

Number 8
Spring 1990
\$5.95

OUTLOOK
NATIONAL
LESBIAN
& GAY
QUARTERLY

Gay Lib vs. AIDS

Civil War of the 1990s?

by Eric Rofes

Jewelle Gomez & Barbara Smith
On Black Homophobia

Brazil: Guerrillas & Transvestites
Take on AIDS

Dennis Altman to US Gays:
Get Global

Lesbian Separatism: Is it Still Viable?





*W*hat are the artistic and political questions confronting writers in the lesbian and gay communities?

continues on page 67

FEATURES

STRATEGY

- 8 Eric E. Rofes **GAY GROUPS VS. AIDS GROUPS**
Averting Civil War in the 1990s

What price does the gay movement pay when AIDS organizations de-gay and de-sexualize their politics?

FASHION

- 18 Kim Klausner **ON WEARING SKIRTS**

Those bumps can be minimized by not wearing underpants under the pantyhose! Do all women know this?

- 19 D-L Alvarez **A BOY'S GUIDE TO FEELING PRETTY**

"As a fag, I make an effort to present a much wider persona than just a guy who dresses like a girl."

ELSEWHERE

- 22 Michael Adams **THE HOUSE THAT BRENDA BUILT**
A Transvestite Response to AIDS

The Palace of Princesses is home to drag queens, whether or not they're healthy enough to work the streets.

- 27 Herbert Daniel **A GUERRILLA GRAPPLES WITH AIDS**

"For years I lived under cover in Brazil, fighting the dictatorship. I kept my sexuality a secret."

DIALOGUE

- 32 Jewelle Gomez & Barbara Smith
TAKING THE HOME OUT OF HOMOPHOBIA
Black Lesbians Look in Their Own Backyard

"One of the challenges is . . . to get our people to understand that they can indeed oppress someone after having spent a life of being oppressed themselves."

PORTFOLIO

- 38 **RACISM: LESBIAN ARTISTS HAVE THEIR SAY**
The Dynamics of Color Art Exhibition

ROOTS

- 44 **GAY PARTY AT POLICE STATION**

"Rumpled Cardin suits, hair in disarray, and beard stubble under traces of makeup." 1969 revisited.

FAMILIES

- 46 Sawnie Morris **ALL OUR RELATIONS**

Winner of the ACLU and OUT/LOOK Non-Fiction Writing Contest.

FRONTLINES

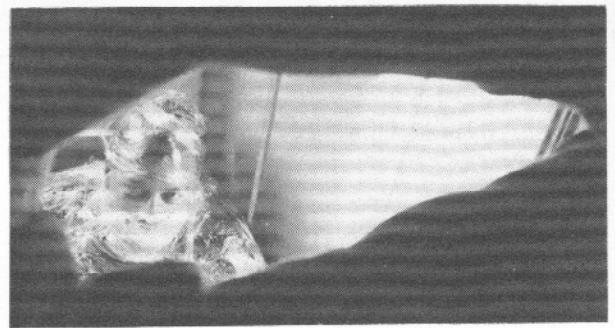
- 54 Connie Gilbert-Neiss **MEET HEIDI JONES**
The Straight Gay Leader

Why is this Sunday-school teacher a gay rights crusader?

POETRY

- 57 Michael Klein **A STEPFATHER, A CHILD**

"Forgiveness is a key / I found. . ."



FICTION

- 58 David Sedaris **CAESURA**

"My love for Dwayne had made me small. Now the truth was making me big and sick."

POLITICS

- 62 Dennis Altman **MY AMERICA AND YOURS**
A Letter to US Activists

America figures prominently in international fantasies, yet its gay politics are nationally chauvinistic.

ACADEMY

- 68 Scott Bravmann **TELLING (HI)STORIES:**
Rethinking the Lesbian and Gay Historical Imagination

The way we recover gay history perpetuates inequities of race, class, and gender.

COMMUNITY

- 78 Ann Japenga **THE SEPARATIST REVIVAL**

Refusing to smile at/cook for/kowtow to men: a 1970s' movement makes a comeback.



- 2 **WELCOME**
OUT IS IN
Or Why Eye Contact
Is Not Enough

- 56 **LIST**
NINE QUEER ANIMAL FACTS

- 66 **INSIDE/OUT**
A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

- 86 **QUEERY**
THATS WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR:
THE RESULTS
NEW SURVEY:
COMING OUT

COVER

Exemplifying the philosophy Out is In, Brazilian educator and fabulously famous drag queen Laura da Zison graces our second anniversary cover. Documented on location in Brazil by New York photographer Katherine McGlynn.

PHOTO CREDITS

Inside front, pages 1, 67, and inside back cover: Isa Massu.





PUBLISHERS
Jeffrey Escoffier, Kim Klausner

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Debra Chasnoff

ART DIRECTOR
Dominic Cappello

EDITORS
Dorothy Allison, Tomás Almaguer,
Rudiger Busto, E.G. Crichton,
Jeffrey Escoffier, Jackie Goldsby, Bo Huston,
Kim Klausner, Meredith Maran

POETRY EDITORS
Jewelle Gomez, David Groff

ASSISTANT DESIGNER
Michael Sexton

ART ASSOCIATES
E.G. Crichton, Kris Kovick

ADVERTISING
Lisa Geduldig, Robin Stevens

PUBLISHERS' ASSISTANT
Kelly Lee

COPY EDITOR
Douglas Woodyard

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Vanessa Tait

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Judy Bell, Chris Calhoun, Dan Carmell, Michael Carter,
Fish, Jim Garrison, Judy Helfand, Dee Hibbert-Jones,
Steve Kaye, Evelyn Shapiro, Diane Shields, Susan Schuman

INTERNS
Jennifer Martinez, Barbara Schultz

ADVISORY BOARD
Roberta Achtenberg, Virginia Apuzzo, John D'Emilio,
Michael Denneny, Melvin Dixon, Essex Hemphill,
Armistead Maupin, Joan Nestle,
Sarah Schulman, Barbara Smith, Urvashi Vaid

OUT-LOOK FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Peter Babcock, Thom Bean, Debra Chasnoff,
Jeffrey Escoffier, Kim Klausner, Robin Kojima,
Donald Pharaoh, Sandra Whisler, Karen Wickre

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 4 SPRING 1990

OUT-LOOK, National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly (ISSN 0890-7731) is published quarterly by the OUT-LOOK Foundation, 2940 16th Street, Suite 219, San Francisco, CA 94119, (415) 626-7929. Postmaster: Send address changes to OUT-LOOK, 2940 16th Street, Suite 219, San Francisco, CA 94119. Second class postage paid at San Francisco and additional mailing offices. Correspondence: OUT-LOOK welcomes letters to the editor, queries, unsolicited manuscripts, and artwork. Submissions cannot be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included. No responsibility is assumed for loss or damage. Letters may be edited for length. Send all editorial, business, advertising, and subscription correspondence to the address listed above. Subscriptions: Annual rates are \$21 for individuals, \$29 for libraries and institutions, and \$31 international. Add \$18 for first-class international. All rates are in US dollars. Rights: All rights reserved. Contents copyright © 1990 by the OUT-LOOK Foundation except where otherwise noted. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Note: Publication of the name or photograph of any person or organization in articles, advertising, or listings in OUT-LOOK is not to be construed as an indication of that person or organization's sexual orientation unless stated specifically. Opinions expressed in the pages of OUT-LOOK do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editors, unless stated specifically.

Out is In or Why Eye Contact Is Not Enough

OUT/LOOK's latest appeal to potential subscribers features an envelope with a woodcut of four human figures printed in deep-purple ink accompanied by text that reads, "Finally, an intelligent alternative for our community." We send out 75,000 of these four times a year. Occasionally some opened envelopes are returned to us, from horrified heterosexuals, who scribble messages like "NO WAY, If I was gay, I'd shoot myself."

But one of our subscription appeals was returned to us—presumably from a lesbian or gay man—with the following reaction typed on it:

I think its damned rude & obnoxious of you people to send this mailing with this obviously gay lavender printing on envelope to me in a small redneck town. Remove my name from your mailing list and dont ever send me anything ever agin. Dont you people have any brains. Dont send me anything ever again. Never. Fuck You. S.S."

There is a dilemma faced by gay and lesbian media, political organizations, rights defenders, and cultural groups: we cannot rely on eye contact or word of mouth to increase our strength and scope; to build a powerful movement, we need to keep reaching out, at times inadvertently threatening the members of our community most harmed by the homophobia we seek to eradicate. Many lesbians and gay men are so terrified of being dragged out of the closet that they avoid any overt contact with any person, organization, publication, or product that could lead to a pronouncement of "guilt" by association. Sadly, our efforts to include them cause more trauma than the constrictions of the closet do.

In the last few years, the gay and lesbian movement has come into its own in an arena that other political movements—from the environmentalists and Central America solidarity activists, to anti-gun-control fanatics and the religious right—have used for years: direct mail.

Your mailbox can probably attest to the proliferation of lesbian and gay causes that have taken to renting and exchanging mailing lists to send information about their activities to potential supporters. Just in the last year, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, ACT UP, MONK (a

funny gay travel magazine), *Gay Community News*, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and many others have started or beefed up their efforts to build their bases through the mail.

The challenge in communicating through the Postal Service is finding ways to say to lesbians, gay men, and our allies who receive our envelopes, "Hey, this is gay—you might be interested," without alerting the antennae of the (supposedly straight and hostile) mail carrier, other residents of your apartment complex, or the father you live with but are not out to. Winning that flicker of recognition amid all the other junk mail, yet not being so out that we provoke gay-bashing (verbal or physical) is the fine line all gay groups tread.

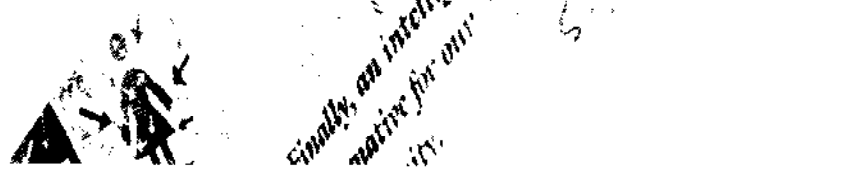
No organization we know of has sent out direct mail that explicitly says, "Calling all queers," even though at times we wish they/we could. When it comes to soliciting supporters, gay and lesbian organizers actually have exercised considerable discipline and sensitivity. We understand and respect the reasons why many lesbians and gay men still feel they cannot fully come out. So we will continue to be cagey about how we make contact with potential readers, and still send out the magazine in its "plain brown wrapper" (even though many of you have asked us to send *OUT/LOOK* in no packaging at all!).

At the same time, we support the courage and vision of those who can and do come out, and stay out, not just about being gay or bisexual but about their political visions and sexual desires as well. Some would go so far as to say that if every gay person were to come out fully, homophobia would disappear. We don't believe that, but we are convinced that keeping the nature of one's sexuality a secret diminishes self-acceptance, pride, and self-esteem—as Jewelle Gomez and Barbara Smith account for in their discussion in this issue about the toll homophobia takes on Black women's psychological health. It is particularly important that as professionals or in our political work we not mask the existence or contributions of lesbians and gay men—even if we do so in hopes of winning additional funding or legitimacy from the broader community. That goes for those at the helm of

the country's AIDS organizations as well, as Eric Rofes argues in his article confronting the politics of AIDS activism.

Collectively, there is no doubt that as more gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people are able to be open about their full identities, we are all better off, personally and politically. In this spirit, *OUT/LOOK* is proud to be sponsoring **OUT Write '90**, the first national lesbian and gay writers' conference, in San Francisco on March 3 and 4. It promises to be the largest gathering of openly gay and lesbian writers in the history of the world! We're also celebrating our second year of publication by proclaiming that *OUT* is *IN*, at our anniversary bash on March 3 honoring six pioneering lesbian and gay writers. Finally, we encourage you to come out of your shell and fill out this quarter's Queery on page 87, and let us know about your own coming out experience.

▼
—Debra Chasnoff
for the Editors





An Interesting Condition, Indeed

■ Thank you, and Jan Clausen, so much for the article "My Interesting Condition" (Winter 1990). When I first saw the cover text, "When Lesbians Fall for Men," I almost dropped the magazine like a hot potato. I looked around guiltily to be sure no one had seen me juxtaposed with this magazine cover. Because it was obviously designed *with me in mind*. You see, I too am a lesbian coping with "backsliding" into the arms of a man.

I have never felt so alone. This is so much more difficult than "coming out" as a lesbian was for me. There isn't even a name for this process—"going back in," maybe? This has raised questions for me: Was my mother right? Is/was my lesbianism just a phase? And what about Mom's other chestnut, "Those people (homosexuals) wouldn't be your friends if you weren't a lesbian"?

I know lots of places where I can read about lesbian experiences, but this particular situation is not discussed very openly. For cen-

turies, the stories of gay people and women have often been judged as not worthy enough to record, to pass on to others. Sometimes I'm afraid that we're making those same mistakes all over again. We must listen to and pass on and print each other's stories, no matter how frightening they may be to us.

OUT/LOOK has earned my respect by covering a wide range of issues in the gay community, many of them sensitive, some of them volatile. You have helped me. I feel much less alone now. Silence is so isolating.

Elizabeth Shaw
Washington, DC

■ Thanks to Jan Clausen for her courage to go public with her "interesting condition." Her piece was insightful and remarkably complete, considering that it touches upon such a new subject of debate within our communities.

The dominance of lesbian-feminism as the paradigmatic experience of lesbian sexuality for the past, say, 25 years should fool no one into believing that things were always this way, or that they will or should always be this way in the future. Lesbians are doing and talking about things we have never done or talked about before. We are moving beyond the realm of Sisterhood into the world of the nasty, the tasty, and the sexy. We are pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable lesbianism. We use the word "fuck" like the boys used to, we wear lipstick, and we lust openly and pridefully. We dance and sweat and tease, and we Have Sex.

So it should come as no surprise that this lesbian community, with its rapidly expanding parameters, should come up against such difficult and painful questions as "what do you do when a right-on woman starts sleeping with boys

and loving it?" It is not simply that we are finally able to voice certain questions about desires that the self-righteous atmosphere of political correctness and erotophobia we called lesbian-feminism kept us from uttering; our new culture is actually producing new desires, and the questions follow naturally. These questions *are* hard, and they venture deep into our worst fears about not belonging to some identifiable niche in the universe. I, for one, welcome them.

Yvonne Zylan
Brooklyn, New York

■ If articles like Jan Clausen's continue to appear in *OUT/LOOK*, this will be my last subscription. I get this magazine to read about gay and lesbian life. I do not get *OUT/LOOK* to read about how wonderful heterosexual fucking is. Incredible that with all the important issues facing our community, and all the possible self-affirming articles that could have been written, this was your cover and lead story.

Adrienne Mennis
Bronx, New York

■ Jan Clausen can rationalize her "interesting condition" until she is blue in the cunt. The politics of the patriarchy, the penis, and the pussy have been used here as a poor excuse, a scapegoat, a vaginal veil for her failures as a woman-identified-woman. And I didn't need her to apologize about her gender, race, social status, or sexual inclinations, either.

The bottom line is: I don't consider any woman a "dyke" who sleeps with a man. Period. (Oh, yes, but with a male lover she need not announce her period as part of the day's news.)

I am sorry that in her search for identity, she bears the burden of being a woman. Hopefully one day, she'll find that the real truth resides deep down, deep down

inside the vaginal walls, the walls that for centuries have ached and cried for freedom.

The real freedom that only a woman can give her.

Robyn Sadowski
Sacramento, California

What Kinds of Images Affirm?

■ As a disillusioned former activist, artist, and women-only coffeehouse collective member turned daycare teacher, I was really discouraged after reading the Winter 1990 articles on lesbians falling for men and butches who get off on violent pseudo-het sex. The times, they certainly are a-changin'! But being the Capricorn I am, I persevered. And I was delighted (and relieved) to read about speakers bureau speakers (Meredith Maran's "Ten for Bravery, Zero for Common Sense") and especially Stuart Edelson's commentary on the Mapplethorpe show ("Of Torture and Tangents, Consequences of the Mapplethorpe Exhibit"). Bravo, Mr. E., for your critique of sex/torture imagery passed off as art. Thank you for your courage in speaking out for integrity and loving equality in our public and artistic images!

Trina Porte
Minneapolis, Minnesota

■ Stuart Edelson puts his central objection to Mapplethorpe's work between parentheses ("The Moral Majority has overturned gay civil rights bills with such stuff as this"). This is the bare heart of his whole stupefying argument, and I hope those parentheses mean that Edelson feels a degree of decent shame.

The right wing is overturning the rights of all kinds of people, grabbing whatever excuses it can. Senator Helms may detest "hard core" photographs by Mapplethor-

pe of men in leather, but does Edelson believe he himself will be loved by right-wingers for engaging in private consensual sodomy? Tell that to Michael Hardwick.

Edelson claims to be impartially opposed to censors and to the planners of the Mapplethorpe show he saw at one museum. In fact, such impartiality is loaded with cultural assumptions I reject. Major museums, including the National Gallery, specialize in showing the art of Western white men, to the near exclusion of other people and cultures. Why doesn't Edelson suggest that X-ratings be given to major cultural institutions which impose racist, sexist, and heterosexist tastes and views upon the public?

Edelson fears that Mapplethorpe's work puts gays "far outside the mainstream," and warns us that marginalization prepared "the German public for the annihilation of their Jews." Since Edelson raises the issue of Nazism, he should be reminded that "assimilated" German Jews were sometimes expert in distancing themselves from "the bearded Hasid," and yet shared the same gas chambers. Likewise, Edelson may insist on distancing "assimilated" gays from leatherfolk, and yet this government treats us all as queers. Edelson makes the work of censors and bigots that much easier by advising self-censorship and bigotry within the gay community.

Edelson has spectacularly misread the significance of the Mapplethorpe controversy, and judges it only from the point of view of the Public Relations Department of the Gay Mainstream Corporation. Whatever he thinks of Mapplethorpe, the fact is that artists and civil libertarians waged a strong fight against censorship. So I found solidarity where Edelson found only division. And to the Public Relations Department I say:

Kiss my ass, or at the very least, get out of my face.

Scott Tucker
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Ageist Lust

■ Your "Lustafters/Lustbusters" list (Fall 1989) is extremely disturbing. On the women's list, the average age of the "Lustafters" is 29, and all of the "Lustbusters" but one are over 50! The ageism reflected here is appalling! The men fared somewhat better: the hot guys' average age was in the low 30s, and half of the undesirable men were over 50. To publish this list as a bit of playful whimsy reinforces the insidious ageism that permeates the lesbian and gay community as well as the straight world. It also reflects a particular hatred of mid-life and older women's bodies and fetishizes young women's. Will I have to face this shit when I get old? Let's face our own bigotry and fears of aging, folks, because we're all going to be old someday, if we're lucky!

