

No. 5
SUMMER 1989
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DANCE MUSIC'S
GAY BLACK ROOTS

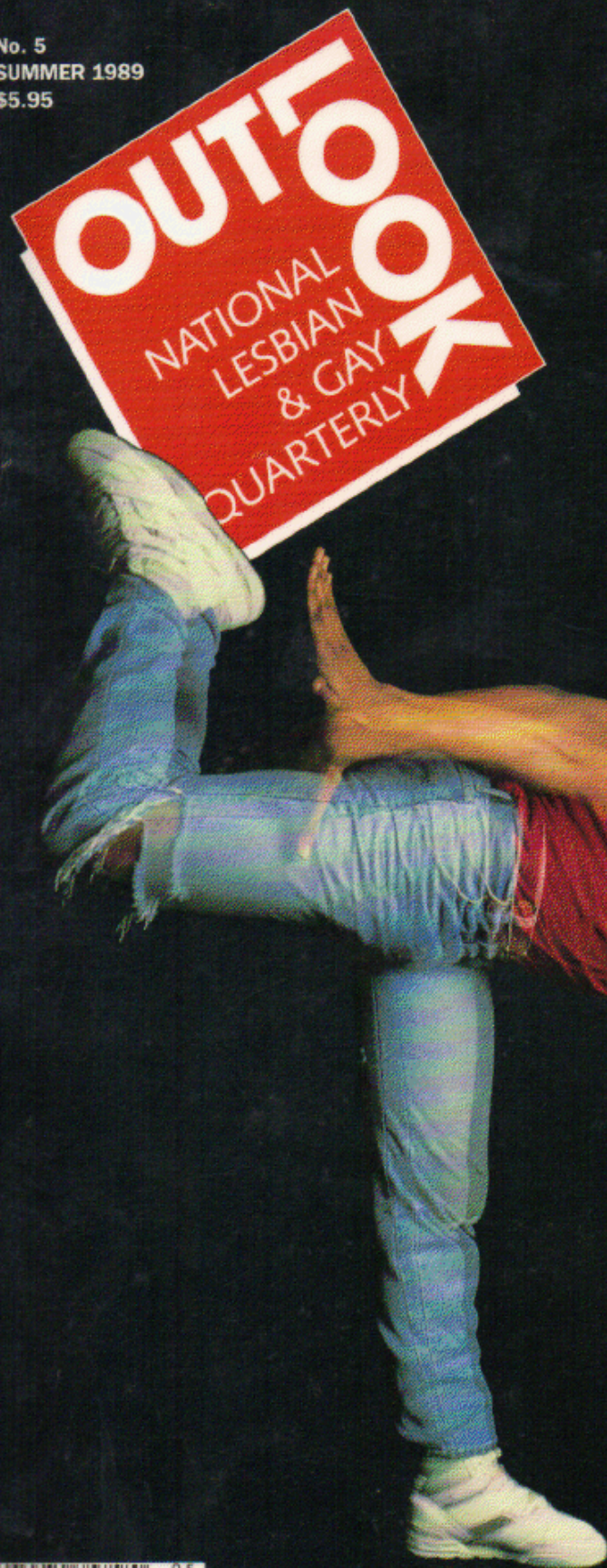
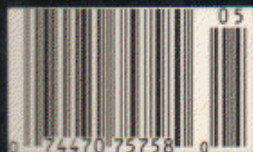
THE HOUSE THE KIDS BUILT

IS AIDS DRAINING THE
WOMEN'S COMMUNITY?

GAY CHILDREN
OF POLITICIANS

SINCE STONEWALL:
6 LEADERS SPEAK OUT

THE ALLURE OF
"STRAIGHT" MEN



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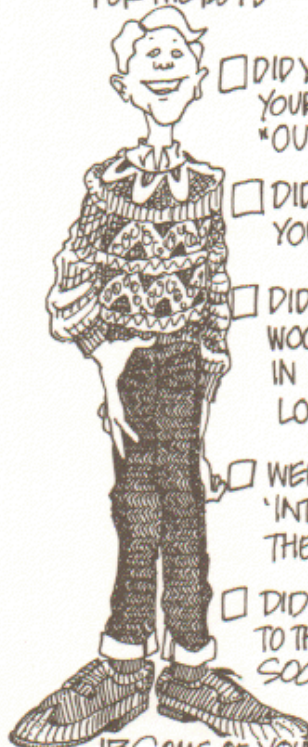
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DO YOU (HONESTLY) THINK PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE QUEER IN HIGH SCHOOL

FOR THE BOYS:



☐ DID YOU CALL YOUR CLOTHES "OUTFITS"?

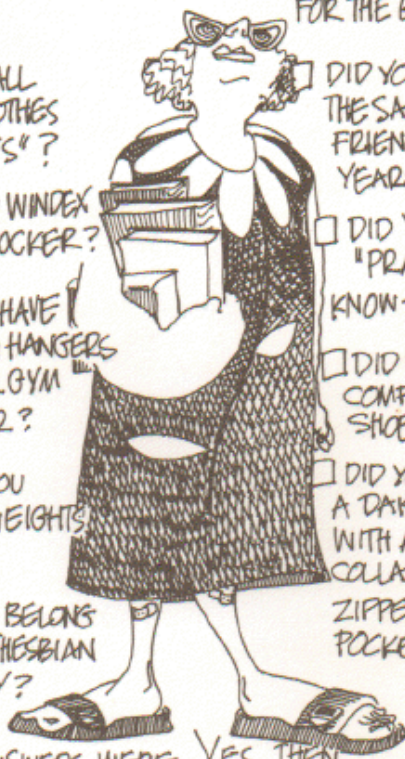
☐ DID YOU WINDEX YOUR LOCKER?

☐ DID YOU HAVE WOODEN HANGERS IN YOUR GYM LOCKER?

☐ WERE YOU 'INTO' WEIGHTS THEN?

☐ DID YOU BELONG TO THE THESSALIAN SOCIETY?

FOR THE GIRLS:



☐ DID YOU HAVE THE SAME "BEST FRIEND" FOR 12 YEARS?

☐ DID YOU "PRACTICE" YOU-KNOW-WHAT?

☐ DID YOU LIKE COMFORTABLE SHOES?

☐ DID YOU HAVE A DAKY DRESS WITH A FLOWER COLLAR, STEM-ZIPPER & LEAF POCKETS?

IF SOME OF YOUR ANSWERS WERE YES THEN EVERYBODY KNEW (BUT FOUND YOU ADORABLE!)

KRIS KOVICK

Volume 2, Number 1 — Summer 1989

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Cover photography by Dorothy Low.

Welcome.

To commemorate the completion of our first year of publishing, OUT/LOOK commissioned the Question Queen (known to insiders as Bobbie Walters) to find out what our readers think of the magazine. Bobbie combed bars, beaches, and bookstores from Boston to Boise to Bakersfield, tirelessly posing the journalistic question: "If OUT/LOOK was a twee, what kind of twee would you want it to be?" What follows is a small sampling of your responses.

How has the first year of OUT/LOOK changed your life?

Asked in the parking lot of the Cock 'N Ball Club, Wilmington, DE. "As long as I can remember, I've wanted one of those hot retro deco coffee tables. But I couldn't justify buying one—until I overheard the guy at the bookstore describe OUT/LOOK as a 'coffee table magazine.' Now, my life is complete: I've got my fabulous coffee table, and (for a pittance) a lifetime subscription to the magazine that looks absolutely stunning on top of it."

George Vacuous, exterior designer

Asked at a "Lesbians Against MSG" rally, Chicago, IL. "OUT/LOOK is totally PI, if you ask me—which you did. First they have this article putting down twelve-step programs, then they put in a cartoon about drinking. I mean, ha, ha. And the size of the penises in that Tom of Finland article! If I wanted to look at gigantic penises, would I be a lesbian? Not to mention articles about lesbian fashion—isn't that a contradiction in terms? And, for goddess's sake, bourgeois electoral politics. It's no wonder my affinity group voted to cancel our subscription!"

Celeste Separatiste, auto mechanic

Asked on Peach Street, Atlanta, GA. "I'm glad there's finally a magazine for lesbians and gay men to share. Reading about how expressive and nurturing women are makes me realize how far we men still have to go. I just have one question about OUT/LOOK: How come y'all don't run any hunky sex ads like the Advocate does?"

T. Over Newleaf, gym operator

Asked at WimminFire Books, Albuquerque, NM. "I didn't think I was ready for a magazine geared toward both gay men and lesbians. But I've actually enjoyed reading the male perspective, and I've come to see that men and women aren't as different as I'd thought we were. I'm

just so grateful that OUT/LOOK doesn't run those sleazy sex ads like the Advocate does."

Chamisa Margaritaborn, graduate student

What do you like most and least about OUT/LOOK?

Asked in the back room of the Leather Tusk, Portland, OR. "Most: the article on Tom of Finland. Least: all the letters from the lesbian prudes protesting the article on Tom of Finland."

Dirk Nippleclump, Mr. Gay Oregon, 1987

Asked at Oseto, the communal women's hot tub, San Francisco. "Most: the article about lesbian softball. Least: the Tom of Finland article. Those penises!"

Ruth Babe, apprentice machinist

Asked at the Cosmic Cweers Convention, Ann Arbor, MI. "Most: the articles on Zuffi spirituality. Least: they don't have an astrology column."

Aura Gone, tarot card reader

How do you people do it (keep OUT/LOOK coming, that is)?

Asked in the OUT/LOOK office, cheap rent district, San Francisco. "Easy. All we have to do is round up 50 volunteers per issue. And go to biweekly editorial meetings where women and men from totally diverse backgrounds with different opinions on absolutely everything discuss what should and shouldn't appear in the magazine. And answer irate phone calls from writers and artists who want to know why we butchered their contributions (for which we didn't pay them) or why we didn't use their contributions at all. And figure out how to pay the printer, the rent, the shrink..."

Kim Klausner, Publisher, OUT/LOOK

"How do we do it? Hey—give me a book contract, and I'll tell you all about it—in detail!"

Dorothy Allison, Editor, OUT/LOOK;
Author, Trash

"Personally, I'm rewarded by the growth I've seen in the two years I've been working on OUT/LOOK. We started out with five people and a vision; now we've got ten editors and the second-largest circulation of any gay magazine in the country. I'm just enough of a size queen to get really excited by that!"

Jeffrey Escoffier, Publisher, OUT/LOOK

—Meredith Maran, for the editors



Celeste Separatiste



George Vacuous



T. Over Newleaf



Aura Gone



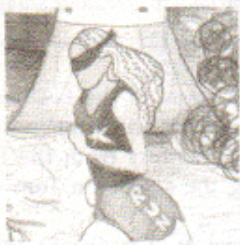
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plus a poll about
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Crossover Conundrum

Michael Denneny's article ("Chasing the Crossover Audience and Other Self-Defeating Strategies," Winter 1989) introduces several important literary/cultural issues, but it frustrates any serious reflection by simplifying these issues. Denneny does not identify a single "crossover" novelist; this disallows anyone the possibility of actively reading the article. We cannot disagree with Denneny because we are not sure to whom he is referring. We cannot question his assumption that this new generation of novelists is concerned only with making money because we don't know whom he is accusing.

Moreover, the article does not recognize the complexity of the issues: do most lesbians and gay men choose permanently and irrevocably between assimilation and resistance? Doesn't one often risk reinforcing one's marginalized position in society by writing from and about that position exclusively? If it is true (as Denneny claims in his first sentence) that "the production of writing necessarily takes place within a cultural and social context," isn't it possible that the cultural context in which this second generation of writers is living is at all different from the context in which the first generation lived in and wrote from? Does creating a gay literature and a gay culture mean making the straight culture as invisible as it has made gay culture?

We do need the literature of resistance, the literature of anger, the literature of marginality, but we also need those writers who can maintain their

integrity as chroniclers of lesbian/gay experience while reminding us that human experience includes gay experience and straight experience—that lesbians and gay men not only *can*, but *do*, live side-by-side with straight people.

Paul M. Puccio
Amherst, MA

■ I am fascinated by a recent statement issued by Ray Chalker, publisher of the San Francisco *Sentinel* (one of the Bay Area's gay weeklies) in which he said he wants "to put out a paper that people can read on Bay Area Rapid Transit and not be ashamed of." Perusing the same issue of the *Sentinel* in which this statement ran, I find no sign of the words "lesbian" or "gay" anywhere on the cover. The banner identifies the paper only as a "Bay Area Weekly Magazine."

What is the publisher worried that readers would be "ashamed" to display on public transit? Mr. Chalker would do well to read Michael Denneny's remarks about the desire to produce "crossover" publications by avoiding "the outright identification, the specific, glaring label: 'gay'." Denneny's rhetorical question is "what is this except a literary version of the old strategy of 'passing'?"

I feel somewhat ashamed of the *shame* about homosexuality suggested by the generic "Bay Area Weekly Magazine" tag, and a calm pride and pleasure in exposing my fellow riders on regular Muni and CalTrain forays to the "National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly" subtitle blazoned on the cover of

OUT/LOOK.

Gerard Koskovich
San Francisco, CA

■ I found Michael Denneny's argument—that gay writers will reach a broader audience only by being unapologetic about gay themes—very compelling, but also extremely ironic, considering his letter to me in response to [the novel I recently submitted to him]. Evidently, Denneny's theories are meant to apply to only gay *male* writers, many of whom he has had the opportunity to publish himself. About my novel, however, he could find time to say only that it was "not financially viable."

In his article, Denneny has a footnote (where he believes gay *women* writers belong?) where he speculates that "the crossover situation for lesbian writers is completely different, and perhaps more promising.... Gay women writers...can more easily find an audience for their work among non-gay women influenced by the women's movement.... There is nothing analogous to this in the situation of gay men."

Easier for gay women writers? Is that why nearly every single one of the new (and older, for that matter) gay writers we have read about in the newsweeklies and in the book review pages are male? Indeed, while Denneny attributes the wave of interest to the long-term effects of Stonewall, I attribute it to the fact that AIDS has given the straight book publisher and the straight reader a more "respectable" reason to publish and buy books about gay male experience. It has become a current events issue, a

health issue, a humanitarian issue (and rightly so, of course).

But frankly, there is nothing analogous to *this* in the situation of gay women. AIDS has made lesbians even more invisible—and less financially viable as publishing projects—than ever before. And as anyone in the women's movement knows, the straight feminist is perhaps more likely to distance herself from her gay sister, because she has grown weary of being labeled gay herself.

Diane Salvatore
New York, NY

Conscientious Objectors to Style Wars

My growing sense of frustration and disappointment [with *OUT/LOOK*] turned to anger with your latest cover story, "Style Wars and the New Lesbianism" (Winter 1989). Jeez, I

don't know, maybe I'm square, not hip and trendy enough...I'm just an active, visible mid-west lesbian.

But "Lesbian style may be one of the

central battlegrounds for the reformulation of lesbian identity today...." Give me a break! There is no war, there is no battle.

We are as diverse a group as any. We have no uniform, no code of conduct, and we are not in combat. This just strikes me as *National Enquirer* stuff, with a sort of fake academic spin on the ball. Whatever happened to celebrating our differences?

Katie DuMont
Ferndale, MI

■ I am a 65-year-old lesbian and have been one ever since I can remember. My father was a mechanic and my mother a homemaker and a seamstress. I am white, but not very religious I'm afraid.

In response to the article "Style Wars and The New Lesbianism," let me say that I just could not be bothered trying to keep up with all the changing styles in or out of the lesbian community. I have always worn tailored men's clothes—they suited my personality and were a great deal more comfortable than what I saw of more feminine attire. I have on occasion noticed younger lesbians try to dress up to "code," but as for me, no thanks.

My style of dress does not imply that I am in any way attempting to emulate men.

But I do suppose that after 30 years in the Navy and

having worked and lived in such close association with them, some of their ideas on life might have rubbed off on me.

For me, style and politics are not one and the same. I will admit that in choosing a companion of my own sex I prefer one more feminine than I am. But her style of dress is NOT a prerequisite to our relationship.

If someone is turned off by my mode of dress without even attempting to know me first then it is they that have a problem, not me.

Rusty Brown
San Francisco

The Zuñi Berdache Debate

It is interesting to read about the trials and tribulations your staff put themselves through in order to maintain a non-sexist balance as you published the Tom of Finland material (Welcome, Winter 1989). So it is sad to have to conclude that you quite missed the boat in not equally trial-ing and tribulating over the ethnocentrism, indeed racism, in Dr. Ramón Gutiérrez's article on the Zuñi Berdache "Must We Deracinate Indians to Find Gay Roots?" (Winter 1989).

[Gutiérrez writes of] "the violent masculine world of Pueblo Indian warriors..." qualified by "...But bear in mind that conquest and annexation by the United States Army had, by these dates, totally constrained the ability of Pueblo men to

We'Wha-gate continues...

wage war."

What on earth is Gutierrez talking about? What conquests or annexations did the US Army wrest from the Hopi, Zuñi, Keres, or Tewa Pueblos, by such violent struggles as to totally constrain the ability of Pueblo men to wage war? This is simply a fiction pure and simple: my own 25-year acquaintance with the Tewa people north of the Rio Grande Basin totally bears out Dr. Ruth Benedict's 1930s appraisal of these people as *Apollonian in temperament*.

There has been a harvest of respectful and appreciative scholarship concerning myth and ritual in the ongoing daily life of the Pueblo people these last thirty years by such people as Claude Levi-Strauss, Fred Eggan, Alfonso Ortiz, Richard Ford, Edward Dozier, Dennis Tedlock, Sue Ellen Jacobs, Will Roscoe, among others. So it is sad to have to note that the bulk of Dr. Gutierrez's sources reflect the biases of an earlier period of American ethnological perceptions when US administrations were striving to clean up the Native American's woefully un-Christian morality by beating them unmercifully in boarding schools and starving them to death on agrarianly worthless reservations—for their own good—of course—you understand!

I would conjecture that Dr. Gutierrez picked up his [other] whopper of a gaffe—which put smears of blood on the inner thighs of the *Kor'kokshi* instead of the *Chakwena Woman warrior*—from the same source in which he discovered the "violent masculine world of the Pueblo Indians." Whoever finds

that source first (again) should run with it—don't just walk—to the nearest incinerator so that it is not allowed to further contaminate anyone!

Harry Hay
Los Angeles, CA

Tom: the Defense

Am I the only person who wasn't offended by the Tom of Finland article (Fall 1988)? I, as a lesbian/feminist, was thrilled to see an unabashed appreciation for an admittedly controversial part of our gay history. Whatever labels we may choose to slap on to Tom of Finland's work, they can't change the fact that these works, and countless others like them, represent a key element of gay life prior to the gay liberation movement. Art like this, circulating largely underground, was (and still is, in some places) a lifeline of mutual acknowledgement of sexual feelings for numbers of closeted gay men.

Admittedly, the images of the power games and the oh-so-obvious terminal case of *phallus tyrannus* can be disturbing to many people—they are to me, on one level. But these elements are parts of Tom of Finland's own psychosexual makeup. Criticizing these elements of his sexual ideals to try and cover up the fact that we, too, possess similarly politically incorrect fantasies, is a petty and untruthful way to react to Tom's work. It's the *role* [of these drawings] in our history that's important, not the size of the cocks or the police uniforms or the power politics.

Some of the controversy and discontent could probably have been avoided by looking at Tom

of Finland's work as part of the tradition of erotica in the gay culture instead of presenting it as an appreciation. I feel certain that many lesbians would have felt less threatened by the sudden protrusions of all these penises if the work had been presented in this way.

Johanne Blank
Jamaica Plain, MA

■ [In reference to the letters (Winter 1989) protesting the article about Tom of Finland], may I say to the many women who constantly write against pornography that most men, myself included, do not understand anything they are saying? Pictures, stories, and films about sex give me pleasure. That is all I know about the subject, and all I need to know.

Sex hatred is a sad result of our Puritan foundations. It deflects people's attention from actual evil and causes them to deceive themselves into thinking they are fighting evil when they are only venting their unfortunate hatred for sex.

When I was growing up, these pathetic victims of mis-education called sex "sin." Then they called it "maladjustment," or "immaturity." Now in our superficially politicized age they call it "non-life-enhancing," "oppressive," and "demeaning." Sex and porn are fun. They feel good. I like them. If you don't like them, don't do them.

Robert Patrick
New York, NY

Lesbian Parenting

While I sympathize with Janine Baer's and other adoptees' search for their birth parents (Letters, Winter 1989), her anal-

ogy between adoption and donor insemination, at least for lesbians, is naive and overly simplistic.

In the best of all possible worlds, donor insemination-conceived people could know their fathers *and* there would be no threat to their mothers or family units. The reality, however, is that if the donor's identity is available to his offspring, the child's identity is potentially available to the donor.

While I agree that non-biological co-parents shouldn't feel threatened that their child will reject them, they should and do have a very real fear that they will be rejected by society. This applies to the biological lesbian mother as well! A lesbian family is a third-rate family, if that, in the eyes of our society and our courts. With a known donor, that family is constantly under the threat of loss of custody.

To ignore the very real vulnerabilities lesbian parents face does a disservice not only to those parents but also to the DI-conceived people whose families would be torn apart.

Erica Martinson
White Plains, NY

Poetry Provided

Readers who enjoyed Cheryl Clarke's poem, "Erol," (Winter 1989) might also like to know that, in addition to the books listed in Cheryl's author's note, she also has written a book of poetry, *Narratives: Poems in the Tradition of Black Women* (Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press).

Barbara Smith, Publisher
Kitchen Table Press
Latham, NY

THE OUT/LOOK LIST

The 10 Best and 10 Worst Congresspeople

Using data compiled by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, OUT/LOOK determined who our best friends and worst enemies in the House of Representatives were during the 100th Congress (January 1987 through October 1988). (This list doesn't take into account the fact that lesbians and gay men obviously are concerned about all kinds of legislation, not just gay-related bills).

THE BEST: Thirty-five percent of the members of the House scored an "A" on the NGLTF report card, but these ten Representatives go the extra mile for lesbians and gay men. They scored 100 percent on the report card; many are chairs of committees who have pushed our legislation; they regularly use their influence to promote gay-positive legislation or to try and stop the homophobic bills. Relevant legislation ranges from those that include gay people in the compilation of hate crime statistics, to AIDS-related bills on funding, testing, and housing discrimination, to overriding the veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act.

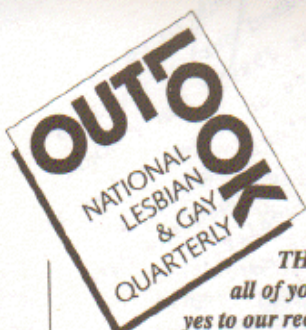
Barbara Boxer	D-CA	District 6, San Francisco and Marin County
John Conyers	D-MI	District 1, Detroit
Julian Dixon	D-CA	District 28, Los Angeles
Don Edwards	D-CA	District 10, San Jose
Barney Frank	D-MA	District 4, suburban Boston
Steny Hoyer	D-MD	District 5, suburban Washington, DC
Nancy Pelosi	D-CA	District 5, San Francisco
Gerry Studds	D-MA	District 10, New Bedford and Cape Cod
Henry Waxman	D-CA	District 24, Los Angeles, westside
Ted Weiss	D-NY	District 17, Manhattan, westside

THE WORST: Twenty-eight percent of the Members of the House flunked the NGLTF report card, but these Representatives all scored zero. What's more they go out of their way to obstruct progress on gay-related legislation and opt to cash in their political chits to push for the most homophobic bills.

Joe Barton	R-TX	District 6, suburban Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth
Dan Burton	R-IN	District 6, suburban Indianapolis
Beau Boulter	R-TX	District 13, Amarillo and Wichita Falls
Phil Crane	R-IL	District 12, suburban Chicago
Bill Dannemeyer	R-CA	District 39, Orange County (Disneyland)
Bob Dornan	R-CA	District 38, Orange County
Duncan Hunter	R-CA	District 45, San Diego
Bill McCollum	R-FL	District 5, Orlando (Disney World)
E. Clay Shaw	R-FL	District 15, Ft. Lauderdale
Bob Stump	R-AZ	District 3, Maricopa County and western state

FYI: Using the same criteria, our best friends in the Senate were: Alan Cranston (D-CA); Daniel Moynihan (D-NY); Paul Simon (D-IL); and Lowell Weicker (R-CT, defeated for re-election). The worst scoundrels in the Senate: Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Stephen Symms (R-ID).

...so anxious to be hot
we renamed our Spring 1989
issue "Summer 1989." DON'T WORRY!
You didn't miss an issue, and we're
still on a quarterly publishing
schedule. We just changed the date
to better reflect reality.
--The Editors



Thank you,

THANK YOU to all of you who said yes to our recent invitation to become OUT/LOOK Sustainers. Your support is crucial to OUT/LOOK's ability to grow and flourish. No political magazine in this country is supported solely by subscriptions and advertising, let alone one with a lesbian and gay focus. Your participation is essential if we are to continue our efforts to produce a high caliber, widely distributed national magazine.

We extend our appreciation to 50 people who requested anonymity, and:

Kate Abbott, Cardiff, CA
 Roberta Achtenberg, San Francisco, CA
 Randy Albelda, Mattapan, MA
 Peter Alpert, San Francisco, CA
 Elaine Anderson, West Hollywood, CA
 Sara Arrand, Boston, MA
 John Barrow, New York, NY
 Alvin H. Baum, Jr., San Francisco, CA
 Wayne L. Bender, Oakland, CA
 David N. Bentley, San Francisco, CA
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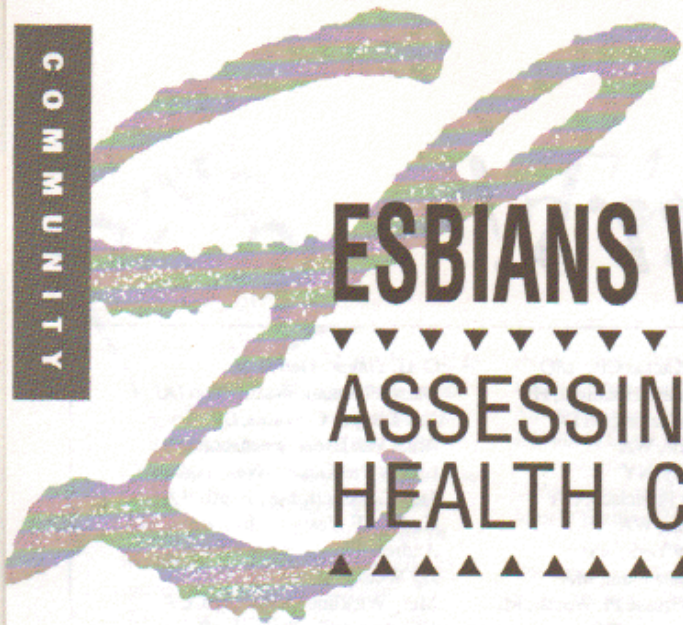
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LESBIANS WORKING ON AIDS

ASSESSING THE IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN

▼
by
Jackie
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Illustrations
by
Michelle
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*This article is adapted
and shortened from
Winnow's keynote
speech at the Lesbian
Caregivers & the AIDS
Epidemic Conference
in San Francisco in
January 1989.*

Recently the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran an article addressing the plight of the 100 women with AIDS in the Bay Area and describing the services that have been started for them, including housing, childcare, a day center, haircutting, a food bank, massage, counseling, and meals.

In 1988, approximately 40,000 women were living with cancer in the San Francisco/Oakland area, at least 4,000 being lesbians, about 4,000 women dying. Eight thousand women were diagnosed this year. The 40,000 women don't have the services that the 100 women with AIDS have. I want the women with AIDS to have those services. I don't mean to polarize. But I also want recognition that we have a huge problem here and we need to do something about it.

According to the American Cancer Society, half a million women in the United States will be diagnosed with cancer in 1989, and a quarter of a million will die from the disease. Forty-two thousand women will die from breast cancer in one year, about the same number of people who have died since the inception of the AIDS epidemic in 1981. Cancer is the leading cause of death in women ages 35 to 54. One out of three of us will get cancer. Cancer has become an acceptable epidemic. As someone who has metastatic breast cancer, that is unacceptable to me.

I started working on the AIDS crisis early on, when AIDS hysteria was starting to threaten our civil rights, increasing violence

against lesbians and gay men, and increasing discrimination—particularly in housing and employment. In my role as a lesbian/gay community liaison to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, it was obvious that AIDS, then called GRID—Gay Related Immune Disease—had to be reckoned with. While little was firmly known about its cause or transmission, it was clear that large numbers of gay men were getting it and that our survival as a people depended on our response. We reacted admirably.

