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# gpu news

GAY PEOPLES UNION / MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN / MARCH 1973

## ARSON HITS MC MOTHER CHURCH

Los Angeles . . . An unexplained fire gutted the Los Angeles Metropolitan Community Church, the nation's largest gay church in the early morning hours of January 27. The fire evidently started in two places in the building at around midnight and arson is suspected. Damage has been estimated in the \$75,000-\$100,000 range with severe structural damage to the building and an almost total destruction of the main sanctuary.

The only occupant of the building at that hour was Ted Sweet, a Crisis Intervention telephone line volunteer who was roused from sleep by a neighbor.

Church services were held the following day, a Sunday, in the street outside the burned out church building. A city permit to block off the street for the service was arranged by Councilman Robert Stevenson. During that service over \$1,800 was raised for a re-building fund. The Reverend Troy Perry, founder and spiritual leader of the church later said that the church's board of directors is studying the question of whether to rebuild the existing structure or to seek a new location. Said Perry, **"WE SERVE YOU NOTICE--that we, in the Gay Community, will never permit the hands of the clock to be turned back on us--ever again! WE WILL rebuilt and go forward!"**

By the following Sunday, arrangements had been worked out for regular services to be temporarily held at the Aquarius Theatre at 6230 W. Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood. About 800 persons attended the first service in the theater. Other church activities are temporarily being held at various locations including the facilities of other gay organizations in the area.

## STATE CAN CAN GAYS

The State Personnel Board has upheld the right of the state to fire a person because he is homosexual.

In reviewing an appeal from a gay man who was fired last July from his position as houseparent at Southern Colony and Training School by its Superintendent, John M. Garstecki, the board sustained the firing by a 3-0 vote. Board members are: William Ahrens, chairman, Charles Brecher, John A. Serpe, and Percy L. Julian, Jr. Julian heard testimony in the case, but did not vote since he is active with Wisconsin Civil Liberties Union which represented the appellant.

In the hearings Southern Colony officials maintained that it

## LESBIAN FOR SCHOOL BOARD

From THE CAPITAL TIMES, Madison, Wisconsin, February 5, 1973:

Judy Greenspan, 102 E. Johnson St., a Madison lesbian-feminist, has filed as a candidate for the Madison Board of Education.

An activist in the local women's and gay movements, Ms. Greenspan, 20, said she intends to represent the rights of students, women and gay persons on the board.

**"My campaign will bring up important issues which would not ordinarily be raised by the other candidates,"** she explained. **I will run on a platform advocating the right of gay people to both speak and exist openly without harassment in the public schools; challenging the discriminatory practices against women in academic and vocational education; demanding counseling on birth control and abortion, and self-defense classes**

was because the man had discussed his homosexuality with other employees within earshot of some patients, but then admitted that he was fired simply because he admitted his homosexuality under questioning by Garstecki. The Colony is a state institution for mildly retarded children and the man had been a houseparent for over two years for a group of mildly retarded teen-age boys. There were never any contentions that the employee attempted to solicit patients for homosexual acts, advocated homosexuality or engaged in any such acts at the colony. As a matter of fact there had been no complaint about his work. In its ruling the Board maintained **"That homosexual activity is contrary to the generally recognized and accepted standards of morality and the appellant's activity of this nature had a substantial adverse effect in the performance of his job duties."**

The ruling further maintained **"That one of the appellant's duties and responsibilities as a houseparent was to provide proper training, example**

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

**for high school women; and supporting the High School Bill of Rights.**

She noted irony in the fact that as a lesbian she is not permitted to enter public schools without the principals' permission, but as a candidate she has already been invited to speak at Memorial High.

Last spring, gay people who had been scheduled to address sociology classes were suddenly banned from entering the Madison public schools and were called "criminals" by school officials.

**"If elected, I will reinstate the right of students to hear whomever they want to."**

# editorial

## QUEER FEAR IS THE VILLAIN

Following the radical-militant sixties, the gay movement is asking itself (as Lenin did earlier), "What is to be done?" Solving problems means knowing their causes.

We know the problem is "oppression"--legal/physical (we are busted), occupational/financial (we are fired), and ego-destructive (we are made to feel godawful about what, or rather, who we are). The goal is "liberation", which by the way, is not some Roman candle ecstasy, but just being free to grow our own lives like everyone else. Perhaps the real enemy of liberation is the core of fear in the straight psyche.

Gayrev circles call for "internal" head clearing and gay community sense (consciousness-raising, counseling etc.) as well as "external" institutional reforms (information and education for the public, power-blocs, gay coalitions, and where necessary militant activism). These are the most commonly called for "solutions" to the "problem" of "oppression".

Let us now examine a third course of action which might be

called "grass roots therapy". In addition to the standard tactics, we should, wherever possible, attempt a more direct alteration of straight hate, fear and uneasiness. We can break the psychic apartheid in which we live by creating fifth-column partisans and allies with sympathetic straights. By necessity this must be done on a person-to-person basis, informally but openly, by out front gays who can afford to take personal and economic chances. The actions must be directed towards accessible straights, blending militance (unforgiving-truth telling) and a "cool" of empathy and understanding with "positive regard" which mixes reason (here are the facts) and emotion ("How do you feel about gayness? Why?")

We must adopt these tactics because our oppression is caused not simply by ignorance (the myths), but also by "homoeotophobia" --queer-fear. A product of the Judeo-Christian-Puritan tradition, queer-fear, like most cultural ideologies, is arbitrary and unnecessary. It is its own self-perpetuator and is as enormously repressive as any political system. Actually, queer-fear is not "natural"; other cultures are much easier about gayness. We are, therefore, feared and hated simply because it is the traditional thing to do, but few people realize this.

Crucially, it is upon this psychic liberation of straights (and gays too, for that matter) from queer-fear that our "inward" and "outward" liberation depends. Furthermore, we gays will have to remove queer-fear ourselves.

This unreasonable phobia is too deeply ingrained in the human psyche and is too completely reinforced by social custom to die easily. We can't hope to draw on liberal guilt feelings, such as the Blacks found helpful, because these feelings do not exist. We have the image of "willful pervert" or "pitiable cripple" (the famous sin-crime-sickness syndrome) to overcome.

All of our education programs, counseling, law reform

work etc. will not truly liberate us unless we attack the basic phobia on a person to person basis. We must somehow get it across to straight people that **our mistreatment violates basic human decency.**

A social movement requires the sense of intolerable reality plus the vision of conceivable change. Here are four ways of treating the cultural disease of homophobia or queer-fear.

1. **Treat it with awareness!**  
**A problem does exist! Many gays**

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

# feedback

To G.P.U. NEWS

To the Gay Community,

I heard that guy that got fired by the state speak at a couple meetings about his fight for his job. He said that the Wisconsin Civil Liberties Union was handling his appeal case for him. I think that's great. All of us gays have something to gain from Paul's case, so we should also help ourselves by supporting and joining W.C.L.U.

I heard their head man speak at a G.P.U. meeting last fall and he was good. The W.C.L.U. is fighting for all of our liberties.

Jay Garland

Editor's reply -- G.P.U. Board of Directors agree with you and has taken a membership in the W.C.L.U. for G.P.U. We urge you all to join individually. (See membership ad elsewhere in this issue)

Dear GPU News:

John Money, Ph. d. has written in **Archives of Sexual Behavior**, Vol 2, No. 1, 1972, the following:

"It is timely, therefore, for medicine to respect the arguments of the homosexual militants and not to discriminate against them by insidiously lending credence to the assumption that all homosexuals and their behavior are, if not bad and wrong, sick. Some though not all left-handed

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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Yours in Liberation,

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## Fired

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and image to those children under his supervision. Because the appellant, in his position duties, served as a houseparent which required intimate personal contact with those retarded children assigned to his care and placed upon him the burden of displaying proper parental care, custody, control and moral training, his admitted homosexual tendencies and attitudes constituted an adverse influence to the proper performance of his position duties and his discharge on this basis should be sustained."

Representatives of both sides indicated that the case had been the first challenge in the history of Wisconsin to the state's right to fire a person because of homosexuality.

