

I just happened to run across a book which, I was surprised to see, includes a three-page article about a scholarly activist group that I co-founded in 1979. This is an example of the far-reaching effects that just two people (me and my boyfriend Greg Sprague) can instigate. Hopefully this example will inspire others to take action to challenge prejudice.

Chuck Stewart, ed.. *Proud Heritage: People, Issues, and Documents of the LGBT Experience*. Santa Barbara CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 2015, pp.127-129.

#### COMMITTEE ON LESBIAN AND GAY HISTORY (CLGH)

p.127 The Committee on Lesbian and Gay History (CLGH) is an affiliated society of the American Historical Association (AHA), one of the leading professional organizations of historians.... The committee focuses on the study of homosexuality in the past and fosters interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange between scholars working in this field; it also guards against homophobic discrimination within the history profession. In addition to sponsoring sessions on LGBTQ history at the annual meetings of the AHA, the CLGH promotes the inclusion of LGBTQ topics in the general history curriculum and supports public history groups and activities....

p.128 Additionally, the CLGH maintains a website with an archive of syllabi for LGBTQ history courses and publishes a newsletter.

p.128 The CLGH was founded in 1979 by Walter L. Williams, then an assistant professor of history at the University of Cincinnati and later renowned for his 1986 work, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*. While pursuing research in Chicago, Williams met Gregory Sprague, a professor at Loyola University who had started the Chicago Gay History Project.... The two commiserated over their displeasure with the absence of queer topics at the annual AHA meetings. Although some relevant panels had been held during these conventions, they were largely few and far between, both because LGBTQ history was not considered by many mainstream academics to be a topic worthy of serious study and due to a paucity of resources for scholars....

While attending the 1979 convention of the AHA, Sprague and Williams approached the organizers and asked for space to hold a meeting of gay and lesbian historians. Their request was granted and after hastily advertising with handmade signs, Williams and Sprague welcomed 15 historians to their meeting. Dubbing themselves the “Committee on Homosexuality in History” ... the next year it gained a new moniker, the Committee on Lesbian and Gay History, at the suggestion of Williams and Lesbian Herstory Archives cofounder Deborah Schwartz and Walter Williams, then serving as cochairs. In 1982 the CLGH applied for, and received, recognition as an affiliated society of the AHA....

The acceptance of the AHA stood in marked contrast to Williams’s experience at the national convention of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) around the same time [1983]; scheduled to deliver a paper on same-sex relationships in Native American cultures, Williams was surprised to learn that conference organizers had received a death threat against him. Over the objections of conference organizers, he proceeded to present his paper, which was warmly received. The episode illustrated the resistance with which the field of LGBTQ history was met in its formative years. ...

p. 129 In the AHA's stance against homophobic discrimination, the organization developed new guidelines for selecting sites of its annual meeting, which specified that they would refuse to hold their conventions in any location where state or city laws would permit discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability. Another watershed moment illustrating the widespread acceptance of the legitimacy of academic studies in LGBTQ history occurred in 2003, when a group of CLGH members filed an amicus curiae brief in relation to the case of *Lawrence v. Texas*. The brief is considered to have been instrumental in determining the outcome of the landmark case, which overturned the 1986 decision of *Bowers v. Hardwick* and invalidated all other laws in the United States that criminalize consensual homosexual acts between adults.