



David A. Steinberg,
President NLGJA

Over the past several decades, there's no question that there have been huge leaps and bounds in coverage of the good gay life. Testimony to this is the white-knuckle commitment of associations such as America's **National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association**, best known for breaking that ground; being the driver behind getting those pivotal pieces under the media lens and into the limelight.

Founded in 1990 and headquartered in Washington, DC, NLGJA comprises 22 chapters. That number could change to 23. The next stop for the organization is Canada. On September 10- 3, 2009, NLGJA will hold its National Convention and LGBT Summit in Montréal, Québec.

We're talking today with **David A. Steinberg**, NLGJA's National President.

David is a Copy Desk Chief/Stylebook Editor at the San Francisco Chronicle; but more to the point, he's been on the NLGJA board since 2001 and has been on the Executive Committee since 2004 (first as treasurer and, since last year, as president).

NLGJA is an organization that's been of great service to all gay and lesbian readers. But one, today, that needs more recognition in order to build its membership and further strengthen its impact on journalism product.

That's where Canada can come in. For the most part, gays working in the journalism field will have heard of this association. But many queer folk outside of the media milieu may not know the actual vital role that NLGJA plays. It not only supports the best journalists but ensures the fairest and most free press, as we all collectively as a community work to ensure that our civil rights are promoted and protected. Cross-border liaison work with NLGJA could well be the light that illuminates our rainbow flag in these dark days of the downturn.

So, take a few minutes to learn about David's work on the ground and how NLGJA is serving us all by building community. And maybe listening to a little shoptalk won't hurt you either.

The next stop is Canada: NLGJA turns to us

“I would be excited if a dedicated group of journalists in non-U.S. markets are interested in building a chapter base” – David A. Steinberg, President of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association speaking to us from San Francisco, California (May 13, 2009).

Noting that NLGJA is weathering the current economic storm, David says, “We’ve really matured as an organization; but our primary focus hasn’t changed: Working from within the industry for fair and accurate coverage of LGBT issues. In the early years, we often had the most impact by working to ensure that LGBT journalists could work openly in their newsroom so that we could be a voice inside the newsroom for fair coverage.”

He adds, “More recently, we’ve tried to make an impact by monitoring coverage of all types of media – online, broadcast, print – and responding quickly when we see bad coverage. We work to educate our fellow journalists about issues to help them improve their own coverage. And finally, in these difficult times for the media, we have really ramped up the professional development programs that we offer to our members. By helping folks improve their skills, we make them more valuable employees (or freelancers) who can continue to shape coverage.”

One of David’s priorities has been this: “I’ve really tried hard to make sure NLGJA is inclusive, offers concrete benefits for members, and listens to what people want and need. Especially recently, with all the cutbacks in the industry, it’s so important to give people the tools they need to survive.”

“We have, for now, been primarily focused on revitalizing and stabilizing our domestic chapters, especially as the economic downturn has hit our members and their employers so hard.”

In terms of new directions, David points out, “We have had a trans and allies task force. Most of the support we’re able to offer has been of the one-on-one variety. When someone gets in touch with us, we’ll work to address needs and put that person in touch with the appropriate parties. Former national

board member/secretary/VP for print, Ina Fried, has been a great resource for other transgender members.”

“We are also looking to jump-start our campaign to promote employment protection by media companies for gender identity. Our support for lesbian members is also mostly informal, as our women’s task force and listserv have been fairly inactive recently. Our strategic plan sets a goal for increasing the proportion of women in both the membership and NLGJA leadership. We also try to make sure there are programs at the national convention that are of interest specifically to women. The most popular is the women’s networking dinner (though men are welcome to attend); but we’ve also held panels on women’s health issues (and trans health issues and coverage).”

So, where does Canada fit into the conversation? David is unequivocal. “I would be excited if a dedicated group of journalists in non-U.S. markets are interested in building a chapter base.”

That’s all we need to hear. Let’s get on it people! For Canadians interested in promoting coverage of gay issues and doing cross-border network and solidarity work, this is like music to our ears. Especially since we don’t have a specifically gay journalism association of our own. And that’s got to change. Given the economic climate, the best scenario we can wish for is for queer-identified journalists to garner all the support they can get. That’s why raising awareness about NLGJA is so important. The suddenly forced-to-be-freelance writers need to be aware of the new networks that are developing.

Visit www.nlgja.org for more information on the organization and the Montréal convention.



National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association