeting with Patricia Wald at the Justice Department-immigration and naturalization. She reminded the Administration that despite its declared adherence to the Helsinki Declaration and the freedom to travel, the U.S. officially bars gay women and men from visiting or becoming citizens of this country. She pointed out that the rationale for such discrimination is that gay people are persons with "psychopathic personality" and "bad moral character" and emphasized that this is contrary to the views of the American Psychiatric Association.

Bunch was promised a meeting with Patricia Wald at the Justice Department and a meeting with the Immigration and Naturalization Service.



CHARLOTTE SPITZER, from Los Angeles, Calif., is the mother of a lesbian and the founder and chairperson of Parents and Friends of Gays. She is currently a lecturer in communications at the University of California at Santa Barbara and a licensed marriage and family counselor. She is a former chapter president of the American Jewish Congress.

Spitzer related some of the personal and emotional problems which are often faced by homosexuals, their families, and their close associates.

Asked at a press conference following the meeting what her feelings about Anita Bryant were, Spitzer replied that she herself is appealing to parents to save their children, namely, the 40 million parents of gay children in this country. Asked if she would like to debate Bryant, Spitzer replied, "Anytime!"

ELAINE NOBLE, from Boston, Massachusetts, is a member of the Massachusetts state legislature. For five years she was an instructor of communications at Emerson College, Boston University. She was recently named one of ten outstanding young political leaders by the Boston Jr. Chamber of Commerce and is currently being considered by Action, the federal government's volunteer corps, for a top, Senate-confirmation-level, policymaking job.

Noble briefed the Administration about security clearances, noting that there are still many agencies which exclude gays from receiving such clearances.

She was promised meetings with the State Department and several other agencies.



RAYMOND HARTMAN, from Los Angeles, Calif., is a former naval officer and is the current co-chairperson of GRNL. He holds a degree in foreign service from Georgetown University.

Hartman is presently a partner in a general civil practice, with about 50% of his clients gay.

Hartman briefed the Administration on current legislation in the U.S. Congress which would end discrimination against homosexuals in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. He asked for increased sensitivity in the White House to the gay community and to the issues which affect it. He suggested that the Carter administration, consistent with its efforts in the human rights field, utilize resources inside and outside the Congress to become better informed. He recommended that White House staff people working in the areas of domestic policy and Congressional liaison make concrete efforts to become familiar with the subject.

Hartman was promised a meeting with Frank Moore, the President's congressional liaison, and with members of Moore's staff. Hartman will attend the meetings with Virginia Apuzzo, also co-chairperson of GRNL.



PROFILE

MYRA RIDDELL, from Los Angeles, Calif., is a psychotherapist, a licensed clinical social worker, a marriage and family counselor, and an author and researcher on alcoholism treatment. She is a former consultant to the Gay Community Services Center, and is currently chairperson of the steering committee for the Southern California Whitman-Radcliffe Foundation.

Riddell briefed the Administration on problems with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. She said that the FCC has ruled that leaders of the gay community are not required to be interviewed as part of the broadcast licensee's community-ascertainment programs. Thus, she said, gay citizens are deprived of their basic right to access to the airwaves.

Riddell also noted that the Fair Housing Act of 1968 is not now being applied to prevent discrimination against persons on the basis of sexual orientation. She reminded the Administration that it is within the jurisdiction of HUD to set up its own guidelines in this area, because there is precedent on the state level for ruling against housing discrimination on "any arbitrary basis."

Riddell was promised a meeting with Dr. Chester McQuire, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. She was not promised a meeting with the FCC, because this is an independent agency not under Administration control. Ms. Costanza did pledge that the Administration will consider gay sensitivity when considering candidates for vacancies on this commission.