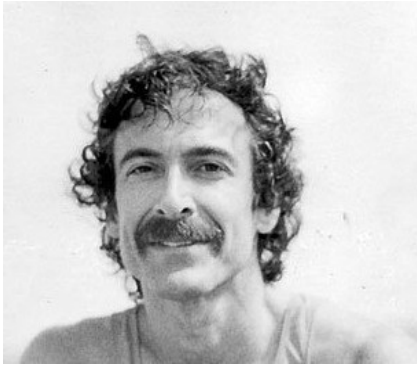


Dennis Rubini



Dennis Rubini was a professor at Temple University where he taught history from 1969 to 1999. He was one of the first openly gay professors on campus. His openness didn't sit well with some of his colleagues.

Dennis was very active in the LGBT community in Philadelphia, both on and off campus. Outside the Temple community, Dennis took a stand in the LGBT-rights movement as a member of the Gay Activist Alliance. He served as president of that organization in the early 1970s.

In 1973, the gay student group at Temple set up a "Kiss the Queer" booth on campus, an action that was met by strong resistance from some students. The administration also had a negative response, but Dennis intervened to keep the club and its members from being punished.

With the help of another openly gay faculty member, Dennis created one of the first courses on gay liberation and gay history in the country, which they taught at Temple for years.

It was a mutual passion for history, a dedication to gay rights, and geographic proximity, that brought Dennis and Arthur Warner together. Arthur lived in New Jersey but was often in Philadelphia. The two may have crossed paths at a meeting of gay activists in the region. Arthur had obtained a doctorate degree in history at Harvard. So the two men had much in common. As a result, Dennis was invited to join the National Committee for Sexual Civil Liberties.

Dennis and Arthur were both active in the American Historical Association. At the AHA's December 1973 business meeting, Dennis, representing the Committee of Gay Historians, proposed a resolution that condemned "any form of harassment or discrimination directed at single and gay women and men and members of all other sexual minorities who respect the rights of others," regardless of criminalization.

In response, president Lynn White asked whether the resolution would "place the association in a position of condoning the breaking of laws." Arthur, co-chair of the National Committee for Sexual Civil Liberties, noted that "the AHA would simply be following in the path of organizations like the American Bar Association, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychiatric Association." Two weeks earlier, the APA Board of Trustees had both approved the declassification of homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder and endorsed the repeal of criminal laws against private consensual sex for adults. The AHA resolution passed 129–38.

Rubini then presented a second, more contentious resolution that would condemn "historical bias" based on "sexism in general or homophobia in particular" and call on "all historians to make available to gay people and all others engaging in consensual sexual acts all facets of their historical birthright."

Rubini accepted one amendment that changed “all historians” to “the historical profession,” but he resisted another to delete language criticizing historians for perpetuating the myth that “homosexual acts are unnatural or evidence of sickness.” After the latter was approved 64–60, the resolution passed 76–56.

The AHA’s discussions of gay issues continued in 1974–75. In December 1974, the business meeting adopted a resolution proposed by Dennis. It affirmed “the right of gay historians and others to engage in the research and teaching of the history of single and gay people as well as members of all sexual minorities” and declared that “attempts by colleagues, administrators, and others designed to subvert such research and teaching are to be considered violations of academic freedom.” The AHA governing Council exercised its right to “nonconcur,” which sent the resolution to a membership ballot by mail in 1975.

While the membership voted against the 1974–75 resolution. However, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) affirmed in 1975 “the right of historians and others to engage in research and teaching of the history of members of all sexual minorities.” The resolution also declared that “attempts by colleges, administrators and others designed to subvert such research and teaching are to be considered violations of academic freedom.” When the OAH membership was polled, the vote was 901–389 in favor.

In 1974, Dennis and openly gay historian Martin Duberman submitted a proposal for a panel on "the history of sexuality" for the American Historical Association's annual convention; not getting any response, they inquired and were told that the proposal had gotten "unaccountably lost." When they resubmitted the proposal the following year, it was formally rejected.

The National Committee held its [annual meeting](#) in Philadelphia in 1981. Dennis was one of the presenters at the meeting.

Dennis died on March 23, 2013 at the age of 72. In his [obituary](#) published by the Philadelphia Gay News, someone who knew Dennis well stated: “He was strong-willed, stubborn and extremely dedicated to the struggle for gay liberation.”