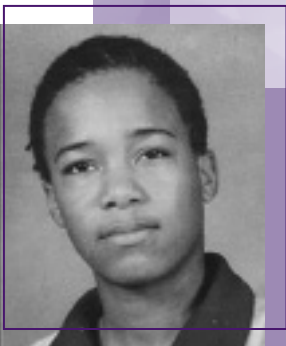


# ColorLife!

AUDRE LORDE PROJECT COMMUNITY ORGANIZING CENTER FOR LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TWO SPIRIT AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE OF COLOR

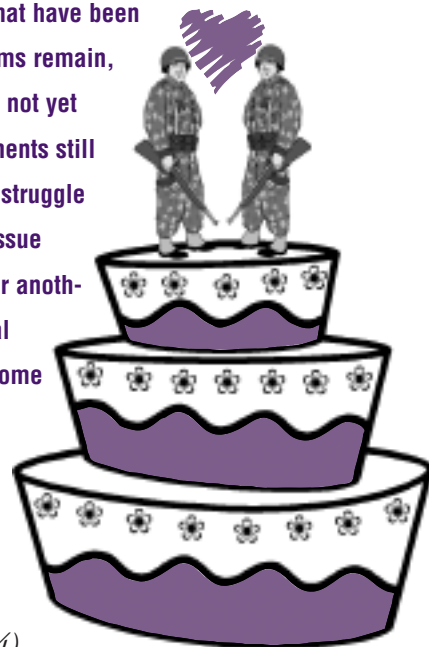


**INSIDE:**  
Looking back at  
the Sakia Gunn  
March and Vigil  
— page 6

## The WARS We Are Still FIGHTING

BY BECKY LEE

**C**an a single issue ever define a movement? Can a movement truly succeed if it attempts to win one fight at a time, pushing forth one issue/one community first over others? There is a very fine line between the tactic of “winning one victory at a time” and the tactic of “divide and conquer,” and if this line is blurred, our movements will be in danger. Every community in struggle must be conscious of this fine line. Many movements have begun in the past, and what is often misunderstood is that these movements are far from over. Despite victories that have been gained, and laws being changed, the same root problems remain, and multiple oppressions still exist; because, what has not yet been achieved is systemic social change. Many movements still continue today, but what has become dangerous in the struggle is the attempt by some to make a movement a single-issue movement — prioritizing one issue/one community over another. We see this happening in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, especially when some claim adamantly that war is not an LGBT issue and the most important issue of the “LGBT movement” is marriage rights. Such a claim denies the living reality of many communities, especially Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit and Transgender (LGBTST) People of Color communities. *(continued on page 4)*



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**[ Note: this article was written in Jan '04, prior to recent developments in San Francisco, Upstate New York, the White House, and hundreds more dead in the war. ]**

## The Audre Lorde Project

is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit and Transgender People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on the New York City area. Through mobilization, education and capacity-building, we work for community wellness, and progressive social and economic justice. Committed to struggling across differences, we seek to responsibly reflect, represent and serve our various communities.

AUDRE LORDE was in her own words, "A Black, lesbian, feminist, mother, warrior, poet." She was also a theorist and catalyst central to changes in nation-wide feminist curricula, a founding member of Sisters in Support of Sisters in South Africa (SISA), and a co-founder of *Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press*.

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# INTO THE FUTURE

BY JESSE HEIWA

**C**olorLife! Magazine burst forth in 1992 along with the plethora of organizing by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirit, Transgender (LGBTST) People of Color that began that decade. In October 1992, a LGBTST People of Color community-wide eat-in/teach-in was held in conjunction with our Native American brothers and sisters; commemorating the survival of Indigenous peoples, 500 years since that fateful 1492 when they discovered a Christopher Columbus who was lost at sea. We wanted to know about our relationships not only within our own communities but also between ourselves. We wanted to move beyond simply being People of Color in reference to the majority white organized LGBTST community; while also examining the concerns that we had within the larger LGBTST community, and in time within our own People of Color communities. It was a heady time, and with gay magazines such as *Out*, *The Advocate*, *Curve*, et al. we knew something was missing, and that was us. We decided a magazine done by, for and about LGBTST People of Color was necessary for those of us "in the life!" We were inspired by earlier examples such as *Kitchen Table: Women Of Color Press*, the *Other Countries* collective, the MACT/NY newsletter and other grassroots efforts that we had created. We went to it with zeal and vigor. We covered a wide range of issues including inter-country adoption by white U.S. LGBT parents of adoptees from overseas, on sexual objectification of men of color in different ways by white gay men, on the gatherings that brought all the LGBTST People of Color

and anti-racist majority People of Color mixed groups together for workshops, sharing, and culture. We provided a resource list of LGBTST People of Color organizations and helped catalyze the creation of new ones. One such organization that grew out of such efforts was the Audre Lorde Project itself; creating a space with an understanding that we are all the parts of ourselves, and we can't leave anything back. We all needed to move forward together and *ColorLife!* provided the means to communicate between us and with others. It lasted until the mid 1990s right before the worldwide web hit big and the creation of the Audre Lorde Project. We had the same issues as any small not-for-profit entity: funding, distribution, differences on specific content and decision-making. None of us got paid for it; it was hard even sustaining ourselves while doing all the work required. Our last issue had a cover story focusing on the activism of young LGBTST People of Color, which came out in 1994. While we had planned on more issues, it was not to be. Soon other projects took our energies, one of them being the Audre Lorde Project itself. Realizing the importance of not only covering our own history but preserving it, archives of the magazine were housed at the Audre Lorde Project, whom in the wisdom of its namesake is bringing forth *ColorLife!* again, providing a much needed anchor for it. *ColorLife!* will be out again in the world doing what it always has, being a voice for the varied LGBTST People of Color communities that it serves. Viva the Audre Lorde Project! Viva ColorLife! La Luta continua.

**Note:** From 1997–2000, ALP produced a newsletter called *The Missive*. As part of re-launching *ColorLife!*, ALP will no longer produce *The Missive*, but will include ALP news in *ColorLife!*

# 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL KWANZAA CELEBRATION

**O**n December 27th, the 16th Annual LGBTST People of Color Kwanzaa celebration was held at the LGBT Community Center in Manhattan. Kwanzaa was established in 1966 as an African American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. The holiday was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and

Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith). It is important to note Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday, not a religious one, thus available to and practiced by Africans of all religious faiths.

This year's celebration was attended by over 250 community members and co-sponsored by 12 LGBTST community organizations including: African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change, African Asian Latina Lesbians United, The Audre Lorde Project, Black Pride NYC, Gay Men of African Descent, GRIOT Circle, House of Moshood, Latino Gay Men of New York, New York State Black Gay Network, Sable Magazine, Sistahs in Search of Truth, Alliance & Harmony and Sisters of Caribbean Ancestry. Participants were able to shop in an African market, enjoy a wonderful Kwanzaa ceremony which included singing, dancing,

African drumming, poetry and the traditional lighting of the Kinara (a candelabra representing the seven principles of Kwanzaa). Afterwards, a delicious community feast called the Karamu was held.

For more information on Kwanzaa, visit [www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org](http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org).

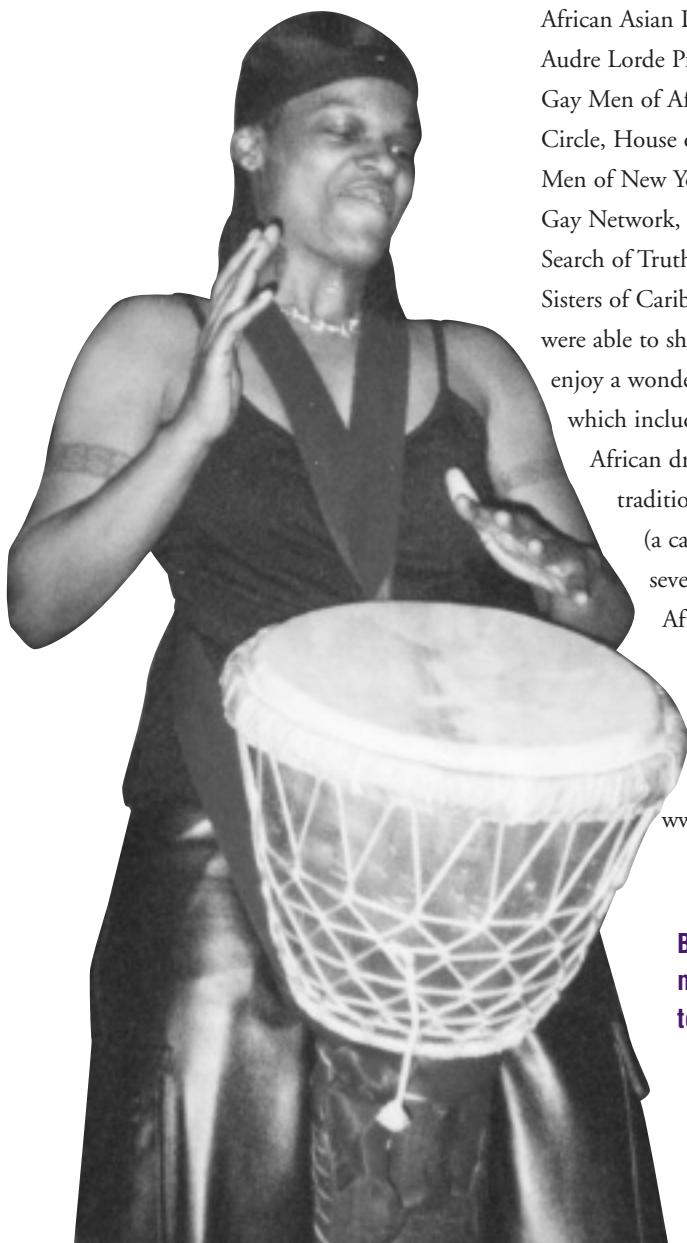
**Bernadette McGowan makes the crowd move to the beat.**



