

10 YEARS

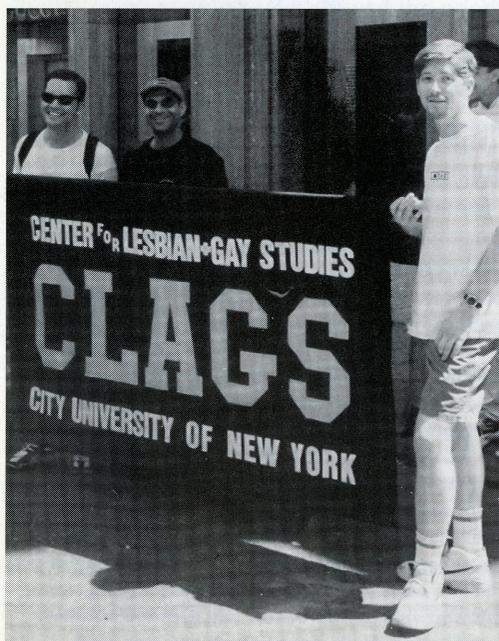


COUNTING

A CAPSULE HISTORY OF CLAGS

CLAGS is pleased to celebrate our 10th anniversary with this special retrospective section. We have ransacked our archives to offer some photos and narratives that capture some of the highlights of the last 10 years. Of course there's hardly room to name all the legions of people who have lent their ideas, labor, and passions to CLAGS's panels, colloquia, and other events, but we hope that the fraction mentioned here will evoke the many more who have shared our podiums, and we acknowledge and thank them all. CLAGS's programs are produced through the intellectual and manual toil of our volunteer board of directors and grad-student staff, whom we salute with gratitude and affection. And to all of you, who have joined our efforts in many ways, we extend great thanks and a warm invitation to the next 10 years.

Hitting the Ground Running



In April 1991, when CLAGS became formally established at the CUNY Graduate Center, George Bush *père* was in the White House, Queer Nation was marking its first birthday, and Mayor David Dinkins had just endured the jeers and heaved bottles of homophobic throngs as he marched with the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization at the St. Patrick's Day parade. Soon heated debates would flare up over proposals to install the lesbian and gay-inclusive Rainbow Curriculum in the NYC public schools. On the national scene, Senator Jesse Helms and company were still fulminating away over the "obscenity" supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, whose funding they had already cut considerably, and Patrick Buchanan was launching a presidential primary campaign in which he was calling the AIDS virus "divine retribution" on an "immoral lifestyle" of a "pederast proletariat."

The future of LGBTQ Studies lies in the influence our ideas generate outside of strictly academic discourse, in the contributions we make to activism across a spectrum of global issues, and in how the strength of our words, our writing, and our teaching can promote changes in both social consciousness and social practices. Our future lies in the depth of the collaborations we form with other interdisciplines, and with how we model activist scholarship for our students, our colleagues, and our communities.

JILL DOLAN

Karen Thompson had finally won the right to care for her lover, Sharon Kowalski, who had been disabled in a 1983 accident, and in San Francisco, queer activists were taking to the streets to protest the filming of "Basic

Kessler Awardees

The annual David R. Kessler Lecture in Lesbian and Gay Studies, which "honors an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the expression and understanding of lesbian and gay life," is pleased to have recognized:

1992-93

I Lift My Face To The Hill: The Life Of Mabel Hampton As Told By A White Woman

JOAN NESTLE

1993-94

The Personal is Political: Queer Fiction and Criticism

EDMUND WHITE

1994-95

African American Lesbian and Gay History: An Exploration

BARBARA SMITH

1995-96

Reading of Texts

MONIQUE

WITTIG

1996-97

My Butch Career: A Memoir

ESTHER NEWTON

1997-98

...3,2,1 Contact

SAMUEL R. DELANY

1998-99

A Dialogue on Love

EVE KOSOVSKY SEDGWICK

1999-2000

Wrestling with Rustin, or The Left Will Rise Again, Maybe

JOHN D'EMILIO

2000-01

A Tuna Bleeding in the Heat: A Chicana Codex of Changing Consciousness

CHERRIE MORAGA

Instinct" for its reliance on the old homicidal-lesbian trope. Down the coast in Los Angeles, LGBTQ groups were joining broad-based civil rights coalitions in outraged demonstrations decrying the police beating of Rodney King.

LGBTQ Studies was blooming as a vibrant field of scholarly inquiry: By the early '90s, a critical mass of books by pioneering authors both inside and outside the academy had accumulated, a sprinkling of courses could be found from New Haven to Berkeley, and the City College of San Francisco had instituted an undergraduate major. And five years had already passed since Martin Duberman had gathered a group of colleagues in his living room to discuss the possibility of creating a lesbian and gay research center to lend the field some of the perks of and powers of institutionalization. It took those five years for Duberman and a dedicated committee to raise the \$50,000 CUNY required for initiating a new center, and once established in '91, CLAGS immediately set about fostering and disseminating LGBTQ scholarship in as many ways as it could. A volunteer board of directors made up of scholars, teachers, public intellectuals, community activists, and professionals, started planning a range of programs that could support the long labor of research, quickly offer analysis of hot issues that erupted in the national media, and assemble LGBTQ thinkers of all stripes to discuss, debate, dispute, deconstruct, and dream together.



"Lesbian Literature" panel Barbara Smith, Bertha Harris, Jill Johnston, Lisa Kennedy and Maria Irene Fornes.

One prime, early example was a symposium on the "Gay Brain," where Simon LeVay presented his findings on the hypothalamus -- and such skeptics as Carole Vance and William Byne offered sharp critiques. Meanwhile, the monthly colloquium series was launched, providing opportunities for seasoned researchers and brand new graduate students alike to present work-in-progress for feedback from a growing community of LGBTQ scholars. In its first full academic year, CLAGS presented panels on Homosexuality and Hollywood and on the increasingly disputed Rainbow Curriculum, a colloquium on Blanche Wiesen Cook's latest findings on Eleanor Roosevelt, and a well-attended conference called "Crossing Identifications:

Contemporary Theories of Personal Identity," where such speakers as Judith Butler, Wahneema Lubiano, Biddy Martin, Michael Moon, Yukiko Hanawa, Kendall Thomas, and Patricia Williams debated the contentious questions of queer theory. And CLAGS set out right away to raise funds specifically to support research in LGBTQ studies,

I left the founding committee of CLAGS shortly after the Center was officially approved, so my memories are more from the "conception" phase than its "post-partum" realization. My files from that four-year struggle yielded up the mission statement we wrote for submission to the Graduate Center administration about 1990, which might inspire some revealing reflection on our founding principles and goals. No doubt each veteran would have a different reminiscence of the degree to which CLAGS -- and by extension the wider community, now called "LGBTQ," which it hopes to both analyze and shape -- has fulfilled that original vision, compromised it, or simply left parts undone by dint of the limited resources so often available to progressive causes. But on balance, to me, the prophecy did come true: "Article 3: The purpose of the Center will be to conduct and encourage scholarly study of the lesbian and gay experience from a multi-cultural and multi-racial perspective, informed by feminist methods and values. The Center will arrange scholarly meetings, develop seminars and colloquia, foster research projects, and provide for public lectures. It is anticipated that faculty and students, scholars from other universities, and persons who by their experience, reputation, and scholarship have achieved distinction in the field of lesbian and gay studies will also be invited to participate."

