



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Gay Medical Student Alliance records**

1972-2013 [bulk 1973-1975]

MssCol 22318

Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2015.

## Summary

**Creator:** Hellman, Ronald E.

**Title:** Gay Medical Student Alliance records

**Date:** 1972-2013 [bulk 1973-1975]

**Size:** .2 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Donated by Ron Hellman, 2014.

**Abstract:** The Gay Medical Student Alliance (GMSA), one of the earliest gay professional organizations, was founded by gay medical student, Ronald Hellman in 1973. The collection consists of letters sent to GMSA by students around the United States discussing issues of isolation, discrimination, and other concerns common to gay and lesbian medical students, as well as other documentation pertaining to the group.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Original, non-redacted correspondence in folder 8 is restricted until 2053.

**Preferred citation:** Gay Medical Student Alliance records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2015.

## Creator History

The Gay Medical Student Alliance (GMSA), one of the earliest and possibly the first gay medical professional organization, was transitory, existing briefly between 1973 and 1975. It was formed when Ronald E. Hellman, a gay medical student, placed a classified advertisement in *The Village Voice* in January 1973, which read, "Gay Medical Student Alliance" and listed a phone number. Medical students from around the United States and abroad sent letters to GMSA following this ad and subsequent media attention in *Medical World News*, *Hospital Physician*, *The Advocate*, and other magazines and newspapers. Hellman, who went on to become a psychiatrist, was a member of other

gay activist groups, including the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance.

## Scope and Content Note

GMSA served to connect and support gay and lesbian medical students at a time when society at large still viewed homosexuality unfavorably. The medical field in particular categorized homosexuality as a disease or disorder. Openly gay or lesbian doctors, nurses, and medical school professors were nearly unheard of at this time and most gay and lesbian medical students also kept their sexuality secret. Midway through the group's existence, in December of 1973, the American Psychological Association, after mounting pressure from gay and lesbian activists, decided to stop classifying homosexuality as an illness.

The bulk of this small collection consists of correspondence. These letters sent to GMSA by students around the United States discuss issues of isolation, discrimination, and other concerns common to gay and lesbian medical students. The letters have been photocopied by the donor with personal identifying details redacted. Original letters have been sealed in an envelope and are restricted until 2053.

Also included in this collection is documentation pertaining to the group's administration, which consists of a copy of the original *The Village Voice* ad, notes, lists of medical schools, lists of GMSA officers, newspaper and magazine articles. In folder 1, a journal article about GMSA written by Dr. Hellman in 2013 [Hellman, Ronald E. "Letters to the Gay Medical Student Alliance," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 17(2) (2013): 235–246.] can be found.

**Arrangement:** The received order consists of the following 3 sections: Administrative Materials; Correspondence, Redacted; and Correspondence

## Key Terms

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence

### Occupations

Gay activists

Medical students

### Subjects

Gay liberation movement -- United States

Gays

Homosexuality -- United States -- History -- 20th century

Lesbians

Medicine

## **Container List**

- b. 1 f. 1-6    Administrative Materials 1972-2013
- b. 1 f. 7    Correspondence 1973-1975  
              Redacted
- b. 1 f. 8    Correspondence 1973-1975  
              Restricted until 2053.