

SUMMARY OF INTENDED USE OF FUNDS--In Support of Research on Homosexuality in Cultures of the Pacific Islands

Professor Walter L. Williams, Institute for the Study of Women and Men, University of Southern California

One of the biggest problems facing our community is that we do not know much about non-homophobic societies, that is societies where homosexuality is socially accepted. We need this knowledge to convince the general population to reconsider their condemnatory attitudes toward homosexuality. We need to know how homosexually-inclined individuals have lived their lives as fully participating members of society, in other cultures and other times. This understanding can provide us with role models for our own lives, and inspiration to rise to our highest potential.

This has been the impact of my fourth book *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (published by Beacon Press, Boston, 1986). This book is about the berdache, the traditional role for androgynous persons who are similar to "drag queens," but who were highly respected as sacred people and religious leaders. The book is based on my fieldwork research interviewing elderly Indians on the Sioux, Crow, Omaha, Navajo, and other reservations, as well as among the Maya Indians of Mexico.

This book has won the award for "The Best Gay Book of the Year" from the American Library Association, plus "The Outstanding Scholarship Award" from the World Congress for Sexology, and the "Award for Outstanding Research" from the Anthropological Research Group on Homosexuality." It has helped to prompt the national organizing of The North American Native Gays and Lesbians group, which holds international gatherings for gay Native Americans. Judging from the reviews and personal statements, this book has helped many gender-variant people to better accept themselves and their special gifts.

Since 1987 I have been working on another book, about **HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CULTURES OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS**. I won a Fulbright research grant to study "gender variance in Indonesian cultures," and I lived in Indonesia for a year in 1987-88 doing research on various native cultures where homosexuality is accepted. While presenting lectures at the University of the Philippines, I also made contacts with scholars who have done research on similar traditions there. In 1989 I won a faculty research grant from the USC Institute for the Study of Women and Men, to do a similar study of the native traditions of same-sex marriages among the Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands in the north Pacific.

I have now exhausted my university sources for money to support this research, yet in April I made another research trip--at my own expense--to the island of Molokai (in the Hawaiian chain). While there I studied the mahu, the Polynesian drag queens who were traditionally the teachers of the sacred hula. Even today, traditional native people in Molokai highly respect the mahu. I discovered that most of the "waitresses" who work at Hotel Molokai are really mahu, and these

males openly dress like women, or in a mixture of men's and women's clothes, in their daily life. One immediate practical benefit of my research is to suggest that Hotel Molokai would be an accepting and enjoyable vacation spot for cross-dressers. Since Molokai is easily accessible by air transfer from Honolulu, it would not be expensive to get there. [Perhaps I could write an article about this for one of your newspapers, or speak before your group if I receive one of your grants.]

One anthropologist who did fieldwork in Tahiti has written about the common acceptance of mahu there also. Besides that, I have learned that there is another culture where homosexuals are easily accepted, and that is Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. No anthropologist has yet done any study of the position of homosexuals in this culture, so it will be necessary for me to go there to do the research. However, I have already spent so much of my own money on this research that I cannot afford to make this trip unless I receive monetary support for the trip.

My intent is to fly to the south Pacific as soon as my fall semester classes are over in December 1990, and remain there for one or two months (depending on how much money I receive in the grant). The airfare alone will be close to \$1,000, and my expenses in the field are usually an additional \$1,000 each month. That does not include the later time and expenses to write up this research, and I am sure that this project will require considerably more money than I am asking for. A total grant of \$3,000 would allow me to stay for the full two months. I realize you have many valuable and deserving organizations asking for grants, but I ask you to consider funding an important research project that is already almost complete.