Liz Nania
Brookline, Massachusetts

The Marriage Debate

■ I am writing in response to Thomas B. Stoddard's and Paula L. Ettelbrick's commentary ("Gay Marriage: A Must or a Bust?" Fall, 1989). Although I certainly support the idea of legalizing marriage between same-sex partners, I must admit to feeling real disdain for the idea of pursuing it in my own life.

Historically, lesbians and gay men [have been] ground-breakers (whether they knew it or not) in the ways we have challenged the rules defining relationships, family, and gender roles. Why, oh why, would any gay person regress spiritually and philosophically to the point where they would seek an external (state-recognized) legit-





imization of their relationship?

By seeking traditional marriage, gay and lesbian couples embrace assimilation to a point that is threatening to our community, [a clear indication of] the need for individuals to begin honestly examining internalized homophobia and its splintering effects. A marriage ring and license will not enhance the commitment two people feel for one another if those feelings don't already exist. It doesn't work for straights and it certainly won't work for queers. We can do better and we have—we just need to recognize this and celebrate our differences.

Trish Kerlé

New York, New York

■ Thank you very much for the thought-provoking debate on legalizing gay marriage. Though my gut feelings were with Mr. Stoddard (pro marriage), Ms. Ettelbrick's essay raised a variety of political and sociological issues for which I didn't have ready responses.

[Her] article's political thesis seems to be that in order to gain equal protection under the law, we must make ourselves the same as those who are already protected. Ms. Ettelbrick asserts that the "concept of equality in our legal system does not support differences, it only supports sameness." How untrue! It is *because* the law is blind to their differences that people in this country *can* be different. Justice weighs only the legally relevant matter in her scale; she is not supposed to peek under her blindfold to see whether we are men or women, Black or white, Moslem or Catholic. A culture that permits differences can thrive only under a legal system that is blind to those differences. Wouldn't it be great if American Justice were blind to sexuality?

The article's sociological thesis

seems to be that marriage is the great homogenizer, a nuptial gristmill that grinds up all sorts of people and churns out the Wonder Bread mainstream of America. I suggest that the evidence does not seem to bear this out. I have not noticed people of color suddenly becoming colorless upon saying "I do," nor Buddhists transforming into genero-Protestants, nor even women turning into men (though wouldn't that confound the heterosexuals!). What I have seen is a rich variety of marriage styles, each as unique as the participants. Marriage is not bleach.

Ms. Ettelbrick fears that gay marriage will undermine our liberation and make us more invisible. Does she suppose that legislatures will just quietly pass gay marriage into law, with scant press coverage and meager opposition, with no passionate public debate? Will this law go on the books completely escaping the notice of mainstream straight America? This seems unlikely. The more likely scenario is that such a law could pass (and not be repealed) only after prolonged and heated public debate. The institution of this law would force all Americans to confront this issue. The ramifications would permeate the whole society: employers would have to provide benefits to our gay spouses, accountants would have to prepare our joint tax returns, lawyers would have to handle our wills and (alas) our divorces. Real-estate agents and bankers would have to deal with our joint title to property; landlords and hotel operators would have to accommodate us as married couples. Gay relationships would come out before the very eyes of mainstream America like never before.

No road to marriage will be easy, but any road leading to marriage will necessarily be one of liberation. But would only those in

monogamous gay relationships become liberated? Would non-marital gay relationships become, as the article asserts, further outlawed? Underlying this thinking is the notion that diversity of relationships is fundamentally gay. Since when did homosexuals get a monopoly on heterogeneity? True, we may be freer to create new relationship modes because we are unfettered by the "straight-jacket" of ossified paradigms. But it is patently false to assume that all straight relationships are marital or even monogamous. Moreover, the legal recognition of straight marriage does not seem to have outlawed straight non-marital relationships. On the contrary, the courts (since *Mitchell v. Mitchell*) are increasingly recognizing the validity of non-marital relationships, and are starting to extend those precedents to homosexual as well as heterosexual non-marital relationships. Once America has made the leap of consciousness to recognize gay marriages, then the distinction between marital and non-marital relationships—already a familiar concept within the straight mainstream—will not even be a particularly gay issue.

The dangerous undercurrent of Ms. Ettelbrick's article is the idea that homosexual America is a culture unto itself—fundamentally different and thus fundamentally separate. Gay and straight Americans learn in the same schools, worship in the same churches, work for the same corporations, grow up in the same families. Homosexuals are no more a distinct culture than the poor, the elderly, or the left-handed.

I am not merely squabbling about the semantics of the word "culture." The point is this: we gay Americans are *not* fundamentally different. To argue otherwise can lead at best to a "separate but equal" status. We are different

from straight Americans, frighteningly so to some. Underscoring our differences serves only to fuel such ignorance-based fear. Wouldn't an open, meaningful dialog be more fruitful? Let us begin by proposing marriage.

Tom Chatt
Torrance, California

More on Incest and Sexual Taboos

■ The dialogue among the magazine's staff, "Incest & Other Sexual Taboos" (Fall 1989), has prompted me to write to you. I have been in psychotherapy practice with women (predominantly lesbians) for the past 12 years, and in that time have watched the gradual shift in public awareness regarding incest.

The recent upheaval in incest awareness is not confined to lesbians. Perhaps lesbians are more willing to speak out publicly because the boats they rock contain a different kind of crew. I don't know of any statistics on this, but numerous other therapists assure me that heterosexual, non-sexual, and bisexual women are dealing with the issue of childhood sexual abuse in great numbers also.

Yes, it is difficult to believe that incest and the sexual abuse of children is so widespread. It is more than difficult, it is unbearable. Freud didn't want to believe it either; he founded a theory of female sexuality based on the notion that women's memories of such trauma were actually fantasies.

But when we pay attention to the reality of children's lives, and particularly girl children, we must pause. Thousands of years of patriarchal conditioning has trained men to prove their manhood by denying their connection to the vulnerable; and those men become fathers. This same patriarchal con-

ditioning has led the fathers (consciously or unconsciously) to think of women and children as their property. The belief that children do not feel, will not remember, and don't know any better anyway, is coupled with the view that females exist to serve males, and that males are not responsible for their sexual behavior. The authoritarian model of the patriarchal family guarantees the fathers (or step-fathers, uncles, grandfathers) the right to privacy about how they treat their children. The patriarchal social structure (civic, legal, medical) guarantees that the authorities will defend the father should the child speak out. And the mother, all too likely to have been a victim of incest in her own childhood, is busy avoiding her memories, too weighed down by her fear and shame to speak out on her child's behalf.

Of course these are generalizations. But a disturbingly large percentage of the private histories that come to light in therapy offices follow this pattern. And what I have seen of other cultures only makes the picture more stark.

The people discussing this issue at *OUT/LOOK* are concerned about the question of sex between teenager and adult, and how this is related to incest. If incest were a problem faced primarily by adolescents, this situation would not be quite so grim. But we are seeing evidence of widespread sexual abuse of girls (and, to a lesser extent, boys) that begins early in childhood, and is definitely based on coercion.

A client once related the following mental images:

Age 4: I am kicking and screaming, trying not to be taken to the room where those things happen.

Age 7: I bow my head and walk to the room. He doesn't have to push me. The fight has gone out of me.

Do you call the seven-year-old's behavior consensual?

Some children who are sexually abused do initiate sexual contact with adults for the favors that they may obtain. I do not believe this behavior represents free sexual expression.

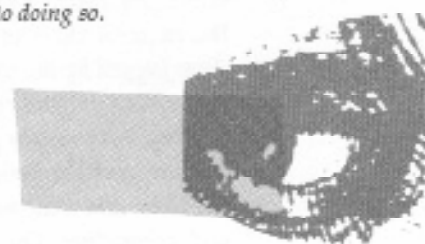
I personally would not argue that all sex between persons of different generations should be taboo. Regarding the ethics of sexual behavior between two people, I would ask: Are both parties completely free to confide in persons of their choosing?

If the answer is no, then something is wrong.

Sexual exploitation is possible only where secrecy rules. If a young person is physically or psychologically unable to confide in persons of their choosing about their sexual experience, then it is not an act freely engaged in.

Lee Johnson
Berkeley, California

Editor's Note: We received many more letters—most of them negative—than we could print about our round table on incest and intergenerational sex. While we stand by our original decision on the value of publishing a discussion of feelings about these topics, we agree on the importance of publishing more articles about these topics, from different perspectives, in future issues, and look forward to doing so.



Your views are important! To be sure your letter is considered for publication in the Summer 1990 issue, we must receive it, typed and double-spaced, by April 5.

I have written for gay and lesbian publications for over a dozen years on a number of controversial topics. No piece has caused me greater anguish and discomfort than this one.

In 1989 I decided to take the position of executive director of the Shanti Project, a key AIDS support service organization in San Francisco. I had worked on AIDS issues as the head of the Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance in the early years of the epidemic, then as the executive director of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center—both explicitly gay and lesbian organizations with roots in the progressive gay and lesbian movement. Shanti was founded in 1974 as a pioneering effort to provide emotional support to people with any life-threatening illness, and turned its energies fully to AIDS in 1984. Its gay participation didn't mushroom until the early 1980s.

I was aware the move into an entirely AIDS-focused group would necessitate compromise. Since 1982 I had witnessed leaders of AIDS organizations making difficult decisions under intense scrutiny by the gay and lesbian movement. At times I sympathized with them as I felt them tugged by the conflicting forces of government funding, community participation, and the politics of the time, and whipped into a frenzy by fear, grief, and exhaustion. On other occasions I arrogantly assumed I would do things differently. From the purity of my gay movement-based positions, I judged compromise harshly and labeled good people as traitors to our cause.

My perception was that gay-based AIDS organizations increasingly were being led by individuals from either the corporate sector or traditional human-services backgrounds—not from the gay

and lesbian movement. After almost a year in my job I realize that there are still many individuals working within AIDS groups who emerged from the gay movement. I have also come to understand more fully the pressures on us to let go of our political commitments as we "mainstream" our organizations.

I know this pressure is powerful, because I fall prey to it daily. I catch myself describing the history of my organization without mentioning the gay and lesbian community. Papers come across my

GAY LIB

By Eric

AVERTING CIVIL

desk from funding sources seeking applications from "non-gay AIDS service providers," and I consider responding. I fail to challenge non-inclusive, sexist language.

At first I excuse myself, rationalizing my compromises as a move toward professionalism, efficiency, or winning funding. But I know better. Amid the madness and loss and intensity of the work, politics is the first thing to go out the window. I may think this hurts my organization or

works against my political agenda, but the impact is far more devastating for me personally. I struggle with internal conflict and carry a burden of shame: have I sold out the cause of gay and lesbian liberation?

Our reluctance to look at the various controversies over the past few years and put together a cohesive analysis of the politics of providing AIDS services diminishes our effectiveness. Our failure to examine these issues encourages our isolation from like-minded AIDS leaders, which leads to deeper

"AIDS organizations," I am aware that they are diverse, based in different communities, and focused in different ways. The primary groups I am discussing are organizations that grew out of the gay and lesbian community. Some of these groups, focused on people of color, struggle with a similarly complex relationship to political movements rooted in the communities of people of color.

S. AIDS

E. Rofes

WAR IN THE 1990s

compromises and, eventually, professional burnout. I offer this essay to initiate discussion within and between AIDS organizations and the gay and lesbian community. I cite specific examples not to attack but to illustrate the concepts I discuss with concrete incidents in which we have had to make difficult decisions.

AIDS organizations and the gay and lesbian movement are neither monolithic nor free from their own contradictions. While I write broadly of

health concerns struggled to maintain paid staff and keep doors open. The two quietly began facing off, like boxers entering the ring. Tensions over a perceived shift in community resources have deepened over the past five years because of conflicts over political issues, openness about gay and lesbian participation, sexual liberation, and organizational culture.

AIDS leaders can no longer avoid confronting some critical questions: Are we a part

A CONFLICT is deepening that threatens to wrench apart the gay and lesbian community in the United States. Unseen, denied, or hushed through the shame of "political correctness," a growing rift between AIDS-focused organizations and progressive gay and lesbian groups appears to be pushing our community toward civil war.

Those in the trenches of community organizing heard the early rumblings by the mid-1980s. Key AIDS groups, conceived within local gay and lesbian communities, rapidly became million-dollar agencies and enjoyed the "goodies" that accompany media limelight. Parallel groups with a specific focus on gay and lesbian

AIDS leaders must confront a critical question: Are we

of the gay and lesbian movement, or do we stand outside of it? If we expect the gay and lesbian community to support us, does it have a right to expect anything in return beyond the provision of HIV-related services? If we become multicultural organizations, do we need to relinquish any commitment to a gay and lesbian agenda? In an increasingly homophobic United States in 1990, there is no neutral position. Which side are we on?

The Imbalance of Resources

Gay and lesbian organizers have been critical of AIDS advocates, but primarily behind closed doors, where they'll complain that "all the money is going to AIDS," or that "the community's entire agenda has been swallowed up by AIDS." When I left my job at a gay and lesbian service center to work for an exclusively AIDS-focused organization, I repeatedly heard one version or another of "Yet another gay organizer sells out to the AIDS bureaucracy." I questioned my motives too and worried that directing an AIDS service organization would mean opting out of the gay and lesbian liberation movement.

Throughout most of the 1980s few gay and lesbian groups felt comfortable articulating these concerns overtly. Instead, they plugged away, responding to the perceived shift in resources by adding AIDS components to existing programs—sometimes in a true and appropriate desire to serve, and sometimes primarily to enhance their fundraising appeals.

Meanwhile, AIDS organizers developed their own criticisms of gay and lesbian groups, arguing that "they lack professionalism and stability" or that they're "made up of a bunch of bitchy queens and politically correct dykes who spend hours 'processing' but don't do any work."

Some representatives of AIDS groups competing for funding with gay and lesbian projects warned funders that their colleagues were "well intentioned" but "unpredictable and radical"—a true funding risk. When gay and lesbian groups issued direct-mail appeals focused on their HIV-related components, some AIDS organizers scoffed at the "exaggerated" level of work the groups claimed to do in the AIDS area and derided their desperate attempt to "latch on" to the AIDS funding bandwagon.

As the decade drew to a close, the situation escalated from behind-the-scenes rumblings to public confrontations. Direct-action AIDS activists found themselves attacked in community newspapers for maintaining a narrow focus and failing to make homophobia as much of a priority as AIDS-related discrimination. Community activists began attacking AIDS service groups for trying to capture additional public support by "sanitizing" or "de-gayng" their agenda. Angry that almost a decade of lesbian leadership and caregiving in the AIDS arena has seen little substantive response from gay men on women's issues, some lesbians confronted gay men on unkept promises and continued self-centered agendas.

Many believe that these escalating conflicts are based solely on economic disparity, the drain of community resources into HIV-related efforts at the expense of other gay and lesbian issues.* For progressive activists, however, the real issues underlying this concern about resources have to do with the *politics* of AIDS organizations—and these issues intensify as AIDS organizations diversify and share power with other constituencies.

* This was the focus of Darrell Yates Rist's landmark piece in *The Nation*, "The Deadly Costs of an Obsession" (February 13, 1989).

"Why focus on logos? Why care if 'the G word'?"

part of the gay and lesbian movement, or outside of it?

The Deliberate De-Gaying of AIDS

While some explicitly activist and lobbying groups such as ACT UP and the AIDS Action Council define themselves and their issues as political, most service and education groups labor under the belief that their work is "non-political." They embrace a self-concept as "social-service agencies" or "healthcare providers" and often insist that their mission is simply to care for sick or needy people. Supporters of this view, reading Larry Kramer's angry open letters to Gay Men's Health Crisis in which he demands that the organization move to a higher level of political militancy, wonder if he's asking for too much. After all, do people with leukemia expect the Leukemia Society to be political?

Yet gay and lesbian movement activists look to AIDS groups and wonder how they can deny the profound impact of politics on their work and their "client" base. They see AIDS organizations' failure to articulate a clear and concise position on their relationship to the gay and lesbian community as the most troubling example of this lack of awareness.

About five years ago a key decision was made by AIDS leaders to put forward the message that "AIDS is not a gay disease." The intent of this strategy apparently was to win increased public support and funding, and to alert all sectors of the population about AIDS prevention. Since that time many AIDS groups have downplayed gay and lesbian participation, denied they are "gay organizations," and attempted to appeal to the "general public" by expunging gay references and sanitizing gay culture.

At other times AIDS groups do acknowledge our bases in the gay and lesbian community, particularly when seeking support for fundraising events or trying to draw in new

volunteers. This schizophrenia on the part of AIDS organizations sets off movement activists who have struggled for years to bring gay and lesbian issues out of the closet. Since Stonewall, gay liberationists persistently have demanded that "the G word" and "the L word" be said, arguing that the overt articulation of our identities as gay men or lesbians must be at the top of the movement's agenda to end homophobia. Others believe that the gay and lesbian community deserves credit for mobilizing the massive numbers of volunteers and for pioneering new service-delivery models that have emerged in response to AIDS.

The majority of people working to improve public support for AIDS are gay and lesbian people, yet the mainstream media chooses as our public heroes only heterosexuals (Mathilde Krim, Everett Koop, Dionne Warwick, Liz Taylor). AIDS organizers can spend their work lives running up against this kind of institutionalized homophobia and directing a great deal of energy toward changing the system. For example, at the August 1988 Center for Disease Control (CDC) conference on AIDS in the people-of-color communities, gay men and lesbians of color confronted the homophobia of the government hosts and non-gay people-of-color health providers who attempted to make gay and lesbian issues invisible.

It is one thing, though, for organizers to grapple with homophobia and de-gaying from traditional systems and institutions, and quite another to confront it when we come "home" to our AIDS projects—especially those founded by and based in the gay and lesbian community:

- At AIDS Project Los Angeles's 1986 Walkathon, the overwhelming majority of participants were gay men and lesbians. Through-

is stated? Everyone knows gay men get AIDS."

De-gayng AIDS might bring more

out the opening ceremony no explicit acknowledgment was given to this community, though speakers mentioned other key affected populations.

- Boston's AIDS Action Committee hosted what they termed a "Pride Dance" during Lesbian and Gay Pride Weekend in 1988. The flyers distributed for the event failed to include any direct reference to the gay and lesbian community.

- Our nation's most explicitly gay-identified AIDS organization, New York's Gay Men's Health Crisis, entered the 1990s keeping "the G word" in its title, though encouraging the public to identify with the organization's initials rather than its name. The sign in front of its building simply reads "GMHC," and the group has run advertisements in gay publications utilizing only the initials. The group's logo consists of the initials with the "H" underlined, emphasizing "Health," rather than the "G".

