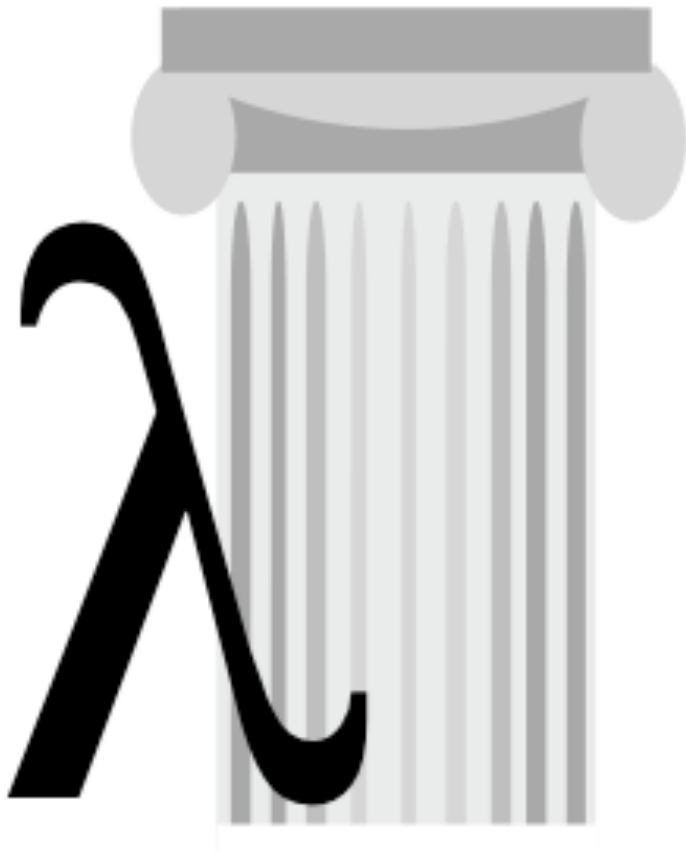


# LGBT Rights Law: A Career Guide



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# INTRODUCTION

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*\*Note on terminology: Many different terms are used to describe the community of people that express sexual or gender identities that differ from male/female heterosexual. For the sake of clarity and brevity, the term LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) will be used for this guide.*

As a new century begins, the legal standing of LGBT people in the United States, while still precarious, has never been better. The past few years have seen impressive strides that, in the words of one attorney, “would have seemed impossible just ten years ago.” Currently, 20 states and hundreds of cities and counties include sexual orientation as a protected category in their antidiscrimination. In 12 states, the laws expressly cover gender identity discrimination. But with the struggle for every new right comes the reminder that LGBT people are in many respects still second-class citizens, not protected by the federal government against discrimination, and routinely subject to harassment.

Just 40 years ago, every state in the country had a criminal sodomy law. Openly gay people faced pervasive discrimination with no legal recourse; most members of the community remained closeted out of fear. With the 1969 Stonewall rebellion and the ensuing LGBT rights movement, increased social tolerance led to greater legal freedom. With the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and '90s, the LGBT community suffered terrible losses, but also gained a new determination for greater equality. As disease exposed the inequalities of the systems on which many Americans rely, members of the LGBT movement fought for both visibility and power with protest movements like ACT UP. Many pillar organizations of the LGBT movement also gained traction during this period, including Gay Men’s Health Crisis, formed in 1981 as a community’s visceral response to the plague enveloping it.

The [*Lawrence*] decision has ... changed the legal landscape and given advocates tremendous optimism.  
—Michael Adams

More recently, and perhaps most significantly, on June 26, 2003, the United States Supreme Court overruled its 1986 decision upholding state anti-sodomy laws in *Bowers v. Hardwick*<sup>1</sup> with *Lawrence v. Texas*.<sup>2</sup> For the first time the Court explicitly protected the rights of LGBT individuals by holding that Texas anti-sodomy laws violated the right to liberty under the Due Process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Most LGBT activists and lawyers considered this decision a major victory in the LGBT movement. Michael Adams, Lambda Legal’s Director of Education and Public Affairs, stated in interviews following the decision that the ruling was a “ringing declaration of support for the dignity of gay people and gay relationships.” Furthermore, he noted, “The decision has broad implications for protecting the civil rights of gay people in many areas. It has changed the legal landscape and given advocates tremendous optimism.”

This optimism was well founded. In Massachusetts, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that gay and lesbian couples have the right to civil marriage,<sup>3</sup> and several states have followed with civil unions and domestic partnerships, including California, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Oregon. In Maine, the highest court affirmed the power of the state probate courts to grant

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<sup>1</sup> *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986).

<sup>2</sup> *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

<sup>3</sup> *Goodridge v. Dep’t of Public Health*, 798 N.E.2d 941 (Mass. 2003).

coguardianships to gay and lesbian parents,<sup>4</sup> and the Arkansas Supreme Court struck down a regulation banning gay people and people in households with gay family members from foster parenting.<sup>5</sup>

As lawyers work to protect LGBT rights on the local and state levels, legislative advocacy groups are doing promising policy work in Washington. The federal Hate Crimes bill and Employment Non-

...it hardly feels the time has come to declare victory and go home.

—Prof. Bill Rubenstein

Discrimination Act (ENDA) are in the works, both of which include protections for transgender people. If ENDA were passed, it would be the first protection for LGBT people at the federal level.

With the fight for LGBT rights entering mainstream national political debate from a much more positive angle, both visibility and the demand for LGBT legal services has increased. Robert Salem, a clinical instructor at the University of Toledo College of Law who specializes in gay rights work, notes that as LGBT people achieve “higher visibility within the larger community ... they are less afraid to go to a private lawyer and ask for services.”<sup>6</sup> As LGBT law develops, career opportunities become available both to challenge unjust laws and to implement good ones.

Despite these developments, though, there is still much work to be done. Professor Bill Rubenstein notes that “although these decisions have been goals of the gay rights movement for decades, it hardly feels the time has come to declare victory and go home.” While “*Lawrence* and *Goodridge* reflect a seismic shift in the legal situation of gay people,” Rubenstein writes, “they are embedded in a social fabric far more conservative, in other ways, than that of my 1960s and 1970s upbringing.”<sup>7</sup>

The 2004 election brought an onslaught of anti-marriage amendments, the implications of which now have to be decided in court. The ruling in the Michigan case *Pride at Work v. Granholm*<sup>8</sup> used Michigan’s new anti-marriage amendment to strike down employers’ domestic partnership benefits, applying a broad interpretation of the amendment that extended far beyond marriage into other rights and protections for GLBT people. The outcome of the appeals to this case and a domestic violence case in Ohio will be important in shaping the way these amendments are seen nationally, and how they affect the lives of GLBT people in those states.

Because LGBT law is still developing, it attracts a passionate and dedicated group of lawyers. The work can encompass many practice areas and frequently takes its advocates to the cutting edge of civil rights law. One attorney noted, “Every week we get a call to the office that has no precedent, one that we’ve never seen before.” With the landscape of LGBT rights law constantly changing, it is an exciting field of practice.

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<sup>4</sup> *In re Guardianship of I.H.*, 834 A.2d 922 (Me., 2003).

<sup>5</sup> *Howard v. Child Welfare Agency Review Board*, --- S.W.3d ---, 2006 WL 1779467 (Ark. 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Telephone Interview with Robert Salem, Clinical Instructor, Univ. of Toledo College of Law (Jul. 17, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> William B. Rubenstein, *My Harvard Law School*, 39 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. 330 (2004).

<sup>8</sup> *National Pride at Work, Inc. v. Granholm*, --- N.W.2d ---, 2005 WL 3048040 (Mich. Cir. Ct., 2005).

# PRACTICE AREAS

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## PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION ORGANIZATIONS

While the line is somewhat blurred between organizations that seek equality for LGBT people through litigation and those that do so through legislative channels and public advocacy work, these two approaches represent distinct practice areas, as they involve a different set of skills and a substantially different focus to the work, though the underlying goals and preparation may be similar.

Public interest litigation organizations use litigation on local, regional, and national levels to protect LGBT rights. They generally focus on impact legal work, meaning that they pick cases that will break new ground or otherwise affect a community wider than the parties to a particular suit. An emphasis on precedent setting cases means that lawyers in such organizations are likely to work on a smaller number of matters and have less client contact than a direct services lawyer. In New England, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) is the primary LGBT litigation organization, and nationally, organizations like Lambda Legal and the ACLU's Gay and Lesbian Rights Project do substantial litigation work.

Because there are relatively few organizations dedicated in whole or part to the advancement of LGBT rights, competition for such jobs is considerable. Lawyers who get a chance to work with these organizations express great job satisfaction. If a case they try is successful, it can make big strides in accomplishing the goals of the LGBT rights movement. The work of these organizations also ensures that their lawyers will be on the forefront of any new issues that arise.

### **ORGANIZATION PROFILE: LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND**

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund was founded in 1973 to advance the rights of LGBT people and educate the public about discrimination against the LGBT community. Lambda pursues impact litigation in all parts of the country, and in all areas of concern to the LGBT community.

In addition to the national office in New York, Lambda Legal also has three regional offices and a fourth on the way. These offices, located in Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and Los Angeles, focus specifically on legal issues within their particular regions.

## LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

While attorneys doing litigation work challenge unjust and discriminatory laws in court, other lawyers work on the legislative front, advocating for the passage of inclusive laws that protect the rights of all and working to defeat discriminatory and divisive laws that take away freedoms and protections. Only a few legislative advocacy organizations focus solely on LGBT rights, but many progressive organizations include LGBT issues among the agenda items for which they lobby. Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force are good examples of national organizations that do both legislative advocacy and public outreach and education work.

