



Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender History

an affiliated society of the
American Historical Association

PRESS RELEASE

November 9, 2009

This January, the Manchester Grand Hyatt will co-host the 2010 annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA). The Manchester Grand Hyatt is the target of a boycott led by Californians Against Hate and UNITE-HERE and co-sponsored by a diverse coalition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and labor organizations. This boycott, now in its second year, targets Doug Manchester, owner-operator of the Hyatt, because of his \$125,000 donation to Proposition 8, the 2008 ballot measure that eliminated marriage equality for same-sex couples in California, and because of his hotel's labor practices. In response to the boycott, numerous professional groups have cancelled conferences originally scheduled to take place at the Manchester Grand Hyatt.

The Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History, an affiliate society of the American Historical Association, stands in full solidarity with the local community in San Diego and with the goals of the boycott organizers. We are committed to full justice and equality for all Californians regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and we support campaigns to improve wages, labor practices, and working conditions. The AHA, due to the contract that it negotiated with the Manchester Grand Hyatt in 2003, would be subject to approximately \$800,000 in penalties should it break the contract to relocate its annual meeting, and we recognize that the AHA cannot incur such severe financial costs.

Recognizing the important contributions that historians can make to ongoing debates about same-sex marriage, the AHA organized a mini-conference on historical perspectives on same-sex marriage, which will be held, with the co-sponsorship of the Committee on LGBT History, as part of the AHA annual meeting in January. The AHA decided to hold the mini-conference inside the Manchester Grand Hyatt, which it believed would be an effective way to showcase the importance of historical knowledge in addressing the issues raised by Proposition 8. While we appreciate the efforts made by the AHA, we also know that many LGBT historians and their allies would prefer to not patronize the Hyatt. LGBT historians and their allies should not be put in this position in the future; the AHA should make every effort to ensure that all historians are treated with equality and respect in all AHA activities.

With the 2010 annual meeting now two months away, the Committee on LGBT History is launching a "Historians Against Hate" campaign, with the following recommendations for conference participants:

- We urge conference participants to book their rooms and suites at nearby unionized hotels such as the Hilton or the Embassy Suites (While the San Diego Marriott & Marina, the co-host hotel for the annual meeting, is not a target of the boycott, we do note that it is included on the local AFL-CIO Council's do-not-patronize list). The AHA will not lose any money if participants make reservations elsewhere. Additionally, we do not want to see job candidates or other conference participants with annual meeting obligations forced to choose between honoring the boycott and endangering their professional careers. For more information, see: <http://www.historians.org/annual/2010/index.cfm#accommodations>
- We urge that conference participants who do enter the Hyatt to not purchase food or beverages from the hotel's restaurants or bars.
- We ask that conference participants take all opportunities possible to clearly and visibly express their opposition to Manchester's actions, and that those participating in and attending the mini-conference on historical perspectives on same-sex marriage take the opportunity to act up inside the hotel in solidarity with those organizing and observing the boycott.

Furthermore, to avoid similar controversies in the future, we urge that the AHA commit to scheduling future conferences in accordance with the principles and practices recommended by Informed Meetings Exchange (INMEX), which would help ensure that the Association's activities support those hotels engaging in non-discriminatory, socially responsible practices.

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The Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History, an affiliate society of the American Historical Association, was founded in 1979 to promote the study of homosexuality in the past and present by facilitating communication among scholars in a variety of disciplines working on a variety of cultures. The Committee on LGBT History meets annual in conjunction with the AHA's annual meeting, where it sponsors sessions on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history. The Committee encourages both the development of specialized courses in LGBTQ studies and the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in general history courses. The Committee promotes local LGBTQ history archives and projects, and coordinates activities with other professional caucuses. The Committee also seeks to prevent discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer historians, in accordance with AHA policies.

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