AIDS service providers often find these concerns petty or obsessive. Why focus on logos? Why care if "the G word" is stated? Everyone knows gay men get AIDS. Why does the community need recognition and acknowledgment? If our own aim is to serve people with AIDS (PWA), aren't we justified if we can win increased funding and provide better services by de-emphasizing our gay participation?

When they hear this argument, activists rooted in the gay and lesbian movement wonder whether AIDS workers wear blinders. Have they no memory of years spent meeting with public officials, journalists, religious leaders, educators, and lawyers to force them to simply say the words "gay" and "lesbian"? Are they unaware that we still struggle to force publications to allow individuals to be identi-

fied as gay, phone directories to include specifically gay and lesbian listings, and obituary writers to name lovers as lovers, rather than as "friends" or "companions"? De-gayng AIDS might bring more funding, but isn't the cost too high?

In the hearts of movement activists, the failure by AIDS groups to say "gay" goes deeper, and strikes at our culture's tendency to discount, minimize, or deny participation by up-front lesbians and gay men. This appeared to be the core of the community debate over the display of the Names Project AIDS Quilt in Washington, DC, in 1988. One letter writer summarized his experience that weekend:

Arriving on the Ellipse early Saturday morning, I purchased my directory of names and found on the cover not an obviously gay family but instead a photograph of a mother and children. Looking inside the directory I could find no direct editorial mention of the lesbian and gay community from any of the three principals writing for the project. At the time I dismissed these as mere oversights on someone's part.

That evening the candlelight march was led by invited parents of people with AIDS as thousands of mostly gay people marched behind them in the silent sea of candles. While this gesture towards parents was certainly admirable and appropriate, it was unforgivable for the project not to show the same level of respect for the partners of people who had died of AIDS. Surely it is not too much to expect an overwhelmingly gay-run organization to strive to recognize gay relationships in a more sensitive manner than society has shown.

When the candle-bearers stood in silence around the reflecting pool listening to five very carefully selected speakers deliver their eloquent messages, not one word was uttered about the lesbian and gay community. It was

People were willing to wipe out the entire Names Quilt simply

funding, but isn't the cost too high?

now unmistakably clear that someone had decided to package the Quilt without recognizing that the vast majority of the names that make up the fabric of this beautiful memorial belong to gay men. . . .

— Keith Griffith, *San Francisco Sentinel*,
November 4, 1988

As the debate played itself out on the letters pages of community papers nationwide, Cleve Jones and Michael Smith of the Names Project responded, saying in part:

The Names Project Quilt is a memorial to all people who have died of AIDS—regardless of who they were or how they got it. It is true that we do not often use the words “gay” and “lesbian.” We also do not use words like “drug abuser,” “black,” or “Hispanic.”

Our critics who insist on such labels cause great harm. They strip away the individuality of each life and once again reduce the epidemic to categories and statistics. They also negate the humanity of others in the quilt who are not gay (or IV drug users or hemophiliacs, etc.), but whose battle with AIDS was no less difficult and whose loss was not less painful to their families and friends. . . .

— *Bay Area Reporter*, November 24, 1988

The anger that erupted in discussions with community activists during this period reflected a profound sense of betrayal. Individuals were willing to wipe out the entire quilt experience—discount its impressive power as an educational tool, its central function as a force for grief and healing, its key role in impacting public policy—simply because the gay and lesbian community went unacknowledged from the stage.

Some focused their fury on Names Project founder Cleve Jones, a veteran grassroots activist who, to their minds, had turned his back on his movement's past in de-gayng the

quilt's display. Boston's gay paper *Bay Windows* editorialized:

Should the Names Project have insisted that a gay man speak? We think so. Although Names Project Executive Director Cleve Jones is correct when he says that nobody could walk around the Quilt and not be struck by the gay community's losses, that doesn't mean that the current trend among AIDS organizations to put gay men at the bottom of the outreach heap is right.

(December 1, 1988)

When the San Francisco AIDS Foundation applauded four worthy honorees at its “Leadership Recognition Dinner” in May 1989, it chose four heterosexually identified individuals, in a city where 92 per cent of documented AIDS cases are gay and bisexual men. Reasonable organizers might say, Yes, honor the heterosexuals—but also honor our community.

The AIDS Civil Rights Project of National Gay Rights Advocates gave a posthumous “Life Achievement” award to Michael Bennett, a public figure who would not publicly acknowledge either his gay identity or his AIDS diagnosis. This from the organization that sponsors National Coming Out Day. Some gay and lesbian activists might excuse Bennett's self-closeting by insisting on his “right to privacy,” but should this man receive acclaim and honors from our community?

The fury of movement activists about all these kinds of decisions by AIDS organizations was stated by Michael Callen in the March 1989 issue of *PWA Coalition Newsline* (New York):

AIDS IS A GAY DISEASE! There. I said it. And I believe it. If I hear one more time that AIDS is not a gay disease, I shall vomit. AIDS is a gay disease because a lot of gay men get AIDS. Nationally, gay and bisexual men still account for more than half of all AIDS cases.

because the gay community went unacknowledged from the stage.

A staff member calls to insist that future issues of our

More important, most of what has been noble about America's response to AIDS has been the direct result of the lesbian and gay community. All this AIDS-is-not-a-gay-disease hysteria is an insulting attempt to downplay the contributions of lesbians and gay men.

At work I often confront issues that set me at odds with my own history of movement activism. A staff member calls me after receiving a copy of Shanti's newsletter and insists that for future issues I screen out any photos that show men in drag. A volunteer calls me to express concern about a line in my monthly column in the newsletter: "Providing services to gay men—including gay men of color—will continue to be a priority at Shanti." He insists this makes it appear as if we are only serving gay men (despite my very conscious wording—a priority, rather than *the* priority—a compromise I had made and already begun to feel guilty about).

The Lack of a Broad Political Agenda

Disaffection with AIDS organizations' absent or narrowly defined politics goes beyond de-gaying. Many of these groups have developed within the community, are composed primarily of gay men and lesbians, and proudly call themselves "community-based organizations." Yet they appear unaware of critical battlefronts in gay liberation, operating without the analytical context provided by the movement's history.

AIDS organizations' relationship to electoral politics provides a key example of this tension. At the height of community furor over Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis's implementation of state policy that excludes lesbians and gay men from becoming foster parents, the governor was invited to speak at the opening ceremony of the AIDS Action

Committee's fundraising walk. AIDS workers argued that the governor had taken leadership on AIDS funding and that his participation at the kickoff would shore up future support, while grassroots lesbian and gay activists were horrified that someone who had institutionalized his personal homophobia into public policy would be an honored guest at an AIDS event.

The Lobby for Individual Freedom and Equality in California—which has taken the lead in pressing both for positive AIDS policies and gay and lesbian issues in Sacramento—takes as a logo for its AIDS lobby a design comprising geometric figures (circles, squares, triangles) that appear to symbolize a man, a woman, and a child—the image of a nuclear family. During the 1987 March on Washington the head of a national AIDS lobbying group wanted the "Wedding" (the celebration of gay and lesbian relationships in front of the Internal Revenue Service) canceled, fearing such a public event would "harm AIDS lobbying efforts." And the rising tension between AIDS service groups and direct-action networks like ACT UP is often about the discomfort of service-providers' lobbyists with ACT UP's appearance as a group of up-front queers engaging in political tactics rooted in early gay lib zaps.

Some would explain these differing perspectives as AIDS groups opting for a short-term gain over the long-term agenda, or pragmatism over idealism. But movement activists question how much AIDS groups will give up in the context of their efforts to woo elected officials or mainstream their image.

Another source of conflict between AIDS organizations and gay and lesbian groups is their marked differences in organizational structure and culture, especially around issues

Hierarchical structures and corporate cultures are

newsletter not have any photos that show men in drag.

of gender parity, affirmative action, decision-making processes, and economic accessibility. Hierarchical structures and corporate cultures are an unchallenged norm in AIDS organizations. Women and people of color are routinely absent from leadership positions, though accepted as caregivers. AIDS administrators interpret these differences as gay groups opting for "political correctness" over efficiency. Gay and lesbian activists observe these differences and conclude that AIDS organizations lack political consciousness.

Ten years ago few would have imagined a group with strong gay and lesbian community involvement called "God's Love We Deliver." Fewer still would have believed that a corporation funding anti-gay political activity (Coors) would be welcomed as the lead sponsor of a fundraising event for this group. Movement activists wonder why so few AIDS organizations have supported women's right to choose abortion—especially when an increasing client caseload of HIV-positive women and women with AIDS faces some risk during pregnancy. And with the Catholic Church expelling Dignity chapters throughout the nation, they question why gay-based HIV groups cooperate with church-based service providers such as Catholic Charities, Mother Theresa's hospices, and church-affiliated hospitals.

Sex-Positive Public Policy

Another key part of progressive organizers' sense of betrayal by AIDS organizations lies in their failure to maintain a gay liberation politic surrounding sex issues in both public-policy debate and the creation of prevention materials. During the 1980s, a decade of increasing political repression (Reagan, AIDS, the Meese Commission, vice squads), many gay and les-

bian activists adopted a revisionist history of gay male sex culture of the 1970s and of the early movement's relationship to sexual freedom. Without an analysis of sexual politics, they paint the period as a time of mindless, drug-induced, compulsive promiscuity.

Sexual liberation in the 1970s, however, was as much about politics as about pleasure. It took place within a context that resisted the oppression of the nuclear family, strove to free men and women from constrictive gender roles, and developed bonding between adults based on playfulness, passion, and erotic exploration, rather than ownership (which was how marriage or monogamy was seen in those days). Many contemporary AIDS educators remain unaware that self-help models of HIV prevention and treatment advocacy are rooted directly in both the women's health movement and early gay liberation's efforts to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and promote a sex-positive gay culture.

To activists who weren't present for the movement's pre-AIDS sex debates, concerns about this history often appear absurd. Veteran activists, however, are outraged at the inability of AIDS organizations to address sex issues without aping the traditionalism of contemporary mainstream culture. AIDS groups throughout the nation are challenged by government officials about the language and content of AIDS prevention materials. While some of these organizations responded by seeking independent funding and producing materials that eroticize diverse gay safe-sex practices and use explicit language, others have accepted regulation by the state and produced materials in line with conservative fantasies of gay male behavior.

In these materials men are instructed to "limit themselves to one faithful partner,"

an unchallenged norm in AIDS organizations.

Speaking on behalf of public sex spaces, controversial

despite consensus since 1985 that acts, not the number of partners, put an individual at greatest risk. They present lists that exclude controversial yet practiced behavior (S/M, water sports, fisting, rimming), and almost all ignore the existence of lesbian sexuality. They distribute homophobic materials such as the CDC's "America Responds to AIDS" brochures, which fully ignore gay men, the group most at risk for HIV exposure in the United States, and Red Cross brochures, which ingeniously urge the reader to avoid sexual activity with HIV-positive people or people at risk for infection—leaving gay men nowhere.

The most visible internal community battles during the mid-1980s focused on health officials' often successful attempts to close or crack down on places of communal sexual activity: bathhouses, sex clubs, theaters, and outdoor cruise areas. Mainstream lesbian and gay community activists considered these spaces embarrassments, obstacles to their attempts to assimilate, win civil rights, and prove that "gays are no different than straights." When public sentiment supported closure of the clubs and bathhouses, they were relieved. Other organizers—particularly men who retained a gay liberation agenda, and anti-censorship feminist women—have been dismayed to find that, in the age of AIDS, speaking on behalf of "public" sex spaces, controversial sex acts, or "promiscuity" makes one an outcast.

Five years ago some AIDS leaders still advocated defining gay male sexuality outside traditional heterosexual constrictions. Today it is almost impossible to find a leader of an AIDS organization speaking on the record on behalf of keeping baths open, protecting cruise areas, or defending group sex clubs. AIDS pre-

vention organizations will target gay men in their prevention campaigns but hesitate to jump into public-policy debate on government regulation of sex spaces. Gay-based AIDS groups throughout the nation, such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, Gay Men's Health Crisis, and Black and White Men Together, create critically important workshops and promote them as efforts to "erotize safer sex." They hold support groups for individuals who have multiple partners and "kinky" sex, or who bring their erotic life into parks and sex clubs. Yet it's rare in 1990 for any organization to articulate public-policy positions that defend these actions.

My own roots as an activist supporting sexual liberation and my current position managing an AIDS service organization lead me into similar conflicts. In my professional role managing a large organization, I fully understand the need to have personnel policies setting limits on sexual relations between staff members and clients, or managers and staff. As an advocate for sex-positive attitudes and policies, these rules can strike me as repressive, sex-negative, and at odds with gay male culture. I allow my professional self to win out over the liberationist in me, and I wonder if I've sold out.

As a single gay male who holds a position with some visibility and stature in my local community, I wrestle with the appropriate way to navigate through the social and sexual scenes of San Francisco. On the one hand, I want to define my own sexuality and be true to my erotic interests and identity. I also want to model a type of community leadership that is not de-sexed. I'd like to conduct myself as a healthy sexual being who enjoys particular aspects of gay male culture. Yet I won't visit

I won't visit sex clubs or orgy parties, because

sex acts, or promiscuity now makes one an outcast.

sex clubs, jerkoff groups, or orgy parties, because I don't want to deal with running into staff members, volunteers, or clients. Am I being sex-negative, or operating with appropriate boundaries, or both?

Perhaps the most difficult struggle for me is finding the courage to be true to my ideals on sex issues in discussions with public officials, journalists, and people within my organization. I find myself doing a lot of self-censoring. If I think I would be voicing a minority opinion about the closing of bathhouses at a dinner party discussion, I say nothing. My fear is less that people won't like me than that they'll be horrified at my organization. Maybe I don't give them enough credit. I took my current position heading an AIDS service organization the same week I was the convener of the Leather Institute at the National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference. Several donors and staff members voiced concern at this connection. To this day, when I'm asked to give a speech or a workshop on a topic related to sexual liberation, my initial reaction is to say no. Then my activist self kicks in and I detach from my fears and internalized shame.

A Call for Integrity

I know I am not alone in the conflicts I feel in my work life. My desire for more integration is shared by others, as is my belief that effective and healthy AIDS organizations could work in consort with a progressive political movement. What we need today, in 1990, is for dialogue and debate to take place within the AIDS system, so that both gay groups and AIDS groups can be clear on reasonable expectations of one another.

Progressive activists working in the AIDS arena have failed to explicitly articulate how to

keep our work from running afoul of a movement agenda. We can do better than running at cross purposes or maintaining what we imagine to be political neutrality. Our AIDS work, to be truly effective, can and should further gay and lesbian liberation. There are countless heroic examples where our major AIDS groups and leaders have acted with integrity toward our movement. We can do more than care for the dying and fight for the living—we can ensure that the community most impacted by HIV makes full and creative use of the opportunities the epidemic presents for advancing a gay and lesbian liberation agenda. ▼

(Part II of this essay will focus on ways in which AIDS leaders and organizations have furthered a progressive agenda, and will offer suggestions for both organizations and individuals who intend to align their HIV work more closely with gay and lesbian movement agenda.)

*Eric E. Rofes is an author and community organizer currently residing in San Francisco. He has written six books, including *The Kids' Book of Divorce* (Vintage, 1982) and *Socrates, Plato & Guys Like Me: Confessions of a Gay Schoolteacher* (Alyson, 1985), and has written for many gay and progressive publications, most notably *Gay Community News*. He is a board member of the *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*.*

I don't want to run into staff members or clients.

When you go downtown you wear a dress. I can't remember whether my mother actually told me this or whether it was something I just "knew." It was the mid-sixties. At the time, it didn't quite make sense but I didn't think to question.

The terms "dress" and "skirt" are interchangeable to me: material that hangs down and leaves my crotch unprotected. Both are integrally connected with pantyhose and heels, making the skirt concept even more formidable.

My favorite and usual clothes are

501s, a cotton jersey,

and Reeboks—I don't feel butch, but compared to most women I probably am. Sometimes I wonder whether I look immature in these clothes—is it because I've been wearing the same ones since high school (substitute desert boots for Reeboks)?

I look different from most other women in their mid-thirties in my neighborhood. I am totally at home in these clothes, yet I feel like a stranger in the outside (straight) world. It's odd that skirts feel so foreign to me. Undoubtedly, there are some straight women who feel similarly about skirts and some lesbians who

don't. But this is one of those small, almost invisible factors that, for me, are part of being a dyke.

by Kim Klausner

On Halloween I thought I'd try blending in with the outside world by dressing in drag and wearing a skirt. Now, "skirt" does not mean an Indian cotton midcalf-type affair. "Skirt" means something in style or, better yet, faddish.

Can the salespeople at the discount stores on Mission Street tell I'm looking for a Halloween costume? I sure feel like a fake. Do my thoughts, clothes, and body language betray that I'm a dyke, that I don't belong here? Or is it solely an internal process?

Among the bike shorts, skin-tight jeans, and dressy outfits, I finally find a turquoise miniskirt in a larger-than-teen size. At first I am shocked at the fit: my hips and ass are outlined by the cotton/lycra fabric for all to see.

(continues on page 20)

On Wearing Skirts

A Boy's Guide to Feeling Pretty

by
D-L Alvarez

*aka DeDe Aster,
Miss Uranus 1990*

KRIS KOVICK

In the conservative community I grew up in, I fared better with the other "weirdos," most of whom were straight, than I did with the sweater-set fags who actually believed discretion was a good idea. The most painful element of coming out was discovering that the new options laid out for me were just a crude mirror of the ones I was leaving behind. Like many, I simply moved from being an out-of-place freak to being a tolerated freak; a queer amongst queers. Judy Garland was not a drag queen, domestic partnership is an obvious embrace of traditional values taught in heterosexual schools, and we did not invent brunch.

As soon as possible, or maybe a bit earlier, I hightailed it for San Francisco. When I arrived in 1984, it wasn't much different than it is today. I discovered that here, like back home, the gay-identified uniforms were for the most part camp versions of their straight predecessors: the college prep, biker dude, bookish nerd, jack, nine-to-five. Even when they stepped out of gender, gay males generally succeeded only in performing gross exaggerations of female stereotypes. I found more role models among the lesbian community, where there seems to be at least a shred of originality.

As a fag, I've made a consistent and conscientious effort to present a much wider persona than just a guy who dresses like a girl. I am an individual who dresses like neither, and both. I'll encourage anyone out there with tendencies toward the same to follow them.

I want to impress on you the divine pleasures of dressing up, not as some parody of an established character, but as a creature that lives outside the pigeon-

holes of male/female, hip and square, the glamorous and the beige. I want to take you into that arena that's been dubbed "genderfuck" and show you a good time.