Advocacy and lobbying can occur at local, state and national levels. Not all jobs are specifically law-related and the more prestigious the organization, the more difficult it is to obtain a job there. The work can also be frustrating. Legislators may be unresponsive or even hostile and an excellent law can be voted down. With the frustration, however, also come great rewards when a coalition is formed and new protections are signed into law.

## **GOVERNMENT**

Although government protections for LGBT rights are incomplete, 17 states and over one hundred cities and counties currently include sexual orientation as a protected category under their civil rights statutes. Many of these states and cities employ attorneys to help enforce those laws. Such an enforcement position can be a rewarding choice for someone who wants to work on LGBT issues, although not exclusively. Government work may also appeal to those who are uncomfortable with the often confrontational and controversial nature of suing the government or private parties and lobbying sometimes unreceptive legislators. If elective office is the way you choose to pursue your career in LGBT rights, there are organizations offering financial assistance and support, including some specific to members of the LGBT community. The Human Rights Campaign Political Action Committee and the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund are two such resources.

## **PRIVATE PRACTICE**

While this guide focuses on public service, attorneys in private practice can also pursue significant LGBT work. Attorneys who want to concentrate on LGBT rights in private practice usually go one of two routes.

Some go into small private firms or solo practice that handle LGBT rights cases. Much of the focus in recent years for such private practitioners has been in the area of family law. This work can be very rewarding. As one solo practice attorney noted, “It’s very exciting because I help people with the legal issues that effect their every day lives.” Client contact is an important part of this practice and the cases can, at times, evolve into impact cases. “Day-to-day issues for lesbians and gay men are cutting edge,” the same attorney noted. “I’ve done impact with many of my cases.” Financial realities, however, can be a worry for small firm or solo practitioners. To remain solvent, lawyers must often look for cases where the client can afford to pay, and may have to turn down cases in which they cannot.

Even working with a larger law firm, or one that does not specialize in LGBT rights, an attorney may pursue LGBT advocacy. Interested attorneys can handle *pro bono* LGBT cases, either individually or as a cooperating attorney with a public interest legal organization like Lambda, GLAD or the ACLU.

## **INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS**

International human rights groups work to ensure that the basic rights of LGBT people are protected around the globe. A number of the major human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, include the fight against denial of human rights due to sexual orientation as part of their mission. In addition, there are LGBT specific organizations such as the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Center in San Francisco. Most of these organizations do not actually litigate, but instead advocate for LGBT rights by petitioning governments and other multi-national organizations. The global advocacy of LGBT rights is a new practice area, with few full-time jobs. For attorneys who want to work internationally, however, this emerging field holds many possibilities.

# OTHER POSSIBILITIES

## AIDS DIRECT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

HIV/AIDS work and LGBT rights work are closely related because the community is disparately affected by this epidemic. There are more jobs in the area of HIV/AIDS than in the other areas of LGBT rights, and therefore more opportunities for full-time employment. However, while the issues are closely tied, HIV/AIDS work is a specialized field and may not offer the diversity some attorneys wishing to focus on LGBT rights seek. For attorneys interested in concentrating on advocacy for people suffering from HIV/AIDS, the work can bring great personal rewards in connecting with individual clients and helping to improve their lives.

## LEGAL AID / LEGAL SERVICES

Legal aid or legal services are public interest practices that are often funded by government monies. These organizations handle many different civil legal issues and most often represent clients at no cost. Typical representation includes cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation in addition to writing up contracts, wills and trusts for LGBT people. Legal services lawyers have a large amount of client contact and gain litigation experience. They can reap great job satisfaction from representing clients who could otherwise not afford legal representation. The drawbacks often include low salaries and heavy caseloads. Only certain legal services offices will have a significant number of LGBT cases, so an applicant must evaluate closely the frequency of such cases in a particular office. One advantage of legal services work, with its heavy emphasis on litigation, is the training it can provide for other positions demanding courtroom experience.

## ACADEMIA

Academic work as a law professor is another avenue by which to pursue LGBT work. A professor might specialize exclusively in LGBT rights law, or work more broadly in a field in which LGBT issues emerge such as family law, civil, human, or women's rights law. Academic work also does not have to be pursued at the expense of a traditional legal career. Practicing lawyers may teach part-time as adjunct faculty members. Other lawyers move to academia full-time after a few of years in practice and others continue to do *pro bono* work for their academic base.

## WORKING FROM WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION

Many areas of public interest practice can involve work with LGBT issues. Family law, elder law, and youth law all can address specific issues that LGBT people face. Joining an organization and then developing its ability to do legal advocacy on behalf of the community is one more way to pursue

### **ORGANIZATION PROFILE: GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS (GMHC)**

Founded in 1981 as a community's response to the AIDS crisis, GMHC has consistently worked to make the treatment and cure of HIV an urgent national and local priority. The organization seeks to reduce the spread of HIV disease and help people with HIV maintain and improve their health and independence.

GMHC employs attorneys in its Legal Services Department, serving over 3,000 people each year. The Department provides advice and representation in the fields of immigrant legal rights, landlord/tenant, family and domestic unity law, permanency planning and employment discrimination, as well as assisting and advocating for clients with issues concerning benefits, entitlements, and overcoming barriers to health care access.



LGBT rights work. Many firms and organizations are eager to hire someone with the experience to work in their main practice areas while also having the skills and initiative to develop new specialties.

## **ENTREPRENEURS**

If research into different organizations and practice settings turns up nothing that fits just right, a lawyer may consider starting his or her own LGBT rights organization. Generally, new organizations start with a plan focusing on a specific area of LGBT rights where there is an unmet legal need. Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, for instance, was founded by Michelle Benecke to remedy the issues she faced in her military service. Start up funding can be secured through fellowships, among other sources. Harvard Law School's Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest Advising (OPIA) has considerable information regarding fellowships, as well as a fellowships advisor, Judy Murciano. If you do not attend Harvard Law School, check with your career services office.

# **ISSUE AREAS**

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The LGBT rights field encompasses a vast number of issues. Legal barriers and discrimination must be chipped away one law and one case at a time in a large number of areas. Currently issues of same-sex marriage and the adoption of children are receiving much press, but AIDS/HIV issues, employment and housing discrimination, and anti-civil rights legislation continue to be active areas of concern and advocacy.

*These descriptions provide only a brief overview of the issues in LGBT rights. For more information, consult the resources section in the back of the guide, or go to Lambda Legal's comprehensive website at [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org), a useful resource.*

## **AIDS/HIV**

AIDS/HIV related legal issues have grown so much in number and complexity that they may be considered an independent practice area, but are included under the LGBT rights umbrella because of the disparate effect on the LGBT community and the stigma of AIDS as the “gay disease.” Because of this erroneous perception, and the fear stemming from misunderstanding of how AIDS is contracted, some cases in the AIDS/HIV area are also sexual orientation discrimination cases involving denial of employment, public accommodations and other services. Other issues include the rights of AIDS/HIV patients to keep their conditions from being revealed without their consent, their right to refuse mandatory HIV/AIDS testing, which may be motivated by perceived sexual orientation, and their right to receive medical care and insurance.

## **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION**

While there are now 17 states and hundreds of municipalities with LGBT anti-discrimination laws in the United States, there is no comprehensive federal anti-discrimination statute. LGBT rights lawyers work to expand protection in such areas as private employment, public accommodations, housing, credit, union practices and education. Where the laws do exist, anti-discrimination lawyers work to enforce them.

## **ELDER & HEALTHCARE LAW**

As LGBT people age, they become more aware of their second class citizenship. Because same sex couples cannot marry in most states, life partners are not considered “next of kin.” Thus, for estate planning purposes, gay and lesbian couples must obtain good legal advice and prepare essential legal documents to protect their surviving partner. Under similar “immediate family only” rules in hospitals, LGBT people may be denied the right to visit their life partners. Elders also face discrimination in assisted living facilities and health care. LGBT rights lawyers work with elders to put together the proper wills, health care proxies and other legal documents to ensure that their wishes are carried out. Advocacy groups work with nursing homes, hospitals and assisted living facilities to develop antidiscrimination policies.

## EMPLOYMENT

Often LGBT people are fired, harassed and denied promotion for no reason other than their sexual orientation. Only 17 states offer any legal recourse based on sexual orientation, and fewer than half that number offer legal recourse based on gender identity or expression. While many companies, including over half of Fortune 500 companies, provide domestic partner benefits to unmarried same-sex couples, as well as including sexual orientation and gender identity in their non-discrimination statements, there are still significant advances to be made, especially at the level of state and federal law. LGBT rights lawyers seek to expand protections to federal employees and to include more of the private sector so that employees will have legal grounds to fight against wrongful termination.

### **ORGANIZATION PROFILE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS (NCLR)**

NCLR works to advance the legal and human rights of LGBT people and their families. As a non-profit public interest law firm, NCLR litigates precedent-setting cases at the trial and appellate court levels, advocates for equitable public policies affecting the LGBT community, provides free legal assistance to LGBT clients and their legal advocates, and conducts community education on LGBT legal issues.

Founded in 1977, the organization currently has a staff of 21, with projects on Family Law (including Marriage Equality), Youth, Immigration, Elder, Transgender, and Sports Law.