From nothing, we created services that educated the gay community and the general community; we housed people with AIDS/ARC, served them meals, provided emotional and practical support, and provided them funds. We created model programs for hospital care, hospice care, and social services. We demanded government responsiveness. We fought for good legislation and endlessly fight against bad legislation and bigotry. We created information services about various treatments and about ways to get them. We honored the dead through building an evolving monument, the AIDS quilt. As needs became apparent, we filled the gaps.

And our hearts, what did this terrible disease do to our hearts, but open us to love and incredible enduring sadness while we continued to go on. All this from a community of people who had come to exist as a community a mere twenty years ago.

Since AIDS is an evolving crisis, there

have been some problem areas. The AIDS organizations were/slow to identify and meet the needs of women and people of color. Women and people of color are often underemployed by AIDS agencies, either in numbers and/or in management capacities. It has only been through the efforts of women and people of color (often lesbian or gay themselves) that some progress has been made in the areas of education and service.

Suddenly the lesbian/gay community was running multi-million dollar organizations; an AIDS establishment has been built. The AIDS/ARC crisis and its organizations have become the lesbian/gay movement in a sense, and all else takes second stage. Indeed, the heads of the AIDS establishment have become the leaders of the lesbian and gay movement, some of whom are not even gay or lesbian, but AIDS experts. A community that had not received funding in the past was now getting money—but only in one area. And as often happens, that area takes priority.

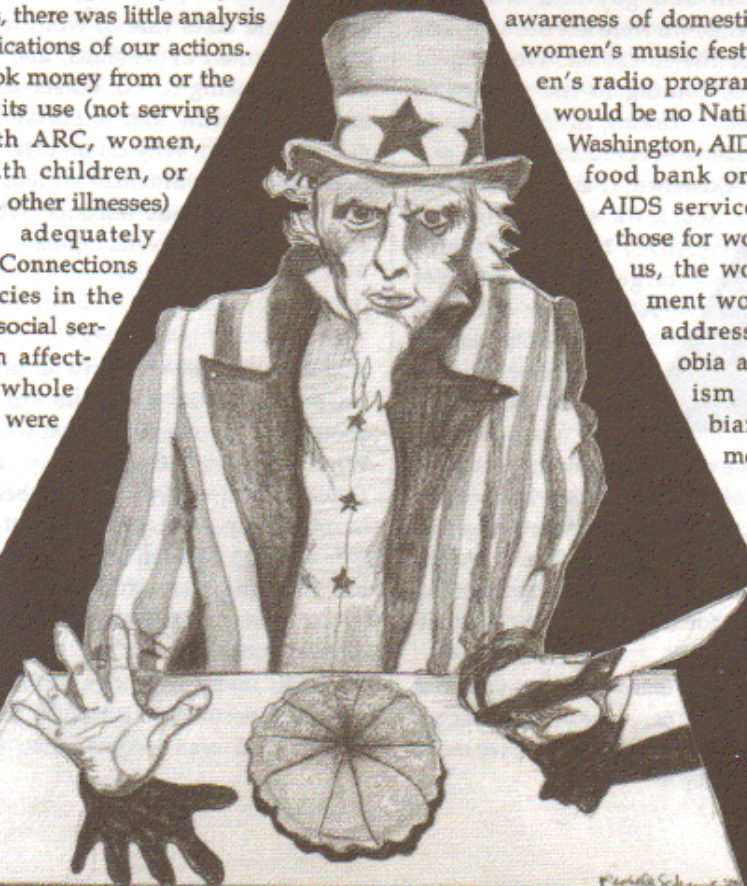
Since the crisis rapidly escalated, and the need to respond quickly was tremendous, there was little analysis of the implications of our actions. Who we took money from or the caveats for its use (not serving people with ARC, women, women with children, or people with other illnesses) were not adequately addressed. Connections to deficiencies in the health and social service system affecting the whole community were ignored.

While as lesbians and gay men our equal rights as full citizens are still denied, we turn our efforts, by and large, toward the struggle for survival. Yet, we still live in a homophobic society, a society that long has believed that a good queer is a dead queer. We live in a society that not only denies us our rights, but has used AIDS as an excuse to strip us of whatever rights we have. We not only consistently have had to work to serve the suffering and fight for money and programs, but we have had to fight against the forces of prejudice, such as Propositions 96 and 102* and the SHAPE (Stop Homosexual Advocacy in Public Education) campaign. In the midst of such struggle, we continue to celebrate our lives.

AND WHAT HAS been the impact of AIDS on us as lesbians?

Lesbians were and still are in the vanguard of the women's and lesbian and gay liberation movements. Without us, there would be no rape crisis centers, no women's foundations or buildings, no awareness of domestic violence, no women's music festivals or women's radio programming. There would be no National March on Washington, AIDS quilts, AIDS food bank or many other AIDS services, especially those for women. Without us, the women's movement would not have addressed homophobia and heterosexism and the lesbian/gay movement would not

**The California ballot propositions that respectively would have required mandatory HIV testing for prostitutes, and would have eliminated anonymous HIV testing for everyone. Prop. 96 passed in 1988; Prop. 102 was defeated.*



have addressed sexism. Indeed, without us, these movements would have remained one-dimensional reform movements. With us, they become dynamic forces for social change.

While many lesbians continued to keep their attention primarily focused on women and women's concerns, many more women turned toward AIDS work, as shown by our numbers at this conference.

Why have so many of us become AIDS caregivers? There is a clear, delineated crisis and there is a need to help people in our community. We take care of our friends who need us. Because women, even lesbians, were raised to be caregivers, we moved toward that need. We were raised to despise ourselves and belittle our needs while holding those of men to be important. Women were raised to take care of men and to serve them. My father once told me that.

And even though we are lesbians and have made conscious choices to disown that heritage, we have nonetheless incorporated many of its basic tenets. As the "other" in the lesbian and gay and women's movements, we were left out a lot, not part of the in-crowd. Working in AIDS, coming to the service of men—working in their agenda finally—served to validate our existence. It is also easier to work on something like AIDS, because, by and large, we won't get AIDS, nor will our lovers or our lesbian neighbors. And AIDS is something the whole society

is addressing; we can actually fit in, we can be considered heroic and important and decent and be recognized for it. We can even, sometimes, work in a queer environment. We get to work where our hearts lie. The work structures are set out for us; the funding is available.

This is not to say that working on AIDS is easy or that we don't care and love the people we know with AIDS. It is to say that we make

excruciating choices without even being aware of them.

What has happened to the women's movement and community since the AIDS crisis started? While it still pulses with creativity and excitement, many institutions, organizations, services, and political agendas have been slowed or disappeared. Not just because of AIDS, but because of general disinterest, as well. Here in the Bay Area, there is no more *Plexus* (a women's newspaper), Berkeley Women's Center, San Francisco Women's Health Center, or Lillith Theater group, to name just a few.

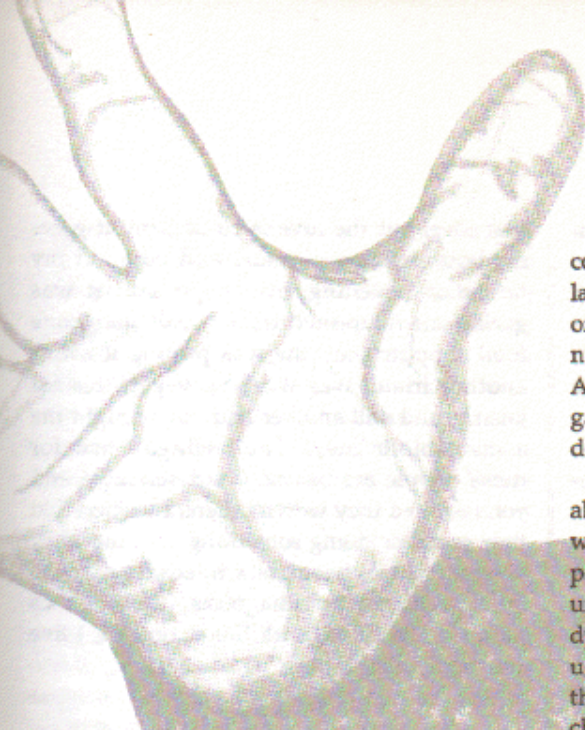
Right-wing groups like Operation Rescue are harassing women at abortion and birth control clinics and bombing those clinics. Why aren't we marching in large numbers to protest? Violence against women is proliferating at enormous rates; we're murdered, raped, and beaten every few seconds, yet few people decry violence against women. Why don't we make it clear that there is a hate campaign targeting women and that it is not new? Why aren't we screaming that sexism kills?

No one takes care of women or lesbians except women or lesbians, and we have a hard time taking care of ourselves, of finding ourselves worthy and important enough to pay attention to. Why doesn't the lesbian and gay community mobilize around the urgent needs of women and lesbians? Why don't we even consider our needs urgent?

AS A WOMAN with cancer, I have learned about how serious our needs are, about what we need and what we don't have. When I was waiting for my first biopsy results in May of 1985, I remember sitting at a Lesbian/Gay Advisory Committee meeting. Our meeting focused on AIDS and I remember thinking, screaming internally really, "what about me?" Well, I quickly found out what about me.

I felt invisible in our community. I had had a lumpectomy followed by radiation, survived, and was expected to go back to

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work—to work on AIDS—and life. There was little recognition of what a woman with cancer goes through. What I found was a community willing to address AIDS, but no more. I found that the things that were offered for people with AIDS did not exist for people with other life-threatening illnesses, that some of the problems that existed for people with AIDS existed for all people with life-threatening illnesses, and yet our community, and society in general, had been one-dimensional in its approach.

Let me explain. If you have AIDS in San Francisco, you can go to the AIDS Foundation for food and social service advocacy, get emergency funding through the AIDS Emergency Fund, and get excellent meals through Project Open Hand. Your pets are taken care of if you should land in the hospital or if you're too sick to take care of them. We have clinics and alternative centers and organizations fighting for drugs and research and our mental health.

If you have cancer, you wait endlessly for a support group, which if you are a lesbian, a woman of color, working class, or believe in alternatives, you don't fit into anyway. No organization shepherds you through the social service maze, no organization brings you luscious meals or sends support people to clean your house or hold your hand. No organization fights for your needs, no one advocates for you.

I'm not saying this just to pick on our community. We live in a society that, by and large, does not take care of its sick. In the case of AIDS, we have built a model as a community. This model does not exist outside of AIDS. This model was built by lesbians and gay men to serve people with AIDS, but it does not serve our entire community.

Cancer, like AIDS, is about living, it's about living with a life-threatening disease, in whatever stage, in whatever condition. Many people equate cancer with death. Yet, we live until we die, so cancer is not so much about dying, but about living. And although each of us experiences cancer individually, it is through collective support and action that changes take place. As an activist, I always believed that, and my own cancer experience strengthened that belief even more.

I took some of what I learned doing AIDS work and a lot of what I learned from feminist organizing and women's liberation, and with other women, created the Women's Cancer Resource Center. We desperately needed a resource, support, and advocacy center where women with cancer could be empowered to make their own choices and be supported by other women in their situation, a center controlled by women with cancer.

Organizing is needed for all diseases, what is lacking needed to be fought for and provided for. All disease and illness in this country is political, not just AIDS. For myself, I learned to make a will, a durable power of attorney, to have someone at doctor's visits, to tape-record those visits, to build support.

The Women's Cancer Resource Center has been slow to grow, partly because some of us have had cancer or have cancer and need to take care of our health. Additionally, a lot of energy is going into AIDS by the women's community, and there is little left over for cancer or other diseases and disabilities. Regardless of AIDS, women have reduced their organizing work and settled into solely working on themselves instead.

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Although we are an agency that serves all women with cancer, we are not in the closet about having lesbians on the advisory committee or serving lesbians. Consequently, we receive

little funding due to homophobia. Funding agencies think they are funding the gay community through AIDS. Women's groups controlled by women and for women get little funding by foundations, businesses, people with money, gay men, or other women. Women's agencies are not so popular, and women's issues get pushed aside.

Even with all those obstacles, the Women's Cancer Resource Center grew, but slowly. The advisory committee worked on funding and programming, we began a drop-in support group, we did forums and educationals, we started information and referral and counseling.

Then I found another lump in my breast, the same breast. When I went for further tests, it was discovered that the cancer had spread to my lungs and bones. I could not believe that I was so ill. I had been exercising, feeling great, working long hours, just like the first time. The possibility of illness never had been far from my mind, always hanging around. And now it was there. I have to tell you that I fell apart. I knew the implications; I knew women who had died of metastatic breast cancer. Yet, the reality is also one of survival—and for a good and productive life. It is now almost a year later. In my first round with cancer, I was always making decisions that had to do with my survival; this time, I agonized over every decision as my life lay fragilely before me.

With what I had learned over the past three years as a cancer activist, and what I had learned as an AIDS activist and a feminist, I made my decisions. I went through my treatments, I did my research, and live with a great deal of support from my lover Teya and my friends and acquaintances. These people I love. Sometimes I cannot express the extent of

that love, but the love is so present, it gives me both extreme pleasure and pain. At my house one evening, my acupuncturist was giving me acupuncture, a friend had gone food shopping and he was putting it away, another friend was washing vegetables for juicing, and still another had just brought me a macrobiotic meal. The feelings I had for those people are basically indescribable and yet, I wished they weren't there. I wished that they could be doing something else, that they weren't there because I needed them so much. With the first diagnosis, my life's axis permanently tilted; with this diagnosis, I live constantly on the edge.

FROM THIS VANTAGE point, there are certain things I want you to know, to take with you, to think about, to change.

The most important thing I want you to know is that lesbians do not have a support network. Disabled women have found it ironic that this conference is addressing lesbian caregivers in relation to the AIDS service community, but not the women's community. One woman told me that although about 80 percent of the disability attendants used to be lesbians, there are only a handful left. Disabled lesbians have been left high and dry, partly by the AIDS crisis, she said.

Support and caregiving in the lesbian community often becomes a matter of personality. I have a lot of support because I am a sociable person, but all of us are worthy of being cared for. There are so many women with health problems, be they cancer, environmental illness, chronic immune deficiency syndrome (Epstein Barr), multiple sclerosis—but no one recognizes that these are serious illnesses, and that they need to be taken care of. Indeed, because they are women, the community has not mobilized.

We also don't have professionals in our community to respond as experts. We need experts. Just as we were healers, experts in our fields in the middle ages, we need to lay claim to our heritage now. We have many people in nascent stages of expertise, but few

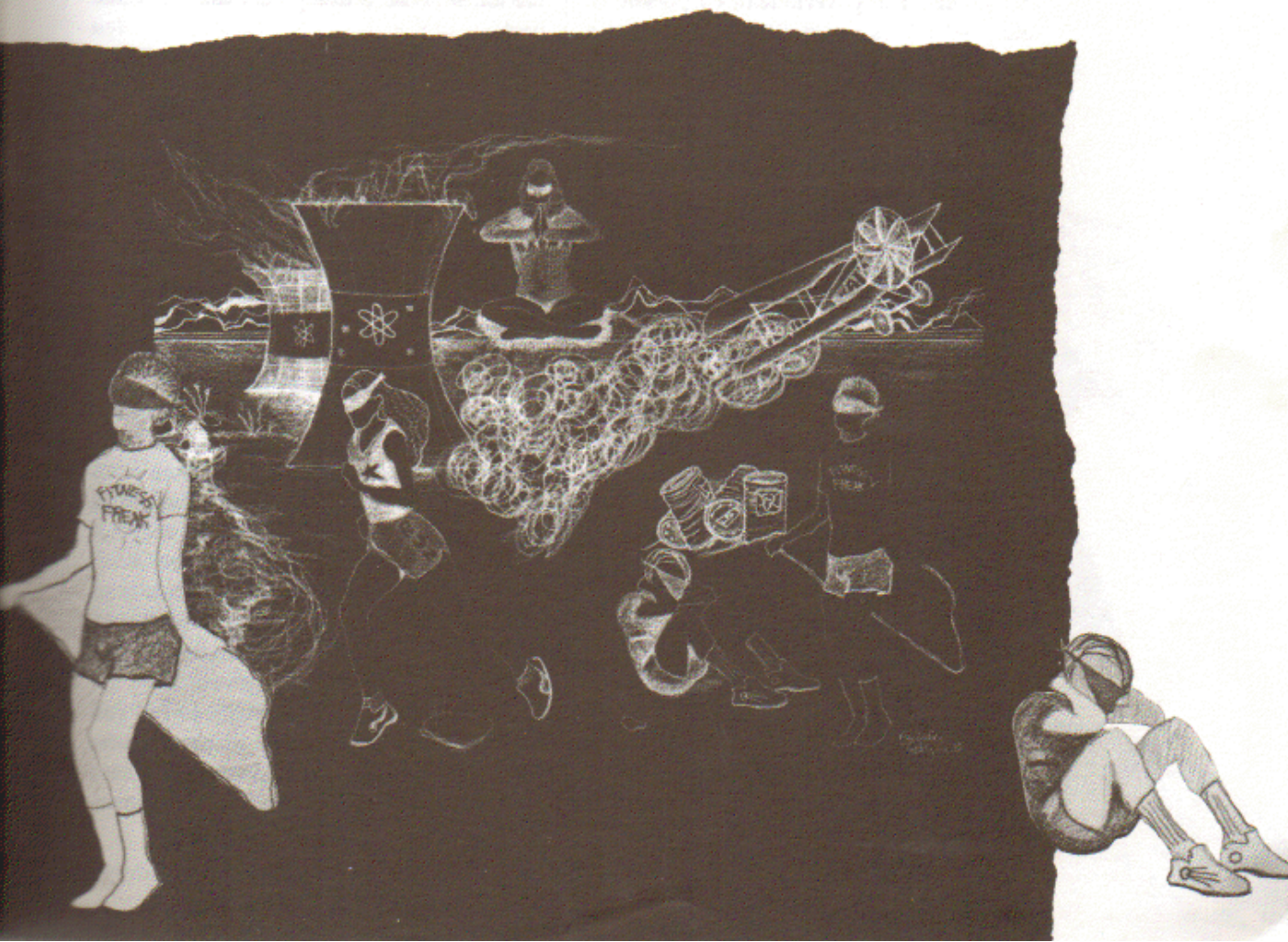


experts. When we started the women's health movement, we were taking control of our bodies, mostly in the areas of reproductive and gynecological health care. Now we need experts in cancer, lupus, arthritis, environmental illness. I mean practitioners in allopathic medicine, chinese medicine, or homeopathy. Going to a doctor, hoping for non-homophobia is not enough. As Lyssa Friedman, an oncology nurse, stated at a recent women and cancer forum, just because doctors have become aware of gay men because of AIDS, does not mean that they are less homophobic when it comes to lesbians. We need practitioners and clinics that are supportive of us as lesbians and experts in their fields.

When lesbians get sick, they also get poor. Women are on the lower rung of the financial ladder, and when they become ill, the bottom falls out much quicker because they are closer to it. They lose their health insurance and

can't get any anymore. If they are lucky enough to have a job, they have to stay in it. Many women I know work when the act of working is almost physically unbearable because they can't afford anything else. Some women would love to work but no one will hire them. Some women are on SSI but hardly making it since, cruelly, the amount is so low.

AIDS IS A NEW disease and fresh in terms of who controls information about it. Information and resources about cancer, however, historically have been controlled by the American Cancer Society. The people on the board of the American Cancer Society, as well as other cancer institutions, are people with a lot of power in this society to keep things as they are: chemical company executives, the Rockefellers, the very scientists standing to get money. Research is geared towards big



Actual prevention would mean changing society—cleaning it up—and that won't happen. When they say prevention, they mean small individual prevention at best, like quitting smoking and cutting fat consumption. They don't mean going after the tobacco industry; they don't mean stopping pollution or providing quality food. When they say prevention, they quite often are talking about early detection, like mammograms or self-breast exams. When they find a tumor in your breast in a mammogram, you already have cancer.

The other day, there was an article in the newspaper about the AIDS crisis decimating the National Cancer Institute. It seems that the money going to AIDS was taken out of the cancer budget. Not the military budget or the space budget.

Cancer is no longer in the news much because it is proliferating so rapidly throughout society. The government, corporations, and researchers not only haven't found a cure, but continue to cause it, while not offering adequate services to those who have it. We need money for both cancer and AIDS. And we need a National Cancer Institute that does relevant research—not research into a quick cure that costs a fortune, but into real prevention, into real cure. Everyone knows that pollution causes cancer, but does NCI or the American Cancer Society do anything about it?

AS A PERSON with a life-threatening illness, there are a few things I see going on in society, in which our community participates, that I find particularly obnoxious. Over the last several years, the

women's movement has become co-opted by professionalism. This also has been happening in the world around us. We have an excess of professionals—lawyers, mediators, therapists, bodyworkers, sexual assault experts. Our society has taken the individual who may have known something and rendered that person useless, so that she has to turn toward experts to tell her what to do. What they usually tell her is individualizing and internalizing. Our movement also has taken on that attitude.

Earlier in the women's movement, we took what had victimized us—rape, battery, incest—and worked toward changing society, while making ourselves stronger. Now, we only work on ourselves individually. Most of that work is therapy work. Without changing the environment which allows such victimization to take place, it is allowed to continue. In that vein, there is a new disease model which holds the individual responsible for her illness. I call it dumping. I call it psycho-babble.

With it has come a lot of new-age jargon about the fitness of self. We are a culture obsessed with what the individual can do to look good and stay healthy—we can jog, exercise, eat oat bran, stop smoking. This is not to say that people cannot affect their own health. But this form of thinking says that it is all in our power. So if we don't stay healthy, we must have done something, or worse yet, if she doesn't stay healthy, she must have done something. It doesn't change a thing; it internalizes illness and blames the victim.

It plays out the concept that we create our own reality, that we have intimate freedom of choice and total control over our own realities. Fuck the world around us, the people around us, the government and corporations, even our own biology. They don't exist. They don't affect us. There is no such thing as sexism, homophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, capitalism, pollution, biology.

I cannot begin to tell you the number of people who believe and have said that I must not have had a posi-

Romanticizing

tive attitude, or I wouldn't have gotten cancer. This is cruel. Also, don't get angry, anger is bad. I have heard that I worked too hard, that if I had just concentrated on myself I wouldn't have gotten sick. Don't do anything meaningful. This thinking comes from a society that doesn't want us to be angry, that doesn't want us to be activists. Let's not incorporate this into our psyche. Instead, let's purge it.

When I got out of the hospital the first time around, I was lying in bed with Teya and we opened *Gay Community News* to find a positive review of a book called *The Silent Wound* by Peggy Boyd. It was all about women getting breast cancer because of repressed sexuality and conflicting new roles—just like intellectuals get brain tumors. What really angered me, beyond the nonsense that this woman was putting out, was that a progressive newspaper in our community was lauding Boyd for spreading lies that fed into the notion of women's passivity and the individualization and psychological basis of disease.

Then we have Bernie Siegel and Louise Hay. These purveyors of positive thinking (although I think of them as being negative) have the audacity to say that people with life-threatening illnesses like cancer do not love enough; if they loved or were loved enough, they would be okay. Others say we choose disease. Somehow fear of love, or just fear, causes illness. And some people say having cancer, having AIDS is a gift. Having a life-threatening illness is not a gift. You wouldn't want me to give you cancer and I don't want it either. Yes, my life has changed, and yes, I have learned from the experience. But I don't have cancer because I have something to learn from it. I have cancer because the cells in my body malfunctioned.

Cancer is said to be an emotionally caused disease because the scientists don't have a cure for it and they are not sure how it is caused. If we keep it on an individual level, we need never find that cause or the cure. Before they found a cure for tuberculosis, TB was thought to be emotionally based. There was a TB personality just like there is a cancer personality, and people tried to visualize

away their illness. As Susan Sontag described in *Illness as Metaphor*, once a cure was found for TB, all that was tossed out.

The other dangerous thing we have in our community is the idea that not only do emotions cause cancer, spirituality does too. Somehow something we have done in the past is causing our troubles now; we are working out our karma, what goes around comes around. I guess that's why women are raped and black people are lynched—it's karma. Take the onus off the perpetrator. Accept the unacceptable. Forgive the unforgivable.

We also have romanticized death so that it has become a good thing. Death is not lovely, easy, or most often wanted. Romanticizing death makes it acceptable and stops us from struggling against the wrongness of people dying from a rotted planet and a society with its priorities turned around. We need to give voice to the fact that more and more young people are dying early and we need to do something about it.

Somehow, a community founded on feminist principles, a community founded to change society and its structures to those that are life affirming, has taken on the individualist ideals of capitalism. By doing this, we unthinkingly tossed out the notion that we live in a society and that we are impacted by that society and that our deeds impact on the society. Until we understand that our actions are meaningful, we will work individually and change will not occur.

I think that this has happened partly because it is easier to deal with disease, or any wrong really, on an individual basis. That way we can believe it won't happen to us and maintain the illusion that we have control in a society out



of control. And yet, we must also act for ourselves. As individuals, we can stop smoking, eat less foods with fat, buy organically grown foods, or not use chemicals in our house or garden. But that isn't enough.

We live in a world with acid rain, with a hole in the ozone layer, where food is mass produced and picked early with no nutrients, where pesticides are sprayed on the workers and the food we eat, where the animals we eat are raised in a tortured environment and fed hormones and antibiotics; we live in a world that has chemical dumps under housing tracts, schools, playgrounds; we live in a society that has nuclear reactors and nuclear dumps and nuclear waste and nuclear bombs that go off underground and over ground, where winds spread the invisible molecules over all of us. All of this is labelled pollution when, in fact, it is "invisible violence."

Our country has no national health care system; people do not receive health care and those that can afford it get poor quality care. We live in a society that turns away from the homeless. Chemical company executives sit on the boards of the largest cancer organizations and control what kind of research is done. We live in a society that wants people to stop smoking and supports the tobacco industry. Society must change and redirect itself to be life affirming; where individual welfare and health care is respected; where profits don't count more than people; where we are free of chemical and radiation hazards; where good, healthy food is available; where each person is known to be significant and worthy of life.

© Jackie Winnow, 1989.

Jackie Winnow, founder of the Women's Cancer Resource Center and Coordinator of the Lesbian/Gay and AIDS Unit of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, is a cancer activist, lesbian feminist, cat aficionada, haggler for social justice, and lover of life.

Michelle Echenique is an artist who lives and works in Berkeley, California.

Let's see ourselves as healers, as workers. We need to make connections and engage in critical thinking, to see the universality and interconnectedness of issues. We need to take the skills we have learned as feminists and apply them to our work on AIDS and to our work with women. And then take the skills we have gotten from working with AIDS and apply them to working in women's health care. Let's bring it back home.

As individuals in partnership with others, we have to be working on women's health issues. We can strongly protest a Department of Public Health for not funding women-specific health care. We can be out there in huge numbers protecting reproductive health and fighting the Operation Rescue people. We can build a lesbian-health support network, so that lesbians who need help are brought meals, taken to appointments, and so on. We can support institutions like the Women's Cancer Resource Center financially and through our skills. We can do this and more. We need to be screaming in the streets that we will not be killed by the dissolution of the earth and make the government accountable to the people.

I have wondered whether the urgency I feel comes because I have cancer, but I think that it only has brought it closer to me. I firmly believe that we are on the brink and that we must be very forceful in order to stop the destruction before there is no us. We have to stop being nice girls, and start fighting as if our lives depend on it because they do. ▼

Special acknowledgement and thanks to my lover Teya Schaffer.

To make a donation to or receive information about the Women's Cancer Resource Center, write PO Box 11235, Oakland, California 94611. Please make checks payable to the San Francisco Women's Centers, Inc. Feedback and discussion regarding this article are welcome.

Lesbian and Gay Families

non-fiction writing contest

Lesbians and gay men have created, and are evolving, relationships that expand traditional notions of families. We seek manuscripts that explore or celebrate the diversity and richness of lesbian and gay families, both families of origin and by choice. Writers of all racial and cultural backgrounds are encouraged to enter.

Prizes

Winners: Two (2) \$500 prizes and GRC memberships

Runners Up: Three (3) \$100 prizes and GRC memberships

The Judges

Allan Bérubé - Gay Historian

Judy Grahn - Poet, Playright, Cultural Historian

Barbara Smith - Writer & Publisher

Entry Blank

1989 Lesbian & Gay Families Non-Fiction Contest

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

STORY TITLE _____

Manuscripts must be typed and double spaced on one side of 8 1/2" x 11" paper and no longer than 4,000 words (16 pages).