JAMES M. SASLOW



Allen Ginsburg and Alice Walker at CLAGS's Nov. 1991 inaugural fundraising celebration.

FROM THE GROUND UP

A Conversation with Martin Duberman

Martin Duberman founded CLAGS and served as its executive director until 1996. We asked him to reflect on the early days of the organization and on what CLAGS has achieved.

in dissertation and fellowship prizes for worthy projects, whether by graduate students, unaffiliated scholars, or senior professors.

With such a propitious beginning, CLAGS began to win the confidence and backing of generous supporters. Dr. David R. Kessler endowed an annual lectureship to "honor an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the expression and understanding of lesbian and gay life" and in December 1992, Joan Nestle, co-founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, gave the inaugural Kessler lecture to a standing-room crowd. That same year, the Rockefeller Foundation's Humanities Fellowship Program granted CLAGS \$250,000 – the largest foundation grant ever given to a non-AIDS lesbian and gay organization – to host two scholars in residence each year for three years. And at the Grad Center, CLAGS had scored an office and a part-time grad-student staffer.

Expanding CLAGS Programs

With the election of Bill Clinton, who readily recognized lesbian and gay rights at least in principle (LGTBQ rights groups were quick to point to his early naming of Roberta Achtenberg as an assistant director of HUD), issues of queer civil rights were in the spotlight again – and Clinton's rapid retreat from his promise to lift the ban on gays serving openly in the military, kept them there, and by many accounts, also skewed the priorities of the movement. CLAGS continued to create opportunities for academics and wider publics to look beneath and beyond the definition of queer concerns offered by "Nightline" and the *New York Times*. Among other highlights that season, CLAGS presented an Evening of Lesbian Literature and another of Gay Men's Literature, both co-sponsored with PEN, bringing into conversation authors Dorothy Allison, Nicole Breedlove, Blanche McCrary Boyd, Maria Irene Fornes, Bertha Harris, Jill Johnston, Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, and Barbara Smith on one hand, and Christopher Bram, Dennis Cooper, Michael Cunningham, Samuel Delany, Sanford Friedman, Allen Ginsberg, Dale Peck, Assotto Saint, and Edmund White, on the other. The year was topped off by a celebratory CLAGS benefit, emceed by the brilliantly hilarious Danitra Vance, which helped keep CLAGS going strong in 1993-94.

That next year featured a two-day conference called "At the Frontier," which explored the effect of lesbian and gay scholarship on the content and theory of the social sciences, with papers on subjects ranging from ancient Crete to the Native North American berdache, the Indian hijra, and the construction of constitutional rights for lesbians and gay men in the contemporary US. That work was extended into practical arenas when, soon after, working with GMHC and the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center,

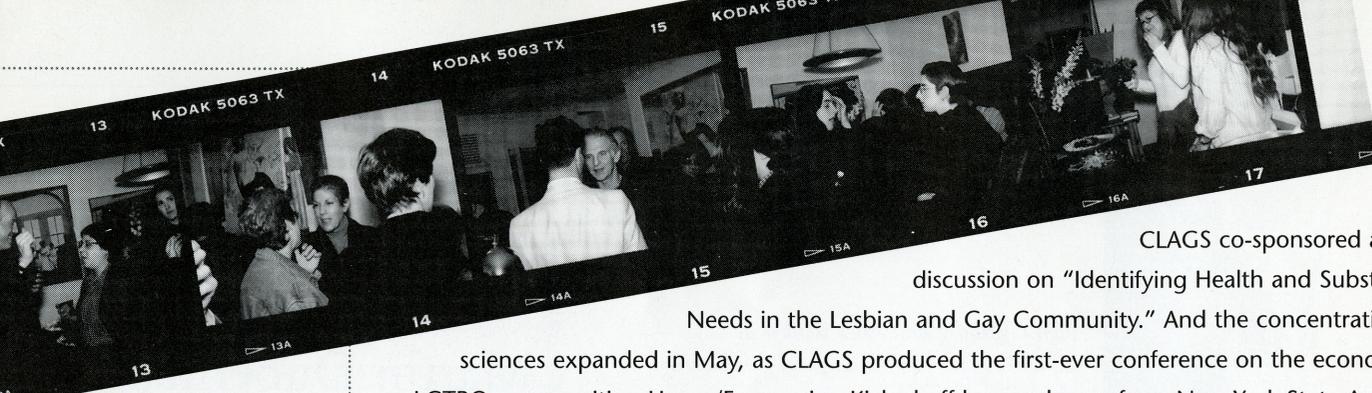


CLAGS Founder Martin Duberman.

What was your motivation for starting CLAGS?

It was early 1986 and I thought enough scholarship had accumulated that it was important to institutionalize it, not in a bad sense, but in the sense of getting the kinds of perks and encouragement and support and legitimacy that a university setting would provide. A crystallizing factor was an accidental personal one: I was close friends with a woman who was married to Benno Schmidt at the time and he had just been appointed president of Yale. Benno was on some matters liberal – though no one's idea of a radical, as he has since amply demonstrated. I thought he might be sympathetic. I had been an undergraduate at

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My primary memory of CLAGS are the last two years of my tenure as Board chair - years in which the Board was in a highly charged state, rent by anger and conflict over race, gender and power. But what lingers most in my thoughts is the precise, incisive and articulate way in which everyone argued their positions. There was anger, passion, frustration, but there were few knee-jerk responses -- instead there was carefully reasoned thought. I learned more in those meetings about the intersections and conflicts of race, class and gender; about the process of organizational reform; about how much we share -- and do not share -- than from any theoretical study I have read. In the end, there was no comfortable agreement to disagree (hardly a useful resolution of anything). But almost no one simply walked out of a meeting in the middle of an argument, or simply quit. I believe CLAGS survived those years because enough of its members believed and understood that it could and should be a vehicle through which these issues could be revisited, re-interrogated, and wrestled with -- not just on panels and conferences, but in the very way we functioned.

