THE ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EMERGENCE
OF U. S. "GAY LIBERATION"

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ABSTRACT

The general significance of "gay liberation" to an understanding of sex roles in U. S. society is discussed in the introduction to this essay, which then proceeds to a lengthy survey of early advocates of the acceptance of homoeroticism, and the relatively recent creation of various organizations that speak for "the homophile community." The conclusion focuses on an analysis of the major contemporary groups, along with their programs and tactics.
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We all have gay friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers, but often they are hidden because of society's prejudices. A lesbian who placed a photo of her lover on the office desk, the man who publicly kissed another man, or someone who chatted about a "date" with someone of the same sex would be regarded as flaunting a perversion, although these are perfectly "normal" activities for heterosexuals. For the vast majority of homosexuals, it is easier to remain silent or to lie, whether out of fear of controversy and job loss, or merely because it seems impossible to explain their lives to an ignorant majority.

Recently, growing numbers have broken this silence, and the deep prejudices of thousands of years have been dramatically challenged by the appearance of gay liberation throughout the West, but most comprehensively in the United States. We have suddenly learned that homosexuals constitute a remarkably large and diverse minority, that they have a cruelly long history of persecution, and that they may offer special insights into the nature of sexuality and living arrangements in this society.

The size of the population would, alone, compel attention to this subject. A recent study indicated that no more than 50 percent of men and 72 percent of women were totally heterosexual, with 37 percent
of men and 21 percent of women having some overt homosexual experience, and 13 percent of men and 7 percent of women engaging in more homosexual than heterosexual activity for at least three years of their lives from the ages of sixteen to fifty-five. Thus, we are talking about millions who are exclusively homosexual and a much larger group that may be predominantly one way or the other, but not totally so. Allen Ginsberg's poem is truer than public opinion once assumed:

Everybody's just a little
bit homo sexual
whether they like it or not
Everybody feels a little bit
of love for their sex
even if they almost forgot

Since the people who have had some homosexual experience are of every age, occupation, educational training, ethnic background, class and region, it is now obvious that stereotypes of "the homosexual" cannot be accurate. Despite the popular images of lesbian truck drivers, limp-wristed decorators, and timid florists with wavering voices, there is no more a typical homosexual than there is a typical heterosexual. Just as racial bigotry is expressed in comments on typical Jews and blacks, "kikes and niggers," sexual bigotry is found in comments on typical homosexuals, "faggots and dykes." The study of gay liberation, then, is important not only for the numbers of people involved but because of what we learn of the rich diversity so often obscured by labels. Rita Mae Brown has captured this complexity for lesbians:

There are lesbians whose politics are to the right of Genghis Khan. There are lesbians who make Maoists look moderate. There are
lesbians who can only be described as dowdy dykes. There are lesbians who can't be described, they simply knock you out with their beauty. There are lesbians who love cats and could never be seen without one. There are lesbians who like dogs. There are lesbians who like men (no parallel intended) and there are lesbians who barely know that men as a group exist. There are Baptist lesbians, born again; there are Catholic lesbians who certainly never violate papal procedure regarding birth control. There are Jewish lesbians and Zen ones, Shinto and all the other religious possibilities. There are even lesbians who don't believe in any religion at all. There are poor lesbians and rich lesbians. There are dumb dyke lesbians (yes, I hate to admit it but there are) and there are smart lesbians.²

But gay liberation has not only reduced the power of destructive prejudices, it has raised significant theoretical issues about sex roles in this culture -- too often expressed in the simple dichotomies of "acting like a man" or "acting like a woman," "straight or gay" (with little recognition of gradations), and "active or passive." Gay liberation has made many people more sensitive to the life-denying character of these narrow categories, giving it the status of an important movement for individual freedom and expression.³

Having said this, where does one begin the history of an "invisible people" -- or find the sources for it? These problems were confronted as soon as the first successful gay organizations were begun in the 1950s. On one hand, they felt the need to learn about the hidden history of their brothers and sisters. Like other minorities who have become self-conscious, such as Jews, blacks and women, they began the
effort to rescue their past from the suppression and neglect from which it (and they) had suffered.

This quickly proved to be an enormous task. How does one reconstruct the history of a people from anonymous martyrs, burned letters and scrapbooks, writings with the pronouns changed, suppressed autobiographies, and silenced voices? Little was ever recorded, most of that has been destroyed, and almost all of the remainder has been filtered through the biases of those who disdain homosexuality as a crime against God and nature. It is not surprising, then, that the conventional history of homosexuality has focused on the scandalous: heretic burnings, sex arrests, prison records, exposés, and gossip-mongering. Homosexuals of the past are generally faceless; one sees only the masks that society has put on them.

What remains is a grotesque record of intolerance that one editor has even called "a heterosexual dictatorship":

During the four hundred years documented here, American homosexuals were condemned to death by choking, burning, and drowning; they were executed, jailed, pilloried, fined, court-martialed, prostituted, fired, framed, blackmailed, disinherited, declared insane, driven to insanity, to suicide, murder, and self-hate, witch-hunted, entrapped, stereotyped, mocked, insulted, pitied, castrated and despised. 4

This bias is rooted in such Old Testament books as Levitacus, carried forward into the Roman world by such disciples as St. Paul, and turned into law when Christianity becomes the state religion in 323 A.D.
Homosexuality was then a damnable sin, and those guilty of it could be legally murdered from that time until even the days of the founding of the colonies in the New World. The bundles of wood that were stacked around those to be burned alive (whether sexual or religious deviates) were called faggots.

The ferocity of the anti-homosexual taboo in Western society is difficult to rationally explain. While many other cultures have tolerated and even encouraged homosexual experimentation, those of the West have not. The Jews, at least, had a good reason: as a small, persecuted people, any sex that would not produce children was a social threat meriting the severest penalties. Curiously enough, this attitude continues into the Christian era. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, argued that masturbation was a more serious offense than forcible rape, since the latter at least included the possibility of conception.

With increasing secularization, more enlightened people called for modernization of the old laws. For Jefferson, this meant that the death penalty against sodomy in Virginia should be replaced by the more humane penalty of castration. In the context of history, this was progress. Also, with increasing urbanization, gay people could more easily meet one another and subcultures began to form in major metropolitan areas.

Consciousness

Perhaps the title of father of American gay liberation should be given to Walt Whitman (with Gertrude Stein possibly deserving the title of mother). In Whitman's poems there are fewer masks and pronouns changed from "he" to "she", along with enticing allusions and bold
images. He is also an exemplary figure for this book insofar as he was not only an American prophet of the sexual revolution, but a champion of radical democracy ("I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the world over. . . . My call is the call of battle. I nourish active rebellion.") As such, he influenced both the development of a gay movement here and in Europe, and has been admired by many radicals throughout the world.

Walter Whitman, Jr. (1819-92) was born on a small farm on the then-rural Long Island, New York. His father, a n'er-do-well carpenter, considered himself a personal friend of Thomas Paine, subscribed to Fanny Wright's progressive newspaper, and admired the radical Quakerism of Elias Hicks. For the parents, the American revolution and "democracy" were not empty concepts, naming two of their children Jefferson and George Washington, and teaching them an independent republican spirit.

Walt, after some youthful work in a lawyer's office, print shop and schoolroom (as a teacher), turned to writing and editing. After some successes and many failures, he produced a 94 page book in 1855 to express his evolved beliefs in democratic diversity. Opening this edition of Leaves of Grass, one discovers Whitman in his costume as a carpenter: slouch hat, clipped beard, red underwear showing through an open shirt — not a dainty poet for genteel drawingrooms but one of the people. The vulgarity of this engraving and everything about the form and content of the work produced a barrage of negative reviews. The London Critic observed that "Walt Whitman is as acquainted with art as a hog is with mathematics." The Christian Examiner characterized the Leaves as
"noxious weeds." The Boston Intelligencer surmised that the book had been composed by an escaped lunatic. The New York Daily Times depicted Whitman as "half man, half beast, neighing defiance to all the world." Whittier is said to have thrown the copy sent to him into the fire, and others suggested darkly that "the law" should look into the whole matter. Only three favorable comments appeared in the Brooklyn Times, the Phrenological Review, and the U. S. Review. We know today that Whitman wrote all of them and submitted them anonymously.

Nonetheless, with the generous praise of Emerson in a private letter -- which Whitman rather bumptiously published -- Whitman commenced his lifelong task of revising and adding to his "bible of democracy" (as he came to call it). By the tenth version, the so-called "death bed" edition of 1891-92, the book had grown enormously. But it never wholly ceased to be controversial; even in 1865 Whitman was fired from his job as a clerk in the Indian Bureau for writing an obscene book.
Although he found another position in the Attorney General's office where he continued until a stroke in 1873 (apparently he was not a "security risk" in that era), there were further attacks by the Society for the Prevention of Vice and others interested in moral purity.

The pervasive sexuality of Whitman's poems undoubtedly provoked much of the uneasy response to _Leaves of Grass_. For Whitman, sex was of the essence of life. Even the world itself becomes a sexual being of "sweaty brooks and dews," "winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me," "broad, muscular fields, branches of live oak," and fecund soil where summer is nature's orgasm. Within this sensual world, there is a certain erotic charm to the smallest descriptions, such as "the hairy wild bee that murmurs and hankers up and down -- that grips the full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her with amorous firm legs, takes his will of her, and holds himself tremulous and tight till he is satisfied."

Humanity, in this frankly material world, is not superior because it is more "spiritual." Whitman transcends the tedious moralism that has been so common in American literature by announcing that "if anything is sacred, the human body is sacred. . . . I believe in the flesh and the appetites; seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles. . . . The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer, this head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds." Here is someone who does not repress emotion, who is not ashamed of his desires. For him, the only unnatural things are those which harm the body.

Applied specifically, however, his gay male imagery is more comprehensive and compelling than that for women, whether lesbian or heterosexual. Although his women are not afraid of sex, but enjoy
natural passions, they tend to be sexually passive, waiting for the active agent, man. While woman lacks nothing, "yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, if the moisture of the right man were lacking." Later, the attraction of a farm woman to an Indian squaw is also rather softly and pensively written:

On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-bottoming chairs, Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half-envelop'd her face, Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded exquisitely as she spoke.

My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the stranger, She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face and full and pliant limbs, The more she look'd upon her she loved her, Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity, She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace, she cook'd food for her, She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle of the afternoon she went away, 0 my mother was loth to have her go away, All the week she thought of her, she watch'd for her many a month, She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer, But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

The furthest that Whitman goes beyond these quiet emotional attachments, for women, is the heterosexual theme of "The Bathers," where a woman secretly watches a group of nude male bathers from her house on a hill, caressing them in her imagination. While this was quite shocking for Victorian readers, as were his more general motifs, D. H. Lawrence and others have concluded that most of Whitman's heterosexual poems are too generalized, and that his male erotic poems are far more disturbing in their intensity.

Most of the latter are found in the Calamus section, although others (such as "Tan-Faced Prairie Boy") are scattered throughout the
Leaves. Whitman completed the Calamus section in 1860, and then composed "Children of Adam," a heterosexaul portion of the work possibly intended to balance the first. It doesn't require a very active imagination to interpret the calamus as a phallic symbol: it's a pink colored, edible aromatic root with spiked leaves. This thrust up plant is also sometimes called a "sweet flag." Although Thomas E. Crawley, in The Structure of Leaves of Grass (1970), disputes the "crude" and "gross interpretation ... that the root is a symbol of the male sex organ," other interpretations seem contrived and prudish. Whitman would have understood: "I do not know whether many passing by will discover you or inhale your faint odor, but I believe a few will."

(From Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America, 1958)
Throughout this section, and the rest of *Leaves of Grass*, one has images of homosexual potential, desire, hesitation, and realization. The poet confesses that "there is something fierce and terrible in me, eligible to burst forth. . . . I dare not tell it in word -- not even in these songs." Yet he also says that it "waits, and has always been waiting, latent in all men." He is uncertain of this potential, which he sometimes implies is nonerotic comradeship and sometimes as amative relationship. He holds back at times, and is still impelled forward: "I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you." He realizes the prejudice against same-sex eroticism, and warns the knowledgeable reader:

I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,

I am not what you supposed but far different . . .

