



## **NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE MOURNS DEATH OF ACTIVIST**

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WASHINGTON - The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force mourns the death of Eric Rofes, a leader, activist, visionary, former board member and dear friend to the Task Force. He died June 26 as the result of a heart attack.

"Words cannot express the loss we all feel. For more than 30 years, Eric was our movement's visionary," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "He was an organizer without par, a brilliant thinker and writer, and above all else, a wonderful person and friend. Our hearts go out to his partner Crispin Hollings and all the members of his extended family."

Eric Rofes started his activism in the 1970s in Boston where he worked on Gay Community News. He was a founder of Boston's first group for LGBT teachers, two of the first LGBT youth groups in the country and the first Boston-based group focused on organizing gay and lesbian voters, Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance. He was a founding member of the Boston Men's Childcare Collective, which provided childcare at women's music concerts and shelters for battered women. He was an elected delegate to the 1980 White House Conference on the Family.

From 1985 to 1989, Rofes served as executive director of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, the largest LGBT nonprofit organization in the world. During his tenure, the center initiated some of the nation's first HIV prevention programs, created a shelter for LGBT and homeless youth and opened the first and largest HIV testing site in California. In 1989, he became executive director of Shanti Project, a pioneering AIDS service group in San Francisco.

He served as a member of the Los Angeles AIDS Commission and the San Francisco Ryan White Council, and was a board member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the National Lesbian & Gay Health Association and the Funding Exchange's OutFund for Gay Liberation. Rofes co-chaired the Southern California No on LaRouche Committee, which successfully defeated a statewide AIDS quarantine initiative. At the time of his death, he served on the board of the Woodhull Freedom Foundation.

He led the organizing of three national summits focused on the health and wellness of gay male communities, including the most recent summit in October 2005 in Salt Lake City. From 1999 to the time of his death, Rofes was an associate professor of education at Humboldt State University in Arcata, Calif.

"Eric Rofes was one of the most extraordinary voices in our community. He spoke and suffused others with the joy of being who we are," said Task Force board member Loren Ostrow, co-chair of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. "His leadership in the communities where he lived, and in the national community, contributed enormously to our understanding of the need for honest discussions about the LGBT community and its issues. Eric's death is a loss to all of us, of a rare voice of truth."

He was a major contributor to the Task Force's Creating Change conference, which he attended annually and where he presented some of the most challenging and stimulating material.

In addition, he published 12 books, including "Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in an Ongoing Epidemic" (Haworth, 1996) and "Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures" (Haworth, 1998).

"Eric Rofes was a strong feminist who was never afraid to put his privilege on the line for those around him," said Kerry Lobel, former executive director of the Task Force. "He bore witness to every major issue for three decades as he talked about war, homelessness, HIV, violence, health, reframing our families, sex and sexuality. His gentle spirit will be sorely missed."