

GAY LIBERATION

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I. THE NATURE OF GAY OPPRESSION

People in the movement have sometimes questioned the idea that gay men and women represent an oppressed group. We don't fit into their fixed notions of what forms a class, caste, or whatever. However, we feel oppressed. And here are a few objective aspects of our oppression:

1. Physical Attacks

Hatred and fear of homosexuals is so strong among much of the population, particularly the police, that we are subject to a summary death sentence, for no other reason than being gay. Dozens of gay people have been murdered in New York and San Francisco alone during the last few years. Thousands are beaten every year.

2. Archaic Legal Codes

Even private homosexual acts between consenting adults, which harm on one, are illegal in every state except Illinois. Some state laws call for life imprisonment.

3. Occupational Exclusion

Very few gay people are hairdressers, interior decorators, etc., and not all of these are gay. Gay women and men can be found in all occupations. But very few jobs anywhere are open to anyone who is known to be gay. A gay person can only find and keep employment by living in secrecy and falsifying his own life.

4. Psychological Oppression

Gay people can be slandered by all of the media, public institutions, organized religions, and every part of the establishment.

The hatred of society can be internalized in a self-hatred which poisons every aspect of an individual's relations with himself and others.

The adolescence of a gay person ...
Have you ever had to laugh at a joke ridiculing what you are?

5. Blackmail

6. Housing

Limited by our openness.

7. Freedom To Assemble

Often the only places we can safely meet each other are in the gay ghetto bars and restaurants owned by criminal syndicates.

II. HISTORY OF THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The gay liberation movement came into being during the spring months of 1969. The radicalization that had occurred across the country during the 1960's was also affecting the gay section of the population. The tremendous force for freedom that was felt around the world could also be found among the many gay men and women. They could sympathize most readily with other oppressed peoples, having been oppressed themselves for many centuries. When the Panthers were organizing and calling for liberation, this made many other people start to think of no longer sitting around and hiding the fact that they too were oppressed. The time had come to stand up and confront the old ways and moral standards, in and out of the movement, and wherever gays were openly being ridiculed.

The movement started to come to light in June 1969 when, after much of the usual police harassment of closing bars and arresting people for being in certain neighborhoods, the police raided the Stonewall bar on Christopher Street in New York City. The police thought this would be just another routine matter, but this was not the case. The people in the bar started to push the pigs back and onto the street. The police warned the crowd that was gathering to disperse or be arrested. The people ignored the warning, and more people joined the crowd that had assembled to confront the pigs. They had taken enough shit. The police called in reinforcements to put the crowd back in place, but found out that word had spread throughout the West Village, and many more sisters and brothers came down to help those defending the bar from pig invasion. It was not the Mafia bar as such, which was being defended. Rather, it was the idea of defending just one place, even in a gay ghetto, where people could meet without harassment and intimidation.

What started on the streets that night has emerged into a full-grown movement of many thousands of people. The baptism of the billy clubs resulted in the formation of a new group, The Gay Liberation Front, named after the Vietnamese people's organization for freedom in their country. The fighting that broke out and sent ten pigs to the hospital did not stop that night, but continues to this day.

When the group was formed, it decided to hold a protest demonstration against the pigs' action and the others leading up to it. 500 people marched against the police, and many wanted to march on the precinct house itself; but this was diverted by pressure from the gay establishment, which has existed for years.

The NAACP of the gay movement, Mattachine, is to many gays an opponent of gay liberation and thus an obstacle in the way of change. The relationship of power no longer exists where the gay establishment runs things with a few militants on the outside buzzing them. Today gay radicals are in the forefront of the movement, directing it past the old establishment.

In New York City, GLF picketed The Village Voice, a liberal weekly newspaper, for printing derogatory articles about gays while refusing to permit the word "gay" to be used in the bulletin board section of the paper. Both offenses were corrected by this political action. GLF dances are becoming popular among movement straights, as well as the gay brothers and sisters; over 900 people attended the last one. GLF members have joined demonstrations for the Panthers, The Young Lords, anti-war mobilizations, and women's liberation actions. Demonstrations have been held against Time Inc. and ABC Television.

