



Dr. Dan Royles Receives 2020-21 LGBTQ Religious History Award

The LGBTQ Religious Archives Network (LGBTQ-RAN) honors Dr. Dan Royles with the [2020-21 LGBTQ Religious History Award](#). The review jury selected Royles' "There Is a Balm in Gilead: AIDS Activism in the Black Church" from among ten papers submitted for the award this year. The jury gave honorable mention to a second paper, "From Neighbors to Outcasts: Evangelical Gay Activism in the Late 1970s" by William Stell.

[Dan Royles](#) is Assistant Professor of History at Florida International University, where he teaches courses on United States, African American, LGBTQ, oral, and public history. His first book, *To Make the Wounded Whole: The African American Struggle against HIV/AIDS*, was published by University of North Carolina Press in 2020. *To Make the Wounded Whole* offers the first history of African American AIDS activism in all of its depth and breadth. It introduces a diverse constellation of activists, including medical professionals, Black gay intellectuals, church pastors, Nation of Islam leaders, recovering drug users, and Black feminists who pursued a wide array of grassroots approaches to slow the epidemic's spread and address its impacts. Through interlinked stories from Philadelphia and Atlanta to South Africa and back again, this book documents the diverse, creative, and global work of African American activists in the decades-long battle against HIV/AIDS.

"There Is a Balm in Gilead: AIDS Activism in the Black Church" draws from one chapter in *To Make the Wounded Whole*, and describes the work of [The Balm in Gilead](#), an organization that works with Black churches around the world on AIDS education and prevention programs. Drawing from an original interview with The Balm in Gilead's founder Pernessa Seele, oral histories conducted for LGBTQ-RAN, grant records, published materials, and archived versions of the Balm in Gilead website, it describes the group's origins in New York City in 1989 as the Harlem Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, and its move during the late 1990s to address AIDS in Africa through partnerships with faith leaders in five African countries.

Royles is the twelfth recipient of the [LGBTQ Religious History Award](#) that was initiated by the LGBTQ Religious Archives Network in 2005. It is the only award given for outstanding scholarship in this field of study. Jury members Dr. Joanne Carlson Brown, Dr. Gillian Frank and Dr. Johari Jabir described Royles' work as "eloquently written and beautifully researched in portraying the development of this important organization and its founder along with their outreach into Africa. The paper forges relatively new ground in Black Church Historiography and gives a complex angle of vision into the overlapping histories of race, religion and sexuality. Scholars and students alike stand to learn much from this vital intervention."

The jury members were impressed with the high caliber of the ten papers submitted this year so they chose to recognize a second paper with honorable mention. [William Stell](#)'s paper "From Neighbors to Outcasts: Evangelical Gay Activism in the Late 1970s" analyzes Letha Scanzoni

and Virginia Mollenkott's 1978 book *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* and its reception among evangelicals, situating the two authors in the context of a small but influential network of evangelical gay activists that formed in the 1970s. Although the book initially elicited many positive responses within evangelical circles, powerful evangelical figures and institutions not only labored to counteract that success, but ultimately helped to engender the conditions under which future historians would fail to notice the evangelical gay activism in which the book partook. The research for this paper will figure in Stell's dissertation on evangelical gay activism from the late 1960s to the late 1980s and its role in the rise of antigay fervor among evangelicals in the late 1970s and beyond. Stell is a graduate student in the Department of Religion at Princeton University.

Submissions for next year's LGBTQ Religious History Award must be postmarked or received electronically by December 1, 2021. Complete information on submission guidelines for the award can be found at: <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/history-award-guidelines>

The [LGBTQ Religious Archives Network](https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/) is a ground-breaking venture to preserve the history of LGBTQ religious movements around the world. It has two primary purposes: a) to assist LGBTQ religious leaders and groups in determining how best to preserve their records and papers in appropriate repositories; and b) to provide an electronic information clearinghouse for these archival collections and other historical data about LGBTQ religious history for the use of historians, researchers and other interested persons. Learn more about LGBTQ-RAN at its website: <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/>

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