(You remember genderfuck. Despite what you may have read in *Interview*, there's a lot more to it than androgyny, although this is a fine starting point. It was the fashion that accompanied many movements of the sixties in the form of unisex clothing and hairstyles. It was popularized in the seventies with the boom of glitter rock. But by the time this baby was old enough to steal to the thrift stores, out from under Mamma's watchful eye, leather jackets had become the one common fashion accessory—no matter what bend of taste they were hiding beneath their folds—and David Bowie had come out as a latent heterosexual.)

Here is some of the anti-fashion I've adhered to: Skirts are spiffy, but dresses are definitely darlin'. I can recall in '85 all the queens who had never worn a skirt in their life pointing at those who were wearing them, and saying, "That's so last year." When picking out a dress, I'll choose one that fits and looks nice on my frame, not one I need to fill or compromise myself for. I find that I'm most comfortable in the extra-dowdy, almost Eleanor Roosevelt-style frocks. One should never go two-dimensional.

When shopping, I will think in schools of painting for themes rather than eras or characters. Instead of finding an outfit that's very Breakfast at Tiffany's, I'll go for the one that screams Dali, Picasso, or Joel-Peter Witkin. In a more daring mood I might venture into the conceptual works of dadaist Duchamp or the silver-
(continues on page 20)

(Alvarez continues)

plated kitsch of Jeff Koons. Remember, art you can meet and interact with is infinitely more interesting than that which rests on a wall.

As for makeup, I always travel against the grain. I have the most fun with eyebrows. I like them Groucho Marx-thick, or near-Vulcan. Accessorize with the atypical: workboots with cocktail dresses, fishnet with thick ties. I like to wear things where they don't normally go. Hot glue saves a lot of time. Most important, I do it because it feels good. Political statements are extra bonus points but not an end.

Whatever I choose to wear, I've found the less regard I have for public opinion in my wardrobe, the more comfortable I feel as a human being. Like Miss Day, I drool over dresses made of lace, but I also know how to work the giving end of a leather strap. Neither of these characteristics relies on me playing butch or femme. In fact, if the guy I'm with doesn't bite back, I'm disappointed. Nobody should have to know their place. Boys and girls, we've spent most of our early years wearing what Mom had picked out for us. Let's not spend the rest of our lives being dressed by a penis or a clit.

The nicest compliment I've ever received came from my good friend Christian Huygen, who said, "Darrell, before I knew you, I didn't own a single dress, and now I have six to choose from." As of this writing, that number is up to eight and counting, and I tell you: the dude looks stunning in each of them. ▼

In June, D-L Alvarez will be curating Liquid Eyeliner, a group show by drag artists and gender-benders, at the Art Commission Gallery in San Francisco.

(Klausner continues)

My hips stick out like bumps, I can't wear this. Oh fuck it, everybody else wears these stupid little skirts, why can't I? I realize it just takes a little chutzpah, that's all. Within moments I have left all my doubts and am really into the look. (I find out later that those bumps can be minimized by not wearing underpants under the pantyhose. I wonder whether all real women know this.)

When the saleslady sees me gaze at the "All Earrings \$1" sign and asks me whether I need a pair of earrings for my outfit, I feel more confident that I blend in.

My first challenge: getting into the car without spreading my legs. My second problem: not tearing my pantyhose on the wire car seat.

Clicking down the street, mincing steps, instability. Vulnerable. (It's mostly the heels but that is part of the skirt experience.) I find myself taking the elevator down the three floors from my office rather than racing down the stairs as I usually do. It just doesn't feel safe—half of my body weight perched on something the size of a pea. Maybe it's like riding a bike and you get used to it.

Feeling sexy. For the first time in my life enjoying the catcalls. I'm in drag and I'm faking them out. People don't seem to be staring at me as they might a drag queen. Men watch and/or comment, women ignore me. At the same time that I'm in drag, I'm perfectly normal, pretending to be your average citizen. I love the contradiction, even if it's only in my head.

I act it up, swinging my hips, swaying my body. Playing the femme feels both natural and odd. I have uncovered a me that I don't often play with. It amazes me how much a piece of fabric can change who I am, both to others and myself. How much symbolism is invested in this tiny piece of clothing.

Having fun flirting with my girlfriend. The politically correct dyke in me screams, "You're playing into the most male-identified symbol there is! You're a sellout to feminism." There's no doubt that we've both been inundated with male standards of beauty and that's why she's excited to see me in this skirt. Does it change if we're both women?

Our new staff member's first day at work: should I tell him that I don't usually dress like this, should I put a disclaimer on my straight-acting appearance? I feel slightly embarrassed that he sees me femmed out and unable to lug boxes and crawl under tables to plug in office machines.

It really is a drag that this skirt so limits my mobility. I can hardly bend down to pick up my sixteen-month-old son, his bag, his bottle, and my purse without exposing my crotch for all to see or flipping over backwards in these heels.

My straight but hip therapist (who always wears pants unless it's terribly hot out) tells me I look sophisticated in my outfit. I haven't told her it's a costume.

At the Halloween party, kids and lesbians running around as cowboys/girls, Batman, and dinosaurs. I'm the only one in a skirt, appearing to have no costume at all, except that I now also wear a long, curly wig. "What are you?" everyone asks. I have a hard time explaining.

Taking off this skimpy rag to hang it in the closet, I wonder when I will wear it again. As much as I enjoyed blending in, I also know I'm a pragmatist. Lace is itchy, skirts don't keep me warm, and I can't stride in heels. I wish these things weren't true. When I don't mind a little discomfort, though, I'll look forward to wearing my skirt again. ▼

Kim Klausner is one of the publishers of OUT/LOOK.

The House That Brenda Built

A Transvestite Response to AIDS in Brazil

by Michael Adams

I am waiting for my next appointment to arrive. Having attended a long series of meetings with AIDS activists in São Paulo over the past four days, this might have been just another one. But when I look around, I realize that I am in a place quite unlike any other I have seen in Brazil, or anyplace else in the world, for that matter.

I share a couch with a quiet and demure young man with long dark hair, tasteful face makeup, and a surprisingly curvaceous body. Several other men, some in various stages of drag, sit in the small room with me, attention fixed on a large color television set. We are watching Xuxa, a former porn star turned Brazil's favorite children's show host, dancing scantily clad

KATHERINE McGLYNN

Brenda Lee (r) talks to a Palace resident.



Brenda Lee has always maintained two rules in the house: no tricks and no drugs.

around a bright-colored studio and followed by a parade of happy young boys and girls who clearly idolize the seductive blond beauty.

At the other end of the room, a stunning transvestite in a provocative, tight-fitting nurse uniform and high-heel spikes is providing pills to two men. Another drag queen, in more traditional medical garb, is preparing medicine dosages in the adjacent office.

Turning away from Xuxa, I am just beginning to talk with the man at my side when Brenda Lee rushes in, flushed and breathless from a morning full of trips to the pharmacy and hospital. Sporting long, bleached-blond hair, three-inch black heels, and a white leather skirt with matching top, Brenda apologizes profusely for being late and invites me to her bedroom to begin our interview.

Brenda Lee, undoubtedly the most visible member of São Paulo's large transvestite community, first opened her boarding house for drag queens in 1983. Early on, disapproving neighbors in the Italian working-class neighborhood of Bixiga dubbed the house "the Witches' Castle." But Brenda always has referred proudly to her home as "the Palace of Princesses."

The Palace was meant to serve as a home for drag queens working in the center of São Paulo. Brenda's boarders generally worked as prostitutes, which is one of the only ways for transvestites in Brazil to survive—financially and otherwise. Despite her tenants' line of work, Brenda Lee has always maintained two rules: no tricks and no drugs in the house. She served as landlord, mother, and

friend, collecting small rent payments, offering advice and emotional support, and responding to the frequent attacks on her boarders by the violent São Paulo police. The house functioned as a warm and sisterly community that Brenda proudly christened "the first historical patrimony of Brazilian transvestites."

Brenda had always planned to transform the dilapidated house into an elegant and glamorous residence. Her plans changed dramatically, however, when HIV disease hit Brazil and the number of AIDS cases in São Paulo skyrocketed in 1984.

The same year saw a series of violent attacks against transvestites working the São Paulo streets. A number of drag queens were shot, most likely by marauding police officers. One of Brenda Lee's boarders was intentionally run down by several men on motorcycles and left paralyzed. In denouncing the violence, Brenda announced that her home would always be open to transvestites in trouble. When a reporter asked her if that included transvestites with AIDS, she said, "AIDS is no worse than being machine-gunned. We're a community; somebody with AIDS would be treated just like anybody else."

Brenda's words appeared in a São Paulo newspaper that afternoon. The next day the Palace of Princesses received its first transvestite with AIDS, and one of the most unusual and innovative community responses to the disease in Brazil was launched.

As time went on, more and more transvestites with AIDS joined the 20 working boarders in the Palace. The transition was not always easy, partly because of widespread panic and misinformation about how AIDS is

contracted. "The girls living here were scared," remembers Brenda. "Some complained they didn't feel safe with people with AIDS." A few left as a result. Those who stayed educated themselves about AIDS and gradually accepted the fact that their new housemates would not infect them with the disease.

By 1987 the Palace of Princesses was taking in more and more transvestites with AIDS. Frequently the newcomers could not work, and Brenda Lee and the other boarders covered most of their rent and expenses. Brenda, by then, had been transformed into a full-time social worker and AIDS activist, shuttling sick transvestites to less than friendly hospitals, scouring São Paulo in search of desperately needed donations of medicine, clothes, and food, and rapidly learning the ropes of the Brazilian AIDS bureaucracy. It was not unusual for Brenda to spend the entire night in a hospital emergency room with a sick and frightened drag queen waiting for a bed.

When I first visited the Palace in July 1988, close to a third of the 20 or so transvestites living in

the house had AIDS. Arriving in the early evening, I encountered drag queens huddled over shared hallway mirrors, busily applying their makeup before heading out for the evening. Sitting chatting with them were Palace residents with AIDS who were no longer able to work the streets. Those who were too ill to get up carried on the banter from their beds. Gossip and friendly joking filled the air, extending warmth and camaraderie even to an obvious outsider. Presiding over the mayhem, Brenda Lee explained the structural work necessary to make the house more comfortable for people with AIDS as she hurried along her boarders in their preparations.

Four years after the AIDS crisis started, Palace residents seemed to have adjusted to the changes forced on them, but the small community was finding it increasingly difficult to make financial ends meet. The electricity and water were cut more than once, and at one point, the financial situation became so desperate that Brenda Lee was forced to put the house on the market. But the building's run-down state kept buyers away.

It was at this time that Brenda, with few, if any, other options in sight, decided to turn to the Brazilian government for help in covering the expenses of the de facto AIDS shelter. While the flamboyant and effusive transvestite was unaccustomed to working with government officials, she had received a baptism by fire in her endless dealings with unresponsive or openly hostile doctors and hospital administrators. If she had learned one thing, it was persistence. Brenda recalls, "I made an appointment with the state secretary of health, but when I got

there he was traveling. So I went and spoke with someone in the national AIDS program. I explained that we were in financial trouble, that I couldn't keep supporting people with AIDS in my house but didn't want to put them in the streets. He was very enthusiastic and told me I could get money quickly—in two or three weeks. But it took more than a year for us to receive help."

In November 1988, an agreement was finally signed with the São Paulo Ministry of Health, and the *Casa de Apoio Brenda Lee* (Brenda Lee Support House) began receiving state funds for maintenance, food, medicine, and transportation. The shelter now houses transvestites and others with AIDS, along with Brenda Lee, who sleeps on the living room couch to watch over things. A nurse and several assistants (all transvestites) have been hired. Brenda remains responsible for supervision of the shelter and still spends much of her time trying to shepherd household residents through the overburdened São Paulo public-hospital system.

Who is this transvestite that the São Paulo press compares to Mother Theresa? Born Cicero Caetano Leonardo in the northern Brazilian state of Pernambuco, Brenda was one of 24 children. Cicero's father owned a large farm, and the young boy and his siblings were all reared to be ambitious. As a child, Cicero hoped to make his family proud of him some day by getting a medical degree. He moved to Rio de Janeiro at nine to live with one of his brothers.

At 14, Cicero ran away, fearing his brother would discover his homosexuality. For the next few

years, he moved from job to job and eventually relocated to São Paulo. "In those days I only dressed as a transvestite for special occasions," Brenda says as she brushes back her long hair. "I dressed as a man for my jobs. I always wanted to be accepted, but I was never valued. In the end I was always fired for being a homosexual. I suffered a lot, but I didn't realize there was another way."

In 1978, when Cicero was fired from his job in a department store after the manager discovered his homosexuality, he decided that from that point on, his life would be different. Brenda recounts: "I revolted. I decided I would never work for anyone again. I would be a street transvestite with independence. I never saw a transvestite die of hunger in the streets. So I went to live with my friends Vandia, Marta, and Sonia Braga."

Brenda Lee permanently adopted the name of the 1950s North American teen singer (she had become a fan through a record one of her brothers had given her) and began working the streets of São Paulo as a prostitute. "At first I was so ashamed of prostituting myself," she laughs heartily. "I would have sex with a man and then be too ashamed to ask for the money, so I would end up doing it for free." That changed when she became the victim of police attacks and mistreatment. "The police went after us something terrible. But it was then I lost my shame—after all, I had friends who were judges, doctors, lawyers, even bricklayers and congressmen!"

Brenda worked as a prostitute for four years. Sharing a crowded but "respectable" apartment with as many as 12 other transvestites, she gradually saved enough money to open a beauty

The Politics of AIDS in Brazil

salon and then a small restaurant. By the time she bought the Bixiga district house in 1983 and made plans to open a boarding house for transvestites, Brenda had become relatively prosperous. "The only things I need to

survive are pretty clothes and a new car," she explains.

Her line of work did not interfere in any way with her deep religious convictions. "I am a very religious person," Brenda says solemnly. "I do everything through faith. I am Catholic and have always gone to church every Sunday to pray and make an offering."

It was also during this time that she developed a strong
(continued on next page)

FEW countries have been as hard hit by the AIDS epidemic as Brazil. The world's fifth largest country with a population of more than 140 million, Brazil consistently has consistently ranked second or third in the world in reported cases of AIDS. As of July 1989, the Brazilian government reported 7,583 AIDS cases. Yet this number significantly understates the gravity of the problem, as underreporting of AIDS cases in Brazil is estimated at 100 per cent, triple that of the United States. Close to 600,000 Brazilians now are estimated to be infected with HIV, and in the first half of 1989, Brazilian AIDS cases were growing 30 per cent a year.

One of the social factors that distinguishes AIDS in Brazil from AIDS in the United States is sexual culture. Sexuality in Brazil tends to revolve largely around the sexual act itself, so that there is no distinctly "gay" identity or culture. In fact, to many Brazilians, the term "gay" connotes a North American model of homoerotic love. Organizations composed of women and men with same-sex orientation refer to themselves, with few exceptions, as "homosexual liberation" groups, not as "gay rights" organizations.

Rather than being defined by the categories of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual, then, sexuality in Brazil is perceived largely in terms of the "masculine" active partner and the "feminine" passive partner.

This is why some Brazilian men who take the active sex role with other men may not perceive themselves, or be perceived by society in general, as either homosexual or bisexual.

Nonetheless, the Brazilian medical establishment has determined that 40 per cent of Brazilian HIV transmission is attributed to "homosexual activity," and that close to 20 per cent is tied to "bisexual activity" (the distinction here refers to the overall sexual habits of each group, not the means of transmission).

Transmission through heterosexual sex has increased consistently and now accounts for 9 per cent of all Brazilian AIDS cases; 10 per cent of Brazilians with AIDS are women.

The politics of AIDS in Brazil is also quite different from that in the US.

The Brazilian government has been slow to confront the disease, and its efforts have been hampered from the outset by, among other things, the country's ongoing economic crisis, the transfer of power from a military to a civilian government in 1985, bureaucratic disorganization, and the continuing opposition of the powerful Catholic Church to explicit AIDS-prevention information.

Grassroots AIDS initiatives have been more innovative and promising. But whereas gay and lesbian organizations in the US have taken the lead in the AIDS battle, their small and fragmented counterparts in Brazil have been largely unable to mobilize to fight the disease. Instead, a number of volunteer AIDS groups have sprung up in cities around the country. These groups have a diverse membership and generally focus on assisting people with AIDS and conducting small-scale educational campaigns.

—Michael Adams

“AIDS is no worse than being machine-gunned. Somebody with AIDS should be treated just like anybody else.”

sense of community with her fellow drag queens. “I had always thought all transvestites were robbers and things like that,” Brenda remembers. “But when I started living with them, I began to realize we’re all human, we all have the same problems. Often our families won’t accept us; we’re mistreated. So we were understanding with each other—we lived so happily then.”

Membership in the transvestite community inevitably brought lessons about AIDS and how the disease and society’s response to it ravaged the socially marginalized, a phenomenon not unique to Brazil. Brenda, in an uncharacteristically sad tone, told how a drag queen friend of hers died of AIDS in 1983. “We were all living together, and we were such a big group I didn’t notice at first that she was sick. When I finally realized, I immediately took her to the hospital. She had pneumonia. The doctor treated and released her—they didn’t want to deal with her, because she was a transvestite. She got worse constantly, so I brought her to another doctor, who told me if she had been hospitalized earlier she might have lived, but now it was too late. She died that night.”

With few active gay-identified organizations in Brazil, care for people with AIDS has been left largely to new volunteer

groups whose members come from all parts of Brazilian society. These groups usually shun, at least publicly, identification with any of the communities hardest hit by AIDS and are often adamant in insisting that their organizations are not in any way homosexual.

The *Casa de Apoio Brenda Lee* is a notable exception. It is unlikely that outsiders could ever have reached as effectively into the tightly guarded circles of São Paulo’s transvestite community as Brenda Lee has done.

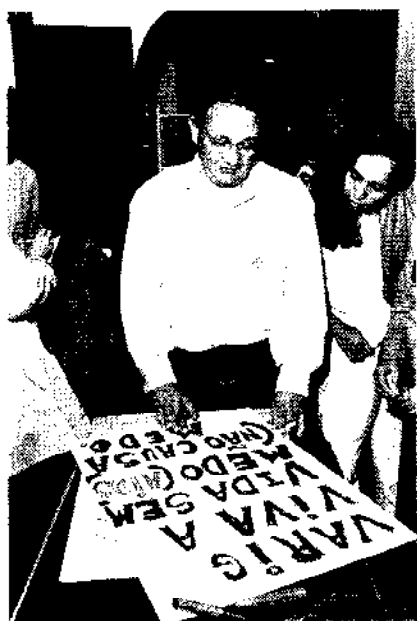
When wealthier Brazilian drag queens return from Europe, they donate to the Palace clothes or money they earned from their work abroad. Poorer transvestites in São Paulo collect small sums from their friends and buy food for the house. “I’ve learned that some communities are never satisfied with the government,” Brenda remarks. “But if they set to work, they could resolve the problems themselves. I never imagined the government would support our work.”