Attorneys for the Wisconsin Civil Liberties Union have indicated that the employee and the W.C.L.U. are both ready to appeal the decision to the courts.

Mr. Todd Mitchell, W.C.L.U. attorney on the case said, "The decision by the State Personnel Board does not carry the weight of law. A favorable ruling from the courts would establish precedent which the state would have to follow in future cases of this nature."

## If State Policy is Followed

**President's Message**  
With the State Personnel Board's public ruling that they can fire a person for the mere fact of their gayness what will be the response of all those other gay people who work for the state? What if the local governing bodies follow the "fire the gays" policy?

Wake up! Don't all you gay people see that this state must be made to recognize that this policy of firing gays is not only insanely discriminatory but also totally impractical?

Do you realize that there are 184,019 employees of the state and another 182,980 local governmental employees. Thus, according to the 1972-3 Book of the

State, there are 367,000 people who are likely to be directly subject to this ruling.

It is generally believed that 3% of the adult population is exclusively homosexual. That means that there are likely 11,000 gay employees in this state.

Suppose that they all told the government that they were gay, and that their employing government fired all of them. Wouldn't they, according to this anti-gay policy be eligible for unemployment compensation? At an \$80.00 a week per person average, that would cost the state \$880,000. per week. If all these fired gays stayed on the rolls for one year, \$45,760,000. would be needed to pay them all their just unemployment compensation.

Now I ask the state, is this policy worth that much to you?

But this will not happen if all gay people form a union of gay people and act as a liberated group. There is great power in our large numbers if we all just come together and act publicly for our own liberation. It is only our willingness to sit still under this unbelievably discriminatory state board ruling that keeps you oppressed. Don't you see that liberation is it's own cure and protection? If this state knows that it will be fought at every turn, it will not continue to pursue this anti-gay policy.

Now is the time for all gays to come to their own aid. No one else has ever helped you in the past. It is up to you to get up off your ever loving ass and begin to work toward the liberated world that we all want to live in.

Alyn W. Hess



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# feedback

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

people are sick. So also, though some homosexual people may be sick, not all of them are. Medicine can help these homosexuals most by setting an example to society and the law not to discriminate against them."

While I completely agree with Dr. Money I would encourage a step further. I would encourage medicine to start a program of actively educating the public. This program should attempt to offset the hundreds of years of professional ignorance and error. For myself, I want more than respect for my argument. I want

acknowledgement of my rights!  
Very truly yours,  
Chuck Holloway

Dear G.P.U. NEWS:  
I'm a patient here at

Winnebago State Hospital and am writing to express my gratitude to you for sending your G.P.U. NEWS to our library every month. I have been reading the paper ever since I was transferred here from Waupun State Prison.

I am 27 years old, gay, and have been involved in some gay related activities since the age of 12. I would ask for an individual subscription except that I have been told that I may not receive it individually due to some censorship problem. I will continue to read G.P.U. NEWS in our library, but I just wanted to extend my heartfelt thanks to you for your extension of service to WSH Library.

Yours truly, George E.  
Winnebago State Hospital  
Winnebago, Wisconsin

Editor G.P.U. News!

I want to make the gay community aware of the importance that the April elections have for us.

The notorious Judge Christ Seraphim is running for the important position of judge of the 11th Circuit Court. In my work helping prisoners, I have sat in his courtroom and have observed it's circus-like atmosphere and his showmanship. He performs and jokes with the crowd and reporters rather than adjudicating properly as he should. His playing to the grandstands rather than tending to justice can be seen often in the newspapers where he cannily grabs the headlines in matters beyond his legitimate concern.

If his undignified attitude is not sufficient reason to vote against him his public statements against homosexuality certainly are. He has been known to use his position on the bench to expose his anti-gay bias.

So VOTE against Seraphim by voting for Judge Landry, who is as liberal as can be expected in this conservative state.

Father Joseph Feldhausen  
Saint Nicholas Parish

# baggies are out.

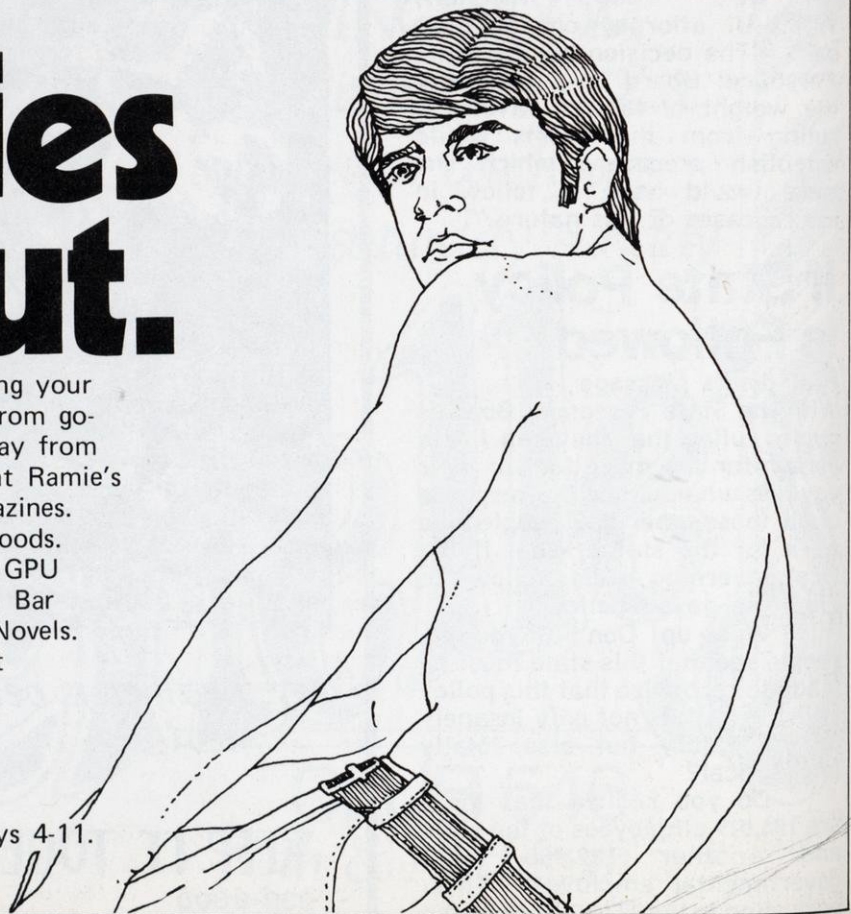
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# editorial

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

themselves are either unaware or unwilling to admit the existence, extent, and intolerability of gay oppression. Some, in my experience, are blissfully unaware, but vaguely uneasy. Others have made adjustments in their closets and deliberately try to ignore the plight of those less fortunate than themselves. WE must make our own people aware of our aims and goals. If we do not know our own situation, how can we expect straights, even the hip and socially conscious, to know it?

2. Treat it at gut level! With firmness and "cool" we can invite straights to explore their honest uneasiness about gayness. "Liberal public tolerance" is often just that alone; tolerance in public will not suffice. We must show up their myths and stereotypes about us as being inaccurate and unfair, the same as those which they have so proudly jettisoned about the shuffling, saucer-eyed Uncle Tom, the brainless, peaches-and-cream, sexpot "chick", and the lazy drunken Indian.

By the way, there is a grain of truth in every stereotype and some of us are campy and cruisy and some even have limp wrists. So what? We are not what many seem to think we are--a threat to society. (Ho hum, that again; behold the Lavender Menace!) If we pose a threat to society it is simply because of societies queer-fear plus the fact that Every person has some potential bisexual component. In short, if the worst thing you can be is queer, when we stand up-front as their worst fears made flesh, we can hardly expect to be embraced.

Let it be known that "the gay threat" is only to an irrational phobia, plus, of course, the psychological vested interests of family patterns, gender roles, male to male and female to female friendships. The stubborn fact remains that gay people pose no actual threat to social order, stability, morality or decency simply because they are gay. We

do not seek to seduce, convert, pervert--hell it's THEY who seek to lay this on US! Who is actually dangerous? Child molesters, rapists, and sadist-murderers, that's who and the overwhelming fact is that these are primarily heterosexual crimes.