**Imani Henry does a piece from his groundbreaking work B4T (Before Testosterone).**



**Mama Gladys brings down the house with her interpretive dance moves.**





**So long as the U.S. continues to wage its wars, undoubtedly the economy will continue to spiral. This could mean continued funding cuts for LGBTST social services, HIV/AIDS-related services, etc. Given the severe impact of U.S. wars on LGBTST People of Color communities and the larger LGBT community in general, it is impossible for war not to be an issue.**

**T**he U.S. has been waging multiple wars around the world for several decades now. Within the last two years, however, U.S.-waged wars have become increasingly visible. Responding to the tragic events of September 11, 2001 with an eye for an eye approach, the U.S. commenced the “War on Terrorism.” Costing countless lives lost and billions of U.S. dollars to date, the country is told to accept the “War on Terrorism’s” continuance without a determinable end. In October 2002, Congress surrendered its responsibility of checks and balances and allowed the President to unilaterally declare war on Iraq in March 2003. Using the “justification” of a pre-emptive strike to seek and destroy “weapons of mass destruction,” close to 20,000 U.S. bombs dropped on Iraq just one month into the war. A year later, and thousands of lives lost, no weapons of mass destruction have been found.

To date, the U.S. has spent over \$600 billion on the “War on Terrorism,” and it is estimated that the War on Iraq (including rebuilding Iraq) will cost over \$150 billion. According to the Department of Labor, during our initial period of war with Iraq, the unemployment rate hit an all-time high of 6% (over 8 million people without jobs). The U.S. economy has dwindled in the recent war years, causing massive funding cuts for health care, education and social services. The 2004 fiscal year discretionary budget request was for \$782 billion, of which \$399 billion was requested for the military. \$55 billion was requested for education, and \$49 billion for health. According to the Center for Defense Information: “In all, the administration plans to spend 2.7 trillion dollars on the military over the next six years—and this as both the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office project a federal deficit as high as

\$200 billion to \$300 billion next year.”<sup>1</sup> So long as the U.S. continues to wage its wars, undoubtedly the economy will continue to spiral. This could mean continued funding cuts for LGBTST social services, HIV/AIDS-related services, etc. Given the severe impact of U.S. wars on LGBTST People of Color communities and the larger LGBT community in general, it is impossible for war not to be an issue.

Since the “War on Terrorism” began, the U.S. has inflicted its military might on Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines, Colombia, and many other countries. Over 500 U.S. soldiers have died so far in the broader ‘War on Terrorism,’ and over 400 U.S. soldiers have been killed by combatant attacks, accidents or by suicide in the War on Iraq. How much higher is the number of civilian deaths in these countries, as a result of U.S.-led wars? The U.S. refused to conduct an official body count of civilian casualties, thus moving independent groups to take up this moral responsibility. According to *A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States’ Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Accounting*, an independent study conducted by University of New Hampshire Professor Marc W. Herold, more than 3,500 civilians were killed in Afghanistan by U.S. and allied military forces, only two months into the “War on Terrorism.” In June 2003, Associated Press tallied 3,240 civilian deaths in the War on Iraq. How many more thousands of civilian deaths have occurred since, in this unending “War on Terrorism?” LGBTST People of Color and their families living in these countries and neighboring countries have been devastated by the U.S.-waged wars. One only needs to imagine precision-guided bombs falling over your family’s home, exploding depleted uranium onto targets with a detonation radius the size of a football field, to

realize how the war abroad must be an issue of importance.

The war has also been violently waged here at home. Since the “War on Terrorism” began, racist, homophobic and transphobic violence and murders have been on the rise. According to *Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Violence in 2002: A Report of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs*, there was a substantial increase from the previous year in the number of reported incidents of violence against LGBT People of Color. Reported violence against LGBT Arab or Middle Eastern identified people increased 26%; violence against Latino/a LGBT identified people increased 24%; and there was a 244% increase in violence against LGBT people identifying as “Other” if they did not identify with the racial and ethnic groups listed on the coalition’s intake sheet. The report affirms, “Further exploration of the identity of those identifying as ‘Other,’ indicates that a significant number of them belong to South Asian, African and other communities... They also tended to represent communities especially impacted by attention, bias and law enforcement scrutiny since September 11, 2001.”<sup>2</sup>

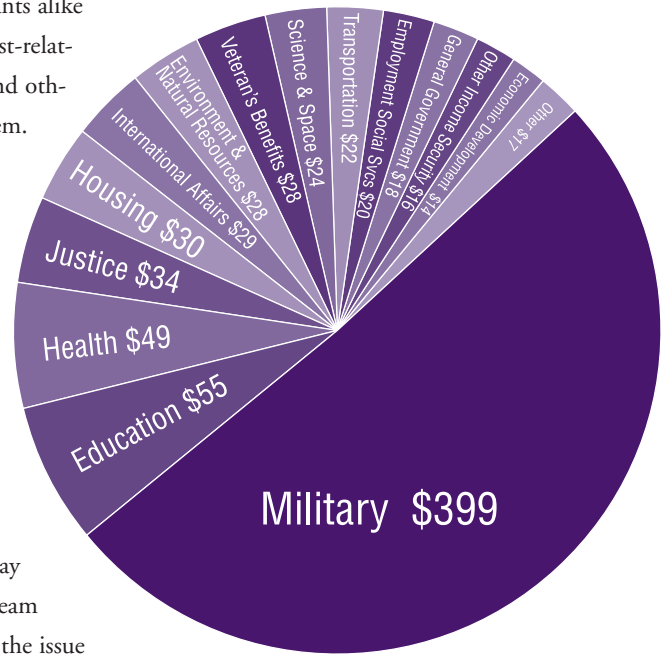
With the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security to support the efforts of the “War on Terrorism” at home, came the passage of the Patriot Act in 2001, and in February 2003, the proposed Domestic Security Enhancement Act (also known as Patriot Act II), which seeks to expand the provisions of the Patriot Act. Such legislative measures bring LGBTST People of Color under attack. Undocumented HIV-positive LGBT immigrants who once were protected by confidentiality of medical records are now at risk of deportation. A racist homophobe need only to call the Gestapo<sup>3</sup> and accuse

you of being a terrorist, and you may be swept up and jailed indefinitely with no right to a phone call or an attorney. Over 1,200 people to date have been racially and ethnically profiled, and targeted by perceived religious affiliation, as “suspected terrorists;” they have been arbitrarily arrested and detained in the U.S. prison system, without charges or bail, and subject to abuse by immigration and correctional officers. Over tens of thousands of undocumented and documented immigrants alike (who have not committed “terrorist-related” crimes) have been deported and others have disappeared into the system. Included in the numbers of those who have been detained and/or deported are members of LGBTST People of Color communities. Undeniably, ending the war abroad and at home is an issue of great importance to LGBTST People of Color Communities.

However many mainstream gay groups believe that war is not a “gay issue.” According to most mainstream gay organizations, gay marriage is the issue of greatest importance in the “gay movement.” Ironically, conservative family values groups agree.

Gay rights advocates saw considerable victories in 2003: In June, neighboring Canada legalized same-sex marriage; the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Texas sodomy laws unconstitutional; in August, the Episcopal Church sanctified same-sex unions, and this past November, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court expressly ruled that marriage is a civil right for same-sex couples, after the state failed to argue the constitutionality of denying civil marriage to same-sex couples. In July, responding to the Supreme Court ruling on sodomy laws and pending the outcome

of Massachusetts and New Jersey courts ruling on same-sex marriage, President Bush stated his intention to codify marriage as a union between a man and woman, short of a constitutional amendment, and had sent his administration lawyers scrambling to determine how to this can happen. After the Massachusetts ruling came down, President Bush vowed to lead the fight for a federal constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriages.