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain,

perhaps destructive.

Nonetheless, the experience of his own life -- his own love for others -- must have convinced him that his feelings were right, saying "I take my own modes of expressing love." He is a man waiting fearfully on the shore, clutching a plank, contemplating the ocean. He wants to realize his desires, his erotic potential:

I was called by the voices of young men
as they saw me approaching or passing
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood,
or the negligent leaning
of their flesh against me as I sat,
Saw many I loved in the streets or ferry-boat or public assembly,
yet never told them a word . . .
As I walk by your side, or sit near, or remain in the same room with you, little you know the subtle, electric fire that for your sake is playing within me.

This potential is realized in such moments as "act-poems of eyes, hands, lips and bosoms," "I roll myself upon you as upon a bed," or in the male image of a stallion being "ridden":

limbs glossy and supple,
eyes full of sparkling wickedness,
his nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,
his well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around and return.

Whitman concludes that he will exile himself no longer from his companions -- "You shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you; I come forward in your midst, I will be your poet." Whitman had become the poet of forbidden voices.

As someone partially alienated from society because of his sexual orientation, Whitman may have "compensated" by arguing that the dominant values of democracy should be interpreted far more radically than they were in his day. As an evolutionist, he envisioned a democratic society of "comradeship" rather than competition, in which the free individual would live in a community of love. Sometimes he thought that anarchism or socialism might provide the models for that full democracy of the future.  

The sexual and political radicalism of Leaves of Grass was deeply attractive to both of the central figures of the early homosexual movement in England, John Addington Symonds (d. 1893) and Edward Carpenter
(d. 1929). Symonds first heard of Whitman in 1865, and Carpenter read him in 1868. Both privately identified Whitman as a poet of homogenic love and began a correspondence with him. Carpenter even made a pilgrimage to the man in 1877 and 1884 (just as Oscar Wilde had stopped by to pay his respects in 1882). Symonds, however, exasperated Whitman with his intimate questions, finally prompting the famous and completely undocumented reply that Whitman had a "jolly" youth, resulting in six illegitimate children and one grandchild. This almost comic letter -- which one person has said could be properly read only by W. C. Fields -- has become the shaky foundation for much of the claim that Whitman was a genuine red-blooded heterosexual. 9

Symonds and Carpenter realized, of course, the public penalties that might come from any honest discussion of Whitman's sexuality. Symonds' book on the poet was not published until 1893, after Whitman's death. Then, Whitman came to occupy a major and honored place in their writings. In the 1890s, Symonds completed one of the first great studies, Sexual Inversion, with Havelock Ellis -- a man who, in The New Spirit (1889), had compared Whitman to Jesus as a liberator. Carpenter, a socialist, feminist, and gay publicist, wrote such works as "Homogenic Love and Its Place in a Free Society" (1894), Towards Democracy (1907), The Intermediate Sex (1908), Love's Coming of Age (1912) and Some Friends of Walt Whitman: A Study in Sex Psychology (1924). Although the 1895 trial of Oscar Wilde had a stifling effect on such public discussion, an unknown people was slowly and more accurately being revealed and understood by the public.
Today, many of Carpenter's writings seem too maudlin and polemical, but they were daring in an era when the mention of sexuality was not polite. Yet, for Carpenter

sex still goes first, and hands, eyes, mouth, brain, follow; from the midst of belly and thighs radiate the knowledge of self, religion and immortality.¹⁰

Carpenter helped to end the grim silence on sex, and presented a vision of humanity evolving toward an "intermediate sex" (perhaps what we would call bisexuality today), of which Whitman was a precursor.
Less progressively, both he and Symonds abhorred "brute appetites" and longed for a chivalrous code between the sexes (in whatever combination) modeled broadly on ancient Greece and the Italian Renaissance. Women were seldom directly present, childhood sexuality was bad, "self-abuse" was not to be encouraged, "mere" sexual pleasure was anti-social, the "intermediate sex" was presented with its own stereotypes of sensitivity and creativity, and monogamy was praised as the highest relationship. Still, both men had contributed to a public discussion of homosexual attractions and Carpenter had been central to the founding of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology in 1914.

The radical pluralism of Carpenter and Whitman has, of course, made them many enemies or, as bad, misinterpreters. Some argue, for example, that if Whitman was essentially homosexual he cannot be a great poet because he was an unrepresentative man. This stand was already taken by Edward Berton in a 1905 character study published in Leipzig. A more common tack, however, has been to gloss over the elements of whatever one does not like. Thus, Freiligrath, Gorky or Mayakovsky laud Whitman as a radical communitarian; others, as a bourgeois democrat, and still others as an All-American patriotic stump-speaker. His sexual themes, despite his own claims for their importance, received little attention among narrowly political people, including in the editions published in the USSR or the Peoples' Republic of China.

In the United States, Whitman has been a case study for the quiet suppression of "awkward" radicalisms. High school and college anthologies dwell on his patriotic poems and speak of the maturity of
"the good gray poet." There is scarcely a word about Whitman "the good gay poet" nor Whitman the red. Scholarly journals are similarly willing to examine almost anything else: Whitman and bird poetry; Whitman in Kansas, New Orleans and St. Louis; his impressions of New Jersey; his reception in Italy and Ireland; his interest in opera; his use of French and Spanish terms; or his relation to Rabindranath Tagore. In brief, a gay satyr, maverick guru, or pre-Civil War hippie becomes a dry-as-dust antiquarian.

The legacy of Whitman's sexual radicalism -- and its connection to his political beliefs -- has been better remembered and nurtured by gay writers. James Baldwin opens Giovanni's Room with Whitman's remark "I am the man, I suffered, I was there." Federico Garcia Lorca, in his comparison of a machinelike America that makes money and Whitman's physical America that makes love, says that "not for one moment, beautiful aged Walt Whitman, have I failed to see your beard full of butterflies." Hart Crane in his classic poem The Bridge includes the pledge "No, never to let go / my hand in yours, Walt Whitman --- so ---." And Allen Ginsberg, in Howl!, spies Whitman strolling down the aisles of a California supermarket: "I saw you Walt Whitman . . . poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys." That both homosexuals and communists have frequently looked to Whitman as their prophet may help to explain why, in 1955, there was a heated debate over naming the new Camden-Philadelphia bridge after Whitman (his supposed children -- even if illegitimate -- were invoked by some to prove his manhood). Or, in 1976, why a national TV program on Whitman was scheduled after 10 P.M. so that children would escape corruption from its gingerly references to
his sexual tastes. Some critics even dismissed the "charge" that Whitman was gay by asserting that others believed him to be "a rapist and a wencher." Presumably the latter conditions would redeem the man.  

(Whitman with Peter Doyle, 1869)

Although we can cite Whitman as an early visionary figure of gay liberation, there are only scattered novelists, journalists and organizers for decades following his death. Most of the first major books were written in Germany and few Americans became aware of them. Slowly, however, a new "scientific" interpretation of homosexuality began to gain adherents. In this perspective, it was not a sin but a sickness, or, as Havelock Ellis more daringly stated, an "anomaly." This literature speaks of inverts (men with women's "souls" and vice versa), Uranians (after a reference in Plato's Symposium to male–male
love), the third sex, Urnings, the intermediate sex, similexuals, and the intersexes. Some of this material, such as Dr. Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1887), and the works of Dr. Magnus Hirshfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (founded in 1897), begins to be known by some in the United States. Still, it is representative of the time that the first major non-fiction book by an American on this subject had to be printed in Italy under a pseudonym: Xavier Mayne [Edward I. Stevenson], *The Intersexuals: A History of Similexualism as a Problem in Social Life* (1908). This massive scholarly book was published in a meagre edition of 125 copies.

Given the close-mindedness of most on the question of homosexuality, and the intolerance of what was generally said, it is not surprising that an independent lesbian like Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) took the opportunity that was available to her to live most of her adult life abroad. Following her graduation from the Harvard Annex, and an attempt to become a doctor at the Johns Hopkins Medical School (rejecting the advice of a relative: "better a baby than an M.D."), she used a small inheritance to establish herself in Paris in 1903. Some now believe that a lesbian love affair was the primary cause for the abrupt conclusion to her studies in Baltimore. If so, it is especially significant that her first large manuscript (unpublished by her request until after her death) was an effort to work out a triangular relationship between three women. In *Things as They Are*, a young woman on an ocean trip encounters two women of the world who ridicule her "almost puritanic horror of physical love." As one asks: "Haven't you ever stopped thinking enough to feel?" The problem of individual desires and social taboos
are clearly drawn in this initial study by Stein. Much of the obscurity of her later writings may stem from an attempt (conscious or not) to conceal her own emotional life.

Gertrude is joined, in 1907, by an exotic Californian, Alice B. Toklas. A relationship begins that was to last to Gertrude's death and beyond. Perhaps because of a more settled life, she becomes an increasingly prolific writer, although her works are confined to such arcane journals as Pagany, Black and Blue Jay, The Celestian Visitor, and Margaret Anderson's Little Review. Some of her unpublished work, such as A Long Gay Book in 1909 (when gay was already a code word for homosexual in France) have homoerotic implications. Many of the most successful of her stories, like the published Three Lives (1909), center on the problems of women.

Her most humanly moving, sensitive and popular book was written about her companion, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (1933). It was composed in the charmingly direct style of Alice, unlike the multifaceted and oblique literary cubism for which Gertrude was infamous. Following this triumph, she returned to the United States for a much publicized tour in 1934-35, accompanied by Toklas and greeted by headlines that chided her repetitious technique: "Gerty Gerty Stein Stein is Back Home Home Back."

(Motive magazine, 1972)

DRAWING by NANCY ADAIR, ALBUQUERQUE
While Alice and Gertrude comprise a famous gay couple, Alice was, of course, represented as Gertrude's secretary. Despite this public fiction, in Paris their salon was a rival to the flamboyant lesbian circle of Natalie Clifford Barney ("the wild girl from Cincinnati") and a friend labelled the Stein-Toklas affair "the worst-kept secret of the century." But official secret it was. Stein's writings were exasperatingly oblique, unlike Whitman's. Perhaps her word portraits represent a gay sensibility, as did her famous posturing ("Besides Shakespeare and me, who do you think there is?"), but her gay influence was indirect, through her appearances with Alice, her close-cropped hair, and literary inferences.

On rare occasions, however, the subject was apparently discussed with friends. As she instructed Hemingway about the differences between male and female homosexuality:

You know nothing about any of this really [ -- She was always so polite! -- ]. The main thing is that the act male homosexuals commit is ugly and repugnant and afterwards they are disgusted with themselves. They drink and take drugs to palliate this, but they are disgusted with the act and they are always changing partners and cannot be happy. . . . In women, it is the opposite. They do nothing that they are disgusted by and nothing that is repulsive and afterwards they are happy and they can lead happy lives together. Hemingway does not seem to have been convinced, however. He later described Stein as "a woman who isn't a woman" and claimed in his autobiography The Moveable Feast that he was "disgusted" by the Alice-Gertrude affair. Gertrude, for her part, considered Hemingway a repressed homosexual.

Stein's message for later years was not only limited by the privateness of these opinions, however, but by the essential "conservatism"
of both her lifestyle and politics. In the 1930s, she still identified herself as a Republican, and even her unconventional sexuality was not liberated, but a gay marriage in which she was publicly the dominant, "butch" member and poor Alice cooked, cleaned, typed and sat quietly in another room with the wives and mistresses of great men while Gertrude conversed with the real people. Gertrude, then, was not a woman-identified lesbian but a male-oriented lesbian. Furthermore, she loathed the irrational and "debauched" sexuality of many of her artist friends and often seemed remarkably prudish. But even given all of this -- disqualifying her as a "model" open lesbian -- it is impossible to agree with heterosexual claims (still advanced by some today) that there was nothing lesbian about the relationship. In 1971, an editor of Stein's work, Patricia Meyerwitz, objected to the "strange allegations of [Stein's] alleged perverse sexuality." Meyerwitz denied any sexuality to poor Gertrude by asserting that an autopsy revealed a calcified uterus and, thus, a lack of sexual stimulation. ¹⁸ This is more of a study in delusion than medicine.

