

A small breakthrough opens wider as straight lawyers start listening

The young man had a beard and long hair and dressed casually. He was the only straight person in the room who looked out of place among his colleagues in the Los Angeles County Bar Association.

As this young man addressed the two speakers on gay rights, it seemed he was prefacing his question with remarks that indicated a pro-gay attitude. But when he got up steam, it was just the opposite.

He told speakers Al Gordon and Tom Coleman, and about 25 members of the Human Rights Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association, that he had always defended the rights of minorities: women, the downtrodden, and counter-culture people.

But when it came to gay people, especially gay people adopting children, an area that the two speakers briefly touched upon, this young man admitted he couldn't feel any sympathy for homosexuals. In fact, he viewed gay people as a threat, chiefly a threat to his family because he had a young male child whom he

didn't want to turn out to be gay.

The meeting at which this took place, on Aug. 26, was the first in which the gay community has been able to reach this important segment of the Los Angeles straight community.

To Gordon, an invitation to speak on gay rights before the County Bar Association was, in a small sense, a breakthrough. As he said afterwards, the anti-gay attitude of that young man was indicative of what the gay community has to tackle in its outreach, on various levels, to straights.

Gordon added that he felt sympathy toward the young man because he remembered similar feelings he had when he first learned one of his sons is a homosexual.

The meeting opened up not only a dialog with the County Bar Association, but with the County Public Defender's Office as well. Attending was Wilbur F. Littlefield, chief of the branch and area offices of the public defender, who invited Gordon and Coleman to speak at two public defender seminars.

As to the young man's question about the propriety and morality of letting gay people adopt children or keep custody of their own children, he didn't get much of an answer because time was short. But in his remarks, Coleman, who is gay, did note that gay people are the product of straight marriages.

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Those planning to attend should make reservations before Monday with Yolanda Wilson in the chief administrative office, room 713, Hall of Administration.

Human Rights Section Of Bar Sets Meeting

Members of the Los Angeles County Bar Association Human Rights Section will hear Thomas F. Coleman and Albert L. Gordon, attorneys, speak on "Problems and Rights of a Gay Persons" at a noon meeting on Thursday, Aug. 22.

The meeting will be held in the Kings Room of the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel, 930 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.