**U.S. 2004 FISCAL YEAR DISCRETIONARY BUDGET REQUEST (IN BILLIONS)\***

How timely the issue of gay marriage moves into the spotlight. According to polls conducted by CBSNEWS.com, results indicate that President Bush was losing approval points for his initiatives, especially the War on Iraq. In April 2003, 79% of those polled approved of Bush’s handling of Iraq; in September, it went down to 46%. His overall job approval rating dropped from 60% in July to 52% in September. His overall approval rating for handling the economy remained at 41%. If the war and occupation of Iraq and the U.S. economy continued on its failing course, Bush’s (continued on page 6)

re-election seemed in jeopardy. Then comes along the issue of gay marriage to conveniently deflect the country from questioning the war. Republicans, conservative Democrats, Christian right and family values groups have cast gay marriage as the premier issue, and mainstream gay rights advocates took the bait. Bush makes the big catch: the war and the economy are no longer the hot debate. Gay marriage has the national spotlight once again, and it is quickly becoming the “wedge” issue for the 2004 presidential campaign.

What needs to be considered, though, is whether the timeliness of the gay marriage issue for the 2004 election will really make or break Bush’s re-election, and does it really matter? All, but three, of the Democratic presidential candidates are anti- gay marriage, including the current leading candidate. If Bush loses, there is no guarantee that a constitutional amendment barring gay marriage will not be pushed through. The gay marriage issue is larger than this election. If gay marriage is legalized or banned, will it truly make or break America? Why is there a hard push for gay marriage to be the central issue? Is the purpose to make gay marriage the premier issue in this country over similarly important issues that may make or break America, say like health care, police brutality, education, rising number of HIV/AIDS-related deaths in People of Color communities, or bringing an end to war?

Taking full advantage of the spotlight, both sides of the gay marriage fight are now desperate to rally as much support as they can for their side — so desperate that they are trying to force the gay marriage issue as the premier issue for People of Color communities, especially the African American community. In the *Village Voice* article, “Queer Eye for the Black Guy: Fear of Gay Marriage Gives the GOP Another

Chance at Minority Voters,” Ta-Nehisi Coates reports that the Alliance for Marriage (an anti- gay marriage group) has recruited conservative Christian African Americans to visibly work on the federal marriage amendment campaign. Some gay marriage rights advocates are taking advantage of the belief that African Americans are more socially conservative and unlikely to support gay marriage, to justify pushing the marriage issue on the African American community. In his article on, “Gay Marriage: The Gender Gap: Why Many Straight Men Fear Same-Sex Unions,” Richard Goldstein writes:

“Men who command respect through wealth or professional power are far less likely to feel threatened by gay marriage than those who earn little and have only one weapon in the fight for prestige: masculinity. Young men are especially prone to this bind, and the rise of gay men makes them feel even more powerless. But no stigma is more implacable than race. African Americans are the most fragile group in America when it comes to social status, and the impact of racism weighs heavily on black masculinity. Hence, as gay men rise, a new theme has appeared in black youth culture: fag bashing. Its typical consumer is a young white male.”<sup>4</sup>

Goldstein’s statement is problematic for many racist and elitist reasons.<sup>5</sup> Could Goldstein be putting forth such provocative statements to elicit a response from the black community (LGBT and straight) as an attempt to increase support for the pro- gay marriage side? It’s a gross dare almost: Prove to the (white) gay community that the black community is not homophobic by supporting gay marriage rights. Ironically, two of the three Democratic presidential candidates who openly support gay marriages on their platforms are influential African American leaders: Reverend

Al Sharpton and Ambassador (and former U.S. Senator) Carol Mosley Braun.

It is apparent that both sides of the gay marriage fight are trying to force their issue as the priority issue for the black community. Fortunately, there is the National Black Justice Coalition working to counter anti- and pro- gay marriage groups’ attempts to colonize the issues of importance to the black community. Working to dispel the idea that gay marriage is a “wedge” issue for the black community, and the notion that black communities are more homophobic than white communities, the National Black Justice Coalition is an ad hoc coalition of black LGBT community leaders working to fight discrimination in their own community. The coalition’s goal in 2004 is to build black support for marriage equality in efforts to defeat the proposed federal marriage amendment. However, there is a great difference between this coalition’s work and the work of mainstream gay marriage rights group: The coalition is not trying to make marriage equality the only issue of importance to their community. The coalition recognizes that there are multiple issues important to the African American community and is working to educate their community on how marriage equality is another issue of importance to consider. Unfortunately, there are some groups unaffected by multiple issues that believe if they took this approach, it will lead them to no gain.

In efforts to rally as much support as they can for gay marriage, there are some mainstream LGBT organizations that are pushing gay marriage as the utmost issue of importance to the LGBT community, accusing LGBT groups who do not agree with this of being divisive and working against the “LGBT movement.” Though gay marriage is undoubtedly an important issue to the gay community, it cannot uni-



laterally be claimed as the most important issue to the LGBT movement. Reminiscent of Bush's "you're either with us or against us" approach to war, to proclaim one issue more important over other issues is nothing more than a sad attempt to define the LGBT movement as a single-issue movement—gay marriage being the single-issue. The fight for gay marriage is not necessarily the most important issue to the entire LGBT community. The fight for gay marriage

**A TRULY UNITED FIGHT, A TRUE "MOVEMENT," IS ONE WHERE WE ARE FIGHTING FOR EACH OTHER AND EVERY ONE OF OUR ISSUES, IN ORDER TO WIN TOGETHER.**

rights, is simply that, a fight for the rights and privileges afforded to married heterosexual couples to be afforded to same-sex couples through the institution of marriage. This fight does not extend the same privileges and rights to LGBT community members who are single, prefer not to marry or are in similarly significant unions—civil unions, domestic partnerships, etc. Should the entire LGBT community focus their efforts on this one fight? Is it strategic to rally every community behind one issue?

More sadly, in attempts to focus the nation on the marriage issue, it seems the fight for and against gay marriage has been likened to war. In a *USA Today* article, Gary Bauer, president of American Values was quoted as saying: "The president

[Bush], I hope, recognizes that there are two wars raging: one in Iraq and the other battle over our culture and our values."<sup>6</sup> In response to an interview between President Bush and Diane Sawyer, where the president clearly expressed his support of a federal marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution, The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force issued a press release, quoting its director as saying: "We consider this a declaration of war on gay America."<sup>7</sup>

It seems conservatives and gay rights advocates concur on the use of this rhetoric, most likely to gain more attention on the gay marriage issue. Before the opposing sides of the gay marriage fight continue to use the word "war" in their rhetoric, can they be conscious of how U.S. military wars have impacted this country and its people? So long as the "War on Terrorism" continues, we will see continued erosion of legal rights for citizens and non-citizens; curtailment of civil rights (including gay marriage); depletion of immigrant rights; increased racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic violence; increased poverty, joblessness, and so on. And lastly, if not most important to our humanity, let us not forget one thing about this war: We are annihilating whole families and communi-

ties around the world and at home.

We cannot allow one issue to become the single issue of importance to our communities. We cannot allow one issue to be the only issue people are fighting for. There are multiple issues oppressing multiple communities, and all these issues are worth fighting for. A single-issue fight, even in its victory, is too expensive. A single gain comes only at the expense of too many losses. If gay marriage is legalized, how wonderful it will be, but will people continue to starve in this country living in poverty (including LGBT families)? If universal health care was declared, will hate violence still occur? If we end the "War on Terrorism," will it stop the U.S. from using the rest of its weapons of mass destruction in some other war? Because, in the end, what we really are fighting for is social change and social justice. This cannot truly be achieved by winning one fight at a time, because whole communities may die fighting, before their time has come. A truly united fight, a true "movement," is one where we are fighting for each other and every one of our issues, in order to win together. Idealistic as it may sound, if we win together, we will all be living in peace, with no inequality, no communities left behind to die, where we are free to determine our own identities, free to be who we are, and free to love whom we want. If, in the end, we are not fighting for this dream, what the hell *are* we fighting for?

\* Budget pie chart derived from Center for Defense Information, "FY04 Discretionary Budget Request." This information was accessible at: <<http://www.cdi.org/budget/2004/discretionary.cfm>>

<sup>1</sup> Center for Defense Information, "Highlights of the FY04 Budget Request." 3 Feb. 2003. As of December 15, 2003, this information was accessible at: <[www.cdi.org/budget/2004/highlights.cfm](http://www.cdi.org/budget/2004/highlights.cfm)>

<sup>2</sup> National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. *Anti- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Violence in 2002: A Report of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs*. 2003 Preliminary Edition. A copy of this report is accessible through [www.avp.org](http://www.avp.org)

<sup>3</sup> Referring to Nazi Germany police, "Gestapo" is also defined by < [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) > as: " A police organization that employs terroristic methods to control a populace."

