

More on the Winslow Street Affair

AEGIS Internet News Special Edition

(Editor's Note: The following article is in three sections. The first section, describing the latest happening in the Winslow Street matter, helps to provide the background for the thought-provoking editorial by Dallas Denny. The third section is by Allison Laing, an IFGE insider.)

Winslow Street Whistle Blower Dismissed "For Cause"

Kerri Reeder, the trustee of the IFGE-administered Winslow Street Fund who alerted the transgender community that the International Foundation for Gender Education had used Winslow Street monies for its internal operations, has said that she received a letter from Winslow Street fund trustee and IFGE Board member Abby Zapin informing her that she has been dismissed for cause as a WSF trustee.

In an open letter sent to the transgender community on February 5, Reeder wrote, "After waiting for more than nine days after the IFGE Board Meeting, I received a letter from Abby Zapin explaining that I was dismissed, For Cause, as a WSF Trustee. The Cause was that I did not contact the Trustees or IFGE Board with my dispute but took it public."

Reeder disputes this: "Yes, I did take it public after I received no response from the Chairs of Winslow Street and IFGE... For the public record, I contacted both Abby [Zapin] and Linda Buten via E-mail and the receipt on my message was confirmed by AOL. I sent by US Mail the text of those notes to all IFGE Board Members. With no response, I turned to an open forum because the Chairs of IFGE and WSF and the Board of Directors would not respond. It was my duty as a Trustee to see that any action done by the Trustees lived up to the trust contributors had when they made donations."

The Winslow Street Fund, named

for a street in Provincetown, Massachusetts, was set up for the transgender community, and is administered by IFGE. For years, IFGE's solicitations for donations to the Winslow Street Fund promised that WSF monies would never be used for IFGE's internal operations—yet last October, IFGE borrowed \$10,000 from the fund. Reeder and others, who were aware of IFGE's plans to borrow the money, approached IFGE staff and board members and WSF trustees beforehand during Fantasia Fair to voice their concern.

On November 13, Reeder widely distributed by e-mail a letter voicing her concerns about the WSF Loan to IFGE. In it she detailed her attempts to communicate with both IFGE and her fellow WSF trustees: "On November 13, hearing nothing, I decided to go to the Community and forwarded my letter..."

In her November 13 communique, Reeder stated that her primary concerns were that there was no loan document and that proper WSF procedures had not been followed.

Reeder claims her action was to "preserve propriety, honesty, and ethics which continue to plague IFGE and its activities. It is to preserve the Winslow Street Fund." Reeder has called for the replacement of WSF trustees, herself included, by new trustees with a well-developed sense of ethics. As for the loan, Reeder has consistently asked that the community be provided with evidence that a promissory note was signed.

Nancy Nangeroni, Executive Director of IFGE, confirmed that Reeder's dismissal had been discussed and decided upon at a meeting of the IFGE board, with a decision being made to dismiss Reeder for violating WSF rules, including confidentiality.

Nangeroni said that a promissory note exists and was signed by herself and other parties in December. She said she does not feel comfortable providing Reeder with a copy of the

note, but that Reeder is welcome to come by the IFGE offices in Boston to view it. Reeder lives in Rhode Island.

Nangeroni emphasized that the IFGE board and the WSF trustees and she herself all feel that the loan was not improper, but was in the best interest of the community. She said, "I want to be clear that I would like to give people confidence that IFGE is being run responsibly."

A number of transgender activists have been critical of the loan. The most vocal has been Judy Osborne. Her November column in the Transgender Community Forum referred to the loan as "Rape on Winslow Street." JoAnn Roberts also criticized the loan in her column in Renaissance News and Views.

Despite having been warned beforehand by Reeder and others that the loan would be controversial, neither IFGE nor WSF informed the community about the loan until after Reeder's November letter was mailed.

Responding to Reeder's criticism, Nangeroni wrote last fall in an e-mail message that Reeder could no longer be a WSF trustee after going public with the news of the loan.

IFGE Consistently Disappoints An Editorial by Dallas Denny

(Editor's Note: The following editorial does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Renaissance Transgender Association, Inc.)

The International Foundation for Gender Education seems unable to differentiate between its own welfare and that of the transgender community. In authorizing a loan from a fund it promised never to touch and then congratulating itself that it was a proper thing to do because it was "for the good of the community," the IFGE board is engaging in circular logic. In failing to inform the community of the loan, IFGE has been irre-

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sponsible. And in continuing to force out those who, like Kerri Reeder, attempt to keep it on an ethical course, IFGE is sowing the seeds of its eventual demise.

