

Welcome and Memorial Tribute

Rick Rosendall, GLAA President
GLAA 45th Anniversary Reception
Policy Restaurant and Lounge
April 21, 2016

Good evening and welcome. 45 years ago, what was then the Gay Activists Alliance was born in the aftermath of our city's first congressional election, propelled by the impressive showing of openly gay candidate Frank Kameny. Today, few places on earth are as welcoming to LGBT folk as ours; yet still we struggle, as Dr. King said, to be true to what our nation's Founders said on paper. As long as there is intolerance and injustice, the coalitions we have formed and reformed over the years will be called to address new challenges.

Our liberal city can feel like an oasis from the intolerance and ignorance being stoked across the country. Yet much remains to be done, as our 2016 policy brief, "Building on Victory," documents. And still as Washingtonians we are denied full representation in Congress. This evening we celebrate the heritage of those who paved the way for us; we honor distinguished service in the present and recent past; and we recommit ourselves to vigilance and public engagement moving forward.

Whether under our banner or others, a new generation will answer the call of activism. We have met some of them in local schools where we were invited to talk about political activism. They are driven by changed expectations that we helped make possible.

Before we proceed, we must mourn a loss. We dedicate this reception to our friend Jerry Clark, who passed away earlier this month. He was widely respected and loved for the wisdom, dedication, and generosity he gave to many people and causes.

Two years ago our Vice President for Administration, Kevin Davis, stood here to present Jerry's Distinguished Service Award. As I draw from that citation, I sadly change to the past tense:

Jerry was Chair of the D.C. Statehood Coalition, political director of D.C. for Democracy, and a board member of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. He served as co-chair of the Whitman-Walker spring gala, and member of the Democratic National Committee's Gay and Lesbian Leadership Council. He served as co-chair of the board of what is now the National LGBTQ Task Force. On issue after issue, Jerry lent his expertise and offered a hand. His energy and commitment were an example to others.

I want to add something else. We are not entitled to other people's trust. Even if you spend decades working to deserve that trust, it cannot truly exist unless it is freely given. Jerry won trust and affection across the spectrum of our diverse community. We will miss his service, his friendship, and his counsel. May he rest in peace. Please join me in a moment of silence.