\$5 reading fee per entry (checks & money orders only). Waivable in case of hardship.

Deadline is 5 pm, August 11. Drop or mail entries to Out/look, PO Box 460430, San Francisco, CA 94146

OUT/LOOK
AND THE
GAY RIGHTS
CHAPTER OF
THE A.G.L.U.
OF
NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA
PRESENT THE
1989

Manuscripts must be in English; typed and double-spaced on one side of 8 1/2" x 11" paper; unpublished, and not accepted or under consideration for publication elsewhere; the original work of the contestant; and no more than 4,000 words.

Each contestant may enter no more than 2 manuscripts.

Contestants must submit **four** copies of each entry. One copy must have a completed entry form attached to the back and the contestant's name & the page number on each page. The three additional copies must be submitted **without any identification.**

No entries will be returned - do not send originals.

OUT/LOOK staff, editorial board members & Gay Rights Chapter board members are not eligible.

Entries will be screened by representatives of OUT/LOOK and the Gay Rights Chapter. Finalists will be passed on to the judges.

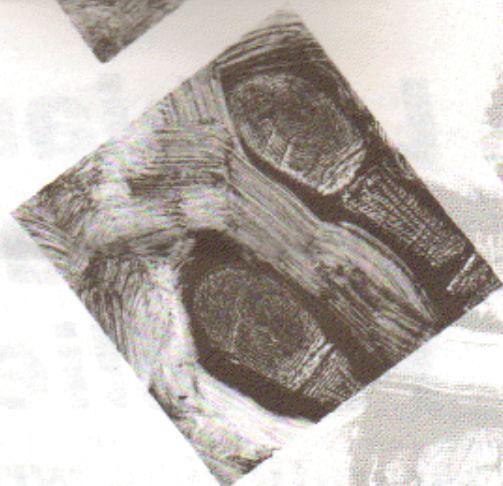
OUT/LOOK reserves the right to copy edit the winners before publication in the Winter issue. Winners will be notified before publication.

Before receiving a prize, the winners will be required to sign a statement that their entry is the original work of the author, that it has not been published in any form, and that it does not invade the rights of any third party.

Entries must be received by 5 pm, August 11, 1989.

These four poems are selections from Poets For Life: 76 Poets Respond to AIDS, forthcoming from Crown Books. This cultural document and eloquent cry from the heart is edited by Michael Klein and represents the best work about AIDS by poets gay and straight, male and female, black and white.

About the artist: E.G. Crichton makes pictures and works for OUT/LOOK.



Sore throat. Long flu.
Hard nodes. Beware.

Test blood. Count cells.
Reds thin. Whites low.

Dress warm. Eat well.
Short breath. Fatigue.

Night sweats. Dry cough.
Loose stools. Weight loss.

Get mad. Fight back.
Call home. Rest well.

Don't cry. Take charge.
No sex. Eat right.

Call home. Talk slow.
Chin up. No air.

Arms wide. Nodes hard.
Cough dry. Hold on.

Mouth wide. Drink this.
Breathe in. Breathe out.

No air. Breathe in.
Breathe in. No air.

Black out. White rooms.
Head hot. Feet cold.

No work. Eat right.
CAT scan. Chin up.

Work out. Ten laps.
Chin ups. Look good.

Steam room. Dress warm.
Call home. Fresh air.

Eat right. Rest well.
Sweetheart. Safe sex.

HEARTBEATS
Melvin Dixon

Part of a longer poem called "The Massacre,"
"The Masseuse" originally appeared in *The American Voice*.
Reprinted by permission of the author.

THE MASSEUSE

Olga Broumas

The friends of the dead lie on my table.
I do what I can
with their breath and my hands.
Witless, the birds are singing.
The crocus-garland month lengthens our light.
I want it
always to be light. I fight the night
and win. I peel my eye
against the black and white
TV until it dawns then sleep.
The Palestinian and Boston
homeless split the screen.
Number of children living on Brazilian streets.
What is forty million? Jeopardy's prey fill the camera
their stripped and stunning faces
emblazoned in the halogen
a kind of sustained lightning
and the peasant heart
who counts the seconds between flash

and fall of thunder shrinks
from the looming toll.
Horror is toxic.
The lesions
on our organs keep the score.
The gentle and the hard are being taken
in legions and the globe
might shake us off its flank like quarry dust
and start again with something less
free, less
wrecked by greed but it suffers us
on its blue cetacean patience
like festered barnacles.
Like counted sheep midair over a stream
the friends of the dead pause on my table.
The shopphar is ringing like starlight
too young to have reached us.
I do what I can
with their breath and my hands.

Olga Broumas' first book, *Beginning with O*, was
selected by Stanley Kunitz for the Yale Younger Poets
Award in 1977. Her latest book of poems is *The Little
Mariner* from Copper Canyon Press. A recipient of
Guggenheim and NEA Fellowships, she resides in
Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Breathe in. Breathe out.
No air. No air.

Thin blood. Sore lungs.
Mouth dry. Mind gone.

Six months? Three weeks?
Can't eat. No air.

Today? Tonight?
It waits. For me.

Sweet heart. Don't stop.
Breathe in. Breathe out.

Melvin Dixon is the author of *Change of Territory* (Callaloo
Poetry Series, University Press of Virginia, 1983). His most
recent fiction appears in *Men on Men 2: An Anthology of Gay
Fiction*, edited by George Stambolian (New American Library,
1988). The recipient of fellowships in creative writing from NEA
(1984) and the New York Foundation for the Arts (1988), he
currently lives in Manhattan.

AT LAST

Eileen Myles

Eileen Myles served as Artistic Director at St. Marks Poetry Project from 1984-1986. Her books include The Irony of the Leash, A Fresh Young Voice from the Plains, Sappho's Boat and forthcoming: The Real Drive.

I always fall in love with tired women. It seems I have the time. On the blackboard at the Gay Community Center it said: Ladies, we need your blood. Afterwards come to the Women's Coffee House and have a cup of coffee. Donation \$1.00. He won't be complaining about his big toe that hurts. The man who died last night. The Death Squad has taken him away. I thought of all the clothes that guy must've had. Now no one can stand to wear them. I use Central America & Southeast Asia to ease

my mind. Pauline Kael says that's squalid. We live in a culture of vanishing men. What is the difference. Vincent's big joke is his five-year membership to a video club. They got him on the phone at the hospital. He didn't know how to say one year would probably do just fine. It's still hard to pass up a bargain. Another thin man does a night club act—he does show tunes to the horror of his visiting friends. He'll take it on the road once he gets better. At last he knows what he wants to do! Jimmy Wayne's family says Well, that's what you get. But I get something different. What I do at my desk is always different from what I do on my bed. I was watching the difference last week. This week I'm different again. Is it because of windows that I think the day's square and life is shaped like a train. The big

buds outside my window make me think I'm outside of life because I can watch her change and she can't see me. You'd think I'd be grateful for my vision. It is complex. A dance of images gates and branches across buildings statues windows firescapes and creeping cats. Honey, life is a blast and I am part of it but you're separate from me. It's how you want it. The radio starts up and I nearly lose my style. I opened my heart to you and now I feel like an open wound. I put my arms around you I thought you felt great. I called it heaven one day

disturbing once the train moved

now nothing's the same.

THE ENTICING LANE

Christopher Hewitt

Christopher Hewitt has an MFA in poetry from the University of Iowa and teaches English at Fordham University and John Jay College in Manhattan. His translations of Romanian poet Nina Cassian have appeared in The New Yorker and his chapbook of poems, The Infinite Et Cetera was published in 1981 by Green River Press.

If I should be told,
suddenly and quite unceremoniously,
that I too had

The Disease and would be taken
from all this,

I would think over the years,
I had complained too much—
the phone's ringing constantly
(lucky I was to have

so many friends),
the hours of my job
(fortunate I was to have
a job I liked),
the lover leaving
(ah, but he was here,
wasn't he, and in my arms
for so long?)

I should have lived in
the moment, kept a secret
corner for myself to breathe in,
allowed my life to blossom
at last—each leaf uncurling

wet with secrecy to dry
in the spring air.

I should have taken more risks—
old stick-in-the-mud that I am—
a balloon trip over the estuary;
speaking up on behalf of the
deaf-mute man at the bank who
was so rudely abused by the teller;
that antique bowl with red
peonies on it that I could
have bought in a shop in England.
But I let myself be dissuaded
by the sensible people.

I should have sought more balance—
silence/laughter,

cool shadow/hot rain,
nights drunk on someone/nights
alone with the dark's quiet watching.

I should have followed intuition
to the Nth degree and trusted it,
kept to that singular path, the enticing
lane with plush hedges, ripe fruit
and wafting scents, that is always there
in the heart's eye and I could have
walked it, always prepared,
even into Death's Unknown and
still have been content, peaceful
as a child dawningdreaming by open windows
before the others are up and everyone,
even the child, is wrenched into the world's
bombardment, the maelstrom of appointments
which constitutes a life.

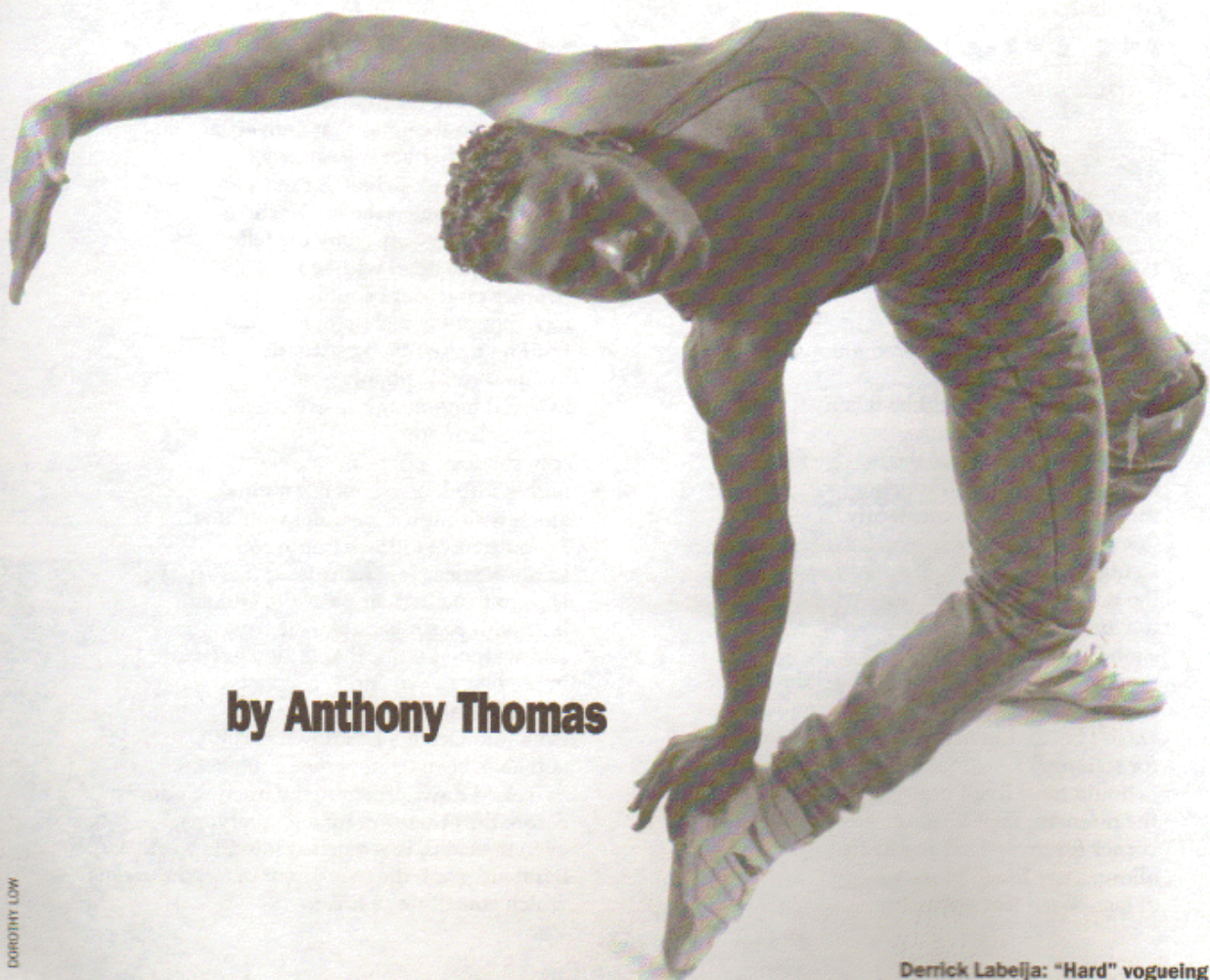
The House The Kids Built

**The Gay Black Imprint
on American Dance Music**

by Anthony Thomas

DOROTHY LOW

Derrick Labelja: "Hard" voguing



AMERICA'S CRITICAL establishment has yet to acknowledge the contributions made by gay Afro-Americans. Yet black (and often white) society continues to adopt cultural and social patterns from the gay black subculture. In terms of language, turns of phrase that were once used exclusively by gay Afro-Americans have crept into the vocabulary of the larger black society: singer Gladys Knight preaches about unrequited love to her "girlfriend" in the hit "Love Overboard"; and college rivals toss around "Miss Thing" in Spike Lee's film "School Daze."

What's also continued to emerge from the underground is the dance music of gay black America. More energetic and polyrhythmic than the sensibility of straight African-Americans, and simply more African than the sensibility of white gays, the musical sensibility of today's "house" music—like that of disco and club music before it—has spread beyond the gay black subculture to influence broader musical tastes.

What exactly is house music? At a recording session for DJ International, a leading label of house music, British journalist Sheryl Garratt posed that question to the assembled artists. A veritable barrage of answers followed:

I couldn't begin to tell you what house is. You have to go to the clubs and see how people react when they hear it. It's more like a feeling that runs through, like old time religion in the way that people jus' get happy and screamin'....It's happening!....It's Chicago's own sound....It's rock till you drop.... You might go and seek religion afterwards! It's gonna be hot, it's gonna be sweaty, and it's gonna be great. It's honest-to-goodness, get down, low down gutsy, grabbin' type music.¹

Like the blues and gospel, house is very Chicago. Like rap out of New York and go-go

out of DC, house is evidence of the regionalization of black American music. Like its predecessors, disco and club, house is a scene as well as a music, black as well as gay.

But as house music goes pop, so slams the closet door that keeps the facts about its roots from public view. House, disco, and club are not the only black music that gays have been involved in producing, nor is everyone involved in this music gay. Still, the sound, the beat, and the rhythm *have* risen up from the dancing sensibilities of urban gay Afro-Americans.

The music, in turn, has provided one of the underpinnings of the gay black subculture. Dance clubs are the only popular institutions of the gay black community that are separate and distinct from the institutions of the straight black majority. Unlike their white counterparts, gay black Americans, for the most part, have not redefined themselves—politically or culturally—apart from their majority community. Although political and cultural organizations of gay Afro-Americans have formed in recent years, membership in these groups remains very small and represents only a tiny minority of the gay black population. Lesbian and gay Afro-Americans still attend black churches, join black fraternities and sororities, and belong to the NAACP.

Gay black dance clubs, like New York's Paradise Garage and Chicago's Warehouse (the birthplace of house music), have staked out a social space where gay black men don't have to deal with the racist door policies at predominantly white gay clubs nor the homophobia of black straight clubs. Over the last 20 years the soundtrack to this dancing revolution has been provided by disco, club, and now—house music.



Playback: the Roots of House

Although disco is most often associated with gay white men, the roots of the music actually go back to the small underground gay black clubs of New York City. During the late sixties and early seventies, these clubs offered inexpensive all-night entertainment where DJs, in order to accommodate the dancing urgencies of their gay black clientele, overlapped soul and Philly (Philadelphia International) records, phasing them in and out, to form uninterrupted soundtracks for non-stop dancing. The Temptations' 1969 hit "I Can't Get Next To You" and the O'Jays' "Back Stabbers" are classic examples of the genre of songs that were manipulated by gay black DJs. The songs' up-tempo, polyrhythmic, Latin percussion-backed grooves were well-suited for the high energy, emotional and physical dancing sensibility of the urban gay black audience.

In African and African-American music, new styles are almost always built from simple modifications of existing and respected musical styles and forms. By mixing together the best dance elements of soul and Philly

records, DJs in gay black clubs had taken the first steps in the creative process that music critic Iain Chambers interprets as a marker of disco's continuity with the rhythm and blues tradition:

[In disco] the musical pulse is freed from the claustrophobic interiors of the blues and the tight scaffolding of R&B and early soul music. A looser, explicitly polyrhythmic attack pushes the blues, gospel and soul heritage into an apparently endless cycle where there is no beginning or end, just an ever-present 'now.' Disco music does not come to a halt...restricted to a three-minute single, the music would be rendered senseless. The power of disco...lay in saturating dancers and the dance floor in the continual explosion of its presence.²

Although the disco pulse was born in the small gay black clubs of New York, disco music only began to gain commercial attention when it was exposed to the dance floor public of the large, predominantly white gay discos. *Billboard* only introduced the term "disco-hit" in 1973, years after disco was a staple among gay Afro-Americans, but—as music historian Tony Cummings has noted—only one year after black and white gay men began to intermingle on the dance floor.

By the mid-seventies disco music production was in high gear and many soul performers (such as Johnny Taylor with his 1976 hit "Disco Lady") had switched camps to take advantage of disco's larger market. Records were now being recorded to accomplish what DJs in gay black clubs had done earlier. Gloria Gaynor scored a breakthrough in disco technique with her 1974 album, *Never Can Say Goodbye*. The album treated the three songs on side one ("Honey Bee," "Never Can Say Goodbye," and "Reach Out, I'll Be There") as one long suite delivered without interrupting the dance beat—a ploy that would become a standard disco format and the basis of house music's energy level.

**Voices from patrons
of a black gay bar:
haiku by Alan Miller.**

in this ritual,
this awkward mating dance, joy
comes suddenly, soon

how many nights each week
do I stare at mirrors,
too early, too late?

a thousand matches
strike at once—enough to light
a trojan empire

DAVID BROMSTEIN

As the decade progressed, disco music spread far beyond its gay black origins and went on to affect the sound of pop. In its journey from this underground scene, however, disco was white-washed. The massive success of the 1978 film *Saturday Night Fever* convinced mainstream America that disco was a new fad, the likes and sound of which had never been seen before. White gay men latched onto the "Hi NRG" Eurodisco beat of Donna Summer's post-"Love to Love You" recordings and the camp stylings of Bette Midler.

Indeed, the dance floor proved to be an accurate barometer of the racial differences in the musical tastes of white and black gays and the variation in dancing sensibilities between gay and straight Afro-Americans. Quick to recognize and exploit the profit-making potential of this phenomenon, independent producers began to put out more and more records reflecting a gay black sound.

Starting in 1977, there was an upsurge in the production of disco-like records with a soul, rhythm and blues, and gospel feel: club music was born. The most significant difference between disco and club was rhythm. Club rhythms were more complex and more Africanized. With club music, the gay black subculture reappropriated the *disco impulse*, as demonstrated by the evolution in disco superstar Sylvester's music.

In 1978 Sylvester had a big hit with "Disco Heat"; in 1980 he released another smash, "Fever." "Disco Heat" was a classic example of the type of disco popular among gay Afro-Americans. At 136 beats per minute it combined the high energy aspect of white gay disco with the orchestral flourishes of contemporary soul. The song also contained the metronomic bass drum that characterized all disco. It was only the gospel and soul-influenced vocals of Sylvester and his back-up singers, Two Tons o' Fun, that distinguished the music from whiter genres of disco.

under the table
where everyone can see, we touch:
hand to burning hand

I'm gonna throw my legs
up in the air and let them fall
where they may

after leading questions
I review the shortest list:
what I won't do for love

"Fever," on the other hand, more clearly reflects a black/African sensibility. To begin with, the song starts with the rhythmic beating of cowbells. Sylvester also slowed the beat down to a funkier 116 beats per minute and added polyrhythmic conga and bongo drumming. The drumming is constant throughout the song and is as dominant as any other sound in it. Just as significant, in terms of Africanizing the music, was the removal of the metronomic bass drum that served to beat time in disco. In African music there is no single main beat; the beat emerges from the relationship of cross-rhythms and is provided by the listener or dancer, not the musician. By removing the explicit time-keeping bass of disco, Sylvester had re-introduced the African concept of the "hidden rhythm."

While most black pop emphasizes vocals and instrumental sounds, club music tends to place more emphasis on a wide array of percussive sounds (many of which are electronically produced) to create complex patterns of cross-rhythms. In the best of club music, these patterns change very slowly; some remain stable throughout the song. It is this characteristic of club music, above all, that makes it an African-American dance music *par excellence*.

Like disco, club also moved beyond the gay black underground scene. Gay clubs helped spread the music to a "straight" black

DAVID BROMSTEIN

the gossip about his absence
is, he stayed home—
with company—AIDS

dancing together,
we are partners in this
perfect mimicry

DAVID BROMSTEIN

audience on ostensibly "straight" Friday nights. And some club artists, like Grace Jones, Colonel Abrams, and Gwen Guthrie, achieved limited success in the black pop market.

For most of its history, though, club music largely has been ignored by black-oriented radio stations. Those in New York, for instance, were slow to start playing club music with any regularity; finally WBLS and WRKS began airing dance mixes at various intervals during the day. In the early eighties, the two black-oriented FM radio outlets in Chicago, WBMX and WGCI, began a similar programming format that helped give rise to the most recent variation of gay black music: house.

Pumping Up the Volume

The house scene began, and derived its name from, Chicago's now defunct dance club, The Warehouse. At the time of its debut in 1977, the club was the only after-hours dance venue in the city, opening at midnight Saturday and closing after the last dancers left on Sunday afternoon. On a typical Saturday night, two to five thousand patrons passed through its doors.

The Warehouse was a small three-story building—literally an abandoned warehouse with a seating area upstairs, free juice, water,

and munchies in the basement, and a dimly lit, steamy dance floor in between. You only could reach the dance floor through a trap door from the level above, adding to the underground feeling of the club.

A mixed crowd (predominantly gay—male and female) in various stages of undress (with athletic wear and bare flesh predominating) was packed into the dance space, wall to wall. Many actually danced hanging from water pipes that extended on a diagonal from the walls to the ceiling. The heat generated by the dancers would rise to greet you

as you descended, confirming your initial impression that you were going down into something very funky and "low."

What set the Warehouse apart from comparable clubs in other cities was its economically democratic admission policy. Its bargain admission price of four dollars made it possible for almost anyone to attend. The Paradise Garage in New York, on the other hand, was a private club that charged a yearly membership fee of seventy-five dollars, plus a door price of eight dollars. The economic barriers in New York clubs resulted in a less "low" crowd and atmosphere, and the scene there was more about who you saw and what you looked like than in Chicago.

For the Warehouse's opening night in 1977, its owners lured one of New York's hottest DJs, Frankie Knuckles, to spin for the "kids" (as gay Afro-Americans refer to each other). Knuckles found out that these Chicagoans would bring the roof down if the number of beats per minute weren't sky high:

That fast beat [had] been missing for a long time. All the records out of New York the last three years [had] been mid- or down-tempo, and the kids here [in Chicago] won't do that all night long, they need more energy.³

Responding to the needs of their audience, the DJs in Chicago's gay black clubs, led by Knuckles, supplied that energy in two ways: by playing club tunes and old Philly

songs (like MFSL's "Love is the Message") with a faster, boosted rhythm track, and by mixing in the best of up-tempo avant-garde electronic dance music from Europe. Both ploys were well-received by the kids in Chicago; the same was not true of the kids in New York.

As Knuckles points out, many of the popular songs in Chicago were big in New York City, "but one of the biggest cult hits, 'Los Ninos' by Liasons Dangereuses, only got played in the punk clubs there." *Dance Music Report* noted that for most of the 1980s, Chicago has been the most receptive American market for avant-garde dance music. The Windy City's gay black clubs have a penchant for futuristic music and its black radio stations were the first in the US to give airplay to Kraftwerk's "Trans Europe Express" and Frankie Goes To Hollywood's "Two Tribes."

The Art of Noise, Depeche Mode, David Byrne and the Talking Heads, and Brian Eno were all popular in Chicago's gay black circles.

What's also popular in Chicago is the art of mixing. In an interview with Sheryl Garratt, Farley Keith Williams (aka "Farley Jackmaster Funk"), one of house music's best known DJ/producers, says:

Chicago is a DJ city....If there's a hot record out, in Chicago they'll all buy two copies so they can mix it. We have a talent for mixing. When we first started on the radio there weren't many [DJs], but then every kid wanted two turntables and a mixer for Christmas....And if a DJ can't mix, they'll boo him in a minute because half of them probably known [sic] how to do it themselves.

What was fresh about house music in its early days was that folks did it themselves; it was "homemade." Chicago DJs began record-

LET'S PLAY HOUSE

If you want your walls to shake and your windows to sweat, toss these discs on the turntable at your next "family" gathering:

MOVE YOUR BODY

Marshall Jefferson (TRAX)
Disco camp meets sanctified church call-and-response in the unanimously declared "house music anthem."

JACK YOUR BODY

Steve "Silk" Hurley (Underground Records)
Hurley's smooth keyboards pushes this classic cut ahead of the pack. But why do I think (fear, maybe?) that as house music hits the mainstream, this song will rotate into exercise class soundtracks with Jane Fonda having us reach to "jack" instead of "for the burn"?

CAN YOU FEEL IT

Mr. Fingers (TRAX)
On this instrumental track, hear what's radical about the house sound and production process: homemade computer-generated percussion and bass lines with spare keyboard solos that chart out rhythm rather than tone.

YOU USED TO HOLD ME

Ralph Rosario with Xaviera Gold (Hot Mix 5)
Miss Xaviera Gold stops mixmas-

ter Rosario's show with a diva rap that gives the best snap queen a run for his money. Miss Thing double and triple dubs attitude for days; Tina Turner could never toss out camp like this. You know what I'm talking 'bout, girlfriend?

DO IT PROPERLY

Two Puerto Ricans, a Blackman, and a Dominican (New York Groove)

Heads raise, drinks spill, cigarettes smoulder, and conversations halt when this thrilling song rises in the mix. Rhythms tumble on top of each other in careful precision, keyboards race into some terrific jams, and diva Tonya Wynne swoons a sweet nothing in your ear: "do it properly."

YOU DON'T KNOW

Serious Intention (Easy Street)
The "Oh-Oh-Oh" mix jams fiercely: the bass line, borrowed from Chic's "Good Times," chases the vocals as they scat and slink around/under/ on the side of the beat. A Hammond-sounding organ fades in and out of the mix like a tide washing up on everything calling and responding. Oh-Oh-Oh-Oh.

MUSIC IS THE ANSWER

Colonel Abrams (PRT)
The Colonel drills this salsa-paced message tune to the wall. When mixed with Willie Colon's "Set Fire to Me" and Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," reports from DC's Clubhouse is that the jam "pees."

MUSIC IS THE KEY

J. M. Silk (DJ International)
Another classic, up-tempo "message" song about dance floor unity—finding political refuge in the club, opening doors (closets?) to liberation in the jacking zone.

SEVENTH HEAVEN

Larry Levan with Gwen Guthrie (Garage Records)
On a cut like this, Larry Levan, star DJ at the defunct Paradise Garage, mixes to seduce. Fading in and out, dubbing and overdubbing, echoing then silencing the rhythm and vocal tracks, you can feel Robbie Shakespeare's drums rise in your gut, Sly Dunbar's bass hug your waist, and Gwen Guthrie's honeyed soprano pour into your ear slowly. For a song like this, we all ought to have nine lives and two more heavens to rest.