Consider the longrange impact on attitudes toward homosexuality when it becomes general knowledge that many other cultures treat homosexuality as a normal part of the diversity of human variation. I am hopeful that, with my prior knowledge of various cultures from the Aleut to the Filipino, Indonesian, and Polynesian areas, if I can add my study of a representative culture from the South Pacific like Rarotonga, then I can show that--at least before the arrival of the Christian missionaries--the Pacific was "A Great Gay Ocean." I intend to write such a book, which will (along with my previous book on American Indians) show that many cultures have taken a much more accepting attitude toward homosexuality and gender variance than is true of our own society. By doing that, my scholarship can demonstrate that it is homophobia, not homosexuality, that is unnatural.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Walter L. Williams, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Anthropology and
The Study of Women and Men
University of Southern California

ONE Institute is the oldest continually-existing gay-rights organization in the Western Hemisphere. Founded in 1953 in Los Angeles, ONE began the first Homophile Studies classes that were ever held, and that continue to the present with our accredited Graduate School in Homophile Studies. ONE Magazine was the first gay publication with a national circulation, and its suit against the United States Post Office allowed for mailings of gay periodicals. This 1958 decision by the United States Supreme Court was the first time the Supreme Court ever addressed the question of homosexuality, and their support for ONE laid the legal basis for all of our community publications that can now be freely circulated through the mails.

ONE Institute has been centrally involved in non-biased research on homosexuality, most notably with UCLA Professor Evelyn Hooker's revolutionary research challenging the mental illness model in psychology, and resulting in the 1973 decision of the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. ONE was also central to the research on transsexuality and transvestism by Professors Harry Benjamin and John Money, and more recently for the research of Professor Walter Williams on homosexuality among American Indian cultures. The Baker Memorial Library at ONE is one of the world's major repositories of information on homosexuality and transsexuality. It has been used by numerous scholars from around the world.

In 1983 a wealthy individual donated an estate to ONE Institute for the establishment of a Graduate School and Research Center on Homophile Studies. This estate is the Milbank Mansion, a three acre plot of land in the Country Club area of Los Angeles, currently valued at three million dollars. Unfortunately, the donor became mentally incapacitated and the adopted daughter of this donor has challenged the legality of the transferral of the estate to ONE. Finally, after years of litigation, in early 1990 the Los Angeles Superior Court ruled that the entire estate indeed was a donation to ONE, and that ONE should have possession of the estate for its educational and research purposes.

This was a great victory for ONE and our entire community. However, now that ONE (and its non-taxable research arm, "The Institute for the Study of Human Resources") has legal title, there are many bills to be paid. Most immediately is a bill for back taxes due, which were not paid while the court hearings and trials were going on. We did not previously pay these taxes, in fear that the estate might be lost. The property tax payment that is due by June 29, 1990, totals approximately \$60,000.00. The Board of Directors of the Institute for the Study of Human Resources is busily engaged in raising this amount, and at this point over \$40,000 has been raised. We are now making a desperate appeal to various individuals and community groups, for contributions toward this back tax bill before June 29. We request \$3,000 or the maximum amount that you can afford to offer.

The ONE estate has already provided much benefit to our community, even while the litigation was going on. Many community groups have been meeting here, our monthly speakers series has been held here, our graduate school classes meet here, researchers continue to use our library, the GAY Band stores its uniforms and equipment here, and AIDS Project Los Angeles has held several major fundraising events here. Now that the legal battles are over, the potential use of the estate is much greater. By helping ONE, you are in fact helping many community groups who use this estate. We intend to make this the leading research center for homophile studies, anywhere in the world. ONE Institute has the real potential to become the Huntington Library and Rand Corporation "Think Tank" of our community. But first the back taxes must be paid. Please consider making as large a donation as possible, so that we can meet our \$60,000 goal before June 29. These taxes must be paid, or this magnificent estate could be confiscated to sell for back taxes. Our community simply cannot afford to lose such a great resource. Thank you for your help.

Professor Walter L. Williams
Program for the Study of Women and Men
University of Southern California
Los Angeles CA 90089-4352
May 29, 1990

Board of Directors
Christopher Street West Association
Suite 109-24
7985 Santa Monica Blvd.
West Hollywood CA 90046

Dear Directors:

I teach Gay Studies at USC and am author of *The Spirit and the Flesh*, the book about gay and lesbian American Indians that won the "GayBook of the Year Award" in 1987. I am writing you now for an emergency request, in my capacity as a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for the Study of Human Resources (ISHR) which is the non-profit foundation that oversees ONE Institute.