J.S. Mill in *On Liberty* said that freedom consists: of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow: without impediment from our fellow creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong.

Read the quote again and add the words. . . or threatening because of queer-fear.

3. Treat it with reason! We should suggest to straights that it is the cultural phobia that may keep them uneasy even after the myths are exploded. That is their problem and they must reason it through. Joseph Epstein has distinguished between public tolerance (as of parades, media shows, etc.) and private acceptance. He claims that few straights have the latter; that most "have difficulty coming to private terms with it" and that we "should prefer not to be conned about what most people think about homosexuality."

Exuberant gayrev circles hate to admit that in their hearts and behind our backs **most straight people simply can't take us**. Anyone who disagrees with this statement simply hasn't been really into the grass-roots thing, getting all the vibes and feedback. However, all this is still a put-down and doesn't excuse responsible straights from working all the more on the problem with a little help from their gay friends. Indeed, anyone with a shred of actual social responsibility toward injustice today must add gay matters to his attention.

It is unreasonable and unfair, plastic militant, to expect wholesale private acceptance or to condemn people for their

uneasiness, but it is not activist or responsible to let the matter rest there. One would like to see straights saying "I still don't feel at all easy about this, but I don't feel threatened anymore because I see that the problem is irrational and I will help others to see this."

4. Treat it with natural, straightforward firmness! Politeness without thrust will get us as far as it did the Blacks--zilch, zot, zero. "Talk all the time, understand, accept, forgive," said Carl Whitman in his *Gay Manifesto*; "be gentle and keep talking and acting free." This is not **copping-out or niggering-up**. It is just the tactics and strategy of guerilla warfare, whose central belief is that if you don't have power (and we don't), you must get the support of the people. **Bridge blowing and brain surgery are different.**

The more liberated we are when dealing with straights, the better. People do tend to take a person at - his self image. Guilty, ashamed, or "over liberated" types will telegraph their feelings loud and clear to straights who will only too eagerly pick it up. Conversely, together people will enable straights to create a new definition of gay strength and pride. Hetrosexuals have a stake in liberation also. Men's liberation groups point out how homophobia contaminates straight male/male friendships making them shallow, over-conventionalized and brittle. .super-plastic-but, a real drag, as it were.

I have a peace pipe dream. . . if only each gay person could reach the fears of five straight people within one year. . . Im-possible. . . But it points the way. . . As well as the problem, the vicious circle. Relief of our oppression requires that we come out and be free to talk about an oppression which for many is so great that they dare not even talk about it with straights.

Isn't it rather bizarre and intolerable that the third largest oppressed group today stands alone among all the others as being not simply at the bottom of the heap, but totally outside the pale in the outlaw status of a conspiracy of silence borne of

ignorance plus the phobia? In *The Gay World*, Martin Hoffman said that homophobic America's treatment of us "constitutes a continuing scandal in the moral life of the nation." We are still where the nineteenth century Nat Turner was, where the earliest feminists were, who risked all including family ties and economic survival to start their liberation.

So... What is to be done? Gay liberation isn't going to succeed. Nor will it fail. There will be no nationwide revolution, no millennium in our time, but there will continue to be gains on all fronts in spite of resurgent neo-fascism. Gay group solidarity is blooming. Legal-economic reform is underway. Now we need to rap as well as zap. Everyone loves a parade, but those who can might do well to expand liberated zones outside the gayrev circles, past the institutions even, into the mentality of what is supposed to be our native land. **The way OUT is the way IN.**

by Jim White

Liberation is never having to say that you're sorry you're gay!



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# Gay Lib : A Movement and Its Growing Pains

NEWS ANALYSIS BY ANGELA KEYES DOUGLAS/ALTER-NATIVE FEATURES SERVICE

In Miami's Flamingo Park last summer, a long-simmering conflict within the Movement came out into the open. With thousands of people massed together to present their grievances to the world from the shadows of the Democratic and Republican national conventions, tensions between gays and other activists, notable since the late sixties, flared into tense and often bitter confrontation.

Protesting the war is now socially acceptable, of course, while gay liberation is not. And the coarse reactions of male "radicals" to the hundreds of gay activists at Flamingo Park--and to many feminists on the scene as well--proved that in the Movement, too, liberation from stifling sexual roles is a touchy and volatile subject.

To many protestors--and to those who came to the park to stare at gays for hours, amazed since they had "never seen a homosexual before"--it came as a rude awakening that gays and women would no longer tolerate abuse. The lesson was reinforced in the fistfights and tense standoffs which marked the presence of gays in large numbers in Miami.

Perhaps it was inevitable that this conflict would emerge, for both gay and female liberation are directed against inequities and deeply held misconceptions on a personal level quite divorced from political ideology. It's natural that both movements touch the emotions of nearly everyone with whom they come into contact.

The reaction on the part of male "radicals" to gay and feminist militance--essentially one of fear and guilt--results not only from society's psycho-sexual programming but also from the Movement activists' personal lack of experience with gay people and gayness in general.

The mistakes of many

radicals are to overlook the immense diversity within the gay liberation movement and to assume that the larger Movement is a necessary prerequisite for gay liberation. New as is gay liberation in some of its contemporary forms, homosexuals in the U.S. have made concerted public efforts for over twenty years, primarily through the **Matchine Society**, **ONE**, and the **Daughters of Bilitis**, to fight the severe oppression of gays.

Only in 1969, however, did gay liberation come out into the open, when gays fought back against a police raid at a gay bar in New York ("the Stonewall Rebellion"). Gay liberation Fronts began to form. There were already hundreds of homosexual clubs in existence, as well as several homosexual religious bodies such as the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles. In 1969 there also emerged the politically oriented Gay Activists Alliance of New York City.

From 1969 to 1971, hundreds of street demonstrations, involving many thousands of people, exemplified the rapid development of gay lib into a political movement. Held throughout the nation, the largest consist of commemorative marches in New York each June to observe the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion. Fasts, hunger strikes and other actions all served to mature the movement, and by late 1971 it had to some extent become accepted as such by other civil rights movements.

## INTRA MOVEMENT CONFLICT

But as some gays found long-sought freedom almost overnight, problems inherent within the gay world also came out into the open. Transvestites came under fire: in some cases, they were viewed as stereotypes, as "remnants of an unliberated part," or as scapegoats to be sacrificed in order to obtain easier social acceptance. Great

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)

# AN EVENING WITH THE DIVINE MISS M

Despite being the coldest night of the week and having Clockwork Orange quietly sputtering from the loudspeakers as we filled Uihlein Hall, the crowd was the warmest of any this reviewer has encountered at live performances. It was Thursday, February 15th. To quote the morning Sentinel, "Milwaukee's gay community turned out en masse." We looked more like New York City, however, since half the audience seemed to have stepped out of GQ. There was an abundance of baggies, high heels, bow ties, layers and layers. I swear I even saw an old drag number.

At about 8:30 the crowd was becoming restless, but we were soon put at ease by the appearance of four musicians who went through a quick five or ten minute tune-up. Then the magic began, as three painted "cocktail waitresses" strutted on stage right in bare shouldered basic black with cinched waists, long black gloves and very appropriate orange gardenias glued to their left temples.

And while we were still pinching ourselves in disbelief, our lady appeared on stage left. A carrot topped female Charlie Chaplin shuffling her way to center stage. Or was it a Shirley Temple who's just reached puberty complete with clumsy elongated body and ample bosom? Heavens no, it was the Divine Miss M, Bette Midler, if you don't know by now, playing the first of the Ten Tackiest Cities included in this her second tour. Dressed in charcoal baggies, bright orange platform shoes and a red blouse tied snugly under her braless breasts. The famous gardenia was present among her frizzy orange locks.