ESTHER KATZ

CLAGS co-sponsored a panel

discussion on "Identifying Health and Substance Abuse

Needs in the Lesbian and Gay Community." And the concentration on social

sciences expanded in May, as CLAGS produced the first-ever conference on the economy of LGTBQ communities, Homo/Economics. Kicked off by a welcome from New York State Assembly member Deborah Glick, the day included panels on the role of economic factors, such as the sexual division of labor and capitalist markets in the development of sexual identities; the development of the gay and lesbian market and its implications for the movement; and how the economic welfare of lesbians and gay men have been affected by the development of a gay market.

Building a Membership

In 1994-95, CLAGS tended to its own economics by becoming a membership organization. Remaining committed to presenting conferences, symposia, and colloquia free of charge (or multi-day conferences with low registration fees), CLAGS needed at least to recoup its \$12,000 in newsletter mailing costs to a list that had grown to more than 7,500 and, as events became more national in scope, needed to increase the budgets for participants' travel and lodging. A few generous foundations and many more individual donors had continued to support CLAGS, but the time had come to ask those with a stake in our work to help sustain it. The response was tremendous: more than 1000 people joined up at once, and the roster has kept on growing ever since.

That vote of confidence, along with the excitement being generated by the upcoming Gay Games and Stonewall anniversary celebrations in New York -- and as well, perhaps, by anger over the homophobic defeat of Karen Burstein in her bid to be New York State Attorney General that fall -- made the 1994-95 academic year one of CLAGS's most productive yet. The Fall saw panels on aging in the LGTBQ community, on "Great Dykes of American Literature, Literary Biography, and Autobiography," and on homosexuality in modern France. The Spring semester began with the lively debates of the Sissies and Tomboys conference. And in March, more than 500 people participated in the workshops, plenaries, political mobilization discussions, and cultural presentations of the three-day Black Nations/Queer Nations?

CLAGS

THE COMMITTEE FOR LESBIAN AND GAY STUDIES
THE GRADUATE CENTER, THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

November 17, 1989 Reception

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RANDOLPH TRUMBACH
ALICE TULLY
ELLEN M. VIOLETT
JOYCE WARSHOW
WILLIAM WEDIN
JON WIENER
JOSEPH WITTEICH
CLAIRE WYNNE-GOODMAN

List in Formation



Toshi Reagon and Brian Freeman at Black Nations/Queer Nations?

conference, a truly groundbreaking event that addressed such urgent challenges as AIDS, unemployment, racism, and homophobia in communities of LGBTQ people of African descent. Presenters included Jacqui Alexander, Anthony Appiah, Cathy Cohen, Samuel Delany, Elias Farajaje-Jones, Coco Fusco, Isaac Julien, Simon Nkoli, and many more. A film by Shari Frilot – supported by the Ford Foundation – poetically documented the conference, capturing its intense analyses, passionate debates, and nitty-gritty organizing.

Only a month later, CLAGS pulled out the stops again to put on Queer Theater, which attracted some 400 folks to a range of panels, roundtables, play-readings, and performances that put scholars and critics in conversation with theater-makers on such topics as the Spectacle of Queer Protest, Queering the Canon, Theater and AIDS, and Solo Performance; Jill Dolan and Brian Freeman were the keynoters and presenters included Joan Jett Black, Jennifer Brody, Sue-Ellen Case, Holly Hughes, Larry Kramer, Tony Kushner, Ania Loomba, Everett Quinton, David Román, Lawrence Senelick, Paula Vogel, and Chay Yew. The first site-specific, movable feast of CLAGS conferences, QT took place at four historically important venues for queer theater: Judson Memorial Church, La Mama, New York Theater Workshop, and the Public Theater.

As the school year ended, a new committee was already planning a major conference for the following winter, “Identity/Space/Power: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Politics,” which brought a range of analysts and activists together just as simmering debates in the movement were bubbling into mainstream consciousness with the publication of dueling books by Andrew Sullivan and Urvashi Vaid. Ever keeping an eye on the development of the field more generally, in 1995-96, CLAGS launched its syllabi collection project, hoping to make samples available to anyone wanting to consult them as LGBTQ Studies courses continued to sprout up all over. Indeed, calls came into the office – now staffed by several part-time graduate students – from all corners of the country. (And the project became even more effective when we launched our website a couple of years later.)

Early supporters of CLAGS.



Jill Dolan, Joey Arias, and Martin Duberman at a CLAGS reception

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Yale and had taught there. He was cautious but somewhat encouraging. He said it would be touchy because a lot of alumni would raise hell. Of course the climate wasn't as open 15 years ago.

He said I should gather some people and draw up a five-year plan. That led me to invite some people to come to my living room and start talking about what this might be. Within a couple of months we had 15 or 20 people showing up for meetings. They included George Chauncey, Esther Newton, the bookstore owner Corey Friedlander, John Boswell, Ralph Hexter, Jewelle Gomez, Carol Smith Rosenberg, Ruby Rich, Larry Gross, Al Novic, Anthony Appiah, Carole Vance. Some dropped out saying that institutionalizing Lesbian and Gay Studies would interfere with the imperative that it stay local.

Did you share those concerns?

Absolutely. I agreed that Gay and Lesbian Studies could lose its connection to local communities given how academia drains the juice from all experience. But it was up to us to do it a different way because if we could get gay studies institutionalized, people could get jobs, support for their research, and so on.

How did CLAGS end up at CUNY instead of Yale?

We had continued to meet, and had broken into committees such as program and governance. Boswell came back with some bylaws suggesting that the center should be controlled on a daily basis by Yale faculty members with tenure. Many of us said, “If you insist on this, it means the center will be controlled by the same white men as everything else because no people of color or out lesbians have tenure.” After

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some discussion – and there were some very accomplished women in the room – Boswell walked out. Five days later I got a long, spiteful letter from him resigning and denouncing all the people in the room, cc'd to Benno Schmidt. That was the end of it at Yale. And to tell the truth, that came as a considerable relief. Along with San Francisco, New York is the center of gay life in the US and it made sense to have CLAGS here.

I went to see Harold Proshansky, who was then head of the CUNY Graduate Center, and he was immediately warmly welcoming. It was stunning. He said, "I really want to thank you for coming to me with this idea. It's long overdue" Of course he then said we had to raise \$50,000 to prove we were viable. That took us five years. No foundation would support a gay and lesbian organization at that point, and for many gay donors, scholarship was not where they wanted to send checks in the middle of the AIDS crisis.

What sorts of things surprised you as CLAGS got going? The amount of research in the works? Its range?

It wasn't the research that surprised me – I expected that. It was more the kind of covert homophobia we encountered. It felt as though we were constantly being outmaneuvered. For instance, we had tremendous trouble just getting assigned an office. I forget how long it took, but when I finally got one, it had electric wires hanging from the ceiling, no furniture, no light bulbs. It was an absolute wasteland. It took us more than six months just to get two chairs. And getting our events listed in the Grad School publications was not easy.

