

NOGLSTP *Bulletin*

Summer/Fall 2003

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NOGLSTP, PO BOX 91803, Pasadena CA 91109, phone/fax: 626 791-7689, www.noglstp.org

NOGLSTP Awards Solicited— Nomination Deadline October 15

Do you have a lesbian/gay/trans colleague who has made outstanding contributions to her/his professional field? Are you aware of a company or institution that has supported NOGLSTP goals by providing assistance to NOGLSTP programs or enhancing the achievements of GLBT employees? Do you know of an outstanding NOGLSTP member/volunteer that should be recognized for his/her dedication and commitment to NOGLSTP growth and goals?

If the answer to any of these questions is YES or MAYBE, then take a few minutes to nominate your candidate for any of three categories of NOGLSTP Awards. The awards, which will be presented at the NOGLSTP Reception at the AAAS Annual Meeting in Seattle WA over the 2004 Presidents Weekend, are intended to honor its outstanding queer engineers/scientists/educators, supporting institutions/organizations, and volunteers. The nomination deadline for the 2004 Awards is October 15, 2003.

The award categories are:

The GLBT Award will honor a lesbian/gay/trans engineer, scientist, or educator who has made outstanding contributions in their field. The awardee will be recognized for sustained contributions in design, production, management, education, or research.

The Institution/Organization Award will honor the institution or organization which has demonstrated outstanding support for NOGLSTP and its programs or objectives. Examples of such support are: providing assistance to NOGLSTP programs, enhancing the achievements of GLBT employees, and dedication and commitment to advancement of NOGLSTP's growth.

The Walt Westman Award, named after one of NOGLSTP's founders, will be the highest national award our organization gives to a NOGLSTP member. This prestigious award will recognize the unselfish and outstanding contributions of a NOGLSTP member who has shown dedication and commitment to the advancement of NOGLSTP's growth.

Nomination forms and guidelines can be downloaded from the NOGLSTP website, www.noglstp.org/awards.php, or can be requested by calling the NOGLSTP office.

Don't have a candidate but want to be involved with the selection process? Contact NOGLSTP Secretary Mark Tumeo by email: M.tumeo@csuohio.edu

Save the Date:

2004 AAAS Annual Meeting and Scientific Innovation Exposition, February 12-16, at the Washington State Convention & Trade Center and the Sheraton Seattle Hotel & Towers. Meeting program includes:

- **2/15/04, 11-1pm: NOGLSTP Board Meeting**
- **2/15/04, 4-6 pm: NOGLSTP Reception and Awards Ceremony**

In Search of Corporate Support for Gay and Lesbian Immigration Rights

By Kin Tso, NOGLSTP Member

The effort to eliminate discrimination against gays and lesbians in U.S. immigration law has entered an important new phase, and organizers of the effort are calling on LGBT employees in science and technology businesses to get their employers behind the effort. Immigration laws force hardships onto gay and lesbian couples, but their employers also are being affected when they lose gay and lesbian employees who must leave the U.S. when they choose to stay in their relationship with a foreign-born partner.

The Permanent Partners Immigration Act (PPIA) has been designed to address inequalities in U.S. immigration law. Heterosexual U.S. citizens can sponsor their foreign-born spouses for immigration purposes; homosexual U.S. citizens are not allowed to sponsor their foreign-born partners. As a result, many gay and lesbian couples are forced to separate or move to Canada or another third country that will accept them as a couple.

Supporters have had great success getting support for the PPIA in the U.S. House of Representatives, where it currently has 118 sponsors. More recently, it was introduced in the Senate, where it has begun to get sponsors, including high-profile California senator Barbara Boxer in late September.

Gay and lesbian groups are continuing to push for PPIA in Congress. Meanwhile, the focus is moving to getting U.S. businesses to write letters to their representatives and senators in support of PPIA. Corporate support is of particular value in getting business-friendly Republicans to support the measure.

The Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force (LGIRTF) San Francisco Chapter is coordinating an effort to have gay and lesbian employee groups within companies bring up the issue with their employers. How can you help? Contact Kin Tso, a co-coordinator of the San Francisco LGIRTF, for more information about what materials are available to help convince your company to do its part to help itself and help its LGBT employees. You can reach him at kintso9@hotmail.com.