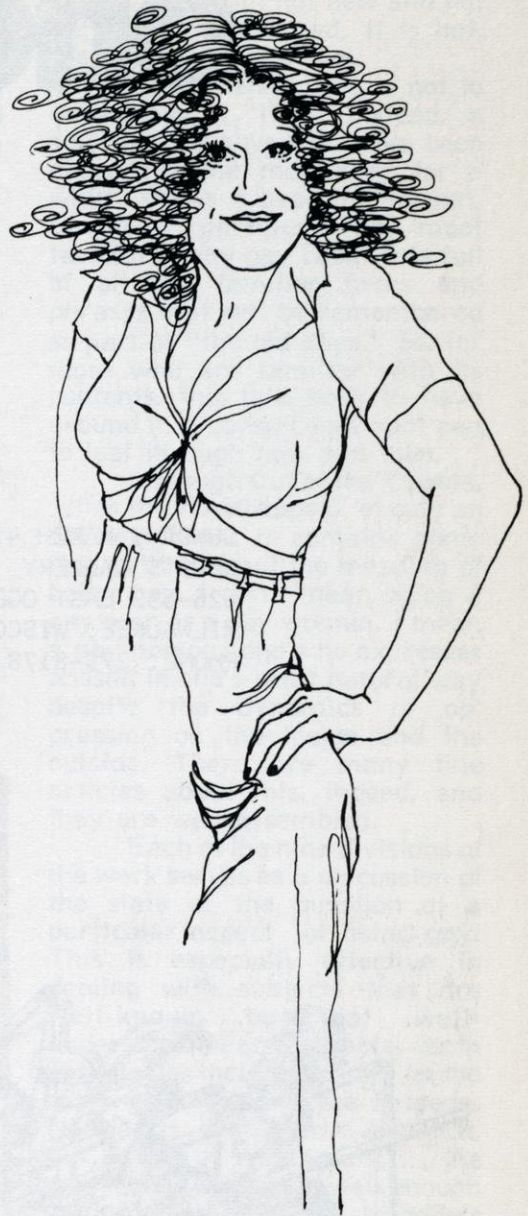
"Milwaukee," she groaned into the microphone, "who would have thought I would be playing Milwaukee?" She then did several locality jokes and did a parody to

the Oscar Mayer jingle, turning it into a teasing stab at Mayor Henry Maier.

She then introduced her back-up singers, the Harlettes and romped into her theme song "Friends". Her campy style and humor quickly won the audience, many of whom know her primarily from her frequent appearances on the Tonight Show. Her very high drag approach lends itself probably from her long engagement at New York's gay Continental Baths.

Through the evening she shoveled out all the garbage she knew, plucking numbers from the past five musical decades. Most of them were flawlessly and energetically performed from her current Atlantic LP, but to our joy she attacked several that weren't, including a very raucous number titled "Bad Sex". She opened the second half with "Moon of Manakoora" under a real potted palm and dressed in a narrow white satin gown which limited her stride to about seven inches. She credited the song to Dotty Lamour. Other songs that evening were credited to the Andrews Sisters, Ethel Waters, Helen Morgan, Karen Carpenter and others. She filled space between numbers and kept audience interest with "dirt stories from show biz", imitations of Charo and Karen Carpenter and flagrant ad libs. Her gown's narrow bottom didn't interfere when she tore into "The Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B", but during the explosive "Your Love Keeps Lifting Me Higher and Higher" ala Tina Turner, she violently unzipped her costume to reveal her famous black sprayed on petal pushers and a corset-like strapless glitter top, which at times did not seem to be doing its job at containing her top heaviness.

She then jumped into "The Leader of the Pack" which seemed to be the favorite number of the attending crowd. It was accompanied by her usual frenzied movements. Finally she carefully placed the microphone on the stage floor and ran off



stage, coming back on her return to a thunderous standing ovation, and she ended the superb show with the final chorus of "Friends" to which the audience, still standing, clapped along. That was it, her ninety minute romp had ended too soon for the audience of more than 2,300, but she did not return as we had hoped, despite our continued applause.

And Friday morning the rest of Milwaukee was subject to more than 2,300 imitations of the Divine Miss M.

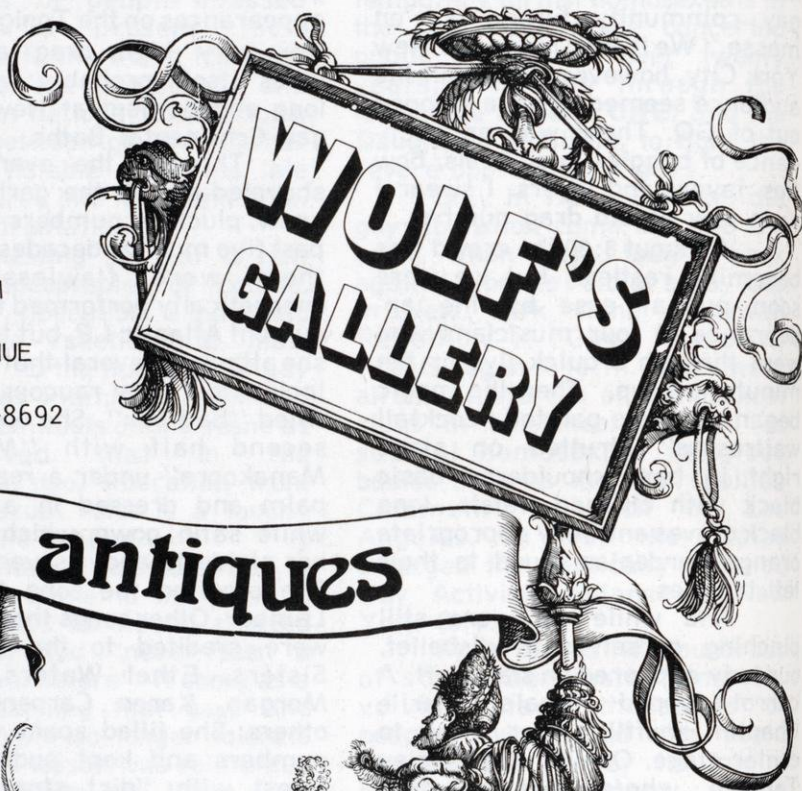
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# books



**The Gay Liberation Book**, edited by Len Richmond and Gary Noguera, Ramparts Press, San Francisco, 1973.

**Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation**, edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, Douglas Books, 1972.

\*

There seems to be no end to anthologies. Everybody seems to be writing one. The reason is that anybody who has been around in the gay movement certainly could. Everybody seems to have a box of old **Sunshines**, **Drummers**, **GPU Newses** and such laying around. All one would have to do would be to cut out some things, paste them into at least chronological order, and get someone to design a snappy cover in which to sandwich them. It would be easy -- for what it would be worth.

The writing of a good anthology calls for considerably more, however. The difference between the presentation of a good collection and a pastiche depends on the editing. Certainly, anyone could gather the stuff included in a collection and read it all as it is found. If one were to read enough, it is probable that some pattern, some system of relationships, might begin to emerge.

But everyone does not have the time or the capabilities to sort through the masses of commentaries on the state of being gay. Moreover, when one has finished that stage, there remains the task of selecting the most interesting and most important of all that one finds. It's an expert's job. Thus, we look to a perceptively edited anthology for a sampling of the best and most representative literature available. **The Gay Liberation Book** and **Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation** are the most recent attempts at this ongoing labor.

Both of these anthologies are composed of letters, statements, manifestos, short articles on gay oppression, gay politics and the like drawn from movement sources published since Stonewall. Both of them have strong political slants, a good deal of leftist diction, and large quantities of the usual tell-it-like-it-is confessions.

There are major differences, though, between them. According to the editors, **The Gay Liberation Book** is more than a collection. It is "... a celebration. A tribute to all gay brothers who have discovered that they are beautiful." They make no pretence of including female viewpoints. They have limited the scope of the book to a statement of the feelings and struggles that they feel to be characteristic of gay males. It is, they tell us, "... the imprint of many minds and hearts." This much they justify. The title they do not.

Aside from the total exclusion of lesbians, the exclusion of questions of nonpolitical

heterodoxy (for which they also apologize) and just the whole West Coast viewpoint of the book are really limiting. What there is of it is good, but not new and not very well synthesized. It is not, therefore, a useful tool.

