

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

# Religious Coalition Plans Gay Rights Strategy

By GUSTAV NIEBUHR

COLORADO SPRINGS, Aug. 23 — An unusual coalition of religious groups representing Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, Mormons and Muslims is trying to forge a major public voice in support of gay rights to counter the efforts of religious conservatives.

Leaders of the groups, some of them caucuses working within denominations, others not recognized by officials in their faiths, gathered here this morning for the first of two days of strategy sessions in a downtown hotel to discuss how and when their coalition, the National Religious Leadership Roundtable, should speak out. Organizers deliberately chose to hold the meeting in a region that is home to many conservative Christian organizations.

"So much of the battle against us is religiously based," said Robert F. Mialovich, president of Dignity USA, an organization that supports gay Catholics. Mr. Mialovich, one of about three dozen participants at the meeting, added that there was "a great deal of religious response to the religious attacks; you don't have to be an atheist to respond to the religious right."

In a nation where polls regularly show religious faith to be widely held, the potential for religious leaders to influence public opinion on gay rights is great, and it is an important theme at this meeting.

Laura Montgomery Rutt, national organizer of Equal Partners in Faith, a liberal religious organization that helped found the round table, cited the support of liberal religious leaders for the civil rights movement in the 1960's.

"The religious support for civil rights in any kind of movement is crucial," Ms. Rutt said.

In a session at the meeting that focused on same-sex marriage, Evan Wolfson, a lawyer with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, said he expected the Hawaii Supreme Court to decide soon whether homosexuals should be allowed the right to civil marriage there.

Mr. Wolfson said religious groups that support gay rights needed to educate the public and also help "beat back the backlash" of political measures at the state level that bar same-sex marriages.

The round table, which includes representatives from People for the American Way and a few other secular liberal organizations, was organized in July 1998 as a project of the

## *A move among the faithful to counter the religious right.*

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's policy institute and Equal Partners in Faith. The policy institute's director, Urvashi Vaid, said the organization reflected a recognition that there was "this whole pro-gay religious movement in every denomination, in every faith."

Nonetheless, the period since its formation has not been a happy one for those who favor a greater role for gay and lesbian worshipers in organized religion. In August 1998, bishops representing the communion of Anglican churches worldwide, which includes the Episcopal Church, passed a resolution strongly critical of homosexual activity.

Then, in March, the Rev. Greg

Dell, a United Methodist minister in Chicago, was suspended after an ecclesiastical court convicted him of violating his denomination's rules by officiating at a same-sex union. And in July, the Vatican ordered the Rev. Robert Nugent and Sister Jeannine Gramick, a priest and a nun who had long worked with gay and lesbian Catholics, to end their ministry.

But in interviews, participants at the meeting, which is at the Antlers Adams Mark Hotel, said they were not discouraged by those events.

"When you stand up, you run the risk of being fired on," said the Rev. Patti Ackerman, an Episcopal priest in Patterson, N.Y., who is also a spokeswoman for Integrity, a group for gay and lesbian Episcopalians.

Citing Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., she added, "We have excellent role models."

Ms. Ackerman also mentioned the murders of two gay men, Matthew Shepard in Wyoming last October and Billy Jack Gaither in Alabama in February. But "God has given us the courage of strength," she said.

Much of the discussion this morning turned on basic questions like how far the interfaith group should go in responding to an event in a particular denomination. For example, several participants said that while the round table would be right to voice general support for the Rev. Jimmy Creech, a Methodist minister in Omaha put on trial in 1998 for officiating at a same-sex union, it should steer clear of debating internal Methodist politics and rules.

Mr. Creech, who was narrowly acquitted in that trial but whose bishop declined to re-appoint him as a pastor, is a guest at the meeting here, one of six speakers at a public event tonight, a panel discussion on the theme of sexuality and spirituality.

*GAY / LESBIAN -  
Religious Coalition*

**The New York Times**

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# Harlem Rally Organizers Say City Can't Stop Plans

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

The organizers of last year's Million Youth March reiterated their plan to hold another rally in Harlem with or without the city's permission yesterday, even as Police Commissioner Howard Safir warned that "without a permit, there will be no march."

Another police official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that the Police Department was leaning toward denying a permit for the event, scheduled for Sept. 4, unless the courts intervened.

But the chief organizer, Khallid Abdul Muhammad, stood outside City Hall yesterday and said that

## Permission for a march rests on obtaining a permit.

while he was "not looking for a confrontation," the march would take place no matter what. "We will march on Malcolm X Boulevard with a permit or without a permit," he said as about a dozen officers looked on. "God is permitting us to march."

Mr. Muhammad, a former senior official of the Nation of Islam, reminded reporters that a Federal judge had declared the city's efforts to block last year's event unconstitutional. He blamed the police for the violence that erupted as that rally ended, saying that "we fight those who fight with us."

Last year's event was a rally rather than a march, and while the organizers said at least 150,000 people attended, the police said the number was closer to 6,000. As officers in riot gear began to move toward the back

of the stage near the rally's scheduled 4 P.M. conclusion, Mr. Muhammad told the crowd to use force to defend themselves from any police attack. At 4:04 P.M., as Mr. Muhammad asked participants to go home peacefully, a police helicopter swooped low over the crowd and metal folding chairs and other objects were hurled at officers.

