

A CELEBRATION OF HEROES AND ROLE MODELS FOR
LESBIAN AND GAY AMERICANS. THE MEN AND WOMEN
IN THIS BOOK HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR

COMMUNITIES AND TO SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. EACH OF
UNCOMMON

THEM SHARES A COMMON THREAD OF EXTRAORDINARY

COURAGE. THEIR STORIES ARE TRANSFORMING PUBLIC

HEROES
PERCEPTIONS OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY.



Photographed by Ron Reagan

Mica England

ACTIVIST

We must begin to stop the hatred within our own spheres of influence. Hatred and negativity will cause our destruction.

Standing before the Dallas City Council in July 1989 as they considered a resolution in support of the students in China fighting for democracy, Mica England held up an equal employment opportunity poster and demanded justice: “I responded to an advertisement for Dallas police officers in the *Tulsa Oklahoma World*. Before the recruiters invited me to Dallas to take the examination, I told them I am gay,” England said to the Council. “But when I arrived they refused to let me take the test because I openly and willingly admitted that I am gay. Why is there no democracy for *me* in Dallas?”

England’s pointed remarks totally disrupted the meeting. One council member demanded the city attorney provide legal basis for the police department’s exclusionary ban, and the mayor tried to save face by hastily adjourning the meeting. Another council member asked, “Is this resolution in support of all Chinese students or only the heterosexual ones?” In the uproar, one thing was clear: the Council had no intention of dealing with the issue publicly. But England sued in 1990, and the Council was forced to hold a public hearing in January 1992. Lasting until 2:30 a.m. with six hundred people in attendance, the meeting was angry and emotionally charged. Conservative and religious groups put homophobic slogans and banners all around the room, even placing *No Homo Cops* badges on infants.

The Council voted to continue the hiring ban on gays and lesbians. But weeks after the hearing, England won her lawsuit. The court ruled that the rationale for refusing to hire gay and lesbian officers (the Texas homosexual sodomy law) was unconstitutional, and ordered the Dallas Police Department to allow England to apply for a position. It was a much larger victory than anyone had anticipated. When five gay and lesbian Texans later sued successfully to overturn the state’s homosexual sodomy law, the Texas Supreme Court refused to hear the state’s appeal, citing England’s case as precedent.

Mica England had one desire: she had wanted to be a police officer. Although she used her hard-won legal victory, and applied for a position on the force, she later realized the court case had made her too famous, and her effectiveness would be compromised. Sadly, she abandoned the dream that had set her on her trail-blazing path. But in her single-minded determination to reach a personal goal, England had made Texas history. That’s no small thing.

I am very impressed with Mica. She’s a real fighter and I’m glad she won her case.

—Larry King
LARRY KING LIVE



Linda Morales

ACTIVIST

In 1986, I sat down with my mother and discussed my participation in a gay and lesbian class action suit against the State of Texas. She asked me why I wanted to tell the whole world about my lifestyle. I responded, 'Not the whole world, just Texas.'

Linda Morales thought that she would be denying her mother's moral teachings if she didn't participate in the lawsuit challenging the Texas homosexual sodomy law. Even so, her mother was uncomfortable with the public nature of her stand. But eventually, her mother told her, "I've always known you to have deep convictions and that it's important for you to stand up for them." Morales then joined four others in the suit, and agreed to be the named plaintiff in *Morales, et. al vs. the State of Texas*. "It was important for people to know that an Hispanic female was involved in our lawsuit," says Morales. "It didn't have to be Linda Morales, I just wanted someone who was a woman and an Hispanic."

Morales is not only a lesbian activist, she is also involved in Mexican-American and women's issues. "The lesbian and gay community is not immune to the ills of the larger society," she says. "And it was because of the racism and sexism in the gay and lesbian community that I put my name on the lawsuit." It was an important statement. Her case was eventually thrown out, but only because the court ruled that another case, *England vs. the City of Dallas*, had already established the legal basis for overturning the Texas sodomy law.

No matter. For Morales, the case was a victory—another step in a long road of using adversity to overcome discrimination. Even as a child, when her mother told her that girls shouldn't play the guitar, Morales taught herself. In Uvalde, her small southwest Texas hometown, where Mexican-Americans were expected to speak English, Morales was paddled in front of her fifth grade class for speaking Spanish. Yet in high school, she became the first Hispanic female elected student body president. And three months after she became involved in the Mexican-American Democrats de Houston, Morales was elected president despite the fact that this group is not a gay and lesbian organization.

Of her two brothers and one sister, only Morales' younger brother is heterosexual. "My kid brother has a lot of my father in him," she says. "He is very accepting and supportive. He's proud of me and I'm sure if my father were alive today, he'd be proud of me too."

