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9 June 1977



To: CETA Commissioners  
CETA Administration  
Berkeley City Council  
Berkeley Community Agencies  
Board of Directors of the Pacific Center

I am writing this as an open letter to name and protest the undignified and discriminatory treatment accorded me and the agency I represent by the CETA Commission. This letter would have gone out weeks ago but for fears that it might further prejudice the Commission against the Pacific Center and the gay people it serves, at the cost of badly needed funding. We have, during this time, received three of the six positions requested.

I went before the Commission at its April 14 meeting to explain the Pacific Center's proposal for funding for additional Public Service Employment positions. The Pacific Center for Human Growth is the only agency in Berkeley serving specifically gay and other sexual minority people. Our services are primarily in the areas of mental health, education and information.

While standing before an audience of other agency representatives and the seven member Commission, I was subjected to a display of homophobic behavior and contempt of which the Commissioners should be ashamed. I was the object of barely concealed hostility on the part of one woman; the man next to her joined in the snickering and laughter; there were blank expressions and half smiles on the other faces; no interest was indicated in the program or the proposal itself; the room was filled with nervousness and tittering.

In short, the CETA Commission acted out the very bias and discrimination which it implicitly denies exists in its refusal to accept homosexuals into minority group status and to accord us Need Assessment Points for CETA Certification.

There are several important considerations here:

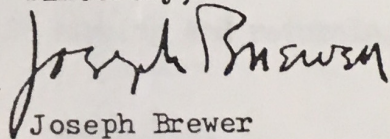
1. The Pacific Center was requesting training positions for sexual minority individuals. The attitudes cited above are what these people face when looking for jobs. It should be quite clear that if one is laughed at and ridiculed in public, the treatment accorded in the closed offices of private sector employment will not likely result in a job.
2. If one adds to this picture the discrimination faced by Third World people and women, whom it is our intention to hire and train, the prospects of fair employment move from bleak to grim.
3. The attitudes and overt behavior displayed in this meeting belie and contradict the stated purpose of CETA, which is to give the oppressed and disadvantaged a chance at job training and placement.

THE PACIFIC CENTER  
FOR HUMAN GROWTH

- many other agencies in Berkeley have joined with us in arguing the need and necessity of including gay people as a priority target population in CETA's client eligibility determination. Adoption of this policy would go a long way towards demonstrating that, despite the April 14 meeting, the Commission is not willing to operate on the basis of primitive, condemnatory social attitudes.
5. Civil liberties have been legislated away from people for the first time in American history in Dade County, Florida. The people are gay people and the issue was employment. It is the stated purpose of CETA to counter discrimination in employment and assist those who suffer from it.
  6. The message from Dade County and from the nationally based organization behind Ms. Bryant is for gay people to return to the closets of degradation and unproductive lives. CETA's failure to certify priority eligibility points to gay people on the basis of self-declaration amounts to an implicit endorsement of this humiliating position. It is also probably true that those who would self-declare are the ones most likely to encounter anti-gay discrimination.
  7. The City of Berkeley adopted a resolution in October 1973 (No. 46,148-N.S.) prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in City agreements. I would like to know if the CETA Commission can provide, by statistics or affirmative action guidelines, proof of its own compliance with this resolution in hiring and recruitment within the CETA Administration?

Factual documentation of employment discrimination against gay and other sexual minority people will follow under separate cover. For now, I ask you to look back at your own behavior on April 14 and consider the likelihood of bias in hiring. Should you have any doubts remaining as to whether gay people are an oppressed minority in need of anti-discrimination support, I invite you to stand in my shoes before the Berkeley CETA Commission.

Sincerely,



Joseph Brewer  
Executive Director