Nevertheless, this is not to downgrade it. It is, instead, a souvenir for guys who have been around in the movement for a while. It has a beautiful format, besides; perhaps the most tasteful of any gay book. It is full of all the familiar faces and phrases that will be remembered as part of "the old days." So, for those who are familiar with its contents, this is a book to have around in a conspicuous spot and to leaf through now and then.

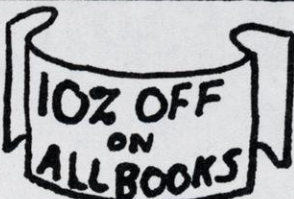
Although **Out of the Closets**... has the visual appeal of only an old text book, it contains some fine writing about the meaning of being gay. I don't mean being a gay man or a gay woman. I mean a gay person; one who expresses oneself in one's most natural way despite the dynamics of oppression on the inside and the outside. There are many fine articles about this, indeed, and they are well assembled.

Each of the nine divisions of the work serves as a discussion of the state of the question of a particular aspect of being gay. This is especially effective in dealing with subjects that are well-known but not well-understood. For example, both anthologies include articles on the celebrated Venceremos brigade. Neither is enthusiastic about it, but in **Out of the Closets**... the material is presented well enough to inform about the brigade's purpose, to attack the myth that Marxism has something to offer gay people, and to impart the accurate impression that its adventure is the gay version of the "Bay of Pigs Incident."

Even though this book is more inclusive than many others so far, it could have been even more so. Here, as in all others, there is no mention of significant statements in the media at large about gaydom. One might be interested to read some of the comments that elicited the reactions put forth in gay

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)

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# MICHELANGELO



# Artist - Poet



## SONNET TO TOMMASO CAVALIERI (1533) #70

Since through the eyes the heart's seen in the face,  
I have no other way so evident  
To show my flame; let this then be sufficient,  
O my dear Lord, to ask you now for grace.

Perhaps your spirit, gazing at this chaste  
Fire that consumes me will, more than I credit,  
Have trust, and be with me speedy and lenient,  
As grace abounds for him who well entreats.

O happy that day, if this is true!  
Then at one instant in their ancient road  
The hours will be stopped, time, sun, the days,

That I may have, though it is not my due,  
My so much desired, my so sweet lord,  
In my unworthy ready arms for always.

## SONNET TO TOMMASO CAVALIERI #96

Wherefore should I let loose still more my keen  
Longing in mournful words or in lament,  
If Heaven, which clothes us all with such a fate,  
Strips no one of it ever, late or soon?

Wherefore should my tired heart still urge me on  
To die, if others also die? So let  
My eyes feel in their final hours less hurt,  
All other good counts less than all my pain.

Therefore if I cannot evade the blow  
I steal and snatch from him, if it is fated,  
Who at least comes between delights and harms?

If capture and defeat must be my joy,  
It is no wonder that, alone and naked,  
I remain prisoner of a knight-at-arms.

## SONNET TO TOMMASO CAVALIERI #258

Violent passion for tremendous beauty  
Is not perforce a bitter mortal error,  
If it can leave the heart melted thereafter,  
So that a holy dart can pierce it quickly.

Not hindering high flight to such vain fury,  
Love wakens, rouses, puts the wings in feather,  
As a first step, so that the soul will soar  
And rise to its maker, finding this too scanty.

The love for what I speak of reaches higher;  
Woman's too much unlike, no heart by rights  
Ought to grow hot for her, if wise and male.

One draws to Heaven and to earth the other,  
One in the soul, one living in the sense  
Drawing its bow on what is base and vile.

# Michelangelo - A Study in Whitewash

While dredging up authentic poems and art work by Michelangelo for this month's center spread in **G.P.U. NEWS**, I recently waded into several biographies of the famous Renaissance genius. (1475-1564) The more I read, the more I was intrigued by the great extremes to which his various biographers have gone to explain away his homosexuality. All agree on his genius, but most seem to feel that such a genius could not be gay and offer a whitewash job to cover the obvious fact.

Everyone, it seems is willing to accept the refined gold of genius, but few want to believe that such gold could come from a "tainted" vessel. Therefore, throughout history when a genius is found to be gay, the whitewash brushes go to work. Casual opposite sex friends are turned into passionate lovers and real same sex lovers are called "platonic" friends or worse still, ignored completely. The life and personality of Michelangelo has been so whitewashed as to be almost unrecognizable.

This article is not intended as a brief biography of the master, nor is it even an attempt to disprove the theories of the biographers. Rather, I hope to look at Michelangelo's life and work in the framework of his sexuality and personality. If I vent a little righteous anger along the way at what history has done to gay genius, please remember that anger is a vice only when it disturbs clarity of judgement.

That Michelangelo was an artistic genius was recognized when he was only fourteen by Lorenzo de' Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent), who invited him to live as a guest in the Medici palace. Lorenzo had collected around himself some of the greatest thinkers and intellects of his time and had founded a school of sculpture in the Medici gardens. Here, Michelangelo produced two of his early sculptures, both of which, if examined objectively, tend to show the homo-erotic personality that was forming in the artist.

The earliest extant work of Michelangelo is a bas-relief known as the "Madonna della Scala", a seated Madonna and Child in the style of Donatello. A powerful composition, the Madonna is technically superb, but singularly lacking in the maternal tenderness usually associated with the subject. As a matter of fact, this big handed, massive creature is feminine only in costume. One biographer tries to explain away the obvious by stating that the death of Michelangelo's mother when he was only six might explain the masculinity of his youthful Madonnas. Could this also explain the masculine women who appear many years later as heroic Sibyls in the ceiling paintings of the Sistine Chapel?

His second youthful work is a larger bas-relief called the "Battle of the Centaurs" showing more than twenty nude male figures locked in hand to hand combat. The topic enabled the artist to glorify the male body in many different positions, a sort of "compendium of the nude." One cannot look at this closely intertwined group of male nudes without sensing an undercurrent of eroticism.

Throughout his life, Michelangelo frequently selected subjects that could best be expressed by the use of a large number of male nudes. i.e., "The Last Judgement." Robert N. Linscott, modern editor of Michelangelo's verse and letters, calls this fact an "obsession" for "the naked male in many postures." Other authors, however, gloss over this "obsession" by attributing it to "Florentine Platonism."

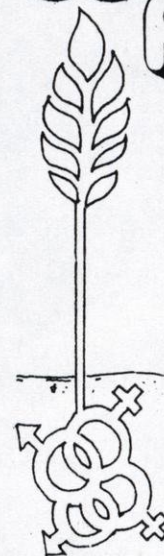
The spirit of the Renaissance was one of a revival of classic form and knowledge in art, literature and learning. Therefore, Renaissance thinkers looked to the ancient Greeks and Romans for "classic" models of thought. Plato's writings on male affections which ultimately deny the flesh fitted easily into the religious philosophy of the Renaissance.

The Judeo-Christian tradition that the sex act was sacred to procreation, the ideal being love without physical contact, made homosexuality immoral and a sin unless it could be purified into spiritual desire only. On the other hand, it is well known that homosexuality was not uncommon in the Renaissance. The fiery Florentine preacher, Savonarola attacked it repeatedly. To the Renaissance thinker, Neo-Platonism offered a position that reconciled both views. Love between members of the same sex was permissible, even sought after, provided it did not develop into a physical relationship. The constant struggle with the temptations of physical sex allowed the lover to rise (in theory, if not always in practice) above the violence of physical passion to a spiritual calm.

Creighton Gilbert,  
Michelangelo's modern trans-

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slator, spends several pages in his translator's forward to the **Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo** using Neo-Platonism as whitewash. Admittedly, Gilbert has the difficult task of explaining away a goodly number of love sonnets by the master addressed to the handsome young nobleman, Tommaso Cavalieri.

He has the particularly outspoken sonnet number 258 (see center spread) to explain away. Here Michelangelo states flatly that a man should not "grow hot" for a woman because the love of a man "draws to heaven" and the other is "base and vile." Gilbert whitewashes as follows:

"The frustrating difficulty of reaching spiritual calm through excitement over beautiful women can be circumvented in one way. This is by loving a man, since sexual excitement is there not involved. This solution is offered explicitly in poem 258. 'Violent passion for tremendous beauty' is free of sin if it aspires to Heaven. Love for a woman is 'too much unlike' and should be avoided. Since this was a solution to Michelangelo's most urgent problem, the expression of such love for men is frequent. Rejecting 'the sense', it does not involve homosexuality

... Platonic love is not the timid bloodless thing that we usually associate with it, but an agonized defense against the temptations of women."

