



National Coming Out Project  
919 18th Street, NW #800  
Washington, DC 20006  
(800) 866-NCOD  
[ncop@hrc.org](mailto:ncop@hrc.org)  
[www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)



## HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN'S NATIONAL COMING OUT PROJECT

PROMOTING THE VALUES OF HONESTY AND OPENNESS FOR GAY AMERICANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

### WHAT WE DO:

The Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project (NCOP) promotes honesty and openness about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender on campus, in the workplace, and at home. A project of the HRC Foundation, the National Coming Out Project's public education and outreach programs help turn ignorance into acceptance by opening a dialogue with gay and non-gay Americans and urging gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people to come out and get involved.

With the help of notable spokespeople, who in the past have included Amanda Bearse, Dan Butler, Candace Gingrich, Chastity Bono, and Sean Sasser, HRC provides desperately needed role models that serve as inspiration to all people coming out. The 1997-99 spokesperson was Ellen's Mom, Betty DeGeneres--the first non-gay NCOP spokesperson. Betty serves as a role model for our non-gay allies, reminding everyone that discrimination is a family issue. Through speaking tours, local events, and public service announcements, these courageous leaders show that being yourself is the best act to follow.

### NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY:

An occasion to increase awareness about the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, National Coming Out Day (NCOD) is the culmination of the National Coming Out Project's year round activities. Held every October 11, National Coming Out Day commemorates the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. To facilitate NCOD events, NCOP provides a free National Coming Out Day Kit which includes information, resources and ideas. NCOP also conducts a national public education campaign on radio and television, and in the print media. With hundreds of events in all 50 states and many countries, National Coming Out Day increases visibility and raises awareness about equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF 2000:

Hundreds of college campuses, gay and lesbian employee groups, business, community, religious and civic organizations held National Coming Out Day (October 11) events focusing on the importance of this election year. In 1999 there was not a National Coming Out Project spokesperson- instead we encouraged folks to "Come Out Voting" and use the power of their votes to make a difference and educate local, state and national candidates. Some highlights for NCOP in 2000 included:

#### *"Come Out Voting" NCOD theme...*

National Coming Out Day encourages queer and queer-supportive people to come out, be visible, and be heard by all Americans, particularly our elected officials. It is incredibly important to exercise our duty as American citizen by participating in the electoral process at every given opportunity. Only if we are out to

them can our elected officials act on our behalf. Citizen action is incredibly important at all levels of government. In addition to letter writing, personal visits, faxes and emails we also use the voting booths to send messages to elected officials. Too often the apathy about political issues keeps GLBT and allied Americans from having a powerful impact on our government. In 2000 there were 6,000 state legislators, 435 U.S. representatives, 34 U.S. senators and one President elected. As GLBT and fair-minded people it is in our best interests to make our presence known and to hold candidates accountable. For this reason we chose "Come Out Voting" as the '00 theme. We created a provocative NCOD poster and public service announcement featuring Justices Rehnquist, Scalia and Thomas which asked "Who Will Choose the Next Supremes?" to remind folks of the importance of the election year.

We sent out over 600 NCOD kits across the country and beyond.

### *NCOD Events Across America...*

Working with fair-minded American nationwide, NCOP provided hundreds of NCOD Kits to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and allied campus, community and workplace organizations. Some examples of the hundreds of events included:

- **Cleveland State University (OH)** *Project Lambda* chose to educate the campus by setting up a table to provide glbtq resource guides for CSU and Cleveland and the Gay & Bisexual Men's and the new Lesbians & Bisexual Women's discussion groups. The wall behind the table was adorned with GLB people who had shaped history such as Langston Hughes, Maynard Keynes and Gertrude Stein.
- **Humboldt State University (CA)** *GLBT Student Association* celebrated NCOD on the Quad by playing games (Rainbow Twister!), taking photos of students exiting the closet door they had constructed, dancing to a live deejay playing music by gay artists and and a 50/50 drawing. In honor of Ellen's coming out episode the GLBTSA topped the day off with a cake decorated to say "Congratulations, You're Gay!"
- **University of Montevallo (AL)** *Sexual Acceptance for Everyone (SAFE)* hosted "Out in October", a weeklong celebration which included a showing of "Out of the Past", a campus-wide candlelight vigil for victims of anti-gay violence, Gabi Clayton recounting the tragic story of her son's suicide and a panel discussion for GLB students to speak about their lives.
- **Rainbow Center of Tacoma (WA)** Spearheaded a series of public programs on being out, designed to inform and entertain. Activities included a panel discussion w/local GLBT folks titled "Is it Safe to Come Out in Pierce County?", a presentation on "Coming Out - A Historical Perspective", "Body, Mind & Spirit" a panel of health care professionals to discuss the impact of being a sexual minority and a program on homophobia presented by Tacoma PFLAG and Safe Schools.
- **University of Massachusetts Amherst 2 in 20** (a dormitory floor established in 1992 to create a safe space for GLBT students and their allies) worked to support and educate the campus community about the Coming Out process by distributing materials, buttons and brochures. The group wore identical 2 in 20 T-shirts and blanketed the campus with information.

