

Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C.

“Do you want to remember or forget?”

A Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. and McDermott Will & Emery white paper calls for the U.S. Government to acknowledge and apologize for the “federal assault” on LGBT Americans over seven decades.

June 8--“The time has come,” the Mattachine/McDermott Will & Emery paper begins, “for the U.S. Government to acknowledge and apologize for its mistreatment of LGBT Americans.” The paper continues, “For decades, the animus against LGBT Americans poisoned every institution of the United States Government and destroyed the lives of tens of thousands of federal workers and military personnel.”

“Unfortunately, Congress itself led the charge,” the paper emphasizes, with “relentless purging” of all LGBT Americans from public service in a systematic way. “Not once has Congress acknowledged this misconduct or apologized for it,” the white paper states before enumerating the evidentiary history that requires a reckoning. The paper outlines how Congress has made six such formal apologies over the past thirty years including to Native Hawaiians, Chinese immigrants, Japanese Americans, Native Americans and twice to African Americans. The paper asks Congress to consider that many of America’s allies have already apologized for their mistreatment of LGBT citizens, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia, Spain, The Netherlands and Brazil. Most recently, the head of Britain’s MI6 intelligence service apologized for excluding LGBT employees--it was “wrong, unjust and discriminatory,” he said.

Entitled, **“America’s Promise of Reconciliation and Redemption: The Need for an Official Acknowledgment and Apology for the Historic Government Assault on LGBT Federal Employees and Military Personnel,”** the paper is the outcome of a two-year research project involving a core team of five attorneys with the international law firm McDermott Will & Emery and the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. led by Mattachine Board Member Jeff Trammell. The McDermott team was led by the firm’s partners Lisa A. Linsky in New York and Paul Thompson in Washington, D.C.

“We were inspired by the fundamental question, ‘Do you want to remember or forget?’, posed to governments worldwide when considering grave wrongs committed against their citizens,” Charles Francis, Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. President, said. “We believe the U.S. government’s assault over seven decades on LGBT Americans is such a wrong requiring acknowledgment and apology.

Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. co-founder Pate Felts said, “After ten years of ‘archive activism’ research into how tens of thousands of LGBT men and women were investigated, fired, discharged and ruined by the federal government, we knew that a reckoning in the form of acknowledgment and apology is long overdue.”

“Indeed, we are honored the white paper and our work over the past ten years as ‘archive activists’ is both endorsed and profiled by Omar Encarnacion in his book *The Case for Gay Reparations* (Oxford University Press, 2021),” Francis said.

Lisa A. Linsky, New York Litigation Partner at McDermott and lead outside Counsel to Mattachine, said, “Our goal with this white paper was to powerfully lay out the history and legal case for an acknowledgment and apology drawing upon the McDermott team’s research as legal counsel for the past ten years to Mattachine. We dedicate that work to ensuring this terrible history can never be erased, diminished nor repeated.”

Jeff Trammell, Mattachine’s Acknowledgment and Apology project leader, concluded, “The McDermott/Mattachine paper documents the evidentiary history and provides much needed historical context for a Congressional acknowledgment and apology. We believe the time has come to understand and acknowledge the historical animus that LGBT federal employees and military personnel faced for generations from their own government to ensure it can never happen again.”

Trammell is the former Rector (Chair) of the Board of Visitors of the College of William & Mary and has been a national leader in LGBT politics. He served on the Advisory Board of the U.S. Holocaust Museum’s Gay & Lesbian Victims Remembrance Project. He is currently on the Board of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, as well as the Commission overseeing the home of Pres. James Monroe.

###