During Stein's lifetime, she had little encouragement to correct such heterosexual bias. It was hard enough being an independent woman without suffering from the public stigma of being a lesbian. In the United States -- which she had abandoned -- there were only a few pro-gay books and novels. The accepted wisdom was criticized by a tiny number of progressive doctors and professionals, audacious writers, and ultra-left radicals like Emma Goldman. Opposed to these few was an array of censoring individuals and groups. In 1927, for example, the state legislature of New York forbid the depiction of
of homosexuality on any stage (a law that lasted until 1967). In 1928, a lesbian novel by Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, was intensely criticized and nearly banned throughout the United States.

**Organization**

Despite this repression (and sometimes because of it) new forces were beginning to coalesce. Margaret Sanger knew and approved of the British Society for Sex Psychology, and others were aware of the work of various German groups. In 1925, an American who had been in Germany shortly after WWI and learned of the pro-gay Bund für Menschenrecht set up the first documented homosexual organization in the United States.

The Society for Human Rights, Inc., founded in Chicago by Henry Gerber and incorporated under the laws of the state of Illinois, was intended to "combat public prejudice" against those "who by reasons of mental and physical abnormalities are abused and hindered in the legal pursuit of happiness . . . guaranteed them by the Declaration of Independence." It had gathered only ten members and published two issues of *Friendship and Freedom* before its leaders were arrested, their material confiscated, and Gerber fired from his job. Although they had not actually broken any laws, the organization was shattered. Newspaper coverage of a "strange sex cult" in Chicago, the cost of arranging a defense ($800, which was Gerber's entire savings), job losses, and public contempt crushed this initial effort. 19

Gerber retreated to New York City where he published a mimeo newsletter for pen pals, *Contacts*, from 1930, and a literary magazine, *Chanticleer* in 1934. He was, in many ways, a budding social critic, insofar as his comments not only condemn anti-homosexual laws and prejudices, but also pro-gay literature that embodied stereotypes
(such as the masculine lesbians in The Well of Loneliness, which he called "ideal anti-homosexual propaganda"), and, more broadly, the destructive competition of capitalism.

Other small groups came and went: the Sons of Hamidy (Chicago, 1934-45?), the Quaker Emergency Committee in New York (1940s), the Veteran's Benevolent Association (New York, 1945-54), and Lisa Ben's Vice Versa: America's Gayest Journal (Los Angeles, 1947-48). These affected a few people, but the great masses of Americans, if they read anything at all about homosexuality were likely to learn about "shadowy worlds," sordid perverts, Warped Women, "the purple flame of passion," strange sisters, "a hidden world of sexual depravity," Twilight Sex, and shocking sin in books like Lesbo Hotel. Even this trash might not be available in small towns and rural areas, although the stereotypes probably still circulated verbally.

Few homosexuals would have predicted that the 1950s would bring the creation of three national organizations for their social and legal justice. Jim Kepner, who became a gay activist in the early 1950s, describes the beginning of that period:

In 1950 there were no gay publications or organizations or churches; no all-gay baths; no identified gays on any public platforms; no gay novels describing sex or having happy endings (allow a well-hidden exception or two on some points); no gay vote; no demonstrations; no gay cycle clubs; virtually no gay social activities; no gays who were arrested pleading not guilty, and hence no cases appealed; and almost no mention of homosexuality in the press except for accounts of bar raids and murders, and occasional McCarthyite screams that homosexuality was a Communist plot.
Not-So-Gay Life in Miami, Florida, 1954

Crackdown On Deviate Nests Urged

How L. A. Handles Its 150,000 Perverts

WARNING FOR MIAMI?

(Second In A Series)

By J. R. W. ROBERTS

New York Times Staff Writer

In Greater Miami in danger of becoming a favorite gathering spot for homosexuals and sexual psychopaths?

It happened in Los Angeles and it could happen here. In California the homosexuals have organized to resist interference by police. They have established their own magazine and are constantly crusading for recognition as a "normal" group, a so-called "third sex."

They number 150,000 in Los Angeles, their leaders say. They claim kinship by nature with some of the leading literary and business figures in the nation.

The Los Angeles homosexuals are apparently well aware of the situation in Miami. In the January issue of their magazine, Miami Beach Police Chief Romaine Shepard was reported to have raided a bar on homosexuals gathered at the 22nd Street bathing beach.

The cover of the magazine showed a young man in bathing trunks facing Biscayne Bay with his arms lifted up in supplication.

"Miami Joins the Constitutionalists," was the headline.

The article urged homosexuals living in the Miami area to get together and sue the City of Miami Beach for their arrest.

Dan Sullivan, operating director of the Greater Miami Crime Commission, also was lambasted in the same issue for failing to find any homosexuals "sex criminals."

Deviate Drops Charge Against His Accuser

By MILT SOSIN

Miami Herald Staff Writer

A colony of some 500 male homosexuals, congregated mostly in the near-downtown northeast section and ruled by a "queen," was uncovered in the investigation of the murder of an Eastern Air Lines steward.

MIAMI HERALD 8/12/54

But the first general revelations of the falsity of the public's stereotypes came already in 1948 with the publication of Alfred Kinsey's Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (selling 200,000 copies in two months), followed by, in 1953, Sexual Behavior of the Human Female. Here, for the first time, was a scientific survey that avoided open moralizing and attempted to depict things as they were
rather than as someone thought that they should be. Because Kinsey did not like to think in terms of absolutes, he placed sexual behavior on a scale. At one end ("0") all fantasies and activities were directed toward the opposite sex. At the other end ("6"), all fantasies and activities were directed toward members of the same sex. By this method, he avoided the simple either/or categories that still dominate the popular mind today -- that a person is either totally homosexual or totally heterosexual (rather than, let us say, a "2", an ambisexual "3" or a "5"). Using this system, he concluded that large minorities of the society felt homosexual attractions and many had acted on these.

Although many criticisms were made of "the Kinsey Report," it was recognized that nothing of such depth and comprehensiveness had ever been completed before on the actual sex lives of Americans. Its conclusions, even when disputed, produced the first widespread public discussion about the sexual mores and laws of this society, including those related to homosexuality.

This discussion encouraged the publication and success of the first widely-read pro-gay book in our history. Although the author, Edward Sagarin, wrote under the pseudonym Donald Webster Corey, he boldly stated that *The Homosexual in America* was based on a quarter of a century's experience drawn from his own life. It was and is a remarkable book, both in its emotional impact and in its comprehensive references to Carpenter, Symonds, Whitman, Wilde, Gide, Hall, Isherwood, Stein, Kinsey and many others. Summarizing the entire era that preceded it, it was "addressed to all the gay people in America" to become conscious of themselves as a persecuted minority, and included a plea
for the heterosexual world to cast off its irrational fears of those different from themselves. 21

Although some libraries may have filed the book under the history of pornography or in abnormal psychology, one reads or hears of people who found the book a revelation. Here, in one study, was a complete overview of the problem. Just as many proto-feminists were intellectually enriched and stimulated to action by the American edition of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in 1953, such was also true of some gays in reading Corey's book.

Both the Kinsey Report and the Cory book reflect the changing times and gave an impetus to the foundation of the first successful gay organization in U.S. history, the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles. Henry Hay, a member of the Communist Party for over a decade and a half, decided in 1948 that he should be doing something for his own oppressed people. He was afraid that gays, in a future crisis, would become "America's Jews," the scapegoats for social troubles. With some knowledge of the Chicago Society for Human Rights, he began composing an outline for a new group, at first approaching members of Bachelors for Wallace, which had supported the Progressive Party candidate in 1948, Henry Wallace. Later, leaflets were distributed by Hay at gay bars and beaches in Santa Monica. By November of 1950 he had convinced only two other people that his dream was possible, and these three, with considerable audacity, founded a preliminary organization that warned of "encroaching fascism" as a danger to all minorities. The founding date: April Fool's Day, 1950.
Hay, leaving the Communist Party as a security risk to it (!), devoted his energies to creating "a service and welfare organization devoted to the protection and improvement of society's Androgynous Minority." Because Hay and others felt they were required to wear masks by heterosexuals, they adopted the name Mattachine in 1951, after medieval jesters who were allowed to speak the truth in public because of their costumes. They were to be professional fools.

The first meetings in 1950 and 1951 began the long process of overcoming the sense of social isolation and intellectual confusion among gay people. Under the slogans of "to unify; to educate; to lead", the directors of the Society called for meetings and publications that would encourage self-understanding, regulation of "the social
conduct of our minority," "social analyses" to others, "progressive sexual legislation" and "alliances" with other minorities. Each member was asked to pledge himself or herself "in every way possible, to respect the rights of all racial, religious, and national minorities, since I realize I also am a member of a persecuted minority."^21

Although the Mattachine started cautiously, with pledges of secrecy and a "guild" structure of cells so that not all new members knew the entire membership of the Society, the number of guilds grew rapidly. In 1953, after the group had publicly won a law case in favor of one of its members, Dale Jennings, who had been falsely arrested by a police decoy for "solicitation," the society held approximately 50 meetings and had a total of several thousand in attendance. By May of 1953, there were Mattachine discussion guilds in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Chicago and New York, and the Los Angeles group continued such novel activities as sending questionnaires to metropolitan political candidates requesting their views on sexual legislation and enforcement (a daring approach for the time). The L.A. group also distributed 20,000 copies of a rather favorable article in the L.A. Mirror.

Expansion, however, was too rapid. There was not enough experienced leadership, the cell structure was not democratic, basic principles were not clear to all, and there were severe social and political tensions. The potential threat of an investigation of Mattachine by the House Un-American Activities Committee (never actually done, but a fearful thought in 1953) disturbed many members and supporters. Hay, realizing that the Society could be destroyed by a split or an investigation, dissolved the parent Foundation at a meeting in the
summer of 1953, and allowed a new leadership to re-organize the Society. Thus, although the name persisted, the Mattachine now actively opposed communism, supported evolution not revolution, and proclaimed that it had "no connection whatever with the Mattachine Foundation."

In terms of membership and many goals, this was not quite true, but the radical theories of Hay were no longer welcome. With an emphasis on coat-and-tie respectibility, and because of the fears generated by various controversies, general enthusiasm for Mattachine declined. In 1957 the Society moved to San Francisco, where it had no more than 100 members and 500 subscribers to the Mattachine Review (begun in 1955). Until 1961, chapters in Boston, Chicago, Denver, New York and Los Angeles were affiliated with this central office. At that time, the tiny corporation could not handle either the administration of such far-flung outposts, nor the legal responsibility for what affiliates did, nor the political and social squabbles. In 1961, each chapter went its own way.

Given the limited size of each group, they were astonishingly active in their publications and meetings. Even a 1955 reader of the Mattachine Review would learn not only about American activities, but the presence of foreign literature such as Futur, Arcadie, Der Weg, Der Ring, Vennen, the International Journal of Sexology, Vriendschap, and the Newsletter of the International Committee for Sexual Equality. While gay liberation may have lacked numbers in the 1950s, it did not lack ambition or energy from a dedicated and tenacious few.
One can most clearly measure the influence of Mattachine on such individuals as Frank Kameny. A government astronomer, he was fired in 1957 because of his homosexuality, although he was a competent worker, had not intruded his sexuality at work, and could scarcely be blackmailed by foreign agents for the secrets of the stars. Unemployed for 20 months, he concluded that a gay organization was necessary to provide legal aid to victims, lobby for change and "to pick up the pieces after society has done the smashing." In 1961, he founded the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C., which, over the years, sponsored picketing of the White House, Pentagon, U.N., and Independence Hall (all in the mid-1960s). Drawing the analogy that blacks had never gotten anywhere so long as they
sat quietly in the back of the bus and accepted their inferiority, nor had polite educational work among the public been enough, Kameny urged a militant public image. In 1962, he was the first "real" live gay to appear on Washington, D.C. television, rather than wearing a bag over his face or speaking from the shadows. This allowed people to see a human being rather than that bizarre abstraction, THE homosexual. In 1964 he convinced the Washington Mattachine Society to reject any of the "sickness" or "abnormality" theories of homosexuality, although the more conservative members asserted that they were not sufficiently qualified to reach such a scientific judgement! In 1968 he proposed the motto "Gay is Good" at the North American Congress of Homosexual Organizations; it was unanimously accepted. At least a few people had come a long way since the time when even homosexuals assumed that there was something wrong with loving someone of the same sex. In 1980, Kameny was an official member of the Human Rights Commission of the District of Columbia.23

But, turning back to the earliest days of the movement, the second and third oldest gay organizations were also established in the 1950s in California: ONE in 1952 and the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955.