## FAMILY

Thanks to new reproductive technologies, changes in the law and more tolerant social attitudes, more and more LGBT people are becoming parents than ever before through birth, adoption, and foster care. Family LGBT rights lawyers work to repeal discriminatory adoption statutes to secure second parent adoptions, child custody, inheritance rights and dual-mother or dual-father birth certificates. They also deal with the difficult issue of partnership breakups that involve children by trying to establish custody based on “de facto parenthood.”

## FIRST AMENDMENT

All Americans have the rights of free speech and free association, but LGBT people and allies have had trouble exercising these rights in the past. In recent years, several workers throughout the country have been fired simply

because they joined an LGBT rights group after work, participated in a march, or were otherwise involved in the LGBT community. Attorneys work to secure the right of any person to associate with LGBT people and organizations without fear of retribution. There are, however, tensions in the first amendment area, as anti-LGBT comments are also protected, and some organizations, such as the ACLU, which advocate for LGBT causes also work on freedom of speech cases.

## HATE CRIMES

With the brutal death of college student Matthew Shepherd in 1998, more nationwide attention has been focused on anti-LGBT hate crimes. Yet 18 states have no mention of sexual orientation in their hate-crimes law, leaving members of the LGBT community with limited legal recourse. Sadly, hate crimes against members of the LGBT community are all too common, following only race and religion in numbers of bias crimes every year. Attorneys work to prosecute hate crime perpetrators while policy advocates work to pass hate crimes law in all states.

## HOUSING

Many municipalities and 17 states prevent housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. In most of the United States, however, refusing to rent or sell because of sexual orientation is perfectly legal. Other problems arise when a same-sex couple resides in public housing or a rent controlled apartment and one partner dies. As the law stands, these situations result in LGBT people often losing their homes. Attorneys challenge cases of discrimination in court while advocacy groups fight to add more non-discrimination laws to the books at the local, state and national level.

## IMMIGRATION AND POLITICAL ASYLUM

While not ideal, conditions for LGBT people in the United States are much better than they are in some other nations where people are routinely harassed, beaten, maimed, raped or killed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. Currently the United States does allow people to apply for asylum based on fear of persecution due to their membership in the LGBT community, but they are often denied because of prejudice within the judicial system. In addition, bi-national LGBT couples also face challenges when trying to live in the United States. Immigration law only recognizes heterosexual marriage and does not allow a partner of an LGBT person to apply for citizenship based on a relationship to a U.S. citizen. Attorneys and policy advocates work with the Immigration and Naturalization service, Congress and the courts to ensure that those who need protection are granted asylum in the United States and that couples are able to stay together and are not separated by their different nationalities.

## MILITARY

The United States is the only NATO nation besides Turkey that refuses the right of LGBT people to participate in the country's armed services. The military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy has meant that on average two service members were discharged for their sexual orientation every day since it was instituted in 1996. While the law was ostensibly designed to protect service members who remain closeted, witch hunts, discharges, assaults and even murders continue to threaten LGBT service members. Attorneys negotiate with the US Department of Defense on behalf of suspected LGBT service members while policy advocates work to change the law and allow open LGBT people to serve without retribution.

## RELATIONSHIP RECOGNITION

With the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, and a similar push toward civil unions in several other states, the fight for equal marriage has come to the forefront of the national LGBT rights movement. With the recent onslaught of anti-marriage ballot measures and constitutional amendments, though, the fight will continue for years to come. Proponents of equal marriage face new challenges as courts in some

### **ORGANIZATION PROFILE: GAY AND LESBIAN ADVOCATES AND DEFENDERS (GLAD)**

GLAD is a public interest organization, based in Boston, working for the rights of the LGBT community in New England. Among its victories in the last 25 years is the 2003 ruling in the Massachusetts Supreme Court challenging of marriage as an exclusively heterosexual right, the Vermont marriage case leading to civil unions (1999), winning the first AIDS-ADA case in the U.S. Supreme Court (1998) and countless others in the areas of school law, employment discrimination and family law. GLAD accepts, on a non-fee basis, cases having a major impact on the lesbian and gay community. GLAD also makes referrals, answers legal questions, writes publications, and arranges speakers.

states begin to rule on the application of constitutional amendments, in one case extending the amendment so far as to say that employee domestic partnership benefits are illegal. The current fight for equal marriage focuses on overturning state statutes that prohibit same-sex marriage, as well as working on the application of civil union and marriage rulings and laws, recognition across state lines and on the federal level, and on the way these issues are affected by the Defense of Marriage Act.

## **TRANSGENDER ISSUES**

People who express non-conforming gender identities have not until recently been included in what used to be just a lesbian and gay movement. In recent years, many specifically transgender groups have formed, such as the Transgender Law Center, and lesbian and gay groups have included transgender issues in their missions for equality, respect, and recognition. Transgender people face many of the same battles for equality in employment, housing and marriage and have even fewer laws to protect them. Attorneys and policy advocates work to include gender expression in non-discrimination statements and laws and hate crimes statutes, and litigate cases based on sex stereotyping principals. They also focus on rules and regulations regarding correct sex designation on passports, drivers' licenses, and other identity documents, segregated facilities such as bathrooms, gyms, and prisons, and on gaining non-discriminatory healthcare access and coverage, including transgender-specific operations.

### **ORGANIZATION PROFILE: TRANSGENDER LAW CENTER (TLC)**

Started as a project of the National Center for Lesbian Rights in 2002, TLC has been an independent civil rights organization since 2005. TLC advocates for transgender communities by connecting transgender people and their families to technically sound and culturally competent legal services, increasing acceptance and enforcement of laws and policies that support California's transgender communities, and working to change laws and systems that fail to incorporate the needs and experiences of transgender people. In addition to public policy advocacy and educational work, TLC provides direct legal services to about 150 people each year.

## **YOUTH**

Despite increasing acceptance and tolerance, the United States is still a very difficult place for LGBT youth to grow up. They face discrimination and abuse in school as well as at home. It is perhaps a result of this treatment that one-third of all teen suicide attempts are estimated to be by LGBT youth. Attorneys and advocates fight for the rights of youth to form gay/straight alliances in their schools and for the right to be free of harassment while attending school, as well as advocating for the right to receive accurate information in schools and to have equal representation of LGBT people in school curricula. Out of home care settings are another significant issue for at-risk LGBT youth, and lawyers fight for provision and protection for LGBT youth in foster homes, group homes, and juvenile detention facilities.

# FINDING A JOB

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Law school graduates and attorneys seeking to practice LGBT rights law will find a tight market. Obtaining employment is not impossible, though. Gaining relevant experience, researching the job market and presenting your job qualifications most favorably are your best tools for tackling this challenging search.

## KNOW THE ISSUES

Familiarity with the struggles that face the LGBT community and the current hot issues are essential, but need not come from scholarly or even purely legal research. You can gain this knowledge through involvement with a local or national organization while gaining valuable work experience. LGBT organizations look for a demonstrated commitment to the issues, so staying involved in work on LGBT issues is important, either through volunteering, *pro bono* work, writing, or through work in traditional LGBT organizations.

## KNOW YOURSELF AND THE KIND OF WORK YOU WANT TO DO

Employers look for not only knowledge of the issues but also comfort with and dedication to the clients. You should know what kind of work most interests and satisfies you, whether it is working with AIDS patients on healthcare access, advocating for the needs of at-risk LGBT youth in foster care, or lobbying members of Congress for new legislation in the House. The variety of work in LGBT law is considerable, and different areas require different skills. Preparing yourself for a small LGBT family practice will be different from trying to obtain employment with a major legislative advocacy organization. Research the organization or practice setting that you hope to join. Go to web pages, check the law school resource library and talk to lawyers in such practices. This research can help you define what you want to do, learn how best to build experience, and may even help you identify where there may be new opportunities.

## BUILD EXPERIENCE

There are two basic types of experience you will have to demonstrate when seeking a job in LGBT law. The first is experience working with LGBT organizations or causes, which can be developed by doing clinical or summer work in law school, as well as *pro bono*, government, or volunteer work after law school. Second, it is important to develop a specific skill set for the kind of organization you want to join. For impact organizations, litigation experience is essential, while for legal services work, direct service experience and skills are key. Because significant LGBT litigation experience is often hard to come by, many people develop their litigation experience outside of strictly LGBT work, building their legal experience and their LGBT bona fides separately.

Choose your law school jobs carefully, based on the type of LGBT rights law you wish to practice. If you do not enter strictly LGBT work directly out of law school (and many, if not most do not because of the paucity of jobs), stay involved in LGBT work through bar associations, *pro bono* work, writing articles and op-eds, or doing volunteer work for LGBT organizations.

## GET TO KNOW PEOPLE

The LGBT rights field is tightly knit, and when the time for hiring rolls around, knowing the people in an organization can help you get your foot in the door. Good ways to make contacts include summer jobs, *pro bono* if you are a practicing attorney, extracurriculars in law school, and alumni from your law school and law school career centers. Having connections with LGBT rights lawyers can also help you narrow down your options and figure out what practice areas and kinds of advocacy most appeal to you. Speak with people you know about their experiences and ask questions! Strong contacts are also essential for learning about unadvertised openings and for securing valuable recommendations.

## LANDING A JOB

National public interest litigation organizations are often what most people think of when they think of LGBT rights law, but there are many other opportunities to do LGBT rights work. Lawyers looking to make contributions to LGBT rights should also consider opportunities at private public interest firms, legal services offices, and in the government.

