

2001 - A Historic Year of Triumphs

The attacks of September 11 galvanized America and mobilized the gay communities of the United States like no other event in the course of the year.

Indeed, it is no longer an option to absorb a story on anything, from news to sports to entertainment without a mention of September 11th and its aftereffects.

Despite this new focus, the gay and lesbian community has continued to make news on its own.

Through trials, tribulations and triumphs, the local and national news has continued to focus on the issues that have helped the community gain a recognizable presence and continuing equal rights. Here is a rundown of the important gay stories of the year.

Gays in the Wake of September 11th



After a series of hijacked planes destroyed the World Trade Center, part of the Pentagon and a jet in a Pennsylvania field, the world was left in mourning. Thousands of lives were lost and President George W. Bush announced the war that continues to be fought in Afghanistan to "rid the world of evildoers."

While the mainstream media has said just about everything that can be said already in order to recount the details of September 11th, *The Express* also focused on the gays and lesbians who lost their lives in the attacks.

San Francisco PR whiz and rugby player Mark Bingham was recognized as a national hero after overcoming terrorist hijackers and causing the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 into a Pennsylvania field to avoid making the White House or Camp David another hit target.

Being on United Flight 175 ended the lives of gay couple Daniel Brandhorst and Ronald Gamboa, along with that of their three-year-old adopted son David, when it crashed into the World Trade Center. Also killed were pilot David Charlebois and Director of the National Geographic Society's Geography Outreach Program J. Joe Ferguson.

Friends of the gay community killed in the attacks included actress/photographer Berry Berenson, *Frasier* creator David Angell and his wife, Lynn, and Army Lieutenant General Timothy J. Maude. Maude played a pivotal role in developing and implementing key programs related to LGBT military personnel.

Shortly after the attacks, televangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson lost credibility by tastelessly blaming the attacks on gays, feminists, pro-choicers and others as the surviving partners of gay victims fought for financial assistance in the wake of the attacks. On Thursday, December 13th, the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Projects announced that it would begin disbursing gifts ranging from \$4,000 to \$6,000 to surviving partners.

The tourism industry and overall economy were nearly destroyed entirely in the weeks following the attacks, but gay tourism dollars rebounded as gay travelers refused to submit to fear. Gays continue to travel to popular destinations, including South Florida, and take advantage of newly offered deals, though interest in destinations overseas dropped.

Boy Scouts and Gays Reach Common Ground

After being the major local news story of last year, the Boy Scouts of America's South Florida Council and the gay community continued to make strides to reach a common ground. All of the pandemonium is the result of a Supreme Court decision in June of 2000 that effectively permitted the exclusion of gays as scouts or scout leaders.

In January of this year, the United Way of Miami-Dade and SAVE Dade announced that strides had been made between gays and the Boy Scouts in Miami-Dade county. The Boy Scouts announced that they would develop diversity-training program to educate Scout leaders and to adopt a policy disallowing the organization or any of its members from involving the Scouting movement in political activity.

In August, the Broward County School Board voted to allow the Boy Scouts and other nonprofit groups to meet in public schools rent-free. The decision ended a 10-month battle with the Scouts, a group the board originally wanted to ban from meeting at the schools all together.

GLSEN Moves Through Change

A Human Rights Watch report released in May revealed that as many as 2 million gay teenagers nationwide are subject to harassment and bullying, and school officials often refuse to address and sometimes actively encourage the abuse.

After changing leadership and announcing the appointment of Mike Record to its Co-Chair position, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network of South Florida experienced an upsetting defeat amid the reports on October 16 as the Broward County School Board rejected a formal agreement between the Schools and the non-profit organization. The agreement was a routine procedure that would have formalized the relationship between GLSEN and the Schools' Office of Diversity and Cultural Outreach.

The Board rejected it in a flurry of opposition from protestors encouraged by local church groups and radio personality Steve Kane's morning show.

Nonetheless, GLSEN celebrated this year with the release of "Dignity for All Students: Gay and Lesbian Youth," a training video shown to all Schools employees and a legislative bill submitted to the State Congress by State Representative Kenneth Gottlieb and Senator Walter "Skip" Campbell. The bill will go before the State Legislature next year to be made into a law banning discrimination in public schools.