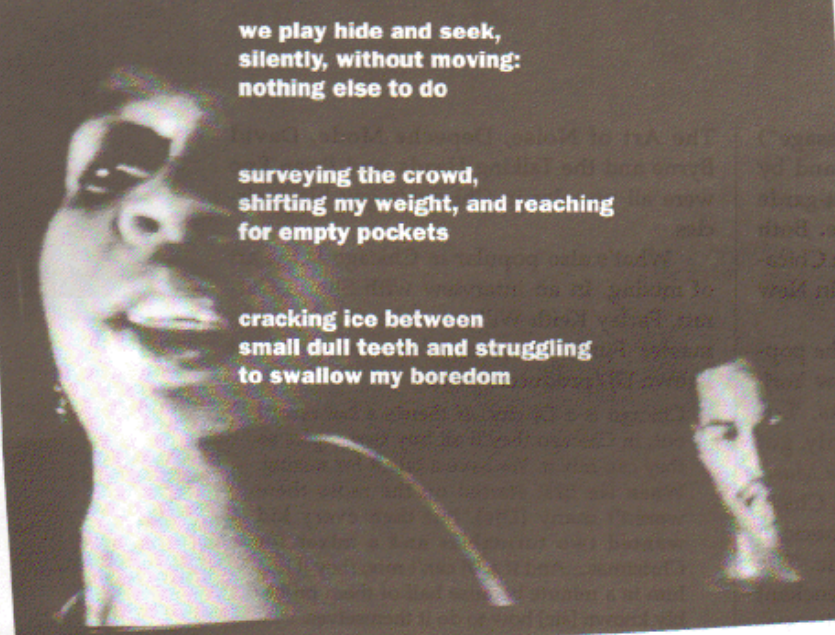
BIG FUN

Inner Life (Virgin)
This "techno-house" hit is rolling out of Detroit backed by punchier, closer-cropped keyboards and a richer percussion line than classic Chicago house. Virgin Records snapped up this bouncy beat; as it's less raw and decidedly less sexual than Chicago house, this'll be the type of cut that crosses out of the East Coast club scene and over to the mainstream.

BACK TO THE BEAT

Reese and Santorio (ffrr)
"Acid house" could dissolve the Queen Mother's jewels, with its corrosive synth lines and after trace fizzles, cracks and pops. "Back to the Beat" cooks up a bubbling brew of rhythms, spilling over a primordial chant that sounds an awful lot like b-boys wooing their approval of the mix—which at the song's end, titrates out the elements of house: Philly soul, scratch/rap, Eurodisco, and James Brown funk.

—Jackie Goldsby



we play hide and seek,
silently, without moving:
nothing else to do

surveying the crowd,
shifting my weight, and reaching
for empty pockets

cracking ice between
small dull teeth and struggling
to swallow my boredom

DAVID BROMSTEIN

ing rhythm tracks, using inexpensive synthesizers and drum machines. Very soon, a booming trade developed in records consisting solely of a bassline and drum patterns. As music critic Carol Cooper notes, "basement and home studios sprang up all over Chicago."

DJs were now able to create and record music and then expose it to a dance floor public all their own, completely circumventing the usual process of music production and distribution. These homespun DJs-cum-artists/producers synthesized the best of the avant-garde electronic dance music (Trilogy's "Not Love," Capricorn's "I Need Love," and Telex's "Brain Washed") with the best loved elements of classic African-American dance cuts, and wove it all through the cross-rhythms of the percussion tracks, creating something unique to the character of gay black Chicago.

There are so many variants of house that it is difficult to describe the music in general terms. Still, there are two common traits that hold for all of house: the music is always a brisk 120 bpm or faster; and percussion is everything. Drums and percussion are brought to the fore and instrumental elements are electronically reproduced. In western music, rhythm is secondary in emphasis and complexity to harmony and melody. In house

music, as in African music, this sensibility is reversed.

Chip E., producer of the stuttering, stripped-down dance tracks "Like This" and "Godfather of House" characterizes house's beat as:

...a lot of bottom, real heavy kick drum, snappy snare, bright hi-hat and a real driving bassline to keep the groove. Not a lot of lyrics—just a sample of some sort, a melody [just] to remind you of the name of the record.⁴

That's all you can remember—the song's title—if you're working the groove of house music, because house is pure dance music. Don't dismiss the

simple chord changes, the echoing percussion lines, and the minimalist melody: in African music the repetition of well-chosen rhythms is crucial to the dynamism of the music. In the classic *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, John Chernoff remarks that "repetition continually re-affirms the power of the music by locking that rhythm, and the people listening or dancing to it, into a dynamic and open structure." It is precisely the recycling of well-chosen rhythmic patterns in house that gives the music a hypnotic and powerfully kinetic thrusting, permitting dancers to extract the full tension from the music's beat.

Chernoff argues that the power and dynamic potential of African music is in the gaps between the notes, and that it is there that a creative participant will place his contribution. By focusing on the gaps rather than the beats, the dancers at the Warehouse found much more freedom in terms of dancing possibilities, a freedom that permitted total improvisation.

The result was a style of dancing dubbed "jacking," that more closely resembled the spasmodic up and down movements of people possessed than it did the more choreographed and fluid "voguing" movements of the dancers at other clubs like New York's Paradise Garage [see *All About Yves*, page 34]. Dancers at The Warehouse tended to move

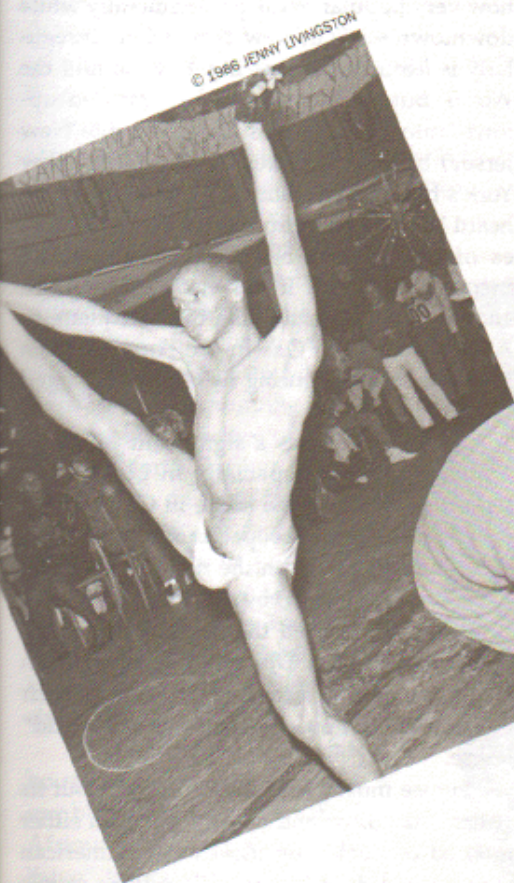
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at closing time
the bartender grunts, "last one
out gets to sleep with me"

exiting the john
I check the mirror
for the face of naked lust

outside I am asked
if I need something. wonder
how it is he know?

DAVID BROMSTEIN

faster, quirkier, more individualistically, and deliberately off-beat. It's not that the kids had difficulty getting the beat; they simply had decided to move beyond it—around, above, and below it. Dancing on the beat was considered too normal. To dance at the Warehouse was to participate in a type of mass possession: hundreds of young black kids packed into the heat and darkness of an abandoned warehouse in the heart of Chicago during the twilight hours of Sunday morning, jacking as if there would be no tomorrow. It was a dancing orgy of unrivaled intensity, as Frankie Knuckles recalls:

It was absolutely the only club in the city to go to...it wasn't a polished atmosphere—the lighting was real simplistic, but the sound system was intense and it was about what you heard as opposed to what you saw. ⁵

No Way Back: House Crosses Over

Like disco and club, house music is rapidly moving beyond the gay black underground scene, thanks in part to a boost from radio play. As early as 1980, Chicago's black-oriented radio stations WBMX and WGCI rotated house music into their programming by airing dance mixes. WBMX signed on a group of street DJs, the "Hot Mix 5," whose ranks included two of the most prolific and important house producers/artists—Ralph Rosario and Farley Jackmaster Funk. When the Hot

Mix crew took to the air on Saturday nights, their five hour show drew an estimated audience of 250,000 to 1,000,000 Chicagoans.

Now in Chicago, five-year-olds are listening to house and jacking. Rocky Jones, president of the DJ International recording label, points out that "[In Chicago, house] appeals to kids, teenagers, blacks, whites, hispanics, straights, gays. When McDonald's HQ throws a party for its employees, they hire house DJs."

Outside of Chicago, house sells mainly in New York, Detroit, DC, and other large urban/black markets in the Northeast and Midwest. As in Chicago, the music has moved beyond the gay black market and is now very popular in the predominantly white downtown scene in New York, where it regularly is featured in clubs like Boy Bar and the World. But the sound also has traveled uptown, into the boroughs (and even into New Jersey) by way of increased airplay on New York's black radio stations; house can now be heard blasting forth from the boom boxes of b-boys and b-girls throughout the metropolitan area. It has also spread south and west to gay clubs like the Marquette in Atlanta and Catch One in Los Angeles. Even Detroit is manufacturing its own line, tagged "techno-house."

House music has a significant public in England as well, especially in London. In reporting on the house scene in Chicago, the British music press scooped most of its American counterparts (with the notable exception of *Dance Music Report*) by more than a year. So enthusiastic has been the British response to house that English DJs and musicians (both black and white) are now producing their own variety of house music, known as "acid" house.

House music, however, is not without its critics. Like disco and club, it has been either ignored or libeled by most in the American music press. In a recent *Village Voice* article

hailing the popularity of rap music, Nelson George perfunctorily dismisses the music as "retro-disco." Other detractors of house have labelled the music "repetitive" and "unoriginal."⁶

Because of its complex rhythmic framework, though, house should not be judged by western music standards but by criteria similar to those used to judge African music. House is retro-disco in the same way and to the same extent that rap is "retro-funk."

The criticism that this music is unoriginal stems from the fact that many house records are actually house versions of rhythms found in old soul and Philly songs. Anyone familiar with African-American musical idioms is aware that the remaking of songs is a time-honored tradition. As John Chernoff has documented, truly original style in African and African-American music often consists in subtle modifications of perfected and strictly respected forms. Thus, Africans remain "curiously" indifferent to what is an important concern of western culture: the issue of artistic origins.

Each time a DJ plays at a club, it is a different music-making situation. The kids in the club are basically familiar with the music and follow the DJ's mixing with informed interest. So, when a master DJ flawlessly mixes bits and pieces of classic soul, Philly, disco, and club tunes with the best of more recent house fare to form an evenly pumping groove, or layers the speeches of political heroes (Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, or Jesse Jackson) or funky Americana (a telephone operator's voice or jingles from old television programs) over well-known rhythm tracks, the variations stand out clearly to the kids and can make a night at the club a special affair.

To be properly appreciated, house must be experienced in a gay black club. As is true of other African music, it is a mistake "to listen" to house because it is not

set apart from its social and cultural context. "You have to go to the clubs and see how people react when they hear it...people jus' get happy and screamin'." When house really jacks, it is about the most intense dance music around. Wallflowers beware: you have to move to understand the power of house. ▼

Anthony Thomas is a soon-to-be attorney from the Chicago area who, in addition to being an amateur pop sociologist, has dabbled as a DJ.

About the artists:

David Bromstein's photo stills are from "House Tapes," a work-in-progress. He is a New York City film/video-maker.

Jenny Livingston is a New York City filmmaker whose feature-length documentary-in-progress "Paris is Burning" was recently excerpted in the Berlin Film Festival.

Alan Miller's poems are excerpted from his chapbook, At the Club, available for \$7.50 from PO Box 20624, Oakland, California, 94620.

Dorothy Low, a New York City photographer and video-maker, most recently co-directed and produced a video entitled "Vogueing: the Message." It was screened at El Museo del Barrio in December. For information about her video, write to Dorothy Low, c/o J. West, 231 West 29th Street, Suite 205, NY, NY 10001 or call (718) 729-7680.

¹ Sheryl Garrat, "Let's House," *The Face* (September 1986), pp 18-23.

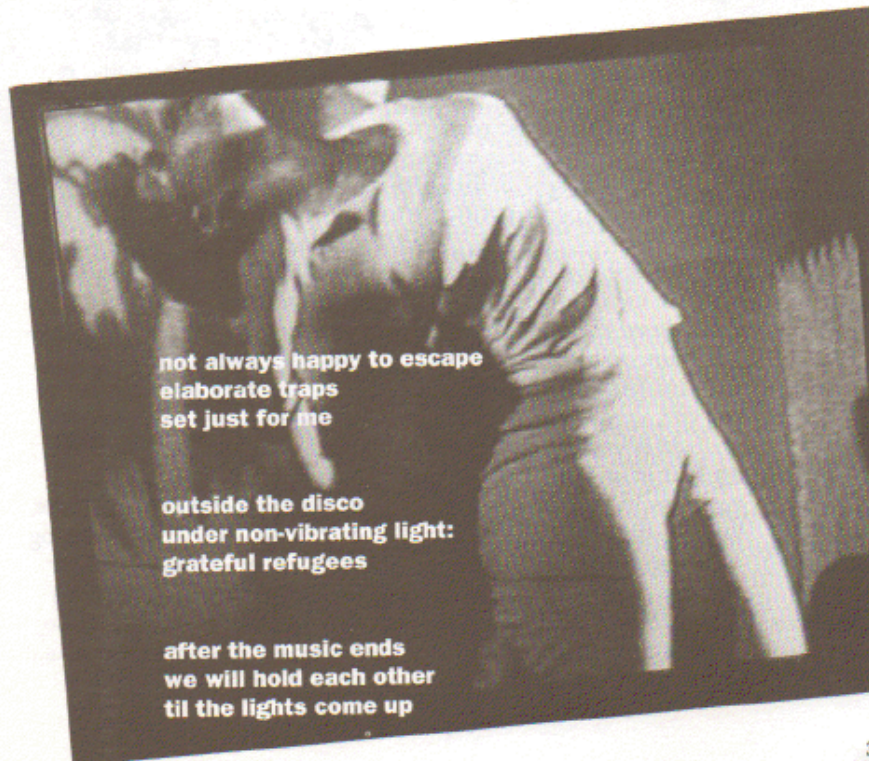
² Iain Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), pp 187-188.

³ Simon Wiffer, "House Music," *i-d* (September 1986).

⁴ Garrat, page 23.

⁵ Wiffer.

⁶ Nelson George, "Nationwide: American Back," *Village Voice* (January 1988), pp 32-33.



not always happy to escape
elaborate traps
set just for me

outside the disco
under non-vibrating light:
grateful refugees

after the music ends
we will hold each other
til the lights come up

All About Yves

by Jackie Goldsby

Vogueing is to house music what breakdancing was to rap: "a way of battling without fighting," observes poseur Willie Leake.

Where b-boys cock their baseball hats, zip up their fleece-lined bomber jackets and begin uncorking their joints on the bass-heavy beat of the latest rap jam, voguers aim for a more stylized effect: blending the sultry flair of an Iman working the runways in Europe with the butch cool of the GQ look, voguers sweep the dance floor striking picture perfect poses around/behind/alongside—but never strictly on top of—

the cross-rhythms of house music

For Leake, who has "walked" or performed three times and snagged as many first place trophies in competition, voguing ranks as more than a way to play the dozens with your body.

"As a dance, it's unorthodox. Kids use classical movements—some aerials, spins, and splits—but it looks untrained, natural. Voguing shows that blacks and Latins can produce an art form that's our own."

New York's answer to Chicago's "jacking," voguers perform their magic at dance clubs like Tracks, the Tunnel, the World, and, in its heyday, the Paradise Garage. During summer's lazy, sweaty days, voguers truck down to the piers fronting the Hudson River near Christopher Street or to Washington Square Park and show out in public. Boom boxes or car stereos pitched loud, the posing—the stretching, dipping, tumbling, muscle flexing, and gliding—begins. "Voguing's better on the street because you're doing it for yourself. It's fun to show out, to feel looser," says Leake.

That's because, like the magazine, voguing sets out to cultivate a standard of style. And when the fun moves indoors and under the auspices of the Harlem drag balls, the competition begins and it's fierce.

At the most prestigious, traditional event, "Paris is Burning," "there are categories for everything," Leake reports. Femme Queens, Butch Queens, and "Real Girls" (that is, biological women—straight and/or lesbian) compete in divisions such as "Best Dressed," "B-Boy Realness," "Femme Queen Real-

ness," and "Luscious Body." In the "Face" category, judges "look for ebony features. This makes it hard for folks who aren't black to crack in," observes Leake.

Voguers must toe the line set out by judges, who require them to perform compulsory moves—spins, dips, and pops—en masse, before allowing them to free-style solo routines for which the "Voguing National Anthem," the 1971 re-mix of MFSB's "Love is the Message," serves as soundtrack.

The entry point into the world of voguing and the drag balls is through the cliques organized by the participants and modeled after *haute couture* corporations: the "House of Chanel," the "House of St. Laurent," and the "House of the Magnifiques," to name a few. At one point, Leake organized his own family unit, the House of Ninja.

"I chose the name *ninja* because of my Asian friends. The word means invisible assassin. My house would strike when you least expected. We'd show up at a ball, win our trophies, and leave."

But the "house" system, voguing, and the drag balls strike at tradition and subvert it. The rituals and organization deconstruct entrenched codes of bourgeois culture—family, fashion, and status.

Leake credited Ronald and Nancy Reagan (of all sources), with projecting a model of sophisticated elitism, the aristocratic sense with which the "house" system operates. But the First Family would never approve of the kinship structures of a given house: a (typi-

Peace of Mind

by Martha Boethel

Illustrations by Paula Kristovich



MY MOTHER ONCE visited the apartment I shared with my "roommate," Claire. She examined each bedroom suspiciously, counting pillows, nightstands, lamps, alarm clocks. "It's too small," she announced, "someone will break in here and slit your throats."

Later she demanded to know what was going on between us. "Tell me the truth about your relationship," she ordered; "ease my poor mind once and for all."

"Mom," I told her, "I can't do both. You'll have to choose one or the other."

She offered to support me if I'd only leave Claire and move back home. "You could play golf," she promised; "you'd have time for your writing, though God knows that's probably the whole root of your problems. You sit at that desk and brood too much. Life wasn't meant to be picked to pieces!"

She tried every persuasion, even resorted to my own weapon: wrote me a story titled

"Paradise Lost." A mother gives birth to a beautiful child. She accumulates memories like photographs: her daughter—dressed like an angel on Easter morning, curling in bed with a new kitty, blowing out candles, baking her first cake. But then comes the riddle: her daughter a locked trunk without a key. And then shock, helplessness, pain just like death. And a mother is left, as mothers are, wondering how she gave birth to a stranger, wondering if she will ever, ever in her life again experience a single moment of pleasure or hope.

She drove all the way to Austin to see me, pulled into the driveway and honked till I came. She brought a list of questions, scribbled on the back of the Sunday TV magazine. We sat in the car, on the slick vinyl seats of her Mercury, the motor running, air conditioning on.

"Won't you come inside?" I asked her.
"We could sit on the sofa, have

some iced tea." But she just moved from question to question, every one of them beginning with "why."

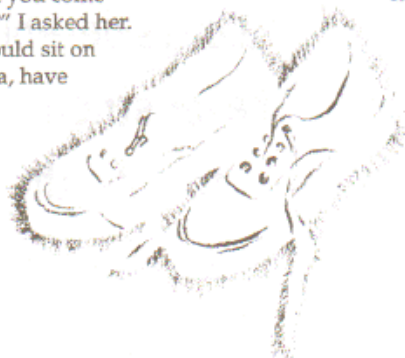
Finally I said, "It's not my job to make you happy. I've worked too hard to accept who I am. Take me or leave me," I told her; "it's really the only choice you have."

She looked at me, disgusted. Then, before I knew what was happening, she pushed the electric door lock, put the car in gear, and ripped out of the driveway like a teenager.

"What are you doing?" I screamed at her. "Let me out of this car!"

"Shut up," she said. "You just hush and sit still; I'm in charge here." I looked at her left hand, still resting on the door lock button. "And don't think for a minute you can jump out of this car."

"You're out of your mind," I muttered,





slumping down in my seat. I pulled into myself like a turtle: an old defense.

She headed for the hill country, driving through the city traffic like I'd never seen her before, honking, yelling, jerking in and out of lanes. Finally we were out of traffic, on a country road, cedar breaks and cow pastures rolling by us. "Recognize this road?" she asked, but I wouldn't answer.

We rode in silence for more than an hour. I was thinking about Claire, at home in the apartment, peeking out our bathroom window at the driveway, finding the car gone. Had she heard us burning rubber? Had she called the softball team to say I'd be late for the game, having been kidnapped by my own mother?

I was thinking about the road we were on. I did know this highway; we'd driven it every summer when I was a child, heading for a cabin on the Frio River. I'd ride in the back of our station wagon, surrounded by luggage and groceries. I'd play with my collection of

toy soldiers, wrinkling the quilt I sat on to form foxholes and hills. Or I'd write notes and drop them discreetly out the car window: HELP! POLICE! KIDNAPPED! LOOK FOR GREEN FORD STATION WAGON, LITTLE GIRL IN BACK.

"Remember this place?" my mother said, pulling suddenly off the road. I did: an old country store with a high wooden porch, faded gas pumps out front. Inside, dark aisles and creaky floors, the smell of kolaches and hot sausage, a cooler full of Orange Crush and Grapette and Barq's cream soda.

"You fell off that porch once, remember? That's how you got that little scar on your lip. I held and held you, but you wouldn't stop crying till the storekeeper offered you a Hershey bar."

"Wait here," she told me, and she went into the store. I heard cowbells clank, just like always, when she pushed open the door. As soon as she disappeared I got of the car and

headed back down the road toward home.

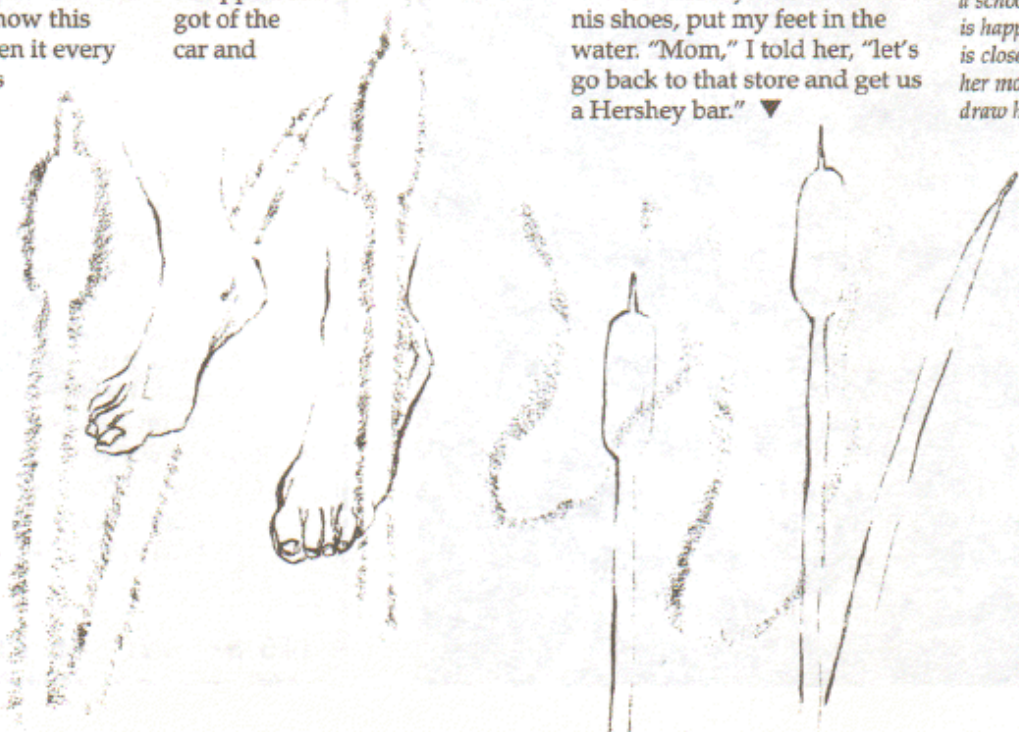
Minutes later she pulled up beside me, honking; she leaned over to open the passenger door. Two bottles of cream soda lay unopened on the seat. "For God's sake," she said, "you aren't planning to walk all the way back to Austin?"

"Leave me alone," I yelled, slamming the door. She drove off, spraying gravel.

A few minutes later, rounding a curve, I found her. She'd pulled the car off the road near a low water bridge. She'd taken off her shoes and her knee-high hose and rolled up the legs of her pants suit; she sat on a big rock by the creek, her feet in the water, crying and drinking cream soda. I got the other soda out of the car and sat down beside her.

"I want you to know," she said, sniffing, "that no one, no one, can ever love you as much as I do."

I took off my socks and tennis shoes, put my feet in the water. "Mom," I told her, "let's go back to that store and get us a Hershey bar." ▼



Martha Boeth
a writer who l
in Austin, Tex

About the arti
Paula Kristov
lives in San
Francisco, dri
a schoolbus, a
is happy that
is close enoug
her mother to
draw her feet.



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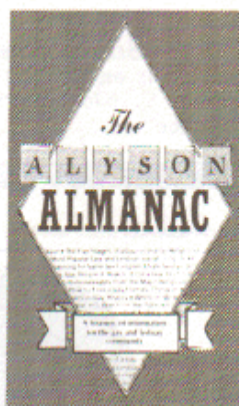
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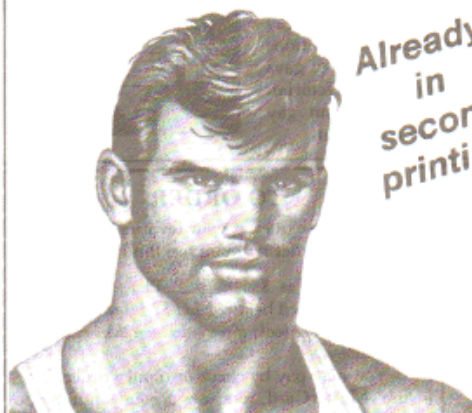


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As a founder of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in 1897 and director of Berlin's Institute for Sexual Science until 1933, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld was the most influential advocate of gay rights in early twentieth century Europe. The legacy of his work is now reappearing in the German Democratic Republic after generations of Nazi genocide and Stalinist repression.

GDR

East Germany Faces Its Past

A NEW START FOR SOCIALIST SEXUAL POLITICS

by John Parsons

I FIRST VISITED East Germany six years ago. Shortly after my arrival I attended a large demonstration in downtown Berlin commemorating the overthrow of the Nazis. As the demonstration broke up, I noticed a pair of women holding hands. I followed them to a nearby cafe which appeared to be visited regularly by lesbians and gay men. I had made my first discovery of the lesbian and gay subculture in socialist Germany.

While I had been excited to find such an open display of homosexual identity at an obviously official and very public program, during the remainder of that visit I learned that this had been a unique event. Back in 1983 the lesbian and gay subculture in East Germany was still very much underground, although not illegal.

By 1989 things have changed dramatically. Public displays of homosexual affection remain rare, but gay liberation has made significant and surprising progress in a short period of time. Not only is the gay subculture in the early stages of coming aboveground, but the process of liberation is now developing with the active support of the Communist Party. Lesbians and gay men, communists and non-communists alike, are exploring anew what sexual liberation means in a socialist country.

The public discussion of homosexuality

now being promoted by the Communist Party is one in which homosexuality is finally recognized as a natural aspect of sexuality and society. As in any new beginning, the discussion is marked by revelations of narrow-mindedness on the part of many bureaucrats, by diverse reservations on the part of much of the public, and by disagreements about how fast to proceed and exactly where it is all heading.

The Communist Party itself is not a monolithic institution. There are millions of members with various views on sexuality and sexual politics, and it is no surprise that different views should win sway at different times. But what is striking is that the Party has moved so quickly from a position of, at best, benign neglect to one of clear advocacy for a reasoned, humanistic and in many ways radically progressive position.

Of course, the path of liberation will be marked by the reactions of the other players on the East German political scene, including the Christian Democratic Party, the many different trends within the Lutheran Church, and the variously opinioned intellectuals, factory workers, health professionals, and others who are not directly affiliated with any political party. But the Communist Party is still the strong and ruling party in East Germany, and the path to gay liberation within this socialist society is certainly marked by its policies.

John Parsons teaches corporate finance at MIT, and walks picket lines for social justice in Boston. He has made four research trips to East Germany and has hosted several East German researchers visiting the U.S.

Gay Activism: A Century Ago

The fight for sexual liberation in Germany began in the nineteenth century. The legal persecution of homosexuals in Germany was based upon Paragraph 175 of the legal code. Paragraph 175 was taken from Prussian law and extended, in 1871, to the rest of Germany during its unification. As usual, only male homosexual acts were mentioned. Female homosexuality was not persecuted directly through this law, but through the institutions enforcing women's oppression more generally.