To be a competitive candidate, it is important to develop a track record of work in the area of LGBT rights through research and writing in related areas, extracurriculars, summer jobs and post-law school employment. Attorneys currently working with LGBT organizations emphasize that experience makes all the difference in making an applicant stand out in a pile of excellent resumes. Interning during the summer while in law school with an LGBT organization that interests you is an excellent way to gain this vital experience and make good contacts. Research and writing skills are important, and a demonstrated commitment to public interest is a must.

Because impact organizations look for litigation experience, LGBT rights work at one of these large organizations may be almost impossible to obtain right out of law school. Some young lawyers manage to break into these groups through fellowships. In addition, most LGBT litigation organizations work with cooperating attorneys on a wide variety of cases. While employed elsewhere, those interested in the field can do *pro bono* work as a cooperating attorney. By working so closely with these organizations, full-time employment may be easier to hear about and obtain. In addition, someone who already has litigation experience will be a more attractive candidate.

Young lawyers should remember that although there is steep competition for jobs in large national LGBT organizations, there are still many opportunities to work on LGBT or related issues and

### **ORGANIZATION PROFILE: AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (ACLU)**

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) focuses on litigation and public policy advocacy. Attorneys in the organization handle precedent setting cases, often raising constitutional issues. Cases are carefully chosen for their potential to break new ground and make a broad societal impact. The ACLU has a Lesbian and Gay Rights Project that specializes in impact litigation.

Headquartered in New York, the ACLU also has an AIDS and Civil Liberties Project. The Project pursues cases in the area of discrimination based on AIDS/HIV status, many of which raise LGBT rights issues as well.

In addition to litigation, the ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights and AIDS and Civil Liberties Projects advocated for the community in front of administrative agencies and other government bodies. The ACLU also publishes public education materials, such as books and briefings.

develop advocacy skills. Working at a legal services office or doing work in racial justice or women's rights—or in useful contexts such as public education, political organizing, or campaigns—can be helpful in building public interest experience toward the goal of working at an LGBT organization. Evan Wolfson, founder of Freedom to Marry, points out that “you can do great gay work at Planned Parenthood, People for the American Way, or local NAACP offices, too.” He explains that the fight for LGBT rights is “not just about the glitzy gay rights case to win marriage, important as that is ” but also about ground work for, and implementation of, such cases. “You can't just leap from law school ... to the best job in the world.” Experience is important; you have to “show some track record [and] build your skills.”

You can't just leap from law school ... to the best job in the world.... Show some track record [and] build your skills.  
—Evan Wolfson

## LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Legislative and public advocacy organizations look for many of the same characteristics and experiences that litigation organizations seek. Experience and familiarity with the issues are still extremely important, and credentials like clerkships and law review can also hold a lot of weight. Since advocacy organizations do a lot of policy work and lobbying, people skills are critical. “Coalition building,” said one lawyer with a national advocacy organization, “is key.” In contrast, litigation experience is de-emphasized, since few legislative advocacy groups go to court.

As is the case with many of the high profile public interest litigation organizations, it is next to impossible for a recent graduate to land a full time position. “We don't hire out of law school,” as one attorney bluntly put it. Gain experience by working in a related civil rights area or doing other policy work. Advocacy groups, like public interest litigation organizations, use cooperating and *pro bono* attorneys, so perhaps consider doing this as a way to get your foot in the door.



# PERSONAL NARRATIVES

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## ROBERT BANK

*Chief Operating Officer*

*Gay Men's Health Crisis, New York, New York*

I was born and raised in Cape Town, at the tip of the African continent in apartheid South Africa. Growing up in an environment where the struggle for equality was so pervasive, profound, and at least at the time, seemed so impossible to attain, has been the greatest driving force for my work in the area of LGBT rights, poverty issues, and HIV/AIDS.

After immigrating to the United States, I decided to attend City University School of Law, attracted to its mission of “law in the service of needs.” Having come from a country that had no constitution, no bill of rights and no principles of equal protection under the law, I immersed myself into issues of constitutional law, criminal law, and federal courts. The course that impacted me most was a second-year concentration course entitled, “Equality and Inequality and the Role of Lawyers and Lawyering.” While interning at the Civil Rights Bureau of the New York State Attorney General’s office, I studied the Supreme Court’s battle with whether to recognize particular fundamental human rights. I was fascinated and frustrated by the Court’s complex interpretation of a particular civil rights act and what the equal protection clause protected.

Experiencing racism, stigma, and poverty in both South Africa and the United States, was a powerful backdrop for my own struggle with coming out as a gay man. In 1986, the year that I graduated from law school, the AIDS epidemic was in its fifth year and had already claimed the lives of thousands of gay men. I witnessed an entire new wave of discrimination and social ostracism targeted towards the gay community. Coming of age as a gay man in this environment was extremely challenging. However, with the advent of the AIDS epidemic, a social movement was born that taught me the possibilities for both individual and global social change through personal reflection, lawyering, and advocacy.

After law school I pursued my interest of working with the underserved. I clerked in the *pro se* office of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, spending hours reviewing the briefs of incarcerated litigants. Without legal representation litigants are almost always deprived of a just outcome and my role, which was to interpret these briefs liberally, was extremely rewarding. I then worked at the New York City Department of Law bringing affirmative litigation against residential and commercial landlords who were harassing their tenants. I gained courtroom experience and the satisfaction that I had kept a fairly large number of New Yorkers in safe and affordable housing and, later, the opportunity to supervise new attorneys. During this time, I started volunteering in the legal department of Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC), the nation’s oldest nonprofit, volunteer-supported, HIV/AIDS community-based organization.

Writing wills and other legal documents for the then predominantly gay clients of GMHC was one of my most compelling life experiences. Frequently, my clients were very close to death and wanted their health care decisions to be made by their long-term same-sex life partners if they were unable to do so. They were also clear that their soon-to-be-survivor same-sex partners should be accorded all of the same legal rights that heterosexual survivors would have been. Unfortunately, since same-sex partnerships were not legally recognized, even with all of the written documents in place, we

witnessed discrimination in health care settings and challenges by estranged next of kin who claimed that their legally-recognized relationships superseded those of surviving same-sex partners.

In 1995, I joined the legal department of GMHC, later became the director of that department in 1998, and in 2000, was promoted to managing director and general counsel of program services. In 2006, I was promoted to chief operating officer of the agency. In this position, I provide strategic direction, leadership, and vision to a diverse, multi-disciplinary staff of over 200, and ensure that all agency services and advocacy are infused with the organization's core values of quality, social justice, and human dignity.

GMHC's mission is to reduce the spread of HIV disease; help people with HIV maintain and improve their health and independence; and keep the prevention, treatment and cure of HIV an urgent national and local priority. In fulfilling this three-pronged mission, we remain true to our heritage by fighting homophobia and affirming the individual dignity of all gay men and lesbians.

Twenty-six years into the AIDS pandemic, five million people are newly infected each year, and 40 million adults and children live with HIV/AIDS worldwide. In the United States, the disease disproportionately impacts poor women of color; gay and bisexual men of color; gay, bisexual and transgender youth; substance users; immigrants; and people with histories of incarceration. GMHC targets these and other vulnerable and marginalized communities throughout New York City, providing a full range of clinical, legal, and other supportive and prevention services, as well as the opportunity to engage in peer-driven public policy advocacy with lawmakers and other government officials.

HIV/AIDS is a true equal opportunity virus that anyone can get. It is 100% preventable, and despite access to the advances in medical treatment for a miniscule percentage of those infected worldwide, AIDS is years away from a cure or vaccine. In the LGBT community, the largest number of new infections is amongst men who have sex with men, and yet there is an enormous complacency and lack of attention paid to this devastating trend.

There are 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, and of those, 500,000 are not receiving medical care. Approximately 250,000 are infected with HIV, but do not know their status. Because HIV/AIDS hits low income communities of color disproportionately, GMHC and other domestic AIDS organizations are committed to finding effective models of service and advocacy that have the most impact in specific, targeted communities. We have focused our attention on HIV testing and connection to medical care and supportive and prevention services. Not only does this allow newly diagnosed individuals to get the medical care and support that they need, it also ensures that they do not transmit the virus to others. There is considerable evidence that shows that knowing one's HIV status leads to safer sexual and needle sharing behaviors. Recognizing the importance of building resiliency and a sense of personal "agency," we have built programs that ensure economic self-sufficiency such as job training, job placement, and job retention services. We have also ramped up our mental health services, to address the deep psychological complexity of an HIV diagnosis which is frequently accompanied by stigma and shame. In the public policy arena we continue to fight the federal government's policies of abstinence until marriage, which prohibits effective HIV prevention tools such as condom distribution and life-saving needle exchange programs. These are truly the only effective HIV prevention tools that we have, and tragically, the current leadership of our country condemns them both.

In my day-to-day work, I witness multi-layered epidemics that all collude around the overwhelming challenge of HIV infection. More than 70% of our clients present with multiple serious psychosocial conditions predating their HIV diagnosis: substance use, mental illness, homelessness and histories of domestic violence and trauma. Many continue to present with legal challenges. Employers still discriminate against HIV- positive gay men because of their health status and sexual orientation; landlords still try to evict surviving same-sex partners; and immigration law continues to separate bi-national lesbian and gay partners from living together legally in the United States. These are just a few of the legal areas that we deal with on a daily basis at GMHC.

Equal means getting the same thing, at the same time, and in the same place.

