

Task Force taps Dr. Jaime Grant to head LGBT think tank

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by Chrys Hudson, GayWired

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has appointed Jaime Grant, Ph.D., as director of the Task Force Policy Institute, a leading lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) think tank. Grant succeeds Sean Cahill, Ph.D., who served as Policy Institute director for six years before moving to Gay Mens Health Crisis to serve as its managing director for public policy, research and community health.

Grant, a scholar, writer, researcher and longtime activist in the LGBT and other progressive communities, is widely recognized for her work on the causes and impact of discrimination. Most recently, she was program director for the Ford Foundation's signature leadership awards program, Leadership for a Changing World, at the Advocacy Institute/Institute for Sustainable Communities. Grant also has extensive experience in building resources, infrastructure and management practices for a diverse range of progressive academic and movement-based organizations, including the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Gaea Foundation.

"We looked for someone who could continue the legacy of the Policy Institute's past visionary directors—John D'Emilio, Urvashi Vaid, Sean Cahill—of combining exceptional academic, writing and policy analysis skills and activist heart, and we found that person in Jaime Grant," Task Force Executive Director Matt Foreman said in a release. "She will continue and strengthen the Policy Institute's unique work in racial and economic justice, build the Policy Institute as a catalyst to put forth new ideas, new language and new visions for LGBT equality, and will more directly use our existing body of research to support and push our public policy agenda at the state and national level."

"Jaime Grant knows the university and she knows the world of grassroots organizing. She understands how research can be a tool for social change and how bold new ideas can provoke waves of activism for social justice. This was the vision of the Policy Institute from the beginning, and I can't think of anyone better suited than Jaime to lead it forward," added John D'Emilio, gender studies professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and founding director of the Policy Institute.

"As a community, we have made huge gains over the last 20 years, yet we haven't truly examined the impact of our progress or the possibilities that lie ahead," Grant in a statement. "The Policy Institute will serve as an intellectual town square where activists, thinkers, funders, academics and policy makers can come together. This is also an exciting time for our movement to shape research and for grassroots activists to use it in innovative ways to affect change and support LGBT people in all areas of their lives. The Task Force is one of the rare places where I can bring my two decades of work exploring race, gender, class, and sexuality and put it to use as we build a just world."

Grant lives in Washington, D.C., with her partner and their two children. She began her leadership of the Policy Institute on Nov. 9 and is based in the Task Force's Washington, D.C., office.

