

# September 11 GLBT Impact Continues

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**October 1, 2001:** America is still trying to recover from the terrorist attacks 20 days before and approximately 1000 people packed New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center to remember and honor those lost in and affected by the tragedy. The event was co-sponsored by 80 organizations from New York City and around the United States. Hosted by comedienne Kate Clinton, the show featured performances by soprano Aprile Mollo, vocalist Jodi Cardwell, the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, and the Gay Gotham Chorus. A candle lighting ceremony and moment of silence followed.

Richard Burns, Executive Director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center had this to say, "It was a way to say goodbye to members of our community who were victims of this attack and a chance to recognize our heroes."

**October 4, 2001:** The Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, founder of the Traditional Values Coalition complained during a Cybercast News Service that the American Red Cross and other relief agencies were allowing the partners of gay victims of the Sept., 11th attacks to be eligible for relief funds.

"[Relief organizations] should be first giving priority to those widows who were home with their babies, and those widowers who lost wives." Rev. Sheldon further said, "It should be given on the basis and priority of one man and one woman in a marital relationship. This is just another example of how the gay agenda is seeking to overturn the one man-one woman relationship from center stage in America, taking advantage of this tragedy."

Founded in 1980, Traditional Values Coalition is the largest non-denominational, grassroots church lobby in America with a membership of 43,000 churches. TVC focuses upon issues such as education, homosexual advocacy, family tax relief, pornography, the right to life, and religious freedom.

**October 5, 2001:** CNN runs a segment profiling openly gay New York City firefighters and police officers who have emerged as heroes from the front lines of ground zero at the World Trade Center. CNN also profiled Mark Bingham, one of the United Flight 93 passengers who participated in an on-board revolt that crashed the plane near Pittsburgh avoiding another target by the terrorists. This report by CNN ran three days after NBC's less inclusive *Dateline* show. [National Public Radio first broke the silence on September 22 with host Scott Simon's essay on its *Weekend Edition* Saturday program comparing the heroic actions of "gay rugby player Mark Bingham, who hoped to go to the Gay Games in Sydney next year" to the mean-spirited remarks of Christian evangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. "Who would you rather be sitting next to on a hijacked plane?" Simon asked.]

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force criticized comments made the Rev. Lou Sheldon as "hateful rhetoric." A statement made by the NGLTF Executive Director Lorri L. Jean said, "I sincerely hope the American

people will rise up in protest against Sheldon's fanaticism, just as they did against Jerry Falwell's," making reference to the controversy provoked by suggestions from Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson that the United States may have brought on the attacks because of the activities of "pagans, feminists, gays, and lesbians," among others.

**October 6, 2001:** Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) was the keynote speaker at the Human Rights Commission's National Dinner and ended her speech with, "We have to make clear that what we're fighting for is our values" and included as a value the ending of "discrimination against gays and lesbians once and for all." Gordon Smith (R-Ore) along with Judy Shepard spoke and received awards.

Executive Director Elizabeth Birch offered, "As we grieve, we should allow ourselves to be inspired and lifted by the stories of unmatched courage from members of our community ... we have seen so much of humanity's best."

Ms. Birch also acknowledged to the crowd that Katherine Lee Bates - author of "America the Beautiful" - lived with a beloved female partner for more than 25 years.

Several victims' partners attended the event including Tom Hay, partner of David Charlebois, co-pilot of Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon; Nancy Walsh, partner of Carol Flyzik, passenger on Flight 11 that crashed into the World Trade Center; and Mike Lyons, partner of Jack Keohane who fell victim to debris at the World Trade Center.

**October 10, 2001:** From Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Executive Director: "... in the wake of the tragedy, heroes have emerged from within our community. Mark Bingham participated in a revolt that crashed the hijacked United Flight 93 into a remote field outside Pittsburgh.

"Father Mychal Judge was killed while ministering to a fallen firefighter at ground zero. And Graham Berkeley, Daniel Brandhorst and Ronald Gamboa, David Charlebois, Carol Flyzik, Jack Keohane, Sheila Hein and many others who had lived brave, openly gay lives were among those lost to the terrorist attacks.

"Media coverage of these gay and lesbian heroes and victims of the Sept. 11 attacks has been and continues to be a primary focus for GLAAD, because our community has been uniquely impacted by these events. Our relationships are not afforded basic, equal protections under the law. As a result, some surviving partners will find themselves unable to qualify for state aid and Social Security benefits, and may find themselves unable to obtain bereavement leave, inheritance rights, or even access to the memorial of a partner."

Love Sees No Borders, the recently established organization focused on raising awareness of the plight of same-sex bi-national couples and their fight to remain together, today announced that same-sex bi-national couples are facing dire consequences as a result of the terrorist attacks of Sept 11. Bi-national same-sex couples already found themselves in a precarious situation before the attacks, and the worsening of the economy and the toughening of regulations only made it worse for loving committed couples who just want to be together.

With no recourse to sponsor their foreign

partners, Americans in same-sex bi-national relationships find themselves facing potentially escalating difficulties right now. The Immigration and Naturalization Service has frozen all applications and petitions for visas. The current economic conditions, tremendously worsened by the attacks, place H-1B (work) visa-holders in a more precarious situation with no job stability. It is estimated that a large percentage of same-sex binational couples rely on H-1B visas to remain together in the U.S. Proposals submitted by the White House so severely narrow degrees of separation from suspected terrorists that innocent foreigners in same-sex relationships may find themselves in jails post-September 11. The passage of the Permanent Partners Immigration Act, H.R. 690, would alleviate the suffering of bi-national couples by guaranteeing that their families can remain together in the U.S., and providing Americans in same-sex relationships the basic human right to build a family of their choosing in their homeland.

**October 15, 2001:** The former partner of San Franciscan Mark Bingham, a victim of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, watched as Gov. Gray Davis signed legislation bringing California's domestic partnership law closer to marriage on several fronts. Adding health care, estate planning and adoption benefits now enjoyed by married couples to the measure Davis approved makes California second only to Vermont in granting legal rights to domestic partners.

"Given what happened, I think Mark would want me here," said Castro resident, Paul Holm, 40, the friend and former partner of Bingham, 31, who helped fight off the hijackers on United Airlines' Flight 93. The plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field, killing all aboard. "We both wanted fair and equal treatment of people, regardless of their orientation."

The measure was written by Assemblywoman Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) who called it the foundation of an "everlasting fight for gay and lesbian equality."

**October 23, 2001:** In the October 23 issue of *The Advocate*, Editor in Chief Judy Wieder had this to say to her readers regarding the lead story of gay heroes, "If tragedies like this make it clear that in the end, all human lives are equal - regardless of gender, nationality, sexual orientation, race, religion, financial status, whatever - why is it so hard to make this point outside of horrific, cataclysmic events? If gays and straights are equally heroic, equally vulnerable, equally courageous, equally frightened, equally lucky, equally unlucky, and just plain equally human, then why are some of us still fighting for equal rights and opportunities in this country?"

"In the aftermath of all this horror, when the call went out for people to give blood, gay men could not. If the United States goes to war, gays and lesbians cannot serve openly. And without marriage, all the gay widows and widowers have no legal rights to their chosen families.

"Yes, *The Advocate* still has something vital to say. The magazine needs to tell the stories of the gay and lesbian heroes who died September 11, 2001, as equals, because if they hadn't died, they'd still be fighting for that equality. So with mixed feelings of great sadness and pride, we honor their lives here."