In the melee that followed, at least 30 people were injured, including 16 police officers. Six people were charged with attempted assault and reckless endangerment, but a grand jury decided not to indict Mr. Muhammad, even though Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani said he should be charged with inciting a riot.

Mr. Muhammad and several other organizers spewed invective about Mr. Giuliani yesterday, and said their news conference outside City Hall was a reminder to Mr. Giuliani that the march would take place. But the Mayor, who was holding a fundraising event in Rochester, said only, "I don't think I will comment on people that are involved in hate marches and hate rhetoric."

The organizers said yesterday that they had applied for a permit for the event at least three months ago, and that they were negotiating with the police. But in a news conference of his own, Mr. Safir said the organizers had not responded to a number of questions the city had about their application. "We have not heard from them," Mr. Safir said. "At this point, there is no permit, and without a permit there will be no march."

Neither Mr. Safir nor a spokeswoman for Michael D. Hess, the Corporation Counsel, would say what information the city was seeking.

Last year, the police put up barricades in the streets surrounding the stage at West 118th Street. They also closed down the No. 2 subway line and had more than 1,600 officers in

attendance and another 1,600 in reserve. But Malik Z. Shabazz, one of the organizers, said yesterday that they would not allow the city to "dictate and set the terms" this year.

"We will not allow the Mayor to do to us what he did last year," he said. "We will not allow you to pen us in like slaves or like cattle at this year's Million Youth March, and we will not allow you to cut off the subways and the buses in a racist and discriminatory and biased manner." He added, "All efforts to dismantle and destroy

the Million Youth March will meet doom and destruction."

Mr. Shabazz said the event would begin at 9 A.M. on Sept. 4, and end at 4. He said participants would gather at Malcolm X Boulevard and 145th Street, and march down the boulevard to 119th Street.

Mr. Muhammad, who was ousted from the Nation of Islam after a 1993 speech in which he referred to Jews as "bloodsuckers," said yesterday that he and the other organizers were not "hate mongers," and that

the goal of the march was to encourage solidarity among black youths.

But in response to a reporter's question about how he viewed Jews, Mr. Muhammad, who used anti-Semitic language during last year's rally, said yesterday that "the so-called Jew is a Johnny-come-lately who has just crawled out of the caves and hills of Europe." For his part, Mr. Shabazz wondered whether Mr. Giuliani would oppose the event "to compete with Hillary to see who can gain the most Jewish voters."

# Foie Gras Event Is Killed by Protests

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 — Yielding to protests from animal rights organizations and celebrities like Sir John Gielgud and Bea Arthur, the Smithsonian Institution today canceled a panel discussion and tasting of foie gras, the fattened liver of a duck or goose, that had been scheduled for next month.

The animal rights advocates celebrated. The producer of the foie gras at issue called himself a victim of terrorism.

David Umansky, the spokesman for the Smithsonian, said the 133 people who had bought tickets, at \$25 or \$30 apiece, would get refunds. He said the Smithsonian had canvassed them before deciding on the cancellation. "We received messages of protest," he said. "Some of them were of a tenor that led to the decision that we should talk to the ticket holders and get their opinions."

When asked whether the protests had taken the form of threats, Mr. Umansky declined to answer. But he did say, "Some were way over the top."

The foie gras program was to be one of a long-running series that raises money for the Smithsonian and provides a setting for authors to sell their books. The decision to cancel it led Michael Ginor, owner of Hudson Valley Foie Gras in the Catskill community of Ferndale, N.Y., and author of "Foie Gras... A Passion," to complain of the protesters: "What these people are doing are terrorist acts. They intimidate. They use means that are close to terrorists but without the blood."

When it became known that the program would be an occasion for Mr. Ginor to promote his book, which will be published next month by Wylie, organizations including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the Humane Society of the United States complained that the Smithsonian should not allow itself to be identified with the production of foie gras, which involves the force-feeding of ducks and geese to make their livers swell.

Ms. Arthur said in a letter to the Smithsonian that she was not a vegetarian but that the treatment of ducks and geese in the produc-

tion of foie gras "would be shocking to any meat eater."

And Sir John wrote to the Smithsonian that he was "extremely distressed" that it was planning the foie gras event. He complained that foie gras production involved thrusting long metal pipes down the birds' throats and forcing "two to three pounds of corn mixture into their stomachs" three times a day for four weeks.

Reached at his office in Great Neck, N.Y., Mr. Ginor (pronounced ghee-NOR) maintained that much of what Sir John had said was incorrect. The pipes, Mr. Ginor said, are not metal but plastic, and are not long; the largest are six inches, he said, and are held in the bird for one and a half seconds.

"It is not painful, and it is not distressing," Mr. Ginor said, offering as proof that "when a person comes to feed them, they come to the feeders."

Michael McGraw, the spokesman for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, denied that his organization had ever engaged in terrorism. "We have made no threats whatsoever," Mr. McGraw said.

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