Though Proshansky was supportive, there were some rock-solid mid-management homophobes around.

That seems to have improved, no?

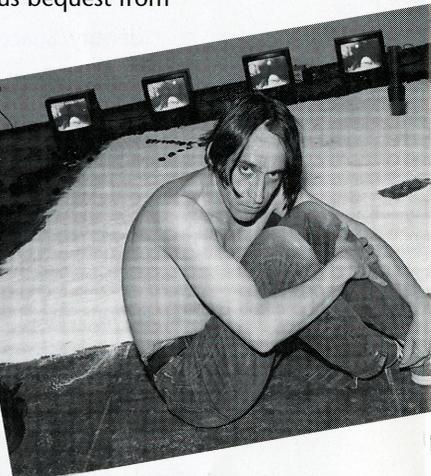
Once Frances Horowitz came along [as Grad Center president] she was wonderfully friendly and helpful. And getting the Rockefeller grant was the biggest deal in the early years. That put the stamp of approval on us.

CLAGS ran into its first blatant bout of homophobia that year, too – at least in terms of programming -- as the Americas Society removed our name as a co-sponsor of a conference we helped organize, "Margin/Center: Emergent Discourses in Latin American and Latino Literature and Culture." CLAGS board members Elena Martinez and Oscar Montero, who had worked on planning the event, raised the issue at a panel they were part of, and dozens of conference participants signed a letter of protest of a homophobic gesture that, as Montero said at the time, "gave particular urgency to an event whose goal had been to deal precisely with issues of power, marginalization, and strategies of representation."

Americas Society's actions only served to highlight the importance of CLAGS, but many more positive developments fed our sense that our mission remained vital. Calls and emails of inquiry – and applications for our fellowships -- continued to come in, not just from all over North America, but from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. That year the Rockefeller Foundation announced the almost unprecedented renewal of its grant, underwriting another three years of fellowships and programming around the theme "Citizenship and Sexualities: Transcultural Constructions."

New Leadership

In 1996, Martin Duberman announced that after five years of forming CLAGS and another five of running it, the time had come for him to refocus his energies on his teaching, research and writing. Jill Dolan, a leading scholar of feminist and LGTBQ performance, who had been a professor in the Theater program at the Grad Center as well as a CLAGS board member for several years, ably and energetically stepped in as CLAGS's new executive director in the Fall. In her first year, CLAGS presented "Crossing National and Sexual Borders: A Latina/o and Latin American Conference," celebrated the publication of *The CLAGS Reader* and *Queer Representations: Reading Lives, Reading Cultures*, both published by NYU Press and edited by Marty Duberman, and received a generous bequest from Michael C.P. Ryan to produce an annual series of programs exploring political, cultural, and artistic questions facing LGTBQ Latino/as in the US and Latin America.



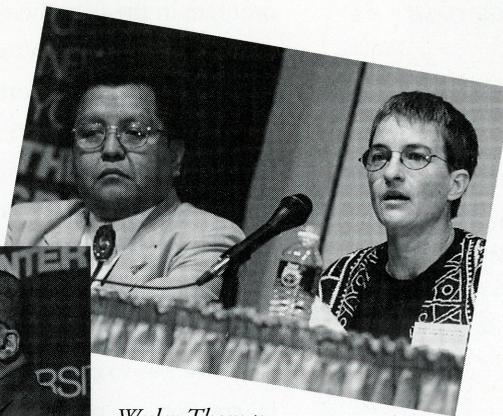
Francisco Casa performs at the 1996 Crossing Borders Conference.

Graduate Center President Frances Horowitz with 1997-98 Kessler Honoree Samuel Delany.

The historical transformations in homosexual behavior that began to occur in western societies after 1700, and that in the last 130 years have produced a public political discussion, need to remain the focus of scholarly discussion and public policy. Studies of literary texts that are not ostensibly about homosexuality seem to be less useful. Instead the question whether homosexual behavior in Asia, Africa and the Islamic world is following something like the path in the west since 1700 needs to be systematically addressed.

R A N D O L P H T R U M B A C H

Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin Manalansan at the Queer Globalizations, Local Homosexualities conference.



Wesley Thomas and Cindy Patton at the Queer Globalizations, Local Homosexualities conference.

Around the US, LGBTQ Studies was enjoying a major growth spurt. The University of Wisconsin in Madison had just reported on its two-year study of LGBTQ issues in its curricula and campus life while the University of California-Riverside established an interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in Lesbian and Gay Studies. Meanwhile, the University of Minnesota received a nearly half-a-million-dollar grant from alum Steven J. Schochet to support the development of LGBTQ Studies and services there. CLAGS was strengthening our connections to scholars, teachers and new centers and sharing strategies for building the field nationally – and beyond.

LGBTQ Studies Attacked

Around that time, even as *Ellen DeGeneres* was coming out in a primetime sitcom, Congress was debating the Defense of Marriage Act and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act – and voting against LGBTQ rights in both instances. Meanwhile, efforts to establish domestic partnership benefits on campuses and in cities were heating up and several notorious custody cases, in which children were taken away from LGBTQ parents, were clashing with the images of the much ballyhooed “lesbian baby boom.” Once again, CLAGS offered a program, “Relatively Speaking,” that both explained and analyzed such developments, but that also asked deeper, contextual questions, including what the benefits and pitfalls might be of spending so much of our nascent political capital on family issues.

In 1992 (I think) I gave a talk at one of the first conferences held by CLAGS at CUNY. My presentation was entitled “The Event of Becoming” and although the audience was predominantly white and male it was sprinkled with enough people of color and lesbians to represent an amazing cross section of the queer community. Several things impressed me in those moments as I spoke to the assembly. First, I was struck by the magnitude of the fact that we were assembled at all in an auditorium of the City University in midtown Manhattan as out Queer people. This was something that I could not have imagined only a decade earlier.

Another startling thought I had was an understanding of how much people had sacrificed on our way to having an academic discipline devoted to the study of our lives. That sacrifice was palpable in the air around me—those who’d died of AIDS, as well as those who’d died in closets of alcoholism and shame or those who’d died at the hands of homophobic violence. The spirit of those who’d given up their professional careers in order to create political movements of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were also in that auditorium. Each of them, named and unnamed, was responsible for our event of becoming the group in that auditorium. The importance of remembering those histories, and of remembering the political philosophies underlying all academic study crystallized for me that day and that remembering has become the subtext of all the creative work I do.

