

Dr. Herb Samuels is interviewed by Dr. Erica Goodstone

Dr. Herb Samuels is one of the few African American males to remain involved in the field of sexology for several decades since 1975. He explains that he had read articles in books and some research from people of color, such as Robert Staples, William R. Johnson, and Leonore Johnson, but these people were in psychology and sociology, not really considered sexologists.

Although he says he was always treated cordially by his colleagues, his biggest challenge has been to try to get African Americans involved in the sexology organizations. There needs to be a separate push, a reach out to Black universities and black organizations. His other challenge has often been the struggle to explain what he does and the misperception by many that if you are a sexologist you are open to everything and anything sexually and that, perhaps, there is something wrong with you and you are less qualified for focusing on this topic.

His involvement in sexology began when he worked at Planned Parenthood in Louisville, Kentucky, before starting the NYU Human Sexuality Program in 1978. In his words: "It was like somebody had written a program just for me". While teaching at City University of New York, LaGuardia Community College, Rutgers and Nassau Community College, he claims that his major contribution was his ability to translate difficult material into ways people can understand it.

His main sexology affiliation has always been SSSS. He has been Eastern Region Rep and President, Treasurer for 2 terms and president for 1 term and on the board of directors for 10 years. When asked why he chose SSSS, he explained he had attended the first regional meeting in Philadelphia and could not afford to travel and pay dues at that time for 2 organizations. At one point he spoke on a SSTAR plenary.

What he remembers most about AASECT was those few joint meetings of SSSS and AASECT, bringing clinicians together with researchers. He met some people at these meetings who seemed to not know very much about sexuality. He remembers AASECT as having always been open to the LGBTQ issue within leadership and on boards. There seemed to be no problem with diversity.

In terms of promotion of sex positivity, he was on the SIECUS board focused on advocacy for 5 or 6 years. SSSS, on the other hand, did not take an advocacy position but they have promoted sex positive research. Over the past 30 years, SSSS has been his professional home where he has learned from such notables as Wardell Pomeroy, Ira Reiss, John Money, Vern Bullough, and Leah Cahan Schaefer