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NEWS FROM ACADEMIA:

The Point Foundation — the first nationwide LGBT scholarship foundation

The San Francisco-based Point Foundation, in its second year of operations, has awarded 10 college students \$132,000 in scholarships. Co-founded by life-partners Bruce Lindstrom and Carl Strickland in 2001, The Point Foundation is the first nationwide LGBT scholarship foundation granting scholarships to undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate students of distinction. The mission of The Point Foundation is to provide financial support, mentoring and hope to meritorious students who are marginalized because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Point Scholars, as they are called, are chosen for leadership skills, scholastic achievement, extracurricular activities, involvement in the LGBT cause and financial need, and must maintain a 3.5 GPA to continue scholarship eligibility. Future scientists/technical professionals among the 10 Point Scholars for the 2003-2004 academic year are Michelle Marzullo, PhD Candidate in Anthropology, and freshman Math major Rohan Barrett.

For more information about this remarkable endeavor, point your web browser to www.thepointfoundation.org.

WORKPLACE NEWS:

HRC Corporate Equality Report: Companies get more gay-friendly

The Human Rights Campaign released its 2003 Corporate Equality Index last month, in which the 250 companies listed are scored between zero and 100 based on how they treat their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees, consumers and investors. The companies in the index were compiled from the Fortune 500 and the Forbes list of the 200 largest privately held firms. According to the survey, a growing number of the nation's largest companies are now considered "gay-friendly."

This year's index saw the number of firms with a perfect score nearly double. Also, no firms received a score of zero, 80 firms improved their scores over 2002, and 95 percent of the companies now have a sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy. HRC believes corporate America is leading the way for fair treatment of the GLBT community.

The index has 21 firms with a perfect score of 100, including tech-employers Apple Computer, Avaya, Eastman Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Intel, Lucent Technologies, NCR, PG&E, S.C. Johnson, and Xerox.

Lockheed Martin Corp. made the largest jump on the index. In 2003, the company was at the bottom with a zero, but this year it's nearing the top with a 71. Defense contractor Northrop Grumman also made the rankings this year by making domestic partner benefits available company-wide.

Since the index was first published last August, HRC said companies have been asking the organization how to improve their scores. Also, individuals are using the list to make better-informed decisions in the marketplace. For the full survey, point your web browser to www.hrc.org/worknet/cei/index.asp

SCIENCE/HEALTH RESEARCH NEWS:

Scientists detect how HIV attacks T-cells

U.S. researchers have described in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* the function of a key HIV gene that attacks infection-fighting blood cells.

Scientists at the University of Utah and University of Rochester, N.Y., have discovered the method by which the viral gene, known as VPR, stops immune system cells from replicating and protecting the body from infection. The gene is capable of activating a dormant gene inside T-cells that prevents the cells from regenerating.

"We would like to find a method or a substance that would allow us to interfere with the ability of HIV to kill the white blood cells using this mechanism," said researcher Vincente Planelles of the University of Utah. However, he warned that an effective treatment could take up to 10 years to develop.

VPR had been in the headlines earlier this year, when researchers at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester reported that many HIV patients who never develop AIDS have damaged versions of the gene. In these patients, called HIV nonprogressors, HIV kills the immune system, but T-cell supplies are replenished fast enough to protect the body from serious infection.

Source: *Gay.com U.K.*, August 26, 2003

Lesbians may face higher heart risks

Lesbians may face an increased risk for heart disease than heterosexual women because of their weight distribution, according to a new study by doctors at the University of California, San Francisco. The single study, conducted by researcher Stephanie A. Roberts and published in the journal *Women's Health Issues*, found that gay women are more likely to carry excess weight near the waist, which is one indicator of a metabolic syndrome that can lead to heart trouble. The pattern of having extra abdominal weight -- as opposed to more weight distributed in the hips and thighs -- has also been linked to high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

"It has been known for several years that lesbians tend to have a higher body-mass index, but the new finding is that this additional weight appears to be fat and not muscle," she added.