I realize this is a very busy time of the year for you, but please give this letter immediate and serious attention. One of our community's most important institutions is at stake, and is in need of an immediate financial loan.

I'm sure you realize that ONE Institute is the oldest continually-existing gay-rights organization in the Western Hemisphere. Founded in 1953 in Los Angeles, ONE began the first Homophile Studies classes that were ever held, and that continue to the present with our accredited Graduate School in Homophile Studies. ONE Magazine was the first gay publication with a national circulation, and its suit against the United States Post Office allowed for mailings of gay periodicals. This 1958 decision by the United States Supreme Court was the first time the Supreme Court ever addressed the question of homosexuality, and their support for ONE laid the legal basis for all of our community publications that can now be freely circulated through the mails.

ONE Institute has been centrally involved in non-biased research on homosexuality, most notably with UCLA Professor Evelyn Hooker's revolutionary research challenging the mental illness model in psychology, and resulting in the 1973 decision of the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. ONE was also central to the research of my and many other scholars from around the world. The ONE Library is one of the world's major repositories of information on homosexuality.

In 1983 a wealthy individual donated an estate to ONE Institute for the establishment of a Graduate School and Research Center on Homophile Studies. This estate is the Milbank Mansion, a three acre plot of land on Country Club Drive, currently valued at three million dollars. Unfortunately, the donor became mentally incapacitated and the adopted daughter of this donor challenged the legality of the

transferral of the estate to ONE. Finally, after years of litigation, in early 1990 the Los Angeles Superior Court ruled that the entire estate indeed was a donation to ONE, and that ONE should have possession of the estate for its educational and research purposes.

This was a great victory for ONE and our entire community. However, now that ONE and ISHR has legal title, there are many bills to be paid. Most immediately is a bill for back taxes due, which were not paid while the court hearings and trials were going on. We did not previously pay these taxes, in fear that the estate might be lost. The property tax payment that is due by June 29, 1990, totals approximately \$60,000.00. The Board of Directors of the Institute is searching everywhere for funds.

Fortunately, we have a major donor who has donated some Malibu real estate property to sell for ONE, but this property cannot be sold until March 1991. Therefore, we need an immediate loan (secured by the Malibu property) to pay the taxes by June 29.

Since CSW will be taking in sizable sums at the Pride Festival on June 24, I am writing to ask if there is any possibility that this money (\$60,000 or whatever you can allow) could be offered to ONE as a loan. It would be best if the loan could be made until March 1991, but even if made for less time, that would at least give the Board of Directors a longer time to raise the money than the few weeks we now have.

If this is a possibility, or if you would like more information, I will ask you to call ONE's attorney David Cameron at 213-452-0914 or ONE Secretary Dorr Legg at the Institute 213-735-5252. If I can be of further assistance, my number is 213-747-3039.

I'm sure all of you realize how important ONE has been in helping our community get to the point where we are today. That is why you honored ONE Secretary Dorr Legg as the CSW "Man of the Year" for his many years of dedicated service to our community. Through Dorr's hard work the ONE estate has already provided much benefit to our community, even while the litigation was going on. Many community groups have been meeting here, our monthly speakers series has been held here, our graduate school classes meet here, researchers continue to use our library, the GAY Band stores its uniforms and equipment here, and AIDS Project Los Angeles has held several major fundraising events here. Now that the legal battles are over, the potential use of the estate is much greater. By helping ONE, you are in fact helping many community groups who use this estate. We intend to make this the leading research center for homophile studies, anywhere in the world.

ONE Institute has the real potential to become the Huntington Library and Rand Corporation "Think Tank" of our community. But first the back taxes must be paid. Please consider making as large a loan as possible, so that we can meet our \$60,000 goal before June 29. Again, this is a secured loan. These taxes must be paid, or this magnificent estate could be confiscated to sell for back taxes.

Our community simply cannot afford to lose such a great resource.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Walter L. Williams, Ph.D.