JEWELLE GOMEZ

Rockefeller Fellows

CLAGS’s Rockefeller Fellowship in the Humanities grant ran over the course of six years and assisted the work of these scholars:

1993-94

Carra Leah Hood, *Contending Forces or the Ecology of Contagion and Desire*

Charles I. Nero, *Invisible Lives: Black Gay Men, Domesticity and the Reconstruction of Manhood*

1994-95

Janice Irvine, *A Place in the Rainbow: Cultures, Identities, and the Controversies over Teaching about Lesbian and Gay Issues in Public Education*

Allan Bérubé, *A Third Red, A Third Black, A Third Queer: Queer Work and Sexual Identities in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union*

1995-96

Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Bodily Bonds: The History of Politics of Lesbian and Transgender Identities and Communities*

Jeffrey Edwards, *City Politics and the Trajectory of Lesbian-Gay Political Development: New York City and San Francisco, 1969-present*

1996-97

Grant renewal year

1997-98

Miranda Joseph, *Performing Community: Discourses of Community in Late Twentieth-Century United States*

Urvashi Vaid, *Citizenship, Constituency, and Statewide Institutions: A New Model for Increasing Participation in Queer Organizations*

1998-99

Eric Clarke, *The Invention of ‘Lifestyle’: Sexuality, Modernity, Citizenship*

Barbara Smith, *Family Ties: Exploring the Histories of African American Lesbians and Gay Men Within Black Communities*

1999-00

Esther Newton, *My Butch Memoirs*

Jasbir Puar, *(Same) Sex Tourism: Consumption, Nationalism, and Queer Human Rights*

Of course, you had encountered some homophobic resistance at the Grad Center long before.

Around 1976 or '77, I proposed teaching a course at the Grad Center on the history of sexuality. The department not only turned it down. They said I was not a bona fide scholar, but a polemicist, that there was no such subject matter as the history of sexuality. I was finally allowed to teach it in 1991. Things *have* really changed. How wonderful that is.

So what did it feel like when CLAGS was actually up and running?

It was so exciting. Of course tensions and arguments constantly surfaced, But we knew the work was pioneering and that kept us committed. Our very first event in 1989, before we were officially established, featured George Chauncey, Jewelle Gomez, and Esther Newton talking about gay and lesbian life in New York City -- to a filled auditorium. Everyone was delighted. It was thrilling. Not that from a scholarly point of view it broke any notable new ground. But just to have that kind of enthusiastic gathering. To this day I never go to a Kessler that doesn't thrill me.

What makes you most proud of CLAGS?

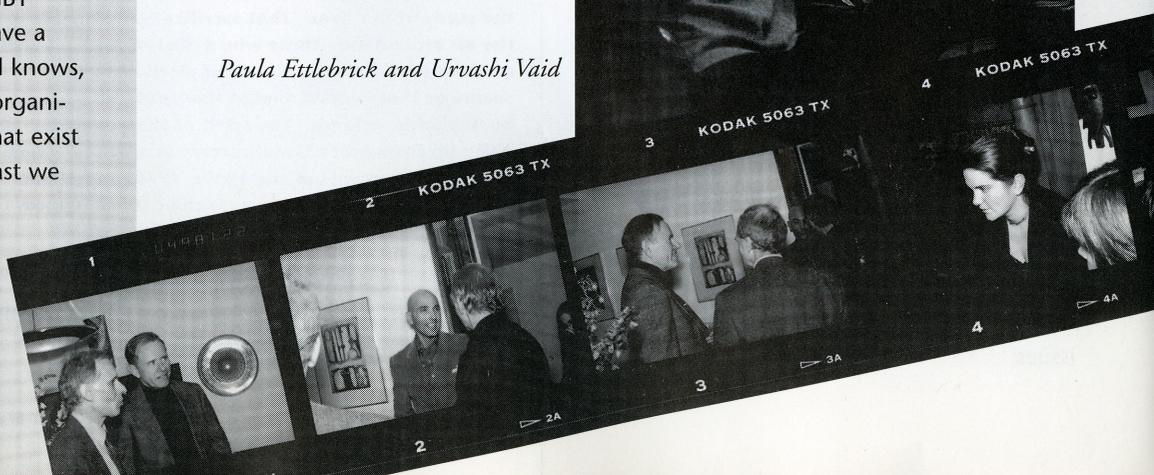
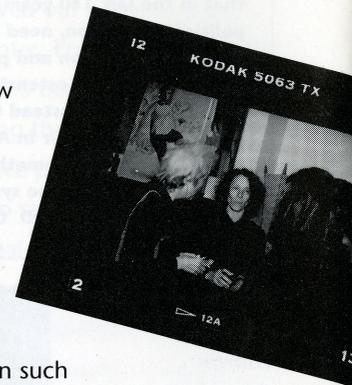
I think we can be proud of the real diversity in the committees of CLAGS and certainly in our programming. From our first meeting, we said we'd be run by a group that was 50-50 male-female and that has remained a principle. Over the years other issues surfaced and we grappled with them. I think we've done a lot of wonderful work to put our varied communities in touch with each other and all have profited from the varied insights. I'm proud that our fellowships have often gone to people marginalized within the world of LGBT scholarship. In general I think we have a record to be proud of -- though god knows, there were tough times. Every gay organization reproduces all the tensions that exist within the bigger community. At least we fought them through.

LGBTQ Studies made headlines in 1997-98 as Yale University declined a gift from Larry Kramer to establish a program in the field there, and when right-wing anti-tax activists used a women's sexuality conference at SUNY-New Paltz to turn public sentiment against support of the state university system. CLAGS responded -- without dropping the on-going colloquium series or other well-established programs -- by initiating an Advocacy committee that might fortify the bridge CLAGS had long been building between academe and activism. Among other things, the committee drafted and helped distribute statements on such controversies to provide some sensible analysis, and soon had branched out further by creating our popular Seminars in the City -- a series of monthly reading groups open to the public and led by a CLAGS board member with a focused theme each semester. Still going strong, the Seminars have taken up such subjects as Lesbian and Gay Fiction, Queer Theory, Latino/a LGBTQ Cultures, Transgender Politics, and Economics.

CLAGS also presented a panel on the volatile politics of race and sexuality in the NYC elections that fall, a roundtable on arts censorship and its relationship to homophobia as the NEA 4 case was making its way to the Supreme Court, and a one-day symposium called "Anxious Pleasures: The Erotics of Pedagogy" with Jane Gallop and several supporting as well as detracting commentators. In the Spring, CLAGS presented another cutting-edge, three-day conference, "Queer Globalization, Local Homosexualities: Citizenship, Sexuality, and the Afterlife of Colonialism," where speakers included Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé, Martin Manalansan, Michael Moon, Geeta Patel, Chela Sandoval, Gayatri Spivak, and Ella Shohat.