The first was created by several members of Mattachine and a small group called the Knights of the Clock, established by a black man in 1950 as an interracial club that was concerned with issues of unemployment, housing and democratic equality between the races and sexes. The members of the new organization wished to focus on educational work, such as a quality magazine that expressed not only homophile rights but the fundamental unity of humanity. Thus, the name "One" was suggested by a young black man, Guy Rousseau, and adopted. While Mattachine had
been, and continued to be active in attempting to generate a broad movement, ONE would center on creating "a real magazine" (not a tract or a sex-tease journal), classes and educational forums. The premier issue of America's first openly gay magazine, One, appeared in 1953. Later, an Institute for Homophile Studies was set up in 1956, and a more scholarly journal added in 1958, along with One and a membership newsletter.
One, Inc. was soon characterized as dedicated to the "Higher Homosexuality." Through it, an individual could learn about the past and present of his or her people, foreign movements, recent publications, contemporary struggles within a civil rights context, and some vision of a democratic and just order. As one author expressed his hopes for human rights in 1954:

... the homosexual minority can play a very creditable role in the evolution of human rights and in the fulfillment of the democratic ideal -- not because it is homosexual, and certainly not if it is under the delusion that sexual rights are humanity's chief or only rights, but because its individual members have been compelled, like the members of many other minorities, to visualize the full nature of human rights perhaps more clearly than those who are complacently entrenched in traditional conceptions and majority attitudes. Thus this group can, if it will, make a distinct contribution to the social discovery and revaluation of human rights on all levels, a discovery and revaluation which stands as the issue of greatest human importance during this apocalyptic era.24

Already in 1954, One, Inc. received several pages of publicity in People Today, a magazine with a somewhat larger circulation: approximately two million. In keeping with the age, the reader still saw only the backs of people's heads, and the article would seem somewhat condescending and bigoted by more recent standards, but it was clear that a new minority might be beginning to consciously form, and that the mass media was somewhat more open and educated than in the past. By 1965, One's Institute of Homophile Studies had conducted 1000 public lectures and the magazine had circulated in yearly runs of several thousand copies. In its activities, it consistently sought to present an image that was not solely sexual (as in homosexual), but intelligent and unsensational. Thus, it has always preferred the term "homophile" to either awkward medical words or a term which they consider frivolous and demeaning, "gay".
While they were not successful in this last regard — although homophile is the standard term among all ages in Europe — One, Inc. has left a splendid legacy of a resource library, its own literature, travel tours, a book service, counseling, references, public influence, and at least one major legal victory, a Supreme Court ruling on January 13, 1958 that merely because One magazine was pro-homosexual did not mean that it was "filthy and obscene" (as the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled). At that time, some people felt that if homosexuality was illegal then One must be a magazine for criminals! Previous complaints from the Post Office had caused the magazine to delete some of Whitman's poems, and prompted the corporation's attorney to read each issue before it was finally printed and sent out. After the entire press run of October 1954 was seized, a four year battle was waged in the court, at considerable expense to the group (as one appeal said: "Principles are often expensive!"). National support was mobilized, including Dr. Kinsey, and the society achieved a significant victory for freedom of speech. It was because of such work that the cover of one issue in 1957 could boldly say "I'm Glad I'm Homosexual." But it was a long struggle toward a feeling of self-worth. Just as many of the black readers of The Crisis had once complained when W.E.B. DuBois printed pictures of people who were too black (in the days when the highest status went to the lightest-skinned), some subscribers and members dropped out of ONE because they were shocked by that 1957 issue, and disturbed by ONE's public controversies. 25
BOOKS

Notices and reviews of books, articles, plays and poetry dealing with homosexuality and the sex variant. Readers are invited to send in reviews or printed matter for review.

AUGUST 1958
FIFTY CENTS

THE HOMOSEXUAL VIEWPOINT

I am glad
I am homosexual

ONE INSTITUTE QUARTERLY:
HOMOPHILE STUDIES

- Morality in Ancient Canaan
- Some Problems of Method
- Sociology of Homophobia
- Roman Catholic Report
- Byron's Disputed Memoirs
Lesbians who were aware of this homophile movement often looked at it from the outside. They sometimes asserted that a principal weakness of both Mattachine and One was a failure to attract women or to incorporate them into leadership roles. Sexism among gay men was probably a key factor, although the general discrimination against women throughout this culture has been such that women are less likely to have the organizational skills, money or time to participate, and furthermore might have been fearful of losing what little they had by any public exposure of their lesbianism. Still, it is also true that Mattachine and One did not -- nor perhaps could they, given their limited size -- seek to encourage women's participation and development within their groups. Although Ann Carll Reid was editor of One for several years in the 1950s and a journal section entitled "Feminine Viewpoint" was apparently (from the "letters" column) popular, women were not generally drawn to either of these male-dominated societies, nor did they tend to stay.

This was some of the background for a 1955 meeting of eight people in San Francisco that began the earliest effort to organize American lesbians. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, a couple that had been together for several years, wanted an alternative to the gay bar culture in a time when police commonly raided bars as "houses of ill repute," decoys were sometimes used to entrap customers for "lewd and lascivious behavior," and the bars themselves were dreary and repressive. A Filipino at the first meeting suggested the obscure and therefore protective name: the Daughters of Bilitis, the latter having been one of the lovers of Sappho (600 B.C.) on the island of Lesbos. As Martin
and Lyon were to explain this curious title years later: "We thought that 'Daughters of Bilitis' would sound like any other women's lodge -- you know, like the Daughters of the Nile or the DAR. . . . 'Bilitis' would mean something to us, but not to any outsider. If anyone asked us, we could always say we belong to a poetry club."^26

Even this tiny society, however, suffered from divisions between those who wanted to exclude all men, those who insisted on excluding non-lesbian women, and those who wanted a more purely social club. Martin and Lyon, because of their personal values and their discovery of both One, Inc. and Mattachine, seemed drawn to a more activist perspective. Despite the fact that the group had only fifteen members after one year, it was decided to publish a magazine to reach a broader public. The first issue of their historically important journal, The Ladder (out of the Well of Loneliness?) appeared in October of 1954. It was to be fourteen years before a second journal, Ain't I a Woman? (Iowa City) would be established. Like One, it was a quiet, unsensational journal of news, analysis and fiction for its gay readers and friends.

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There's a new organization for women interested in the homophile problem as it affects the lesbian.... daughters of BILITIS

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS women's organization (parallel to but not affiliated with Mattachine Society) publishes a monthly news periodical, THE LADDER. Subscriptions: $1 per year, first class sealed in plain envelope. Address inquiries and replies to:

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS Post Office Box 2183 SAN FRANCISCO 26, CALIF.

(December 1956)
By 1956, the purposes of the DOB included: social life outside bars, self-education, public education, research, publicity, and social change. While some of the dress code of the DOB and other rules urging "respectability" now seem timid, the essential leaders of the DOB were quite militant. They were tired of being called "not real women" or freaks. As Del Martin responded in 1956: "The salvation of the Lesbian lies in her acceptance of herself without guilt or anxiety, in her awareness of her capabilities and her limitations, and in pursuit of a constructive way of life without misgivings or apology."27 For the DOB, lesbians were (using Kinsey's term) merely "variants," not strange monstrous creatures.

These were still novel ideas; in 1958, DOB had only about 50 members. Still, it laid the foundations for an influential publication that lasted until 1972, and what became autonomous branches in other cities like Los Angeles, Boston and New York.28 In San Francisco, the Mattachine Society and the Daughters contributed to the formation of
the Council on Religion and the Homosexual in 1964 as a means to change the attitudes of the churches on homophile society. Major publicity came when a police attempt to harrass a New Year's party of this group on January 1, 1965 backfired on the police. They had expected that by ringing the building with squad cars, floodlights, photographers and 50 policemen that the partygoers would be thoroughly intimidated. Nonetheless, over 500 entered the hall under the glare of the lights, and the non-gays were shocked at this display of police power. The next day, seven clergymen condemned the police at a public news conference. The fact that gay people and their supporters were beginning to be a conscious minority was further acknowledged in 1966 when the fourth national convention of DOB, in San Francisco, suddenly received radio announcements, interviews, TV taping and mainstream newspaper coverage.

The activities of the Daughters of Bilitis, Mattachine and One, along with a growing consciousness among a minority of gays within enclaves or "ghettos" in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Greenwich Village, and a general mood of opening possibilities with the "New Frontier" of the early 1960s, contributed to the creation of what was soon called the New Homosexual. Life magazine took notice of this phenomenon by publishing a lengthy review in 1964. It reported to its readers that "today, especially in big cities, homosexuals are discarding their furtive ways and openly admitting even flaunting, their deviation."

The magazine added that the Los Angeles Police Department had recognized this menace in an educational pamphlet that concluded that the secret goal of homosexuals was "a fruit world."
It was at least true that, by the mid-1960s, a gay social network had evolved in most of the major cities of the United States, and that, within this population a minority had begun to think of itself as a "community." By 1969, one could discover this world in such local, national and international guides as the Gay Yellow Pages, Bob Damron's Address Book, Lavender Guide, Barfly, Guild Guide, and Le Guide Gris (first published by the Mattachine Society in 1958).

The first militants were not highly visible even in the homosexual world, much less in the larger society, but they would be joined soon by many others. While one poll in 1965 found that 58 percent of the overall population considered homosexuals a threat to the nation, surpassed only by the menacing presence of atheists and Communists, Barbara Gittings, in that same year, was refusing to be a polite and hidden lesbian. Comparing herself to a Mississippi Negro told to adjust to a "nigger" role, she replied that "there are times when revolt, not 'adjustment to society,' is the only mature and self-respecting course."30

Such activists were sometimes critical of the older homophile organizations as too timid, and urged more aggressive protests. Thus, the Homophile Action League was begun in Philadelphia in the mid-1960s, and the Society for Individual Rights was founded in San Francisco in 1964 to counter the "sluggishness of other groups." SIR quickly became the largest homosexual organization by creating a prototype of the "gay community center" now found in many cities: a meeting place for activities from educational forums to election nights for political candidates, a Sirporium (thrift shop), an auditorium for plays and dances, referral services for housing, legal aid, jobs, counseling and medical help,
publications (such as *Vector*, a magazine), and individual social groups for swimming, hiking, and the like.

Because of the growing diversity of local organizations, and the feeling, among some, that a nation-wide movement was possible, a planning meeting was held in Kansas City in February of 1966. Thirty delegates, representing fourteen groups, agreed to form a coordinated center for inter-communication, to be called the National American Conference of Homophile Organizations. While this effort proved to be premature because of the relatively tiny and scattered memberships, several conferences were later conducted and NACHO was a sign of the slow creation of an identifiable minority. 31

More successful was the creation of a national newspaper. After a 1966 raid on a gay bar in Los Angeles, one of those arrested was shocked by police invading a private club, randomly charging people, and closing the place. Although Dick Michaels then considered himself a conservative, this experience, and $600 in legal expenses, prompted him to join PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education), and then to begin a newsletter for the organization, the Los Angeles *Advocate*. The journal clearly answered a need for information. It steadily progressed from a twelve page tabloid with a press run of 500 copies, $24 in advertising (two-thirds of which was never paid), and $200 in capital, to a slick newspaper that was sold for $4 million in 1974 and had a circulation of 71,000 in 1979. Another gay institution had been established.