<sup>4</sup> Goldstein, Richard. "Gay Marriage: The Gender Gap: Why Many Straight Men Fear Same-Sex Unions." *The Village Voice* 10-16 Dec. 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Goldstein offensively presumes: 1. Wealthy (older white) men are less homophobic than poor (young) men. This doesn't explain how straight white men with power are responsible for proposing and implementing homophobic, transphobic and heterosexist legislation; 2. Gay marriage (which Goldstein equates to gay men rising to power) will emasculate (poor young) straight men, since the only thing poor men rely on for "prestige" is masculinity. How gay marriage directly threatens straight young male masculinity is not clear; 3. (Straight) black youth are more homophobic/ violent than (straight) white youth, and black youth culture directly influences white youth culture. With this assumption, Goldstein implies that black youth are the perpetrators of homophobic violence, and white youth are devoid of responsibility for perpetuating homophobic violence.

<sup>6</sup> Page, Susan. "Gay Marriage Looms Large for '04." *USA Today* 15 Dec. 2003.

<sup>7</sup> As of December 19, 2003, this NGLTF press release was accessible at: <[www.nglftf.org/news/release.cfm?releaseID=611](http://www.nglftf.org/news/release.cfm?releaseID=611)>

# FINDING A WAY TO JUSTICE

LOOKING BACK AT THE SAKIA GUNN MARCH AND VIGIL

BY EMAN RIMAWI



photo provided courtesy of Gay City News

SAKIA GUNN 1988 - 2003

**T**he Youth Working Group at The Audre Lorde Project & FIERCE! decided to do something in memory of Sakia and all those who had been killed for being themselves. Not a rally. Not a protest, but a space for our communities to share stories, strategize and begin healing. We wanted to unite people, in a loving way, while remembering the reason why we were here. After much discussion, we decided on a March and Vigil. We wanted to bring the LGBTST community together, in remembrance of Sakia Gunn, a 15 year-old lesbian, who was killed for no reason other than being herself.

The process of getting the March and Vigil together wasn't easy. I had never worked on anything like it before, and neither had my fellow working group members. We were also working with FIERCE for the first time. So, it was an all around new experience. We discussed what we thought, as young people, should take place. Speakers? Performers? The Media's attendance? How were we going to let youth and the entire community know what was going on? We all came up with great ideas. Chants, ways to communicate with other youth and media releases to show how we felt about the situation. Hard as it all was, the end result was very successful.

July 11th, 2003 came around the cor-

ner before I knew it. The night before the March and Vigil, I helped to finish posters for the marchers. I also helped with chants, introductions of performers and speakers, and putting together the program in general. I was going to be the host! I was scared, excited and anxious all at the same time. This was going to be a big, big deal, and it went down as a very big deal in our community. Youth came together. Adults came together. The weather, however, was against us. It was almost as if the ocean, behind and under us, was full of our emotions, and the spirit of Sakia and many others slain for the same reason, were mixed in the murky dark waters. From out of nowhere, a huge storm came over us. But as soon as I saw the marchers coming around the corner of Christopher Street, the storm subsided, the sun beamed from the opening white clouds, and the vigil began.

The Marchers came down the pier, holding signs, chanting "The People United Will Never Be Defeated" loud and bold, and security was walking beside them, striving to insure safety. I was with one of the FIERCE crew, watching from the front of the stage. We looked at each other, then looked at the crowd and then back to one other again, we smiled, and she high-fived me. It was the most amazing thing to see - hundreds and hundreds of





photo provided courtesy of Gay City News

people, together, marching for this girl - someone who they knew through the newspapers and only after she had been brutally taken away from our community. Who knows what great and amazing things she had in store? Who could know? We didn't. But it was up to us to make sure that the memory of what she had already accomplished in her life, stayed alive.

I began with an opening statement, welcoming everyone and talking about the program. Next came the speakers and performers. Spanky, a friend of Sakia's, spoke to us, breaking down into tears because of the memory of that night. People in the crowd held each other as each voice got up to sing, speak, rap and rhyme. The pier opened its arms, ears, eyes, and hearts, as we stood with our backs to the massive ocean, unleashing our hearts and souls to one another. This day was a day of remembrance, a day to bring about what some thought was impossible. But nothing is impossible. It is a matter of holding it together with a strong bond. It is about getting an issue that will unite the LGBTST youth and adult people of color community, an issue that will help us to understand that we are all in the struggle together. It is about struggling across differences and allowing the commonalities to hold us together. There have been too many losses. On July 11th, a community united.

As we closed the March & Vigil, we asked everyone to light a candle in remembrance and struggle. We had a moment of silence for Sakia and all those lost in our struggle for liberation. The flames rose high in remembrance of them all. The heat rose, coming from our hearts through the candles. Heads were bowed, tears were shed, arms were locked into one another and we held together through it all. Weather, park rangers, NYPD, Hudson River Park Trust, and everyone else that made the Sakia Gunn March & Vigil very difficult couldn't stop us that day. We were strong, bold, and ready for whatever they threw in our direction.

Today, I look back on it and I am so happy to have been part of it. I think of a few things when I think about that March and Vigil. I think of my own sexuality. I think of how it was when I was fifteen. I think of all the youth who think they don't have a soul in the world that cares and then I think of all the good we are doing in the community to show the youth that we do care about them, because we are them. We will fight, and we will struggle. We will find the strength to carry on through this on-going battle to just be and you know what? We will make it. I have faith in us, as a unit. And faith...believing in a group, is sometimes the greatest weapon of all.

# ALP SPEAKING OUT!

## During the Fall/Winter of 2003:

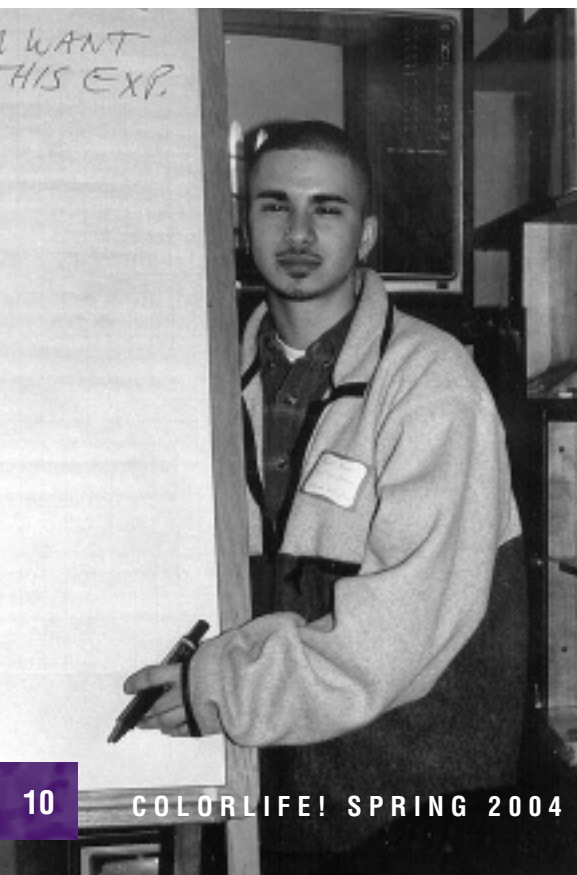
- Staff person Trishala Deb spoke on a panel produced by the Queer Economic Justice Network (QEJN) entitled *Beyond Iraq: The Impact Of The War On Terrorism On LGBT Communities*
- ALP staff person Desmond Rudder & volunteer Sandie Green conducted HIV 101 workshops for African, Asian, Latina Lesbians United (AALLU) at the New Brunswick, NJ Pride Center and for the youth organization Yo' SiSTAH at the NYC LGBT Center
- Desmond also conducted an HIV 101 workshop at The Bronx Health Jam
- Volunteer Bran Fenner facilitated an anti-homophobia training at the LISTEN Conference in Washington, DC
- ALP staff person Trishala Deb represented ALP's Working Group on Police Violence by giving testimony on the effects of racial profiling on the LGBTST POC community at the Amnesty International hearing on racial profiling.
- Trishala also facilitated an anti-homophobia training for the BlackOut Arts Collective.

ALP attended the Creating Change Conference in Miami, Florida where:

- ALP board member Sheila Stowell, in conjunction with American Friends Service Committee, facilitated a workshop on understanding the effects of zero tolerance and enhanced penalties on the LGBTST POC community
- ALP staff members Kris Hayashi & Trishala Deb facilitated a 5-hour skills building workshop on racism and xenophobia.
- Trishala also spoke on a QEJN panel entitled *Class and the Queer Agenda*

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**The Audre Lorde Project seeks interested individuals to become active builders of our work. Following are some examples of volunteer opportunities.**



**Working Group Member**—requires a 4 to 10 hour a month commitment, for at least three months. Are you an activist or organizer or aspire to be one? Do you care about the political issues that affect your daily life but don't know how to change things? Here at ALP we have several working groups that address progressive social and economic issues such as health & wellness, immigrant rights, police violence and youth organizing. Working group members meet monthly to discuss pertinent issues and upcoming projects. Below is a description of each working group.