The early movement for the decriminalization of homosexuality was led by Magnus Hirschfeld. In 1897 he and several others founded the "Scientific-Humanitarian Committee" for the purpose of promoting a scientific discussion on the subject of homosexuality and to advocate the repeal of all laws persecuting homosexuals. The committee pursued its work among intellectuals and professionals until the rise of fascism in 1933.

Political support on a mass scale for the

The support of the party, however, proved to be based upon a very ambivalent attitude within the majority of its leadership. In the early 1900s, the leadership found it possible to make political capital by pointing to homosexual scandals in ruling class circles. The ideas that homosexuality was a feature of decadent capitalism or an individual's private problem were popularized among the membership. The party retreated from its earlier agitation for a radical understanding about sexuality and public mores and began to oppose the persecution of homosexuals on exclusively humanitarian grounds. Finally, by 1910 the party no longer actively agitated for the legalization of homosexuality.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Communist Party of Germany took the lead. In 1920 they were the only party in the Reichstag to support the elimination of Paragraph 175. While the Social Democratic Party earlier had lent its support to the movement for homosexual rights, it had remained distinct and separate from that movement. In contrast, the Communist Party considered itself directly connected with the movement. Several members of Magnus Hirschfeld's circle were members of the Communist Party, including Richard Linsert, a staff member of Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science. Their homosexuality was public knowledge, and for some of them it was an important aspect of their political work. Felix Halle, the Communist Party's expert on questions of law, co-authored the legislation proposed to replace Paragraph 175 and was the party's delegate to the 1928 Congress of the World Society for Sexual Reform.

The relationship between the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee and the Communist Party was marked, however, by mistrust and contradictions from both sides. On the one hand, the committee sometimes avoided publicizing its support among Communists since the committee was trying to show with its petitions that the "mainstream" or "responsible" intelligentsia supported its demands.

At the same time, contradictory currents existed within the Communist Party. Just a

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work of Hirschfeld and the committee, and for the discussion of the broader set of policy questions on the subject of women's liberation, came primarily from the working class parties of Germany. In the 1890s, it was the Social Democratic Party leader, Eduard Bernstein, who spoke out on the occasion of Oscar Wilde's trial. Party leader August Bebel was the first to demand repeal of Paragraph 175 in a speech before the Reichstag.

with the Social Democratic Party, some persons in the Communist Party exploited revelations of homosexuality among the ruling elite and the Nazis to deride them. While the Communist Party leadership gave its support to Hirschfeld's theory on the inborn nature of homosexuality, articles published in the Communist press expressed various attitudes. These ranged from an acceptance of homosexuality as natural to a belief that it was an individual illness. Some thought that it was a symptom of the moral decline of capitalist society.

The work of both the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee and the Communist Party was put to an end with the Nazi rise to power. Homosexuals, Communists, Social Democrats, and especially Jews were all ruthlessly persecuted and murdered. The Nazis succeeded, moreover, in thoroughly tearing out the roots of cooperation that had existed among various people on the issue of sexuality. During the Nazis' twelve-year rule, they reorganized the medical, legal, and teaching professions—promoting confirmed Nazi ideologies, searching out those who were not, and raising a generation on Nazi propaganda. What few threads of the earlier cooperation the Nazis themselves did not destroy, the devastation of the war and the battle lines drawn in the Cold War finished off.

Back in the Closet: The Cold War Era

At the end of the war the earlier differences within the Communist Party again appeared as a discussion arose about how to reconstruct the society. Some people argued that the democratic reconstruction of the country should include progressive reforms of the laws and customs regarding sexuality. Articles appeared in many newspapers advocating the elimination of Paragraph 175. In Saxony, which later became a part of East Germany, the legislature endorsed repeal of the Paragraph. These efforts were especially due to the work of Doctor Rudolf Klimmer. Prior to the war, Klimmer had been associated with Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute. He was gay and a member of the Communist Party.



PARSONS

The efforts of Klimmer and others proved to be exceptional. There were two primary causes for this. First, Germany had been devastated by the war. Prior to World War II, Germany had been an advanced industrial society. After the war it was a land of poverty, homelessness, and hunger. The country also was devastated spiritually. A generation of children had been raised and educated in Nazi schools. The problems of de-Nazifying the country, of creating new, democratic educational programs and new legal and medical professions took center stage. The Communist Party turned its attention to mobilizing the population for the barest of economic needs and towards stabilizing social life in the most orthodox of all structures.

The second cause lies with developments in the communist movement itself. Under Stalin, a dogmatic brand of communism had arisen that rebuked any progressive understanding of sexuality. Stalin's rise ended the Communist Party's advocacy of sexual reform. The same reversal occurred in Germany, with the growth of the influence of Stalinism throughout the world communist movement. The communist movement worldwide became associated with the most backward of family models. Not only did the East German Communists give sexual liberation a

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The majority of heterosexuals consider homosexuality to be an illness and ask about ways in which it can be treated.... Conscious homosexuals do not feel themselves to be sick, and except for a few individuals, they find this interest in changing their orientation to be an unacceptable attack on their essence.... [Homosexuality] is not to be diagnosed as a sickness, but rather as one personality structure, as one variation on sexuality. So it should not be surprising that every type of psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, or behavior modification therapy that has been tried has not only failed almost without exception in changing the orientation of the homosexual, but rather have themselves created neuroses.

Excerpt from the chapter on "Homosexuality" by Siegfried Schnabl and Kurt Starke, appearing in the sexual education textbook, Love and Sexuality until 30, edited by Kurt Starke and Walter Friedrich, German Science Publishing House, Berlin, GDR, 1984.

GDR

low priority, in many cases they actively championed the age-old notions of heterosexuality as normal and homosexuality as a perversion or sickness.

Between 1948 and the late 1960s, lesbian and gay liberation lost any place in broad public discussions. The subject was relegated to the legal and medical professions. In the early 1950s, Klimmer resigned his membership in the Communist Party and continued his advocacy through professional work in the public health field. He and others had some success in modifying the legal persecution of homosexuality as well as in developing early models of modern sexual counseling centers. In 1968, Paragraph 175 was stricken from the legal code and male homosexuality became legal for the first time. A similar legalization occurred in West Germany four years later.

The East German reform was part of a complete revision of the legal code that abolished the entire category of sexual crimes. Rape was reclassified under the Crimes Against the Person section along with murder, assault, and battery. Incest and the sexual abuse of children were reclassified under a new section entitled Crimes Against Youth and the Family. This new section, Paragraph 151, included provisions that differentiated between heterosexual and homosexual relations with minors and therefore became the last legal basis for the prejudicial treatment of homosexuals.

During the 1950s and 1960s, an underground gay subculture developed like those of other industrialized countries. It included friendship circles and common meeting places in major urban centers. The 1970s and early 1980s were a time when this lesbian and gay subculture grew and flowered, creating a broad self-consciousness and assertiveness. In 1972 the Berlin Association for Homosexual Concerns was founded. The Association was organized by both women and men, and organized public and private discussion groups and programs. They showed films and had book readings, presented speakers from the medical, psychological and sociological fields, and organized a cabaret. A number

of gay-identified clubs and cafes opened in the major cities.

Parallel with these efforts, lesbians and feminists were organizing their own discussion groups centered on questions of women's liberation. The official and public discussion in East Germany primarily has focused on male homosexuality, remaining silent on lesbianism. I have had difficulty in determining how much this also has been true of the discussions within the lesbian and gay subculture itself. One fact that is striking, however, is that lesbian and gay cultural institutions and friendship circles in East Germany historically have been integrated much more across gender lines than those in either West Germany or the United States.

These lesbian and gay activists occasionally found support from the trade unions or state offices, but generally they faced the active obstruction of the Communist Party and the state. The Association for Homosexual Concerns, for example, applied for state recognition in 1976 and was denied.

Many gay activists turned to the Lutheran Church to help them organize publicly. The Church was the only institution strong enough to serve as an umbrella for political discussions organized outside of the Communist Party. And some persons in the East German Church had already been introduced to the idea of cooperation with gay organizations through their participation in international discussions about homosexuality begun by their West German or US associates. In 1982, the Homosexual Working Group in the Youth Section of the Lutheran Church was formed in Leipzig. It was the first East German public forum for homosexual issues. Of course, many homosexuals, including those who were members of the Communist Party, were not comfortable with the Church and did not find this association helpful. The Church itself was divided, harboring as it did many conservative members and parishes that explicitly opposed work with homosexuals.

The New Policy: Just a Beginning

Finally, in the late 1980s, public discussion backed by the Communist Party and the state was revived. It included lesbians and gay men speaking out as self-conscious voices for their community. This new beginning was heralded at a June 1985 conference on "The Psycho-Social Aspects of Homosexuality" organized by scientists and health professionals. Their explicitly political purpose in organizing the conference was stated in the for-

the state should sanction institutions through which lesbians and gay men could discuss and organize among themselves. The demand for autonomous organizations also had been made at about the same time by a Humboldt University interdisciplinary research group organized in 1984 at the request of the Berlin city administration.

These recommendations were debated in the course of the Communist Party's 11th Congress held in 1986. According to one ac-

quaintance of mine who is a member of the Humboldt University research group, there has been a good deal of success in moving the national Party apparatus to support the work of these groups. Other acquaintances, however, have told me stories of continuing obstruction from various Party officials.

Between the first conference in 1985 and a second conference held in Karl-Marx-Stadt in 1988, many visible steps were taken to

continue the public discussion. Articles have appeared in the press dealing with the subject of homosexuality. The state radio and television stations occasionally began including homosexuality issues in their programming. Many of the articles and much of the programming is directly targeted at an adolescent audience who are asking questions about their own sexuality. The state film studios recently completed a documentary film on the satisfactions and problems facing homosexual couples. The subject of AIDS also has been at the center of public media, although homosexuality is not featured as the central aspect of the disease. And a new book of life

THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF SEXUALITY AND FAMILY COUNSELING CENTERS SHOULD AID IN DISMANTLING PREJUDICES REGARDING HOMOSEXUALITY.



A lesbian wedding couple making a ritual visit to Marx and Engels? When I took this photo, I wasn't sure what was going on, but the woman with flowers is dressed as a typical East German bride, there was no male husband in sight, their parents were there, and it is a tradition to lay a wreath in honor of anti-Nazi fighters. —JP

ward to the published volume of contributions:

For the first time we have invited persons to a conference on the subject of homosexuality....That engagement begins from the position of tolerance and acceptance of homosexuals and should lead to their integration into socialist society.

An important feature of this conference was that it was organized with the open participation of lesbians and gay men, both as contributors and as discussants.

Two major demands were voiced at the conference: first, that the discussion should be taken outside of these exclusively professional circles and made a public one; second, that

Georg D., thirty-six, sociologist

Excerpts from "Georg D., thirty-six, sociologist," an interview with a gay man that appeared in Männerbekanntschaften: Freimütige Protokolle, by Christine Lambrecht, Mitteldeutscher Verlag Halle, Leipzig, 1986. This translation is from the West German edition published by Weltkreis, Dortmund, 1986.

...Shortly after our wedding day—that was nine years ago—I had an experience. I climbed into a street car and a young man stood next to me and suddenly touched me. I knew or sensed that something had happened that would have colossal consequences for my life, because his touch wasn't unpleasant and I didn't repudiate it. I couldn't, at the time of course, estimate or appreciate what that meant. I didn't look at the man, I only concentrated. What happened there and what the consequences would be

were my only thoughts. We were on the street car for about five minutes together, then he climbed off, and with that it ended. Of course that gave me no rest, and I noticed that something had risen up within me that I had repressed my whole life.

From then on I began to pay attention to how I engaged men and to how they engaged me. I thought about and somehow sensed the wish for, the desire, the need, to repeat that earlier incident. At the same time I also strove against this. Then pictures of men began to occur to me—ones that I had watched, very animated memories of male bodies, that included high school, grade school, the army, everywhere. Suddenly I knew that back in those times I had already had the wish to be closer to them and hold them, the thoughts themselves were all walled off. "That isn't supposed to be, and therefore it wasn't," that's how I was then. Therefore I never got beyond a fascination with the image. So I slowly came to the realization that this had always been inside me, but that I had just not trusted myself to be who I am.



...One speaks of a so-called coming out for homosexuals. That's a period which begins with the first inkling that one is a homosexual and which ends when one knows it for sure. That lasted three years for me. That was the worst time in my life. I didn't risk talking to anybody about it for a long time. The first time was only after one and a half years.

I had in the meantime always sought contact with men, and I once enjoyed a casual relationship. I just wanted to know what that actually meant, to be a homosexual. I asked others how it was for them, how they lived. The experiences that I had then were bitter ones. I saw that many homosexuals tended towards alcohol and that a large part of their loving needs and desires could not be fulfilled in a lasting partnership. I saw that they had difficulties with their families, with the collective at work, with the neighbors, and that this all found its consequences in the way that they went around with people.

But all these bitter experiences couldn't hold me back. Therefore I can testify that none



of this is a question of choice or preference. I had hoped during these three years that it would sometime disappear just as it had come.

[Georg decided to leave his wife and two children to live as a homosexual.]

...Being single was often bad. I was looking for tenderness and hoping for a good, trusting partnership. How often I would go out evenings, just walking through the streets. Or I would sit in a restaurant, and then nothing would arise except a one night stand. After that one feels even more alone than

effort.

Nevertheless, I never regretted that I had accepted my homosexuality. From the point when I was divorced and had my own apartment I began to realize that it also wouldn't make any difference if my colleagues learned about it. Today it's all the same to me. I tell myself that if there are problems in that regard, then it is the other person's problem. They will have to learn to cope with it. And I have to say that I have almost never experienced so much as a confrontation. In my apartment building everybody is just as friendly with me as before. There are colleagues at work, especially younger ones, with whom I speak about it. I've noticed that rejection and disparagement have a lot to do with ignorance and insecurity. When people have the opportunity to ask questions and to receive answers then they are usually ready to understand. And they want to and they can understand. Recently I let my other colleagues know how I live. I invited them to my place when my boyfriend was there. I believe that most every one took it as very natural.

...You see, because I'm gay there still exist for me barriers to everyday things. For example, I wouldn't invite Rudolf to a large Institute social event because there are too many prejudices. Sure I believe no one would send us home. It might even give everybody a bit of excitement if we would dance together there. But afterwards there would be many angry discussions behind my back. A few people would see it as a provocation. One has to persuade and educate people bit by bit, so that

people come with you.

It is a great burden that we can only go around with each other naturally when we are not being observed. One is always reminding oneself to be careful. When a married couple is sitting in the living room and has visitors and one of the two



before. That was also a problem for my work at the Institute. I think that I fulfilled my professional and societal responsibilities despite my internal unsettledness, the inner conflicts, but with a great expenditure of

touches the other then it's taken for granted. When friends visit us and I stroke Rudolf or if we kiss when he comes home, then I'm always conscious of what I'm doing. I'm aware that at this moment I'm allowed to do this. Of course it means that I also take it seriously as a result.

...I'm happy to live as a homosexual in East Germany. In capitalist countries many prejudices hide themselves behind a facade of openness. For example, many people are fired because of their homosexuality. And I know there is a lot of resentment in Hungary because of the Catholicism. Even when the Paragraph existed, hardly anybody was prosecuted here. I think it has something to do with the fact that there has been much progress here.

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TION TEXTBOOK
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MANY SEXUALLY
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TWO MEN
TOGETHER AND
ONE OF TWO
WOMEN LYING
NAKED IN ONE
ANOTHER'S
ARMS.**

histories of several East German gay men, compiled and written by a gay man, is scheduled to appear soon.

In the midst of this generally positive discussion, however, some negative contributions have appeared as well. The first popular scientific book on the topic of homosexuality was published. Written by a criminologist, the book focuses on the psychological and social problems associated with homosexuality and on unrelated issues such as pedophilia.

The homosexual community also is now receiving recognition by state officials and many previously underground institutions have moved into public view. The most important of these is the "Sunday Club" in Berlin. The club has roots that go back to the private discussion circles of the late 1970s. In the early 1980s, it had found a semi-official existence. With the cooperation of the officers of a regularly functioning neighborhood youth club, homosexuals organized programs on Sundays consisting of discussions, cultural events and outings. In 1983 and in 1984, they applied to the city for permission to start a "Cultural and Consultation Center" for homosexuals. They were actually only looking for recognition of a function that they already served. Both applications were denied, but the group continued to function. It was their applications, among other things, that pushed the city administration to request the formation of the study group at Humboldt University. In 1986, the Sunday Club finally received official recognition and became the first state-supported homosexual group. Other parts of the subculture also have come into greater public view, including regularly organized dances in public halls.

Important social institutions also began to implement reforms with greater speed. For example, the Commission on Marriage and the Family, which is responsible for running a system of counseling centers, passed a resolution asserting that the national network of sexuality and family counseling centers should aid in dismantling prejudices regarding homosexuality and foster the integration of gay men and lesbians into society. The full network of centers is open to gay men and lesbians seeking counseling.

A new curriculum for sex education in the public schools is being prepared in which homosexuality is given a meaningful place. The 1984 edition of the standard sexual education textbook included an important chapter on lesbian and gay identity. Homosexuality is presented as a natural variation of sexual identity. This is in sharp contrast to earlier editions in which homosexuality was treated as a deviation. The primary problems experienced by homosexuals are identified as being caused by the persecution

and isolation resulting from social discrimination and homophobia. The book includes among its many sexually explicit or romantic photos one of two men together and one of two women lying naked in one another's arms. It is also interesting to note that in this chapter, lesbianism is given explicit attention—for the first time in East Germany as far as I can tell.

Then, in August of 1987, a final noteworthy step was taken. The Supreme Court of East Germany moved to drastically restrict the application of one of the few remaining legal bases for discrimination against homosexuals. Overturning a conviction of a man who had had consensual sex with a minor,



Dr. Lykke Aresin, a professor of medicine at Leipzig University, was one of the convenors of the 1985 conference on "The Psycho-Social Aspects of Homosexuality."

the Court wrote that

the starting point for a judgement about the sexual relations between persons of the same sex must be the principle that homosexuals just as much as heterosexuals are members of the socialist society and are guaranteed the same rights of citizenship.

The court continued,

...homosexual relations between an adult and a person between the ages of 16 and 18 do not necessarily lead to an abnormal development and do not have any other harmful consequences than homosexual relations between two youths or heterosexual relations between an adult and a youth.

The court therefore asserted that the only proper basis for a conviction would be evidence that the relations had been non-consensual or harmful. In the case being judged, the youth had often frequented gay establishments and parties, had consciously sought sexual contact, and was judged to be competent. The Court continued, asserting that

...discrimination against homosexuals and bigotry is therefore to be opposed. Homosexuals are to be protected by legal regulations and judicial punishment against attacks on their integrity—for example by slander or physical violence or rowdiness.

Old Debates in a Different Context

This new movement in the German socialist state is filled with debates and conflicts that ring familiar to any seasoned activist in the US. And yet these debates are given their own flavor by the different circumstances that confront a socialist society.

An important first step for this new movement was the decision of whether to support the development of an autonomous homosexual community or whether to push for integration into society. Early on some people argued against the establishment of identified homosexual clubs or homosexual caucuses within political organizations because that would set homosexuals apart from heterosexuals. Concerns were expressed that a liberation of lesbians and gay men could not come about through the creation of gay ghettos. However, there were those who advocated a radically independent organiza-

tion of homosexuals that would be organized in opposition to heterosexist institutions.

The view that seems to be leading the current set of state actions is one in which autonomy is not set in conflict with integration. Lesbians and gay men have a need to meet together for personal, cultural, and political reasons. Their ability to collectively discuss and decide their views on their oppression and needs is an important step in enabling the society as a whole to address these issues. Integration, however, is also seen as a positive goal—not an integration in which lesbians and gays hide their identity, but one in which their unique identity contributes to and changes the whole.

The role of autonomous organizations and the actual possibilities for integration can sometimes stretch the imagination of those of us who have become accustomed to the limits of the struggle here in the US. I remember a day in 1987 when I read in a Berlin newspaper that lesbians and gays still face greater problems of discrimination in the countryside than they do in the major cities of East Germany. The example that was given was that editors of some local papers in rural areas still refuse to accept gay personals. I wondered to myself, "Do the editors of the Berlin papers

**HOMOSEXUALS,
JUST AS MUCH AS
HETEROSEXUALS,
ARE MEMBERS OF
THE SOCIALIST
SOCIETY AND ARE
GUARANTEED THE
SAME RIGHTS OF
CITIZENSHIP.**



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Jürgen Lemke, *Ganz Normal Anders: Auskünfte Schwule Männer aus der DDR*, Aufbau Verlag, Berlin, 1989. This book is a collection of the life histories of several gay men in East Germany. It is currently being translated for publication in English.

really accept explicitly gay personals?" I went out and picked up a paper and discovered, to my amazement, that there among all of the other personals were lesbian and gay personals. For at least two years that had been the case. I later learned that as a part of the new state initiative, an East German government ministry had issued an order to all newspapers making clear their responsibility to accept all such personal ads.

Similarly, the struggles over the rights to a job and access to housing or health insurance free of discrimination are taking place in East Germany in ways different than similar struggles here in the US. The fact that it is a socialist state does not eliminate these problems, but it does give them a different focus. Job security in East Germany currently is guaranteed. Cases of discrimination by a supervisor certainly arise, but there is no grave danger of unemployment as there is in the United States.

In East Germany health insurance is guaranteed to all. There are no private health insurance companies seeking to avoid the financial losses that will come from treating AIDS patients. On the other hand, the health care bureaucracy has shown no special attention to gay health problems, except the counseling programs mentioned before. And it is

not possible for gay or feminist doctors and health professionals to set up their own independent practices and pioneer in gay or women's health care in the same fashion as in the US.

Housing problems used to be the greatest concern for gay couples. Discrimination resulting from personal prejudice and malice is not common. But family law and the special historical situation facing East Germany do create housing problems particular to lesbians and gay men. For three decades after the war there was a tremendous housing shortage. The state gave housing priority to families and this left lesbians and gay men, acknowledged only as single persons, far at the end of the list. A single mother, who happened to be a lesbian, would, however, have been an important exception. Single mothers were given housing priority above all others. There is no longer any grave shortage of apartments, and so it is now possible for many lesbian and gay couples in Berlin or the other major cities to find apartments next to one another. Several couples that I know have managed to get an apartment together.

What's Next?

History has taken many a sharp turn in the past, both in Germany and in the US. No one can be sure if the current developments in East Germany will be continued, halted, or reversed. People active in the movement, however, already are working on the next stage of changes that they hope to make happen.

One important issue on their agenda appears to be changing family law so that the state recognizes gay couples and families. Several speakers at the second conference on *The Psycho-Social Aspects of Homosexuality* raised this issue in their remarks. To make progress here will require an important change in the socialist conception of the family as an institution. If this happens, then it will show how the discussion of homosexuality is leading to a re-evaluation of issues for the society as a whole. ▼



ADN-ZB

Messages to the Movement...

Where We Are Twenty Years After Stonewall

The Real Pro-Family Policy

Robert A. Bernstein

In honor of the twentieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots, OUT/LOOK invited activists who have been involved with gay and lesbian organizing efforts for many years to "send a message to the movement." We asked them to comment on how Stonewall has made a difference in their lives, and to identify the internal obstacles we face as a movement today—the roadblocks we create for ourselves that keep us from reaching as far as we can.

ABOUT A YEAR ago, I wrote a column in the *New York Times* that contained these sentences: "My daughter is a lesbian. She also is the light of my life, a warm and talented young woman whose joyous spirit helps brighten the lives of others."

No profound historical scholarship is needed to realize that those words, and the now, not uncommon parental attitude they reflect, were made possible by the revolution that Stonewall ignited.

My daughter and I were both ignorant of that event, and only dimly aware of the existence of a gay and lesbian world when she first enrolled at Stanford University, my alma mater. There, however, thanks in part to an administration increasingly sensitive to the significance of the gay and lesbian movement, she was able to confront and accept her own lesbianism.

Among her valuable sources of support was one special student organization, the Gay and

Lesbian Alliance at Stanford. GLAS meetings are held in an ancient campus landmark known as the Old Firehouse. (Virtually every building still standing from my day is now called "The Old" Whatever.)

Shortly after my daughter had come out to herself and to her family, she asked me: "Did GLAS meet in the Old Firehouse when you were here?"

The query delighted me—and not only, of course, because of my memories of the large red vehicles that had once occupied the building in my day.

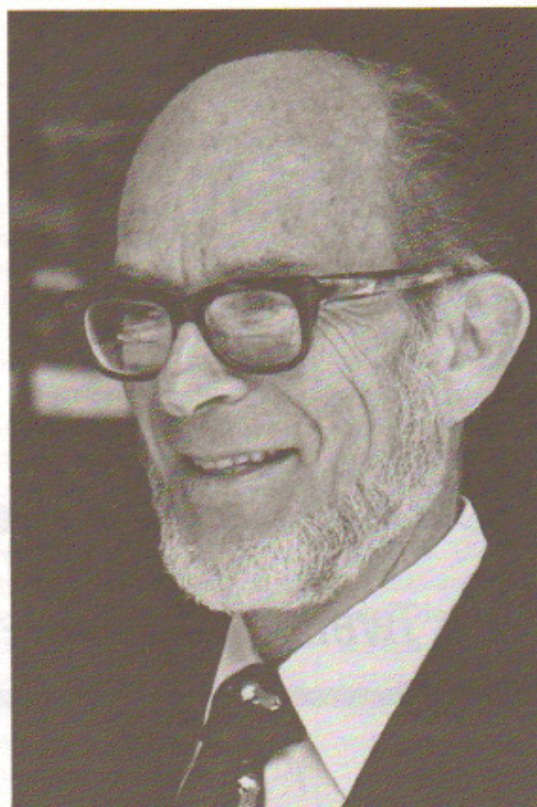
Her refreshing innocence seemed to dramatize the vast change in social climate—residual homophobia notwithstanding—that Stonewall has wrought. What my daughter could so take for granted—an officially sanctioned gay and lesbian student organization—would not have adorned even the wildest of futurist fancy in my era.

I particularly recall the case of one friend, a fraternity brother, who was ordinarily shy and good-natured. But he hated "queers," and became physically violent on the few occasions he actually sighted an openly gay man. Sadly, his high moral dudgeon, and its savage expression, were highly admired by the "brothers." Even more sadly, I was among the admirers.

So no, you don't have to be gay to say, "Thank God for Stonewall," and to know that your life would be immeasurably poorer in its absence. Chances are that I would still be in the gay-bashers' rooting section. I might be wondering, for instance, why the big fuss simply because a judge shows mercy to a murderer whose victims were, after all, just a couple of fags.

More importantly, in terms of my personal welfare, I would probably be estranged from my own daughter. And I would have been deprived of a broadening and enrichment of my life that has come from a widening acquaintance with other openly gay and lesbian people. I learned that they were not to be feared, as my college friend would have it, but in the main, to be admired and enjoyed.

They were to be admired because they were traveling a path of integrity and self-discovery, quietly but courageously defying the pervasive environment of hostility to which I myself had once contributed.



And they are to be enjoyed because that path, however risky, can lift the human spirit to new levels of spontaneity, sensitivity, and creativity.

I know that society's lingering cruelty will cause hardships for my daughter. But a life with-

***Without
Stonewall, I
would probably
be estranged
from my own
daughter.***

out challenges is hardly worth the name. And hers will be shared with a community graced with talent, wisdom, warmth, and compassion. No

father should ask for more.

I have, nevertheless, gotten more. I have met scores of warm and caring parents whose love for their children has melted the stony stereotypes of a lifetime. And I have found a special joy that comes from the conviction that together, through Parents FLAG, we are doing something important: sharing with the world the insights that have given our own lives new purpose and meaning.

One of those insights, of course, is simply that human diversity is something to celebrate, not despise. Another is the teaching of the sages, from Jesus to Freud to Fierstein, and encapsulated in the Shakespearean admonition, "To thine own self be true." For "I Am What I Am," it turns out, is more than mere musical hall tune. It is a truism of nature that can be ignored—by children, parents, or society as a whole—only at great human cost.

Melvin E. Wheatly, Jr., is a retired bishop of the United Methodist Church and the father of a gay son. He put it pithily, speaking at last year's convention of the Federation of Parents FLAG:

"We were not wise enough to pray for gay children. But at least we are now smart enough to thank God for sending those gay children to us."