Whitewash or hogwash? Where is the evidence that Michelangelo was ever tempted by a woman?

Even such a friendly writer as John Addington Symonds felt it necessary to add an appendix to his biography to explain that although . . . "He showed no partiality for women and a notable enthusiasm for the beauty of young men" . . . there was no reason to "doubt his moral probity." He further accused Michelangelo of a "physically frigid temperament . . . who habitually philosophized his emotions." This, from Symonds who seems to have written sympathetic biographies, essays, or translations of every prominent homosexual prior to his time and who is known to have worked very hard to include his contemporaries such as Whitman in his stable. Symonds did beautiful translations in rhyme of Michelangelo's poems and letters, using more than the usual tran-

slator's license. Indeed, one of Michelangelo's letters to Cavalieri as translated by Symonds is a lengthy romantic epistle bearing little or no resemblance to the friendly, but guarded letter as translated by Gilbert.

History, as reported by his biographers, offers no proof that Michelangelo's relationship with Tommaso Cavalieri ever stooped to the carnal. For one thing, the master was 57 years old in 1532 when he met the unusually handsome and intelligent young patrician. There is no doubt, however, that he promptly fell in love with this embodiment of his idea of the ideal male.

Cavalieri inspired Michelangelo to express his feelings in a series of elegant love sonnets that force his biographers to hurry to the whitewash pots.

Linscott says:

"The extravagant sentiments of some of his poems reflect the conventions of the period which Michelangelo developed in his own personal way. They show a tender and sensitive side to his nature, a bondage to beauty of mind and body; but they show nothing more."

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Other biographers go into lengthy ecstasies about Neo-Platonism, the inspiration of Dante, Petrarch and other lesser known classicists, and some even discuss the "liberation of the soul."

After admitting that Michelangelo was "fascinated by Cavalieri's physical beauty", the modern scholar Francesco De Feo slaps the whitewash on with a very wide brush:

Buonarroti's love for young Tommaso was a pure and totally disinterested love, a love of beauty as a witness of God; it was a love entirely spiritual and almost sacred, understood as a high and noble sentiment of friendship for the virtues and beauty of the youth, for his eloquence and intelligence, for his culture. It was the agreement of two souls that felt each needed the other. And the best proof of the purity of their feelings is the duration of this mutual affection; it lasted until the death of the artist. Cavalieri was of help to him in business as well; it was thanks to him that the master, now very old, completed the wood model for the dome of St. Peter's. It was Cavalieri who was with him at the moment of death and jealously preserved Michelangelo's drawings for the Campidoglio."

Cavalieri also preserved a group of finished drawings given to him by the master, ostensibly to help the novice in his drawing lessons. Among them was a portrait of the youth, indicating that Michelangelo must have, indeed, been fascinated by his physical beauty. Michelangelo had steadfastly refused to do portraits, for, as Vasari says, "he abhorred making a likeness unless it was of infinite beauty."

That he even gave finished drawings to Cavalieri was highly unusual since he almost never finished his drawings, using them simply as a method of getting an idea down on paper before it was lost. Periodically he gathered these shorthand, idea drawings together and burned them lest they fall into the hands of a public that might see the work that went into creating a masterpiece. The topics chosen for the drawings

and the fact that they were executed with an erotic symbolism makes them more than the equivalents of the love poems.

He did three versions of the fall of the sun's chariot with Phaethon, each becoming more sensuous and psychoanalytically revealing. A Tityus with the vulture eating his heart shows a reclining male nude, strapped to a rock, straddled by a large bird. This over all effect should surely be appreciated by the modern gay who is into the "bondage" scene. The evident allusions to the torments of love (gay love?) are so obvious as to be almost painful.

In the Bacchanal of the Cherubs and The Archers (see center spread), Michelangelo reverts to his Centaurs type group of male nudes, only this time with an open eroticism in an orgiastic setting. Modern psychiatrists should have no difficulty in seeing "infantile regression" in the former and "symbolic ejaculation" in the latter.

Several idealized "divine heads" are almost sweet enough to be valentines and do not carry the usual Michelangelo sense of drama. (One is a drawing called Zenobia which recently was reversed and used on the dust jacket of Mary Renault's latest gay novel, *The Persian Boy*.) The drawing titled The Three Labours of Hercules shows almost pornographic sex posture studies.

Who then can argue that Michelangelo was not homosexual? If not an overt homosexual, he was at least aware of his homo-erotic feelings and was brave enough to express them in poems and drawings at a time when he could easily have been destroyed by a more public admission of his nature.

The whitewash brushes

## CALIFORNIA



## SCENE

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began in his own lifetime and are still at work. Do you wonder that I burn with anger when I read the following in Arno Karlen's supposedly objective "*Sexuality and Homosexuality, a New View*" published as recently as 1971:

"The evidence suggests that both Leonardo and Michelangelo, unless they had secret, unrecorded homosexual lives, were mostly sexually inactive. They may or may not have identified as homosexuals." To describe either as homosexual with confidence reflects a desire to believe them homosexual.

Does it really matter that heterosexuals go to such extremes to whitewash our gay geniuses? Yes, indeed, it does matter. The entire historic irrational attacks on the homosexual as an irresponsible, unproductive creature who destroys the fabric of society sinks when the gold of gay genius is placed in the balance on the scale. Bring the truth out into the open and one more myth will fall. In my opinion it is also important to the self image of the homosexual to know that society has gone to a great deal of trouble to lift the sickness stigma from a long list of people who contributed mightily to our culture in spite of being persecuted for being homosexual.

All through history it has been those whose views and lives have been unorthodox who have had the most profound effect on their time. The world has relied on the genius of the individual, even when eccentric or deviant, to lead the way, but then it has said "Look at him. He's just like me." Until recently, Black heroes were omitted from the history books, their accomplishments being ignored entirely. Blacks are busy putting their people back into the pages of history. We must do the same thing except that our people have not been ignored, but simply whitewashed. We must remove the whitewash carefully so that the true picture will emerge and gays both historic and modern can take their rightful place.

END

BY SAM EDWARDS

# here & there

It will probably be officially received as were the reports on marijuana, violence and pornography-censorship, but the **Final Report of the Task Force on Homosexuality** is now available from: Public Inquiries, NCMHI, 500 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20852. This is the "Hooker Report", a soberly right-on policy statement from the National Institute of Mental Health.

\*\*\*

Really, my dearest Mama!  
You're very old hat and bourgeois

To frown on Denise  
And me and Maurice

And our wonderful menage a trois.

(thanks to **The Gay Canadian**, P.O. Box 284, Stat."A", Vancouver 1, B.C.)

\*\*\*

Portland, Oregon -- A federal judge has ruled that a teacher's homosexuality does not constitute immorality, and that she was improperly fired from her job.

Judge Gus J. Solomon awarded the teacher, Peggy Burton, 1 1/2 year's back pay and ordered that all references to immorality be removed from her record at Cascade Union High School.

**A Gay Bibliography** is a "carefully compiled non-fiction" list which "emphasizes materials that support a positive view of homosexuals and homosexuality." It emerged from the **American Library Association's Task Force on Gay Liberation**, which bills itself as the first time gay people in a professional association have openly formed a group to protect their own interests within the profession and to advance the interests of other gay people as touched by that profession. Copies are available from Barbara Gittings, P.O. Box 2383, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. You might wish to use this list to check out the holdings of your own public library. **Out of the locked cases and on to the shelves!**

\*\*\*

San Francisco's **Society For Individual Rights (S.I.R.)** has elected a new slate of officers including Frank Fitch, 29, as the youngest president in S.I.R.'s history. The new vice-president is Don Scott. Returned to office were "Duke" Smith, Secretary and Rodger Hayden, Treasurer. Five new members were elected to the 9 member board of trustees. They are: Jim Foster, Gary Miller, Deno Thomas, Doug DeYoung, and Kevin Norton.