Linda Morales is a rare, singular, unique person. If only I could bottle her energy.

—Yolanda Navarro Flores

TEXAS HOUSE MEMBER



Glen Maxey

TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

When I was first elected to the Texas Legislature, the big joke on the House floor was, 'You better move your seat or you're going to have to sit next to the queer.' In some ways, I'm glad that happened on my very first day. Most often, we can't shine a bright light on homophobia and discrimination because it's done behind our backs. But I got to walk into the legislature knowing exactly who told the faggot jokes, who was embarrassed by this blatantly bigoted display, and who wanted to help.

It was a bruising campaign. Even Anne Richards had advised him against it. His opponents tried to make an issue of his private life. The race received national media attention. But none of that mattered when in 1991, Glen Maxey became the first openly gay man ever elected to the Texas State Legislature. In fact, he was the first openly gay man to even *run* for a seat.

Maxey represents Travis County, which includes Austin, the state capital. His friend, Governor Richards had been worried that even if he were elected, he would have to be perfect on everyone's pet issue, or that he might be viewed as a single issue legislator—the “gay one.” That didn't faze Maxey. “My objective,” he says, “was to be the environmentalist, or the consumer advocate, who just *happens* to be gay.” During his first term, he made legislative ethics reform his issue. When a colleague asked how he had the courage to take on the House leadership, he responded, “Once you've gone through the terror and the agony of coming out to your family, friends, and co-workers, standing in front of this legislature and introducing a bill is a piece of cake.”

As he has gained political experience, Maxey has found new and even deeper connections with his gay constituents. “I've had teenagers walk up to me and say, ‘When I grow up I want to be just like you.’ When that happens, I get the message deep in my being,” he says. “Or a sixteen-year-old gay young man who told me that because of my example he had decided to go into AIDS law. See, it's all about the fact that lesbian and gay youth desperately need role models so that they can envision themselves growing up to be what they want to be.”

As long as I've known him, Glen Maxey has been an activist for the people. As a member of the legislature, he has been a fighter on a whole host of issues. I am proud that we have fought the fight together on the same side all these years. And I'm proud that he is my friend.

—Ann Richards

TEXAS GOVERNOR

Photographed by Bill Woodford
Courtesy Palomo



Juan R. Palomo

JOURNALIST

I'm not feeling too proud of myself today. Paul Broussard was beaten to death with nail-covered two-by-fours in another hate-filled attack on gay people. Broussard's mother said she didn't understand how this could have happened to her son. Well, I can understand. I have listened in silence as a co-worker suggested going out 'to beat up some queers.' I have remained silent as an admirer urged me not to write anymore about fags, because my readers would be upset. I know that such things are a result of the silence of people like me. I feel a special responsibility to speak out because I have this forum and, because like Broussard, I am gay. I have to deal with the fact that unless people like me are willing to risk the comfort and safety of our closeted lives, we will never stop the hatred. I didn't know Paul Broussard, but I know I have a responsibility to ensure that Houston does not forget him, or how he died—or why.

When Juan Palomo wrote those words for the *Houston Post*, his column was censored by his editors. They didn't want him to come out in print, so they forced him to remove the part about his being gay. It was controversial enough that Palomo was so angry about the fag-bashing death of the young gay banker Paul Broussard. When word got out that Palomo couldn't be out, the *Houston Press*, an alternative paper, interviewed the columnist and wrote a story subtitled, "The *Houston Post*'s Juan Palomo had something important to tell his readers. His own paper wouldn't let him, so we will." After the article appeared, Palomo was fired for disloyalty.

His firing made national news. The paper attempted to counter the embarrassing publicity by trotting out various establishment Hispanic leaders to show how inclusive and broadminded they are. That only triggered a flood of ethnic outrage. Palomo is the son of migrant farm workers from Mexico, and he continued working farms with his family until his last year of college. He may have been queer, but to the Hispanic community, by God he was *their* queer. Various Hispanic groups, along with Queer Nation, picketed the *Post*. Palomo's coworkers signed petitions and some even joined the picket lines.

Juan Palomo was re-hired. And his column in the *Houston Post* now deals with being gay—as well as with being Hispanic, being American, and living in urban Texas. His power comes from writing about what it means to be human.

Juan Palomo has become a symbol of the difficulties gay and lesbian journalists have to overcome once their sexual orientation is known. His attempt to come out publicly in his column was unprecedented and courageous.

—Leroy Aaron

NATIONAL LESBIAN
AND GAY JOURNALISTS
ASSOCIATION