Of course, now that the government has entered the picture, things clearly have changed. “We’re not a community anymore,” Brenda notes with a hint of nostalgia in her voice. “We’re a house specifically for people with AIDS.” Newcomers to the house must first be authorized by the state secretary of health, and they are not always transvestites. Brenda must report regularly to the secretariat. And her

relationship with her houseguests also has changed. Accustomed to being something akin to a much-loved mother (drag queens in residence often refer to her as Mother Caetana), Brenda has been taken aback slightly by some recent changes in attitude. “They demand things now because they say the secretary of health gives me money for them,” Brenda complains. “People want everything done for them. It’s a big change from when I paid for all of it.”

Still, Brenda Lee professes to be happy with the arrangement and to see it as an example for transvestites outside São Paulo. Others are not so sure. Some Brazilian AIDS activists have expressed concern that Brenda Lee is being used unfairly by the São Paulo Health Secretary to provide services—at a far lower cost and in substandard conditions—that the state should be providing. If Brenda is aware of such criticisms, they have not changed her feelings about the work she has undertaken. “People have to help themselves,” she states firmly. “I built this house for the transvestite community. When I die I’ll leave the house to them, not my family. We’re all we’ve got.” ▼

Michael Adams is currently pursuing advanced degrees in law and Latin American studies at Stanford University. He wishes to thank Paul DiDonato and Charles G. Moura for their invaluable assistance with this article.



by
**Herbert
Daniel**

A Guerrilla Grapples with AIDS

From one minute to the next, the simple fact of saying "I'm alive" has become a political act. To affirm myself as a citizen who is perfectly alive is an act of civil disobedience. For this reason, ever since I found out that I have AIDS, I constantly repeat that I am alive and that I am a citizen. I have no deficiency that makes me immune to civil rights—in spite of abundant propaganda to the contrary.

We all get sick. Everyone will die. Yet when a person has AIDS in Brazil, evil and powerful tongues say that we are "aidectics"* and, for all practical purposes, provisionally dead until the final hour of passing arrives.

(continued on page 29)

* The Portuguese term *aidético* was created by the medical establishment to label the AIDS sufferer and has since been adopted, with a heavy load of prejudice, by the media and public in general.

Who is Herbert Daniel?

Herbert Daniel is one of Brazil's best-known gay intellectuals, writers, and AIDS activists. His work against discrimination is not confined to Brazil, nor to those countries whose system of government he opposes. In an appeal to Fidel Castro last summer, for instance, he condemned Cuba's approach to dealing with AIDS:

...I was an armed rebel, a sincere follower of Ché Guevara. Today I am one of the thousands of Brazilians living with AIDS... Deprived of basic human rights, the person with AIDS experiences a de facto civil death....

I have followed with great sorrow the Cuban initiatives in relation to AIDS... Cuba could take pride in its health system. Could, if it weren't for the way it treats those who are HIV seropositive, whether sick or not, burying them in an isolation which has no technical justification, which goes against all scientific advice and which seriously infringes on human rights.

Cuba has used, in an abusive manner, compulsory HIV tests and has incarcerated those who test positive. Thus, Cuba seeks to combat the virus by combating those people whom the virus has attacked. In this way, Cuba is defeated by the HIV virus and by the ideological virus of prejudice and discrimination. There are no possible arguments to defend these positions, except for those based on the most reactionary forms of prejudice against gays...

Daniel's personal story is in many ways a history of progressive and radical politics in Brazil over the last 20 years. He participated in the Brazilian armed guerrilla struggle and in 1970, at the age of 23, commandeered the kidnaping of the German ambassador to Brazil. He subsequently was arrested and exiled by the country's military government. Eventually granted amnesty by the Brazilian government, Daniel returned from exile in 1979 to become one of the leaders of Brazil's budding gay rights movement and a key actor in the fight for a return to civilian government.

In the 1980s Daniel turned to writing and published several novels, including *Passagem para o proximo sonho*, a romance about a gay guerrilla and his young lover, and *Alegres e irresponsaveis abacaxis americanos*, a novel about AIDS. In 1986 he emerged as one of the founders of ABLA, the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association. That same year, following the return to civilian government, he unsuccessfully ran for a seat in the Rio de Janeiro state Legislative Assembly under the banner of the Workers Party. In 1989, shortly after he was diagnosed with AIDS, Daniel and a number of friends established *Pela VIDDA*, a group of people with HIV disease dedicated to fighting discrimination based on HIV status. Daniel was the symbolic presidential candidate of Brazil's Green Party in the country's recent national elections.

—Michael Adams

I, for one, discovered that what I am is not an "aidectic." I am still the same person; the only difference is that I have AIDS—an illness like other illnesses and, like a few of them, loaded with taboos and prejudices.

As for dying, I haven't died yet. I know that AIDS can kill, but I also know that prejudice and discrimination are more deadly. May death be easy for me when it comes, but I won't let myself be killed by prejudice. Prejudice kills during life, causing civil death, which is the worst kind. They want to kill people with AIDS, condemning us to a civil death. For that reason, disobediently, I am striving to reaffirm that I am very much alive. My problem, like that of thousands of other people with this disease, is not to ask for easier conditions of death but to demand a better quality of life—a problem, by the way, that is common to almost all Brazilians.

When I got sick with an opportunistic infection typical of AIDS, between the fever and the fright of having recognized in myself the so-called disease of the century, I immediately imagined that from that day on my problem would be how to make sense of my death. Things didn't happen that way, although I think that I have seen death up close and discovered that dying is easier than I once supposed. I confess that my greatest worry was not how to respond to the unspeakable question of whether there is life after death. I perceived that the first question to be answered is whether there is life, and of what kind, before death. I think that only by responding to this question will it be possible for all of us to face death. Or rather, to make sense of the absurdities that are peculiar to what we call the human condition.

There are still other problems with the definition of AIDS, which reveal distinctive types of prejudice. I have observed that the disease's definition was based on its evolution in the United States and Europe. The fundamental "model" was first-world. Third-world models were the "exceptions to the rule." The "African model" (where transmission is basically heterosexual) serves as a counterpoint rather than a starting point for understanding the global problem of this pandemic. The racism of this ethnocentric view has had a devastating effect.

In Brazil, where studies about the disease are still insufficient, Ministry of Health bureaucrats remain fascinated by these "chic models." All too often we see how hard they try to demonstrate that a "North American" pattern should also fit us. This has two results: (1) to disseminate the idea of an elite disease, coming to our privileged classes from the "developed world" (an idea that those who actually work with the disease have proven untrue); (2) to disguise characteristics of the disease that are unique to Brazil, such as the question of transmission through contaminated blood transfusion. (Blood continues to be a scandalous issue in our country—genocide is being committed against hemophiliacs and others who need blood transfusion.)

It becomes evident that in Brazil the disease will reach predominantly poor people. This is because the majority of our population are poor and any epidemic affects real people in a real country. AIDS is not a foreign disease. The virus is here among us; it is "ours." And it does not make distinctions by sexual orientation, gender, race, color, creed, class, or nationality.

The epidemic will develop among us according to our specific cultural characteristics—our sexual culture, our material and symbolic resources for dealing with health and disease, and our prejudices and capacity to exercise solidarity. AIDS inscribes itself upon each culture in a different way. Each culture constructs its own particular kind of AIDS—as well as its own answers to the disease. Today these answers largely depend upon civil society's capacity to mobilize itself against AIDS and force the government to assume its responsibilities. The current Brazilian government is still not aware of the epidemic's importance. Actually, it isn't aware of anything. This government is only a death rattle, ridiculous in its mediocrity, of the authoritarian system it perpetuates. At present there is absolutely nothing that looks like a national program to control and prevent the HIV epidemic. As a result, AIDS in Brazil will have the same dimensions as the government's incompetence.

I know I have AIDS. I know what it means for me to have AIDS in this country. I don't have any illusions about it, even though I am a person with privileges. I am watching many people die as a result of government negligence; I am also dying because of it. We will all die because of it. I know very well what so many living dead mean. I know that I want to shout with them: We are alive.

For years I lived undercover in Brazil, while fighting against the dictatorship. At the time, I kept my sexuality a secret. They were hard times. Because I fought for freedom, I was persecuted by the police force. And during the fight, I thought that being a guerrilla

was incompatible with being homosexual.

Later I learned that one can't fight for half-liberties, and that there is no freedom without sexual freedom. Many years ago I came to understand that living my sexuality openly meant demanding citizenship for everyone, not just those who are, or are said to be, homosexual.

To this day, even in large cities and in the most liberal circles, homosexuality is lived in either complete or partial secrecy. AIDS has revealed the most tragic aspect of living in the shadows. For many, the worst thing is not the disease, it is having to reveal that one is gay. Pathetically, the person with AIDS is forced to reveal how he was contaminated. The diagnosis is transformed into a denunciation. So much so that people who don't get AIDS through sexual contact feel compelled to repeatedly and permanently "differentiate" themselves so as not to be confused with those who have the very same illness they have!

I know many people with AIDS. Homosexual or not, their greatest suffering comes from prejudice. It means not being allowed to just be sick, but having instead to bear the stigmata of being an "aidetic." It means feeling fear due to the frequent yet invisible social pressures (the worst prejudices aren't always necessarily direct discrimination). It means panic at the thought that their sexual and emotional lives may be over. It means the constant presence of those who seem to be just waiting to carry your coffin. It means the invisible web of oppression created by family members, sometimes doctors, priests, and even friends.

In the face of all this, the most frequent choice is to go undercover—a way of fleeing in order to die, since dying is the only kind

of life that society seems to offer the sick person. The issue is not finding better conditions for the sick to die in peace. The real issue is finding better conditions for living. Concealment is proof of society's inability to live with the disease. It is a testimony to its bankruptcy.

Many people live with AIDS secretly in Brazil, from those who die without knowing they have the disease to those who are killed by discrimination. Sick people who remain anonymous are not able to impede the cruel march that pillages our citizenship from us.

To satisfy this spoliation, tinged by the morbidity of a distorted curiosity, people with AIDS are shown in the shadows, their faces darkened, principally on TV. This is not a way to preserve the sick person's privacy—which, by the way, is an essential right. It is, instead, a way of depicting a depersonalized destiny, of fumbling around in a region where we all live, unknowingly—a darkness that tests our civil rights.

They foretold my death, naming it with an acronym whose four letters don't spell the word "love." They are the letters that spell the word "days" (*dias* in Portuguese)—days that we live, or that we survive. I don't want those days; I will not accept a predetermined death. AIDS is no more than an illness of our time, like any other, and I cannot agree to their making it a synonym for the final day. AIDS is no more than a viral infection that caused an epidemic that we will defeat. With all the letters that spell love: solidarity.

"The days hurt, the last one kills," cautions an old proverb. Thus, I am not a survivor. An AIDS sufferer tends to be referred

to as a terminal patient with a short survival period. I'm as terminal as a bus station, full of hopeful arrivals and departures to the most incredible and exciting roads that lead to the living. I don't have a survival period; I have a surplus of life, the only one I can use to leave the trace of a passion that always moved something immobile in me, rooted in a place I used to call my breast, but which I know reaches beyond any heart. The body, in the end, is disorganized—and AIDS, poor thing, is just an affliction of the organs. Desires are organic disorders. It won't be AIDS that makes me lose my appetite. AIDS only places me, like an explosion of a corporeal truth, in a state of impermanence. Something I always lived but never felt.

Let all my days hurt, all of them up to the last, as they say of a finger striking the strings of a guitar during a dance.

There, where a truth explodes, passion commands. I am certain that most people with AIDS begin to live passionately from the moment they learn they are ill. Many people very naively believe that this passion comes with the explosion of death's truth. As if all that was left for the sick person were the last cigarette before the guillotine falls or before the shot of mercy is fired. Death is not a truth. Death is nothing. The truth that explodes, in this curious discovery of our mortality—a futile and obvious discovery, although the obvious has become obscure in this alienated world—the truth that bursts forth is the significance of life. Before death. ▼

Reprinted with permission from Vida antes da morte/Life Before Death [in Portuguese and English], translated by Elizabeth Statem (Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia Jaboti, 1989).

taking the home out of homophobia



Laura Irene Wayne

Black Lesbians Look in Their Own Backyards

This conversation is excerpted from the forthcoming Seal Press anthology of writings on Black women's health issues, *No Ways Tired: Black Women's Health*, edited by Evelyn C. White. White asked Gomez and Smith, two pre-eminent Black lesbian writers, to discuss the toll homophobia takes on Black gays, specifically within the Black community.

A dialogue between Jewelle L. Gomez & Barbara Smith

Barbara: One of the challenges we face in trying to raise the issue of lesbian and gay identity within the Black community is to try to get our people to understand that they can indeed oppress someone after having spent a life of being oppressed. That's a very hard transition to make.

Jewelle: At this point, it seems almost impossible because the issue of sexism has become such a major stumbling block for the Black community. I think we saw the beginning of it in the 1970s with Ntozake Shange's play *For Colored Girls*

Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Unuf. The play really prompted Black women to embrace the idea of independent thinking; to begin looking to each other for sustenance and to start appreciating and celebrating each other in ways that we've always done naturally. I think that the Black male community was so horrified to discover that they were not at the center of Black women's thoughts, that they could only perceive the play as a negative attack upon them. I think that, for the first time, that play made the Black community look at its sexism. And many people rejected Ntozake Shange and things hav-

ing to do with feminism, in a very cruel way. So years later, when we got the Central Park incident with the white woman being beaten and raped by a group of young Black males, all people could talk about was the role racism played in the attack.

Barbara: There was an article in *The Village Voice* in which some Black women were asked what they thought about the Central Park rape, and most of them came down very hard on sexual violence and sexism in the Black community. They indeed cited sexism as a cause of the rape. This incident is not a mysterious fluke. It is part and parcel of what African-American women face on the streets and in their homes every day. There was a Black woman standing in a supermarket line right here in New York City and they were talking about the rape. There was a Black man behind her and he was apparently wondering why they had to beat the white woman, why they had to do her like that. And then he said, "Why didn't they just rape her?" As if that would have been okay. So you see, we have a lot to contend with.

Jewelle: I think that the sexism continues to go unacknowledged and even praised as part of the Black community's survival technique. The subsequent acceptance of homophobia that falls naturally with that kind of thinking will be the thing that cripples the Black community. So I don't think we should be surprised about homophobia. It sneaks in, in a very subtle and destructive way, even though homosexuality has always been an intrinsic part of the Black community.

Barbara: Absolutely.

Jewelle: When I was growing up, everyone always knew who was gay. When the guys came to my father's bar, I knew which ones were gay, it was clear as day. For instance, there was Miss Kay, who was a big queen, and Maurice. These were people that everybody knew. They came and went in my father's bar just like everybody else. This was a so-called lower-class community—the working poor in Boston. It was a community in which people did not talk about who was gay, but I knew who the lesbians were. It was always unspoken and I think that there's something about leaving it unspoken that leaves us unprepared.

Barbara: That's the break point for this part of the 20th century as far as I'm concerned. There've been lesbian and gay men, Black ones, as long as

there've been African people. So that's not even a question. You know how they say that the human race was supposed to have been started by a Black woman. Well, since she had so many children, some of them were undoubtedly queer. *(Laughter)* Writer Ann Allen Shockley has a wonderful line that I use often: "Play it, but don't say it." That's the sentiment that capsulizes the general stance of the Black community on sexual identity and orientation. If you're a lesbian, you can have as many women as you want. If you're a gay man, you can have all the men you want. But just don't say anything about it or make it political. The difference today is that the lesbian and gay movement prides itself on being out, verbalizing one's identity and organizing around our oppression. With the advent of this movement, the African-American community has really been confronted with some stuff that they've never had to deal with before.

Jewelle: I was thinking as you were saying that, that if one embraces the principles of liberation—gay liberation and feminism—then you have to assault the sexual stereotype that young Black girls have been forced to live out in the African-American community. The stereotype that mandates that you develop into the well-groomed girl who pursues a profession and a husband.

Barbara: High achiever.

Jewelle: Or the snappy baby machine. You tend to go one way or the other. You're either fast or you're well-groomed. I think that for so many young Black women, the idea of finding their place in society has been defined by having a man or a baby. So if you begin to espouse a proud lesbian growth, you find yourself going against the grain. That makes embracing your lesbianism doubly frightening, because you then have to discard the mythology that's been developed around what it means to be a young Black woman.

Barbara: And that you gotta have a man. The urgency of which probably can't even be conveyed on the printed page. *(Laughter)* I was just going to talk about when I was younger, people would want to know about me. Not so much about my sexual orientation, because they weren't even dealing with the fact that somebody could be a lesbian. But I always noticed they were more surprised to find out I didn't have children than that I wasn't married.

“Once I realized that one had to go—sexuality or Catholicism—it took me five minutes to drop Catholicism.”



Jewelle: Right. They had no understanding at all that you could reach a certain age and not have any children.

Barbara: And not having children doesn't mean we're selfish. It means we're self-referenced. Many Black lesbians and gay men have children. Those of us who don't may not have had the opportunity. Or we may have made the conscious choice not to have children. One of the things about being a Black lesbian is that we're very conscious. At least those of us who are politicized about what we will and will not have in our lives. Coming out is such a conscious choice that the process manifests itself in other areas of our lives.

Jewelle: Yes, it's healthy. Having grown up with a lot of Black women who had children at an early age, I've noticed a contradictory element in that that's the way many of them come into their own. I have younger cousins who have two, three, four children and are not married and will probably never be married. It seems that the moment they have the baby is when they come into their own and their identity after that becomes the "long-suffering Black mother." I think it re-creates a cycle of victimization because a lot of these young women carry the burden of being on a road that wasn't really a conscious choice. On the other hand, when I look at Black lesbian mothers, I see that yes, many of them are struggling with their children. But there is also a sense of real choice because they've made a conscious decision to be out and have children. They are not long-suffering victims. They are not women who have been abandoned by their men. They are lesbian mothers who have made a place in the world that is not a victim's place. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that things are any easier or simpler for them. But there is a psychological difference because most Black lesbian mothers have made a choice and have a community they can look to for support.

Barbara: I think that conscious lesbianism lived in the context of community is a positive thing. It can be a really affirming choice for women. The connection to sexism is deep, though. Homophobia is a logical extension of sexual oppression because sexual oppression is about roles—one gender does this, the other does that. One's on top, the other is on the bottom.