**Health & Wellness** — Would you like to help educate the LGBTST POC community about items such as wellness issues affecting our communities or holistic health practices? Are you interested learning more about HIV/STD prevention, or doing outreach in clubs or at LGBTST People of Color events? Consider joining the Health & Wellness Working Group where you can help plan and implement our health & wellness related programs including community outreach and workshop/community forum development and facilitation. For more information, contact Desmond Rudder @ 718.596.0342, ext. 14.

**Immigrant's Rights** — This working group is open to all people born outside of the United States, regardless of legal status/citizenship. Over the next year we will be connecting with LGBTST POC immigrants all over New York City to build safe spaces for immigrants to come together, access legal and support services, and

strategize on organizing strategies that can directly impact the issues that effect our lives. If you are interested in being a part of a team for outreach, legal support, political education, and/or direct action organizing with other immigrants, this is the place for you! For more information contact Trishala Deb @ 718.596.0342, ext. 12.

**Police Violence** — Are you tired of feeling helpless in the face of all kinds of abuse of power by the police in your community? Are you questioning how the "War on Terrorism" is connected to your life as an LGBTST person of color? Are you ready to explore the connections between policing abroad and right here at home? The WGPV is looking for LGBTST POC who have been impacted by police violence, or who have a strong desire to organize against police and state violence locally. Over the next year we will be building a local campaign centered on issues of police violence for LGBTST POC in NYC, as well as convening a national meeting for LGBTST organizations opposed to the "War on Terrorism." For more information, contact Loyda Colon @ 718.596.0342, ext. 20.

**Youth Organizing** — If you are a LGBTST youth of color 20 & younger and you are interested in fighting for justice and helping your community, you should join the Youth Organizing Working Group. The working group is lead by and for youth that identify or want to be trained as community organizers. Youth are trained in program & curriculum development, workshops facilitation, outreach,

fundraising, retreat/event planning and much, much more. In the Youth Organizing Working Group you will be given the opportunity to hang out and work with other youth across the country. We also invite you to apply for the Youth of Color Leadership Training Program (YCLTP) taking place this summer. The YCLTP is a six-week paid organizing training that provides youth with the basic skills needed to organize and fight for their rights. Meals and weekly metro cards are also provided. For more information, contact Loyda Colon @ 718.596.0342, ext. 20.

**ColorLife!** Use your writing, drawing, photography or computer skills to help us produce *ColorLife!* Knowledge of Quark and/or good writing skills are a plus. For more information, contact Desmond Rudder @ 718.596.0342, ext. 14.

**Fundraising Committee** (4 to 10 hour a month commitment, for at least 1 year) Work directly with our Development Associate and Executive Director to implement creative strategies for sustainable fundraising. We are looking for volunteers who are detail-oriented, have good written/communication skills, and want to learn more about fundraising. The Fundraising Committee offers excellent skills building and resume building experience. For more information, contact Becky Lee @ 718.596.0342, ext. 15.

**Materials Preparation** Help ALP put together materials for distribution at trainings, community events and parties. For more information, contact Desmond Rudder @ 718.596.0342, ext. 14.

**Outreach Worker** Are you a people person? Do you enjoy attending community events? Then this could be the volunteer spot for you. ALP needs people to staff our tables at various community events. You would have the opportunity to talk to folks about our programs, provide community members with referral information and much, much more. Attending an ALP Outreach training is required. For more information, contact Desmond Rudder @ 718.596.0342, ext. 14.

**Website Maintenance** Help ALP update & restructure its website. Experience with Dreamweaver is a plus. For more information, contact Desmond Rudder @ 718.596.0342, ext. 14.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT ALP HAS A FACILITIES PROGRAM?

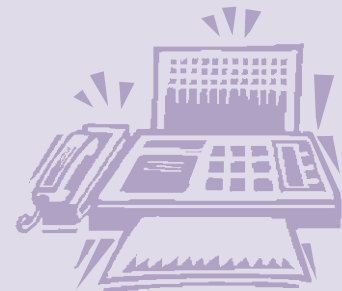
The goal of the Facilities Program is to build capacity and support the organizational development of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit & Transgender People of Color (LGBTST POC) non-profit community organizations and organizing efforts through the provision of meeting space, access to office infrastructure, technical assistance, training, networking and coalition building opportunities.

LGBTST POC groups can access meeting space, office infrastructure, technical assistance, training, networking and coalition building opportunities in three ways, as a User Group, a Member Group or as an Incubator Group.

### Some of the services our facilities program offers are:

- Low cost meeting space
- Mailboxes
- Voicemail
- Technical Assistance
- Fax, Copier & Computer usage

**For more information or to request a brochure, please contact our Program Assistant-Resource Center@ 718.596.0342, extension 17.**





# ALP ANNOUNCES OUR FIRST-EVER CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In 1999, ALP's strategic plan indicated that one day ALP will grow out of its current rented space in the parish house of Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. Since then, ALP has carefully planned for this campaign: we conducted a feasibility study among our donors, gathered advice from fellow grassroots community-based organizations which have succeeded in their capital campaigns, and researched prospective new homes. Cause Effective, a nonprofit resource center, has also been providing technical assistance to the development of ALP's capital campaign.

Reconfirming our mission as a community organizing center for LGBTST

People of Color Communities at our Spring 2002 strategic planning session, ALP was ready to move forward with our quest for "a space for many movements." Last summer ALP publicly announced our search for a new home. Our goal is to raise \$450,000 to secure a space that is wheelchair accessible, can provide meeting space to over 30 LGBTST People of Color organizations in the New York City area, and will allow us to continue building our organizing work around youth issues, immigrant rights, transgender rights, police/state violence and wellness.

As our new executive director settles in confidently, we are ready to shift the capital campaign into high gear. The success of

this campaign is contingent upon the support of our communities and our allies. If you are interested in volunteering for this campaign, there are plenty of opportunities, such as: participating on the space search committee, fundraising, or providing professional legal advice, real estate services, or architectural/construction services.

**Whether it is a monetary donation, volunteer services or words of support, your contribution to ALP is essential! For more information on how to get involved with ALP's capital campaign or to make a donation, contact Becky Lee at 718.596.0342 ext.15 or [b.lee@alp.org](mailto:b.lee@alp.org).**

## CHILLIN' & GRILLIN



### ALP's Annual Picnic Was a Hit!

In August, we held our 6th Annual Chillin' & Grillin' family barbecue and picnic at Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Over 200 people joined us for fabulous food, volleyball, softball & piñatas. Chillin' & Grillin' VI was co-sponsored by 10 organizations including African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change, Gay Asian & Pacific Islander Men of New York, Gay & Lesbian Dominicans Empowered, Gay Men of African Descent, House of Moshood, Las Buenas Amigas, Latino Gay Men of New York, New York State Black Gay Network, Sister in Search of Truth, Alliance & Harmony & Sisters of Caribbean Ancestry.

Be sure to join us for Chillin' & Grillin' VII on Sunday, August 7 in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

< Theresa and Nakeyta Green have fun posing for the camera.

# NYC LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TWO SPIRIT AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE OF COLOR RESOURCE GUIDE

**ADODI/ New York** – Black same-gender-loving/gay men's group. P.O. Box 7417, JAF Station, NY, NY 10116-7417, tel: 212.560.7252; web: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/menofadodi>; email: moa@yahoo.com.

**African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (AALUSC)** – Committed to the empowerment of African Ancestral Lesbians and all Wimmin of Color. AALUSC, 154 Christopher Street, #3C, NY, NY 10014, tel: 212.741.9110 ext. 18; email: [info@aalusc.org](mailto:info@aalusc.org); web: [www.aalusc.org](http://www.aalusc.org).

**Al-Fatiha Foundation** – An organization for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Muslims & Friends. P.O. Box 33532, Washington, DC 20033; email: [gaymuslims@yahoo.com](mailto:gaymuslims@yahoo.com); web: [www.al-fatiha.net](http://www.al-fatiha.net).

**Assal East Coast – Arab & Iranian Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Women's Group.** Social and support network for Arab and Iranian LBT women, tel: 718.596.0342, xt.35; e-mail: [labwas@yahoo.com](mailto:labwas@yahoo.com)

**The Audre Lorde Project:** Community Organizing Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit and Transgender People of Color Communities – 85 South Oxford St., Brooklyn, NY 11217, tel: 718.596.0342, email: [alpinfo@alp.org](mailto:alpinfo@alp.org); web: [www.alp.org](http://www.alp.org).

**Black Pride NYC** – Committed to empowering lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit and transgender people of African descent. 692 Fulton St., #3, Brooklyn, NY 11217; tel: 212.613.0097, email: [blackpridenyc@aol.com](mailto:blackpridenyc@aol.com); web: [www.blackpridenyc.com](http://www.blackpridenyc.com)

**Brazilian Rainbow Group** – c/o GMHC, 119 W. 24th St., 4th Floor, NY, NY 10011 tel: 212.367.1471, email: [brg@gmhc.org](mailto:brg@gmhc.org).