By January of 1969, *Time* magazine reported a new homosexual activism, and the early June issue of the *Advocate* editorialized about
"signs of a new movement." The stage had been set for the dramatic
eclipse of the older and smaller homophile societies by a mass phenomenon,
"gay liberation." 32

Quite unexpectedly, the event that symbolized this was a
routine raid on a New York gay bar. For about two years the Stonewall
Inn, on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, had operated without a
license (although within a few blocks of a precinct station). The police
finally arrived late on the evening of June 27, 1969, evicting the
patrons, beating up some of them, and arresting a few of the more
flamboyant. A crowd of about 400 gathered, at first curious, but
increasingly hostile as the arrested were brought out. The police began
to be taunted, coins were thrown, and then bottles and cans. After the
police had retreated back into the bar, the door was nearly smashed in
with a parking meter ripped from the sidewalk, trash cans were beaten
against the boarded-up windows and matches were tossed into the room.
Although the police were rescued by the arrival of reinforcements, they
and public opinion were startled by the response of angry homosexuals.
On the other hand, closeted gays like Merle Miller were brought into
activism and open gays may have quietly or loudly agreed with Allen
Ginsberg: "Gay power is great! We're one of the largest minorities,
you know. It's about time we did something to assert ourselves. [The
demonstrators are] beautiful -- they've lost that wounded look that fags
all had ten years ago."

Much had happened in the previous decade. A homophile group
like One was seventeen years old at the time of Stonewall, there were
recent massive struggles by other minorities for full equality (first
blacks and, very soon, women), and the growing influence of the anti-war movement, the New Left, and the counter-culture. The once few advocates of free sexuality, like Ginsberg, were now members of a new sensibility, including androgynous rock stars and hippy romantics, that said "if it feels good, do it." Left gay critics like Paul Goodman were no longer isolated, but speakers for broad coalitions that advocated decentralism and pluralism. There were alternative presses scattered throughout the United States willing to report "unconventional" people, ideas and news. And, cumulatively, this social and political ferment had made the mass media receptive to seeing (and perhaps even helping to form) the new gay liberation movement.

Once this stage had been reached, there was a quantitative and qualitative explosion of consciousness on this subject. A leftist like Allen Young, working at the Liberation News Service, realized that he hadn't even liberated himself so long as he hid his gayness. Karla Jay, who became a major gay anthologist (with Young) has said that she was brought out by the women's movement, which, in turn, became
progressively more open to lesbian women after a period of fearing a "lavender menace" that would label all feminists "a bunch of dykes." Or, in 1970, the radical black leader Huey Newton condemned the use of terms like "faggot" among Black Panthers and called for the recognition of gay liberation and the struggle of a minority against oppression ("Maybe they might be the most oppressed people in the society").

The Stonewall "riot" was not, then, to be an isolated event but an inter-related process with other movements. Within a few weeks, the first Gay Liberation Front was formed in New York City (its name suggested by an ex-member of the Mattachine Action Committee). In March of 1970, the first Christopher Street parade was held to commemorate the event, and would quickly spread to other cities where significant numbers of gays were willing to publicly "come out." It had become a part of the historical memory of a newly conscious minority. Despite all of the divisions among gay people -- between those who had opposing ideologies, those who hated other gay people of different races, those who disdained members of other classes or gays of the opposite sex, or those who wore leather and ridiculed others who preferred sequins and feathers -- an indefinable but vital sense of community had begun to replace the previous isolation of gays. Although this community would speak with many voices, it was clear that the time of nearly complete silence was over.
What Do These People Want?

Most gay organizations favoring social reform have worked to change sex stereotypes, the various "sickness" theories of the psychiatric establishment, legal inequalities, and antiquated religious attitudes.

The first task of any minority is to overcome the demeaning stereotypes that a majority has forced upon it. Just as blacks had to fight against the self-hatred of straightening their hair, admiring lighter-skinned blacks, bleaching their skin or copying white ways trying to "pass", gays had to cast off much prejudice that had been glorified into "science" and "religion" to achieve a positive self-identity. The meetings of Mattachine, One, and Bilitis began with invitations to psychiatrists, ministers, sociologists and others to explain the nature of gay life to gay people themselves. After beginning to overcome some of the fears, doubts, ignorance and aloneness that characterized homosexual life at that time (and finding that many professionals were bigoted in their own complacent ways), some gays moved from this defensive stage to the more aggressive one of stating, from the experiences of their own lives, that gay is, or could be, good. Just as some blacks had matured from discussions of "the Negro problem" to the insistence that the source of the difficulty was "the white problem," many gays stopped blaming themselves and criticized society for inflicting mental violence by calling a minority "sick" and forcing such people to lead double lives.

From this self-acceptance has grown a willingness to make a generalized critique of the dominant sex roles in this society.
First, gender conditioning is a form of social control that limits our potentialities. "Real men" are strong, silent and unemotional creatures who learn from the cradle that only sissies, fags or little girls cry or show intimate feelings toward others of the same sex. "Effeminancy" in men is a loathsome flaw.

"Real women" are expected to be quite the opposite (in theory) of independent men: soft, passive and unassertive ("feminine"). Women who didn't agree might be intimidated by fears of being called "dykes". Such ideas of proper roles limited the imagination of most people in the past. Now, they are being more closely examined by many throughout the society as more women have independent careers, the women's movement is widespread, and the gay movement grows. A man who approves of the feminist movement, or shares domestic responsibilities, is less likely to have people consider him a pansy pervert. Sex-determined roles are not quite so rigid as they were only a decade ago.

(Courtesy of R. Fiala and Christopher Street)
Missing Pg. 48
conformity in sex as in everything else, and the mass media (in most cases) purveyors of prejudice, they have focused most commonly on these three "ultimate" justifications for discrimination.

Psychiatry was rated first importance, I think, even by the early movement. While many people still justified their hatred of homosexuality by arguing its "sinful" nature, the official rationale for criminalization was psychiatric. Psychiatry, as a self-announced science, gave us theories to explain this phenomenon: early family life, a "close-binding mother and a detached-hostile father," sexual fears or "arrested development" (these suggestions dominated the public discussion more than medical possibilities of hormonal imbalances in the pregnant mother or young child, or genetic disposition). If the cause or causes could be discovered, it might be possible to "cure" all of these afflicted people and create a 100 percent heterosexual society. Homoeroticism would be stamped out.

Even by the early 1960s, some gays were not willing to listen to these explanations quietly. Most of the generalizations of "science" were based on studies of psychiatric patients or prisoners. Could one deduce the character of the "typical" heterosexual from those who went to psychiatrists or to prison? Was it fair to contrast some ideal model of heterosexuality against this open minority of a hidden minority? Why was it that many people had "close-binding mothers and detached-hostile fathers" and didn't become gay? Why was it that one boy or girl of identical twins would be gay and the other not? Why was love for someone of one's own sex "abnormal"?
While conceding that some homosexuals, like some heterosexuals, were sick, early gay activists criticized the general categories of psychiatrists as pseudoscientific rationales for society's bigotry. In 1964, the Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. concluded that "in the absence of valid scientific evidence to the contrary, homosexuality could not be considered a sickness, illness, disturbance, disorder, or other pathology of any kind." The North American Conference of Homophile Organizations also stated simply in 1966 that "we are not sick" and the DOB surreptitiously paid for a study of mental health professionals' actual treatment in 1968 that discovered that 96 percent of them believed that gays could be happy, 97 percent said that they would not try to change a client's sexuality, and over 90 percent questioned the use of the term "disease."

Few people would have predicted in the late 1960s, however, that the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association would soon publicly agree with these criticisms. The psychiatric industry, after all, is quite a closed shop for an elite: very white, very male, very middle class, and very conventional in politics. In 1970, when the national convention of the American Psychiatric Association was disrupted in San Francisco, this radical manifesto captured the left critique of the Association:

[You have] a panel about American Indians which concentrates on suicide by them rather than genocide by us . . . learning about aversion treatment for homosexuals -- but not considering whether homosexuality is really a psychiatric 'disease' . . . hearing about drugs, new drugs and old drugs -- but not the way drugs are
used to tranquilize people who are legitimately upset . . . hearing
about psychiatry and law enforcement -- but not about how our
society uses police to oppress people and prevent change . . .
discussing sexuality and abortion -- but not the way sex roles are
used to oppress women. . . . Women come to you suffering from
depression. Women ought to feel depressed with the roles society
puts on them. . . . Those roles aren't biological; those roles are
learned. . . . It started when my mother threw me a doll and my
brother a ball. 37

Several years of protests followed against logical inconsistencies
in theories of homosexuality, low or virtually non-existent "cure" rates
from psychiatry, and barbaric treatments (electric shocks, nausea-producing
drugs, lobotomies, castration, clitoridectomies, and hormonal injuctions).

In 1974, the APA board voted, 13-0, to drop the old listing of
homosexuality as a mental disorder, and also urged the abolition of all
legal inequalities applied to gays. Later in the year, the membership
of the Association upheld this decision, resulting in a sudden cure for
perhaps 20 million people, by a vote of 58 percent for. Since psychiatry
had been a bulwark for the notion that same-sex relations -- even those
between consenting adults -- were diseased, this vote had potential
ramifications in legislatures, courts, the civil service, private
employment, the military, and security clearances. The APA recognized
this: "We will be removing one of the justifications for the denial of
civil rights to individuals whose only crime is that their sexual
orientation is to members of the same sex. In the past, homosexuals
have been denied civil rights in many areas of life on the ground that
they suffer from a 'mental illness,' the burden of proof being on them that they were competent, reliable, or mentally stable."

(Inter-Change, 1973)

Two things are immediately clear: that the APA was galvanized into such prompt action not by polite appeals so much as confrontational tactics (including the invasion of its conventions) and that psychiatry is not a strict science, although it is capable of being pushed from a state of arrested development toward greater humanistic maturity. In this case, only one residue of the earlier state was left -- a "sexual orientation disturbance" category "for individuals whose sexual interests are directed primarily towards people of the same sex and who are either disturbed by, in conflict with, or wish to change their sexual orientation. . . . This diagnostic category is distinguished from homosexuality which, by itself, does not necessarily constitute a
psychiatric disorder." While the new manual should, to be consistent, include a "sexual orientation disturbance" category for, let us say, exclusive heterosexuals who wish to be cured of their narrow interests, the revised paragraph was a major step forward.

Beyond this institutional change (later adopted by related groups), modern psychiatry, psychology and sociology give little credence to many other popular myths about homosexuality. Gay people are no more obsessed by sex than straight people.

are unlikely to "recruit" children if, as many experts now believe, basic sexual identity is established by the ages of 3 to 5.

seem to influence their own offspring (since some are parents) mainly in their greater tolerance of role-model diversity.

are less likely to molest children (95 percent of cases are by heterosexuals).

are rarely involved in coerced sex (98 percent of rapes are by heterosexuals).^39

may be more "promiscuous" because society denies many respectable meeting places and refuses any kind of social or legal status to longterm same-sex relations.

are better adjusted than one might expect, given society's intolerance in the past.

A second major area of gay concern has been legal reforms concerning prohibited sexual activity and unjustifiable discrimination in housing or jobs. Although it is nowhere illegal to be gay, homosexual acts are, in many cities and states, criminal. It is important to remember, furthermore, that laws against "perverted sexual practices" (such as fellatio and cunnilingus) apply equally to heterosexuals. With the sexual revolution of recent years, it has been estimated that perhaps 80 percent of the adult population has been guilty, at some
moment, of a sex crime. Jerry Wilson, when he was Chief of Police of the District of Columbia, once remarked that since the statutes forbid all sexual intercourse but the classic "missionary position," he could probably arrest a half-million people in the District.

Already in 1955 the American Law Institute, in its Model Penal Code, urged the decriminalization of any kind of sex between consenting adults in private. Beginning with Illinois in 1961, over twenty states have modernized their former bans on sexual "crimes against nature." Less progressively, however, the Nixon Supreme Court upheld a Virginia law in 1976 that prohibited same-sex acts between consenting adults in private. That is, the Court held that the state has a legal right to invade your bedroom.

Even when laws have changed, police may continue their harassment under new excuses. In Illinois, local police for years
after 1961 used a nineteenth century law against "disorderly houses" to invade gay bars. Since a disorderly house was defined as "any establishment in which any sort of physical contact of a sexual nature takes place," one wonders if this pristine ideal was applied equally to straight bars.

Another favorite police tactic, in past years, was the use of officers in tight-fitting civilian clothes standing around hoping to entice an act of "solicitation," and then arresting the victim. The use of decoys to incite a "crime" seems to have diminished in recent years, especially where the law may now require a third party witness (not police) who was offended by such a public solicitation.