And for that new-found wisdom, he might have added, we owe profound gratitude to the

angry, valiant men of Stonewall.

Robert Bernstein is an attorney for the tax division of the US Department of Justice and the Vice President of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay Men.

We Haven't Come Such a Long Way, Baby

Jewelle Gomez

"I was born in a country wrought with wars, in a land gutted by B52s, in a nation still going through its adolescent stage of independence even though its people are as old as the earth itself."

THESE LINE BY Vietnamese lesbian Huong Giang Nguyen, are a literal description of her youthful experience in Hue, the central city of Vietnam. I, living in the US, a country that never has been bombed from the air (if you don't count Mayor Goode's murderous assault on the MOVE home in Philadelphia), can only empathize with these words in an intellectual way. But they serve as an apt metaphor in my frequent search for a way of articulating my experience of being a black lesbian in this country. My people have heard the bombs in Atlanta churches, as well as in a Philadelphia row house neighborhood.

And, as a lesbian as well as an Afro-American, I feel I am part of a way of being that is

Gay men still can't say "feminist" without smirking.

ancient. To be a lesbian is no more new than being part of an African and Native American heritage is new. Historical research continues to open up the past to show me the world through the eyes of lesbians. And I've been able to retrieve information about how historical movements for gay rights have thrived under circumstances more repressive than those we face today. But the distance we have traveled since 1969 does not seem like such a long way, baby!

In 1969, my focus was on another aspect of the wars here in the US—the escape of the Soledad Brothers from San

Quentin, and Angela Davis' subsequent flight from prosecution. In my hometown, Boston, community activists were gearing up for the school desegregation fight. News of the police confrontation at the Stonewall bar must have been buried somewhere in the local paper, but it wasn't something I heard much about until moving to New York—and even then it was not a hot topic among the women I knew.

Looking back now, it is clear how all of the struggles are connected. At that time, a time when my life and the political life of the gay movement were in formative stages, it did not seem so obvious. And it's my fear that it is still not obvious to many of the people working in the movement.

While our historical sense has grown since 1969, it does not seem to have reached back before 1969. In meetings I constantly feel as if we're reinventing the wheel. No one knows that the civil rights movement

VIAL WILMER



Jewelle Gomez

Mickey Wheatley

or the women's movement ever took place. We don't take advantage of known methodologies or profit from past mistakes.

Women are still struggling to avoid being subsumed under male prerogatives. Black gay men and lesbians don't trust white organizations and don't trust ourselves enough to challenge the status quo, so we keep playing out victim roles. White activists and organizations recruit just enough blacks, just before someone notices that their efforts are all-white. Gay men still can't say "feminist" without smirking. Lesbian and gay activists have not learned to take any type of constructive criticism.

The greatest threat to the visions of freedom that I hold dear is still the power the US culture invests in being white and male. Being gay doesn't seem to have mitigated that threat at all.

A few things have changed in the past twenty years, but it is the loss of naiveté that feels the most significant—the realization that we, in our thirsts for power, our wallowing in self-pity, our self-centeredness, our ignorance, our arrogance can be our own worst enemy. This is a land "wrought with wars" and we are a people "as old as the earth." It is the destructiveness of adolescence I fear.

*Jewelle Gomez is the author of a collection of poetry, **Flamingoes and Bears**, and is a poetry editor for **OUT/LOOK**.*

Beyond the Melting Pot

Mickey Wheatley

TWENTY YEARS AGO, on the night of Judy Garland's funeral, gay people rioted in Greenwich Village, militantly demanding for the first time that we be treated with respect. It was not mainstream gays who started the Stonewall Revolution; it was outrageous drag queens who finally had no choice but to riot.

In the last twenty years, our movement has lost sight of the value of our diversity. Many supporters of the lesbian and gay liberation movement have forgotten that our people are made up of drag queens, butch lesbians, s/m leather boys, vegetarians, day-glo hippies, radical faeries, separatist lesbians, boy lovers, queer anarchists, witches, queer punks, pagans, and everyone else with a "separatist" bent whose focus is more cultural than narrowly "political," whose concern is with being most truly herself.

There is tension between the mainstream "assimilationist" gays and the more flamboyant, outrageous separatists. Assimilationism seeks to integrate lesbian and gay people into the dominant heterosexual culture by gaining us legal rights and acceptance. Separatism, on the other hand, eschews assimilation because it is more concerned with discovering who we really are. I believe that the goals of these two ostensibly polar currents informing the consciousness of our movement are not so contradictory and that they actually complement

each other.

In the seventies, liberal gay organizations were created with the intention of gaining mainstream acceptance of the lesbian and gay "lifestyle." The notion was to demonstrate that "we are just like you except for what we do in bed."

The tactics of these assimilationist institutions have created visibility for our community in the mainstream media. More judges are writing better opinions that reflect a real understanding of our issues. Our issues are now openly discussed in Congress and other government lawmaking bodies. Many cities have actually enacted civil rights ordinances protecting our legal rights to housing, employment, and public accommodations, and provide ready mechanisms for seeking redress.



At the same time, however, assimilationism has undermined the Stonewall vision of liberation for all the members of our community. Those members of our community who have not demonstrated a middle-class, heterosexual personal style have been kept from our leadership roles, and from the images we have created to define ourselves. Of course, the fallout from this approach is that our movement and community institutions fail to address the needs of all members of our diverse family, particularly lesbians, people of color, poor gays, rural gays, and those who are sexual and cultural minorities within our own communities.

Those lesbian and gay people frustrated with the assimilationist approach have been organizing into more expressly counter-cultural, separatist movements such as the Radical Faeries for men and separatist collectives for women. These groups have worked to create truly supportive community structures for themselves that have allowed the groups to focus inwardly on the ways in which we are uniquely oppressed, and how our oppression has worked at denying us knowledge of our innate nature and gifts as lesbian and gay people.

But the patriarchal hate directed against us has been too strong, and the AIDS crisis too overwhelming, for us to be able to turn our backs on the dominant culture. Separatism, by itself, fails to build the bridges necessary to create a progressive culture, however supported we feel when we are truly and radically with our own community

of friends and loved ones.

Thus, separatists need assimilationists to educate the courts, legislatures, and the rest of heterosexual culture about our lives and issues because we cannot escape state oppression, whether it takes the form of separating us from our children or lovers, prohibiting the full expression of our sexuality, or

Assimilationists should not ask the rest of us to cultivate a more heterosexual personal style.

allowing us to continue to grow sick and to die.

Yet assimilationists should not ask the rest of us to cultivate a more heterosexual or mainstream personal style or politics—just as they refuse to become heterosexual. Putting on a three-piece suit does not change the fact that we are still largely despised because we represent a major threat to patriarchal culture. Our politics and personalities are as central to us as our sexual orientation, and should be celebrated, not oppressed. We cannot win our liberation by becoming our oppressors, but rather by becoming most fully and openly ourselves. Let's challenge our oppressors and each other to embrace differences of sexual orientation and lifestyle.

So let's stop dishing each other; because together we can create a force whose emanations will be felt throughout the world and for decades into the future. The separatists will provide us with vision, magic, and healing, and the assimilationists will mediate between us and our oppressors so that each of us can create our own "safe space," whatever that may be.

Mickey Wheatley is a gay rights attorney and a radical faerie.

Paranoia Is Passé

John D'Emilio

I THINK THE BIGGEST internal obstacle the lesbian and gay movement face today is that our psyches have not caught up with our successes.

As a historian, I can't help but be aware of how far-reaching our successes have been since Stonewall. We permanently have shattered the invisibility and isolation that characterized most gay and lesbian life through the late 1960s. We have built an extraordinary range of organizations and community-based institutions, many of them stable and secure. We have reached into almost every corner of American society, done ground breaking educational work, built coalitions, and won allies for our agenda. We have made major cracks in the structure of institutionalized oppression. When we consider the enormity of what we faced at the time of the Stonewall riots, the level of our achievement is astounding.

Despite all of this, we often act, think, strategize, and make assumptions about the world as if nothing had changed. Once upon a time, we faced a solid and unbreachable wall of hostility; defensiveness and mistrust became mechanisms of survival. The hostility is no longer solid, yet we act as if it were—always on the defensive, ready to assume the worst, prepared for betrayal, poised to get them before they get us.

Recently, on a morning talk show, a woman in the audience began saying to the gay panelists that the prejudice of many heterosexuals came from the fear of anything different or

unfamiliar but that, with time and more opportunities like the panel, attitudes could change. Here she was, speaking as a friend, yet the panelists jumped on her because of her admission of prejudice. It will be awhile, I'm sure, before she risks putting herself out for us again. A trivial instance, perhaps, but we all have witnessed many such scenes.

Another example of old, useless modes of thinking is our glorification of marginality and isolation. Once upon a time, the dangers we faced were so great that we retreated into hidden corners of society. Oppression pushed us to the margins, but our marginality also helped us to escape being noticed and hence to survive. Our movement has enormously expanded the "safe

space" in society, yet we often seem wedded to a marginal, separate existence.

Our community seems an end in itself, our organizations a refuge.

Example: a heterosexual woman in North Carolina makes the issue of gay oppression a priority, but she encounters suspicion and hostility in gay organizations. Her presence at meetings "spoils" the party. We'd rather have our in-jokes, the comfort of not having "them" around, than welcome allies into our organizations as volunteers, hire them as

staff, or invite them on to our boards. AIDS has done a lot to change this, yet we still often seem invested in remaining marginal, separate, and isolated.

A final area of "old think" is the way we savage virtually anyone in our community who takes initiative, becomes visible, or assumes leadership. Last winter, I met with about forty "leaders" on the West Coast. Most saw this phenomenon as a

What are we doing when we cannibalize our leaders?

serious problem, and were at a loss over how to stop it. To me it seems a clear example of internalized gay oppression. Once upon a time, all the messages of our culture proclaimed that lesbians and homosexuals were despicable and contemptible. Our movement has proclaimed a different message, yet what are we doing when we cannibalize our leaders by treating them as if they were beneath contempt?

So, rather than act defensively and mistrustfully, I would like us to start from the assumption that everyone is a potential ally. Rather than glorify our marginality, I would like us always to act on the assumption that the whole world is our home. And rather than attack and maul one another, I would like us to treat other lesbians and gay men in the manner we

John D'Emilio



all deserve—with respect.

If we do this, I suspect we'll find the external obstacles to our liberation far less formidable than they often seem, and the next twenty years filled with even more successes than the previous twenty.

*John D'Emilio teaches history at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. He is the author of *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, a history of the gay movement before Stonewall, and is a member of the board of directors of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.*

We Have a Blueprint; Now We Need Tools

Urvashi Vaid

TWO DEVELOPMENTS define our movement in the twenty years since Stonewall: the emergence of a strong, national gay and lesbian movement with a clearly articulated political agenda, and the formation of a wide range of local and state organizations whose primary mission is the achievement of gay and lesbian freedom. Today, we agree on our priorities (whether redefining family, ending violence, fighting discrimination, repealing sodomy laws, shaping humane AIDS and health policy). We know that many of the battles we face—be they at city councils or in Congress, in the churches or in the streets—are similar. We know we must support each other politically.

We have a blueprint. We have architects. We have builders and workers following a plan. But

we still lack some essential tools for constructing gay and lesbian freedom.

We have not yet learned how to be more than a collection of acronyms working toward a common goal. Our movement faces three key internal and structural obstacles that inhibit our work: inadequate communication vehicles, a parochial view of organizing, and our continuing inability to depersonalize our work as activists.

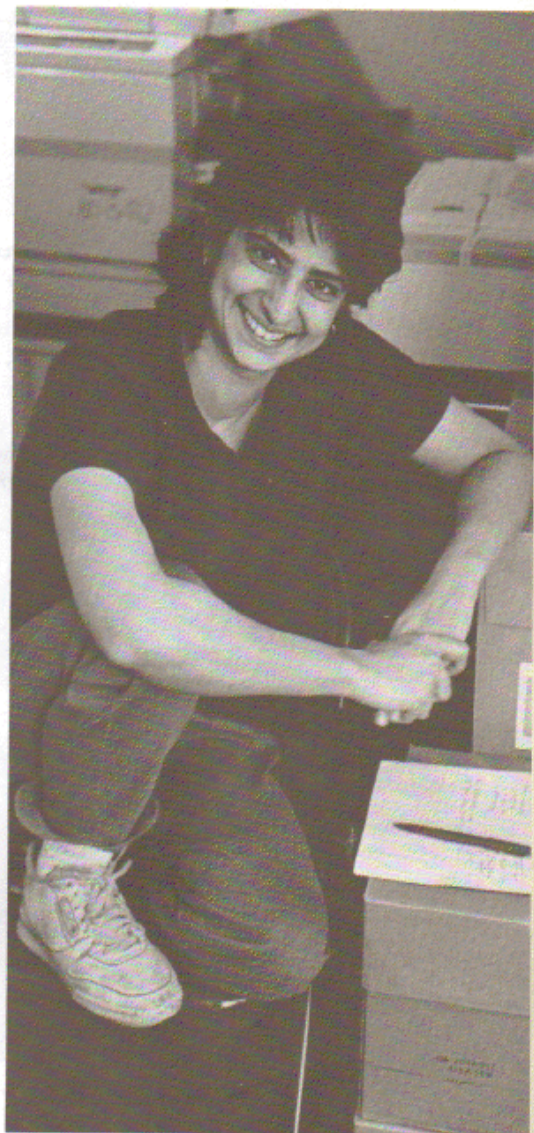
While we have strong local and regional print and electronic outlets, we have no national gay press. None of our local papers have the resources or the mission to report extensively on the successes and defeats of our political movement. Without information, how can we know why things happened the way they did? How can we learn from each other's incredible talents? Until we have a national lesbian and gay media aimed at activists and political organizers, we will remain dependent on the mainstream media to report, in its sporadic, shallow, and biased way, on our movement. And we needlessly will remain disconnected and misinformed, spinning our wheels to reproduce what activists have already accomplished in other communities.

The achievement of our political goals also requires a commitment among activists to communicate with others directly. We must learn to turn to each other for help, advice, and material support.

If we step out of parochial concerns and take ourselves seriously as an integrated political movement, we will not reinvent strategies. Viewing gay

and lesbian organizing as interdependent, and as a long term project better allows us to prepare the materials, arguments, and tactics we need to accomplish our goals. It requires us to share much more than we do at present.

The final internal obstacle to building a more effective movement is our fierce and wonderful individuality. As queer people, each of us grew up believing that we were different from our siblings, our friends, our classmates. We respect and



TOM DI MARIA

understand individual quirkiness. But an unproductive aspect of this appreciation of individuality is the reluctance of many in our movement to genuinely support each other.

A parallel from the Reagan Administration illustrates how we could accomplish this. Despite enormous conflicts of politics and personality, the Reaganites were able to throw their support behind each other to implement their right-wing vision. Baker, Deaver, Darman, Don Reagon, and others played musical chairs with job titles and responsibilities during the eight years of the Administration. They suspended disagreement and threw their support behind each other. This same type of depersonalized support must become the norm among activists in our movement.

We have come a long way from the 1970s when the politics of vendetta and grudge ruled. But even today, individual dislikes dictate the direction organizations take. Sometimes the "personality clash" is a code word for deeper political differences. Let's address those differences upfront.

The progress we have made as a community and a movement requires us to shift consciousness and change how we work together. Until we support each other in practical and unselfish ways, we will not move past a rhetoric of progress on gay and lesbian freedom to the reality of fundamental social change.

Urvashi Vaid is Public Relations Director for the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, headquartered in Washington, DC.

Brand X: Why We Need To Be More Generic

Virginia M. Apuzzo

THERE'S A fundamental question that the gay and lesbian movement is going to have to confront, a question some have been asking for a long time: Is this a movement for social change, or is it a movement to make it okay to be gay or lesbian?

Every minority group faces this question. I come from a working-class Italian, Catholic family. My grandparents just wanted to be able to live their lives. They didn't care much about anti-Italian prejudice; they formed their own support systems—large families. All they wanted was to be able to survive, raise their kids, get across a few basic values, and maybe put some of their children through high school.

In every group there are those who just want to be able to live their lives. It's not difficult to understand when simply surviving takes everything you've got.

For the most part, our community isn't significantly different in that respect. Some only want to ride this train until it makes it okay for them to be gay or lesbian: to have a job, a place to live, and to be able to walk the streets of their neighborhoods and towns not fearing for the safety of their lives. Then they want to get off.

That's where we find ourselves twenty years after

Stonewall, faced with the question of legitimacy versus liberation.

If the issue is liberation, we are going to have to deal with some very basic questions around social change in America. Those questions revolve around issues of class, of race, of heterosexism, and how all those elements impinge on *all* our lives—straight or gay, black or white, rich or poor.

Choosing liberation means it becomes imperative that we adopt a more generic approach to the way we look at the things that matter to us.

AIDS, for example, is every problem this society has ever looked at, said it wanted to address, and then promptly walked away from.

The face of AIDS is poverty unaddressed, racism unchallenged, sexuality unresolved. AIDS is the worldwide war on drugs waged with a slingshot. It's four million street kids worldwide. It's homelessness in our cities.

It is the developed nations of the West turning the TV channel on famine, and a deaf ear to the needs of their developing neighbors.

It has brought us, as every crisis brings us, back to the glaring realization that for all that distinguishes us one from the other, what we share is what *must be most cherished*, and that is life.

I think what stops us from broadening our scope where AIDS is concerned is the pain. In many cities, vast numbers of us could probably be clinically diagnosed as suffering from chronic bereavement, and it's difficult to have 20/20 vision

Virginia Apuzzo

when you're battered and in grief.

But we shout and chant at every celebration and demonstration, every parade, "We are everyone. We are everywhere." As we structure our agenda, then, it is pivotal that the elements of that agenda reflect the "everyone and everywhere" that we are.

I see some lesbians and gay men recognizing the commonality of some of what we experience in the context of AIDS. But I have, as many of my sisters have, an abiding and painful question about the extent to which the oppression that I experience as a woman, as a middle-aged woman, has some reality for my brothers.

Here in New York State, for example, we have a very effective grassroots network around health care issues as they pertain to AIDS. But we barely got a mammography bill through the last legislative session. In the last forty-five days, three friends of mine had lumpectomies. For women, that's a reality: but where was the health consciousness in our community on *this* issue?

Increasingly, I see women having more of an opportunity to help fashion the agenda in this movement. Not as much as women ought to have, but more. And as we broaden participation in establishing the priorities of our agenda, I have increasing confidence that the issues will be framed more generically.

Yes, we must have a federal lesbian and gay rights bill, we must have a federal hate crime bill to stop this violence against us. We must have immigration

reform. We must have an AIDS policy that addresses this crisis once and for all. *We can and must get all of that.*

Yet, when each of these things is behind us, it is entirely possible that as a community we will still be looking down the barrel of heterosexism. As people of color, some of us will still be struggling against racism. And class—well, we have hardly begun to scratch the surface of that issue.

Perhaps we can recognize that what we have been calling "coming out" all these years also has an aspect to it that I call "coming in." We affirm our-

selves to ourselves and, in coming out to the world, seek to come into a community. When that very community that serves in part as sanctuary draws its lines so narrowly as to exclude its own, it creates political refugees.

That's too heavy a price for the legitimacy of a few.

Stonewall is not just about yesterday; for us it must also be about tomorrow. ▼

Virginia M. Apuzzo is Vice Chairperson of the New York AIDS Advisory Commission and Deputy Director of the New York Consumer Protection Board.



ROBERTA F. RAEDUN

ACCORDING TO Washington, DC's rumor mill, three (and possibly four) of the last six presidents had gay kids. If the ten percent incidence of gays in the population holds true among political families, there are dozens of members of Congress and thousands of state and local politicians with lesbian daughters or gay sons.

At first glance, this seems to be a large potential lobbying force for gay rights. Yet none of these people has gone public. And as I learned when I interviewed a dozen gay offspring of politicians, we can't even assume they are trying to influence their powerful parents in private. When Mom's in the state house or Dad's in the Senate, being gay can affect your life in complicated ways.

From an early age, gay politicians' kids experienced a heavy sense of responsibility. "You don't operate as an independent individual. You know that what you do reflects on your parent," says Mary Anne (Tanya) Corman, whose father served 20 years in the US House of Representatives. "I was always aware of the potential for scandal."

As teenagers, the gay sons and daughters of officeholders worried about smoking dope, drinking, or

exploring political demonstrations. What if they were caught and the media got wind of their hijinks?

This sense of responsibility can make coming out an especially acute struggle. Sons of politician fathers, in particular, are often groomed to continue the family tradition of running for office. If gay feelings start to surface, the results can be explosive.

From his infancy, Martin M.,* an only child, was primed for a political future. He's participated in his father's campaigns for the House of Representatives, and even took a year off from college to help with one of them. "We created an image of our family in the media with campaign commercials. I've been the perfect son: going to the perfect schools, wearing the perfect clothes, having the perfect dog. My parents expected me to go into politics, and they had the perfect mate picked out for me."

Any man or woman may struggle to come to terms with being gay, but Martin found that, "being in a political fish-bowl makes it an immensely emotional experience." It was hard to distinguish what he wanted from his parents' plans for him. Martin says he went through a period where he "played the straight routine, going as far as sleeping with women."

Martin's first foray into the gay community ended in near catastrophe. He drove his father's car halfway across his home state to visit a gay bar. In the parking lot, he drank a six-pack to fortify his courage. Panicked at the sight of his father's Congressional license plates in that setting, he removed them. Then he went into the bar. "I was standing in a little corner, terrified out of my mind, when someone comes up and says, 'Martin M., is that you?' I answered, 'My name's not Martin!' and ran out of there." He took off at 70 miles per hour, only to be stopped by the police for driving without a license plate. He ended up having to show his dad's plates before the officers let him go.

To be able to come out away from the glare of the political limelight, gay

The Untapped Lobby:

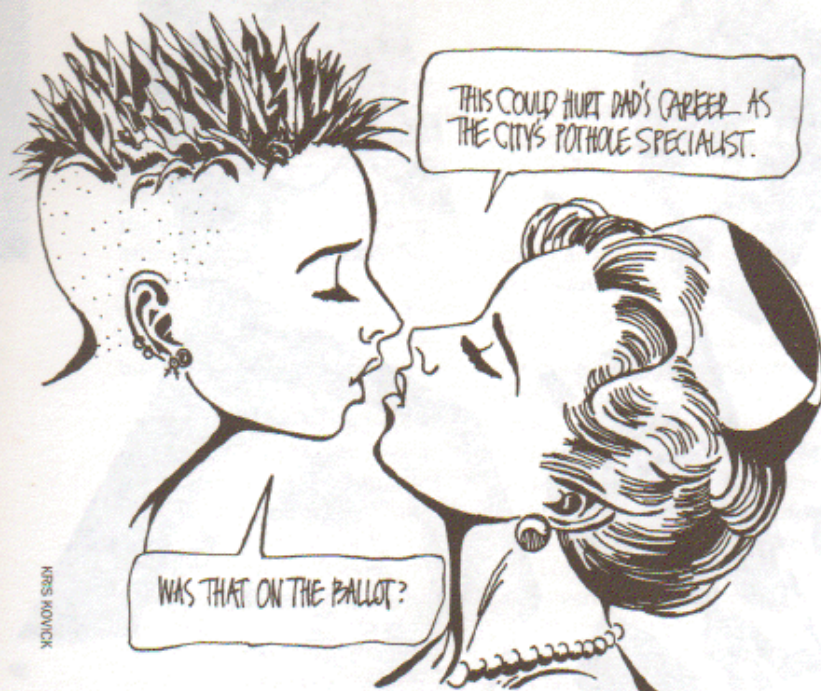
Lesbian Daughters and Gay Sons of Politicians

by Judy MacLean

Cartoons by Kris Kovick

*People identified only by a first name and last initial in this article are using pseudonyms, either to protect their parent's reputation or their relationship with their parent. In some cases, other identifying details have been changed. All full names are actual names, and no details have been changed for anyone identified by a full name.





sons and lesbian daughters often put significant physical space between themselves and their parents, sometimes by attending colleges thousands of miles away. Martin was one of those who withdrew from his parents while he was creating his gay identity.

"When we got back together as a family, I felt it necessary to tell my Dad who I was. I took him out to dinner and got him very intoxicated. I got myself very intoxicated." When he finally got around to telling his father he was gay, all his father said was, "Oh?"

But three days later, Martin received "an incredible letter. He told me I was still his son and that he still loved me."

Now, Martin is a strong lobbying force for gay rights within the Republican party. "When our issues come up, I call my dad and say, this is how it will affect me. He has no problem with gay issues." Martin claims to have changed three Republican Senators' votes on a 1988

bill for AIDS education. He also says he managed to stop a Republican House candidate in Southern California whose campaign tactics included attacks on gays. "I found the candidate's old college roommate, who was gay. He flew out to California, and that ended gay bashing in that campaign."

Still, there's a limit to how far Martin M. can come out. Last year, he was fired from his job, in what was clearly a case of anti-gay discrimination. "I got an attorney and was all prepared to file suit, but then my

"When our issues come up, I call my dad and say, this is how it will affect me."

family stopped it," he says. His dad plans to run for governor in 1990. "The suit would have been all over the papers." But Martin is philosophical about the experience: "I'm 23; eventually my life will be completely my own."

In the meantime, Martin believes he can accomplish a great deal behind the scenes. The public service ethic his parents raised him with makes him take seriously his duty as an informal gay rights lobbyist. "I have a tremendous amount of access on Capitol Hill because of my dad. Other children of Congressmembers have it, too, if they'd just use it," he says.

Robert Bray, Communications Director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, agrees. "Our nation's best lobbyists on the issue of gay rights are the gay children of politicians. HRCF can hire the most savvy lawyers, but the most effective lobbying happens at home."

There are many reasons why these potentially influential lobbyists do not always try to influence those at home.

Sometimes, lobbying seems unnecessary. Polly Munts, whose mother served 12 years in the Wisconsin state legislature, says, "I never talked with my mom about how she'd vote because her record is so strong on civil rights, I was confident she'd vote the right way."

In other families, rocky relationships can deter a gay or lesbian offspring from trying to influence a parent politician. Barbara D.'s father serves in the state legislature on one coast; she's an open lesbian activist on the other. Yet she doesn't lobby her dad. Her parents are

divorced and for many years her father was a distant figure. Now, "I stay out of his life. If we were close, I might be interested in talking to him about issues that come up," she says.

She hesitates to discuss gay-related legislation because she doesn't want to widen the gulf between her and her father. Barbara didn't talk to him when his state was debating its sodomy law. "I'd be devastated if I found out he voted the wrong way."

Eighteen-year-old David T. also has the kind of relationship with his parents that makes it difficult to lobby them. They both held city council seats when he was exploring his gay feelings in high school. He never dared to discuss council business with them because, "they wouldn't have listened to me anyway. To them, I was just a naive kid, and they wouldn't discuss politics with me."

When David came out, the family relationship turned bitter. David's been cut off financially and no longer can live at home. "They told me never to tell their friends or any other family members," he says. David has been accepted at the University of California at Berkeley, "but I can't pay for it. I have to wait until they will pay or until I can earn enough."

Tanyan Corman felt comfortable enough in her relationship with her Congressional father that she reversed the usual process. She actually lobbied her dad before she ever came out to him.

In 1978, her father was an 18-year veteran of the House. Tanyan was in college in his California district. She asked

Minnis and his supporters went door to door telling voters that Dietz had a gay son and his campaign was financed by the gay community.

him to come and speak at a rally against California Proposition 6, a ballot referendum that would have barred gay men and lesbians from teaching in the public schools.

"I had been going to a lesbian rap group on campus, but I

hadn't had the nerve to tell my dad about it," Corman recalls. "He came to the No on 6 rally and spoke against it. Afterwards, I told him I was going to an all-women's dance. I think I was hoping he would ask me if I were gay. But I'd been involved in so many causes, he didn't think about this one having anything to do with me personally." It took several more months for Corman finally to come out to her father.

MOST OF THE LESBIANS and gay men I spoke with have worried that they might become a political liability to their officeholding parents. At least one of their parents thinks those fears are exaggerated. Mary Lou Munts, former state legislator in Wisconsin, was surprised to learn that her daughter, Polly, was apprehensive about coming out. "I think kids worry unnecessarily about that. You get so many slings and arrows in poli-

THIS COULD DAMAGE MOM'S CREDIBILITY AS ASSISTANT CO-CHAIRPERSON FOR THE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC SUBCOMMITTEE TO STUDY RURAL VOTER REGISTRATION & DEMOGRAPHICS FOR RE-APPORTIONMENT.