—Thurgood Marshall

Unfortunately, the list of “unequal rights” accorded to lesbians and gay men remains extensive. Although the LGBT movement has made considerable legislative and judicial advances in the past several years, same-sex couples still cannot marry in 49 states, and the federal government refuses to honor the marriages that same-sex couples validly enter. Only 20 states plus the District of Columbia include sexual orientation in their antidiscrimination laws, 12 of which also cover gender identity discrimination. The federal government still refuses to pass an LGBT antidiscrimination law, thus perpetuating homophobia in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

In reflecting on the challenges ahead in the LGBT legal arena, I remain convinced that lawyers must use their skills in diverse environments beyond litigation and traditional advocacy. Education and dialogue still remain the key ingredients to any social change. Unfortunately, we are years away from a society that treats LGBT individuals the same as their heterosexual counterparts. The majority of our federal lawmakers - and this becomes even more evident during presidential campaign years - are blatantly homophobic in their refusal to recognize same-sex partnerships as similar to different-sex partnerships in any sphere of family life, perpetuating discrimination, human suffering, and a non-pluralistic world that fails to embrace the reality of human diversity.

I encourage those of my colleagues who are studying to become lawyers and entering the workforce to speak out against instances of inequality and to recognize that they have the power to reshape the LGBT legal landscape by looking at the law through a human rights lens. There are opportunities for this work in every legal job. Wherever one works, one can make a difference by joining forces with both LGBT and non-LGBT colleagues who believe in Thurgood Marshall’s definition of equality: “Equal,” he said, “means getting the same thing, at the same time, and in the same place.”

**MARY BONAUTO**

*Civil Rights Project Director*

*Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, Boston, MA*

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) is the Boston-based public interest legal organization that works through the courts and public education to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity.

I came to GLAD in 1990, after two years in private practice at a mid-sized firm in Portland, Maine. How did I get the job? Part of it was good timing. There simply wasn't the same level of interest in these issues at that time. Part of it was that I had fairly broad experience despite only two years of practice. I had handled litigation in state and federal court, as well as in administrative agencies, and had also worked on legislative issues. Part of it was that I had experience dealing with the problems of gay people. I was out as a new lawyer and had handled everything from AIDS discrimination cases in the late 1980s, to negotiating employment contracts for gay clients, to navigating property and parenting disputes. My commitment was obvious from both *pro bono* litigation and volunteer activities at the ACLU and Volunteer Lawyers Project.

A typical day at GLAD has changed over the years, in part because what is precedent setting has changed over the years. We try to open new doors for folks, or stated another way, to ensure that there is one standard of justice for all. Once we helped to establish joint adoption rights in Massachusetts, we moved on to other issues, leaving private practitioners to put those rulings into practice. While we still do individual representation at the trial level, much of our work is appellate, or taken with the understanding that the matter will be decided on summary judgment and then appealed.

What will I do in the course of a month? First and foremost is focusing on our clients and their litigation. Since much of our work is appellate, it is not uncommon to spend most of our time writing briefs, but we also take and defend depositions, draft motions and agreements and all the other business of litigation. We receive a steady stream of calls from attorneys, both in New England and nationally, about how to handle their matters, what arguments they could or should make and analyzing the desirability of their appeals. We also talk to non-lawyers through our website, public education programs and our legal information hotline. Strategy discussions with our colleagues at other organizations whether about unfavorable trends, legislation, litigation, appeals, petitions for certiorari and the like are a regular part of our work. We draft and update publications, and speak to, both lay and legal audiences. We work in coalition with other civil rights organizations on matters of local and national concern ranging from racial profiling to transgender rights to family policy. Last but not least, we talk to the media since we need to make our arguments in court as well as in the court of public opinion.

The range of issues on which it is productive to work has grown every year to the point now where every issue is on the table.

—Mary Bonauto

For the thirteen plus years I've been at GLAD, we've seen sea changes in the field. In 1989, more experienced lawyers cautioned me against taking the GLAD job because I would be throwing away my career. Once I had the job, in the first years, I was often turned down when I sought cooperating counsel to work with GLAD on our new cases because they were "too militant." Most of the cases involved litigating under the newly enacted lesbian and gay civil rights law barring discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit. In 1990, I spent a great deal of time

dealing with personal security issues, ensuring that people had a right to work and trying to persuade police departments and district attorneys to deal with hate crimes. The range of issues on which it is productive to work has grown every year to the point now where every issue is on the table, including the issue of ending discrimination in civil marriage. It's odd, but the military and marriage are the two institutions that remain privileged based on sexual orientation. The question of whether same-sex couples can marry, in my experience, roots out the remaining societal biases about the basic worth and citizenship of gay people. What counts as a family is one of several defining civil rights issues that will dominate the landscape in the years to come.

If you want to get a job in this field, you can do a few things to help yourself along. Don't necessarily eschew private practice since you can learn lawyering skills and do both paid and *pro bono* work that can help you build an attractive resume. Along the way, you can also gain valuable negotiation and persuasion skills in convincing a firm about why it is right and good for you to take on such work. At the same time, don't be a lone ranger. If you have a case that raises issues of first impression, then talk to someone at GLAD, LAMBDA Legal, or the ACLU in order to learn more about what arguments are better or worse in the short and long terms. You can also gain valuable experience as a board member of community or advocacy organizations. Last but not least, stay up on the issues by reading the materials on the Internet (see the Resources section of this guide) and also by reading Lesbian and Gay Law Notes, published by Arthur Leonard at New York Law School. Read the decisions and read the briefs in the cases that interest you. The bottom line, though, is to learn to be a good, trustworthy, hard working and likeable lawyer.

## COURTNEY JOSLIN

*Staff Attorney*

*National Center for Lesbian Rights, San Francisco, CA*

Since September 2000, I have been working as a staff attorney and New Voices Fellow at the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR). My primary focus is on issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth, exactly the type of work that I hoped to be doing upon graduation from law school. My experience at NCLR has far exceeded my expectations. On a daily basis, I have the opportunity to work on cutting-edge substantive legal and policy issues, collaborating with an amazing array of public interest advocates. Moreover, I provide desperately needed information and technical assistance to individuals and attorneys throughout the country. My two-year New Voices Fellowship will soon end, at which time I will be continuing on at NCLR as a staff attorney.

As many other fellows can no doubt attest, the fellowship process can, at times, be a tedious, frustrating and even demoralizing process. As I sought to do an LGBT-specific project, misunderstanding about the LGBT community, a failure to see LGBT issues as civil rights issues or homophobia made the fellowship process even more difficult. Despite these difficulties, however, having gone through the experience and watched friends and colleagues experience similar struggles, my advice is to be patient. If you are determined and persistent, with faith and hard work it will work out.

When making your initial job choice, remember that no decision locks you into one particular career path (although it may seem that way at the time). There are always ways to do the work you want to do, regardless of the job you take right out of law school. If you take a public interest job in another area, the skills you acquire will be an asset if you later decide to focus on LGBT issues. If you begin your career at a firm, it is also possible to move to the public interest realm, even years later. While working at a firm, there are still ample opportunities to be involved in LGBT-legal work, either through participating in the firm's *pro bono* program, working with your local bar's LGBT committee or volunteering your services to nonprofit legal organizations, such as the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force.

No decision locks you into one particular career path (although it may seem that way at the time).

–Courtney Joslin

Working at NCLR has been a great experience – both professionally and personally. I feel incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to do the work that I feel most passionate about and that is also extremely challenging. Although one might think that LGBT advocacy requires only a narrow set of skills and knowledge, I have had the opportunity to litigate a huge array of substantive issues,

including child custody and visitation, torts, sex discrimination under Title VII and IX and a range of constitutional issues. Because most laws were not drafted with LGBT people and families in mind, we are forced to use the law in creative and innovative ways, which keeps my work exciting and intellectually challenging.

One of the cases I litigated with NCLR is the Sharon Smith case. Sharon Smith is the surviving partner of Diane Whipple who was mauled to death by vicious dogs in the hallway of the couple's San Francisco apartment building. NCLR represented Sharon in her wrongful death lawsuit. Last year, a San Francisco judge held that Sharon's case could proceed to trial. This ruling marked the first time in the country a court has held that excluding all same-sex partners from the right to bring

a wrongful death suit violates the constitutional principles of equal protection. Sharon's testimony was also instrumental in the passage of California Assembly Bill 25 (2001), which provides same-sex partners in California with a number of important protections including the right to bring a wrongful death action as a surviving partner.

In addition to litigation, I am also involved in legislative work – drafting and commenting on bills and advising local activists from around the country who are working to amend local school board policies and city human rights ordinances to include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

For example, this past year I have been working with the Center for Young Women's Development, a San Francisco organization run by and for young women who have lived on the streets and/or are involved in the juvenile justice or foster care systems. My primary objective has been to get San Francisco's juvenile jail facilities to adopt an anti-harassment policy that provides protection for youth who are harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Thanks to the testimony and direct action on the part of the youth involved at the Center, the policy, which is the first of its kind to be enacted anywhere in the country, will go into effect in September of this year.

It is not upon you to finish the task, nor are you free not to begin.  
–Pirkei Avot 2:21

While my job has been incredibly fulfilling, it can also be very emotionally difficult and troubling. Because I have a personal connection to the work I do, the losses are sometimes devastating. In addition, because the law is so bad in some areas and/or there are so few resources available, there are times when there is little we can offer to people who contact us. Particularly where children or a person's home or livelihood are involved, it is very difficult to tell people that they have no legal rights or protections.

That said, however, it is a tremendous privilege to be a part of an incredibly dynamic area of the law that is developing to help LGBT people and their families across the country protect themselves and their families. Perhaps the day will come when LGBT people and their families are equally protected and this kind of work is no longer needed. In the meantime, however, “[i]t is not upon you to finish the task, nor are you free not to begin,” Pirkei Avot 2:21.