Beyond sexual law is the question of job and housing discrimination. In most locations, someone who has been fired, evicted or denied some civil right merely because of affectional preference has no legal way to present a grievance. Even the U.S. Civil Rights Commission has no authority in cases of gay discrimination.

The argument that laws should apply equally to all has made some progress in touching the public conscience. Opinion polls indicate that most people think that individuals should be judged on the basis of personal merit rather than on some preconceived category. By the mid-1970s, the U.S. Civil Service Commission severely restricted any firing of gay people without a list of substantive reasons related to actual job performance, the Department of Defense was more willing to give security clearances to open gays (since, after all, if they were open, how could they be blackmailed?), major corporations such as CBS, IBM, AT & T, the Bank of America and 130 of the Fortune 500 businesses
had issued anti-discrimination statements, and many cities, churches
and unions had also done so. Perhaps the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and
1968 will some day be amended to include "affectional and sexual preference"
(forty congressmen were willing to sponsor such a bill in 1979).

The public, however, is still likely to support discrimination
in certain occupations such as teaching and the military. There is, of
course, no documentation that gay teachers are likely to seduce their
students (such incidents are remarkably rare), nor even that, as role
models, they would "convert" their naturally heterosexual students.
There is also no evidence that gays in the military (who are already
there, anyway) would cause the collapse of the armed forces. Nonetheless,
one reads such cases, in the 1970s, as that of Joseph Acanfora of Maryland,
dismissed from his job solely because he had belonged to a gay organization
when he was a student at the University of Pennsylvania. Or the case of
Sgt. Leonard Matlovich who got a medal for killing two men and a discharge
for loving others.40

But times were changing. The National Education Association
spent $25,000 to defend Acanfora and Matlovitch was featured on the cover
of Time magazine. The military is now much more generous in giving an
honorable discharge, and some major school systems have announced that
hiring and promotion should depend solely on merit. In California, for
example, school districts in Palo Alto, San Francisco and Santa Barbara
-- while forbidding teachers from promoting any sexual lifestyle in the
classroom -- reject any sexual discrimination against teachers.
A final issue of legal inequality, touching on much of the hypocrisy of society, is the ban against same-sex marriages. As a lesbian writer said:

Our relationships are often principally physical ones . . . because we are not allowed to bring them out of the bedroom. Our marriages, which are just as sacred to us as any religious ceremony, are constantly harrassed by 'Be careful how you look at me in public,' 'Uncle John's coming to visit, push the beds apart so he won't suspect,' 'We can't buy a house together, how will I explain it to my folks,' 'Make sure you kiss Ed good-night, so he won't think anything's funny,' 'Don't wear your matching little-finger ring when you drop by the office today, someone might notice,' and on and on.41

This cultural taboo is reflected in the law. Marriage is not only a social rite that brings status, and implies a long commitment, but has tangible material benefits: community property rights; income, estate and gift taxes; capacity to inherit if there is no will; benefits to couples by credit unions, bank and insurance companies; the ability to collect on disability insurance; social security and veteran's benefits at the loss of the partner; and the right to recover damages for wrongful death. What rational basis is there for denying such advantages simply because both members of a union are of the same sex? Or, if such relationships are given no validity, is it fair to complain that gay relationships are transient?
Some litigation has been attempted to expand the definition of "family." If a man and a woman can be "related" by marriage, adoption or common law practice, why not two men, or two women, or some alternative family? Such efforts assume that family rights should be available to all who want them. Other legal possibilities include the writing of relationship contracts or adopting your lover. Still, progress in this area may be very slow since the institution is so basic. When National Educational Television conducted a poll in 1974 to ask whether same-sex marriages should be allowed, 68 percent found the idea "sick," "decadent" "disgusting" and conjuring up "images of Sodom and Gomorrah." In the same spirit as such majority opinions, the legislature of California, in the late 1970s, specifically forbid gay marriages.\footnote{42}

The third major bastion of anti-gay feeling has been religion. Many of our laws today have their hidden foundations in religious belief. For centuries, gay people have suffered mentally and physically from Judeo-Christian hate groups. Recent gay responses to this have ranged from dropping out, staying in (angry or submissive), forming gay caucuses within established churches, or forming entirely new gay churches.
The reinterpretation of Biblical injunctions against homosexuality would appear to be the largest of these phenomena today. Many people recognize that the Bible is not a legal document (like a collection of statutes) but the spiritual anthology of a desert kingdom, thousands of years removed from our lifetimes. Many of the Old Testament edicts, such as the diet code (necessary before refrigeration) were reasonable in their day but are now of arcane interest. We conveniently forget that the Bible calls it a sin for us to eat shrimp, oysters or lobster,
to have a steak rare, for a man to wear woolen pants or a cotton shirt, or for a woman to wear a red dress.

We choose to ignore the Bible's praise of slavery and ridicule of women, who are told to remain silent, neither teaching, preaching or serving in any authority over men. Also, few would probably condemn adulterers to death (Lev. 20:10) or forbid divorce except for adultery (Matt. 5:32).

We have selected from the Bible what we want. On the question of homosexuality, this is considerable, but raises further questions: are the translations accurate? What were the circumstances of the time? What was the context of the quotation in each book, and in the Bible as a whole? One discovers, first, that lesbians were never mentioned, and, second, that male references are subject to more ambiguity than many people have assumed. Sodom and Gomorrah may have been guilty of pride and inhospitality; other quotes may refer to male prostitutes, and unloving relationships generally. Even so, the sex phobias of much of the Bible are not completely offset by such interpretations, praise of David's love of Jonathan, or references to the love and compassion of Jesus, who never married, said nothing about homosexuality, and consorted with twelve other men.43

Looking at modern religions, being Jewish and gay is still a problem, although the radical decentralization of the faith has allowed the formation of gay synagogues. Israel, however, is no promised land for gay Jews, with few meeting places, and sectarian prejudices turned into public law. In 1977, the Jewish National Fund even tried to return $4000 that had been given to plant trees in the Negrev desert.
in memory of the slain gay leader, Harvey Milk and 200,000 gay victims of the Nazis.  

The New Testament successor to this tradition, the Catholic Church, has committed centuries of atrocities against sexual minorities. Within the Church, a gay caucus named Dignity was begun in 1968 by an Augustinian priest in San Diego, California. By 1979 it had 81 chapters that were active in petitioning the hierarchy for change, and providing educational and social meetings for its members.

It may, of course, be questioned whether a church headed by men in gowns and beads, declaring that the celibacy of priests and nuns is normal, and believing that the mother of God was a virgin, is an erotophobic S & M cult incapable of redemption. Even if it isn't however, it must be taken seriously for its reinforcement of guilt about natural desires. In 1976, papal views on sexuality were summarized in a "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sex and Ethics." Here, the Church officially declared that "every genital act must be within the framework of marriage" and that even masturbation (both harmless and near-universal) was "an intrinsically and seriously disordered act." Both pre-marital sex and homosexuality were also mentioned as "options contrary to Christian doctrine." It is understandable that one newspaper placed the story under the headline "Fasten Your Chastity Belts."
Efforts to redeem the other mainline churches have been attempted through the organization of caucuses: Affirmation (Mormon), Emergence (Christian Science), Evangelicals Concerned (not denominationally linked, but a theological perspective), SDA Kinship (Adventist), Integrity (Episcopal), Lutherans Concerned, Unitarian Gay Caucus, Committee of Friends, Lazarus Rising (Presbyterians), and the Brethren-Mennonite Council for Gay Concerns. These activities are intended to end the pain of separation within the churches by bringing about reconciliation among its members.

INTEGRITY/ Washington
...FOR GAY EPISCOPALIANS & THEIR FRIENDS
EUCHARIST/MEETINGS

As an alternative to caucuses, some gays have considered the possibility of separate churches. In 1956, several members of One, Inc. attempted to establish a First Church of One Brotherhood ("Archdiocese of Los Angeles"), with elaborate plans, a few projects, and ultimate failure. Some following efforts have been equally exotic, such as gynocentric religions (Wicce) or "high camp" episodes intended to be satirical, such as High Holiness Pope Morris [Kight] I renting a clerical costume in 1970, taking a pilgrimage to the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles to demand ninety billion dollars in reparations ($10,000 for each of the nine million gays which he claimed had been killed by the Christian Church over the centuries).
Less extravagant, and more lasting, has been the Metropolitan Community Church. The founder was the Reverend Troy Perry, a fundamentalist minister who had served churches in Florida and California. In 1963, he separated from his wife, two sons and the church. His "problem," in both cases, was his homosexuality, which neither his family nor God (apparently) could accept. By 1968, he concluded that the problem was not from a God of love, but the narrow and immoral prejudices of much of humanity, and began a study group with twelve other people that was to become a church with 135 congregations in the United States and six foreign countries, 171 licensed ministers, and 28,000 members. Although MCC is not strictly a church for gay people (since that would be a denial of the universal message of Christianity), it is essentially that because of the inhospitable atmosphere in most other churches.

Although Perry was (and is) a fundamentalist -- or, as he prefers, a "primitive Christian" -- the Metropolitan Community Church tends to be ecumenical in all regards. Depending upon the congregation, the services may be quietly formal or loudly charismatic, and the politics may be subdued or aggressive. One common characteristic has been its effort to create a non-sexist religion: gender references have been eliminated from the liturgy, more and more women have been ordained, and parity has been attempted on all of the committees of
the Church. This trend has disturbed some within the church, and some outside of it (the main building in Los Angeles was torched by an arsonist in 1974), but the leadership of MCC appears to be committed to living out its egalitarian principles.46

Those who reject this path, believing that "religion is the problem, not the answer," had their own voice by the late-1970s: the Gay Atheist League of America (GALA). They asserted that "a gay religionist is a gay dupe" since religion is both an illusion and an enemy of physical pleasure. GALA did not care whether God created the first heterosexual couple, or whether He/She/It approved of homosexuality. The League dismissed God as the essence of anti-humanistic repression, and insisted that what we really needed was freedom from religion. Of course, even if this is true, such critiques have little influence among people who live within traditional Jewish and Christian symbol systems, nor are those disenchanted with traditional religion likely to find atheism completely attractive since it is so purely negative.47

IF YOU BELIEVE organized religion is the greatest enemy of gay liberation, we will send you a free copy of GALA Review published by the Gay Atheist League of America Write: GALA, P.O.Box 14142, San Francisco CA 94114

OUT OF SATAN'S SHADOWY WORLD OF HOMOSEXUALITY, IN A DISPLAY OF DEFIANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, THEY COME FORTH — THOSE WHO SUFFER THE AGONY OF REJECTION, THE DESPAIR OF UNSATISFIED LONGING — DESIRE ENDLESS LUSTING AND REMORSE CRYING THAT GAY IS GOOD — THEIR TRAGIC LIVES PROVE THAT THERE ISN'T ANYTHING GAY ABOUT BEING GAY.

(From a religious booklet reprinted in GALA Review)
The End of Invisibility

These changes in religion, the law and psychological theory were pushed forward, in the 1970s, by many new and openly pro-gay organizations. In 1960, a person who had homoerotic feelings might believe, at first, that "I am the only one." By 1980, there was a far higher public consciousness about the subject and many specialized gay groups.

A central factor in this change has been the role of the mass media. TV, films, magazines and major newspapers inform and shape much of how we "see" the world. A few informational centers, such as New York and Los Angeles, vitally influence the imagination of the entire nation. This fact has been crucial for gay liberation since most gays are still closeted and thus the general public's knowledge tends to come from the media.

The emergence of a mass movement, of course, produced initial publicity. Thus, Walter Kronkite told millions on April 8, 1971 that "in Minneapolis, an admitted homosexual, Jack Baker, has been elected president of the University of Minnesota Student Association." Since the networks believed that the public would find such events of interest, the first "specials" were filmed and shown, such as a 1971 panel on David Suskind's program. Earlier, the subject had been generally taboo, and only the bad (such as sex crimes) had reached the public's attention. The rise of gay activism, and the reporting of it, began the process of the mass transformation of common prejudices, anxieties and myths.
This has meant a more realistic understanding of the actual complexity of American homosexuals. Even if stereotypes are common in the new depictions in film, tv and print, millions of people have been presented with additional information, and with some opportunity to discuss with others what they saw on television last night, read in Newsweek, or even found in the bookrack at their drugstore or supermarket. Responses, of course, may be quite mixed, including "OK, now that it's been mentioned once, I don't want to hear about it again," or the belief that the percentage of homosexuals must have grown to explain for such a public emergence, or some enlightenment. But just the presence of the discussion means further opportunity to pressure the Federal Communications Commission or the National Association of Broadcasters about false images of sexual minorities, calls and letters to media stations and publications, and protest demonstrations against highly negative and erroneous treatments.