Jewelle: I didn't really come out through the women's movement. For me, my sexuality didn't have a political context until later. I always had a sexual identity that I tried to sift out, but I was most concerned about how I was going to fit it in with being a Black Catholic, which was very difficult. Once I realized that one of them had to go—sexuality or Catholicism—it took me about five or ten minutes to drop Catholicism. *(Laughter)* Then I focused on racism, to the exclusion of homophobia and everything else. That left me unprepared. I had a woman lover very early. Then I slept with men until my mid-20s. They were kind of like the entertainment until I found another girlfriend and got my bearings. I didn't have the political context to deal with what it meant to want to sleep with both men and women. I skipped past the feminism until much later. So homophobia came as a total shock to me because I had never experienced it. Nobody seemed to be homophobic in my community, because no one ever talked about it. I hadn't experienced it because I wasn't out. I didn't know that I wasn't out. But I wasn't.

Barbara: Because you weren't out, you weren't really experiencing homophobia consciously.

Jewelle: Right. I thought it was an aberration. I didn't quite understand what it meant. But looking for an apartment in Jersey City with my then lover, who was Black, we'd be dealing with people who had two-family homes and were looking to rent one of the units. I remember we called this one place, and I was in stark terror. In my mind, I was thinking about a white couple looking at us and seeing two Black people that they were going to potentially bring into their home. It terrified me because I could see them insulting us or even possibly slamming the door in our face. And then just as we were about to get out of the car, it occurred to me that this white couple would also look at us and see two lesbians. *(Laughter)* I was literally shaking. I had been so focused on them seeing two Black women, that it hadn't occurred to me that they would also see two lesbians. They'd see the quintessential butch-femme couple, both of us going into our 40s.

Barbara: Yes. Well beyond the college roommate stage.

Jewelle: It terrified me. But as it turns out, they would have rented to us if we had decided to take the place, which we didn't. But the anxiety I

suffered during those minutes before we rang the doorbell was devastating and definitely scarred me internally.

Barbara: Of course. It's deep. This is one of the permutations of how homophobia and heterosexism overshadow our lives. One of the things that I'm very happy about now is that I live in Albany, New York. And they did allow me to buy a house there. I don't know how many Chase Manhattans I would have had to rob down here in New York City in order to get enough money to buy a house. *(Laughter)* My house is in the heart of Albany's Black community. And one of the really nice things about it is that I know that nobody can put me out of my house because of what I have on my walls, who I bring in there, or whatever. That's very refreshing. Of course, it's the first time I've ever felt that way. What I'd always done before, because of homophobia and racism, was to be pretty low-key wherever I lived. I just felt that around my house, I had to try to be very cautious, even though I'm known to be a very out lesbian, both politically and in print. I didn't want anybody following me into my house who thought that bulldaggers shouldn't be allowed to live. Because I own my house in Albany, I feel less threatened. I feel like I have more safety and control over my life.

This is very important for all people, especially Black people in this country, to understand: We pay a heavy toll for being who we are and living with integrity. Being out means you are doing what your grandmother told you to do, which is not to lie. Black lesbians and gays who are out are not lying. But we pay high prices for our integrity. People really need to understand that there is entrenched violence against lesbians and gay men that is much like and parallel to the racial violence that has characterized Black people's lives since we've been in this country. When we then say that we are concerned about fighting homophobia and heterosexism, and changing attitudes, we're not talking about people being pleasant to us.

Jewelle: Right. My lover and I went camping in New Mexico recently. One day we camped on the Rio Grande in a fairly isolated area. We put up our tent and went away for a while. When we returned, there were these guys fishing nearby and it made us really nervous. In fact, we had a long, serious discussion about our mutual terror of being a lesbian couple in an isolated area with

these men nearby. I was especially conscious of us being an interracial couple and how much that might enrage some people.

Barbara: Oh yes, absolutely. Speaking from experience, I think it's easier for two Black women who are lovers to be together publicly than it is for a mixed couple. To me, that's a dead giveaway because this is such a completely segregated society. Whenever I had a lover of a different race, I felt that it was like having a sign or a billboard over my head that said—"These are dykes. Right here." Because you don't usually see people of different races together in this country, it was almost by definition telling the world that we were lesbians. I think the same is true for interracial gay male couples. So, you see, the terror you were feeling was based on fact. Just recently a lesbian was murdered while she and her lover were on the Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania. This is what colors and affects our lives in addition to Howard Beach and Bernhard Goetz.

Jewelle: The guy who murdered the lesbian on the Appalachian Trail claimed his defense was that he had been enraged by seeing their blatant lesbianism. He believed he had a right to shoot them because he had been disturbed by their behavior.

Barbara: What is that defense called? The homophobic panic?

Jewelle: To me, it's equivalent to [Dan White's use of] the Twinkie defense [to rationalize his murder of Harvey Milk and George Moscone].

Barbara: Yes. There's a term of defense they try to trot out that suggests that the mere existence of gay people is so enraging to some that they are then justified in committing homicide.

Jewelle: It's sort of like saying that because you are scared of the color black you are justified in running over Black people in Howard Beach.

Barbara: Right. We as a race of people would generally find that kind of thinking ludicrous. Yet there are Black people who would say that those murdered lesbians got what they deserved. I think that some Black men abhor Black lesbians because we are, by definition, women

"Being out means you are doing what your grandmother told you to do, which is not to lie."



“One of the myths about Black lesbians and gay men is that we go into the white gay community and forsake our racial roots.”



they are never going to control. I think something snaps in their psyche when they realize that Black lesbians are saying, “No way. I’m with women and that’s that.” But the real question is: Why should they be bothered? There are plenty of heterosexual Black women.

Jewelle: I think it’s a psychological thing. Black women are perceived as property and they are the means by which Black men define themselves. It’s another way they are like white men. They use female flesh to define themselves. They try to consume us to prove themselves as men because they’re afraid to look inside of themselves. The final note about our terror in New Mexico was that it was both a positive and negative thing. It was positive because we refused to give up ground. We decided to stay where we were because we liked the spot. Of course, it meant that I slept with a large rock in my hands and she with her knife open. But I’ll tell you, I slept very well and she did too.

Barbara: I’m glad you said that about not giving up ground because as out Black lesbians we have to live and do live with an incredible amount of courage. I attended a conference several years ago for women organizing around poverty and economic issues in the deep South. The Black women who came to the conference were wonderful and they treated me gloriously. As usual, I was out as a lesbian at this conference. Homophobia was the one issue they had not considered as a barrier to women’s leadership. Funny thing, they skipped that. *(Laughter)* But there was a little quorum of white and Black lesbians and we raised the issue. We got up on the stage and read a statement about homophobia. Then we invited other lesbians and people in solidarity with us, to stand up. Almost everybody in the room stood up. Later we were talking about the incident in our small groups and a woman said something I’ll never forget. She said that what we’d done had taken a lot of courage. And I have never forgotten those words because they came from a woman who was in a position to know the meaning of courage. She

knew what it meant because she had been hounded by crazy white people all her life. For her to recognize our being out as courage meant a lot to me.

Jewelle: That’s a very important point. I think that for those of us in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Albany, we have a certain leeway in being out. We have a diverse women’s community that supports us in our efforts to be honest about being lesbians. I find it sad that there is a larger proportion of Black lesbians in small rural communities who won’t and can’t come out because they don’t have this support. I think they suffer an isolation and even a kind of perversion of their own desires. That’s one of the things that Ann Allen Shockley writes about so well—the Black lesbian who is isolated and and psychically destroyed because she doesn’t have a positive reflection of herself. These are the stories that aren’t often told. Such Black lesbians don’t get many opportunities to share what is going on for them.

Barbara: Yes. Class is a factor, too.

Jewelle: Certainly. Your whole view about what it means to be lesbian is colored by whether you were able to get an education—to read different things about the experience.

Barbara: Another point I want to make is that the people who are not out and have the privilege of good education and jobs need to be more accountable. It really bothers me that there are closeted people who are perceived as leaders within the Black community. This is something I find very annoying, because I think they are skating. We also need to discuss some of the young Black men who are so prominent today in the Hollywood movie and television industry. People like Arsenio Hall, Eddie Murphy, etc. I think they are homophobic to their hearts.

Jewelle: And sexist. I think it’s telling that Spike Lee, the most popular Black filmmaker in the country today, includes the rape of a Black woman in his films. Sexism is so pervasive in our community that we don’t even think of this as awful. Imagine what it feels like to sit in a movie theater watching his film *School Daze*, in which a Black woman is raped. The so-called Black brothers in the movie are saying, “Yeah, bone her. Bone her.” And the Black women in the audience are giggling.

Barbara: They were probably giggling because they knew they had to go back home with those

kinds of guys. This gets back to the Central Park rape that obsessed and terrorized me so much. The question I was raising at that time is: Do men understand that they can kill a woman by raping her? Do they understand that rape is torture and terror for us?

Jewelle: I think that as Black lesbians, in some ways, we are very fortunate. This is because we are in a community that supports us in growing past racism, sexism, and homophobia. But as you've said, our heterosexual sisters have to go home with these guys.

Barbara: We have to acknowledge that there are heterosexual Black females who are not putting up with that stuff. There are definitely Black heterosexual feminists who are saying—"No way. I'm not taking that kind of abuse, negation, or suppression." But that means that most of those women are without mates. From what I can see, many Black heterosexual women who stand up for their rights go without long-term partners. And my impression is that there used to be more cooperation between Black men and Black women. Back when lynching was a daily American pastime and the crazed white man was our common enemy, we were not as inclined to lash out against each other as we are today. For instance, there was an article recently in *Publishers Weekly* about Black writers. The thrust of the piece was that Black male writers are suffering because Black women writers are getting lots of attention. This kind of thinking is based on the scarcity model that says there is only so much approval for Black writers within the mainstream white publishing industry. And that may be true. But there should be infinite approval within a Black context. Everybody who wants to write should write so we can all keep moving up a little higher.

Jewelle: I'd like to close by saying that homophobia is particularly dangerous for Black lesbians because it is so insidious. There have always been acceptable places for gay Black men to retreat and escape from danger—look at the choir queen or those who embrace the white gay male community. But as Black gay women, we haven't been interested in removing ourselves from our families or communities because we understand the importance of that connection. The insidiousness of the homophobia lies in the fact that we've been forced to find ways to balance our contact with the community with our need to continue to

grow as Black lesbians. We straddle the fence that says we cannot be the uplifters of the race and lesbians at the same time—that's what makes it so dangerous for our emotional health as Black lesbians. But you know, I think that our ability to see the need to keep the family intact is what is going to be our savior and help preserve the Black community. As lesbians, we have so much to teach the Black community about survival.

Barbara: I'm very glad that you said that about family. One of the myths that's put out about Black lesbians and gay men is that we go into the white gay community and forsake our racial roots. People say that to be lesbian or gay is to be somehow racially denatured. I have real problems with that because that's never been where I was coming from. And that's not the place that the Black lesbians and gays I love, respect, and work with are coming from either. We are as Black as anybody ever thought about being. Just because we are committed to passionate and ongoing relationships with members of our own gender does not mean that we are not Black. In fact, the cultural and political leadership of the Black community has always had a very high percentage of lesbian and gay men. Although closeted in many cases, Black lesbians and gays have been central in building our freedom.

Jewelle: Yes. It's very important that all our voices be heard. Everyone asks: Why do we have to talk about homophobia? Why can't we be quiet about it? The fact that we have to talk about it means that a lot of people don't want to hear it. And as soon as there's something they don't want to hear, it's very important that we say it. I learned that as a Black person. ▼

Jewelle L. Gomez is an activist author of several volumes of feminist prose and poetry. She is a poetry editor for OUT/LOOK.

Barbara Smith is the co-founder of and publisher at Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. She is a member of the OUT/LOOK Advisory Board.

About the artist: Laura Irene Wayne grew up on the lower east side of Detroit, Michigan, and is presently a graduate student in fine art with an emphasis on printmaking.

“It really bothers me that there are closeted people who are perceived as leaders within the Black community.”



The Dynamics of Color Art Exhibition

Art has always played an important role in catalyzing the imagination and expanding horizons. The Dynamics of Color Art Exhibition, featuring lesbian artists' work on racism, was conceived to promote lesbian visibility in the fight against racism and to promote dialogue with and within the lesbian community.

Artists shown responded to a nationwide call for works on racism. Entries from artists across the nation were juried by three Bay Area artists—Wendy Cadden, Esther Hernandez, and Orlanda Uffre. The exhibited pieces depicted and opposed racism; some abstracts piqued the imagination, and some celebrated difference.

The exhibit was shown at the Sargent Johnson Gallery of the Western Addition Cultural Center in the heart of San Francisco's African-American community and was funded by the Zellerbach Family Fund. It was a final steppingstone to the October 1989 conference "Dynamics of Color—Building a Stronger Lesbian Community, Combating Racism, Honoring Diversity" sponsored by Bay Area Lesbians of Color (BALOC) and Lesbian Agenda for Action (Lafa). Accessibility in all forms and racial parity in all leadership positions were inherent in both the exhibit and the conference.

Happy/L.A. Hyder, who conceived and coordinated the Dynamics of Color exhibit, is starting a lesbian arts organization that will promote lesbian artists with a slide registry, lecture bureau, and exhibitions.

Artists, critics, historians, and supporters interested in this organization should contact Hyder at 180 Linda, San Francisco, CA 94110.

*Racism:
Lesbian
Artists
Have
Their
Say*

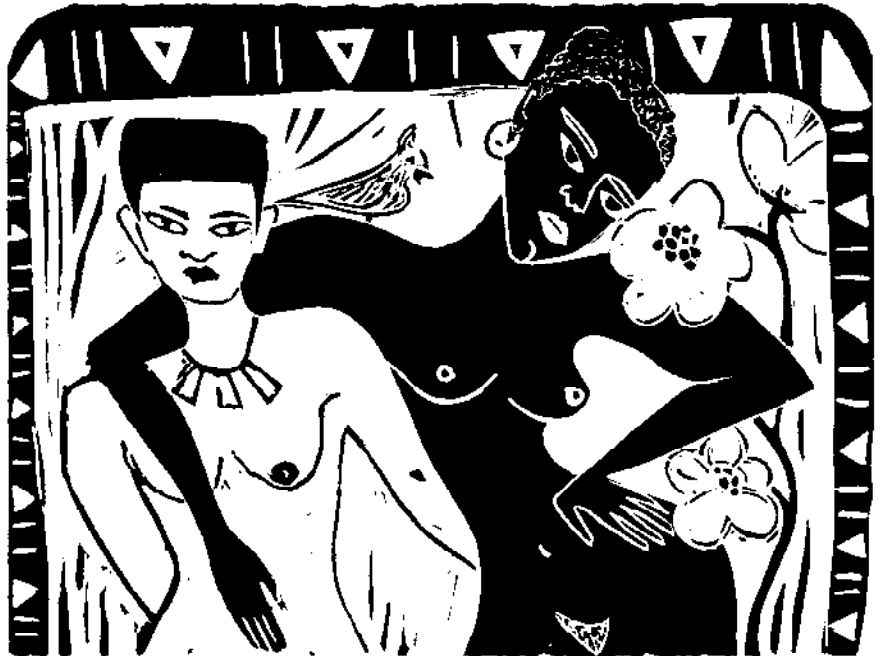
Julie Potratz
Mrs. & Mrs.



Tee A. Corinne
Willyce Kim



Catalina Govea
*Quinceniera at
A.P.U.M.E.C. Hall,
Oakland*

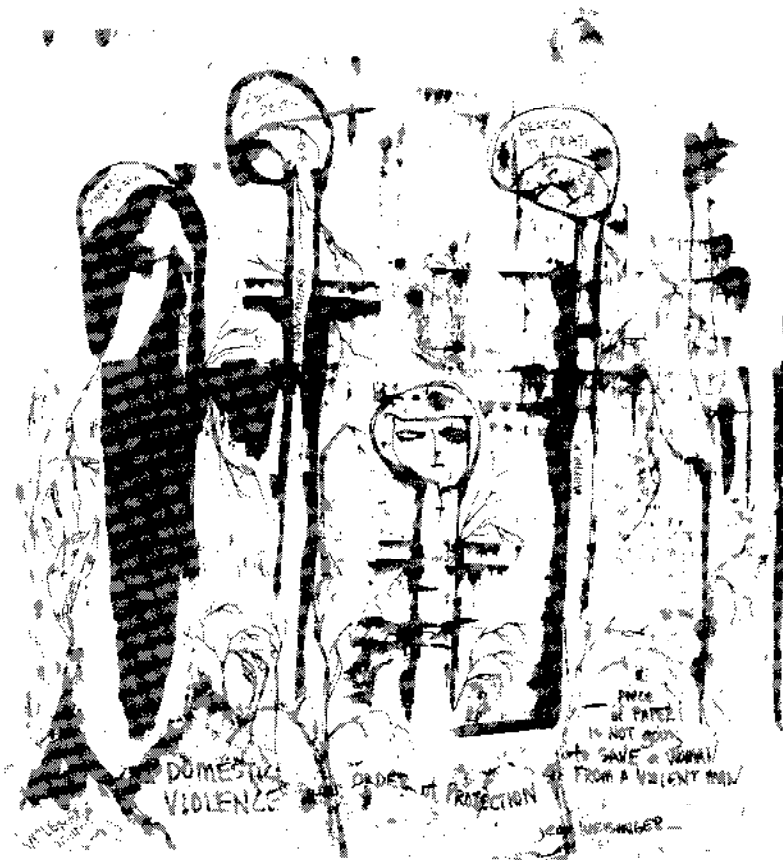


Juana Maria de la Caridad
Las Amigas

Terese Armstrong
Untitled



Jean Weisinger
Domestic Violence





Victoria Fontana
today we will not be invisible nor silent

today
we will not be invisible nor silent
as the pilgrims of yesterday continue their war of attrition
forever trying, but never succeeding
 in their battle to rid the americas of us
convincing others and ourselves
 that we have been assimilated & eliminated

but we remember who we are

we are the spirit of endurance that lives
in the cities and reservations of north america
and in the barrios and countryside of Nicaragua, Chile
Guatemala, El Salvador

and in all the earth and rivers of the americas

"Gay Party at Police Station"

The NYC Police Department recently hosted a wild gay party which was so successful they moved it down to the Criminal Courts Building. They didn't start out to have a party, of course, but they ended up having a dilly that won't be forgotten soon by the "guests," the cops, or the courts. Here's the story as we heard it from one of the guests.

A new gay club opened recently in the East Fifties. The owners were blithely selling liquor to three score customers, sans license, permit, or even the basic Certificate of Occupancy. In walked the fuzz and arrested the management (which is legal) and all the customers (which is illegal), for "disorderly conduct." The cops herded more than fifty very elegantly dressed, and very high, male homosexuals, four women, one sex-change-in-progress, and one dog into the paddy wagons. A lot of people, we understand, had pills, which they proceeded to swallow as fast as possible, so as not to be caught with them. By the time they got to the station house, they were flying. The cops could neither control them nor shut them up.