Researchers studied 324 lesbians for the study, as well as a female heterosexual sibling closest in age to each gay participant. Although average weights were similar for both groups, waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratios were greater among the lesbian group. The study did not go into detail about why this difference in weight exists, but Roberts suggested that cultural and behavioral differences might be the reason. "There is a history of body acceptance within the lesbian culture," she says, before suggesting that gay women may be "less inclined to buy into mainstream feminine values that require constant dieting." She adds that to ensure that lesbians beat heart disease, which is the biggest killer of American women, there should be more gay-specific strategies to help highlight the problem.

Source: *Gay.com UK*, September 10, 2003

How to Start a NOGLSTP Chapter

Many NOGLSTP members have inquired as to whether there is a local chapter in their town. Currently, three local organizations for local lgbtq technophiles exist. They are Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Scientists, Triangle Area Gay Scientists, and the Humboldt Society (Philadelphia). While none of these organizations are technically NOGLSTP chapters, they do have their origins closely related to an early NOGLSTP incarnation known as National Organization of Lesbian and Gay Scientists, and have (on and off) supported NOGLSTP programs and goals. Founders of these groups were part of a nationwide grassroots networking movement among scientists, engineers, and naturalists in the very early 1980's that grew out of a homophobia workshop held at the 1980 AAAS annual meeting.

If you don't live in the Los Angeles, Research Triangle, or Philadelphia areas, you may be interested in starting a NOGLSTP chapter in your neck of the woods. "Yeah, I'm interested," you say, "but I don't know where to start!"

The first thing to do would be to try to arrange a gathering of local NOGLSTP members, and make some sort of commitment to get together on a periodic basis. Popular low-cost, low-planning-time activities are potluck socials, field trips to tech and nature museums, behind-the-scenes tours of high tech manufacturing facilities, and workplace show-and-tells in the form of lecture or tours. How do you identify local NOGLSTP members? The NOGLSTP membership roster, published yearly and available to all NOGLSTP members just for the asking, is a good resource for connections. Also, the NOGLSTP e-list is a fast way to locate local interested individuals.

After you've planned your event, you need to spread the word so people will attend. Three traditional methods of advertising your event are through the gbt press, gbt-friendly companies, and local colleges. For the local gay/lesbian publications, you should submit press releases to them about your planned activities (try to get them to announce it in their events section). For the local companies/institutions that employ technical professionals, send event announcements to their HR departments for distribution/posting (this will only work for the larger companies that have diversity-positive EEO policies). For local colleges, target their science departments and GLBTQ student clubs. Realize, of course, that using these traditional avenues of communications requires advance planning. NOGLSTP will help defray the costs of initial publicity in the form of a classified ad and postage to local members, but does not have the resources to provide the actual logistics or creative effort.

Once you get a regular operation going, then you can decide whether you want to be your own association, or whether you want to operate under NOGLSTP bylaws. In either case, your group can maintain ties to NOGLSTP by providing a representative (a NOGLSTP member) to sit on the NOGLSTP Board.

Sound interesting? Give it a try. To avoid volunteer burnout, set small goals first. Arrange for a meet-and-greet with your local technoqueer colleagues, and decide from there. For more information and guidance, contact the noglstp office.

NOGLSTP Volunteer Opportunities

Edit or write articles for The NOGLSTP Bulletin, Compile of a list of professional societies to which our members belong, including any official or unofficial lesbian/gay/trans special interest groups, Solicit and secure grants to support expansion of NOGLSTP activities, Facilitate a relationship between NOGLSTP and professional societies, Start a local chapter in your geographic area, etc. etc. etc. Contact office@noglstp.org to volunteer.

IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES?

Check your mailing label. If it says 200308-200311, it is time to renew your dues. If it says 200305-200307, or trial2, it is past time to renew or join, and this will be your final newsletter unless we hear from you. We need and appreciate your continued support. You may renew online (and pay with a credit card), or fill out the form below (and on the other side of this page), and return it with your check to NOGLSTP, PO Box 91803, Pasadena CA 91109. Remember to add \$5US if you are subscribing outside of the US. You may also use this form to inform us of any address or area code changes.