Shortly after the Fall 1998 semester began, Matthew Shepard was murdered in Laramie, and New Yorkers who gathered for a public funeral were greeted with a police crackdown that shocked the demonstrators -- and politicized many of them. At the Creating Change meeting in Pittsburgh that year, students and faculty from colleges across the country reported on a campus crisis of radical right organizing against LGBTQ advances. Wisconsin judges agreed with conservative plaintiffs who objected to student activity fees

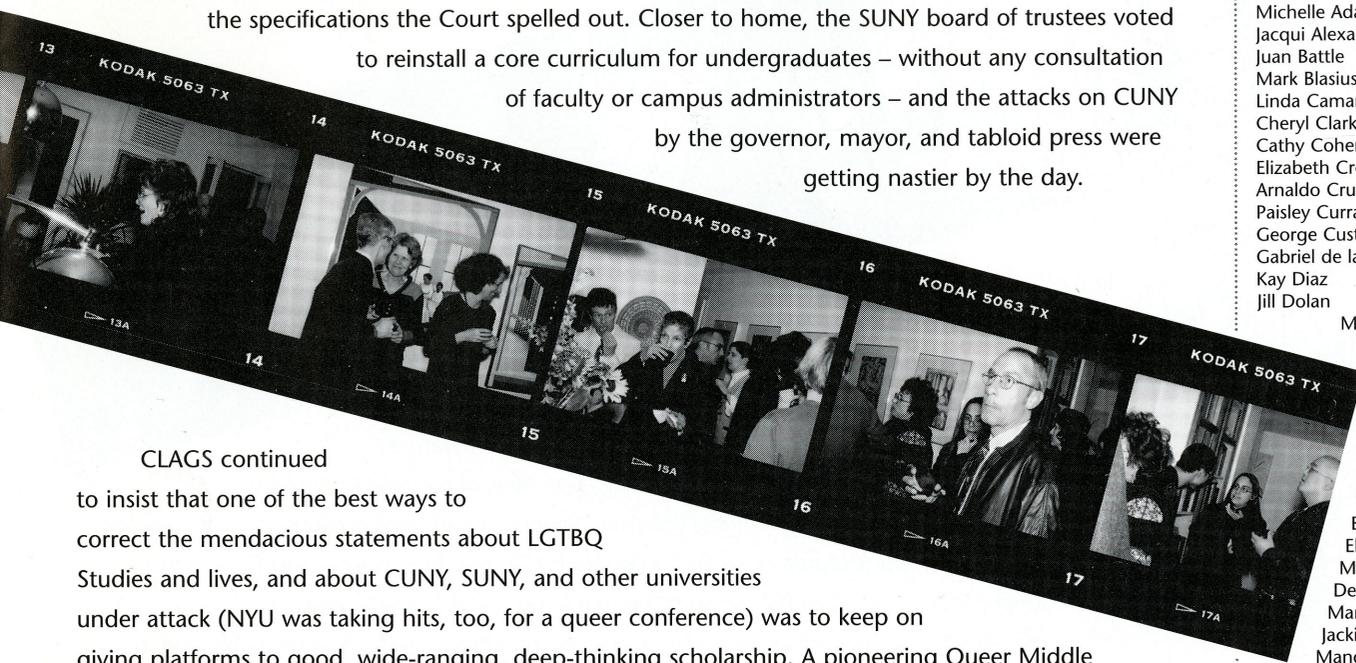
Paula Ettlebrick and Urvashi Vaid



that supported "ideologically oriented" student groups, meaning, among others, those representing LGBTQ students and racial and ethnic minorities. Though the Supreme Court was to reverse the decision a couple of years later, new suits are achieving the same result now by hewing more closely to the specifications the Court spelled out. Closer to home, the SUNY board of trustees voted to reinstall a core curriculum for undergraduates – without any consultation of faculty or campus administrators – and the attacks on CUNY by the governor, mayor, and tabloid press were getting nastier by the day.

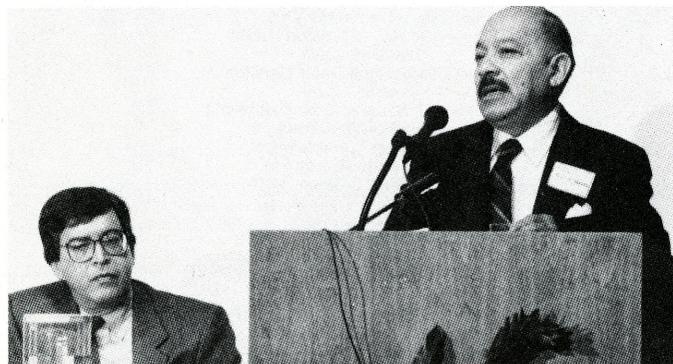
CLAGS Board Members through the years

Michelle Adams
Jacqui Alexander
Juan Battle
Mark Blasius
Linda Camarasa
Cheryl Clarke
Cathy Cohen
Elizabeth Crespo
Araldo Cruz-Malavé
Paisley Currah
George Custen
Gabriel de la Portilla
Kay Diaz
Jill Dolan
Martin Duberman
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Jeffrey Escoffier
Paula Ettelbrick
Gerard Ferguson
Licia Fiol-Matta
William Fisher
Byrne Fone
Elizabeth Freeman
Marcia Gallo
Deborah Gambs
Martha Gever
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Francesca Canadé Sautman
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David Valilee
W. Kirk Wallace
E. Frances White
Ara Wilson
Alan Yang
Gilda Zwerman



CLAGS continued

to insist that one of the best ways to correct the mendacious statements about LGBTQ Studies and lives, and about CUNY, SUNY, and other universities under attack (NYU was taking hits, too, for a queer conference) was to keep on giving platforms to good, wide-ranging, deep-thinking scholarship. A pioneering Queer Middle Ages conference drew hundreds of participants – among them Judith Bennett, Daniel Boyarin, Michael Camille, Carolyn Dinshaw, Steven Kruger, Karma Lochrie, Afsaneh Najmabadi, and Everett Rowson – and CLAGS also presented a one-day symposium called Passing Performances, where theater scholars discussed work addressing the sexualities of earlier generations of performers and producers. "Crossing



Randolph Trumbach and Thomas Ybarra-Frausto at the Dec. 2, 1993 "At The Frontier" conference.

