
Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians

September 13, 1984

Newsletter

Number 1

🕒 Minutes of BAGMAL Meeting: 08/27/84 🕒

This meeting was held at Siang-hual's on Sunday August 27, 1984. Eight people were in attendance including four new members who were attending a BAGMAL function for the first time.

Introductions were followed by a short history of BAGMAL for the benefit of the new members.

Members of BAGMAL were briefed by Willy Wilkinson on the formation of a new group for Asian lesbians. The name of the group: Asian Lesbians in New England (ALNE).

Karin, a new lesbian member of Filipino descent handed out information on the status of her aunt, Clarita Roja, a lesbian poet who is a political prisoner of the Marcos regime in the Philippines. Karin appealed for support from BAGMAL members. See the next story in this newsletter.

The members present voted to endorse the March on the UN which is to take place September 30 in New York City.

An account was given of a forum sponsored by Ann Maguire, the Mayor of Boston's Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian Community, to explain the city's statutes and laws that affect third world lesbians and gays who experience discrimination. BAGMAL members who attended felt there was a lack of participation by third world people in the forum and many questions from the audience were left unanswered. Some useful information on using the city's anti-discrimination laws in housing was obtained.

It was decided to form a newsletter committee to circulate an expanded circular to BAGMAL members, offering not just minutes and announcements but other information and articles of interest. SH, Vickie and Carolyn volunteered to serve on the interim board pending the call for participation by other interested members.

A discussion centered around whether the racism faced by Asian lesbians and gay men can be adequately addressed by city ordinances and statutes. An opinion was expressed that in fact forms of discrimination and prejudice against Asian peoples in the city often do not take the form of denial of housing or jobs but involve subtler mechanisms whereby Asian peoples are rendered invisible and peripheral, and thus ignored. Personal experiences of other members with regards to housing discrimination contradicted this opinion and many felt that anti-discrimination statutes if enforced and used by Asian peoples themselves would be effective in countering various forms of discrimination. In this regard, some felt that the information offered at the Maguire-initiated forum could be of use to BAGMAL members faced with housing, job, and workplace discrimination problems.

A BAGMAL Chronology

There's a first time for everything, and the first time for BAGMAL happened one summer evening in 1979. Two women and two men met at Glad Day Book Shop in Boston, all of them Asian, and all of them queer. Although it doesn't sound like a momentous occasion, as far as we know, this was the first meeting of the first organization of its kind in the country!

BAGMAL members met periodically after that--back at the book shop, at each other's homes--but ever vigilant for potential new recruits. Bars were posterred and leafletted, and likely prospects accosted.

In October of the same year, the fledgeling group joined the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. At the march, Siong-huat met other gay Asians from Toronto, thereby spurring the formation of Gay Asians of Toronto.

Since then, the membership has grown to roughly 30 men and women. People come and go, some move away or drift off, but BAGMAL remains to provide support, social space, and discussion. BAGMAL produces action and results in direct proportion to the leadership and energy contributed; thus, the group has been amorphous at times, but always a constant by simply existing.

The efforts of individual members past and present have created a substantial list of accomplishments. BAGMAL and its members have been active in Gay Pride marches and rallies since 1980. Lillian was one of the emcees of the Pride rally in 1980; Carolyn spoke on a WGBH radio show during the same rally. In 1981, Lester gave a speech at the rally; in 1982, BAGMAL hosted a panel during Gay Pride Week to promote awareness of gay and lesbian Asians.

Both Lester and Lillian appeared in the movie *Pink Triangles*, a documentary film about gay men and lesbians that received screenings across the country.

1981 also saw BAGMAL introducing itself to the community in Chinatown with a panel at the South Cove Community Health Center. It is often more difficult to be both gay and Asian; at South Cove, Lester and Siong-huat came out to this segment of the Asian community to affirm that gay Asians really *do* exist.

1982 was a banner year with a feature article in *Gay Community News* about BAGMAL and some of its members: Ali, Andrew, and Cindy. The public relations jewel of BAGMAL's history, a giant community outreach party, was organized by frenetic members at the Paradise in Cambridge. The party was thrown to announce BAGMAL's presence to the gay community at large, as well as to publicize how well gay and lesbian Asians always eat.

Dark blue BAGMAL glamor T-shirts were the highlight of a quieter year in 1983. Social outings and meetings were the favorite pastimes, but a strong showing at the Gay Pride march held steady.