In California, gay liberation groups helped build the various Moratorium events. The San Francisco Examiner, a reactionary paper, was picketed for referring to "semi-males", "deviates", and "flexi-wrists". Twelve brothers and sisters were ripped off by the pigs and printers ink was thrown at the demonstrators. Max Rafferty, the super-reactionary State Superintendent of Public Instruction, had a fit when he heard GLF was successfully organizing at San Jose State College. Rafferty was quoted as saying, "I think it's rotten", and the President of San Jose State was denounced for "running a cesspool". The Committee For Homosexual Freedom marched on Delta Airlines for kicking a brother off a plane for wearing a "gay power" button.

The gay liberation movement is less than a year old, and has grown by leaps and bounds nationwide. GLF's and other radical gay organizations exist in most of the major cities and some smaller towns.

III. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Is Homosexuality Natural?

The anti-homosexuality statutes in America are full of such phrases as "unnatural intercourse", "unnatural crimes", and "infamous crime against nature". The concept that all homosexual acts are unnatural is a part of the prevailing myth system or ideology of our society, and most people would probably agree, at least publicly, that homosexuality is unnatural.

Yet, within the perspective of greater human society, the belief that homosexual acts are unnatural has no more validity than the once prevailing belief that the earth is flat. On the contrary, the findings of all relevant and intellectually respectable social research support the conclusion that homosexual acts represent natural, completely human forms of behavior.

What is meant by defining particular acts as natural or unnatural? It should be made clear, first, that by "natural", we do not mean "in a state of nature" or apart from the conditioning influences of human society. Man is distinguished from all other animals by the relative size of his cerebral cortex: consequently we speak of Man the learning animal and Man the social animal. Occasionally individuals are found who have grown up apart from any human companionship. These individuals are referred to as "feral", or wild, and fail to exhibit the characteristics we regard as essential to being human.

Vastly more than for any other animal, Man's behavior is the result of learning rather than instinct. And this learning takes place in a social context.

Therefore, we define as "natural", behavior which may be expected to occur (and has been observed to occur) in a great variety of human societies, which occurs with substantial frequency within specific societies, and which may be inferred to have a biologic basis as evidenced by the study of closely related animal species.

The anthropologist, Clellan S. Ford, and the zoologist, Frank A. Beach, sum up the relationship between homosexuality and culture as follows:

"Men and women who are totally lacking in any conscious homosexual leanings are as much a product of cultural conditioning as are the exclusive homosexuals who find heterosexual relations distasteful and unsatisfying. Both extremes represent movement away from the original, intermediate condition which includes the capacity for both forms of sexual expression. In a restrictive society such as our own a large proportion of the population learns not to respond to or even to recognize homosexual stimuli and may eventually become in fact unable to do so. At the same time a certain minority group, also through the process of learning, becomes highly if not exclusively sensitive to the erotic attractions of a like-sexed partner. ...human homosexuality is not basically a product of hormonal imbalance or "perverted heredity. It is the product of the fundamental mammalian heritage of general sexual responsiveness as modified under the impact of experience."

The United States condemns any and all forms of homosexual behavior for males and females of all ages. This is not a middle-of-the-road, but an extreme position; it differs from the majority of human societies. Other peoples condone some forms of homosexual activity, particularly during adolescence. A third group of societies actively enforces homosexual relations upon all male members, usually in connection with puberty rituals.

Typical of the third group are the Siwans, an African people:

"...males are singled out as peculiar if they do not indulge in these homosexual activities. Prominent Siwan men lend their sons to each other, and they talk about their masculine love affairs as openly as they discuss their love of women. Both married and unmarried males are expected to have both homosexual and heterosexual affairs."