Considering that a number of community activists warned IFGE beforehand that a loan from the Winslow Street Fund would be controversial, it's mystifying that IFGE did not tell the community what it had done until it was caught with its hand in the proverbial cookie jar. It seems rather maladaptive, like a burglar who decides to ransack the house even though there is a police car parked outside—or perhaps it is merely arrogance, a serene assumption by its board that IFGE is not accountable for its actions, whatever they may be. However, I suspect the real answer is simple inefficiency.

For an organization that considers itself the future of the transgender community, IFGE consistently disappoints. Considering its large budget, it is decidedly underproductive. Its publications are uninspired and often amateurish. Its database of support groups is famous for not being updated. The statistics it gives reporters often seem to be made up on the spot. It uncritically distributes information, sending flyers about questionable procedures like needle-less hair removal schemes and herbal hormones alongside flyers for more legitimate products and services.

In a word, IFGE does not seem to

be the polished, professional, and efficient organization the transgender community needs, but rather is more like an overgrown support group with a \$300,000 budget.

IFGE is in perpetual financial crisis, bailing itself out once or twice a year by sending out panicky fundraising letters—which causes one to wonder why it imagines it will be able to pay the WSF loan back instead of sliding more deeply into debt. It is in perpetual identity crisis, having walked away from the one thing it was truly good at—being an umbrella organization—in favor of doing gender education it is intellectually unprepared to do. And it is in perpetual moral crisis. The present instance—IFGE's failure to disclose the loan from WSF until forced to do so—is but one of many ways IFGE continues to disappoint.

ANOTHER OPINION ON WINSLOW STREET

by Alison Laing

When Kerri Reeder initially raised issues relating to alleged improprieties regarding the loan of Winslow Street Funds to IFGE, I attempted to remain aloof. There were several reasons for me taking this position. First, I felt strongly that this was an issue internal to WSF trustees. Second, I felt I was too close to the situation, since I was Executive Director of IFGE when we came under extreme financial pressure, and I saw this loan as the only solution for IFGE being able to continue operations. Third, Kerri Reeder is both a personal friend

and neighbor, and I was afraid that any stance that I took might jeopardize that relationship. Finally, I felt strongly that IFGE had done no wrong.

After the decision of the Board to endorse Abby Saypen's recommendation for the dismissal of Kerri as a WSF Trustee for cause, I began to rethink the situation. I had read most of the material that Kerri had submitted to the Board and which others (Judy Osborne, Joan Goodnight, Dallas Denny and JoAnn Roberts) had expounded upon to varying degrees in the TG media. While I went along with the vote for dismissal, (not saying "Yea" but not saying "Nay" either), I was uneasy after the meeting. It seemed to me that those of us who were at the January 24, 1998 IFGE Board meeting may have acted in haste, especially since Kerri had not been given any chance to defend her position.

I began to restudy the issues and now believe that we, the Board of Directors, must revisit this action. I have discussed this with several other board members, including some who were not at the January board meeting and have found that they, too, agree that this issue and the action of the Board should be reexamined. I have also been in communication with other community leaders regarding this action. Most of them feel that IFGE is whitewashing this situation.

The underlying problem seems to be how this loan was handled. This

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Renaissance Library Report

By Lee Etscovitz, Ed.D.,
Renaissance National Librarian

Wind and rain did not stop a hardy core of participants from attending the monthly meeting of the Library Discussion Group on Wednesday evening, February 4. Two guests, both female to male (FTM) transsexuals, shared their transgender journeys with the group. The discussion was lively, thought-provoking, and extremely interesting, to say the least, especially since everyone, including the guests, was able to compare the transgender experience as seen from two different starting points.

The next meeting, in keeping with

the first Wednesday of every month schedule, will be on Wednesday, March 4 at the Woods (where the Renaissance National Office and Library are located) from 8:00 to 9:30 PM. Everyone is welcome, including transvestites, transsexuals, male to females, female to males, the intersexed, significant others, and simply anyone with an interest in the transgender phenomenon. It is in terms of whoever is present that the discussion takes on a form of its own for each meeting. Dr. Lee Etscovitz is the discussion leader.

The Renaissance Library has benefited recently from the efforts of

Michele Lynn and Jessica Brandon who weeded out old issues from the file which contains the newsletters from other transgender organizations around the United States and in several parts of the English-speaking world. This effort now makes it possible for the library to use its limited space for the more current issues as we receive them. The file is organized by states and foreign countries and is useful, for example, if someone is taking a trip and wants the name and telephone number of a transgender organization in the place being visited. So thank you, Michele and Jessica.



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does not mean that the Board resolutions calling for new Trustees, redefining the IFGE relationship with Winslow Street and the operating procedures of Winslow Street, were out

of order. These must be done, and as soon as possible. I eschew controversy, but this issue will not go away until we have a fair and complete resolution that will hopefully help recover WSF and IFGE reputations and show the community that IFGE can be responsive.



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