## **KATHERINE TRIANTAFILLOU**

*Attorney at Law*

*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

I did not grow up with a burning desire to practice law. I wanted to be President of the United States and make the world a better place. Going to law school seemed like a practical way to begin such a journey. Although I had been out sexually since high school, I continued to date and maintained the outward manifestations of heterosexuality; it wasn't until I experienced the full force of the women's movement and the gay movement here in Boston while I was attending law school that I came out as a lesbian politically. The realization that I could no longer hide who I was and be fully integrated as a human being carried with it the equally potent realization that, at the time, mainstream politics would be impossible. This was in 1975, well before Barney Frank and Gerry Studds acknowledged their homosexuality in a storm of scandal.

Rather than accept the judicial clerkship I was offered out in Ohio, I decided to stay in Boston and start my own law practice on the day I was sworn in to the Bar. I was the first openly gay person to practice law privately in Massachusetts and thus threw myself into the challenge of addressing homophobia in the legal and political world. Although I created what is known as a general practice – accepting a variety of cases from wills to divorces to criminal defense – my focus was on gay and lesbian issues and feminist issues. I had no money, huge law school debts, and no family connections (everyone I knew was back in my home state in Michigan), and used my teeny apartment on Beacon Hill as an office. Because there were no openly gay lawyers, I got a lot of clients just by the mere fact that people were looking for a lawyer with whom they could feel comfortable. I was also fortunate in that I had made the acquaintance of one of the few feminist attorneys in town, now a federal judge, who referred me cases she did not want.

One of my first cases was as a volunteer for the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts where I helped defend two women thrown out of the Army for their sexual orientation. (Then, the Army conducted aggressive campaigns to rid their ranks of suspected lesbians in a surreal and ugly reprise of *The Crucible*). I also volunteered at a shelter for battered women – one of the first in the country – and ended up providing 24-hour a day legal advice to women fleeing abusive husbands. As a result of both those affiliations, I became an “expert” and participated in many seminars, panels, television and radio shows talking about homophobia and wife abuse. The resulting personal publicity and networking helped grow my practice, although that was not my intention.

When former Mayor Kevin White refused to issue a permit for the annual gay pride parade in the early 80's, I was one of the attorneys who sued him; when a prize winning lesbian journalist was fired from her job at the *Christian Science Monitor*, I represented her; when a married doctor with children was arrested for lewd and lascivious behavior at a rest stop, I represented him; when gay couples worried how they would protect each other in case of death or illness, I drafted their wills and powers of attorney; when a gay man with AIDS was brutally beaten by a homophobic teenager, then charged with A&B with a dangerous weapon, I represented him. When politicians ran for office or were in office, I worked with groups pressuring them to publicly support gay issues, or issue executive orders, or adopt anti-discrimination legislation. When demonstrators chained themselves to seats in the State House protesting the failure of the legislature to pass our anti-discrimination law, I represented them. When a group of lesbians staged a “sleep in” at the entrance to the Governor's office protesting the removal of foster kids from the home of two gay men, I represented them. I also produced and co-hosted “Closet Space,” one of the first and oldest radio shows with gay content in the U.S.



I was the co-founder and first co-chair of the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Bar Association and the National Lesbian and Gay Law Association. I was one of the original people who created the Lavender Law Conference, geared toward the practical training of LGBT lawyers. I wrote and self-published *Do Your Own No-Fault Divorce*, and training manuals for shelter advocates helping battered women. I co-authored the Abuse Prevention Act, a national model for obtaining restraining orders and was the principal lobbyist in the state house for the coalition of groups that supported it. In 1993, I won a landmark case, *Adoption of Tammy*, which established the right of gay people to jointly adopt in Massachusetts. I was an adjunct professor at Northeastern Law School where I taught their first Sexual Orientation and the Law course and at Suffolk Law School where I taught family law and made sure to cover lesbian and gay legal issues in my classes.

In 1994 I was elected to the City Council of Cambridge (the first openly lesbian elected official in Cambridge) and served for six years. Just prior to my election I helped the Mayor draft a Domestic Partnership Ordinance. When I was in office I advocated for the implementation of domestic partnership health benefits. I helped amend our Human Rights Ordinance to include transgender rights.

The 20 years between 1975 and 1995 were an exciting and heady time, with endless opportunities for creative lawyering and I was privileged to have been a part of it. There was so much to do and so few people doing it, it is hard for new lawyers to imagine a period of our history when one could read every law review article written on LGBT issues in an *hour*. Or even the sad fact that a liberal Democratic Governor could promulgate a regulation that foster children not be placed with homosexual parents.

Although the times have indeed changed and many of the major legal battles have been won here in Massachusetts - and to practice law in Massachusetts is akin to being in gay nirvana - I truly believe there are abundant opportunities for new lawyers to litigate cutting edge cases or to be of service to the LGBT community. One of the drawbacks of our success has been the professionalization of the movement and thus most civil rights litigation is now handled through large organizations, both nationally and on the state level. But this does not mean the only way to practice gay law is to be a staff attorney for one of those organizations. Live in a smaller city and establish a general practice; cases will walk in the door that cry out for your advocacy and empathy.

Move back to your hometown or state, wherever that may be, and make changes and be “the gay lawyer” there. Work in a large downtown law firm, but be “out” and encourage the firm to handle the legal work of some of our organizations *pro bono* or make loads of money, giving generously to the organizations that are fighting on our behalf. Volunteer for a LGBT non-profit or be on the Board and draft by-laws that make sense and help the organization meet its mission. Consider running for office, including those “lower” levels, such as school committee where many of the important decisions affecting LGBT youth arise.

In 1996 I closed my law practice, which by then had grown to five attorneys, a paralegal, a once a week bookkeeper, two administrative staffers and \$50,000/month overhead, to concentrate on doing something different with my career. It was a far cry from the \$125/month studio apartment on Beacon Hill, but I felt that it was time to move on to other social issues and I was burned out. We had scores of gay attorneys, more than a handful of gay judges, dozens of LGBT organizations and newspapers articles stopped using “lesbian” or “gay” before the word “lawyer” or “city councilor” when I was quoted in an article. We had achieved many of our goals, at least in Massachusetts, and I

reasoned that there were plenty of newer folks who could take on the remaining legal challenges while I concentrated on my political career.

However, in 1999 I lost my reelection to the City Council. Fortunately, I also graduated from the Kennedy School of Government, having become reacquainted with my love for international relations and foreign policy. Thereafter, I started consulting on civil society projects overseas, including trying a criminal case in Kosovo, building political parties in Bosnia and evaluating local government projects in Azerbaijan. I didn't do gay rights when working in developing countries, but became more aware of how difficult it is just to be gay in many foreign countries. If foreign affairs are your passion, then look into the international organizations that deal with advancing gay rights issues or start pressuring the UN to confront homophobia.

Because of my mother's declining health in 2003, I settled back into the United States for what I thought was a temporary basis, starting up my law practice again until I could get back overseas. I joined the Board of MassEquality mostly because I was deeply concerned about the backlash from the marriage decision and what a disaster it would be for our community to have the issue up for a referendum vote, even in Massachusetts. In addition, I was fearful that everything I had worked for would go down the tubes in a wave of fundamentalist fury. The choice surprised me because I thought those years of "gay activism" were behind me, but it also reminded me that one never knows where this journey of life will take you.

There are countless ways in which LGBT lawyers can make a difference, some of which you won't know until you commit yourself to the 'cause' and pay attention to the large and small ways in which individuals with your training and intelligence can make a difference.

—Katherine Triantafillou

The LGBT legal landscape has changed considerably since I graduated from law school, but as I reflect upon it now I think that transgender issues present the same challenge that gay issues did, as will the myriad of issues that will be litigated as a result of the conflict between DOMA type legislation and gay marriage rights. More battles will also be fought over children and young adults, especially in the schools. There are countless ways in which LGBT lawyers can make a difference, some of which you won't know until you commit yourself to the "cause" and pay attention to the large and small ways in which individuals with your training and intelligence can make a difference.

Thus my overriding advice to new law school graduates is that you should always be open to new experiences, don't be afraid of changing your mind, and as the ancient Greeks said, "know thyself." If your goal is to help others, truly help others, then there will always be opportunities for you to change the world and make it a better place.

*Katherine Triantafillou practices law in Cambridge, Massachusetts and also consults on civil society projects worldwide. She is currently working on publishing her first novel in addition to being Vice-President of MassEquality and a member of the Family Law Section of the Mass. Bar Association.*

# LGBT RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

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## LEGISLATIVE, PUBLIC ADVOCACY, & IMPACT LITIGATION ORGANIZATIONS

### Center for Policy Alternatives

www.cfpa.org  
1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Ste.  
710  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 387-6030  
Nonpartisan nonprofit  
organization working to  
strengthen the capacity of state  
legislators to lead and achieve  
progressive change.

### Gender PAC

www.gpac.org  
1743 Connecticut Ave., NW, 4th  
Fl.  
Washington, D.C. 20009-1108  
(202) 462-6610 phone  
(202) 462-6744 fax  
gpac@gpac.org  
Gender PAC is an advocacy  
group that also does impact  
litigation. At the cutting edge of  
LGBT rights, Gender PAC  
believes that homophobia and  
sexism spring from gender  
issues and thus LGB issues are  
inseparably tied to those of the  
transgender community.  
Education on gender issues is  
another one of Gender PAC's  
efforts.

### Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)

www.glaad.org  
GLAAD is an entertainment  
advocacy organization that  
lobbies newspapers, television  
studios and movie executives to  
portray LGBT people in positive

and accurate ways. The group  
also performs community  
education and studies the effect  
that media has upon perceptions  
of the LGBT community.  
GLAAD has offices at the  
following locations:

**Los Angeles, California**  
5455 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1500

Los Angeles, CA 90048  
(323) 658-6775 phone  
(323) 658-6776 fax

### New York, New York

248 W. 35th St., 8th Fl.  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 629-3322 phone  
(212) 629-3225 fax

### San Francisco, California

1360 Mission St., Ste. 200  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 861-2244 phone  
(415) 861-4893 fax

### Human Rights Campaign

www.hrc.org  
919 18th St., NW, Ste. 800  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
202/628-4160 phone  
202/347-5323 fax  
The Human Rights campaign is  
a large advocacy group fighting  
for both societal and legislative  
acceptance of LGBT people.

### Immigration Equality

www.immigrationequality.org  
350 West 31st St., Ste. 505  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 714-2904  
Advocates for equality under the  
immigration law for lesbian, gay,  
bisexual, transgender (LGBT)  
and HIV-positive individuals.  
Runs a *pro bono* asylum project to  
assist LGBT and HIV-positive  
asylum seekers to find free or  
low-cost legal representation.

Provides technical assistance to  
attorneys who are working on  
sexual orientation, transgender  
identity, HIV status-based  
asylum applications, or other  
immigration applications where  
the clients' LGBT or HIV-  
positive identity is at issue in the  
case.

### Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

www.civilrights.org  
1629 K St., NW, 10th Fl.  
Washington, DC 20006  
personnel@civilrights.org

### National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

www.nglhf.org  
1700 Kalorama Rd., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009-2624  
(202) 332-6483 phone  
(202) 332-0207 fax  
The National Gay and Lesbian  
Task force is a grassroots  
organizing and advocacy entity  
as well as a think tank on LGBT  
policy issues. NGLTF organizers  
work at the local and state levels  
for civil rights, organizing voters,  
drafting legislation and educating  
lawmakers.

### National Transgender Advocacy Coalition

www.ntac.org  
P.O. Box 123  
Free Union, VA 22940  
info@ntac.org  
The National Transgender  
Advocacy Coalition is a group  
that lobbies on Capitol Hill and  
at the state level for transgender  
and intersex rights.

**Northwest Women's Law Center**

www.nwwlc.org  
907 Pine St., Ste. 500  
Seattle, WA 98101  
(206) 682-9552

**Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

www.pflag.org  
1726 M St., NW, Ste. 400  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 467-8180 phone  
(202) 467-8194 fax  
PFLAG is an organization for family members of LGBT people. The group does Congressional advocacy, community education, grassroots organizing and provides support for families all across the United States through local chapters.

**Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)**

www.siecus.org  
**Washington Office**  
17 R St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 265-2405

**New York Office**

130 West 42nd St., Ste. 350  
New York City, NY 10036  
(212) 819-9770

**Transgender Law and Policy Institute**

www.transgenderlaw.org  
This advocacy group is devoted exclusively to the legal challenges faced by transgender people in society and engages in advocacy on their behalf.

**Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund**

www.victoryfund.org

1705 DeSales St., NW, Ste. 500  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
(202) 842-8679  
The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund is devoted to raising money for and supporting openly gay and lesbian candidates for office at all levels of government.

**Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

www.glsen.org  
121 W. 27th St., Ste. 804  
New York, NY 10001-6207  
(212) 727-0135 phone  
(212) 727-0254 fax  
GLSEN works with school systems, teachers and students on advocacy and education projects aimed towards LGBT teachers and students.

**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**

www.aclu.org/issues/gay/hmg.html  
132 W. 43rd St.  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 944-9800  
The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) does litigation and public policy advocacy.

**Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (LLDEF)**

www.lambdalegal.org  
120 Wall St., Ste. 1500  
New York, NY 10005-3904  
(212) 809-8585 phone  
(212) 809-0055 fax  
Lambda pursues impact litigation in all parts of the country and in all areas of concern to gay men and lesbians.

**Western Regional Office**

6030 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90036-3617  
(323) 937-2728 phone

(323) 937-0601 fax

**Midwest Regional Office**

11 E. Adams, Ste. 1008  
Chicago, IL 60603-6303  
(312) 663-4413 phone  
(312) 663-4307 fax

**Southern Regional Office**

1447 Peachtree St., NE, Ste. 1004

Atlanta, GA 30309-3027

(404) 897-1880 phone

(404) 897-1884 fax

**South Central Regional Office**

3500 Oak Lawn Ave., Ste. 500

Dallas, TX 75219-6722

(214) 219-8585 phone

(214) 219-4455 fax

**National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)**

www.nclrights.org  
870 Market St., Ste. 570  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 392.6257 phone  
(415) 392.8442 fax  
info@nclrights.org  
Organized in 1977 as the Lesbian Rights Project, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) is a national nonprofit public interest law firm that litigates cases concerning lesbians and the wider LGBT community, in addition to doing education projects on LGBT rights. NCLR currently focuses on areas of child custody and visitation, adoption, alternative insemination, same-gender marriage, domestic partnership, immigration and asylum and youth.

**Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN)**

www.sldn.org  
P.O. Box 65301  
Washington DC 20035-5301

(202) 328-324 phone

(202) 797-1635 fax

sldn@sldn.org

The SLDN was founded in 1993 to provide legal advice and counsel to service members targeted by the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass policy. The primary focus of the organization is to represent and advise targeted service members, but it also educates service members on their rights and how to protect themselves.

### **Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force (LGIRTF)**

www.lgirtf.org

230 Park Ave., Ste. 904

New York, NY 10169

(212) 818-9639 phone

(212) 573-6075 fax

info@lgirtf.org

Founded in 1994 by a few Lambda Legal attorneys, the LGIRTF is a small but growing organization that provides legal advice, counsel and education on issues of the immigration of lesbians and gay men to the United States, specifically binational couples, immigrants with HIV/AIDS and sexual orientation based asylum.

### **LOCAL/REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Community United Against Domestic Violence**

www.cuav.org

973 Market St., Ste. 500

San Francisco, CA 94103

(415) 777-5500

#### **Custody Action for Lesbian Mothers - CALM, Inc.**

PO Box 281

Narbeth, PA 19072

(215) 667-7508

#### **Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD Boston)**

www.glad.org

290 Washington St.

Boston, MA 02108

(617) 426-1350

gladlaw@glad.org

GLAD is a public interest law organization, based in Boston, working for the rights of the LGBT community in New England.

#### **The Center for Lesbian and Gay Law and Public Policy**

www.center4civilrights.org

1315 Spruce St, Ste. 301

Philadelphia, PA 19107

(215) 731-1447 phone

(215) 731-1544 fax

info@center4civilrights.org

c4crinfo@center4civilrights.org

The Center for Lesbian and Gay Law and Public Policy is an organization founded in 1996 to meet the needs of lesbians and gay men in Pennsylvania. They provide both direct services, impact legal work and public policy advocacy.

#### **Transgender Law Center**

www.transgenderlawcenter.org

info@transgenderlawcenter.org

870 Market St., Rm. 823

San Francisco, CA 94102

(415) 865-0176 phone

877-847-1278 fax

A civil rights organization advocating for transgender communities. TLC utilizes direct legal services, public policy

advocacy, and educational opportunities to advance the rights and safety of diverse transgender communities.

### **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **OUTFront - Amnesty International**

www.amnesty-usa.org/outfront

322 8th Ave.

New York, NY 10001

(212) 807-8400

outfront@aiusa.org

OUTFront is Amnesty International USA's program addressing issues of sexual identity and human rights. The program is part of a worldwide network of Amnesty activists organized to promote LGBT rights.

#### **Human Rights Watch**

www.humanrightswatch.org

350 5th Ave., 34th Fl.

New York, NY 10118-3299

(212) 290-4700 phone

(212) 736-1300 fax

#### **International Lesbian and Gay Association**

www.ilga.org

ILGA Administrative Office

c.o Antenne Rose & FWH

81, rue du Marche-au-Charbon

B 1000 Brussels, Belgium

+32 2 502 24 71 phone and fax

#### **International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission**

www.iglhrc.org

1360 Mission St., Ste. 200

San Francisco, CA 94103

(415) 255-8680 phone

(415) 255-8662 fax

**AIDS/HIV RELATED  
DIRECT SERVICES**

**AIDS Action Committee**

www.aac.org  
294 Washington St., 5th Fl.  
Boston, MA 02138  
(617) 437-6200

**AIDS Legal Referral Panel**

www.alrp.org  
1663 Mission St., Ste. 500  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 701-1100

**AIDS Services of Austin**

www.asaustin.org  
P.O. Box 4874  
Austin, TX 78765  
(512) 406-6173

**Gay Men's Health Crisis**

www.gmhc.org  
Legal Services and Client  
Advocacy Department  
119 W. 24th St.  
New York, NY 10011-1913  
(212) 367-1040  
Gay Men's Health Crisis  
(GMHC) is a not-for-profit,  
volunteer-supported and  
community-based organization  
committed to national leadership  
in the fight against AIDS. Its  
mission is to reduce the spread  
of HIV disease, help people  
with HIV maintain and improve  
their health and independence,  
and keep the prevention,  
treatment and cure of HIV an  
urgent national and local priority.