And the Keraki:

"Keraki bachelors of New Guinea universally practice sodomy, and in the course of his puberty rites each boy is initiated into anal intercourse by the older males. After his first year of playing the passive role he spends the rest of his bachelorhood sodomizing the newly initiated. This practice is believed by the natives to be necessary for the growing boy." ³

It is misleading, by the way, to refer to such societies as "primitive". Although underdeveloped from a technological standpoint, these societies may be highly evolved with regard to other aspects of culture -- laws, language, kinship systems, art forms, etc.. Conversely, a critical examination of our own society -- its foreign and domestic policy, the misuse of natural resources, the allocation of the national budget, the distribution of income, the treatment of minorities, the forms of entertainment -- indicates that our society may be considered primitive by the standards of a truly human society of the future.

Despite the severe legal and social sanctions against homosexual relations, homosexual activity does take place among American men and women to a much greater extent than usually imagined.

Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin interviewed more than 5000 American men, using a study design of extreme sophistication. Following are some of their findings:

- 50% of American males have been conscious of specifically erotic responses to other males.
- 37% have had at least one homosexual experience resulting in orgasm.
- 30% have come from being given a blow job by another male.
- 18% have had at least as much homosexual as heterosexual experience between the ages of 18 and 65.

These findings are absolute dynamite. Think about them. They mean, considering the conformity and pusillanimity of the American male, that the man on the street must have conscious homosexual desires. For every active gay man, how many others simply lack the courage and know-how? The button slogan, Face it we're all queer, is no exaggeration.

Kinsey and his associates followed up with a similar study of almost 6000 American females. It would appear from their findings that homosexuality is much less prevalent among women than among men, and the general anthropological picture agrees with these findings. Among the total sample of American women:

- 28% have been conscious of specifically erotic responses to another female.
- 13% have reached orgasm from at least one homosexual experience.

There is one important qualification to stating that the incidence of female homosexual behavior appears to be less than half that of male homosexual behavior. Between 14% and 19% of the unmarried women and 1% to 3% of the married women were classified as not responding erotically to either heterosexual or homosexual stimuli, whereas almost no men fell into this category. The implications of this sizable "asexual" category among women may depend upon further research employing the techniques of depth psychology.

At any rate, male homosexuality has historically been a matter of much greater social concern in Anglo-American culture than has female homosexuality. Male homosexuals were commonly put to death in ancient and medieval history, whereas female homosexuals rarely were. Homosexuality laws are frequently enforced against men, but almost never against women. It is almost always the male homosexuals who are murdered and blackmailed by police and other criminals. This is not to say that gay women have been better off -- rather, it reflects differences in the specific ways sexual chauvinism operates against male and female homosexuals.

Animal species below humans exhibit homosexual behavior, and it is particularly frequent among the infra human primates (apes and monkeys). Descriptions of monkey sex are not only fun, and quite human sometimes, but also enlightening as to the genetic bases of our own behavior.

"Bachelor baboons who have restricted opportunities for contact with females sometimes strike up homosexual friendships, and for a time a masculine pair remains constantly together. Immature males often join full-grown bachelors and engage in sexual activity. Prepuberal and adolescent males show a wide range of sex responses. They display the feminine sexual presentation, masturbate, and mount one another. They also mount and are mounted by adult members of their own sex. And they engage in manual, oral, and olfactory₄ genital examination with other males of their own age."

Our little cousins can also use sex for social manipulation and ulterior reasons:

"There are, however, many advantages to be gained by a smaller and younger male who submits to a more dominant partner. Aggressive adults tend to protect their homosexual favorites from assault by other monkeys, and the favorites soon learn to seek this protection. In such a relationship the socially inferior partner often adopts the sexual presentation when his dominant partner starts to take food away from him and the procedure is often effective." ⁵

A true homosexual liason has even been observed between two male porpoises. One partner was removed from the tank for three weeks. Their reactions upon being reunited are described in this lovely passage:

"No doubt could exist that the two recognized each other, and for several hours they swam side by side rushing frenziedly through the water, and on several occasions they leaped completely out of the water. For several days, the two males were inseparable and neither paid any attention to the female. This was in courting season, and at other times the two males seemed bent only on preventing the other's copulation with the female." ⁶

At this point we feel the case has been proved that homosexual relations are a natural, completely human form of behavior. Therefore, as anti-homosexuality laws are based on the false premise that homosexual acts are unnatural, these laws must be null and void. In addition, any society which so far departs from fairness and rationality in this area must be subject to the most severe scrutiny in all of its aspects.

