

OLOCs Conferences and Events Attended Reports March 2013

Facing Race Conference

By Alix Dobkin, 1941

What struck me most forcefully about the Facing Race Conference Nov. 15–17 was the number of national and local organizations, groups, and agencies working on social justice issues. The conference was very well organized and well attended. Eight hundred were expected but 1,400 showed up, more than half women (natch). I found the positive, excited, welcoming energy inspirational and exciting, more so even than the actual program. I loved handing out our little rainbow cards. Everyone lit up when they read it and were all happy to hear about OLOC.

The topics of the three plenary sessions were "*Now What? Debriefing the Election and Taking Governance*," "*Race and Gender in the 21st Century*," and "*Culture Trumps Politics: Or Does It*." It seemed to me that Gays, Lesbians, and particularly transgender persons had an extremely visible presence on the panels and presentations.

The best workshop I attended was "Race and Class: Why an Intersectional Approach Is Critical in Undoing Structural Racism." We were given handouts and then walked through a couple of the exercises. I liked the discussion on whiteness and white supremacy. We were advised to "complicate the conversation" in order to unpack layers of racism bigotry.

Sally reminded me of the excellent opening stretching session and the riveting and illuminating performance by four women in full burka of "We're Muslim, Don't Panic."

Facing Race was a welcoming and impressive gathering of activists and organizers. I'd be happy to go again next year.

Creating Change

By Ruth Debra, 1944, and Jan Griesinger, 1942

Creating Change is the annual conference of the National Gay/Lesbian Task Force. Attending from OLOC (along with 3,000 others) in January in Atlanta were Ruth Debra, Bonnie Wagner, Sally Tatnall, and Jan Griesinger. We did a workshop titled "Old Is Not a Four Letter Word: Ageism through the Ages." We also held a "Lesbians 60 and over" caucus. Ageism has never been addressed in a plenary, and we continue to lobby for this with no success. The next conference will be January 28–February 2, 2014 in Houston. Registration is free for those 65 and over.

The all-day institute on Racial Justice gave us some tools to analyze our progress and will be very useful to OLOC. We all attended the Lesbian Caucus and were very clear that we want the Task Force to have much more emphasis on Lesbians. Dr. Glenda Russell, an OLOC member from Colorado, presented an excellent workshop on the effects of anti-LGBT campaigns and attitudes. A workshop on and by out undocumented LGBT youth was also excellent. There was a great deal of emphasis on immigration and the imperative for the LGBT communities to join in this struggle.

Vera Martin (OLOC co-founder who died last year) was mentioned in the memorial slides and from the stage, and many people asked about her. Vera left a lasting impression on all whose paths she crossed and will be greatly missed.

Silver Threads

By Bonnie Wagner, 1942

Attending Silver Threads as a representative of OLOC was a new experience for me. I enjoyed meeting new people and discussing OLOC's work. Silver Threads is primarily a social organization. The OLOC workshop had the most substance. Many women approached me to say how much they enjoyed our presentation. A presenter at one of the other workshops referred to workers in nursing homes as the bottom of the food chain. We took issue with this comment and tried to educate the workshop participants about ageism and classism in her comments. I felt that the presence of OLOC members gave a

nice reminder on what it means to be an Old Lesbian. We offered suggestions about how future workshops might have more substance and relevance.
