



Thomas F. Coleman is an attorney with decades of experience advocating for sexual civil liberties.

During an era (1974-1980) when heated battles over the rights of consenting adults took place in courtrooms and legislatures everywhere, Coleman served as co-chair of the National Committee for Sexual Civil Liberties. In addition to his role as advocate, Coleman assumed the role of researcher and educator by publishing a legal periodical known as the SexuaLaw Reporter (1975-1979) which was read by attorneys, judges, and activists in the United States.

He and others lobbied the California Legislature for several years to obtain sexual privacy rights for consenting adults (1972-1975). These efforts paid off when such conduct was decriminalized in 1975.

In 1977, Coleman spoke at a forum sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles. The topic was "The Sexual Rights and Responsibilities of Teens." The following year, he spoke at a training session for hotline counselors at the Los Angeles Free Clinic. The topic was "Giving Accurate Information on Sexual Laws."

During an era that undercover vice officers entrapped and harassed gay men who engaged in consenting sexual conduct, Coleman was at the forefront of challenging discriminatory enforcement methods as well as the laws themselves. He won a landmark decision in the California Supreme Court which invalidated the sexual solicitation statute and established new guidelines for the "lewd conduct" law that all but put a halt to the entrapment tactics. (Pryor v. Municipal Court (1979) 25 Cal.3d 238)

Following the victory in the Pryor case, Coleman filed briefs in appeals in Oregon and Oklahoma challenging similar laws in those states in 1981.

A few years later, Coleman and his co-counsel William Gardner won a case in the United States Supreme Court when they convinced the high court to dismiss a challenge to a New York ruling that protected the privacy rights of consenting adults.

(People v. Uplinger (1984) 467 U.S. 264)

Coleman filed legal challenges to California's prostitution laws. In 1980, he and his co-counsel Jay Kohorn won an appeal in which the court ruled that posing in the nude for money or engaging in solo sexual conduct for money (no touching between the performer and the customer) was not a crime. (People v. Hill (1980) 103 Cal.App.3d 525) That same year he made a presentation at a training of public defenders in Los Angeles. The topic was "Recent Developments in Prostitution Litigation."

He served as Executive Director of the Governor's Commission on Personal Privacy (1980-1982) and wrote the Commission's final report which recommended ways in which the state should protect the sexual privacy rights of Californians. Among its many recommendations, the Commission advocated for the sexual privacy rights of people with developmental disabilities in licensed facilities.

Through public speaking and educational forums, Coleman has advocated for the sexual civil liberties of people with disabilities.

For example, at the Western Center for Independent Living, Coleman made a presentation in 1980 on "Sexual Privacy and Equality for Disabled People."

In 1985, Coleman did a lecture on "Law, Sex, and Disability," at a conference at California State University in Northridge where he emphasized the implications of a landmark Court of Appeal decision recognizing the sexual privacy rights of conservatees with developmental disabilities. (Foy v. Greenblott (1983) 141 Cal.App.3d 1)

For many years (1990-2002), Coleman advocated for the right of heterosexual couples not to be subject to discrimination by state agencies or businesses because the couples lived together as unmarried partners. His advocacy for opposite-sex domestic partners occurred in California, Alaska, Illinois, Georgia, New York, and Virginia, in the contexts of housing, employee benefits, and professional licensing.

Throughout these decades, Coleman has always advocated that the sexual civil liberties should be protected and respected, regardless of sexual orientation.