SHE'S PRETTY AMBITIOUS, HUH?





tics and so much criticism yourself that anything your kids do is no big deal."

Munts, however, held office in an extremely liberal community. In more conservative climes, the story is different. Jim Dietz faced the ultimate nightmare of the gay child of a politician last November. His father, Oregon Democrat Dr. Estill Dietz, made his first-time bid for a state legislative seat against conservative Republican John Minnis. The population of the heterogenous Portland district in which the campaign took place ran the gamut from liberals to Christian fundamentalists. The Friday before the election, a poll showed Dietz ahead by five points. Over that last campaign weekend, Minnis and his supporters went door to door telling voters that Dietz had a gay son and that his campaign was financed by the gay community.

The elder Dietz had never broadcast the fact that Jim is gay, but he had never attempted to hide it either. In fact, he has long been an active member of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Jim was Dietz' campaign treasurer. Dr. Dietz had received a small donation from a gay PAC, but the charge that the Dietz campaign was financed by the gay community was quite an exaggeration.

During that same election, Oregon saw a vicious—and ultimately successful—campaign to pass Measure 8, which repealed a state executive order banning discrimination against lesbians and gay men. Measure 8 proponents charged that the order gave "special rights to gays."

In that context, Minnis' last-minute door-to-door ploy worked. Dietz was narrowly defeated on election day.

Estill Dietz is bitter. His advice to candidates in a similar

situation: "Don't run." Says his son, "I'm discouraged that the voters chose a Nazi who publicly supported apartheid over my father. I'm also sorry my being gay became an issue. It has nothing to do with my father's qualifications for office. He would have been an excellent public servant."

The political cost of having gay offspring has been even higher at other points in US history. In 1954, Sen. Lester Hunt (D) of Wyoming was an outspoken opponent of Sen. Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy was then at the height of his power, holding televised hearings to root alleged Communists (and homosexuals) out of government. Being named at one of McCarthy's hearings was all that was necessary to smash a political career.

Hunt's son, Lester Jr., was arrested in Washington DC's Lafayette Park, charged with making an advance to a plainclothes officer. McCarthy's henchmen told Hunt that his son would not be prosecuted if the older Hunt would retire when his term expired that year. They hoped to replace him with a Republican, and tip the balance in the Senate toward a Republican majority that would give McCarthy stronger support.

Hunt refused. McCarthy pressured the District of Columbia police; the younger Hunt was tried and found guilty. The press in Washington and Wyoming covered the trial. Distraught over the prospect of a nasty campaign in which his son's conviction would surely be an issue, and worried about his own failing health, Hunt

fatally shot himself in his Senate office.**

A tragedy like this is less likely to happen today. Yet no gay child of an elected official that I spoke with has gone public on the turf where his or her parent holds office. Some are public gay people, but at a distance of a thousand miles. Others remain private about their sexual orientation regardless of where they live. Still others have considered being out in a more public way, and have been pressured to keep quiet.

That's what happened to Tanyan Corman in 1980. Tanyan had transferred to a college outside of her dad's district. She had come out to her father, and he had signed on to an early version of the Congressional gay rights bill. She was becoming a fledgling lesbian activist in the Democratic Party.

Her father was running a tight race against an opponent who was hitting him hard for his stand on busing and other issues dear to the right. Jim Corman's campaign manager took Tanyan to his office one day. He closed the door and made it clear that he did not want her being a lesbian to become public information.

"I thought it was unnecessarily sleazy to take me aside that way, but I was willing to go along," she says. That was the year that Ronald Reagan's coat-tails swept several Republicans into the House. Jimmy Carter conceded the election early, and California voters stayed home in droves. Jim Corman lost his re-election bid by fewer than 1,000 votes, putting an end to his 20-year House career.

"I ended up being glad my

being a lesbian never came out," says Tanyan. "It was so close. I never would have known if I was the factor that caused him to lose that election."

It's a problem that each gay child of a politician considers coming out in isolation. Stephanie H.'s father has died, but his quarter century in Congress made him famous enough that she probably could get press attention even now if she came out.

"It would be easier to be out in public if my name were just Susie Smith, [but] my father's reputation is bigger than mine. People would be interested because of him. That would be the main thing—your father this, your father that. It holds me back."

"To be from a famous family and be out could be a very positive thing. Young gay people and their families would see that this person they respect has a gay daughter. And," Stephanie adds, "they might decide that being gay can't be so bad. Famous people form a context in America for what's acceptable."

Stephanie thinks people might start to think better of lesbians and gay men when it becomes known that they are part of famous families—especially if the famous family shares their political outlook or ethnic background. But there's a negative side, too. They may also start to think worse of the famous person, and by extension, of their political outlook or ethnicity.

The other negative, Stephanie says, is "the gossipy objectifying way the public sees famous people. Celebrity in the US is so

bizarre. We're children of famous people, but so what? Why is that significant? Why should people be in my business?" Her coming out might have a positive effect, but Stephanie fears it might also cater to the public's prurient interest. This probably keeps many other gay children of politicians in the closet.

It could make a big difference in public and legislative attitudes if America could actually see how many of us there are in the families of those elected to serve in our nation's democratic institutions (however flawed that democracy may be, and however great the public distrust of politicians). Just imagine what the news stories would look like if the media were free to seek comments from three (and possibly four) gay children of ex-presidents when a gay issue came up on Capitol Hill.

Until that day, lesbian and gay children of elected officials remain a huge potential force behind the scenes. But for reasons ranging from distant relationships with parents to the gay child's own need for distance to create an individual identity, that force is still largely untapped. ▼

**Maurice Rosenblatt, *The Ordeal of Senator Hunt*, an unpublished manuscript, Washington DC, 1988.

Judy MacLean is a freelance writer and editor in the San Francisco Bay Area. The highest political office either of her parents attained was PTA President.

Kris Kovick is a cartoonist living in San Francisco.

TAKE 1

Perhaps it was too soon to see her, but I knew my lover was in a hurry this morning. I scanned the horizon for a sign. If Big O was coming, I easily would be able to see her against the treeless horizon. She would come riding in over the familiar hills and valleys, some green and fertile, others brown and barren, until she reached our bed. I strained to see, twisting my head from side to side, looking in all directions.

I finally spotted her; she was riding in from the west today. She was still a fleck on a distant brown hill. She moved in lesbian time—in her own time, in her own fashion. If her pace was as slow as it usually was, and with all the ground she still had to cover, she might not get here until tomorrow.

My lover's plaintive voice called me back. "My arm is getting tired," she implored. I opened my eyes and tried to focus. I almost had forgotten about her, so intent was I on the lookout for Big O.

TAKE 2

I turned back to the rolling hills to the west. Big O was riding in from a long way out this morning. I could just see her outline against the crystal blue sky. Then she disappeared into the shadows of one of the brown valleys.

My lover was getting restless. "I'm hungry," she whispered to me.

"But I can already see her," I answered. "I'll make you a big breakfast after she gets here, okay?"

"I didn't know she was anywhere in sight," my lover muttered.

TAKE 3

I turned again to look for the rider from the west. Oh God, she must have turned back.



RIDES AGAIN

W E N D Y S T E I N

Illustration by Laurie White

"Where are you?" I yelled across the empty landscape.

Big O re-emerged from the dip in the hills and waved to me. I couldn't make out her face yet. I guessed she would be masked, as she always was. But I wondered if this rider was the one who usually came, or if it was one of Big O's apprentices. Most of them were equally as pokey, getting here when they damn well pleased. But once Big O had sent one who rode up quickly and snuck up on me from behind. My lover and I

were so surprised we both cried out.

My lover continued to rub and kiss me. She whispered encouragement, as much to herself as to me. "Right there?"

"Right there, but slower," I answered.

"SLOWER?! I have to pee," she whined.

TAKE 4

Big O was a casual rider, paying no attention to where she was going. The horse had made the trip so many times before, that the reins hung unattended around its shoulders. Slumped in the saddle, Big O read as the mare carelessly bumped along. Off camera, a lone guitar twanged her theme music:

Dummm Deee Dah Dah.

Dummmm Deee Dah Dah.

Dummmmm Deee Dah Dah.

She was wearing a weathered black Stetson, with a feather. A black mask hid the top of her face, but I could see that her jaw was strong, her mouth inviting. A red and black checkered shirt, probably flannel, was buttoned tight across her ample bosom. Her jeans were dusty from the long ride.

Dummm Deee Dah Dah.

Dummmm Deee Dah Dah.

Dummmmm Deee Dah Dah.

They poked along. She didn't seem to sense the urgency in my lover's bladder. If she had, she might have turned the old mare around and headed on out across the hills.

I turned to my lover to tell her how close Big O was now. But as I opened my eyes, I caught my lover stealing a glance at the clock on the nightstand.



TAKE 5

Horse and rider were slowly bobbing—*dummm dee dah dah, dummm dee dah dah*—poking along on a hilly treadmill that teased me with its simulation of progress.

"Now look," I scolded her. "Just keep coming, you hear me? You don't have to be teasing like this. Do you hear me? Why do you always have to be so slow?" I knew I was taking a chance scolding her. She might just ride away.

Big O must have been in a good mood, though, because instead of retreating, she removed her hat with a huge sweeping gesture and waved it at me. She must have flashed her big toothsome smile for an instant, too, because the sun glistened on the lower part of her face. But she still refused to be rushed. She and the mare just swayed in place.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

"I really have to pee," my lover whispered hoarsely in my ear.

"NO," I ordered. "And don't move your hand. That's a good spot. A little faster. No—slower. No, a little higher. No, lower. Never mind, go back to where you were before, that was good. Damn. You lost it.

Ohhh. That's it. Right there. Yeah, right there."

Dummm Dee Dah

Dah. Dummm

Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm

Dee Dah

Dah.

TAKE 6

A car stopped in front of our house. The car door slammed. My lover and I both held our breath and listened for the footsteps. Was she out there? Did she decide to drive the rest of the way? The footsteps hurried up to the next door neighbor's. My lover's hand began to move again. And I looked to the west for Big O and her trusty mount.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

I tried again to get Big O's attention. But she was purposefully ignoring me. I opened my eyes to look at my lover. Her jaw was clenched. She was massaging her own shoulder with one hand as her other hand massaged me.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

TAKE 7

The dog barked. Why did the dog always bark about now? Was Big O finally at the door?

Frantically, I looked around. Big O was just coming up over the last plush green mound towards the bed. But, tease that she was, she pulled the horse to a stop and dismounted. "Now what?" I thought.

She must have heard me.

"We were parched, me and my horse here." They had paused at a watering hole. The horse was lapping greedily at the water. Big O dipped her hands into the clear water and satisfied her thirst with gusto. Then she gleefully dunked her hat into the water and plopped it onto her head, sending water splashing from her short brown hair down her face and neck, soaking the front of her shirt. She stared me straight in the eye, nodded, and

gave me a sly smile. Then swinging her long leg over the saddle, she remounted and came towards me.

TAKE 8

My lover kept strumming.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

Dummm Dee Dah Dah.

The mare started to canter.

My lover strummed faster.

Dum de dum de dum de dum de dum de dum de dum de dum de dum de dum.

The dog was barking furiously to warn us Big O was coming. We needed no warning. She was coming at me at a full gallop.

Suddenly, she jumped from the horse and burst into the room. I screamed an ecstatic welcome. My lover looked at her with appreciation and a silent prayer of thanksgiving.

As usual, the masked woman had arrived just in time. She couldn't stay but a moment though. She only had time for a breathless, "Howdy, ma'am, glad to be of service." Then saluting me with a quick tug on the brim of her Stetson, Big O was gone. She didn't even wait for me to thank her.

My lover ran to the bathroom. But I lay there smiling and waving as the retreating horse and rider ambled off into the sunset. ▼

When not chasing Big O through supermarkets, shopping malls, and dance halls, Wendy Stein is a freelance writer and editor in Syracuse, New York. She thanks the women she has loved for inspiring her.

About the artist: Laurie "Max" White is currently a student of Hatha Yoga and an active member of the Fort Mason Print Makers in San Francisco.



FROM CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY THAN FROM AIDS.

One out of three gay men and lesbians suffers from chemical dependency. That adds up to 7 million persons struggling with the disease of chemical dependence who are on their way to becoming statistics.

It doesn't have to be that way.

Pride Institute is America's first in-patient drug and alcohol treatment facility for gay men and lesbians. At Pride, we offer them a chance to clear the drugs and alcohol out of their life and a chance to find themselves, without the everyday distractions of their normal routine. All in the safety and comfort of a place that respects their sexual orientation while protecting their confidentiality.

Our program is based on a proven combination of 12-step experience and clinical expertise. But unlike other treatment facilities, we also offer them a chance to explore the history and heritage of being gay in a non-gay world.

Our goal is to send them back into the world full of the enthusiasm, talent and energy that makes them who they are and proud of what they are—clean, sober and choosing to live.

If drugs or alcohol are doing a number on you, call our toll free number today: **1-800-54-PRIDE** (or in MN, 1-612-934-7554). Help is available 24 hours a day.

Recover with pride.

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INSTITUTE**



THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Steven Heimoff's essay offers a portrait of a significant milieu of gay male life. His interpretation of the sexual hunt in the backrooms at the peep shows makes what many readers will feel are politically unacceptable, or at least controversial, assumptions about masculinity and sexuality.

Since the late sixties, most discussions of male sexuality have been framed by feminist analysis and embroiled in the political campaigns of the last twenty years. Heimoff's essay confirms many of the most pessimistic feminist assumptions about masculine sexuality while also challenging the progressive hopes of many gay men and feminists to reshape masculine socialization. Sexual politics in every form—whether combatting sexist behavior or devising safe sex educational campaigns—cannot be conducted very effectively if our assumptions about gender socialization, sexuality, and the potential for intimacy are inaccurate. We hope by publishing this candid and controversial essay to re-open discussion about male sexuality. As a first step toward a broader discussion, we are publishing several comments that reflect different male responses to Heimoff's portrait.

by Steven Heimoff

Reprinted with permission from the *East Bay Express*, Berkeley, California.

Illustration by Alexander Laurant.

We may all need to readjust our image of what regular guys are all about, because there are millions of them slouching off to the bookstore.

THERE IS A PLACE in downtown Oakland I say I will not come to anymore, but, surprise, here I am again. Not actually inside yet; double-parked outside, motor running, so I can look down the long entrance way to see if that fat old queen is working tonight. If he is, I can't go in, because he's got my number, damn him. Last time I was here he comes into the back room, where I'm pretending to be watching the video strip game, and he says, with his Gotcha! smirk, "You bought a dollar's worth of tokens over an hour ago, and we both know it doesn't take an hour to use four tokens."

I say evenly, "You want me to leave." I don't ask it; I say it, with a nice smile, acknowledging that I recognize his power over me. No sense alienating him. He just fixes me with that Do-I-look-stupid? look, his three chins hanging down like pink drapery. I leave. I even say goodnight.

That's why I'm double-parked out here to see if he's working, but although I can see about half the counter, including the cash register and the mirrors reflecting rows of lubricants, lotions, and sex toys, I can't see who's working. Usually the clerk stands right in the middle, by the register, and you can see him from outside, but not tonight. Meanwhile there's a pair of headlights coming up behind me, which means it might be a cop, or God forbid, someone I know.

I discover to my relief that it's not the fat old queen who's working but the young kid, the one with the nice face and tight

jeans. I should have known, because he always sits on the counter at the far end, swinging his legs. He sees me as soon as I see him, but it's cool, because he's young and good-looking and not bitter like the fat old queen. He doesn't take being a clerk in a dirty bookstore very seriously.

I go in and decide to flirt a little with the kid. I'm an outrageous flirt, I freely admit it. I enjoy flirting; it's fun, but it almost never works. Not with this kid, anyway; he always just hands me my four tokens with a grunt and goes back to reading his dirty magazine.

ONCE IN the back room the first thing you notice is the heat. It's like entering an oven that's set permanently on bake. There's no fresh air, no circulation, just a greasy old fan stirring the dust around. The heat is compounded by strands of cheap colored bulbs, red, green, and blue, forty-watt jobbers. They blink in sequence and give a carnival-like atmosphere to the place, which I don't mind, because this is, after all, what enables most "respectable" people to call the back rooms of dirty bookstores "seedy" and "lurid." I like seediness. I wouldn't want the back room all dolled up and made antiseptic. That's not what it's all about.

There's usually a pretty good crowd of men back here; never any women. The men tend to fall into three main groups. First, there are the older straight guys, 45 or 50 and over, your

I'm an outrageous flirt, I freely admit it. I enjoy flirting; it's fun, but it almost never works.

basic balding, pot-bellied daddies who come in for a quickie. You'd be surprised at how many there are: your dentist, grocer, perhaps your granddad. Then there are the younger straight guys also in for quickies, but their quickies take about three times longer, on average, than the older guys' (up to half an hour, versus five to ten minutes). I suppose this is because they're younger and healthier and last longer, although there might be some fantasizing on my part going on there. The third group is your queers, and they're in there cruising.

Why am I here? I'm looking to connect with the second group, the young straight guys. Let's get one thing straight right away: I may be queer, but you'd never know it, not in a million years, and I take my manhood seriously. On appearance, I fall into the second group. They tend to be working-class and good-looking in a rough-hewn way, the kind of guys Madison Avenue loves to use to sell things with. They know how to wear a cap and walk like a man is supposed to, sort of a lope. They're usually horny and there are a hell of a lot of them in the back room at any given time. All I can think is, the local ladies must be doing something wrong if they can't keep these guys at home. I know if I had a

man like that I'd keep him tethered to a short leash. These guys are coming to the dirty bookstore in droves to get off and leave their little love deposit on the floor, and their ladies probably don't even know it. Ladies of Alameda County: be warned!

Naturally, these days the young guys are wary of fooling around. I remember a time...but no, there's no use crying over spilt milk. Still it is germane to the story to mention that once upon a time, before the epidemic, scoring with these guys was as easy as falling off a log. Nowadays, most of these guys enter the back room like they're walking past a graveyard at night: eyes down, head bent forward, hands in their pockets, they move in a straight line at about ten miles an hour. You almost expect them to whistle. They beeline to the nearest booth and make a big deal about Slamming the Door and Locking It. In other words, no one need apply. I can understand that, but I regret it all the same. On the other hand, there's always a percentage, maybe one out of ten, who are fair game. I don't know why some guys will and some won't; most likely, I figure, everyone will, sooner or later, given the right circumstances. Maybe some of them are still ignorant of the epidemic (although that's pretty unlikely), maybe they know how to practice safe sex (yes, you can do safe sex even in the back room of a dirty bookstore), or maybe they just throw caution to the wind, gripped as they are in the throes of their horniness. They are your meat and potatoes crowd, the basic staple of the back room, and they're why I

You're probably wondering how I can call a guy "straight" if he's willing to go inside a booth and mess around with another man.

keep coming back even though I always say I won't.

You'd think that with that horny percentage of young guys ready to double-up in a booth, it would be easy to score, but that's wrong, mainly because of the competition. That's the third group, the cruising queers. To me, they're mostly a bunch of stiffs, out of shape, sad and furtive-looking, with that peculiar dead-suspicious look like walking zombies. People you'd cross the street to avoid. I don't feel like I have anything in common with them, despite certain surface similarities.

It may sound to you like there's an element of self-hatred here, but I'm sorry, it's the way I feel. Hitler and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. both loved women, but that doesn't mean they were members of the same club. I keep myself in shape and I know damn well I look good. These creepy guys give the rest of us a bad name. But, inexplicably, some of the young guys go for this type. Why, I'll never understand. *Chacun a son gout*. These queers are also bad for the trade because they scare the young guys off. Let's say a straight guy is back there, horny as hell, sees me, and figures we'll duck into a booth where he can get his rocks off. Great. But then all of a sudden, we're surrounded by three or four old geezers staring at us like lizards, following us wherever we go.

Naturally that alarms the guy, and ninety percent of the time he ducks inside a booth and does it alone. That really pisses me off.

YOU'RE PROBABLY wondering how I can call a guy "straight" if he's willing to go inside a booth and mess around with another man. Good question. There's no hard and fast rule here, you understand. For me, a "straight" guy will play around with another guy, but eventually he'll go home, where he's got a good woman waiting. I guess for me the distinction is subjective. It has to do with masculinity. I value masculinity in a man. You can see masculinity in how a guy dresses, how he walks, in his eyes, and especially (for me), his mouth. Feminine guys have prissy mouths, while masculine guys have mouths that are harder and firmer, sensuous. I know that sounds vague, but it's the best I can do.

Femininity in a guy revolts me. It just feels wrong, like mustard on ice cream. Guys that mince and prance are okay in their place—in their neighborhoods, or on a float in some parade, and I've had quite a few for friends—but not here, in the back room, where every move is choreographed like a ballet and your behavior has got to be just so. I mean, this whole thing depends on the goodwill and cooperation of the ten percent of straight guys who are still willing to play around. They lubricate this place; they keep the wheels turning. If they were to stop coming, or beeline for their booths and slam the doors, this

whole scene would melt faster than a butter patty in the desert. It's always been like that, as far back as you'd care to go. The kindness of strangers.

That's why these effeminate cruisers annoy me so. If a straight guy ends up in a booth with another "straight" guy (read: me), he can shrug it off by rationalizing that both of us are real men and just "fooling around." All he has to do to prove it is look at me: as rugged as he is, not a molecule of drag in my body. But the feminine guys are a shocking reminder that there's a word for guys who have sex with other guys and that word is *faggot*. The dreaded "f" word, and no self-respecting man can allow himself to even *suspect* that on some deep level he is one. So when Mr. Ten Percenter comes into the back room and the first thing he notices (after the heat) is the beady eyes and licking tongues of the queers, circling him like timber wolves, his fear level soars. It's a complicated set of psychological factors, but the end result is the slammed booth door, the date with Rosy Palm, and ten cc's on the floor. Alone.

That's why it would be misleading to suggest that I score all the time, because, in all honesty, on a typical night, absolutely nothing happens. I might stay for an hour or two, flirt with a few guys, but they're all door slammers. If there are other queers about, I try to avoid them. I might walk away from them whenever they get too close, and if they're especially obnoxious, I might go into my psycho schtick. That's where I mutter to myself, walk a little threateningly, and clench my

fists. I'm not really like that at all; it's just an act to scare them off or at least make them keep their distance. You should know, though, that very few of them are taken in by this act. Most of these back room cruisers are predatory old things, hardened inside; they've been around the block for years. It doesn't matter; growling makes *me* feel better.

Even so, often I hit pay dirt. Like I began to say earlier, in the old days (I never thought I'd be saying that!), you used to be able to score almost every time. Now, it's more like every tenth time! Which sounds like dismal odds, and you might think it's awfully boring spending nine nights walking around the back room of a dirty bookstore with nothing happening. But I like it. It's like fishing; even if you don't catch anything, you can still have a good time. I know it's hard to believe, but to me, there's a lot of ambience in the back room, and it beats being a couch potato. It's a little slice of life, and all the tension, hope, and glory are there, in microcosm. If you're a student of life and enjoy watching a wide cross-section of people go through their weirdness (and going through your own at the same time), it's never boring. So, a long time ago I taught myself a handful of tricks to keep cruising from getting dull. I still use them, because they've never stopped working. I don't want to get too graphic, but there's a lot a man can do to excite himself without blowing his wad. I can go for hours and stay into it. In this sense, it's like extended foreplay, using a

whole bunch of unusual techniques and objects.

THIS NIGHT, there's nothing going on except for four buddies playing the video strip game. You've got to stay away from groups here; groups can be dangerous. They're usually half-tanked, and all that sexual energy is close to a critical mass. Personally, I think guys coming together to the peeps smacks of more than a little mutual erotic attraction, but it's repressed way down there in the shadows and anything that threatens to shine a light on it risks being seriously mauled. Too bad, too, because these guys are just right, probably military (the Alameda base is just on the other side of the tunnel), and my fertile mind can conjure up all sorts of amusing connubial permutations. But years of experience have made me wary, and I avoid them. One of them keeps glancing at me, and at one point he goes into a booth, drops a token, and *leaves the door open*—an otherwise astonishing casual invitation. But I don't respond, because discretion is the better part of mayhem. I have to assume he's not aware of the meaning of his action—these are yokels and it's probably their first trip to the big city.

After a while another of the guys starts giving me really strange, almost hostile looks, probably because I keep walking around instead of disappearing inside a booth—which is the ostensible reason why I'm here—and he seems to be wondering, What the hell are you

doing? So I go back out front to the magazine section. The rules are no in and out privileges. You're supposed to buy a dollar's worth of tokens every time you go in, but I know the kid at the counter doesn't care and he won't make a fuss. (The fat old queen would; he's a real stickler.) I pretend to look at the dirty girlie magazines, but they bore me, so I move over to the swinger magazines. Even among the perverts who frequent the dirty bookstores, the swinger magazines are perceived as truly bizarre. Mostly, they're full of photos of pallid, pasty-skinned middle-aged women, fat and frowsy, looking for some cheap thrills. (You begin to acquire a different perspective on the Bible Belt after noticing their addresses.)

THE PEEPS HAVE been in for their share of hard knocks lately. As if the epidemic weren't enough, the new moralism of the Reagan Revolution has delivered the peeps a staggering blow.

Still, the few surviving peeps, it seems to me, are thriving. In a kind of Darwinian survival of the fittest, and in true corporate style, they've been through the battles of the eighties and the lean and mean operations have survived. They're more resilient than ever, although, doubtless, many more will close. The institutions' continuation, despite the odds against them, is a testimony to a truth that most civic fathers, who would like to see them disappear altogether, cannot admit: there is a great demand for dirty bookstores.

It would be fascinating to do a real demographic study of who goes to the peeps. My apocryphal descriptions aside, there remains a great deal that is unanswered: Are most of the men who go there married or single? Are the older men your classic dirty old men, or are they really your dentists, homeowners, PTA members, and church-going Christians? We've become so accustomed in this country to hypocrisy, what with the likes of Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggert, Gary Hart, et. al., that we almost automatically assume the worst of people; but we really do not know. Concerning the young guys who frequent the peeps, I have a few theories. Almost all of them seem to be blue-collar workers, the kind of guys you see in Lite beer commercials.

It seems to me we may need to readjust our image of what regular guys—the Lite beer crowd—in America are all about, because it could be that there are millions of them slouching off to the bookstore, unbeknownst to anyone, and this is not in keeping with the image. If a lot of these guys really are going to the peeps, then we must admit that man's sexuality is indeed what it's been rumored to be all along: harping, insistent, indiscreet; when you gotta go, you gotta go.

Down near the bookstore I go to is a bar which will remain nameless, a real sports bar, its walls plastered with baseball and football pictures, pennants, and *Playboy* centerfolds. There's a well-used pool table there, and on Friday and Saturday nights, a duo wails out C&W

tunes. The barkeep is a sassy lady with long, bleached blond hair, and a lot of the regulars wear cowboy hats; on them, this is no affectation, but perfectly natural. Everyone gets pretty drunk, there's a lot of clapping and hooting; this is not one of your cry-in-your-beers bars. There's a young guy I see in there from time to time whose looks I like a lot. He, alas, has never noticed me and probably never will. He's built like a construction worker, maybe a pipefitter, and wears a gold band on his wedding finger. He plays pool with his buddies, drinks Dos Equis like a champ, and seems like a regular guy. And he is—if, that is, you can say that paying regular visits to the dirty bookstore is a regular-type activity.

I've seen him, more than once, leave the bar, walk the half-block down to the bookstore, buy a few bucks' worth of tokens, and disappear into one of the deluxe booths for fifteen or twenty minutes. Then he emerges from the booth, straightening his hair, and takes himself back to the bar, where they're just calling his name off the blackboard for the next game of pool.

Do his furtive visits to the bookstore somehow disqualify him from being regular? The official position—the Judeo-

I may be queer, but you'd never know it, not in a million years, and I take my manhood seriously.

Christian one, with the accent lately, and decidedly, on the Christian part—is yes. We are asked to transmute embarrassing attacks of horniness into something higher and nobler, the way priests are supposed to, or at least save them for the marriage bed. To this crowd, sex is “bad,” even harmful if it is done outside its rightful place (a view that is temporarily, let us hope, difficult to argue with), and, taken to its logical extreme (which the born-again do), this view sees sex as being for procreation only.