The arrested people had to be questioned, and searched, and that was a real freak-out. The artificial gaiety of the high ones rubbed off on everybody else, and the station house was the scene of perhaps the biggest "camping" of all time. The more the cops tried to maintain order, the more ridiculous the whole situation got and the more the cops lost control of the mob they had arrested.

Things hit a high point when it came time to search the sex-change. He had siliconed breasts, which were reportedly enormous. But he still had his male equipment as well. The cops were at a loss as to who would search him (her?)—a policeman or a policewoman. Somebody suggested that a policewoman search the top half and a policeman the bottom half. That broke up the whole crowd, and the embarrassed cop in charge decided not to search the sex-change after all.

Finally, despite great obstacles in the form of loud camping, freaky carryings on by those so high on pills they weren't sure what was happening, a yapping dog, four furious women, and a bunch of gay kids, some of whom were enjoying the whole ridiculous scene and others who were very unhappy about it all, the cops got all their paperwork done, and then loaded everyone into paddy wagons again to go to jail.

That trip precipitated another crisis. The women wouldn't ride with the queens, so the cops settled that by letting the real ladies ride up front. The sex-change, to the amusement of everyone else and the consternation of the cops, demanded the same privilege.

That was eventually settled and everyone went to jail. There, isolated ones were photographed—with much posturing, posing and camping. A cop suggested fingerprints, and a squeal arose about ruined manicures and dirty fingers. Finally, rather than go through another scene, the cops forgot about the fingerprinting idea.

The gay boys were herded into two cells, 25 to a cell. The women got a cell to themselves, and the sex-change (again, they couldn't decide whether it was a "he" or a "she") got a cell alone, and the dog was impounded in a separate cell.

Every hour during the rest of the night, the cops came around and took half the gay boys out of one cell and moved them to the other, apparently with the idea of preventing sexual carrying on.

What they didn't notice was that the same crowd was moving each time, and the coupling was going on. With so many people in the cell, the cops couldn't see what was happening in the back, and there was more than a little hanky-panky.

1969

From the New York

Mattachine

Newsletter



Came the dawn, as the old movie titles say, and everyone got "breakfast"—hot tea with no sugar, and bologna sandwiches. Once again they were piled into the wagons and hauled to the courthouse. There, they were kept in a back room and led out four at a time before the judge. Our reporter says the whole scene was too much. All those ruffled Cardin suits, hair in disarray, and pimples and beard stubble sticking out under traces of makeup.

The first four trooped before the judge, who heard the case and dismissed the charges. Another four, this time more swishy, trooped in. The courtroom began to titter, and the judge rapped for order. The charges were dismissed. The next four were called, and three gay boys and the sex-change came in. That, it is said, did it.

The judge made the mistake of asking the sex-change why "she" had a man's name. He got a lecture on sex changes and how they work. The lawyers, bailiffs, criminals awaiting trial, and spectators all got involved. Courtroom discipline collapsed. For the rest of the morning, four queens at a time tripped before the bar of justice while the judge tried to be serious. The courtroom remained in an uproar, and it took a lunch recess to restore order.

The cops told our informant that they intend to arrest, on charges of disorderly conduct, any person found in a club that they bust for not having a license. We doubt if they mean that, especially after this incident which destroyed police and court discipline for 17 hours one night. ▼ *(see side bar next page)*

The Stonewall Riots of June 1969

have, understandably, assumed mythic proportions within the gay community. But our interpretation of them can easily obscure other, less overtly "political" forms of resistance, such as the antics reported in this newsletter article. Though the account is self-explanatory for the most part, a few points are worth mentioning:

- Although there is much evidence to indicate that this was not the typical response of victims of a bar raid, there is no reason to believe that it is unique. Future research, especially through interviews of older lesbians and gay men, may uncover similar instances of resistance.
- It is interesting to see how central humor or "camp" is to gay male protest, as Michael Bronski has explored in his book, *Culture Clash*. The Stonewall Riots also had their light moments.
- This raid occurred under the administration of John Lindsay, one of the most liberal urban politicians of the late 1960s. Hence, it highlights how little gays could expect from the political establishment before gay liberation.
- The article suggests that this was a middle-class group. If they were willing to go this far in mocking the police, it is no wonder that drag queens, gays of color, and street youth were ready to fight back. Clearly, consciousness was changing, though with different implications, throughout the gay community.

But the incident is more than humorous. Though the judge dismissed the charges because the police had clearly overstepped the law in arresting patrons, buried within the story is another victory: those arrested were not fingerprinted. During the 1950s and 1960s, the FBI had an operation called HOMEX. Using the rationale of the Cold War federal loyalty-security program that lesbians and homosexuals were security risks, the FBI dispatched agents throughout the country to gather information on any and all gays. One method was to find friendly local vice squad cops who were willing to pass along their records on gay men and lesbians. Not having one's fingerprints taken might save one from future surveillance, harassment, or job loss.

—John D'Emilio

OUT/LOOK

Meanwhile, in another part of town
and 20 years later...

Photo: Jane Cleland



On October 6, 1989, activists for the rights of people with AIDS and HIV infection were confronted by San Francisco police officers in the Castro Street area.

Sawnie E. Morris

ALL OUR RELATIONS

I am sitting on a hardwood floor, up against one of the walls in an enormous dome. On one side of the dome is a large window the shape of a hexagon. The glass has been taken out for summer so that the air, and sometimes birds and people, move freely in and out of the window. It is near sunset, and below us stretches the high mesa of northern New Mexico.

The dome is situated on the side of a mountain in the Sangre de Cristo range, on land that belongs to the Lama Foundation, a 20-year-old spiritual retreat. This is the second year 125 gay men and lesbians have gathered here. There would be more of us, but Lama and the land itself have limits as to how much human activity may transpire here at any given time.

Last year was the first time so many women had joined this New Mexico gathering. Lesbians and gay men intermingled, half-naked much of the time, full of the energy of beginnings, first thoughts. It was a wild and liberating discovery of ourselves as a tribe. One night we danced for hours in a circle in this very dome, spontaneously drummed with our own hands, shook, rattled, and rolled out our own sounds and movements. I thought to myself: This is what the straights like to go to gay bars for, hoping to capture a little of for themselves. But it isn't in the bars. Not this.

Another night we built a "Kali Fire" and sang Hindu chants around it, each of us making an offering to Kali of what we were ready to give up,

burn away. In the mornings, people did tai chi, sat zazen, or participated in sweats led by a Native American lesbian.

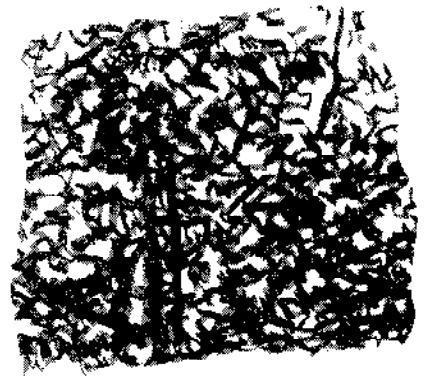
Much to our mutual surprise, the lesbians and gay men discovered that we more than tolerated each other, we liked each other. We were inspired by each other, emboldened to be more of who we are—grateful to find the unexpected depth of consciousness within each gender concerning the other, and the sincere will to learn. So healing, people said.

This year feels different. More subdued. I theorize: We trust each other now, and the place. We are ready to go deeper, get down to the work of it, whatever that is. We have matured as a tribe, as a small collective, although there are plenty of new people here and plenty who did not come back.

And we are grieving. It is a deep, steady thing, this grieving, like rain.

Tonight, sitting against the wall in the large dome, I am waiting with everyone else for the event of the evening to begin. We are on the verge of something historic, but we don't know it. I don't know it. It has been titled "The Gay and Lesbian Family Bonding Ceremony." A gay man named Dimid and a lesbian named Jean have been asked to lead. Whatever it is that they have decided to do will be a surprise, for the most part, to the rest of us.

I am feeling ugly, scared, and horribly alone. Having spent most of my adult life single, I am uncomfortable at events that celebrate coupledness. "Family



Bonding Ceremony" smacks of a weddinglike procedure. What is worse, I recently decided that my discomfort at heterosexual weddings had to do with being a lesbian. I am disliking myself intensely right now. It is beginning to seem that refusing to participate, let alone be the maid of honor, in my oldest friend's wedding last spring had less to do with being strong about being gay and more to do with fear and alienation. And in spite of my deep need for and love of solitude, there is also the



yawning chasm of my failures at intimacy.

I am convinced that many people are not going to show. They are going to stay in their tents and feel as horrible as I do. Who could bear to feel like an outcast among the very people you have allowed your heart to be pried open by and with? An outcast at a celebration of outcasts?

It is time to begin. We do so with a song, something meant to generate energy and bring us all into the present. The singing

seems to me halfhearted. People have pulled suspiciously into themselves, waiting to see what will follow.

Dimid enters the circle. He begins to walk around inside of it. He is wearing a little skirt. Another time, at a distance, I mistook him for a woman. I like his ass. It occurred to me that if I were involved with Dimid sexually, I would make love to him as though he were the woman and I were the man.

I don't know much about him except that he fathered,

through artificial insemination, the two children of a lesbian couple who are friends of mine, and that he is a very active member of the Radical Faeries. Those words, "radical" and "faery," together sum up my sense of who and how Dimid is in the world.

He is walking and walking, his head bent slightly forward. He begins to talk as he walks.

"We are a creative tribal people. Our work has filled the world with art, literature, theater—with extraordinary voices,

HAVING SPENT MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE SINGLE,
I AM UNCOMFORTABLE AT EVENTS THAT
CELEBRATE COUPLEDOM.

dreams. We have been great poets and musicians. We have inspired and revealed. We have contributed to culture in all ages and all places. In some cultures, we have been recognized as the ones to cross borders between worlds. And we have created rich families of choice to replace the families of origin that did not nourish us in the ways that we need."

He pauses, still walking. We all breathe. His tone changes:

"We have also been persecuted. We have been tortured and ridiculed. We have been called sissy, been burned as faggots and witches, battered, raped, and thrown off bridges at night and left for dead. We have been considered perverted, been refused the basics of food, clothing, and shelter, been rejected by our families of origin and our friends. We have lost or forgotten our sense of who we are as individuals and as a people."

He looks up at us, around the circle.

"In the face of all of this, we persist."

I watch as he walks past me. His slender bare back. The delicate yet somehow certain step. His head still bent in concentration. His voice speaking simply, without faltering. Our truths. Out loud, in this giant room. Already there are the noises of emotion. We are so open after four days, and he has come so close.

Dimid calls someone to the center of the circle, where there

is a very large bowl full of water with the blossoms of magenta flowers floating across the surface. He is a pale blond-haired man. He has the physique of a body builder. He goes down on his knees and begins an invocation to his recently dead lover. His intonation, his gestures, are dramatic, and clearly authentic.

We are a dramatic people, I think.

Dimid is on the other side of the room from me when he says, in conclusion, "And now, we are faced with the worst health crisis we have ever known, could have ever imagined, as a people. Tonight, to begin, we will honor the ones we have lost."

There is more. I can't hear it. The air is filled with gasps, sobs. A wrenching. He has reached his place in the circle. He stops. There is a moment when no one speaks, and we listen to the uncontrolled, irrhythmic sound of ourselves in grief.

We are asked to call out the names of our loved ones who are now dead, in invocation, in memory. We do, tentatively at first, and then in a torrent, spontaneously, and by tacit agreement never more than one name at a time. It is like calling into the breadth of a wide-open canyon. Our voices, the names of loved ones, echo around the room.

We are asked to call into the circle the names of any who need healing, any we wish

could be here. I call the names of every person in my biological family: my father, who is an alcoholic and was teased as a young boy for playing with dolls, and my younger sister, who has been gang-banged and battered, and the names of many of my friends, of all genders and affections.

We are asked to call in our friends from the animal kingdom. I call for my dog, whose leg was shot off a year ago as part of someone's target practice, and for the hawk who circles the field beyond my backyard. I call the names of all my friend's dogs as I think of them, and my ex-lover's cat.

We are asked to call in all our old lovers. A murmur of fond amusement streaks around the room and mingles with something older, deeper. The memory of all the ones who got beneath our skins. I remember each of them slowly, clearly, and see them before me in the center of the circle as I call them like a gift.

Everyone we have ever loved or been with is now with us. What has been ripped apart before is, in this moment, re-sewn. We have arrived in some place where love, death, joy, and sorrow are not so far apart.

Now we are going to further honor our relations among one another. It is as simple as turning one's body from one direction to another in deep water. So we turn.

We form an inner and outer circle. Those of us who are not currently in partnerships are on the inside; those who are in partnerships, outside.

Jean steps forward. I have known her for many years, closely. I try to remember what it is like to see her for the first time. She is all earth signs, with large brown eyes, dark hair, and dark skin. You can feel that she is solid from the way she stands while she is speaking. Her integrity is so striking it almost, but not quite, intimidates.

She begins: "Before honoring the relationships we have among one another and with ourselves, we want to honor the single people. All of us have been single in the past, and most of us will be single again. Single people hold the light for the community. When the couples go apart again, it is into the waiting sea of single people, which is the gay and lesbian community, that they return."

She continues: "Before we ever thought about sexual preference, we had to deal with being queer. What makes us powerful is when we stand up in our queerness and honor it."

One by one, as we are moved, we are to go forward to the bowl of water, take a pinch

of salt from a smaller bowl, and drop it into the water, saying, "I am queer because _____."

The woman sitting next to me is a friend of mine who is only recently single. She whispers to me. "I don't like this. I don't like being singled out. I don't like that word. I don't feel comfortable saying it." Queer.

We are to sit in silence first and think of why we are queer. I close my eyes. It is wild what we are doing. I trust Jean. I trust what is happening. I think. I think: I trust this group of people. After all, more than half of us are being asked to do this thing. And we just finished crying together.

I search for what will say it: why I am queer.

I think of the numbers. When I was a child, the numbers had personalities. Most distinctly the numbers 1 through 12. They have surfaced at most turning points in my life since I was 26.

There were no visible gay men or lesbians in my life when I was young. I did not know, consciously, what a gay man or lesbian was. But when I remembered the numbers again as an adult, I recognized instantly that the 1 is a gay man and the 3 is a lesbian. It is a complicated world, but the players of primary importance to me were the 1,

the 3, the 2 (a princess), and the 12 (the queen).

When I was 10, I was in an experimental class for gifted kids. I did badly at everything but reading, and was terrible at math. There were consequences when you took the 2 from the 5, or added the 3 and the 9. I told my mother about the numbers—my mother with her third child, her dreams of being a lawyer forgotten, and a girl-child who tested high but could barely keep up. My mother was driving. She slammed on the breaks and I fell forward, hitting my head against the glove compartment. "The numbers are what?!" she shrieked.

I forgot the numbers. I forgot them completely. I left them out.

Seventeen years later, two hours before the first time I confessed to a woman that I loved her, and we went naked and searching into one another's bodies, I recalled all of the numbers in detail. This time I knew who they were.

That is why I am queer, I thought. Because loving that woman gave me back the constellation of my existence. Because I am the 3, the odd number. I am the 1 and the 2 put together. I was born of the queen. And the queen, the queen is very close to being queer, too.

WHEN THE COUPLES GO APART AGAIN, IT IS INTO THE
WAITING SEA OF SINGLE PEOPLE, WHICH IS THE GAY AND
LESBIAN COMMUNITY, THAT THEY RETURN.

WEDDING HAD LESS TO DO WITH BEING STRONG ABOUT

BEING GAY AND MORE TO DO WITH

FEAR AND ALIENATION.

I kneel before the salt and the water and say, "I am queer because I remembered who I was, and who I am."

Together and alone, we rise. I will remember what each of us has said, like Ruben, a tall, gorgeous Hispanic man, who said, "I am queer because I am defiant." He said it like Jesus. Then he said, "and because I am Catholic," and everyone laughed.

The people who want to honor their relationships move to the middle. They form a horseshoe with the open end to the window that looks out over the mesas. The rest of us form a horseshoe around them.

My friends Jean's and Kat are the first to make vows to one another. These two women are the core of my queer family. Most of their friends have become my friends, and many of my friends have become theirs, and so the family has grown.

Before they say their vows, they tell everyone that they want to honor two people who made their relationship possible. They ask me and Hilda to come up. Hilda stands on one side and I stand on the other. We grin at each other over Jean and Kat's heads.

Jean says how Hilda was one of her first lovers 17 years ago and how without that relation-

ship, she would have never made it to Kat. She learned from her relationship with Hilda. She thanks Hilda. Thinking they know what she means, everyone laughs and claps.

Kat says how I have been a steady companion and friend to their relationship. The one who has been a friend to each of them individually and supported them both during hard times. She says how when she and Jean are having trouble, I encourage them in their efforts to work it out.

I think that what she really means is something different. More complicated. Too complicated to explain to all these people right now. I remember times after they'd had fights, mostly in the very beginning, and I would ask them to tell me how they fought and how they worked it out. I was starved for that kind of information: how to fight and not tear each other up. They shared with me generously. My need played a role in their salvation. They had a witness—someone who heard and saw and knew they had survived.

Now we are standing in front of over 100 grinning gay and lesbian faces. I have this great feeling of participating in a kind of coup. The coup of usurping what the rest of the world has envisioned as "wedding." I love being at this one. I am full as a flower floating in the bowl of

water. A true maid of honor with a true place. I think of my oldest friend's elegant wedding, the one I did not go to. I look around me at all of us with our wide-open faces and camping clothes and bare feet. I know what the difference is. It is that all of me has been invited. I have not had to leave one inch of my existence outside the door to come to this feast. And room has been made to reveal my own story and honor its imperative contribution to every single one of these people in this moment, in this place.

People keep rising, making vows to each other, themselves, several other people, whole groups of people, and to people who are now dead. We are all the words attendant, in the North American dominant culture, to oppressed "minority" people. We are dramatic, colorful, flamboyant. We are funny. We stand up in front of each other and say the wildest things. We wear all kinds of clothes (or don't wear them) and make our vows in all kinds of positions. We are not always particularly comfortable. We say things to each other like "As you know, this relationship is one of the most difficult and sometimes excruciating things I have ever tried to do in my life."

A heavyset man with blond hair and dark brows stands. He says his lover died a few days before he came here. He stands

before us and talks for a long time to his lover's spirit.

Tonight is only the first glimpse of this man's courage. Tomorrow, during the closing circle, this same man will tell us how he comes from a long line of violent men. He will say that recently he found out that his father once raped a woman and left her to die in the snow. He will cry and say that he does not know how the women can stand it; how they can bear to have anything at all to do with the men.