Court Upholds Adoption Ban

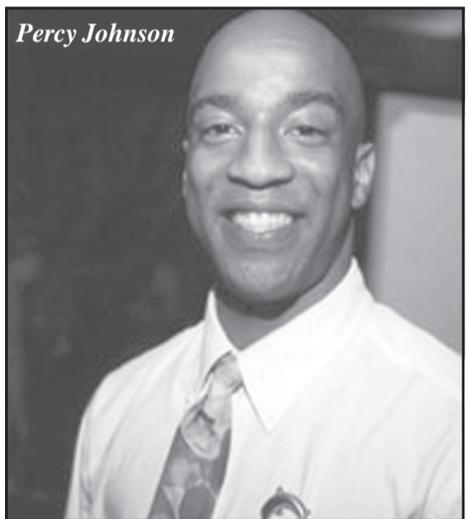
As reported in the September 10 issue of *The Express*, a federal judge upheld Florida's ban on adoptions by gays, accepting the state's argument that married heterosexual couples provide a more stable home for children. Gay rights activists who sought the same adoption rights as heterosexual couples challenged the law, which was enacted in 1977 and automatically disqualifies anyone who is gay or lesbian from adopting children. The ruling drew sharp criticism from civil rights groups who promised to appeal the decision.

Broward Gay Leaders Mobilize to Fight Church and Protect Ordinance

Launching their own initiative to prevent repeal of the Broward County Human Rights Ordinance, which protects gays and lesbians from discrimination, leaders in the Fort Lauderdale gay and lesbian community formed the Americans for Equality: Empower Broward Political Action Committee. It was created as a direct response to Christian leaders seeking to repeal the ordinance by forming a similar PAC under the direction of anti-gay Evangelical Fundamentalist Anthony Verdugo.

In October, following the resignation of a series of co-chairs, local attorney Robin Bodiford and the PAC declared a victory after the opposing side's Equal Rights Not Special Rights group failed to repeal the ordinance due to the county's rejection of thousands of invalid voter petition signatures.

Racism Charges Center on Gay and AIDS Communities



After Percy Johnson was elected the first African-American president of the South Florida's Dolphin Democratic Club, Johnson and local educator and activist Naomi Parker raised racism charges against the gay community-at-large this year.

Both stated that "racism is a dirty little secret that no one wants to talk about" and came forth in *The Express* with numerous stories of racism that they had personally encountered.

Later this year, Parker again emerged with new racial allegations that she noticed after taking over as Chair of the Broward County HIV Health Services Planning Council following the resignation of A. Maurice Maddox. A furor erupted after Maddox stepped down in protest over alleged lack of funding for minorities with HIV/AIDS. Though all HIV/AIDS service organizations were shown in Broward County reports to have received proper funding, the scandal focused new attention on the racial divide within the AIDS community.

AIDS Organizations Receive New Media Attention



On Thursday, April 12, HIV awareness outreach worker Angela Lee was arrested outside of Fort Lauderdale's Baja Beach Club. Lee, who was working in connection with the University of Miami School of Medicine, was arrested after being repeatedly asked to leave by Broward County Sheriff's officers after the club was reportedly closed. Lee said she was wrongly arrested and spoke out about the "over the line" behavior of the Sheriff's officers in the media.

An investigative report also discussed in the media this year as the federal government announced that sexually explicit workshops which had been receiving government AIDS-prevention grants would undergo extreme scrutiny. After an official report detailing funding by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson asked for "enhanced accountability and performance measures because promoting sexual activity and exceeding the legal standard for obscenity violate CDC guidelines."

On the flipside, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt made history on New Year's Eve by making an appearance in this year's nationally televised Orange Bowl Parade. This is the first year that the Quilt was included in the parade, and the second time in history that a nationally televised parade featured it.

GLCCSF Experiences Growing Pains

On March 26th, the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of South Florida announced that Ed Nicholas would fill the position of Interim Executive Director after the resignation of Tony Beall.

In June, tensions came to a head as an emergency meeting was called to address growing concerns over the financial and administrative woes of the organization as it celebrated its first anniversary. Nicholas instituted numerous cost-cutting measures as many community voices, including local activist Karen Wolman, called for the dissolution of the Center entirely.

A few weeks later, a forum held to discuss the problems brought out heated accusations about Nicholas for being 'racist' and 'misogynistic'. Further charges were leveled against the entire GLCCSF Board, including allegations of 'financial improprieties,' and 'a general disregard for the needs of the community.' The GLCCSF responded by forming a series of restructuring committees to deal with appropriate issues.

While the financial crisis was later resolved, tension continues to simmer at the GLCCSF over submitted progress reports and a board restructuring that included the