B. The Individual And Culture

The individual who finds his way of life in conflict with the culture he lives in may respond in various ways. He may attempt to deny his own nature and to adopt the prevailing behavior patterns, even if they are alien to him.

Two other courses, however, are open to him. He may learn to view his differences from the cultural model objectively, and to seek support from alternative models, such as other societies or subcultures. He may then be able to function adequately, and with self respect within the existing society.

A third course is to examine the existing culture critically, to understand its defects, and to struggle to change that society. We believe that true gay liberation will follow this course, which must involve fundamental change in the structure and material base of this society.

The conflicts between a gay person's needs and the condemnation of this society would strain anyone's vitality. Often the results of this conflict are identified with a person's homosexuality, whereas this would not be the case in a more human society. Certainly much of the psychiatric literature on homosexuality is reactionary in that it transfers the blame from an unfree society to those who are among the victims of that society.

The great anthropologist, Ruth Benedict, makes a plea for a cross-cultural, or comparative, psychiatry. This is how she describes "tradition", with America particularly in mind:

"Tradition is as neurotic as any patient; its overgrown fear of deviation from its fortuitous standards conforms to all the usual definitions of the psychopathic." ¹

People who represent, in extremes, the prevailing values of the society are not regarded as abnormal. On the contrary, they are generally the cultural heroes of the epoch. Think about the cultural heroes of America, the "normal American", as related to this passage from Miss Benedict:

"In our own generation extreme forms of ego-gratification are culturally supported in a similar fashion. Arrogant and unbridled egoists as family men, as officers of the law and in business, have been again and again portrayed by novelists and dramatists, and they are familiar in every community. Like the behaviour of Puritan divines, their courses of action are often more asocial than those of the inmates of penitentiaries. In terms of the suffering and frustration that they

spread about them there is probably no comparison. There is very possibly as great a degree of mental warping. Yet they are entrusted with positions of great influence and importance and are as a rule fathers of families. Their impress both upon their own children and upon the structure of our society is indelible. They are not described in our manuals of psychiatry because they are supported by every tenet of our civilization. They are sure of themselves in real life in a way that is possible only to those who are oriented to the points of the compass laid down in their own culture. Nevertheless a future psychiatry may well ransack our novels and letters and public records for illumination upon a type of abnormality to which it would not otherwise give credence. In every society it is among this very group of the culturally encouraged and fortified that some of the most extreme types of human behaviour are fostered." 2

We intend to change our society, going down to the roots of the system. May we achieve a society where the normal man can be a helper to man; where cooperation, not competition, is the virtue.

FOOTNOTES FOR SECTION III

A.

1. C.S. Ford and F.A. Beach, Patterns Of Sexual Behavior, N.Y., Harper & Row (Perennial Library paper), 1970, p. 263.
2. Ibid., p. 139.
3. Ibid., p. 139.
4. Ibid., p. 143.
5. Ibid., p. 144.
6. A.F. McBride and D.O. Hebb, "Behavior of the captive bottlenose dolphin, Tursiops truncatus." J. Comp. Physiol. Vol. XLI, p. 121. (quoted in Ford and Beach, p. 146).

B.

1. Ruth Benedict, Patterns Of Culture, N.Y., Mentor Books, p. 235.
2. Ibid., pp. 238 - 239.

IV. THE ESSENCE OF LIBERATION

Liberation is a process of growth, of widening one's own self and interests. A society is repressive to the degree that it forces some groups within it to forego the goal of organic development for some goal not in the interests of these groups. In American society, the economic and political power elite, as a class, represses many groups, in fact the majority of the American population, by forcing them to labor for economic profits to the detriment of all other goals and needs. Liberation in America requires the abolition of this ruling group's control, i.e., the replacement of corporate capitalism by collective ownership and control of the economy.

Sexuality is an important ingredient in human life and the development of sexuality is essential for all human growth. Sexual liberation must be a concern for all those striving toward human emancipation. American society is sexually repressive, at the same time it exploits sex to encourage compulsive and foolish consumer behavior. Sexual expression is split off from the other aspects of life.

