



COUNCIL ON RELIGION AND THE HOMOSEXUAL COLLECTION

Coll2008-065

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Date Completed

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Descriptive Summary

Title

Council on Religion and the Homosexual Collection

Creator

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives

Extent

Number of containers: 1 archive carton
Linear feet: 0.4 linear foot

Date

1965-1990 (bulk 1965-1973)

Repository

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

Abstract

The collection consists of miscellaneous materials relating to the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, founded in San Francisco in 1965, primarily for the period 1965-1973.



Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

Publication Rights

Researchers wishing to publish material must obtain permission in writing from ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives as the physical owner of the material. Note that permission to publish does not constitute copyright clearance. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives can grant copyright clearance only for those materials for which we hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain copyright clearance for all other materials from the copyright holder(s).

Preferred Citation

Box #, folder #, Council on Religion and the Homosexual Collection, Coll2008-063,
ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

Indexing Terms

This collection is indexed under the following terms:

Council on Religion and the Homosexual (San Francisco, Calif.)
Gays—California—San Francisco
Homosexuality—Political aspects
Homosexuality—Religious aspects
Homosexuality—Societies, etc.
Police—Community relations

Related Material

Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile Records, Coll2008-057,
ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Acquisitions Information

Collection transferred to Archives from Subject Files, October 2008.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Michael P. Palmer, November 11, 2008.

Administrative History

In the early 1960s, as social change accelerated across the U.S., progressive clergymen increasingly took to the streets to minister to marginalized persons. The Rev. Ted McIlvenna, who worked for the Glide Urban Center, a private Methodist foundation in downtown San Francisco, witnessed the oppression and violence homosexuals faced, and to improve the situation sought a dialogue between clergy and homosexuals. With the support of the Methodist church, McIlvenna convened the Mill Valley Conference from May 31 to June 2, 1964, at which sixteen Methodist, Protestant Episcopal, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran clergymen met with thirteen leaders of the homosexual community. Following the initial meeting, the participants began plans for a new organization that would educate religious communities about gay and lesbian issues as well as enlist religious leaders to advocate for homosexual concerns. In July 1964, the participants, along with several other clergymen and homosexual activists, met and formed the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH), which was incorporated in December of that year. The CRH was the first group in the U.S. to use the word “homosexual” in its name. This coalition of clergy—almost all heterosexual—and homosexual leaders proved to be mutually beneficial: homosexual leaders received the “cloak of the cloth” to sanction their activities, while clergy expanded their sphere of social justice ministry.

Within a month of its incorporation, the CRH was the focal point of an event many historians consider an important turning point in San Francisco’s GLBT history. To raise money for the CRH, other homophile groups planned a costume ball to be held on New Year’s Day, 1965. When the 600 ticket holders arrived for the event, many dressed in drag, they were greeted by scores of uniformed and undercover police, who took photographs of them and harassed them on their way into the ball. When the police demanded entrance to the event, they were blocked by CRH lawyers; the police then arrested three lawyers and a ticket taker. The following day, the (heterosexual) clergymen on the CRH held a press conference, severely criticizing the San Francisco Police Department. The mayor and a city judge sided with the CRH, and the police were humbled into an apology. This event is considered an important turning point in San Francisco’s GLBT history in that it brought the city’s GLBT communities together and inaugurated a new phase of gay organizing.

In June of 1965, the CRH published *A Brief of Injustices: An Indictment of Our Society in Its Treatment of the Homosexual* to implement the challenge of change. It also sponsored several symposia, including a “consultation” in August 1966, and the “Symposium on the Life and Style of the Homosexual”, in October 1968. The CRH was especially active in the political arena, supporting gay organizations candidates’ nights, where audiences repeatedly demanded that San Francisco politicians endorse a civilian police review board. The CRH also supported formation of Citizens Alert, a 24-hour hotline that provided lawyers, photographers, and other assistance to victims of brutality. Four years before the Stonewall riots in New York City, usually cited as the birth of the Gay Liberation Movement, the police had greatly curtailed harassment of gay bars in San Francisco and had begun meeting with homosexual groups. The CRH added credibility to the plight of the GLBT community, giving it a voice with the media and the establishments of societal authority. Throughout the 1967-68 local elections, the CRH held candidates’ nights and endorsed gay-friendly candidates. The CRH was instrumental in the creation of the Southern



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California Council on Religion and the Homophile in 1965, and its success led to the formation of organizations with identical names in other cities, including Boston, Milwaukee, Washington, DC, and Winnipeg, Canada.

The CRH helped immensely to bring the plight of the GLBT community into public view in the 1960s and to foster dialogue within mainline Protestant churches. It was instrumental in ending harassment by police and in bringing about legal reform. However, it made much greater strides in the political/legal arena and in society at large than in the churches it represented. In fact, the failure of the mainstream churches to progress quickly enough led to the founding of a new church to minister specifically to the GLBT community, the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), in Los Angeles in October 1968. Although the CRH continued its activities through the 1970s and into the 1980s, by the early 1970s it had been overtaken by more activist religious organizations such as the MCC and Dignity, whose more aggressive stand appealed more to the Gay Liberation generation of the GLBT community.

Sources:

Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *CRH: 1964/1968*, Essays on Homosexuality, 3 (1968).

McAdams, Kathleen A., "The San Francisco Council on Religion and the Homosexual", OASIS CALIFORNIA, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of California, <http://www.oasiscalifornia.org/history/San Francisco Council on Religion and the Homosexual .html> (accessed November 11, 2008).

Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, LGBT Religious Archives Network, <http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Exhibit.aspx> (accessed November 11, 2008).



Scope and Content and Container List

The collection consists of miscellaneous materials relating to the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, primarily for the period 1965-1973. The materials include copies of the articles of incorporation for the Council, general information brochures on the Council, papers (largely flyers, meeting announcements, and newspaper clippings), newsletters, publications, papers relation to a "consultation" (seminar/workshop) held in San Francisco in 1966, two unpublished articles on homosexuality and the church, and a photograph of Dick Gayer, Paul Hardman, and CRH lawyer David Clayton, taken during hearings in the lawsuit Council on Religion and the Homophile v. PT&T held before Commissioner Vukasin in 1969.

Box Folder

1	1	Articles of Incorporation, 1965, no date Papers
1	2	1965
1	3	1966
1	4	1967
1	5	1968
1	6	1969
1	7	1970
1	8	1971
1	9	1972
1	10	1973
1	11	1974
1	12	1975
1	13	1976
1	14	1977
1	15	1980
1	16	1987
1	17	no date
1	18	Articles, 1966, no date
1	19	Consultation. San Francisco, August 22-24, 1966 CRH Chapters
1	20	CRH Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1972-1973
1	21	CRH New England (Boston, Mass.), 1970-1972
1	22	CRH Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1987-1990
1	23	General Information Brochures, no date
1	24	Newsletters, 1967, 1973
1	29	Photograph of Dick Gayer, Paul Hardman, and CRH attorney David Clayton, at hearing before Commissioner Vukasin, in lawsuit Council on Religion and the Homosexual v. PT&T, 1969 Publications
1	25	<i>Brief of Injustices</i> , 1965
1	26	<i>The Church and the Homosexual</i> , 1965



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| 1 | 27 | <i>Essays on Religion and the Homosexual</i> , vol. 1 / <i>Essays on Homosexuality</i> , vols. 2-3, circa 1965-1968 |
| 1 | 28 | Miscellaneous, 1967-1969 |