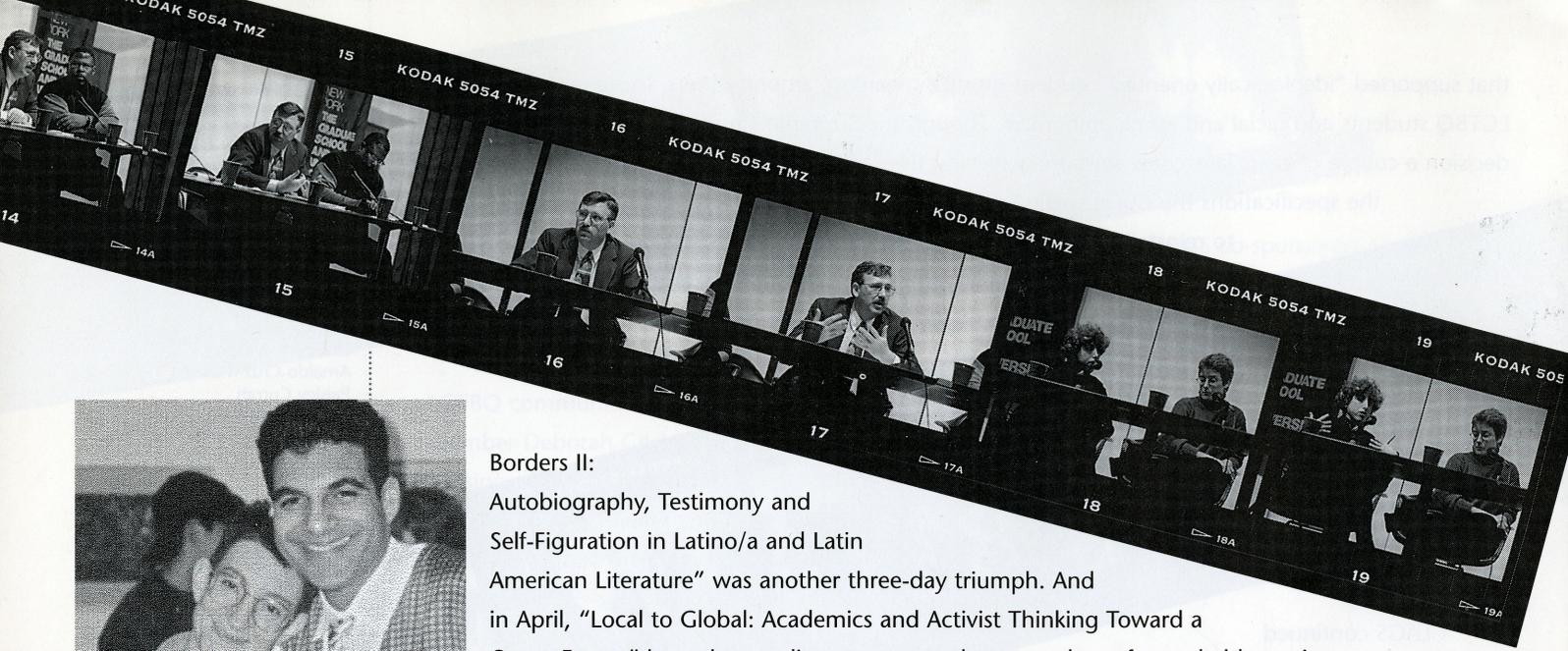
I think that LGBT studies has come a long way, but that it needs to recognize its roots in African American Studies and Women's Studies in a way that goes beyond a tacit connection, but embraces how imbricated these disciplines really are. For example, can we discuss queer bashing without really talking about misogyny or racism? Respect for our disciplinary strengths can only grow when we do some of that work.

SHARON P. HOLLAND



Holly Hughes, Jane Rosett, Esther Newton and Jean Carlomusto.





Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla at the Queer Theater conference.

Borders II:

Autobiography, Testimony and Self-Figuration in Latino/a and Latin

American Literature" was another three-day triumph. And

in April, "Local to Global: Academics and Activist Thinking Toward a

Queer Future" brought standing-room crowds to two days of roundtable sessions

addressing such issues as Human Rights activism, Migration and Immigration, and Violence and

Policing, with such participants as Leslie Cagan, Ruth Gilmore, Nan Hunter, Joo-Hyun Kang,

Robin Kelley, Scott Long, Gail Pheterson, Chandan Reddy, and Graciela Sánchez.

The year was topped off by two new developments that extended the dissemination of

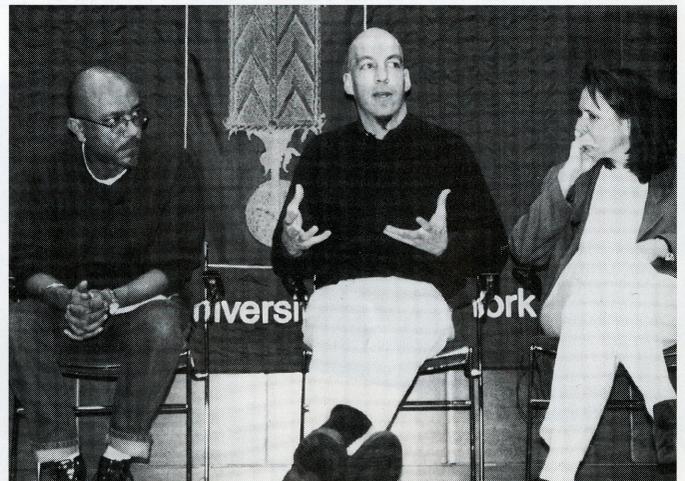
LGBTQ work: a lively email discussion listserv – gendersexstudies-l – and a book series with NYU Press, Sexual Cultures: New Directions from CLAGS, with general editors José Muñoz and Ann Pellegrini.

Spring '99 also brought the announcement from Jill Dolan that she'd be taking a position at the University of Texas-Austin. The director's torch was passed to Alisa Solomon, a long-time professor of English/Journalism at CUNY's Baruch College, who also has appointments in English and Theater at the Graduate Center. A journalist as well, Alisa had spent three full terms on the CLAGS board of directors.

Acting Globally *and* Locally

In Fall '99 CLAGS moved with the Graduate Center to a new home – the old B. Altman department store building. The improved quarters for programs – and some agitation from disability activists -- helped CLAGS develop a steadfast policy on accessibility for its events.

"Crossing Borders III" and a trailblazing major Spring conference – "Whose Millennium? Religion, Sexuality, and the Values of Citizenship," which considered why sexuality is a site of such intense religious regulation, why religious organizations are often the sites of resistance to such regulation, and other thorny questions – were well into the planning stages and while CLAGS was increasingly thinking globally in much of its programming and network-building, we were also rededicating ourselves to acting locally. Board members formed a CUNY committee to increase CLAGS's response to graduate students and to the CUNY campuses, and that spring, put on the first annual Queer CUNY conference, which brought students, staff, and faculty together from almost all the far-flung CUNY colleges. In addition, in the wake of the Human



Robert Vázquez-Pacheco, Michael Warner and Kerry Lobel at the "Imagining the Future Panel."

