

Guide to the Michael Antisdale and Mark R. Melanson Papers

MS 2105



compiled by Emily Komornik; revised June 2022 by Michelle Peralta

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 2105

CREATOR: Antisdale, Michael, donor

TITLE: Michael Antisdale and Mark R. Melanson Papers

DATES: 1995-2003 and undated

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.2 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: The materials are in English.

SUMMARY: Michael Antisdale and Mark Melanson, a gay couple, sued the town of West Hartford in 1998 because the town pool only gave discounted "family" rates to heterosexual couples. Five other cohabitating, non-married couples later joined them in the suit. At the time, the town council was Republican in majority. The suit continued until Democrats came into the majority and settled the case in 2002, and the council revised the definition of "family" in West Hartford's recreational facilities policy to include couples of any sexual identity who lived together. The collection contains legal filings, correspondence, news clippings, and council meeting materials related to the couple's appeal to the West Hartford town council and subsequent civil suit.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2105>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2105>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Michael Antisdale and Mark R. Melanson, 2019, and 2021.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

Michael Antisdale and Mark R. Melanson Papers (MS 2105). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

In 1998, Michael Antisdale and Mark Melanson, a gay couple, had been living in West Hartford for ten years, and had been domestic partners for over thirteen. That year, the two attempted to become members of the Cornerstone Aquatics Center, a community pool in town, by applying for the residential family rate. They were denied on the grounds that they did not meet the requirements for a family membership, due to the fact that such a membership was only available to married couples. Further, the couple was advised that they would each have to pay for an individual membership should they wish to use the pool. Antisdale and Melanson appealed to the town council in July 1998. The council not only denied their petition, but also refused to revise the definition of "family" in the town's public accommodations policy. In November 1998, the couple filed a complaint through the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), claiming that the town of West Hartford discriminated against them on the bases of marital status and sexual orientation.

Antisdale and Melanson originally retained the Law Offices of Maureen Murphy, and in December of 1998, Mary Bonauto and Jennifer Levi filed appearances on their behalf as representatives of the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD). Five other cohabitating, non-married couples also joined the civil suit against the town for refusing to grant them family memberships. Four of the six who filed were same-sex couples. Delays, stays, and extensions filed by both sides caused the civil suit to continue for over four years.

On November 12, 2002, the parties reached a settlement. The Town Council of West Hartford agreed to amend the language of the Cornerstone Pool fee schedule to include a family and household rate, so as not to discriminate against neither same-sex nor cohabitating, non-married couples. They also amended the rates so that two individual adult memberships cost no more than one family and household membership.

The settlement further awarded all plaintiffs family memberships and required the town to make a payment in the amount of \$35,000 toward counsel fees for the plaintiffs' representation. On February 20, 2003, all plaintiffs officially withdrew their complaints against the town of West Hartford.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of legal documents, clippings, petitions, and correspondence related to Michael Antisdale and Mark R. Melanson's initial appeal to the West Hartford town council and the subsequent civil suit, dating from 1995 to 2003. The materials are organized under three headings: Legal action, News clippings, and Audio files, with materials arranged generally first, then alphabetically, therein.

Legal action contains court documents pertaining to the action filed by the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), in which Maureen Murphy and the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) jointly represented Antisdale, Melanson, and their fellow complainants. The legal files contain correspondence between attorneys and clients, as well as affidavits, memoranda, motions, pleadings, and draft settlement agreements. Other materials organized under this heading include statements of support from allied citizens of West Hartford, an open letter to the town council signed by hundreds of members of the community, and council meeting minutes and records dated from 1998 through 1999. It also contains supportive material from "Out of the Blue," an organization within Blue Cross Blue Shield consisting of gay, lesbian, and allied employees dated from 1995 through 1996, as well as the Legislative Electoral Action Program (LEAP) Achievement Award given to Antisdale and Melanson in 1999.

News clippings document the media coverage of the suit from filing through settlement. The clippings come from several local newspapers, including the *Hartford Courant*, *West Hartford News*, *West Hartford Life*, and *New Haven Register*. Two clippings come from the *New York Times*, which reported the story in July of 1998 and again in March 1999.

The dates and contents of the two cassette tapes under the third heading are unknown.

The collection also contains newsletters, memoranda, and clippings related to Out of the Blue, an organization focused on issues affecting gay and lesbian employees of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Connecticut.

Arrangement

The material is arranged under three headings: Legal action, 1995-2003; Newspaper clippings, 1998-2003 and undated; Audio files, undated; and one addition. Materials are arranged generally first, then alphabetically, therein.

Collection Contents

Original accession

	Legal action	1995–2003
b. 1, f. 1	General, handwritten notes	1998–1999
b. 1, f. 2	Blue Cross Blue Shield materials, "Out of the Blue"	1995–1996
b. 1, f. 3-4	Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), legal filings and correspondence	1998–2000
b. 1, f. 5-11	Legal filings and correspondence Folder five contains an undated greeting card sent to Michael Antisdale and Mark Melanson from Holly Aberly-Wetstone, a member of the Town Council of West Hartford. In the card, Aberly-Wetstone commends the two men for their courage in demanding equal treatment for couples of all kinds. Further, she notes her intention to draft a new alternative rate reduction and propose it to the full council at its meeting on July 14. The folder also contains a United States Postal Service receipt indicating that Mr. Antisdale sent the card to his attorney, Maureen Murphy, as a piece of evidence in the civil suit.	1998-circa 2003
b. 2, f. 1	Legislative Electoral Action Plan (LEAP) Achievement Award	1999
b. 2, f. 2	West Hartford Town Council, members	1998
b. 2, f. 3	West Hartford Town Council, minutes and records	1998–1999
b. 2, f. 4	West Hartford Town Council, open letter from community	1998 July
b. 2, f. 5	West Hartford, town, statements and news clippings in support and against the lawsuit	1998
b. 2, f. 6-7	Newspaper clippings	1998-2003 and undated
	Audio recordings	undated
b. 3	Unidentified <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	undated
b. 4	Unidentified <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	undated

Accession 2022-M-0011: Additional material

Newsletters, memoranda, clippings, and a brochure related to Out of the Blue, an organization focused on issues affecting gay and lesbian employees of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Connecticut founded in 1994. One of the organization's major successes was lobbying for domestic partner benefits for Blue Cross Blue Shield employees.

b.1

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Connecticut Out of the Blue materials

1995-1997

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Civil rights -- Connecticut
Gay couples -- Legal status, laws, etc. --
Connecticut
Gay men
Gay men -- Connecticut -- History
LGBTQ resource

Geographic Names

Hartford (Conn.) -- Social conditions

Names

Antisdale, Michael , donor
Melanson, Mark R. , donor

Contributors

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Melanson, Mark R. , donor