**Whitman-Walker Clinic**

www.wwc.org  
**Legal Services**  
Todd Pilcher  
Senior Managing Attorney  
tpilcher@wwc.org  
1701 14th St., N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20009

(202) 939-7627 phone

(202) 939-7651 fax

Non-profit, volunteer-based  
provider of HIV-related *pro bono*  
legal services. Engages in direct  
representation and advocacy, the  
provision of training and  
technical assistance to  
individuals and organizations,  
community education and  
outreach, law reform, and  
related legal efforts. Externships,  
internships available for 2Ls.

**Office of General Counsel**

Nicole Greenidge-Hoskins  
General Counsel  
1407 S St., NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 797-3595

Office deals with legal issues  
involving labor and employment  
law, contracting, health care  
privacy, risk management, real  
estate, not-for-profit taxation,  
reimbursement and corporate  
policy. Externships, unpaid  
internships available.

**HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSIONS**

**Massachusetts Commission  
Against Discrimination  
(MCAD)**

www.mass.gov/mcad  
1 Ashburton Pl., Rm. 601  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 994-6000

**New York City Commission  
on Human Rights**

www.nyc.gov/html/cchr  
Law Enforcement Bureau  
40 Rector St., 9th Fl.  
New York, NY 10006  
(212) 306-7500

**San Francisco Human Rights  
Commission**

www.ci.sf.ca.us/sfhumanrights  
25 Van Ness Ave., Ste. 800  
San Francisco, CA 94102-6033  
(415) 252-2500

**LEGAL SERVICES**

**Equality Advocates  
Pennsylvania**

www.equalitypa.org  
1211 Chestnut St., Ste. 605  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 731-1447

**LA Gay and Lesbian Center –  
Legal Services**

www.lagaycenter.org  
legalservices@LAGayCenter.org  
McDonald/Wright Bldg.  
1625 N. Schrader Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90028-6213  
(323) 993-7670  
Document preparation, hate  
crime victim assistance, HIV/  
AIDS-related legal issues, lawyer  
referrals, no- or low-cost legal  
advice.

**WilmerHale Legal Services  
Center**

(Harvard University)  
www.law.harvard.edu/  
academics/clinical/lsc  
122 Boylston St.  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130-2204  
(617) 522-3003

**LGBT BAR  
ASSOCIATIONS**

**National Lesbian and Gay  
Law Association**

www.nlgla.org  
Box 77130, National Capital  
Station  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7130  
LavLaw@nlgla.org

**Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom**  
www.balif.org  
P.O. Box 421983  
San Francisco, CA 94142-1983  
(415) 956-5764

**Dallas Gay and Lesbian Bar Association**  
www.dglba.org  
(214) 540-4460  
Adam Seidel, President  
president@dglba.org

**GAYLAW: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Attorneys of Washington**  
www.gaylaw.org  
gaylaw@gaylaw.org  
P.O. Box 34072  
Washington, DC 20043  
(202) 842-7723 (voicemail)

**Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago**  
www.chilagbac.org  
3712 N. Broadway, # 415  
Chicago, IL 60613  
(773) 404-9574 phone  
contact@chilagbac.org

**The Lesbian and Gay Law Association of Greater New York (LeGaL)**  
www.le-gal.org  
799 Broadway, Rm. 340  
New York, NY 10003  
(212) 353-9118  
le-gal@interport.net

**International Association of Lesbian and Gay Judges**  
home.att.net/~ialgj

**Tom Homann Law Association**  
www.thla.org  
1010 University Ave. PMB 137  
San Diego, CA 92103

**Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Bar Association**  
www.mlgba.org  
mlgba.adminassistant@gmail.com  
P.O. Box 9072  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 984-0535 (voice mail)

**Oregon Gay and Lesbian Law Association (OGALLA)**  
www.ogalla.org  
info@ogalla.org  
P.O. Box 876  
Portland OR, 97207

**Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia, Inc.**  
www.stonewallbar.org  
info@stonewallbar.org  
P.O. Box 7708  
Atlanta, GA 30357-0708

#### **PRIVATE PRACTICE**

**Law Office of Cullum & Sena**  
45 Polk St.  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 863-5300

**Lippman, Semsler & Salb**  
www.lsslawyers.com  
7700 Old Georgetown Rd., Ste. 500  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 656-6905 phone  
(301) 656-6906 fax

**Litt, Marquez & Fajardo**  
3435 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1100  
Los Angeles, CA 90010-1912  
(213) 386-3114

**Maneri and Maroules**  
www.njlawmm.com  
info@njlawmm.com  
30 Two Bridges Rd., Ste. 260  
Fairfield, NJ 07004  
(973) 575-2755 phone  
(973) 575-8283 fax

**Hadsell & Stormer**  
www.hadsellstormer.com  
128 N. Fair Oaks Ave., Ste. 204  
Pasadena, CA 91103  
(626) 585-9600

**Harmon, Curran, Gallagher & Speilberg**  
1726 M St. NW, Ste. 600  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 328-3500

**Heller, Huron, Chertkof, Lerner, Simon & Salzman**  
www.eeolawyers.com  
1730 M St., NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 293-8090

**Klimaski & Associates**  
1400 K St., NW, Ste. 1000  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 296-5600  
klimaski@klimaski.com

**Jill M. Metz & Associates**  
www.jillmetzlaw.com  
5443 N. Broadway, # 2-North  
Chicago, IL 60640  
(773) 878-4480 phone  
(773) 878-5590 fax

**Relman & Dane**  
www.reلمانlaw.com  
1350 Connecticut Ave., NW, Ste. 304  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 728-1888

**Scurti, Meiselman & Bledoe, PA**  
www.scurtiandgulling.com  
210 E. Lexington St., Ste. 300  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**Law Office of Mark D. Stern**  
34 Liberty Ave.  
Somerville, MA 02144  
(617) 776-4020

**The Stockdale Law Firm**

[www.myrllys.com](http://www.myrllys.com)

[lawoffice@myrllys.com](mailto:lawoffice@myrllys.com)

3840 El Dorado Hills Blvd., Ste.  
301

El Dorado Hills, CA 95762-4567

(916) 933-5545 phone

(916) 933-9833 fax

**Zalkind, Rodriguez, Lunt &  
Duncan**

[www.zrld.com](http://www.zrld.com)

65A Atlantic Ave.

Boston, MA 02110

(617) 742-6020



# **COURSES & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

## **AT HARVARD LAW SCHOOL RECOMMENDED FOR LGBT RIGHTS ADVOCATES**

When making course choices with the aim of a career in LGBT rights, seek a balance between courses that will introduce you to relevant subject areas and those courses that will help you develop overall lawyering skills. Courses that specialize in the substance of the field like “Sexuality and the Law” and “Civil Rights” will obviously be informative and helpful. Do not overlook procedural courses. “I know students are going to hate me,” one impact lawyer said, “but take Federal Courts. I use what I learned in that course every day.” Another lawyer who lobbies federal government agencies comments, “Administrative law is essential for what I do.” Talking to a practicing lawyer with the organization with which you hope to be employed or in the specialty in which you hope to practice might be helpful for advice on other courses.

Alexa Shabecoff, the Director of the Bernard Koteen Office of Public Interest Advising at Harvard Law School has suggested the following courses at Harvard for prospective LGBT rights lawyers. The list is not meant to constitute a hard and fast educational plan, and students should, of course, take into account their own interests and strengths. If you do not attend Harvard Law School, look for courses similar to these or talk to a counselor in your career services office.

- Administrative Law
- Constitutional Law
- Corporations
- Employment Civil Rights Clinical Workshop
- Employment Discrimination
- Employment Law
- Evidence
- Federal Courts and the Federal System
- Families and Children: Law and Policy Clinical Workshop
- Family Law
- Future of the Family: Adoption, Reproduction, and Child Welfare: Seminar
- International Protection of Human Rights
- Seminar: The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement
- Sex Equality
- Sexual Orientation and the Law
- Trusts and Estates

Extracurricular participation can give a law student and prospective LGBT rights lawyer invaluable experience and connections. The following groups at Harvard Law School might be helpful, fun and informative for prospective LGBT rights lawyers. If you do not attend Harvard, look for similar groups at your law school, or consider starting your own. Remember, however, to participate in activities you enjoy, not merely those you believe will be a means to getting a particular job. You will have a richer experience in the long run.

**Legal Aid Bureau:** The Bureau is a student run legal services office that serves low-income people in the Boston area in a clinical education environment. Students are responsible for every aspect of the cases to which they are assigned. Harvard’s Legal Aid Bureau has a special AIDS practice group, which may be of particular interest to prospective LGBT rights lawyers.

**WilmerHale Legal Services Center:** The Center is a community-based poverty law clinic, where students learn the law by handling their own cases supervised by full-time lawyers. The intake of the center is similar to that of the Legal Aid Bureau, but also includes employment law, economic development work and trust and estates law.

**Civil Liberties Union:** The Civil Liberties Union brings together interested students to work as advocates, researchers, and community educators for local civil liberties organizations. Harvard's Civil Liberties Union has a gay and lesbian civil rights project that should be of particular interest to future LGBT rights lawyers, especially those who wish to work with a national public interest legal organization.

**Journals:** Harvard Law School has a number of student-run journals. Journal work provides excellent opportunities to gain important research and writing skills and is an impressive credential during the job application process. Harvard's *BlackLetter Law Journal* and *Civil Rights - Civil Liberties Law Review* may be of particular interest to future LGBT rights lawyers because of their civil rights focus.

**Lambda:** Not to be confused with the national public interest litigation organization, Lambda is the HLS association of LGBT students and allies. The group sponsors educational events, works with community LGBT and civil rights groups and serves as a support group for LGBT students during their law school years.