

and consolidation of disparate community groups. It is when communities come together that things happen.⁵⁵

As a result of coordination and consolidation in 1991, the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community in Tompkins County has a greater chance of political success in the future. A coalition was developed that brought together radical groups such as Act Up and Queer Nation, with religious organizations seeking to show an alternative Christian approach of inclusion. The Ithaca Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Task Force supported the complainants in the Ithaca College resident director case with “legal counsel, research, background information, political resources and people power,”⁵⁸ and continues to support the community by publishing a newsletter, by organizing events, and by simply being visible.

Despite Ithaca’s relatively small size, it is well marked on the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender political landscape. Ithaca has two members on the board of representatives for the Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA),⁵⁹ a statewide lesbian and gay political organization. Ithaca also has one of only three field organizers for ESPA outside of the New York City metro area. People choose to live in Ithaca and Tompkins County today because of the existence of this law and because of what it says about this community.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the message sent by the 1991 campaign to pass Local Law 6 will likely stay with the community at large. The sensitization of Tompkins County Board members and voters to the harms of discrimination and the fear that keeps gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in the closet has diluted stereotypes and has encouraged the development of tolerance and acceptance.

G. GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZING BUILDING TOWARD STATE LAWS

An additional benefit of organization at the local level is that it provides a platform for agenda lobbying at the state level. When the Empire State Pride Agenda wants to lobby the state legislators about passing

⁵⁵ Feminist Mary Joe Frug believes that this is one of the strengths of Catharine MacKinnon’s and Andrea Dworkin’s anti-pornography campaigns in the 1980s. MARY JOE FRUG, *POSTMODERN LEGAL FEMINISM* 145–47 (1992). According to Frug, “concentrating so much effort, energy, and expertise, and even money on the . . . issue simplified and thereby facilitated . . . political organizing Political success is predictably correlated with coordinating and consolidating efforts.” *Id.* at 149–50.

⁵⁸ Press Release, Robin McColley, Ithaca College Settles Employee Discrimination Case, (Apr. 20, 1994) (on file with Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy).

⁵⁹ Empire State Pride Agenda Board of Directors, at <http://www.prideagenda.org/pride/board.html> (last visited Dec. 20, 1999); Pride Agenda Staff, at <http://www.prideagenda.org/pride/staff.html> (last visited Dec. 20, 1999).

⁶⁰ Interview with Roey Thorpe, *supra* note 22. Personally, I considered and weighed heavily the local law in my decision to come to Cornell.

acknowledging one's sexuality.⁶⁷ This has proven difficult for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people because heterosexuality is the norm and homosexuality is considered deviant. Laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and the resulting public awareness and compliance with such laws, challenge that construct and promote the agency necessary for self-definition.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people exhibit "resistant self-direction" when they come out in the workplace, and seek equal treatment, whether by placing a picture of a partner on their desks or by directly discussing their orientation and concerns with their employers.⁶⁸ Again, agency is fostered by the protection of non-discrimination laws. The gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community exhibits "transformative self-direction" when it acts collectively to resist discrimination and oppression by campaigning for sexual orientation non-discrimination laws.⁶⁹ This form of agency alters the institutions and understandings that have operated to erase gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

In order to assess the desirability and effectiveness of local sexual orientation non-discrimination legislation one must consider all of the possible objectives for and benefits of such a law. If the number of claims and monetary awards measure success, then local legislation rates poorly. However, the view is much brighter if one considers the political, organizational, and other long-term positive effects that accrue from a successful (or even a failed) effort to enact local legislation. Not only is there is an appreciable increase in bargaining power and community consideration of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender viewpoints, but there can also be a potential grass roots effect on higher levels of government. Finally, the effort to enact local non-discrimination laws promotes empowerment and agency. Seen in this light, local sexual orientation non-discrimination laws are a viable means by which the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community may accomplish its goals.

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⁶⁷ CHARLES ZASTROW & KAREN K. KIRST-ASHMAN, UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT 554 (1994).

⁶⁸ Harris, *supra* note 64.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 836–37.

⁷⁰ *Id.*

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