CLAGS Staff through the years

- Robert Ausch
- Preston Bautista
- Rachel Cohen
- Heidi Coleman
- John Di Carlo
- Dan Evans
- Graeme Fullerton
- Sara Ganter
- Stephanie Grant
- Erin Hurley
- Jay Plum
- James Presley
- Matt Rottnek
- Jordan Schildcrout
- Desiree Yael Vester
- Jonathan Warman
- James Wilson
- Eli Zal

Rights Campaign's endorsement of conservative, race-baiting, anti-choice NY Senator Al D'Amato and as the controversial Millennium March was approaching, CLAGS presented a discussion on the state of the LGTBQ movement at Baruch College, featuring Kerry Lobel, Robert Vázquez-Pacheco, and Michael Warner. (No conservative representative agreed to join the panel, despite some dozen invitations.)

In a collaboration with NYU's new Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, CLAGS started up a pedagogy workshop called "Lesson Plans," where seasoned and fledgling LGTBQ teachers alike could trade strategies and questions. More than 50 hungry people turned up for the first session, reflecting the dearth of opportunities to talk not only about teaching LGTBQ Studies, but about teaching at all. The workshops have met several times per semester ever since.

Building LGBTQ Studies at CUNY—and Beyond

Fall 2000 saw the initiation of an Interdisciplinary Concentration of LGTBQ Studies at the CUNY Grad Center – as far as we know, the first of its kind – and a new course on the roster, Introduction to Lesbian and Gay/Queer Studies, taught in this first round by political scientist Mark Blasius. Enrollment was high – and so were the levels of energy and discussion in the classroom. CLAGS is now looking toward upgrading the concentration – through which a PhD student in a traditional discipline may also pursue LGTBQ Studies – to a certificate program, and toward increasing the number of courses in the field on offer.

Our programming continued – colloquium series, Seminars in the City, Lesson Plans – plus a special roundtable on the role of feminism in, and lessons from Women's Studies for LGTBQ Studies – while committees worked on our upcoming Spring conferences – Crossing Borders IV (to be held in Austin, Texas), Queer CUNY II (to be held at Queens College) and Building LGTBQ Studies Into the University: Program Planning for the 21st Century, which, like our 10th anniversary, will offer a good moment for us to look back on what's been achieved in the first formal decade of the field, and to look ahead toward strengthening and expanding on it.

Because it is located at the CUNY Graduate Center, CLAGS is in a unique position to serve as a focal point for the development of queer studies within one of the largest public university systems in the country, serving a student population that is majority non-white, immigrant or working class. The moment that for me most signified that possibility was last year's inaugural Queer CUNY conference, when more than 50 faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students from many of the CUNY campuses came together for the first time ever to discuss queer life and studies within the CUNY system. The networks that began to form from that conference, and that are continuing to develop as this year's conference draws closer, reinforce the importance of CLAGS's commitment to the queer component of public education, especially when the concept of public education itself is increasingly under attack.

ROBERT KAPLAN



Essex Hemphill's "Living the Word" presentation, 1993.

What stands out for you as your favorite CLAGS event?

That lovely evening with Essex Hemphill [in March, 1993]. It was just Essex reading and talking to us -- a tender night. Also the Simon LeVay debate was a

highlight. He went right on smiling as William Byne and Carole Vance tore his research apart!

The world has changed in 15 years. LGTBQ Studies is much more available now and students have different expectations.

The growth has been amazing. In my classes, the younger generation of queers can't be bothered debating a lot of the issues we wrestled with for so long and thought were so central -- monogamy, bisexuality, whether lifetime pair-bonding is the "route to happiness". They really seem to be living what theorists have been telling us about sexual fluidity. The evolution has been startling – and wondrous.

The field seems to have much wider acceptance now. Does that have an impact on CLAGS's role?

I wonder about the level of that acceptance. My current gripe is that most of the straight left is not listening. They think they've gotten our message and they support our civil rights, but they have not understood our lives. They're unwilling to hear about the ways we might be different from them; we've had a different historical experience that's produced different perspectives and styles of living, and what's more, values and insights that have a lot to say to the mainstream. The mainstream left is not willing to open its ears to what we have to say about gender and relationships and partnering and parenting and sexuality. I think in a brief period of time we have developed a body of work containing substantive insights on a wide variety of issues that are essential, or should be, to anyone. They ain't listening: they don't want to be challenged. ♦

Recalling four years of planning committee meetings in Marty Duberman's living room, a saga with a continuing core cast and many who came and went, I think of my favorite passage in the Mishnah. The sage Hillel is cited as asking, "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" Even for a stone atheist like me, the spirit of Hillel's questions seemed to be the unstated inspiration for our efforts.

LARRY GROSS

Looking Ahead

CLAGS has come a long way in a short time, presenting more than 100 public programs, where more than 1000 different people have offered their findings and queries; awarding more than 60 fellowships and prizes; collaborating with dozens of academic, community and activist organizations on programming; and solidifying LGBTQ Studies at the Grad Center and beyond. We are proud to have played a part in the explosion of LGBTQ scholarship in the last decade. The ground has shifted considerably in that time. True, our work – and our lives – are still under attack. Witness the use right-wing politicians in Michigan tried to make of David Halperin's course at the University of Michigan last fall, and right-wing fund-raising appeals from Ollie North that whine, "It isn't fair. Yale bans ROTC yet offers courses like Introduction to Lesbian and Gay Studies!" But there are now more than 75 LGBTQ Studies programs at colleges around the country. New centers have sprouted up all over and on any given night nowadays, in New York City alone you could probably find at least one LGBTQ Studies talk being given at a campus or community space. This abundance fuels our determination to solidify LGBTQ Studies at CUNY, to continue fostering and disseminating first-rate scholarship, and to venture vigorously into new territories. We're beginning to concentrate on building stronger international networks, for instance, and on making more and more materials available as our book series grows and our website gets 250 hits per week.

As Bush *fits* moves into the White House, CLAGS is well-poised to continue providing deep discussion of issues and experiences that are so often caricatured and dismissed. Holding fast to a founding principle that ideas and knowledge have the capacity to expand understanding, make a positive impact on public policy, and change individual lives, we look forward to another decade of serious inquiry, exchange, debate – and celebration. ♦



Oscar Montero, Jacqui Alexander, and Elena Martinez at Crossing National and Sexual Borders, 1996.

Institutional/Foundation Support over the years

Over the course of ten years, a number of foundations and institutional supporters have been instrumental in sustaining our organization. We are proud to have built alliances with and presented programming with the assistance of:

Alconda-Owsley Foundation
 Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation
 Bills Foundation
 Carillon Importers
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