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Membership Form

To renew your NOGLSTP membership or become a member of NOGLSTP, support its activities, and receive a newsletter, complete this form and send it with a check or money order to:

**NOGLSTP
PO BOX 91803
Pasadena CA 91109**

Annual Membership Dues are:

\$15-35 (sliding scale) (tax deductible after the 1st \$10)

\$10 for students and unemployed*

*inquire about our limited free memberships to 'starving students'

\$5 extra for memberships outside of the US
(for the extra postage) (US Funds only, please!)

Renewal New Info change only

Name: _____

Address: (don't forget your zip code!)

Telephone: _____

Email/URL: _____

Technointerest or profession:

Latest Degree/Subject:

Do you want your name and phone/email printed on a membership roster to be released to other NOGLSTP members?
 YES NO

Do you want your email/URL to be placed on the NOGLSTP web page?
 YES NO

Don't forget to fill out the other side 

Technoqueer of Contemporary Note: Soraya Bittencourt

Soraya Bittencourt, a native of Brazil, received her BS in Electrical Engineering in 1983, and an MS in Telecommunication and Computer Science in 1987, despite her working-class background and Brazilian society's limited ideas about what girls could achieve. While still an undergraduate, she introduced krypton and argon laser lightshows to Rio de Janeiro's planetarium, where she utilized not only her technical background, but also her musical abilities to create a unique educational and entertaining performance. She reached the pinnacle of her career in her native country at the age of 23, when she was the Brasilsat operating engineer responsible for the launch of the first Latin American telecommunications satellite, and the recovery of Palapa B2 and Weststar VI Communications Satellites. Having hit the glass ceiling in Brazil at such a young age, she decided to immigrate to the United States. She sold everything she had, and came with a backpack to become a music synthesis student at Berkeley College of Music in Boston. It took her three years of survival by menial labor to finally have the right papers to work again as an engineer.

Bittencourt became a software developer at Number Nine Computer, and moved on to Lotus Corporation as a development manager, where she was responsible for the multimedia CD-ROM versions of 1-2-3, Notes, AmiPro, FreeLance, and the development of ScreenCAM. She joined Microsoft as a senior program manager, where she developed the idea of a travel CD-ROM, which ultimately became the nucleus of Expedia.com. She left Microsoft in 1998 — as a millionaire — and has since been involved with

product development at Webex.com, Obongo.com, and AOL Time Warner. Her expertise is in software development, especially on Internet and hand-held product development, a subject in which she holds a number of patents.

Bittencourt did not immigrate alone. Her lover, Lucila Oliveira, who was also the producer for Bittencourt's laser light show, found a way to come along. You can read all about Soraya Bittencourt, her coming out story, and her struggle to succeed in the male-dominated world of technology in her recent memoir, "My Road to Microsoft", available in hard cover, paperback and e-book through xlibris.com.

Membership/Renewal Form (continued):

Please list any other professional organizations that you belong to:

Special Techno-Interests or Expertise:

For New Members: How did you learn of NOGLSTP?

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP US WITH? (CHECK ANY THAT INTEREST YOU)

- BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- HOLD OFFICE
- AAAS
- FUNDRAISING
- NEWSLETTER ARTICLES
- EDIT NEWSLETTER
- PRODUCE NEWSLETTER
- NEW PAMPHLET TOPICS
- GRANT WRITING
- G/L/B/T CAUCUS OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES (which one?)
- OTHER _____

ABOUT NOGLSTP

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF GAY AND LESBIAN SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICAL PROFESSIONALS, INC., is a nation-wide organization of lesbigaytrans scientists and technical professionals, regional and caucus groups, and others interested in technical matters and the gay and lesbian community. NOGLSTP's goals include dialog with professional organizations, providing information, improving our member's employment and professional environment, opposing homophobia and stereotypes, educating the queer, scientific and general communities, and fostering inter-city contacts among our members. National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals, Inc. is a tax-exempt educational organization under IRS section 501(c)3, incorporated in the State of California (TAX ID # 95-4358685). Written correspondence may be addressed to: NOGLSTP, PO BOX 91803, Pasadena CA 91109-9813. For more information, see our web page at www.noglstp.org/

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Newsletter

The **NOGLSTP Bulletin** is published quarterly. Articles are encouraged and gratefully received. e-mailed articles (as plain text) to the NOGLSTP office c/o editor@noglstp.org are preferred. Next publication deadline: November 20, 2003

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