Although such gay demands for change are often countered by complaints that there has been excessive change already, gay opinion has become increasingly organized to match the forces of the New Right, fundamentalist religion and other conservative critics. Both the National Gay Task Force and a caucus of the American Civil Liberties Union, for example, have been willing to act as a homosexual anti-defamation league in cases involving the media.

The proliferation of such specialized groups is a sign that the gay movement, conceived in the 1950s and born in the 1960s, has grown into a sprawling adolescence. Institutions were being built, rather than short-term gay liberation fronts. By the 1980s, the number
of such local, regional and national institutions was remarkable, although most of them were still poor and centered in urban areas. Some gay leaders predicted that the 1980s would bring more coalitions or networks among scattered societies. Within cities, this might mean a focus on a multi-purpose center, like the one in Los Angeles with a budget of $1.3 million in 1980 (drawn from public and private sources) that provided such services as health care, legal aid, housing referral, job counseling, speakers, and cultural and social activities.

Some have looked upon this diversity as a sign of weakness, since politics range from the conventional Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club and the Teddy Roosevelt Rough Riders to gay anarchists, communists and Nazis; lobbying includes the "respectible" National Gay Task Force and the more activist HUAC (Humans Under Attack Committee); there are elegant bookshops like the Walt Whitman in San Francisco and porno stores; journals from Christopher Street (the gay New Yorker) to Blue Boy; gay youth groups and the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Gerontologists; and nearly everything else imaginable. Yet it may be positive that there is no homintern run by "homocrats" (a gay elite). Diversity may mean that each individual can find a comfortable support group, and that such organizations have greater force by speaking separately for their own segment of society. The Stonewall Democratic Club may be recognized within a local Democratic party, Parents and Friends of Gays ("We love our gay children") can be very effective with many audiences, and Dignity is more likely to have influence with the Catholic Church because it speaks as an organization of believers.
Much of the color and diversity of the present movement has been expressed in the large marches in memory of Christopher Street or for legislative reform. Certainly the grandest of these have been in San Francisco. In 1977, the San Francisco Chronicle (a Hearst paper that is not given to exaggerating gay influence in the city) estimated that 100,000 marched and 150,000 watched. While the parade had always been significant, this gigantic turnout was prompted by several recent events.

First, there had been the activities of Anita Bryant in helping to repeal an ordinance in Dade County, Florida, that had forbidden discrimination in housing or employment because of "affectional or sexual preference." Anita Bryant, until then best known as a former Miss Oklahoma and the recipient of a $100,000 a year contract from the Florida Citrus Commission to promote orange juice, opposed the bill that had been passed locally. Her group was called "Save Our Children" and argued that gays "recruited" by molesting children. Ads warned parents: "Gay teacher rapes six year-old pupil," and "Do you want homosexuals to lurk around playgrounds in Dade County?"

Members of the gay community responded that, statistically, 11 out of 12 cases of child molestation is by men upon female children. Did that prove that heterosexuality was dangerous? The record showed that children would be safer with homosexuals. Furthermore, the critics contended that human rights should not be voted on -- just as one should not vote to keep or take away the rights of black Americans, Jews or Chicanos. As Leonard Matlovitch commented: "What if the people of Selma, Alabama, had been asked to vote equal rights for blacks in 1964?"48
Despite such appeals, the law was defeated by over 2 to 1. Robert Break, the formal head of Save Our Children, remarked that "we won 2 to 1, which is proof that the country sees homosexuals as child molesters and religious heretics." The parade in San Francisco (which Bryant had referred to as "a sex cesspool") reflected this controversy.

Second, many participants in the parade seemed to feel that statements by Bryant equating gay people to "human garbage" and other
expressions of hatred legitimated violence against openly gay individuals. Several days before the parade, four men in San Francisco attacked Robert Hillsborough as a faggot, and stabbed the unarmed man to death. Many believed that Bryant's denunciation of all gays as sick, immoral and "an offense to God" contributed to such violence, despite her counterargument that while she hated the sin of homosexuality she had Christian love for the actual sinner.

Third, President Carter had raised the issue of human rights. Why not for everyone? So, the parade was led off by a twenty foot banner that proclaimed: "'Human Rights are Absolute' -- Jimmy Carter."

All of these forces were reflected in the 1977 parade. Here are some of the slogans that I recorded in my notebook: "stop the recruitment of children by bigots," "save our children from learning how to hate," "Leviticus was a closet queen," "demand your right to be different," "smash phallic imperialism," "a day in the closet is a day without sunshine," "the only differences between Anita and Adolf are 40 years and a moustache," "crucify Anita," "come together," "to love we must fight," "heterosexuality can be cured," "any woman can be an Amazon," "lesbians are fun," "free the erotic angels," "our freedom is your freedom," "repress me and you repress yourself," "we're here to stay -- we won't go away," "we're not gay, we're angry," "Christian fascism," "Christians are the true perverts," and "God save us all from religious fanatics." The contingents in the march covered the entire spectrum socially, politically, and culturally. This celebration of diversity should be compared to military parades or demonstrations in Communist states where one does not see personalities but geometrically
ordered "masses." Since one of the key themes of this book is that democracy means the right to disagree, the spectrum of humanity and ideas found in this annual rally is not merely a sign of "divisive" controversy but a recognition of the positive range of human potential.

Such public visibility has also meant, of course, aroused opposition. Voters have rejected equal rights ordinances in Dade County, Florida (by a 7 to 3 margin), St. Paul (2 to 1), Wichita (4 to 1) and Eugene, Oregon (2 to 1). Some have interpreted these defeats as abject setbacks; others ask whether large minorities would have voted for such ordinances in, let us say, 1960. Furthermore, the voting process has politicized many gays (causing them to contribute money and time) and raised the public's consciousness of sexual discrimination. That a line has been crossed, and that the society as a whole has not returned to some earlier stage is reflected by the approval of additional ordinances following these defeats, executive orders from many mayors and governors, a lesbian rights plank at the International Women's Year Convention in Houston, and several victories in public referenda, most notably in Seattle (63 percent voting for ending anti-gay discrimination) and California (58 percent against a discriminatory bill).

The California vote on the Briggs Amendment in 1978 was significant particularly because it focused on the volatile issue of gay teachers. John Briggs, a right-wing state senator from the Republican Party, got sufficient signatures for a vote that, if successful, would have required school boards to investigate and dismiss any school employee "advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging, or promoting private or public homosexual activity directed at, or likely
to come to the attention of, school children and/or other employees."
Thus, a straight person who made a pro-gay comment in a private
conversation could be fired, rumor-mongoring and witch-hunts might have
been encouraged, and a form of open discrimination would have been
legalized. As Californians became more aware of these possibilities,
public sentiment changed dramatically from its initial 2 to 1 support.
Critics focused on job rights, civil liberties, the New Right character
of much of Briggs' support (which condemned reproductive rights for
women, union shops and the "decline" of morality more-or-less equally),
or the violent statements of various homophobes such as the Reverend
Royal Blue, who frankly stated that "Hitler was right about the
homosexuals. . . . I think we should find a humane way to kill these
people." Many began to agree with one slogan of the major anti-Briggs
committee: "It's not just dumb -- it's dangerous." While Briggs
responded with the same litany of myths as Anita Bryant, he was unable
to find even one case of child molesting to publicize, and was often
condemned for his undocumented assertions. Although 2.8 million finally
voted for his proposition, 3.9 million voted against (58 percent to
42 percent). The referendum had been a forum for public education, and
although it may have incited some further violence and hatred against
gays, the diverse constituencies of "the gay community" were unexpectedly
successful in winning what had seemed an unwinable struggle. 50

The partial successes and the partial failures, rather than
discouraging the movement, had by 1979 produced the first national
mass demonstration for gay rights -- and possibly the first in the
history of the world. On October 14, 1979, the National March on
Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights turned out tens of thousands of people from all fifty states and thirty-three countries, saying "we want to be judged on our individual merits, not on some prejudged notions about us." The U. S. Park Police estimated a crowd of 25,000; the Washington police and the New York Times, 75,000; and several local TV stations 125,000. Whatever the size of this unprecedented rally, it may have given many people a sense of their collective power (overcoming isolation), marking the creation of a truly national organization, built upon the numerous M. O. W. committees throughout the U. S. in small towns and large.

Perhaps the most dramatic public example of a backlash occurred earlier in 1978: the killing of Mayor George Moscone of San Francisco and a militant gay supervisor, Harvey Milk. Bizarrely enough, the assassin, Dan White, was a champion of law and order. White, a Vietnam veteran, ex-cop and former fireman, had been elected to the Board of Supervisors in 1977 as a critic of unnamed "deviates" [sic] who were taking over the city. While on the council he clearly represented a right-wing constituency. Unable to live on his official salary, he resigned his office, then reconsidered and asked for it back. Stymied by a liberal mayor and the opposition of supervisor Milk, he loaded his .38 special with hollow-point bullets on November 27, 1978, took extra ammunition, slipped by metal detectors at City Hall, waited in an
outer office (chatting with a secretary), entered Moscone's room, shot
him twice in the body and then twice in the head after Moscone had fallen
to the floor. White then reloaded his gun, walked down the hall and shot
Milk three times in the chest, stomach and back -- and then again twice
in the head (some would describe this later as "execution-style"). When
he surrendered, he showed no remorse, and was allowed to give his
confession to a friend and ex-coach, who began with the leading question,
"Can you relate these pressures that you've been under, Dan, at this
time?"

Shock at the murders, expressed in a candlelight march of
30-40,000, grew into amazement and then anger at the trial proceedings.
No gays were allowed on the jury, and four members had family ties to
police agencies. The prosecutor not only allowed this, but then proceeded
to make a case that did not include the possible sexual and political
motive behind White's actions (although Milk had once said that he
considered White a dangerous homophobe). As one analyst would conclude:
"For the prosecution not to present such evidence of White's political
and sexual loathings was like going after James Earl Ray without suggesting
he hated blacks." The result was both ironic -- since White had
supported a death penalty for murder -- and horrifying for many: a
maximum sentence of seven years, eight months.

While liberals were prone to describe the murders as "a
senseless tragedy" and depict White as disoriented (although his
purposeful actions would seem to belie this), others asked whether he
would have gotten off so lightly if he had been poor and black, or if
he had not been the killer of two progressive leaders. James Denman,
former undersheriff of San Francisco, commented that "to a lot of cops, Dan White was a hero," and a local joke was reported that when White returned home from his errand, his mother reprimanded him: "No, you dummy. I said milk and balony -- not Moscone!"

Evidence of homophobia was further displayed on the evening that followed the court decision, May 21, 1979. Many felt that ex-cop White had "gotten away with murder," and a few considered him a "hit-man for the New Right." After a crowd gathered at City Hall, the taunts of some of the demonstrators were met by maximum police force, which escalated the action to fourteen police cars burned, City Hall stoned, $1 million in property damage, twenty-six arrested and seventy-five hospitalized.

