

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Anti-Police Abuse Coalition
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COMMUNITY SCHEDULES SPEAK-OUT ON POLICE ABUSE

Lesbians and Gays Commemorate 2nd Anniversary of Police Raid on Blues Bar

On Saturday, September 29, 1984, from 2 pm to 7 pm, a coalition of groups and individuals in the lesbian and gay male communities will sponsor a speak-out against police brutality at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center, 208 W. 13th St., Manhattan. The event commemorates the second anniversary of the police attack on Blues, a midtown Manhattan bar patronized predominantly by Black and other Third World lesbians and gay men. In the Blues attack, some 25 police officers stormed into the bar, locked the door and proceeded to beat, harass and abuse both the patrons and the employees, because they were people of color and because they were homosexual. Two years later, the police who committed the attack have not been disciplined and remain on active duty.

Barbara Stephenson, speaking as a member of the Coalition, said, "We see the assault on Blues, like the recent police murder of Michael Stewart, as part of the increasing racist and right-wing violence directed at Black, Latin, Asian and Native peoples, women, unionists, undocumented workers and political activists, as well as at lesbians and gay men."

In the lesbian and gay male communities, police abuse takes a number of different forms, ranging from beatings and harassment on the street and raids on lesbian and gay bars, baths and meeting places, to entrapment, and failure to enforce the law when the rights of a lesbian or gay man have been violated. In New York City at large, people of color bear the brunt of police attacks, as Rep. Conyers' recent hearings confirmed, and the same is true in the lesbian and gay communities. Lesbians and gay men who are especially visible (such as transvestites and transexuals) or especially vulnerable (such as street people, disabled people and the very young) are also frequent targets of police brutality.

The Coalition, which was initiated by Black and White Men Together/New York, in June 1984, organized a "Remember Blues" contingent in the Lesbian and Gay Pride March where participants wore black and blue armbands and carried banners and chanted slogans addressing the issue of police brutality. APAC also plans to publish and distribute a brochure describing what to do when confronted by police violence and to publicize emergency "hotlines" to call in case of an attack.

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The September 29th Speak-out is planned to document incidents of police brutality within our communities, to provide support and information to victims of police abuse, to bring people together to organize a network capable of mobilizing at a moment's notice to fight police brutality, and to make the police accountable for all their actions in every community. As Stephen Durham, a member of APAC, said, "We are actively trying to break the silence about police abuse in the lesbian and gay community and aggressively build alliances with other communities fighting police abuse throughout the city."

People are invited to testify and to help organize for the Speak-out, and new groups and individuals, lesbian and gay or otherwise, are always welcome to join the Anti-Police Abuse Coalition.

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