

## Brazil's First National Gays and Transsexuals Conference Is Sponsored by Government

Contributed by Matthew Cullinan Hoffman  
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Brazil's First National Conference of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transsexuals received its official convocation on Thursday of last week, November 29, by none other than the socialist President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a first in the history of the country.

The president decreed that the conference would take place May 8-11, 2008, "under the auspices of the Special Secretary of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, with the objectives of 1. proposing the directives for the implementation of public policies and the national plan for promoting the citizenship and human rights of gays, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals - GLBT, and 2. evaluate and propose strategies to strengthen the program Brazil Without Homophobia."

Brazil Without Homophobia is a national program run by the Lula administration that teaches that homosexual orientation is unchangeable, and seeks to construct a culture in Brazil that is "affirming" towards homosexuality.

With official government sponsorship, the conference will have a composition of 40% delegates from the government sector and the remaining 60% from among private individuals, according to MixBrasil, a homosexual website.

Organizer Julian Rodrigues is jubilant. "There are countries with more advanced legislation and policies, but this will be the first time that a federal government convokes a complete conference, with the participation of the majority of the organized movement, to define a national plan of public policies for almost 10% of the population, historically relegated to prejudice and discrimination," he said.

Rodrigues' statistic of 10% for the population of homosexuals is denied by scientific studies that show that homosexuals comprise between 3 and 5% of national populations at the most, but it is commonly cited by homosexual activists in the promotion of their cause.

"The first Conference is now created, and there is no turning back. We are going to pull up our sleeves and construct it in all of the states (of Brazil), mobilizing the greatest number possible of members of our community, discussing rights and affirmative public policies," said Rodrigues.

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