

AGLBIC History
(As recalled by Bob Rhode, AGLBIC Archivist/Historian)

AGLBIC began in 1975, when Joe Norton called for interested parties at the New York convention to discuss the feasibility of a lesbian and gay organization within the American Personnel and Guidance Association (ACA's name then). Over sixty people attended and the Caucus of Gay and Lesbian Counselors was born. The group's name changed several times over the next dozen years to reflect the group's issues, and not the sexual orientation of its members. AGLBIC was forged in the furnace of gay activism of the 1970's. The American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association had just removed homosexuality from their list of mental illnesses. The gay and lesbian community was discovering its roots and own identity, both personal and professional. APGA Senate had passed some supportive resolutions in the early 1970's, and AGLBIC continued to press for relevant resolutions; some ACA presidents, such as David Capuzzi and Brooke Collison, were supportive. Enthusiastic support from the parent organization was not to be expected, and for twenty years, AGLBIC fought for official recognition from ACA, but the group's primary focus was on peer education and increasing the visibility of sexual minority issues in counseling.

Throughout the 1980's, workshops and learning institutes were offered at ACA conventions. In 1984, AGLBIC produced an annotated bibliography for counselors. At every convention, AGLBIC had a reception center, which hosted informal programs and opportunities to reach out to the ACA membership. The first exhibit booth appeared in 1986 in Los Angeles. At that, and future exhibitions, the response from attendees was surprise ("I didn't know you existed!") and support. In 1987, ACA (then AACD) created the Task Force on Gay and Lesbian Issues in Counseling, with Fernando Gutierrez as chair, which ultimately became a standing committee, led by both Fernando and Sari Dworkin, who were simultaneously AGLBIC co-chairs.

The gay community was changing in the mid-eighties, however, because of AIDS. The AGLBIC newsletter first mentioned AIDS in its October, 1982, issue and by the middle of the decade many AIDS-related programs were presented at ACA. AGLBIC was very concerned, though, that AIDS not divert the counseling community's focus from other sexual minority issues, and this division in focus led Gutierrez to resign from the Human Rights Committee in protest of ACA's continued equation of gay with AIDS. At the 1989 Boston convention there were 5 gay/lesbian programs and 11 AIDS-related ones; but by 1990, the ratio had shifted to 8 and 6. It seemed that AGLBIC and the issues it held so dear were beginning to be woven into the fabric of ACA. In 1989, a special issue of the *Journal of Counseling and Development* focused on sexual minority issues and in 1990 ACA updated and published the earlier AGLBIC annotated bibliography; a major landmark was the publication by ACA of *Counseling Gay Men & Lesbians: Journey to the End of the Rainbow*, edited by Dworkin and Gutierrez. Big changes, however, were about to overtake ACA.

A disastrous snow storm crippled the 1993 Atlanta convention and precipitated a financial crisis within ACA. Budgets were drastically cut; the GLB committees within

ACA were eliminated, and rather than being able to support AGLBIC's work, ACA itself needed help. The mid-1990's were also a time when AGLBIC's focus broadened beyond issues to organization building. Throughout the first 15 years, there had been efforts to reach out to branches and divisions, with some spotty success in some states, ASCA, ASGW, and NCDA. Michael Hutchins, though, led AGLBIC into a period of bridge building to ACA; Hutchins was awarded the prestigious Kitty Cole Human Rights Award by ACA in 1994. The crisis within ACA also led it to reach out to its constituents and build bases. AGLBIC was to be part of that base. Despite Mel White's keynote address at the 1995 Denver convention, relations between AGLBIC and ACA seemed stalemated. Then, good fortune smiled on our organizations.

In Denver, Robert Barret and Tom Eversole stepped forward demanding to know why AGLBIC was part of ACA but not represented in official bodies and not "at the table." Joined by Colleen Logan, these leaders focused on getting AGLBIC officially recognized. Thanks to a very supportive ACA President Joyce Breasure and Executive Director Richard Yep, the parent organization enthusiastically fostered AGLBIC's efforts to recruit new members, resulting in "organizational affiliate" status in 1996 and the formation of the AGLBIC division in 1997. Since then, AGLBIC continues to promote organization building and strengthening counselors' professional skills relating to sexual minorities. AGLBIC leaders have worked with those from other divisions to steer ACA through the major reorganizations of the late 1990's. Through extremely able leadership on the program selection committee, convention attendees have profited from numerous skill-building workshops related to sexual minorities. In the twenty first century, AGLBIC will hopefully continue to serve the cause of "gay, lesbian & bisexual issues in counseling."

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