**Colectivo Mexicano LGBT (CoMex LGBT)** – c/o D. Leyva, LCOA, 24 W 25th St., 9th Floor, NY, NY, 10011; tel: 212.584.9313; email: [Xocoyotzin@NYC.rr.com](mailto:Xocoyotzin@NYC.rr.com) or [Aztec1970now@aol.com](mailto:Aztec1970now@aol.com)

**Colombian Lesbian & Gay Association (COLEGA)** – Social organization for LBGT Colombians in the NY area. c/o Raul G., 35-15 Leverich St., Ste 607, Jackson Heights, NY 11372; tel: 212.584-9307; email: [colega\\_ny@yahoo.com](mailto:colega_ny@yahoo.com); web: [www.colegalgbt.org](http://www.colegalgbt.org).

**Gay and Lesbian Dominican Empowerment Organization (G.A.L.D.E.)** – c/o Francisco Lazala, LCOA, 24 W 25th Street, 9th Floor, NY, NY 10010; tel: 718.596.0342 ext. 39; email: [info@galde.org](mailto:info@galde.org); web: [www.galde.org](http://www.galde.org)

**Gay Asian and Pacific Islander Men of New York (GAPIMNY)** – Supportive organization for gay, bisexual, and questioning men, and transgender people of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage. PO Box 1608, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10113; tel: 212.802.RICE; email: [gapimny@gapimny.org](mailto:gapimny@gapimny.org); web: [www.gapimny.org](http://www.gapimny.org).

**Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD)** – African, African American, Latino and Caribbean gay men dedicated to addressing the needs of their community. 103 East 125th St., Suite 503, NY, NY 10035, tel: 212.828.1697; email: [gmad@gmad.org](mailto:gmad@gmad.org); web: [www.gmad.org](http://www.gmad.org).

**Gay and Lesbian Arab Society (GLAS)** – A network for the Arab LGBT community. email: [ramzi@glas.org](mailto:ramzi@glas.org); web: [www.glas.org](http://www.glas.org).

**GRIOT Circle (Gay Reunion In Our Time)** – Gathering of elders for Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay Male, Two Spirit and Transgender Persons of All Colors. YWCA, 30 Third Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11217; tel: 718.246.2775; email: [reunion@griotcircle.org](mailto:reunion@griotcircle.org); web: [www.griotcircle.org](http://www.griotcircle.org).

**House of Anjea** – A supportive space for Lesbian & Bisexual women who are married, engage or partnered with men, yet maintain relationships with women. tel: 212.479.7886; email: [HouseofAnjea@hotmail.com](mailto:HouseofAnjea@hotmail.com).

**HoMoVISIONES** – First TV program in history created to present different aspects of Latino gay life through television. email: [info@homovisiones.org](mailto:info@homovisiones.org); web: [www.homovisiones.org](http://www.homovisiones.org).

**House of Moshood** – HIV positive Lesbians and their allies group doing safer sex prevention work thru outreach in the ball and club community. Meetings TBA. Contact Misha Moshood, tel: 646 256 7639; email: [mislew212@aol.com](mailto:mislew212@aol.com).

**Iban/Queer Koreans of New York (QKNY)** – A friendly support group and political advocacy organization for LGBT Koreans, Korean Americans and Korean adoptees. email: [koalany@hotmail.com](mailto:koalany@hotmail.com).

**Kilawin Kolektibo** – A New York City Filipina Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgender networking and support group. email: [Kilawin@yahoo.com](mailto:Kilawin@yahoo.com).

**Las Buenas Amigas** – A Latina lesbian educational, cultural, political and social organization. voicemail: 718.596.0342, ext. 44.

**Latino Gay Men of New York/ Hombres Latinos Gay de Nueva York** – All-Latino, all-gay-male support group. c/o The Audre Lorde Project, 85 S. Oxford St., Brooklyn, NY 11217; tel: 718.596.0342, ext. 36; email: [info@lgmny.org](mailto:info@lgmny.org) or [lgmny@hotmail.com](mailto:lgmny@hotmail.com); web: [www.lgmny.org](http://www.lgmny.org)

**Latitud 0° (Cero)** – Movimiento Lésbico-Gay-Bisexual-Transgenero Ecuatoriano. c/o GMHC 119 W. 24th St, 4th fl., NY, NY 10011; Call Fausto or Bolivar, tel: 212.367.1466; email: [latitud0@hotmail.com](mailto:latitud0@hotmail.com).

**Lavender Light:** The Black and People of All Colors Lesbian and Gay Gospel Choir – Black gospel music tradition in an environment supportive to Lesbian and Gay people. 70-A Greenwich Street, Ste. #315, NY, NY 10011; tel: 212.714.7072; email: [mcjellyrol@aol.com](mailto:mcjellyrol@aol.com); web: [www.lavenderlight.com](http://www.lavenderlight.com).

**Mano a Mano** – Coalition of Latina/o LGBT activists and organizations. Quarterly board meetings. c/o Andres Duque, 24 W 25th Street, 9th Floor, NY, NY 10010; tel: 212.584.9306; email: [aduque@latinoaids.org](mailto:aduque@latinoaids.org); web: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mano\\_mano\\_ny](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mano_mano_ny).

**New York State Black Gay Network** – 119 W.24th St., NY, NY 10011, tel: 212.367.1565; email: [nysbgn@aol.org](mailto:nysbgn@aol.org).

**People of Color in Crisis (POCC)** – Brooklyn-based HIV/AIDS organization serving African American and Caribbean Gay and Bisexual men. 468 Bergen St., Brooklyn, NY 11217; tel: 718.230.0770; email: [pocccgen@poccc.org](mailto:pocccgen@poccc.org); web: [www.poccc.org](http://www.poccc.org).

**Primer Movimiento Peruano** – LGBT Peruvian group. c/o Queens Pride House, 67-03 Woodside Ave., Woodside, NY 11377, email: [grupo@gayperunyc.org](mailto:grupo@gayperunyc.org); web: [www.gayperunyc.org](http://www.gayperunyc.org)

**Puerto Rican Initiative to Develop Empowerment (PRIDE)** – Dedicated to the empowerment of LGBT people of Puerto Rican descent. Louis Robles, President, c/o The Audre Lorde Project, 85 S. Oxford St., Brooklyn, NY 11217, tel: 718.596.0342, ext. 36; email: [lrobles@nyc.rr.com](mailto:lrobles@nyc.rr.com).

**Quisleya-Dominican Gay and Lesbian Association** – 1015 Grand Concourse, #3B, Bronx, NY 10452; tel: 718.681.1612; email: [quisleya@hotmail.com](mailto:quisleya@hotmail.com).

**Sistahs in Search of Truth, Alliance & Harmony (SiSTAH)** – Supportive organization for bisexual and lesbian of colour community. Cadman Plaza, POB 020136, Brooklyn, NY 11202; tel: 212.479.7886; email: [mail@sistah.org](mailto:mail@sistah.org); web: [www.sistah.org](http://www.sistah.org).

**South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA)** – SALGA-NYC is a social and political group for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people of South Asian trace their descent from countries such as Afghanistan, India and Trinidad. PO Box 1491, Old Chelsea Station, NYC 10113; tel: 212.358.5132; email: (general info): [salganyc@hotmail.com](mailto:salganyc@hotmail.com); (women's events) [salga\\_women@hotmail.com](mailto:salga_women@hotmail.com); web: [www.salganyc.org](http://www.salganyc.org).

**Unity Fellowship Church of Christ/NY** – Multiracial, all-ecumenical lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender church, 2578 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207; 718.385.2406; email: [ufcnyc@aol.com](mailto:ufcnyc@aol.com); web: <http://members.aol.com/ufcnyc/>

**Uhuru-Wazobia** – group for LGBTIQ Africans living in New York, email: [adesiminaya@yahoo.com](mailto:adesiminaya@yahoo.com).

**Young Organization of Sistahs in Search of Truth, Alliance & Harmony (Yo SiSTAH)** – For young women 29 years and younger, Cadman Plaza, POB 020136, Brooklyn, NY 11202; tel: 212.479.7886; email: [ghettofabulous7@hotmail.com](mailto:ghettofabulous7@hotmail.com); web: [www.yosistah.s5.com](http://www.yosistah.s5.com)

# ALP AT WORK

**A**LP accomplishes much of its work through Working Groups. Working Groups are structured committees where volunteers can be part of developing organizational policy on various issues and implementing programs. Below are updates on our Working Groups. For more information on Working Groups please call the staff person listed at the end of each update. Also see the *Volunteer Opportunities* page in this publication.