Sexual repression in this general form afflicts virtually everyone in America, but it is most acute for women and for homosexuals, both men and women. By linking sex to certain personality traits such as passivity, non-intelligence, etc., a capitalist society holds women in subject positions, precisely because of their sex. Homosexuals are subject to a similar kind of repression: because of their sexual expression they are classified and treated as inferior, incompetent, neurotic, etc.. Because homosexual expression is socially defined as inferior and perverse, the homosexual finds it extremely hard to experience his or her sexuality as a positive force. Hence, sexuality becomes split off from "respectable" activities, leading to frustration and waste of valuable human energy.

Gay liberation, then, has for its primary objective the emancipation of the homosexual community from the repressive fragmentation of their lives. But this struggle for self-emancipation must be accompanied by the liberation of non-homosexuals from their repressive attitudes into which they have been conditioned. Sexism, the antagonistic splitting off of men and women from one another because of sex or sexual expression is a serious block to effective liberation. Like racism, it serves to keep apart subject and repressed peoples who should be linked in struggle against their common oppression -- and oppressors.

Gay liberation is an important and necessary part of the movement for emancipation in America today. Like women's liberation, gay liberation is a movement of oppressed people who aspire to and are struggling for genuine liberation, genuine human development. Gay liberation demands that gay people be able to control their lives -- all aspects of them -- to develop their human possibilities. Gay liberation conceives of this goal as part of the common struggle now going on by oppressed people everywhere. The gay liberation movement declares itself in solidarity with all struggles for human freedom. The gay liberation movement invites the fraternal support of all those who are in the common struggle against repression.

V. GAY LIBERATION AND THE MOVEMENT

Some people in the movement have contradictions in their thinking towards gay people. There are marxists who honor the grossest superstitions and sexual taboos of the prevailing ideology. Others are ignorant of what gay people are, what they have in common with straight people. The movement doesn't mind when many thousands of gay people take part in demonstrations, but objects if they openly admit that they are gay. For too many years gay people have kept quiet when they heard straights using words like "faggot" and "cocksucker" as derogatory terms against the ruling class and its stooges.

Some marxist groups exclude gay people from their organizations. Gay people who have worked efficiently for years in these parties were told to leave when they were discovered or thought to be gay. Most of these organizations do not have a rule in their constitutions which would show clearly the organization's position regarding homosexuality; rather, an elitist bureaucratic part of the organization takes this responsibility on their own, without informing the membership. This certainly is not democratic centralism.

Basically we make two points to the movement:

- 1) Homosexual acts between freely consenting partners harm no one, and are a natural and completely human form of behavior. The revolution cannot be just or complete if our rights as full human beings are not recognized. We call upon our comrades to be progressive in sexual matters also, as we include ourselves in the Brotherhood of Man. An injury to one is an injury to all.
- 2) We feel that our oppression is due, not merely to ignorance and superstition, but to the interests and ideologies of an authoritarian capitalist society. Sexual repression is one means used to maintain the domination of man over man in an unfree society. Sexual liberation cannot succeed within the framework of reactionary society. At the same time, the struggle for sexual liberation is a necessary part of making the revolution by any means necessary.

Perhaps with the emergence of a classless society, we shall also enter into a labelless society -- one that will be free of the stereotypes that divide man from man and perpetuate the privileges of the few over the needs of the many.

We will not stop, nor will our straight friends, in the fight for the liberation of all, no matter what superstitions must be conquered. No one need give up anything for gay liberation except his own prejudice. We are not asking for our rights as human beings, but demanding them. We will not be satisfied with anything less than freedom.

ALL POWER TO THE OPPRESSED PEOPLES!
POWER TO ALL THE PEOPLE!

Christopher Street Liberation Day will be celebrated nationwide in commemoration of the birth of the gay liberation movement. All of the east coast gay organizations will take part in New York City activities, which will include a block festival on Christopher Street. For further information or help in organizing in your own city, contact The Red Butterfly.

Additional copies of this pamphlet are available. For additional materials, or a speaker for your group or school, write us.

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