

GLBT Attorneys: Progress Because of NALP Members!

by Andrew Chapin

Ten years ago GLBT attorneys were a largely invisible group. Everyone knew we were here, but few but insiders knew our names, our numbers, or our issues. One had to know a network of people in order to find out how comfortable a GLBT summer associate might be at a particular employer or if an openly gay applicant would really be considered.

Now, after more than a decade of gentle activism, increasing visibility, and education, gay and lesbian attorneys are self-identifying in 65% of the New York firms listed in the *NALP Directory of Legal Employers*. Twelve leading firms now employ more than ten openly gay or lesbian attorneys — including Cleary, Cravath, Davis Polk, Debevoise, Jackson Lewis, Milbank, Paul Weiss, Proskauer, Simpson, Skadden, Sullivan, and Weil Gotshal, according to their NALP Forms. These realities were unimagined when we started the NALP Gay, Lesbian & Bi Working Group in 1994. Over the years, the gentle activism of NALP members — which has included consciousness raising, educational efforts, persuasion, conference presentations, receptions, group networking, model materials, and much more, including countless hours in committee meetings of various kinds — has moved our profession forward on equal opportunity and equal benefit for work performed.

Despite these wonderful strides, NALP members have much more work to do on GLBT issues.

- The recorded numbers of GLBT attorneys are far below the real numbers.
- Two law firms in the NYC market continue the policy: “. . . we do not attempt to ascertain the kind of information requested, nor do we believe it would be appropriate to do so.”
- While many employers offer some domestic partner benefits, far fewer than 50% offer benefits equal to those for marriage partners.
- Discrimination against GLBT persons remains legal in 39 states.
- While few transgendered attorneys have passed through our law schools and into employment to date, we are here, our numbers will increase, and we might be exactly the talent you are seeking.
- The armed forces continue to discriminate against GLBT attorneys.

NALP has been an industry leader since its inception — setting standards and guidelines useful to all of us in diversity, legal recruiting, judicial clerkships, and more. The GLBT Committee continues its work on diversity issues, partnering with city groups, employers, law schools, professional associations, and the newly created Leadership/Membership Diversity Task Force (more about this Task Force will be discussed in a future article). We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Annual Education Conference in Salt Lake City at Thursday evening’s Diversity Reception, which will feature a presentation by Paul M. Smith, Managing Partner of Jenner & Block’s Washington, D.C. office, who argued the recent *Lawrence v. Texas* case before the Supreme Court.

A useful, recently updated NALP resource is the **Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Contact List**, produced by NALP’s GLBT Committee: This list is offered as an educational and informational resource only and does not constitute an endorsement by NALP. Information is believed to be accurate as of December 2003. The list can be found at www.nalp.org/refdesk/glbtrres.htm (or by going to the “Reference Desk” section of NALP’s web site).

Reprinted from *NALP Bulletin*, March 2004.

© NALP 2004. All rights reserved. This article may be printed for personal use only. Any reproduction, retransmission or republication of all or part of this material is expressly prohibited unless NALP or the copyright owner has granted prior written consent. For reprint permission contact the NALP office at (202) 835-1001 or www.nalp.org.