## Health & Wellness

Within the last year, the Health & Wellness Working Group has participated in and planned many events including two community forums, Gay-Bi-Trans Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Transgender Youth of Color-Where Are We Now. These forums were co-sponsored by several LGBTST POC organizations including

African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change, Latino Gay Men of New York, South Asian Lesbian & Gay Association and Unity Fellowship Church/CommonSpirit. The working group also produced four workshops covering the areas of meditation, communicating about sex, dream interpretation and massage. Working group members have also helped provide HIV/STD prevention materials and resource guides to over 3,000 community members through street outreach, club outreach and community events such as Brooklyn Pride and The Bronx Health Jam. For more information, contact Desmond Rudder @ 718.596.0342, ext. 14 or [drudder@alp.org](mailto:drudder@alp.org)

## Immigrant's Rights

The Working Group on Immigrant Rights (WGIR) has supported multiple LGBTST

POC immigrants through advocacy, referrals, and legal support. WGIR also represented ALP on Third World Within, a citywide coalition of people of color racial justice organizations. We are currently building our capacity for ongoing community organizing campaigns through a series of know your rights trainings, legal clinics and community meetings. The goal of the working group is to build the capacity for LGBTST immigrants of color to organize for justice and self-determination in our communities, as well as participate in a growing movement for legalization and immigrant rights in the U.S. For more information, contact Trishala Deb @ 718.596.0342, ext. 12 or [tdeb@alp.org](mailto:tdeb@alp.org)

## Police/State Violence

The Working Group on Police Violence has a long history within ALP. In the last

## LEADERSHIP RETREAT 2004





# OPERATION HOMELAND RESISTANCE

year, the working group has participated in a number of national and local projects. Locally, we have held an intensive training series on the history and politics of police and state violence, and participated in community forums with the Queer Economic Justice Network and Amnesty International. We continued our work with CAPB – the NYC-based Coalition Against Police Brutality. WGPV members also coordinated ALP's participation in a local action called Operation Homeland Resistance (see article on this page). WGPV also represented ALP in the formative stages of Racial Justice 911, a national network of racial justice organizations dedicated to building broad-based opposition to the U.S.'s "War on Terrorism" among communities of color. We are currently focused on building our communities' capacity to organize ongoing campaigns to address police/state violence and develop alternatives; as well as convene a second national meeting of LGBTST organizations opposing the "War on Terrorism" with AFSC and Al-Fatiha. For more information, contact Loyda Colon, @ 718.596.0342, ext. 20 or lcolon@alp.org

## LGBTST POC Leaders Roundtable

The Leaders' Roundtable is a network of LGBTST POC organizations in NYC which meets on a bi-monthly basis, holds an annual retreat, sponsors skills building trainings for member organizations, and mobilizes around emerging issues which impact our community. The goal of the Leaders' Roundtable is to provide a space for organizations to come together across

various communities, strategize around common obstacles for our organizations and deepen our unity as LGBTST POC organizations. The latest examples of mobilizations were two demonstrations in response to Chuck Knipp, a white performer in blackface who takes on the persona of a character named Shirley Q. Liquor. The Leaders' Roundtable was able to mobilize two emergency protests at the performance site and organized local press coverage of our actions. For more information contact Trishala Deb @ 718.596.0342, ext. 12 or tdeb@alp.org

## Youth Organizing

The Youth Organizing Working Group is in the process of launching its first LGBTST youth of color led campaign. The campaign is scheduled to begin this year. The youth have also decided to turn ALP's six-week Young Women's Leadership Training program into a multi-gendered leadership training program. The new program will also take place this summer. Last summer the working group organized a March and Vigil with FIERCE! in honor of Sakia Gunn and conducted a youth retreat entitled Organizing From the Inside Out, where members of the working group and prospective new members came together to share their experiences and skills. The youth learned stress reduction techniques, conducted a power analysis, discussed the need for community organizing and received training on short-term campaign development. For more information contact Loyda Colon @ 718.596.0342, ext. 20 or lcolon@alp.org

Last Spring ALP joined other racial justice, immigrant rights and other communities in supporting three days of civil disobedience and creative action – OPERATION HOMELAND RESISTANCE against the "War on Terrorism." Although the bombing has temporarily stopped in Iraq, the "War on Terrorism" continues, with many of its domestic effects experienced most harshly by LGBTST People of Color. Beginning last spring, dozens of LGBTST People of Color, along with many other racial justice, immigrant rights and anti-war activists from across the city, engaged in direct action and civil disobedience to resist the war and let the world know that LGBTST People of Color do not support what the "War on Terrorism" is doing, including:

- Re-institutionalization of racial profiling
- De-prioritization of human needs and social programs, including housing, education and AIDS treatment and prevention
- Increasing militarization of the Immigration and Naturalization Service
- Political surveillance and attacks on human/civil rights
- Promoting a culture of racist violence and homophobia

Desmond Rudder, of ALP said: "As New Yorkers, we want to make it clear that it's not okay to manipulate our mourning for lives lost on September 11th as justification to take more lives through "pre-emptive war," to occupy other countries or to allow crucial funding to be diverted from life-saving HIV/AIDS and other human services to so-called "security spending".



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# SO MANY THINGS

**G**et ready! In the coming months the media's fascination with the Down Low (DL) will only increase and the superficial conversations that demonize same gender loving men of color will reach an all time high. May 2004 will see the release of the book, *Living on the Down Low* (Random House) by J. L. King, an "HIV/AIDS prevention activist" who has made a name for himself engaging conference audiences and scaring black sorority members around the country with details of his former life as a man on the DL. Unavoidably, this book will spawn more articles on this "cultural phenomenon" of Black and Latino men having sex with each other and hiding this fact from their female sexual partners.

Although this sexual reality is hardly specific to any one culture and is nowhere near an inexplicable or even new phenomenon, unavoidably such articles, episodes of Ricki Lake, specials on BET, and the resulting panel discussions at LGBT community forums will point fingers at Black men, but continually fail to ask or answer the important questions. Instead, we will settle for exotic stereotypes of Black men as predators and fully accept narrow notions of Black masculinity that keep many men of color leading secret lives.

The rationale for the widespread focus on the DL is that there is a subculture of immoral Black men who are having unpro-

tected homosexual intercourse with each other, contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, and bringing these diseases "home" to their unsuspecting wives and girlfriends. I take issue with this focus and rationale not because I don't believe that men on the down low exist; but because the entire discussion is implicitly dehumanizing, racist, hypocritical, homophobic and more than a little misguided.

The reality is that we live in a place and time in which people of color who openly express or are perceived as having same-sex desire are at times rejected by their families/immediate communities, often subjected to verbal and physical harassment by their peers or (as in the case of Sakia Gunn and countless others) are even killed. We have not created spaces where all people can openly and honestly discuss sexuality without fear of judgment or physical harm. So the very idea that a man can sexually desire another man but wish to keep it secret shouldn't be so surprising as to inspire national media coverage.

But, what is more troubling is the racialized nature of this discussion. Almost automatically and without question, the Down Low became a defined behavior and "culture" with a cast of characters in black face (i.e. the homothug) and a set of norms specific and exclusive to Black and Latino men as though we invented secret

# TO SAY

BY TRAVIS MONTES

homosexuality. Leaving me to wonder, where is the New York Times article about the “subculture” of married, middle-aged white men from Long Island who troll the internet and frequent midtown gay bars purchasing sex from young men? What hip, media-friendly name can we create for THAT phenomenon? My guess is that one will never be made because dishonest, pathological behavior of privileged whites never seems to sell as many papers or books as perceived black dysfunction or a plot taken from an E. Lynn Harris novel.

In the DL narrative, Black women who trust Black men are cast as the unsuspecting and undeserving victims and Black men as malicious disease spreaders. Not one writer, speaker or panelist on this topic has ever dedicated one word to the idea that men on the DL may spread diseases to their unknowing male sexual partners as well. Why? Because same gender loving men are not considered undeserving of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS – which in many of our communities is still looked upon as a gay disease.

Additionally, it is never mentioned that men who cheat by having unprotected sex with other women are also capable of bringing home STDs to their unsuspecting and undeserving wives and girlfriends. As a result, women are being misled into thinking that the threat of HIV contraction comes exclusively from men who have sex with men, when in actuality, the spreading of HIV and other STDs is about ANYONE having UNPROTECTED SEX with ANYONE, regardless of gender or sexuality.

And it is in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention that this

story has perhaps had its greatest impact. The Down Low has gained so much currency in our lives that community-based program resources and government funding have been allocated to defining and reaching a group of men who, by definition, do not want to be defined or reached by anything gay identified. Which leads me to another problematic issue of the DL discourse, many lesbian and gay advocacy groups organized around issues of the Down Low take the position that men on the DL are “really”

gay and should just come out of closet to add validity to the claim that homosexual men are a diverse community, present in all areas of society. The real news flash in all this is that some people don't want their sexuality or sexual orientation to be the source of their personal, social or political identity. The even bigger news flash: Such decisions should be respected!

