

# **Where Are We? Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?**

**Opening Keynote Address  
The National LGBTI Health Summit 2004**

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Opening Keynote Address**

**Eric Rofes**

## **I. Welcome / Orientation to the Summit**

### **A. Opening Hook→**

**B. I'd bet this summit is different from other professional conferences you have attended.**

- More in the spirit of building community than strengthening professionalism.**

- **More about meaningful connections than about networking.**

**With this in mind, I want us to all GREET people around us.**

**C. Let me give you a little bit of history about the genesis of this summit:**

- **Those of us working on LGBTI health for many years enjoyed the NLGHC**
- **This conference ended in 1998, final conference in San Francisco, when the organization that coordinate it, the NLGHA closed its doors**
- **Some of us who valued the conference hoped someone would pick it up...but we were at a special moment in queer health organizing where that was not going to happen.**

- **I began agitating and met with others, and some leaders in the lesbian health movement gave me some good advice→**
  
- **At this time criticisms began surfacing about the NLGHC and we took these criticisms in mind as we decided to envision a different sort of gathering.**
  
- **I pulled together a group of men concerned with gay men's health and we initiated the first of three national gay men's health summits.**
  
- **These events were marked by:**
  - **A focus on community building rather than professionalism and the power dynamics that emerge at many public health events→ and a commitment to seeing all participants as of equal value, avoiding the star syndrome so common to public health and queer conferences these days→**

- **A commitment to dialoguing across differences and confronting differences in power and privilege head-on**
  
- **A broad rethinking of what we mean by "health" and a shift from a disease model to a well-ness model, incorporating not only individual health but also community health, spirituality, and political activism**
  
- **A commitment to operate on a shoe-string and proceed cautiously when we sought funding support; we wanted to especially remain mindful of keeping control of the agenda and not shift our program or our politics because we were receiving funding from governmental sources or pharmaceutical companies→ feds and Dupont stories**
  
- **After organizing two national GMHS in Boulder in 1999 and 2000 we went back to lesbian colleagues who were then ready to participate in an LGBTI health summit--intersex health**

**was added--and the first LGBTI health summit was held in Boulder in 2002**

- **We then proposed a sequence where on the even number years we'd come together for an LGBTI summit and in the odd years we'd organizing separate gay men's health, transgender health, lesbian health events.**
- **Hence I want to make clear to you that you are attending an event that is:**
  - **community controlled and collectively organized**
  - **as much about OUR health and OUR self-care as it is about the health promotion and health care we provide to others**
  - **This summit intends to bust beyond the power dynamics embedded in our organizations and the health care system of our nation: there are no stars here**

- **This is about each of us as participants in a movement--a political and activist movement--that is the same movement that brought free clinics to communities of color and urban centers across the nation in the 1960s, the feminist self-help movement and Our Bodies our Selves in the 1970s, and ACT UP in the 1980s.**

**D. What is expected of all of us here**

- **Think critically about what your experience is like at most health conferences: Do you experience these events as nurturing and revitalizing, or do you do what I do: try to do too much, immerse myself in toxic power dynamics, and return home exhausted, overwhelmed and sometimes dispirited? Think critically now and make a commitment to doing THIS event differently→**

- **Challenge yourself / dialogue / cross boundaries→ I want to especially highlight dialogue across identity differences in the LGBTI spectrum and across races, cultures, and classes→**
- **Recognize work well done→**

## **II. Where Have We Been? Where Are We? Where Are We Going?**

### **A. Where Are We Right Now?**

- **Progress amid Peril: Contradictory Times→**
- **Hopeful activities:**
  - **Organizing by queers is at an impressive juncture→ marriage, sodomy decision,**

- **National Coalition of Lesbian and Feminist Health Projects**
  - **National Coalition for LGBT Health / HP2010 / Trans health priorities document : JOIN as individuals and organizations**
  - **MSM Prevention Institute by GMHC & APLA**
  - **LLEGO→ queer Latino & Latina health**
  - **GMHS**
  - **SAGE's Policy Conference on LGBT Seniors**
  - **CDC Office of Health Equity includes Sexual Orientation**
  - **LGBT Community1 Centers now have an ED**
  - **LGBTI smoking cessation programs**
  - **Waves of crystal users coming into 12 step programs**
- **Perilous Developments:**
  - **The subverting of science to religion and Right-wing politics**

**We have been living through a surrealistic policy era in which science and research have been thoroughly subverted by religious fundamentalism and corporate greed.**

**This is true in all arenas--not just LGBTI issues and not just health issues. Whether we are talking about global warming, stem cell research, bilingual education, or same-sex marriage, future generations will ask us how the people of our nation...**

- **The Michigan Conscientious Objector Policy Act: doctors refuse to treat LGBTI patients**
  
- **Federal oversight of health research and HIV prevention has...**
  
- **The NIH Strategic Research Plan and Budget to Reduce & Eliminate Health Disparities once again doesn't include LGBTI communities**
  
- **National health surveys still do not include sexual orientation and gender identity**
  
- **Violence against transgender people**
  
- **Down low men and scapegoating of bisexual men of color**

- **Syphilis and gay & bi men**

**B. It is helpful to recall where we our LGBTI health movement has been because for many of us, the current health policy moment seems eerily familiar:**

**C. Where Should We Be Heading?**

**1. We have to do the work of movement building: individually and organizationally.**

**2. NGLTF and HRC: Queer health agenda**

**3. We are challenged to struggle to build an inclusive movement: NGLTF**

**4. We need to make a commitment for the long haul.**

**5. Future LGBTI summits**

**6. Taking this home**

### **III. Core Issues**

**A. What is a healthy LGBTI person?**

**B. Health and politics are linked but not in an easy and simple way**

### **C. The position of sex in a post-marriage LGBTI community**

## **IV. Closing**