



# Gay and Lesbian Rights Organizing: Community-Based Strategies

*Yolanda Padilla*

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## **Gay and Lesbian Rights Organizing: Community-Based Strategies** Yolanda Padilla

Examine successful strategies designed to end discrimination and achieve social justice for sexual minorities!

*Gay and Lesbian Rights Organizing: Community-Based Strategies* is the first compilation of case studies of local-level gay rights organizing efforts. It is an inspiring testimonial to grassroots work going on across the country, from a community located in the heart of the anti-gay operation in the US, the home of Focus on the Family, in Colorado, to a moving vision of a different world told first-hand by four transgender youth in the Northeast, to a successful campaign in a community in Kentucky where a decade earlier television crews agreed to film only the feet of gay rights marchers in order to protect them in view of fierce opposition and even death threats against them. As Urvashi Vaid states in the foreword, “local and state activism remains the vibrant center of the movement.”

The first section of *Gay and Lesbian Rights Organizing*, entitled “Building Coalitions and Changing Communities” examines:

- a multilevel process of organizing for GLBT rights, and how a grassroots campaign lobbied successfully for a local ordinance protecting GLBT rights in Louisville, Kentucky
- the campaign and strategies utilized by the Fairness Alliance in Lexington-Fayette county, Kentucky, to facilitate the passage of that county's Fairness Ordinance, including effective lobbying and coalition building between the GLBT community and business, civic, political, community, and religious leaders
- the development of gay rights organizations and their participation in several important local and statewide political coalitions in Connecticut
- how GLBT activists organized to amend anti-discrimination laws in Maryland

The next section, “Visions of Community for GLBT Youth,” presents:

- candid interviews with four male-to-female transgender students of color at an alternative school in the Northeast
- an examination of the development of Supporting Our Youth, an innovative grassroots program that builds community for GLBT youth in Toronto, Canada, through a broad range of arts, cultural, recreational, and employment training activities and a popular housing/mentoring program
- a framework for creating community-based gay/straight and youth/adult alliances in rural settings—and a look at PRISM, a community-based alliance open to youth from several schools in a college town and nearby rural communities
- the challenges and successes of a small grassroots effort to change the learning environment for GLBT youth in a public school district in a small, conservative Colorado city

The final section, “Innovative Strategies for a New Era,” examines:

the birth of the Lesbians and Lesbian Feminists organization on Mexico City, with a focus on the actualization of two of the movement's ideas—a lesbian kiss-in and legal recognition of same-sex relationships—and their eventual transformation into a major med

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