

## The Deviant's Trove

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The mission of The Mattachine Society of Washington D.C. (“MSDC”) is to uncover documents – once hidden in government files – that detail the long-standing history of discrimination against the LGBT community. In furtherance of that mission, nine years ago, the MSDC partnered with the law firm McDermott Will & Emery LLP (“McDermott”) to submit dozens of requests for documents concerning the LGBT community to various federal and state government agencies, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (or its state law equivalents). And, when government agencies have refused to reveal their secrets, the MSDC/McDermott partnership has successfully pursued litigation to make public those materials that were long kept secret.

These efforts have paid off. Over the course of nine years, the MSDC/McDermott partnership has uncovered thousands of documents concerning the treatment of LGBT Americans by their federal and state governments. Unsurprisingly, these documents reveal a deeply held animus against the LGBT community by elected officials, political appointees, and career civil servants.

But this partnership has been more than just compiling an archive for historic documents. It has also served as a nationally-recognized thought leader on the history of animus against the LGBT community. We were the first to uncover the breadth of the infamous “Sex Deviate” program, started by none-other than J. Edgar Hoover. We filed a nationally-acclaimed [amicus curiae brief with the U.S. Supreme Court](#) in the 2015 marriage equality cases, *Obergefell v. Hodges* – a brief that documented the 'culture of animus' that infected every level of our national government for more than four decades. We drafted and published a comprehensive white paper entitled [The Pernicious Myth of Conversion Therapy: How Love In Action Perpetrated a Fraud on America](#). Like the amicus brief, the white paper contained links to historic documents – these evidencing the federal government’s early conversion therapy practices committed upon scores of LGBT Americans. Our work has been praised and featured in the Washington Post, the New York Times, National Public Radio, and the Associated Press. We have appeared several times at the National Press Club to discuss the results of our unique partnership and how our work informs current-day policies related to LGBT Americans. And, our partnership has been the subject of an Edward R. Murrow award-winning documentary, “Uniquely Nasty,” reported and written by Mike Isikoff.

At the same time that the MSDC/McDermott partnership was gathering and analyzing the long-standing animus against LGBT Americans, historian and author Eric Cervini was engaging in archival research of his own about the life and work of the MSDC’s original founder, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny. Dr. Cervini’s research culminated in his newly published book, “The Deviant’s War: The Homosexual vs. the United States of America.” In “The Deviant’s War”, Dr. Cervini tells the fascinating story of how Dr. Kameny went from being a Harvard-trained astronomer to a civil rights pioneer after he was fired from his position with the Army Map Service for refusing to answer questions about his sexual orientation. Like the MSDC, Dr. Cervini similarly relies heavily on documents he was able to uncover from various sources

(including some uncovered by the MSDC) as the foundation for his retelling of Dr. Kameny's story and the gay rights movement he helped lead in the 1960s.

We are delighted, therefore, to take this opportunity to highlight some of the documents that play a prominent role in "The Deviant's War" collected as part of the MSDC's and McDermott's nine year collaboration in archive activism. Below, we provide summaries of some of those documents to aid your review. We hope that these documents serve as a reminder of the progress made by the LGBT civil rights movement, while cautioning that significant work remains to achieve full equality for LGBT Americans.

It is particularly important "The Deviant's War" comes out now – in June of 2020. This year, the LGBT community is looking for different ways to celebrate Pride in the wake of the social distancing requirements put in place by state and local governments to curb the spread of COVID-19. As Dr. Cervini so eloquently details in his book, Frank Kameny had many admirable traits. He never quit. He adapted and changed his methods to fit the times. And, he never lost sight of the goal: full equality for LGBT Americans and every human being. At a time when the means of protest are very different, and when parades and marches take place via Zoom, it is important that the LGBT Community and our allies adapt, never quit, and always keep the goal of equality in sight. By remembering and reflecting on the life of Frank Kameny, we can all take the opportunity to acknowledge the progress made by the gay rights movement to which Dr. Kameny dedicated his life.