What should not be respected, however, are representations of our community that serve an agenda not our own. We should not blindly accept and internalize the Down Low without first realizing that it is based on racist and homophobic stereotypes about black men and homosexuals. Have we honestly asked ourselves who these men are? Have we honestly asked ourselves WHY they are or why we are so intent on putting a label on this particular sexuality? Do we truly not understand why secret lives exist – as though some of us have never had secret lives of our own? Have we asked who is writing all these articles or creating these media representations of Down Low men? Are they accurate? And more importantly, why hasn't anyone bothered to ask why Black men who are supposedly obsessed with hiding their secret sexual lives are giving detailed and multiple interviews to white journalists from the New York Times, speaking at Delta and AKA conferences or writing books?

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# Q&A WITH KRIS HAYASHI



**“One of the things that impressed me the most since arriving at ALP is the amazing commitment of Board, Staff, Volunteers and Community Members to the organization and to building towards social and economic justice for our communities.”**

**T**his past Spring ALP bid farewell to founding Executive Director, Joo Hyun Kang and welcomed new Executive Director, Kris Hayashi. Staff member Collette Carter interviewed Kris in order to introduce Kris to ALP's community, supporters and allies.

Prior to starting work at The Audre Lorde Project in May 2003, Kris Hayashi was a trainer/organizer at Western States Center, a movement-building intermediary for the Western region based in Portland, Oregon. For seven years prior to that Hayashi was part of Youth United for Community Action (YUCA), a nationally recognized community-based organization located in East Palo Alto and South Central Los Angeles, California, led and run by young people of color organizing for social and environmental justice. For his final three years at YUCA, Hayashi served as YUCA's Executive Director managing two offices and a budget of over half a million. Kris also served on the board of the Gay Straight Alliance Network, a statewide youth organizing organization fighting to end homophobia and transphobia in California schools. Additionally, Hayashi has been involved in a number of different social and environmental justice campaigns over the past ten years.

## **Q: Tell me about yourself?**

I was born in Seattle, WA, which is where I grew up with my immediate family. The rest of my family lives in Hawaii. Then I lived in California for about eight years near the Bay Area. Prior to moving to New York I lived in Portland, OR for a year.

## **Q: When did you first hear about The Audre Lorde Project?**

I first heard of The Audre Lorde Project (ALP) around 1999 and was excited to hear about a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Transgender People of Color (LGBTST POC) organization doing community organizing.

## **Q: Do you remember the first time you made contact with our organization?**

I actually visited not long after I heard about ALP to meet with staff and learn more about the organization.

## **Q: Why did you apply for the position at ALP?**

I was drawn to ALP by the organization's commitment to community organizing for social justice; to leadership by LGBTST POC; and to building an organization of LGBTST POC working to challenge and struggle with each other around ways that we all experience privilege and oppression differently. Furthermore, I saw ALP as organization rooted in the history and current realities of organizing and struggle by our communities.

**Q: Was relocating to New York a big move for you?**

I guess it should have been, but it doesn't really feel like it. Except for the subways, which is a change for me, because for the last 10 years I've always lived five minutes from where I worked.

**Q: As you got to know more about ALP, what has impressed you the most?**

One of the things that impressed me the most since arriving at ALP is the amazing commitment of Board, Staff, Volunteers and Community Members to the organization and to building towards social and economic justice for our communities. Additionally, I feel lucky and privileged to be at ALP in a space where my identity as trans and genderqueer is respected and supported.

**Q: What do you bring to ALP and what do you find as a challenge?**

I bring my background in organizing and a workaholic nature. One of the challenges I look forward to completing is getting to know the different organizations that work with ALP better, and the history of LGBTST POC in New York.

**Q: What is your vision for ALP?**

My vision for the future of organization is to actualize The Audre Lorde Project's vision of doing strong grassroots organizing reflective of and led by our communities.

**Q: What can our community expect from ALP in the near future?**

As the attacks on our communities continue, from the war on terrorism here and abroad; to the continual decrease in government services; to rising unemployment rates and ongoing violence and harassment;

to the deepening of state sanctioned attacks on immigrant communities and the decrease in funds available to support our organizations, ALP is in a phase of strengthening and growing our work. Over the next year we will be building and launching grassroots community organizing campaigns; obtaining adequate space for the organization; and strengthening and building our funding base.

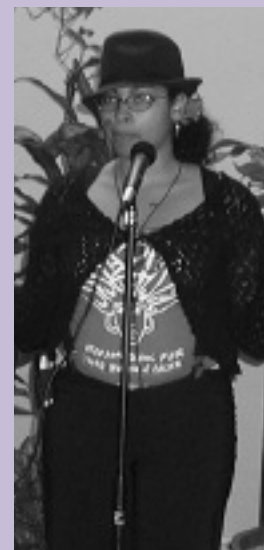
Basically, ALP continues in our same mission of advancing justice for LGBTST communities of color through grassroots, community organizing led and run by our communities. Based on a community driven strategic planning process ALP identified three priorities for leadership and organizing – transgender, youth & immigrant – as some of the communities bearing the brunt of the attacks on our communities.

**Q: What's your favorite candy?**  
Sour Straws.

**Q: Do you have any pets?**

No, but if I did I would get a turtle. I had a turtle once named Yuri, after Yuri Kochiyama.

On December 4th, ALP staff and board hosted an event for community members to get a chance to meet the new Executive Director, Kris Hayashi. A great time was had by all!



Lucia Gimeno grabs some goodies from the outreach table (top).

Youth Organizing Working Group member Eman Rimawi gives a presentation (above left).

Board Emeritus, Lidell Jackson helps himself to some refreshments (above right).

Staff members Loyda Colon & Collette Carter help set up the refreshment table (right).



# NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

In each issue of *ColorLife!* we will spotlight LGBTST POC organizations around the country. The contact information for each is included in the article. If you are interested in learning more about any of the Spotlight organizations, please contact them directly.

**Affinity Community Services** is a not-for-profit organization currently serving Chicago's Black lesbian and bisexual women's community. Affinity is an institution that allows women to merge their culture, gender and sexual orientation in pursuit of individual empowerment and collective organizing. This is accomplished through a combination of educational, social, political and community collaborations.

Affinity's mission is to provide comprehensive services and a safe space on the South Side of Chicago for lesbians and lesbian youth of African descent. This includes providing a supportive environment for bisexual women, transgender persons, lesbians of color, their families, friends and other supporters. Affinity's fundamental commitment is to facilitate wellness within and among these groups and to contribute to the national knowledge base regarding African American lesbians. Programming includes a Young Women's Program, a Forty Plus Women's Program and Social Justice Forums. Affinity was inducted into Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2002.

**Affinity Community Services**  
5650 South Woodlawn, Chicago, IL 60637  
Tel: 773.324.0377  
Email: [affinity95@aol.com](mailto:affinity95@aol.com)  
Web: [www.affinity95.org](http://www.affinity95.org)

**BAAITS** was started in 1999. BAAITS is a community-based volunteer organization whose mission is to create forums for the spiritual, cultural and artistic expression of Two-Spirit (LGBT) people. BAAITS has been asked to perform the blessing at the beginning of the last two San Francisco LGBT Pride Parade celebrations. We also hosted the International Two-Spirit Gathering that brought together Two-Spirit people from Canada, Mexico, South America and from across the U.S. The next International Gathering will be in Montana this summer.

We provide information and referrals to and about the Native American/First Nations community. BAAITS sponsors traditional Native art classes, and other cultural and educational events. We host potlucks every month at the San Francisco LGBT Center. Join us if you are in town. Two-Spirit is a term derived for American Indian/First Nations traditions expressing the belief the LGBT people are gifted people who manifest a balance between the masculine and feminine.

**BAAITS (Bay Area American Indian  
Two Spirits of San Francisco and the Bay Area)**  
San Francisco LGBT Center  
1800 Market Street, Ste. 411, San Francisco, CA 94102  
Tel: 415.865.5616  
Email: [bayarea2spirits@hotmail.com](mailto:bayarea2spirits@hotmail.com)  
Web: [www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Castro/8260/](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Castro/8260/)

## FACTS—NOT FICTION! TO YOUR HEALTH

The following information was provided by the Institute for Southern Studies, <http://www.southernstudies.org/>

- There are 43.6 million people in U.S. without health insurance
- 50% of personal bankruptcies are due in part to medical expenses
- 82% of U.S. residents rank health care as one of their "top issues"
- President Bush's budget cuts Medicaid \$16 billion over the next 10 years, while his Medicaid plan will increase drug company profits by \$139 billion
- In private insurance, 11.7% of health care costs go to administrative overhead
- In the Medicaid program, 3.6% of health care costs go to administrative overhead
- In Canada's national health system, 1.3% of health care costs go to administrative overhead
- In a December government report, racial health "disparities" are mentioned 30 times. The number of times racial health "disparities" were mentioned after the report was "edited" by Bush officials: 2