The official report of the Civil Grand Jury would later concede that "instances of police brutality occurred during and after the dispersal of the crowd at the Civic Center," that police attacked unoffending bystanders, that the police later entered the gay Castro Street area unnecessarily, and that they provoked people who "were pursued by police and beaten." The Civil Grand Jury urged that, in the future, police officers be required to wear name tags so that they could be identified and held accountable for their actions.53

At this point, however, repression is unlikely to vanquish so large and diverse a movement. In San Francisco, for example, the White trial was central in the massive election defeat of the District Attorney and the Sheriff, along with forcing a run-off election in the mayoral race. Although there will continue to be quietly closeted gays, just as there are blacks who "know their place" (or feel required to hide
any hostility toward white racism) or "good Jews" who never mention their Jewishness, the activity of the movement now has an enormously larger base than Mattachine had in 1950. The relatively transient gay activist alliances of the 1960s and early 1970s have often been replaced by organizations with solid foundations. Other movements, such as women's liberation, have frequently become allies. The general consciousness of society has expanded, and many people have the greater freedom of real choices. As with the case of feminism, gay liberation has moved us closer to a world where individual people are treated as individual people rather than as categories: "We're going to be responding to a total person. . . . What's between the person's legs will probably have very little to do with it." Already we see the correctness of Whitman's 1871 prediction in "Democratic Vistas" -- in ways that he might not have expected -- that by the time of the bicentennial in 1976 "much that is now un-dreamed of, we might then see established."
1Memo from Paul Gebhard, Institute for Sex Research ("Kinsey Institute"), Indiana University, to National Gay Task Force, March 18, 1977 (in One, Inc. Library, 2256 Venice Boulevard, Los Angeles, California). While this is re-analyzed data from the Kinsey Reports (1938-1963), it seems unlikely that sexual experimentation has declined in more recent days.


3"Gay" has signified, at various times, "loose" or "wanton" (already by the 15th century), a prostitute (as in a mid-1800's term, "gay girl"), and homosexual (a relatively common slang word by the early 1900's). I have adopted it as the word preferred by most movement leaders, members and publications, just as "black" is now the standard expression rather than Negro.

It should also be noted that "gay" is distinct from transvestite (a person who enjoys cross-dressing, and is statistically more likely to
be heterosexual), pedophile or pederast (someone, who may or may not be gay, who is erotically attracted to children), and transsexual (an individual who believes that his or her physical sex should be the opposite).


5 "A Woman Waits for Me," in *Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose*, edited by John Kouwenhoven (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 85. An early feminist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was quick to note this failing:

Walt Whitman seems to understand everything in nature but women. In 'There is a Woman Waiting for Me,' he speaks as if the female must be forced to the creative act, apparently ignorant of the great natural fact that a healthy woman has as much passion as a man, that she needs nothing stronger than the law of attraction to draw her to the male.
(Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, editors, Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922], II, 210)

6Leaves of Grass, p. 335.

7A standard botanical reference has this commentary on the Acorus Calamus:

Candied Sweet Flag roots have long been popular both in Europe and America as an aromatic confection; and the making of candied flag-root was one of the few frivolities of our great-grand-mothers. The candied roots have been much sold by the Shakers and others in New England. The fresh root is gingery or peppery and with a peculiar soapy taste unpleasant to some, and the confection was too strong for wholesale consumption, though forming a pleasant and tempting nibble.


8His remark on socialism is quoted in Samuel Sillen's anthology, Walt Whitman (New York: International, 1944), p. 41, and the reference to anarchism ("I know that they are probably working in their own way to produce what I am working in my own way to produce") was quoted by Horace Traubel in With Walt Whitman in Camden (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914), III, p. 478 (conversation of January 7, 1889). Both the anarcho-individualism of Benjamin Tucker and the anarcho-communism of William Morris were, at times, attractive to Whitman.

9Jonathan Katz reprinted an illuminating portion of these letters in Gay American History, pp. 508-51 (further materials on Whitman can be found on pp. 751-65). My quotations from Whitman are taken from my own


12 This phrase comes from James Coleman's "The Good Gay Poet," Willamette Bridge, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 19. It was originally printed in Workers' Power, but my clipping doesn't have the date of either publication.


14 Baltimore Sunday Sun, 21 March 1976, K-5 (this reprint from the Detroit Free Press notes that "there was some suggestion in the TV show that Whitman was inordinately fond of young men").


18 "Lesbianism -- Never" (letter), New York Review of Books, October 7, 1971. Such critics are unlikely to be convinced unless home movies are discovered that depict sexual relations, and even then they might argue that it was all a play. On the other hand, Gertrude did not reveal much of her life in her writings. As one analyst of GNP conceded: "If one is not too familiar with

(Gay Community Center, Los Angeles)
Stein, most of the homosexual references are easily missed" (Gay Liberator [Detroit], no. 21 [October 1972], p. 13).


21 Donald Webster Cory, The Homosexual in America; A Subjective Approach (New York: Greenberg, 1951). As an ironic historical note, Sagarin later repudiated the gay liberation movement by the late 1960's. While he continued to urge the end to discriminatory laws and practices, he came to believe that homosexuality could be "cured." Some of this
attitude is already found in his 1951 study when he speculates that "the lack of a well-balanced home" and, above all, "an unusually strong attachment to one parent" was the essential cause of homosexuality. Perhaps then, this could later be corrected.

22 Mattachine documents in *The Homosexual Today; A Handbook of Organizations and Publications*, edited by Marvin Cutler [W. Door Legg] (Los Angeles: One, Inc., 1956), p. 15. The earliest writings clearly parallel the gay movement with "the emerging cultures of our fellow-minorities ... the Negro, Mexican and Jewish people." The background for the name is briefly sketched in "Mattachine -- What Does It Mean?", *Mattachine Review*, no. 6 (November-December 1955), 29, and is placed fully in context by Katz's *Gay American History* (pp. 160-66).

23 "Picketing: The Impact and the Issues," *The Ladder: A Lesbian Review*, September 1965, p. 5; Randy Wicker, chapter on Frank Kameny in *The Gay Crusaders* (New York: Paperback Library, 1972), pp. 89-134; Edward Sagarin, *Structure and Ideology in an Association of Deviants* (New York: Arno Press, 1975). The latter is Sagarin's 1966 dissertation at New York University, documenting the history of the New York Mattachine Society. By this time, Sagarin was one of the more conservative members, having been defeated for the presidency in 1965 by activists with the motto "Let's get Mattachine moving!" His opponents wanted political confrontations and lobbying, along with legal pressures and a public statement by Mattachine that being gay was not a "sickness." The Mattachine militants succeeded, by April of 1967, in having the Civil
Service Commission of the city abolish its official policy of discriminating against gays -- proving that a small group could make some potentially great reforms.


25 In 1980, ONE has perhaps the largest gay collection in the world, followed by the Gay Archives: Natalie Barney/Edward Carpenter Library (organized by Jim Kepner), and the Homosexual Information Center (directed by Don Slater after his split with One, Inc. in 1965). All of these collections are in Los Angeles, which became a center of the early movement because of its incredible ethnic and sexual diversity, large population, relative lack of inhibiting traditions, and, perhaps also, benign climate. While repression was often as great in Los Angeles as elsewhere, the metropolitan area nonetheless became -- for whatever combination of reasons -- the first home of gay liberation, rather than New York, Philadelphia, Chicago or some other major urban area.


29 *Life*, June 26, 1964, pp. 66-74, 76-80. The essay was fairly intelligent, giving an illustration of attempted entrapment of a gay man by a police decoy, and providing examples of heterosexual intolerance.


31 "Homophile Movement Policy Statement," *Vector*, 3 (May 1967), 3 -- see also the letter by Henry Hay, pp. 21, 25 (in both documents there is a clear emphasis on self-acceptance and "the right of individuals to be what they are"). An earlier attempt, on the East Coast, is mentioned in Jody Shotwell's "East Coast Homophile Organizations [ECHO] Discuss the Great Society," *Tangents*, 1 (November 1965), 10-13 (I might note that this meeting was addressed by Paul Goodman and claimed 150 people in attendance).

32 Some important dates in the 1960's: 1961, gay candidate in San Francisco (5600 votes); 1962, Homosexual League of New York (the first group to openly use the word homosexual) and ECHO; 1964, creation of the San Francisco Tavern Guild (gay); 1965: beginning of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual and the Homosexual Information Center (in San Francisco and Los Angeles respectively); 1966; North American
Conference of Homophile Organizations and the Student Homophile League (the first gay student group, organized at Columbia University); 1967, Mattachine's job victory in New York City and the founding of the Homosexual Law Reform Society; 1968, Southern California Tavern Guild and the Metropolitan Community Church (money and spirituality); May 1969, the Committee for Homosexual Freedom is successful in changing the state of California's personnel policies openly discriminating against gays.


34 Ginsberg (speaking at the Chicago Conspiracy trial), quoted in Len Richmond and Gary Noguera, editors, The Gay Liberation Book (San Francisco: Ramparts, 1973), 201; Great Gay in the Morning (Washington, New Jersey: Times Change Press, 1972), 91. One of my favorite names was that given to a Minnesota group in the 1970's: FREE (Fight Repression of Erotic Expression).

36 Magnus (a gay socialist journal), no. 2 (Summer 1977). For the most comprehensive statement of this perspective, see Double-F: A Magazine of Effeminism, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 1973).


My Ship! (New York: Avon, 1978). The latter quotes a 1957 navy study that 37.5% of navy men had had some homosexual experience -- and that the percentage was even higher for women.


42 "Gay Law Symposium" (conducted by the American Civil Liberties Union -- Gay Rights Chapter, at the Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles), November 17, 1979. Topics discussed included national litigation strategies, lobbying, legislation, housing and job discrimination, wills, FCC regulations, police abuse, military law, prostitution and immigration.


44 Randy Shilts, "Gay, Jewish and Proud," The Advocate, September 10, 1975, pp. 12-13. Within Jewish gay groups there are, of course, the standard splits between those who emphasis the "political" and the "spiritual", and divisions among Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism.

45 Even "pro-gay" literature that Dignity recommends may strike the non-Catholic as perverse. Consider the unnatural conclusion of John J. McNeill, S. J., in his study The Church and the Homosexual (New York:
Sheed, Andrews, and McMeel, 1976):

A life of abstinence from all sexual expression, if that life proves possible without serious damage to the person, remains a good prudential choice for the homosexual in today's society. The dangers and difficulties of an active homosexual life are so great and the probability that, owing to guilt and self-hatred, a homosexual relationship may prove destructive both to the individual and to the other person involved is so high, that every Christian homosexual may be well advised to structure his life without an active sexual relationship.

46 Sally Gearhart and William Johnson, Loving Women/Loving Men: Gay Liberation and the Church (San Francisco: Glide Press, 1974); Troy Perry, The Lord is My Shepherd, and He Knows I'm Gay (New York: Bantam, [1972]).


48 Quoted in the Weekly People, 87 (July 2, 1977), 4.

49 Quoted in the Daily Californian [University of California, Berkeley], June 27-29, 1977, p. 20. Many religious groups that support equal justice would disagree, including the National Council of Churches, the Episcopal Church, the Union of Hebrew Congregations (New York), the National Federation of Priests Councils, and the United Church of Christ. It is interesting that a second vote in Dade County in 1978, while still unsuccessful, showed gains: 1977 had 90,000 for gay rights and 202,00 opposed; 1978 had 136,000 for and 189,000 against.
Amber Hollibaugh, "Sexuality and the State: The Defeat of the Briggs Initiative and Beyond," *Socialist Review*, no. 45 (May-June 1979), 55-72; Michael Ward and Mark Freeman, "Defending Gay Rights: The Campaign Against the Briggs Amendment in California," *Radical America*, 3 (July-August 1979), 11-26. In California, even conservative politicians, seeing the popular trend, and being appealed to on the grounds of individual rights, spoke out against the amendment. In Oklahoma, however, a law similar to that proposed by Briggs, was passed by the state legislature and will probably be challenged in the courts.

"National March on Washington" (leaflet; Los Angeles: March on Washington Committee, 1979); "Thousands March on Washington in National Protest," *Gay Rights Guardian* (ACLU), 4 (November 1979), 2. The program included the President of NOW, Troy Perry of MCC, Kate Millet and Allen Ginsberg, upholding such demands as a presidential order banning all sex discrimination in the federal government, military and federally-funded business, along with gay inclusion in the 1964 Civil Rights Act.


*The Sentinel*, 6 (December 14, 1979), 1, 6.

Lois Hart, "Lesbians are Sisters," in *Voices of Women's Liberation*, edited by Leslie Tanner (New York: Signet, 1971), 360. It should be added that as the movement became more conscious, it became more commonly
aware of forms of oppression within "the gay community": sexism, racism and ageism.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!
Whoever degrades another degrades me.

-- Whitman, "Song of Myself"