

Daniel Pinello



Dan Pinello tried to organize a gay law student group at New York University School of Law in 1972 but only a few people showed up. So he associated with the Gay Legal Caucus of the Gay Activists Alliance. The caucus included lawyers, law students, and legal workers interested in advancing gay rights. Dan graduated from NYU in 1975.

Dan's gay rights activism did not start in law school. He "came out" in a big way when he was an undergraduate student at Williams College in 1971. His essay titled "The Homosexual at Williams" was on the front page of the college [newspaper](#) on October 28, 1971. After recounting the isolation and the pressure to conform to heterosexual mores at Williams, Dan urged readers to contact him to form a gay liberation student group.

Dan's essay did not come out of the blue. His decision to go public had been building for months. Dan described the process, step by step, in the senior honors [thesis](#) he wrote in the spring of 1972 to fulfill his American Civilization major at the college. He recalled becoming a member of the Gay Activists Alliance; marching in the streets during the second anniversary commemoration of the Stonewall uprising where he raised his fist in the air and shouting "Justice! Justice! Justice!"

From 1975 to 1984, Dan had a private law practice in New York City. In the late 1970s, he and some activists from two other organizations founded Gay and Lesbian Community Services in New York City. It was there that Dan and attorney George Terzian offered legal counseling and referrals to clients in crisis. Eventually the two lawyers created a separate entity for such legal services. It was called the Law Stop Clinic.

Dan eventually shifted his focus from practicing law to teaching law and government. He was an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of New Orleans. Then he attended Yale University where he received a Ph.D. in political science in 1991. Next up was teaching law and politics at Ohio Wesleyan University. From 1994 to the present, Dan has been teaching at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York. He has [published](#) many scholarly articles and books.

After Dan and his life mate, Lee Nissensohn, had been a couple for 13 years, they applied for and were denied a marriage license in New York in 2008. So they flew to California and were legally married there.

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