### *NCOD Event at University of Pennsylvania*

On October 11<sup>th</sup> there was a unique opportunity to partner with the University of Pennsylvania for a celebration of NCOD and a very special announcement. Life partners David Goodhand and Vincent Griski who met while undergrads at the school announced a two million-dollar contribution to Penn for construction of a GLBT student center. Accepting the grant was University President Dr. Judith Rodin who was joined by out Penn students. Michael Crawford, HRC Eastern Field Organizer spoke as well as Candace Gingrich. The final speaker was former major league baseball player Billy Bean who spoke of his coming out experiences.

### *Resource Guide to Coming Out...*

The HRC Foundation *Resource Guide to Coming Out* contains helpful information about the coming out process. The free *Resource Guide*, is not a blue-print but a pocket guide containing Q&A, myths and why

they are false, celebrity coming out messages and numerous resources from Internet sites to religious and political contacts. In 2000 we distributed more than 50,000 guides to individuals, colleges, high schools, bookstores, community centers, health care professionals, counselors, parents and local organizations. Guides can be requested by calling 1-800-866-NCOD or E-mailing [ncop@hrc.org](mailto:ncop@hrc.org). Since 1998 the *Resource Guide* has also been available in Spanish. The *Guia de Recursos Para Salir del Closet* includes a forward by Latina journalist and talk show host Cristina Serelegui.

### WHAT'S AHEAD FOR 2001:

2001 will mark the thirteenth anniversary of National Coming Out Day. Building on the successes of the first twelve years, NCOP seeks to advance educational and outreach initiatives that encourage people to come out and get involved. In 2001, NCOP will:

- Coordinate educational and outreach materials at Prides and other events nationwide
- Distribute 50,000 copies of HRC's *Resource Guide to Coming Out*
- Update and Expand the *Resource Guide to Coming Out*
- Distribute 20,000 copies of HRC's *Guia de Recursos para Salir del Closet*, the Spanish-language version of the Resource Guide
- Re-make the *Guia de Recursos para Salir del Closet* to make it more relevant to glbt Spanish speaking people, and include expanded resources
- Update the *Resource Guide to Coming Out*, and expand resources
- Redesign and expand NCOP website
- Facilitate hundreds of events on and around National Coming Out Day; encourage people to celebrate the thirteenth annual NCOD celebration; provide event organizers with planning guides and materials
- Conduct a coming out education campaign with celebrity spokespeople and Public Service Announcements for print, radio and television
- Reach out to GLBT youth and college students, encouraging student involvement in NCOD, HRC's Action Network (e-mail), and other HRC activities.
- Coordinate the distribution of the *Resource Guide to Coming Out* through related professional organizations (i.e., National Association of Social Workers, National Association of Campus Administrators, American Pediatric Association)
- Provide information and materials to groups and individuals who are interested in establishing a Safe Zone or Allies Program on campus or in the workplace

### HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

To request your NCOD kit, find out more about official Keith Haring merchandise, order free copies of HRC's Resource Guide to Coming Out in English or Spanish, or request information on establishing a Safe Zone or Allies Program, please call 1-800-866-NCOD or e-mail [ncop@hrc.org](mailto:ncop@hrc.org). Stay up to date on current issues and headlines by regularly visiting the HRC website, [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org). Being part of the fight for equality is easier than you think- become a member of HRC's Action Network by visiting the website and clicking on "Take Action"

**REMEMBER, TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP TODAY AND MAKE *EVERY* DAY  
COMING OUT DAY.**