BLGPA (Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance) members were treated to Connie and Carolyn talking and fielding questions about BAGMAL in 1984. In the spring, Vickie traveled to UMass Amherst to run a workshop at the university's Gay Awareness Week. Siong-huat, meanwhile, spent his evenings as a committee member on the Mayor's Liaison selection committee.

That's all we can remember for now. If your contribution to BAGMAL's history has been forgotten, let us know, and you'll be in the headlines next time.

In Our World

Two Filipina lesbian dissidents, Mila Aguilar and Cynthia Nolasco, were arrested by the intelligence branch of the national police in Manila. Because of international concern, bail was set at 600 peso. However, when family members arrived with the money, they were informed of new charges which were not specified.

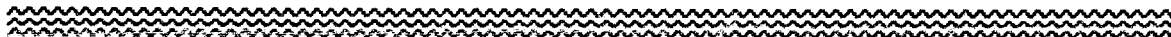
At the time of arrest, both of the women were in active administrative positions at a Roman Catholic women's college. Mila has been underground since 1972 and is a poet, writer, and journalist. Her works, written under the pen name of Clarita Rojas, have appeared in *Big Mama Rag*, *Off Our Backs*, *Bridge*, and *Eastwind*; she has also published two collections of poetry.

Aguilar's niece, Karin Aguilar-San Juan, met us at our August meeting and urges you to contact your Representative and Senator in Congress to demand her release or call her to set up a letter-writing campaign. Her number in Somerville is 625-0281.



.. .. March on the U.N.

A March on the UN to publicize the international character of the gay and lesbian movement will be held in New York on September 30. Specific demands are also to remove the designation of homosexuality as a disease by the World Health Organization and to pressure the UN to adopt homosexual rights as a human rights issue. This march apparently has connections to the International Gay Organization which boasts membership among gay groups in many countries throughout the world. (I suspect this is also an attempt to convince US groups to take the International Gay Organization more seriously. IGA has much prestige in Europe and Canada but is generally ignored in the US, which of course does not consider itself part of the rest of the world. S.H.) BAGMAL has already decided to endorse the march at our last meeting. We are asking those interested in marching to make their interest known in the event we send a contingent down to NY.



👁 Get With It!

A newsletter committee has been formed to bring you a regular newsletter like the one you are now reading. We hope that a newsletter will be sent out after each monthly meeting comprising information, some news, and perhaps a short article of general or specific interest to BAGMAL members. All members are encouraged to submit either information that they feel others will be interested in or their writing--whether essays, poetry, or short fiction. All interested in participating in editing and putting out the newsletter should get in touch with Vickie, Carolyn, or SH who are now so generously serving on the interim committee.



Did you know...

✉ **Letters**, we get letters . . . Did you know that BAGMAL is the regular recipient of newsletters from:

- Tokyo Support Group, bilingually from Japan.
- Pacific Bridge, in San Francisco, whose concerns are learning more about each other for Asians and non-Asians as well as Want-to-meet-me? ads and cute pics. Primarily for gay men.
- Black & White Men Together, from New York.
- Celebrasian, newsletter of Gay Asians of Toronto. Interesting interview with two Asian gay men who are lovers.
- Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays from Hollywood.
- Association of Lesbian and Gay Asians, out of San Francisco.
- Habari-Daftari, a division of National Coalition of Black Gays, discusses issues that affect communities of people of color.
- **PLUS**, lots of other assorted requests and information such as the gay couple, Richard Adams and Anthony Sullivan, who are threatened to be men without a country although they are legally married to each other.
- Other hot items donated by resourceful members are the Asian American Resource Workshop newsletter, which focuses on politics through art; and,
- Asian Lesbians Of The East Coast, the premier issue, from New York. Don't miss it; it's sure to become a collectors' item. Good coming out stories.



COME to our monthly meetings and be with us and our mail. Siong-huat is the Keeper of the Mail, if you'd like more information on it.



Did you know that at Glad Day Book Shop definite attempts are being made to obtain literature by and about Asians. There is currently a gay guide to Japan (in Japanese, of course) and a gay Chinese novel (whoops, which recently sold out).



Come Here Often?

Our next meeting will be held on Sunday, September 23, at 1:00 p.m. at Carolyn's. Bring brunch accessories, etc. At long last, a new membership list will be distributed. Get 'em while they're hot (and they all are, a reliable source informs me).

Discussion topic: **What do Asian gay men and lesbians share?**

Carolyn's address is:

**45 Massachusetts Avenue, Apt. 2 (top bell)
Arlington 646-5639**