

The Community Activist – Dr. Alan Rockway

By Jessica Summers

While surprisingly little has been written about his life, through the 1970s and 80s, **Dr. Alan Rockway** was at the forefront of the fight for LGBT+ equality.

Dr. Rockway was an openly bisexual clinical psychologist who utilized his training and expertise for advocacy. Dr. Rockway was a cofounder of BiPOL – the first bisexual political organization which advocated for LGBT+ rights on a national and international scale.

In 1977, Dr. Rockway was one of the coauthors and advocates behind an ordinance passed in Miami-Dade County, Florida, prohibiting employment and housing discrimination against gays and lesbians. The ordinance was the first of its kind to pass in a major urban area and drew the attention of conservative singer and beauty queen Anita Bryant. Bryant founded the anti-gay organization Save Our Children and made it her mission to overturn the Miami-Dade ordinance and others like it. Ultimately, due to Bryant's efforts, the Miami-Dade ordinance was repealed by overwhelming popular vote. At the time, Bryant was the spokeswoman for the Florida Citrus Commission - which stood by Bryant and her campaign of homophobia. In response, Dr. Rockway and his fellow activists led a national boycott of Florida orange juice. The boycott was successful in resulting not only in the Citrus Commission ending its relationship with Bryant but also in shining a national spotlight on the fight for LGBT+ rights. Dr. Rockway went on to successfully advocate for the passage of Florida's privacy rights amendment – which was applied to protect LGBT+ persons in the state from government or police interference in their private lives and consensual activities.

Dr. Rockway also started two of the country's first mental health programs dedicated to serving the needs of LGBT+ people in Miami and Berkeley.

Tragically, Dr. Rockway was just one of the many powerful champions that fell victim to the AIDS epidemic that was ravaging the country and the LGBT+ community at the time. Dr. Rockway died in 1987. The Rockway Institute at Alliant International University's California School of Professional Psychology in San Francisco, which focuses on LGBT+ research and public policy, is named in his honor.