\*\*\*

Mexico City, D.F. -- A **Homosexual Liberation Front of Mexico** has been formed but it must operate clandestinely. The country's government forbids the group from having a post office box, being a legal organization, publishing statements, or having meetings. (from **The Fountain**, Portland Oregon.)

\*\*\*

The Catholic Conference of Bishops of Ohio has invited New York's Fr. John McNeil, S.J. to speak on the Gay ministry at its spring conference. (from **Dignity**, Feb. 1973)

Our thanks to Milwaukee's **Bugle-American** for including Gay People's Union under 3 headings in their Feb. 7-14 pullout section titled "**Community Resources Handbook.**"

Wouldn't it have been nice if they had also acknowledged that the Handbook's cover design was lifted from a back issue of **G.P.U. NEWS**?

\*\*\*

At the annual meeting of the voting members of the corporation of **One Inc.**, held on January 26, 1973, Howard Beck, treasurer of G.P.U. NEWS was unanimously elected to voting membership in the corporation. Our congratulations to Mr. Beck.

\*\*\*

San Francisco's long notorious Embarcadero Y.M.C.A. is up for sale with a minimum bid of \$850,000. The Y should be able to get more than that out of the building by razing it and selling souvenir bricks and shower handles to sentimental gays throughout the world.

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## books

FROM PAGE 11

collections, or popular accounts of "zaps," and of gay People taking account of themselves.

**Out of the Closets.** . . also contains an "International Directory of Gay Organizations." It is quite complete, especially for the United States, (GPU is, of course, among the listings.) Besides its obvious usefulness, this is of interest otherwise. Because it is so recent, it lists the many moderate groups that have taken control of the movement from the few rather radical groups with which it began. These original groups were the ones from which most of the rhetoric comes for most of the articles in both anthologies.

In other words, if one compares the points of view of the groups listed with what is said, and the way it is said, in these works the "Sea Change" that gay liberation has undergone since the late sixties will become unmistakably clear. The old order has steadily given way to new -- new faces, new lingo, new goals, new tactics, new ideas. There can be no doubt that these things are significant. Of course, their results still remain to be seen.

If you are interested in the direction which the movement is taking, don't bother yourself too much in speculating about it. You won't have to wait long for a perspective on the events. Why? Because someone, somewhere, is writing another anthology.

by JOHN TOM

## Gay Lib

FROM PAGE 8

conflict resulted, eventually producing a number of small militant transvestic groups apart from other elements of gay liberation.

Conflict between gay men and women also developed, although the Gay Liberation Front and other groups attempted cosexual efforts; the polarization appears to be continuing, furthered by the development of both male and female homosexual supremacist groups who are bitterly opposed to each other on all levels and are sometimes almost in a state of war.

Regional conflict also developed, pitting organized gays in one area of the nation against those in another, stifling badly-needed attempts to forge unity.

## NOT ACCEPTED BY GAYS

In truth, the contemporary concept of gay liberation was not readily accepted by the gay world, which thrives in an oppressed situation. If homosexuality were fully accepted by society, there would be no pressing need for gay bars, gay newspapers or gay organizations. In general, most gays still exist in terror, want only to hold onto whatever they have, and are most fearful of anything--including gay liberation--that might negate their chances for survival.

The polarization of the haves and the have-nots within the gay world is extreme. The gay liberation movement is composed

mostly of have-nots: young people and those who live what is often viewed as the "more sordid aspects of gay life." Those who resist the politicization of the gay lib movement are in general the haves--those who belong to the financially solvent gay organizations which expend their full energies to conserve what they already have.

However, the full assimilation of homosexuality by society is so distant in time that the "gay establishment" has little to worry about--and in some cases it has greatly benefitted from gay lib's proselytizing efforts. In several states, many sex laws have been abolished or liberalized, and a more liberal attitude toward gay people is developing. Many gay lib books--The Gay Militants, Dancing the Gay Lib Blues, Homosexual: Liberation and Oppression, Lesbian/Woman, Sappho Was a Right On Woman--have appeared, and more are on the way, while a gay liberationist press (generally replacing the quiet "homophile" publications) has emerged.

Despite internal conflicts, the backlash within the Movement, gay liberation cannot be destroyed, for it is an idea. Some people feel that its time has come, and that the world has only seen its first flower.



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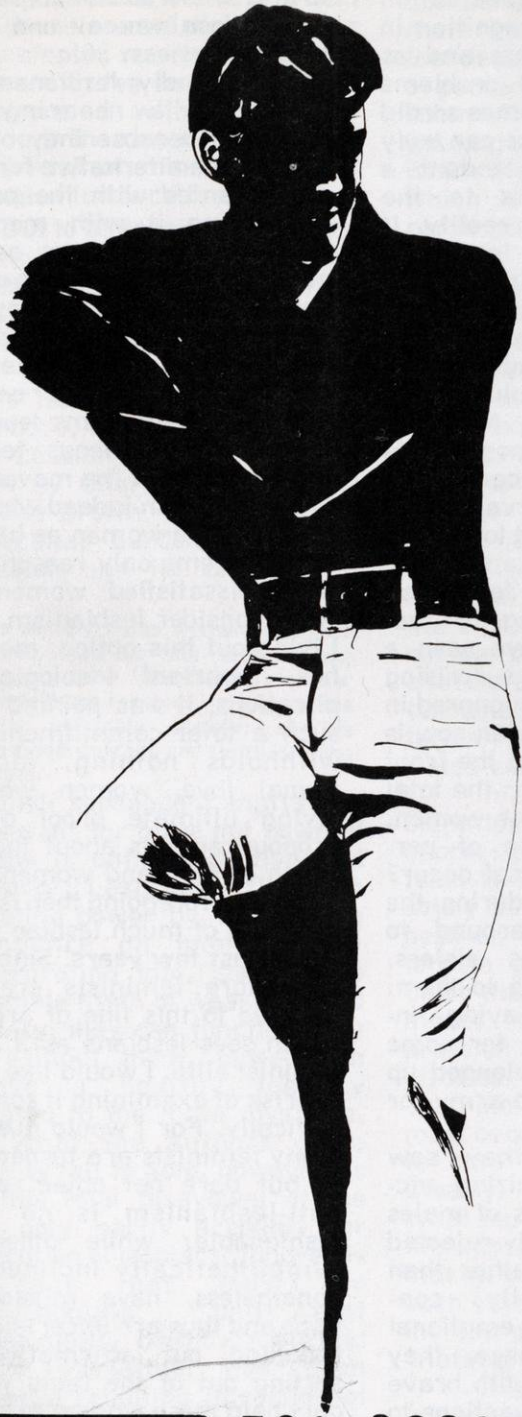
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# Female Homosexuality and Feminism:

The study of all things sexual has seen a sharp escalation in the last 10 years. However, even with the emergence of the gay liberation movement, Lesbians are still considered, by some, to be a pretty exotic species. Unlike their male counterparts, lesbians are simply not taken seriously.

The extreme masculine types are labeled "dykes" and laughed at, while the rest are considered befuddled dropouts from the only legitimate lifestyle of dependent intimacy with a man. Thus because they are pretty much invisible -- and harmless to boot, nobody has really bothered to concern themselves about them. Hence the scarcity of studies about them, of laws against them, and of literature and art depicting them.

Yet it has become apparent within the last few years that within feminist circles the lesbian presence is very vividly felt. In this -- self-selected group of some of the brightest, and at the same time most discontent women in our society, the lesbian is, in many cases, finding herself in the unique position of being taken seriously for the first time. Whether, it is lesbian reality or some mythic version of that reality which is receiving this unprecedented attention is, I feel, a question long overdue for consideration.

The history of the emergence of a lesbian consciousness among American feminists is too long and tangled for me to recount here (good accounts may be found in Donn Teal's *The Gay Militants* and in Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love's *Sappho Was a Right On Woman*). Suffice it to say that, alas, feminists are not unlike most groups in their desire to protect their cause by disavowing "undesirables". Thus they feared that being stamped wholesaley with the labels "lesbian" or "dyke" (a put down indeed frequently resorted to by men and the male-dominated press) would both reduce the effectiveness of their crusade and turn off

potential recruits.