No one can dispute that sex gets people into trouble. It makes them get diseases, neuroses, divorces, pregnant, and sometimes, it makes them die. Like many other things that are enjoyable—swimming, mountain climbing, and drinking, it is most often recreational—done strictly for fun.

To say that sex is either for making babies (good) or having fun (bad) compels people to make a choice. Many, when confronted with this choice, will tend to talk one way and act another. Ergo Jimmy Swaggert. Mostly, you can't blame them. What is important to remember, if you ask me, is that, although this is the definition of hypocrisy, talking one way and acting another doesn't necessarily discredit either what the hypocrite says or what he does. He means what he says when he says it, and enjoys what he does when he does it. Meaning that humans are complicated devices, driven by drives and motives no one can measure or fathom, and hypocrisy is as human as love or embarrassment.



It is probably as useless to try to use doctrine to predict and control behavior as to use meteorological data to predict earthquakes. The San Andreas Fault doesn't give a hoot what the air temperature is, and the regular guy in the bar, when push comes to shove, doesn't care

what the Pope says. I know one thing: I'll be going back to the dirty book store real soon, even though I say I won't and I won't be alone there either, at least not until human nature changes. By that time, I probably won't care anymore. ▼

Steven Heimoff is a free lance writer living in Oakland, California.

About the artist: Alexander Laurant, a native San Franciscan, is an illustrator and graphic designer currently living in Berkeley, California.

REAL MEN WEAR DRESSES

by Scott Tucker

WHAT'S YOUR UTOPIA? A world without pornography? Universal bisexuality? Bon-dage in every bedroom and tofu in every pot? Heimoff's little piece of paradise would be a video arcade where straight guys (the real thing) connect with "straight" gays (butch gays like Heimoff) without any interference or distraction from "queers" (femme gays). Heimoff does convey the boredom, competition, and lightning couplings in porn shops and arcades—places many of us visit with mixed feelings.

Heimoff lays out the rules of the game among men who keep company in relative silence, picking up the signs and signals that place you in the hierarchy of masculinity, and qualify or disqualify you as a sexual partner. But I think, finally, that he takes the rules too seriously. Rules can be enjoyed for the sake of the game, but Heimoff hasn't learned that the game can be a lot more fun if you feel free to bend and reinvent the rules.

Heimoff distinguishes between three groups of men: older straight guys; young straight guys; and "queers." Or, in his distancing phrase, "The third group is you, queers, and they're in there cruising." No "we" and "us," but "your" and "they." And

he follows this with a nervous pun and self-proclamation: "Let's get one thing straight right away: I may be queer, but you'd never know it, not in a million years, and I take my manhood seriously."

The masculinity of "the kind of guys Madison Avenue loves to use to sell things with" is what turns Heimoff on, and his own words prove that he has some understanding of the way in which our culture shapes our nature. I suspect there's a trace of deliberate provocation in Heimoff's verbal attack on "queers." In his equation, Hitler would stand for "queers," whereas Martin Luther King, Jr. would stand for true manhood. In fact, Heimoff has more in common with Hitler than with King, if we take Heimoff's hatred for human *difference* at face value.

"Queers" get in the way of Heimoff's hunt for real men: "the feminine guys are a shocking reminder that there's a word for guys who have sex with other guys and that word is *faggot*." Sweetheart, there's a word for guys who don't challenge the bigotry and brutality of other guys and that word is *coward*. Heimoff is oddly coy about just what he does with real men, but we know for sure that he's been fucked in the head by masculinity.

Heimoff's ambivalence about the games men play is plain when he admits telling himself he won't go back to the porn shop, yet knows he *will* "real soon...and I won't be alone there either, at least not until human nature changes." Humans are culture-creating animals: culture is our nature. So, with a degree of solidarity, we can choose to change the rules. In that video arcade, Heimoff never seems to meet other "straight" gays like himself—but it's very likely he does. Heimoff, let me ask you: would you lose your hard-on if the rules of masculinity became...an open secret?

A final personal note: in 1986, I won the International Mr. Leather contest, and enjoyed the sport of the scene. At one event, I watched a ball-gowned and bewigged drag-queen do a bump-and-grind strip, and emerge as a leatherman in boots, chaps, and harness. Real men wear dresses, dear, and leather, and anything they like. And in this

culture, it takes a real man not to pass for "straight." Sometimes the guys who give us hard-ons are not good for our health, and they still make too many of the rules. ▼

Scott Tucker is an activist and writer. He has been published in Lambda Rising, Christopher Street, The Body Politic, and the Advocate. He salivates at the sight of black basketball sneakers.

THE OBJECT OF DESIRE

by Jeffrey Escoffier

I NEVER HAVE been to a peep. And I suppose that if I did go, the Steven Heimoffs of the world would ignore me completely (I am no hot young body builder) and classify me as a "cruising queer." Apart from Heimoff's glib and self-aggrandizing rationalizations, though, he gives us an honest portrait of some of the more uncomfortable traits of male sexuality.

Most politically conscious men stay away from speaking of those traits because they are embarrassing and, almost unavoidably, open one up to political criticism. Yet many of those traits *are* part of my sexuality, and are probably important in the sexuality of the vast majority of men. Heimoff's self-portrait reminds me of three of these traits in particular.

First there's the Hunt. Cruising. Conquest. Aggression—a desire to dominate or exercise power, not necessarily violently or brutally—is certainly a significant component of many men's sexuality. It provides energy. It's a form of reaching out. But aggression is often the by-product of competition among men for dominance, and brings with it a pervading sense of failure and self-contempt.

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Tenderness is often sublimated aggression.



This makes it difficult to escape feelings of outright hostility or contempt for our sexual partners. These feelings are often painful for the man's partner, as well as for himself. Aggression is the most difficult aspect of male sexuality to acknowledge because so much harm comes from it.

We are capable of love only by coming to terms with our self-contempt and, by its extension, contempt for our sexual partners. But contempt and aggression are always there. Even tenderness, I think, is often sublimated aggression.

Then there is the ever present objectification. I believe that sex for men and women is impossible without it. We all want to be the object of sexual desire. As well as the subject. But few of us want to be *only* an object.

Sex itself is a dialectic between "objecthood" and subjectivity, that rapid oscillation between active objectifying and being an object. And whether we like it or not stereotypes code the human object: age, gender, race, class, coloring, body type, and costume all contribute to our construction of the desired object. The excitement of sex comes from our fluctuating awareness of ourselves as heavily coded objects and as subjects struggling for freedom from objecthood.

The last element of male sexuality that I want to talk about is transgression. The pleasure of crossing boundaries, breaking taboos, the mind fuck. This is the allure of forbidden zones, backrooms, peepshows. The crumbling of facades, of respectability. The pleasure in being bad.

Yes, sex is sometimes a foray into the unknown. It can put us outside society. I can think of two mundane occasions when I experienced transgressive pleasure: One was when I first realized I was gay, and was thrilled (and terrified) to be a sexual outlaw; another was the excitement I've felt having sex with a "straight" man, when contempt for conventional definitions of manliness is mixed with the pleasure in destroying the straight man's self-image. (As I used to say to one man, "Hard-ons don't lie.")

Straight men probably experience the same very real pleasure of mixing contempt

with breaking taboos when they sleep with gay men. Transgressive pleasure is peculiarly mental. It's intellectual sex.

It is useful to remind ourselves of the existence of these tendencies before we dismiss Heimoff's essay as a repugnant tale of misogyny, homophobia, and self-hatred. Heimoff's picture is an accurate portrayal of the sexual culture of gay males throughout the country—possibly even of the majority of gay men. Whatever is unattractive or emotionally inhibiting about it cannot be changed by political denunciations, but can be by honest exploration. ▼

Jeffrey Escoffier is an editor of OUT/LOOK.

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

by Tomás Almaguer

STEVEN HEIMOFF'S PEEP HOLE view of impersonal gay sex at adult bookstores will dismay and perhaps revolt many people. But the issues he raises force us to evaluate our views on male sexual culture as well as gay "public sex." Heimoff believes that male sexuality is guided by innate drives incessantly seeking release and satisfaction. It is these "embarrassing attacks of horniness" that incite gay men to seek "the kindness of strangers" at bookstore peeps. He implores us to "admit that man's sexuality is indeed what it's rumored to be all along: harping, insistent, indiscreet." How accurate is this view of male "human nature"? Are gay men "driven by

Individual preferences for certain sexual acts parallel our attitudes toward eating certain foods...

Homosexuals simply become the cultural equivalent of vegetarians in a society of carnivores.

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their sexuality. The passions unleashed during sexual intercourse allow straight men to momentarily re-experience the tranquil serenity once attained through breastfeeding and a mother's embrace. Coitus provides the possibility of re-experiencing primary love—of re-fusing with their mother and regressing to an infantile stage where all relational needs are satisfied. Gay men experience this refusal by orally copulating other men. (One can speculate that gay men experience another man's penis as the symbolic representation of their mother's breast).

The insatiable, driven character of gay sexuality is the product of gay men seeking to attain an elusive bonding to another person. Gay "promiscuity" is symptomatic of gay men's frustrated attempts at re-experiencing primary love with other men.

Our initial gender identity continually gets reinforced during adolescence with new gender and sexual messages, messages which generally privilege heterosexuality and valorize a cult of masculinity that ruthlessly suppresses gender non-conformity. Society crafts a "natural" connection between our male biological sex, a masculine gender identity, and compulsory heterosexual behavior. Although biological sex is rooted in nature, our gender and sexual identities are not. Variations always exist in the way we individually put together our biological sex with our gender and sexual behavior.

Homosexual desire is simply one of the numerous erotic possibilities that exist in all societies. Every society defines its sexual conventions like it defines customs in clothing and cuisines. It determines what is and is not acceptable to wear; what is edible and what is not. Our need for nourishment and for protection from the elements is biologically conditioned, but how we satisfy these needs is socially prescribed.

So too with our sexuality. Individual preferences for and aversions to certain sexual acts, for instance, parallel our attitudes toward eating certain foods. Eating dogs or horses is inconceivable in our culture but deemed delicacies in others. When viewed in these terms, homosexuals simply become the

benign cultural equivalent of vegetarians in a society of carnivores. Some even define their identity on the basis of these sexual preferences as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Our sexuality, therefore, is infinitely more fluid and socially malleable than we ever truly appreciate. Building upon the underlying psychodynamics cast during childhood, our sexuality is given form and structure by the same social and cultural forces that shape other aspects of our lives.

Male sexuality in this society often becomes the symbolic expression of male dominance. Sex often becomes the most intimate nexus of power/dominance between two people—an arena where couples symbolically affirm or transgress their position in the gender, class, and racial hierarchy. Men typically approach sex as they do other aspects of their lives: in instrumental and goal-oriented terms. Men come to define themselves as Subjects and women as Objects. Women are typically dehumanized (for example, viewed in animalistic terms such as bitch, fox, or bird) and not granted the same sexual prerogatives that men retain for themselves.

In heterosexual relationships, men in this culture usually enter into a calculated exchanges with women in which they manipulate romantic interest and love in order to obtain sexual favors from them. In more straightforward, popular terms, men give love to get sex, women give sex to get love.

Given commonalities in male gender socialization, gay men generally approach sexuality like heterosexual men. Despite differences in sexual-object choice, and how we individually negotiate our sense of gender, gay men are first and foremost men. Since this society continually privileges that which is male and masculine, gay men typically organize their sexuality around these images and erotic messages.

Male homosexuals often eroticize these masculine ideals along with sexual role playing based on unequal status. Gay sexual behavior in the US is fraught with elements of power and dominance expressed in gendered terms. It is a world of "tops" and "bot-

toms" as well as "queens" kneeling at the feet of "butch trade" in adult bookstores. Impersonal public sex ritualizes men appropriating the masculine, straight role and men submitting to a feminine, "servicing" role. Sexual role playing and erotic fantasy in these instances typically involve the symbolic giving and taking of masculinity, a sexual drama that draws upon the dominant heterosexual scripts that circumscribe male/female relationships.

The way gay male culture eroticizes masculinity provides a key for understanding gay sexuality and the bookstore cruising that Heimoff describes. It is a world that has fetishized masculinity and, in the process, denigrated that which is feminine. The campy, yet disparaging, way in which gay men deride feminine attributes provides ample evidence of this. If straight male identity is indelibly cast in anti-feminine terms, then gay male identity often takes these formulations to the extreme.

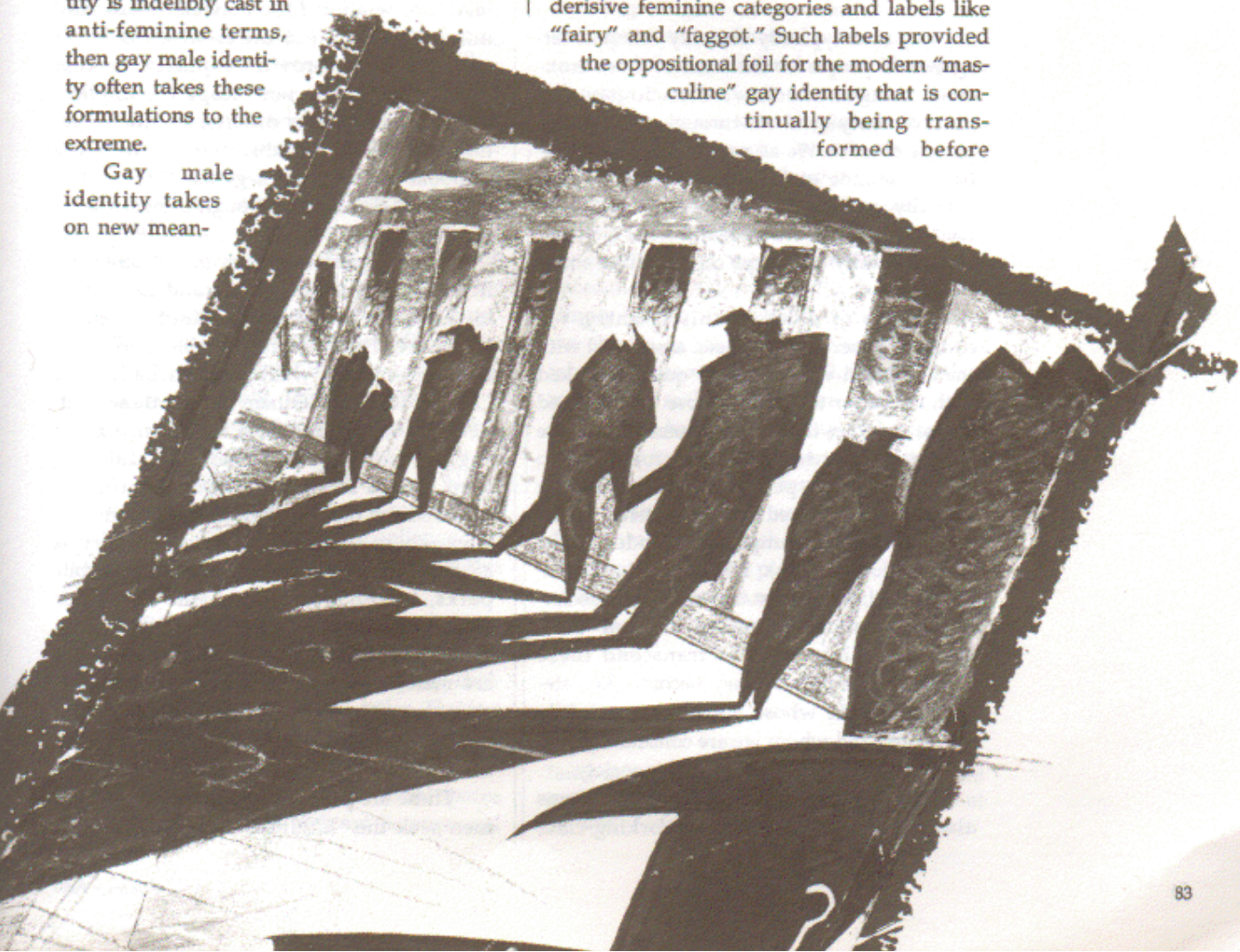
Gay male identity takes on new mean-

ing when viewed from this perspective. We know that its earliest expressions in the US flourished during World War II when identifiable gay communities initially emerged. The advantages of white men in this society afforded them the possibility of initially carving out a new identity based on sexual preference. Successfully avoiding the stifling realities, competing identities, and subcultural prescriptions of class and racial systems facilitated the emergence of a gay identity in this country. Despite the opprobrium white gay men confronted during the period, their position in the social structure afforded them the opportunity to boldly create new gay institutions, communities, and a unique subculture.

Gay historians have shown that this positive gay identity was historically constructed through the prism of traditional gender categories. It was largely defined in opposition to derisive feminine categories and labels like "fairy" and "faggot." Such labels provided the oppositional foil for the modern "masculine" gay identity that is continually being transformed before

The "pervs" that Heimoff describes are no different than the respectable queers that most of us believe we are.

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Most men—gay
or straight—
simply have not
developed the
emotional
capacity to enter
into meaningful
and satisfying
relationships.

our eyes. Witness the various masculine gay images and identities that permeate gay culture: the buffed body builder, the military man, the rugged cowboy, the construction worker, the leather stud, the preppy student, and the more recent "boy look." Gay male culture eroticizes certain bodily features (pecs, thighs, crotches, underarms, and nipples, among other things) of these objectified men.

These are the masculine ideals and erotic images that titillate gay male sexuality. This is true whether we seek respectable relationships or recreational sex in gay bars, on college campuses, at poetry readings, political meetings, therapy groups, or even at adult bookstores, public restrooms, local parks, or any other cruisey haunt. The "pervs" that Heimoff describes are no different than the respectable queers that most of us believe we are.

Gay men typically objectify different categories of people on the basis of these eroticized images which we consciously and unconsciously inculcate through our individual life courses. We all seek the same objectified masculine qualities that we have individually eroticized along specific class and racial lines. What we seek and what we want to do sexually is always cast in these social terms.

People of color in this country, for instance, generally have been associated with the body and with "bestial" qualities linked with nature or the earth. Those unrestrained sexual qualities that Anglo Protestant culture ruthlessly represses have been projected onto them. As a result, people of color historically have been associated with unfettered libidinal qualities (for example, hot-blooded Latins or lascivious blacks). White people, on the other hand, have been traditionally associated with the mind, with those "rational" qualities that allow them to transcend these destructive impulses. They become the category of people whose appearance is loftily privileged and whom we are continually conditioned to erotically desire in this society.

Parallel class images and associations also shape our erotic lives. Working-class

men and women are perceived as more sexual than their class betters. Compare the raw heterosexual personas of Marlon Brando and Sylvester Stallone with the more restrained images of David Niven and William Hurt.

Although tremendous variations exist in the individual life experiences that shape our adult sexual behavior, these class and racial representations also mediate the way we individually crystalize our sexual desires and reify our sexual object choices. Gay men's erotic desires and fantasies affirm or negate their position in the social hierarchy. Such fantasies typically involve fusion (oral copulation or anal intercourse) with an idealized masculinity we have eroticized along specific class and racial lines. The pyrotechnics of gay sexual coupling involve the conscious/unconscious expression of desires rooted in and shaped by these social hierarchies. For instance, relationships between white and minority men from different class backgrounds often provide explosive sexual dynamics that can not escape the implications of these status differences. Such relationships are invariably fraught with the symbolic validation or negation of these class and racial differences through intimate sexual role playing.

In this regard, many gay men desire privileged categories of people and masculine ideals drawn from the dominant heterosexual culture. The most respectable of these is the upper class, waspy Ralph Lauren or Calvin Klein man. Others eschew these well-heeled social categories and desire more rugged, working-class heterosexual men from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. These sexual desires often lead gay men into sites where this particular masculinity is affirmed and valorized: gymnasiums, public parks, locker rooms, bars and also truck stops, bus depots, public squares, adult bookstores, public restrooms, certain streets. These are male domains where straight working-class men frequently congregate and affirm their manhood; they often are hot houses of raw masculinity.

These are precisely the places where gay men seek the "kindness of strangers" that

Despite the formidable constraints placed on gay male sexuality, its impersonal, public expression provides an implicit challenge to the dominant sexual order. The fact that gay male sexuality is not exclusively organized along monogamous, reproductive lines or expressed in the private social spaces (the bedroom) of the dominant heterosexual

These choices, after all, should be treated with the same equanimity and tolerance we accord differences in how we satisfy our hunger. We need to view individual differences in satisfying our sexual preferences in the same way we approach individual differences in satisfying our need to eat. There are simply benign variations in what and where we choose to eat as well as with how and where we choose to be sexual. Unfortunately, most of us make sexual choices in the same smug and judgmental way we approach going out for dinner. Some will only dine at the finest restaurants serving the choicest fares. Others among us, however, simply don't care to make such a big production out of either; we see the purpose of fast food as well as quick sex. And in some cases a Big Mac to go will do very nicely thank you. ▼

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OUT/LOOK

Questions for Couples: the Results

IN ISSUE #3 (Fall 1988), the subject of the *Queery* was "Questions for Couples." We received close to 400 responses, two thirds of which were from women. (This is a different ratio than that of OUT/LOOK readers in general, who are more equally balanced along gender lines.)

The average respondent was a white female, age 35, from a middle class background. She rated her relationship near the top of a seven point scale. She is a very liberal atheist (or agnostic); her partner is slightly less likely to be white or liberal, and is more church-oriented than she. With over four years of college, she earns more than \$25,000 a year, while caring

for .2 children.

The longest relationship reported by a respondent was 39 years, while half of the couples had been together four years or less. The male relationships averaged seven years in duration, longer than women who averaged five.

No single word seems to describe our spouses perfectly, but the respondents most often use "lover" (43 percent) or "partner/life partner" (26 percent). "Honey bun," "snuggums," and "sex kitten" also figured in the tally.

Here are some of the other highlights that surfaced after number-crunching the OUT/LOOK couples.

DEGREE OF COMMITMENT

	Women	Men
For life	60%	74%
For a long time	27%	21%
For a while	13%	5%
10 percent have held a ceremony and 2 percent plan one. 41 percent wear rings or other symbols.		

LIVING TOGETHER

	Women	Men
Always	66%	79%
Sometimes	15%	14%
Never	19%	8%

INCOME SHARING

	Women	Men
Entirely shared	28%	34%
Partly shared	38%	39%
Not shared	34%	28%

TWO GREATEST CHALLENGES

	Women	Men
Communication	42%	
Career	31%	
Sex	25%	
Money	23%	
Relatives	23%	
Health	12%	
Other	23%	

SEXUAL AGREEMENTS

	Women	Men
Monogamy	88%	53%
Monogamy w/exceptions	8%	33%
Non-monogamy	4%	14%
81 percent say they never break their agreement; women even less		

so. Within the last year, none of the non-monogamous respondents had "unsafe" sex outside of the relationship, and only 11 percent had "unsafe" sex within the relationship.

QUALITY OF SEX

	Women	Men
Excellent	54%	34%
Good	28%	33%
Satisfactory	15%	22%
Unsatisfactory	3%	12%

The median frequency women have sex with their partners is once a week; for men, the figure is six times per month.

ROLE OF AIDS

In forming relationship		
	Women	Men
Major	<1%	6%
Minor	10%	21%
None	90%	73%
In continuing relationship		
	Women	Men
Major	4%	9%
Minor	24%	35%
None	73%	55%
About half said they were HIV-negative and monogamous.		

LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

	Done	Planned
Will	35%	40%
Power of Attorney	29%	31%
Living Together Agreement	11%	14%

Only 6 percent had completed all three legal documents, which attorneys recommend for same-sex couples.

DISCRIMINATION ENCOUNTERED AS A COUPLE

	Percentage
Employment benefits	51%
Taxes	47%
Insurance	41%
Membership	18%
Housing	12%
Employment	11%
Credit/banking	11%
Hotels	7%
Hospital visitation	5%
Other	11%
None (or none indicated)	22%

WHERE COUPLES MET

	Women	Men
Friends	26%	22%
Work	20%	3%
Social event	16%	11%
School	13%	6%
Support group	6%	1%
Political event	4%	6%
Bar	3%	24%
Religious event	2%	5%
Park/public space	1%	9%
Classified ad	1%	4%
Baths/cruising	<1%	4%
Other	8%	5%

Because figures are rounded, columns may not total 100 percent.

Survey results © PARTNERS, 1989.

This questionnaire was part of a national survey undertaken by PARTNERS: The Newsletter for Gay and Lesbian Couples. The responses from OUT/LOOK readers are being analyzed along with others from across the country. To receive an extended summary of the results when they are ready, send a stamped, self-addressed business envelope along with your request to PARTNERS, Box 9685, Seattle, WA 98109.

Queery #5: When Violence Strikes

Physical acts of violence against lesbians and gay men are some of the most extreme manifestations of homophobia. Are these incidents rare or do most gay and bisexual people encounter them in the course of their adult lives? Linda Platt, a graduate student in the Social/Personality Psychology Program at the City University of New York in New York City, prepared this survey for OUT/LOOK on anti-gay violence.

Your responses will be completely anonymous. If you wish to make more detailed comments, please write them on a separate page and fold them into this questionnaire. Results will be published in a future issue of OUT/LOOK.

Please answer all questions even if you have not experienced the incident described.

1. How often have you experienced the following kinds of incidents because someone presumed you to be a lesbian or gay man?

Please answer each item for the past year, and for your adult life (since age 18). Use the following scale: 0 = Never; 1 = Once; 2 = Twice or More.

	During Past Year	Since Age 18
a) Had verbal insults directed at you?	_____	_____
b) Been threatened with physical violence?	_____	_____
c) Had your personal property damaged or destroyed?	_____	_____
d) Had objects thrown at you?	_____	_____
e) Been chased or followed?	_____	_____
f) Been spat upon?	_____	_____
g) Been punched, hit, kicked, or beaten?	_____	_____
h) Been assaulted or wounded with a weapon?	_____	_____
i) Been sexually harassed (without assault)?	_____	_____
j) Been sexually assaulted?	_____	_____
k) Been harassed by police?	_____	_____

2. For each of the above items to which you responded with a "1" or "2": Did the person make any references to AIDS? If so, please circle your response for that item. If you would like to describe the incident, please do so on a separate page.

3. If you have been the target of harassment, threats, or violence based on sexual orientation, have you always reported it to the police? (check one)

- ☐ Yes, I reported all incidents.
☐ There was an incident I didn't report. (Explain why, on back if necessary.)

4. Using the same scale as in Question #1, please indicate the extent to which you have experienced each of the following during the past year and since your 18th birthday because someone presumed you to be a lesbian or gay man.

	During Past Year	Since Age 18
a) Been denied employment or fired from a job?	_____	_____
b) Been evicted or denied housing?	_____	_____

c) Been denied services or public accommodations? _____

d) Experienced other discrimination? _____
(please explain)

5. Have you modified your behavior in any way because you feared anti-gay/lesbian harassment or violence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how have you changed your behavior? (use back if necessary)

6. How many people do you personally know who verbally have been harassed, threatened with violence, or physically attacked because they were assumed to be lesbian/gay?

☐ None ☐ One
☐ Two or three ☐ More than three

7. How many people do you know personally who have been discriminated against in housing, employment, or some other area because they were assumed to be lesbian/gay?

☐ None ☐ One
☐ Two or three ☐ More than three

8 Please indicate your gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

9. What is your date of birth

(month/day/year)? _____

10. What is your racial/ethnic background

(Asian, black, Latin/Hispanic, Native American, white, etc.)? _____

11. What is the highest level of formal schooling that you have completed? _____

12. Please indicate your sexual orientation:

- ☐ Gay/Lesbian ☐ Bisexual, primarily gay/lesbian
☐ Heterosexual ☐ Bisexual, primarily heterosexual

13. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

- ☐ Not in an ongoing intimate relationship
☐ Currently in an ongoing, intimate relationship

14. If you currently are in an ongoing, intimate relationship,

a) How long have you been in this relationship?

___ years ___ months

b) Do you share a household with your partner/lover?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. What are the first three digits of your home zip code?

— — —

If you would like to describe in detail one or more of your experiences with harassment, discrimination, or violence, please do so below or on a separate page and enclose with this questionnaire.

Thank you!

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FRONT AND BACK PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOROTHY LOW

INSIDE:

...VOGUEING IS TO
HOUSE MUSIC WHAT
BREAKDANCING WAS
TO RAP: "A WAY OF
BATTLING WITHOUT
FIGHTING..."