This meant that the struggle of those lesbians within the movement for recognition in their true sexual colors and as feminists with special problems was a difficult and at times sordid one. And yet, I think one can truly say that to a large extent a remarkable openness to the lesbian issue is now a reality. It took place far earlier in radical feminist circles, but finally even among the more traditional groups. The symbolic culmination of the latter was probably the passage of the resolution on lesbianism by the National Organization for Women at its 1971 National Conference; it went on record to avow the validity of the lesbian lifestyle and to include its particular problems among the legitimate concerns of feminism.

With the turning of that crucial corner, we have seen a further and rather surprising progression. Once quite ignored in the movement, the lesbian now is often seen as occupying the front ranks of the crusade for the total human emancipation of women. By what strange turn of perceptions did this reversal occur?

Well, basically, during the process of coming around to accepting lesbians as sisters, feminists were listening to them. What lesbians were saying, indeed had been saying for some time, was that they belonged up there at the head of the army for two important reasons.

First of all, they saw themselves as epitomizing victimization at the hands of males because they had totally rejected men in their lives. Rather than legally (or nonlegally) contracting with a male for emotional and material sustenance, they had instead chosen to both brave the law and social conventions to relate exclusively to other women, in which relationships they could of course not expect the automatic benefits associated with attachment to men. In fact, their refusal in any way to depend on men meant an even higher price tag in terms of privilege and status loss than is true of straight

women, yet another example of the cost in our society for refusal to live the traditional pattern of male dominance and female submissiveness.

Secondly, lesbians felt they deserved a hearing from feminists because they offered a reasonable alternative for women disenchanted with the prospects of making it with men. They perceived themselves as exemplums, that is, living examples of how to get along **without** men. Indeed, from both a theoretical and practical point of view, their life style appeared eminently sensible. If, as seems true on the basis of spontaneous testimony from women in the movement, it is the rare man indeed who is able to relate to a woman as his equal, then it seems only reasonable for such dissatisfied women to at least consider lesbianism.

Living out this option, moreover, has important ideological implications, it was pointed out. In such a total commitment which withholds nothing, including sexual love, women would be giving ultimate proof of their pronouncements about the equal worth of men and women.

The foregoing then is a brief distillate of much lesbian writing of the last few years. Since more and more feminists are being exposed to this line of argument which sees lesbians as a kind of feminist elite, I would like to take the risk of examining it somewhat critically. For I would guess that many feminists are turned off by it, but dare not object because anti-lesbianism is no longer fashionable; while others are sympathetically inclined, but, nonetheless, have mixed reactions and thus are uncertain about speaking out affirmatively. A sorting out of the facts will not only help these women to respond more realistically, but hopefully also will tend to help lesbians themselves to think more clearly about their relation to the feminist cause.

To be quite direct about it, I've been forced to conclude that far too much lesbian polemic is unexcuseably simplistic. Its

# A Reevaluation Part 1

BY DONNA MARTIN

reiteration of a few key ideas tends not only to become a monotonous bore, but is of a sort that simplifies and distorts a far more complex reality. Not unlike this genre in the service of other causes, one can with some justice apply to it the description coined by a friend of mine -- namely, "radical mind-fuck".

But to be specific, I will zero in on the two chief claims made by this lesbian rhetoric. As evidence of this sort of propaganda I will quote from a rather typical article which appeared in the lesbian feminist issue of **Motive** magazine (v. 32, no. 1, 1972), entitled "What Every Lesbian Should Know" and written by Charlotte Bunch and Rita Mae Brown. With respect to the peculiar burden of lesbian oppression and its cause, they say,

This society hates women who love women, and so the lesbian who escapes male dominance in her private home receives it doubly at the hands of male society; she is harassed, outcast, and shuttled to the bottom.

Now their subsequent analysis of the reasons for male put down of lesbians is both perceptive and accurate. Lesbians threaten masculine power by withholding dependence on men and by demonstrating that, contrary to the female myth of weakness and passivity, they can function very well without them, indeed can achieve a healthy identity unrelated to the male mystique.

What the authors quite glaringly fail to note, however, is that this total disavowal of the male only partly accounts for persecution of lesbians. Ignored is the fact that they are "homosexuals", and that homosexuality, both the male and female varieties, has been deemed a revolting infraction of societal norms throughout the centuries of our Judeo-Christian Western culture. Whether considered sin or sickness or crime, homosexuality has been punished with an irrational vigor and harshness probably matched only by heresy and witchcraft.

True, one might argue that

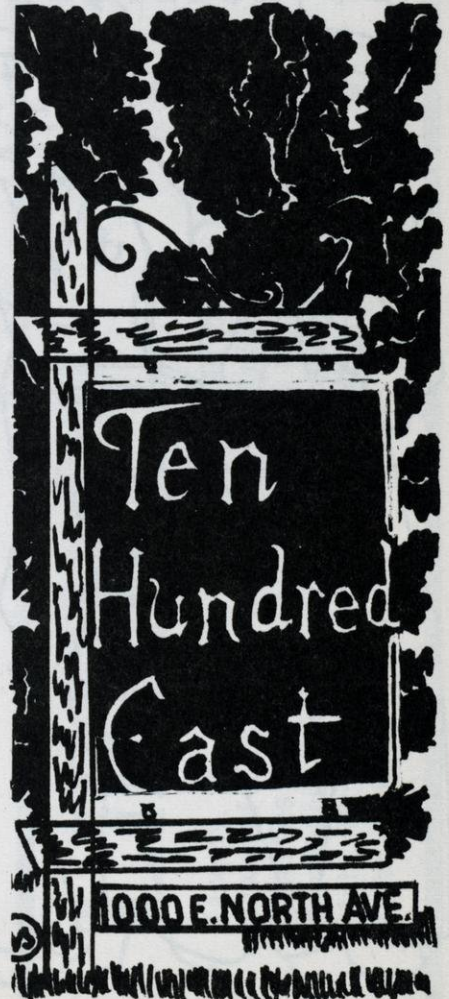
male homosexuals are hounded because a male-dominated culture sees the submission of one male to another in the sex act as a foul debasement of the male ideal, a perverse aping of the female submissive role. And that it is this flouting of the male power trip, which they share with lesbians, which is the root cause for the persecution of both groups. True enough, this is surely an important factor, but here are are many others which contribute heavily. For example, there is the weight carried by those Biblical passages which seem to condemn homosexuality as a heinous sin; related, is the threat to morality seen as being posed by such deviant sexuality in a culture which has been excessively obsessed with adherence to a bleak, repressive sexual code; and, there is the parallel threat to the nuclear biological family, equally characteristic of our culture (especially in the last few centuries), as seen in a way of life which subverts its primacy.

In view then of this constellation of causes of lesbian oppression, it is simply being false to the facts to see lesbians **solely** as occupying the extreme position on the continuum of female oppression. And to conclude that they offer the supreme model for combating such oppression is consequently totally off-base. Bunch and Brown, for example, say that "feminists must become lesbians if they hope to end male supremacy". Clearly, this is sheer nonsense! What isn't nonsense, however, is the more reasonable expectation that all women come to recognize each other as loving comrades in the common cause against male "natural right".

Frequently proclaimed by feminists is the goal, not simply of female liberation, but of human liberation. An unarguable goal, it is also useful in countering attacks against them of female chauvinism and in mollifying male resistance by pointing out that their efforts will benefit men as well as women through releasing both sexes from rigid

role restrictions. But women too, like all fallable people in this far from perfect world, are vulnerable to the temptation of exploiting others. Thus I would like to see the usual feminist conception of the ideal of human liberation more specifically delineated. As such, hopefully, it would cut as an antidote to oppression of women by women on the basis of sexual preference, race or class, and incidentally also help the movement by decreasing the divisiveness such differences often generate. One really important function then of lesbians in the feminist movement, as I see it, is to provide an opportunity, along with racial minorities and working class women, for all women to expand their sympathies and become more fully human.

(to be continued)



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