I will feel my heart open. I will see this man as the underside of all the fathers and uncles and cousins and other men I have feared and loved and rejected and known. I will see in this man what is possible. He will be for me a representative of the men who will dive down deep enough inside themselves to find another way to live. For a moment, I will feel both detached and deeply connected by our strange and mysterious humanity. Maybe *this* is what being queer is.

A lesbian will rise and tell how 10 years ago, while she was still married to a man, she was camping and another man came into her tent while she was sleeping and raped her. She will say how she has never, since then, been able to camp outdoors and feel safe until now, during these few days we have all spent together. She has been camping in the presence of over 70 men.

When the man is finished talking to his lover, he turns and throws his lover's ashes out the hexagonal opening and into the night. No one foresaw this action. There is an abrupt, collective intake of breath.

It is broken by the woman who sat next to me and did not like the ceremony for the single people. She has been squirming since the people making their vows began. She suddenly jumps up and I see she has a ventriloquist's doll and a teddy bear in her hands. I think she is going to say vows to these familiars as a joke. Instead, the doll talks to us about her recent breakup and all the pain she is in. When the woman speaks to us directly, she repeats "I am miserable, but I am going to be all right" several times. I look around me. Everyone is listening to her attentively. There is compassion in this room.

We are family. That is how families act. When it is over we sing, and this time our song is loud and clear and full.

We are each of us terribly different, and when we come together we find the amazing and resilient ways in which we are alike. What is equally important is that when we come together as a tribe, recognize and become grounded in that collective memory/myth (as in the ancient meaning of "myth," which is "truth"), we become far more free than we may have ever imagined possible to express what is unique in our

individual selves, and have that expression be valued and heard. This is what dream, art, and vision are all about: the creative expression of the collective through the individual's life.

For our reception, the Lama people respectfully bring in platters of cake and cranberry juice, with more flowers. I am standing in the middle of the room, dazed and feeling like I am floating. I am very happy and the radiant faces around me seem to swim. My friend Hilda ambles up to me grinning. "Always the bridesmaid and never the bride, right Sawnie?" We both laugh, and then we feed each other cake. ▼

Sawnie Morris is a poet who makes her living as a free-lance essayist and as the director of a river protection organization in northern New Mexico.

About the artist: William Samios, originally from Syracuse New York, now lives in San Francisco where he paints with an inspirational view of Cafe Flore.

In our Winter 1990 issue, we published "Rosario" by Adam Gettinger-Brizuela, the other winner of the 1989 Lesbian and Gay Families Non-Fiction Writing Contest sponsored by OUT/LOOK and the Gay Rights Chapter of the ACLU of Northern California. This writing contest is made possible by the Norman Sanson Bequest.

PEOPLE STAND UP AND SAY ALL KINDS OF THINGS TO EACH OTHER. WE ARE FAMILY. THAT IS HOW FAMILIES ACT.

Heidi Jones is a tiny woman with fine, medium-blond hair and a wide smile. She lives in the small suburban town of Westwood, New Jersey, with her affable husband, Bob, their three children, and a houseful of assorted animals. For 12 years she worked as a housekeeper and as a cook in an elementary school and taught Sunday school. She is also the immediate past president of the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition (NJLGC) and in April will receive the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition Achievement Award. And . . . Heidi Jones is straight.

Since 1972 NJLGC has served as New Jersey's clearinghouse for lesbian and gay events. While both its membership and effectiveness have ebbed and flowed over the years, it currently consists of the two dozen or so most active lesbian and gay groups in the state. As a result of Jones's terms as president in 1987 and 1988, the Coalition and its tax-deductible Personal Liberty Fund have emerged as a force to be reckoned with. Even losing gubernatorial candidate James Courter discovered the power of NJLGC under Jones when he made the campaign statement that "obvious homosexual men" were unfit to work with children.

So how is it that a major statewide lesbian and gay organization elected to its highest post an out-of-the-closet heterosexual?

With Heidi Jones in mind, I asked pivotal members of New Jersey's gay and lesbian community and a score of participants at the November 1989 Creating Change Conference sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force this very question: What do you think about straight leadership in the lesbian and gay movement? The initial reactions were unanimously negative. "Never!" and "Are you kidding?" In further conversation, these activists, especially those who work in the service-providing organizations that involve straight volunteers, confessed some reservations about straight involvement—even at that level.

Meet Heidi Jones:



the STRAIGHT Gay Leader

by Connie Gilbert-Neiss

Lee Glanton, producer of Campfest, the "comfortable womyn's music festival," and the newer spirituality festival, Womongathering, thought the idea was "bizarre. I find it just as bizarre that NOW would have men presidents." Glanton does not know Jones and would not rule out limited participation by straights. "But if we look outside ourselves to accomplish what is integral to our well-being or success as a movement—there's something bankrupt about that, giving away both respect and power. I also think there is a certain kind of passion that comes with being part of a silent minority and working through layers of self-homophobia in order to gain one's own voice. The foundation of that passion is an integrity that comes from the healing part of the self, and the voice of that passion has an unmistakable ring to it that helps call others."

Those interviewed who have worked closely with Jones, however, are unanimous in their support of what several called non-discrimination. "Why should we discriminate?" retorts John Gish, one of the state's earliest activists and a major force on the NJLGC board. "I'm a goal-oriented person. We have goals, and if a leader can get us to those goals, what difference should sexual orientation make?" Gish did make a distinction, however, between heterosexual involvement in the community's political activities as opposed to its cultural ones. "The lesbian and gay movement seems bent upon some sort of social and cultural self-affirmation and/or celebration, whereas the civil rights groups are bent on obtaining a status of nondiscrimination." In that sense, he finds Jones "is a true movement personality. She's legitimately angry, and you can see her blood boil." Jones, he points out, is also involved, as treasurer, for the Campaign to End Discrimination (the organization whose sole purpose is lobbying for the New Jersey civil rights bill) and its associated political action committee, the Coalition-initiated Voters for Civil Liberties. Gish believes that Jones's work with the Campaign "legitimized our cause. She's a tireless worker, dedicated, conservative as opposed to flamboyant. Her strength is in telephone work and networking rather than heavy-duty press releases and demonstrations. She knows how to get to people; she knows how to rope her way around, knows who's who in a room. She's a political animal." As for her ability to communicate, "She gets her point across and makes an indelible impression—petite, blond pageboy, that German accent, and a name like Heidi! 'Heidi doesn't lie,'" he quips, parodying a television commercial for Swissair.

Who is Heidi Jones? Born in Berlin in 1939, she was not yet two when her father was killed on the Russian front. She and her mother, a postal employee, were displaced several times during the war. Heidi's earliest

memories include bombings, detention camps, and a forced march from what is now Poland through Czechoslovakia in 1945. Raised in postwar Dusseldorf, she was encouraged to learn about the Holocaust. "A remarkable teacher introduced us to [the writings of] Anne Frank." Her name was Elisabeth Mosler, and "she had an extreme influence on me, on my way of thinking. I got involved with a Jewish youth group. For almost two years, I was a constant guest. Three years ago I was back, and the youth leader and I had dinner," Heidi remembers with pleasure.

She came to the United States as an Army wife in 1969, settling first in Georgia. "It was culture shock," she recalls. "America is thought of as the land of freedom, where everyone is equal. Atlanta was my first encounter with racism. I was actually embarrassed for my white race."

For Jones, becoming involved with lesbian and gay issues was a logical progression. "When I read in *The Bergen Record* in 1986 that the Coalition had done a report on discrimination, it was to me like lesbians and gays were treated like Jews in Nazi times." But what moved her most about this survey of anti-gay incidents was "the silence of neighbors all around. From there the connection came. I still draw the parallels."

One letter from Jones to the editor of the newspaper led to another. When she saw a TV interview of a local business owner speaking on behalf of gay rights, she marched down to meet and talk with him. She recalls this incident with irony. "I didn't think there were any gays in Westwood—after all, I'd never met any!" From this meeting she became a member of Bergen County's Gay Activist Alliance of New Jersey (GAANJ). Her vitality eventually earned her the position of Alliance political director, then of its delegate to the Coalition.

Jones's activism in the lesbian and gay community has forced others to examine their own thinking about political involvement with it. Peter

Jewell, the current Coalition president who served as recording secretary during Jones's administration, admits that "when I got involved with the Coalition I thought that only homosexuals would be involved with these issues in such a central way. It never occurred to me that Heidi was straight. I felt very good that Heidi was concerned enough about these issues and dedicated enough to get involved. The only way we're going to have major successes is to have people of all orientations working toward our goals. . . . I see it as meritocracy at work. If you want to do it and can do it, you get the opportunity to do it."

Before Jones was elected, he remembers, "there were no doubts in my mind that she was an excellent candidate." However, he did not realize she was heterosexual until a 1987 statewide rally—the community's first—was staged to protest a homophobic assemblyman. Bob Jones, Heidi's husband, was there videotaping the event for the Coalition. Afterward Heidi and Bob hosted a pool party and picnic at their home, and Jewell realized then that the marriage wasn't a cover. "It didn't make any difference. In fact, I had a lot more respect for what she was doing. It's very different for straight people to take a role in the lesbian and gay community—it casts suspicion on them and opens them to the same discrimination."

The rally also influenced Ellen Castell, a GAANJ delegate from Morris County and one of a few women active with the Coalition. Jones had been elected Coalition president only a few months earlier and was slated to speak on behalf of the organization. "Here it was, the first gay demonstration in the state," Castell recalls. Jones was "absolutely nervous. She was trembling. But she was marvelous—bright, reasonably articulate, wonderfully effective. If she could get out and do that, I certainly could. I had more reason to be there. She was there for me."

Being active in lesbian and gay issues has not always been a positive

experience for Jones. Elders in her Lutheran church suggested that perhaps she was "too busy" to teach children's Sunday school and asked her to leave the congregation. She finally found a more welcoming place to worship when Bishop Spong (who recently ordained the first openly gay priest in the Episcopal Church) invited Jones to join his church.

And it took Jones's family a little time to adjust, but they are now full supporters. When Jones was asked by her daughter to speak to her high-school class about NJLGC, the invitation was summarily withdrawn by school authorities. Undaunted, her daughter went ahead and spoke on the issues to the class herself.

NJLGC recently elected Peter Jewell as president, with Jones moving to the vice-presidency and filling in as treasurer. She feels very much a part of the lesbian and gay community and plans to stay politically active for as long as it takes. Remembering the way she grew up "under the bombs" and instances of kindness during the war—when she was hungry and a female Russian officer offered her half of her sandwich—she insists that "people are actually all alike. I think everyone is born with a sense of justice, and it's either reinforced or forced out of people. What amazes me is when people don't care. People need to open their eyes, see what needs to be done, and do it!" Predictably, she has excelled in her new roles as vice-president and treasurer for the Coalition. She also works as the payroll clerk for New York's Gay Men's Health Crisis, where she is known as "the most loved person." When asked why she keeps going, Jones's answer is swift: "The job's not done!" ▼

Connie Gilbert-Neiss is a longtime civil rights activist, journalist, public relations consultant, and homemaker, roughly in that order. A past executive officer of NOW-NJ and NJLGC, she is a founding member and present co-chair of the Campaign to End Discrimination. After almost 20 years as the local movement's resident bisexual, she feels a debt of gratitude to Heidi Jones.

1. Octopus

The vagina and penis are recent evolutionary devices that the octopus—like many other creatures—doesn't have. Instead, the female's breathing apparatus (or nose) also acts as a vagina. The male has a hectocotylus, one tentacle slightly longer than the rest, which can transfer sperm packets into the female's nose/vagina.

2. Sea Horse

The female sea horse takes the male role, using a papilla, or nipple-like projection, as a penis. She takes the initiative in intercourse, releasing eggs into a pouch in the male's belly.

Completing the role reversal, the male then hatches the eggs in his pouch. The pouch grows larger and larger as the young mature until, belly extended, he looks like any other pregnant creature. He eventually gives birth to fully developed, though tiny, baby sea horses.

3. River Sunbater

The male of this species of fish plays the female role by making a nest under a rock in a streambed and enticing the female into it. If she is interested, she will eventually spawn. He will fertilize the eggs, then shoo her out.

He will then spend two weeks fanning the eggs to keep oxygen flowing to them until they hatch. He also protects the young until they are old enough to leave the nest.

4. Black-chinned Mouth Brooder

The black-chinned mouth brooder of West Africa also practices the custom of couvade—male mimicry of the female birthing process. The male fish incubates the fertilized eggs in his mouth for 23 days—during which time he completely abstains from eating.

5. Emperor Penguin

In this penguin species, the male does all the brooding. He holds the single egg on his feet for two

months to protect it from the freezing Antarctic ground until it hatches. When that happens, the female takes over and he goes off for a much-needed chance to fatten up again.

6. Spiders

Spiders tend to eat anything that moves. Females often eat incautious males during, or instead of, copulation; in many species, the male distracts the female with a silk-wrapped maggot or some equally entrancing gift, while he slips in a quickie. But nature is such that, even if the male escapes unharmed, he will often stop eating and die, perhaps from a sense of having experienced the ultimate.



Somewhat Queer & Wonderful Facts About Animal Reproduction

7. Praying Mantis

The female praying mantis also eats the male—in this case, without even waiting for the sex act to get well under way. She begins munching on the male's head as soon as they start copulating and works her way down his body as far as she can reach. Some entomologists believe that this is a necessary part of the act—that an inhibiting gland in the male's head must be disposed of to release energizing hormones before copulation can occur at the appropriate frenzied rate.

8. Angler Fish

The first ichthyologists studying angler fish noticed some irregular warts, and on closer inspection

they discovered that the warts were looking back at them. These are the male angler fishes, minute in comparison, which, when they find a female, give her the longest love bite known to the animal kingdom. Eventually their bloodstreams merge and the male begins to melt into the female. The female controls the male's sole function, the production of sperm, by pumping a hormone through him. Any woman who has been tempted to think of men as parasitic excrescences can here see her worst suspicions confirmed.

9. Virgin Birth

One question about the human species has never been studied scientifically: parthenogenesis, the production of a child without the assistance of insemination from a male. The case of the Virgin Mary is relevant only if we reject the standard assumption that Jesus was male.

Helen Spurway, a noted British scientist, believes it can—and does—happen in the human female. According to Spurway, the incidence is one in 1.6 million pregnancies.

A US research project on parthenogenesis was canceled because the researchers were inundated by women wanting to participate—and saying they had conceived without any help from the male of the species.

The best-documented recent case occurred in Hanover, Germany, during World War II. Miss Emmie Marie Jones collapsed during a bombing attack and nine months later gave birth to a baby girl. (Shock, usually chemical or electric, is used to induce parthenogenesis in certain animals.) Miss Jones claimed to be still a virgin at the time of birth.

Except for the age difference, the mother and daughter looked exactly like twins. British geneticists who tested them found that their genetic makeup was identical, and concluded that the case was remarkably like parthenogenesis. ▼

Excerpted from Lesbian Lists by Dell Richards, forthcoming from Alyson Publications.

A stepfather, a child

by Michael Klein

Forgiveness is a key
I found. This newsphoto of you
begs for it: restrained

after taking some scissors
to a pair of drivers
at the ambulance wheel

mid-transfer from one hospital
to another.
All I can think of is twenty

years ago and how I prayed
the trick of our sex together
wouldn't sicken me,

like a secret. I wondered how you
made it, in total power
those nights

we brewed alone, relentless
in a two-family house—I wondered
how you magically reduced

to a passive boy my age
so I could get away with seducing you
as my mother walked a thinning dog named Star,

knowing nothing, and kept walking
to her death: a skilled wish,
rising out of Brooklyn.

And I wondered how
wanting your love,
however strangely unwilling,

got to something like this:
hand coming down
on a crotch

the way the passenger's arm
will strike the driver just before
the steering column snaps

or how we never kissed
because it would have given
violation an intimacy to

diminish its force.
But let's face it—the picture
isn't about that, really. It's about

how you're not
making it. It's about scars
that never finish healing

because the mind
secures them from the body.
And because I could never

understand male affection
without a trail of
quixotic acts,

I stand a life of not getting it
fully. So how you are
of dry-mouthed patients that wait

for a door to open out
from Rockland State, is how still I am
in searches for men to love:

whole and rushing
tantalizing schools
of them.

Michael Klein is the editor of Poets for Life, 76 Poets Respond to AIDS (Crown Books). His poems have appeared in Black Warrior Review, Boulevard, and Pequod. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.



The second I stopped caring about Dwayne Youngblood my skin felt tight. He shifted in his chair, conscious of my weight on his bladder. I shifted too. ¶ He complained to his date, somebody named Christopher, about a slight pain in his stomach. Dwayne suspects it has something to do with his rich dinner at the Trattoria Al Dente. ¶ Trattoria Al Dente! When I knew Dwayne, he thought Al Dente was a used car dealer. Now the words roll off his tongue and after dinner, because of his stomach, Dwayne only begs this Christopher to fuck him three or four times before he takes it with the most God-awful surrender I have ever heard in my life—and I've been around. ¶ My love for Dwayne had made me small but now the truth was making me big and sick. ¶ I towered over him at the rest stop where we first met. I was 6 feet 2, 245 pounds. I was chubby. Maybe not chubby. I could have stood to lose 15, maybe 25 pounds. I was in a jazzercise group and worked to keep my weight down (I'd cut out pasta completely) but after a certain age you just spread out and there's not a thing in the world you can do about it unless you want to turn into one of those Contant Gym Queens and that was the last thing I had time for.

When I first saw him, Dwayne was taking one of those long six-pack pisses and whistling what I would later come to recognize as Skull Daggers' "Death Knell in Hell," not a catchy tune by any stretch of the imagination but accomplished. It was a dead night at the rest area and we were alone so I stood at the next urinal until he caught me staring. I remember I said something stupid like "When I hear a whistle like that I can't help but come"—it was something silly and off the cuff. Then Dwayne leaned towards me, his beautiful fat cock hanging out of his pants, and he hit me in the mouth, knocking out my left front tooth. That tooth was on its way out anyway. I smoke too much and tend to grind my teeth when I'm anxious, so I really didn't mind losing it. I'd been planning on having it replaced and this motivated me to take the first steps towards a lot of bridge work I'd been putting off for years. While I was bleeding on the bathroom floor, he shook his last few drops of piss onto my face and called me a Cocksucking Shit Head before kicking me

twice in the ribs and swaggering out to his car to smoke a joint.

See, he made me love him!

I have an old lover who works in the state attorney's office and he helped me to trace Dwayne's name and address through the licence plate number I'd copied from the back of his car.

I used to love the way Dwayne hung up on me the first few times I called. By the fifth call I'd worked up the nerve to remind him of where we'd met and, when he threatened to track me down and beat the shit out of me, I felt my class ring loosen and slide off my finger. It was the way he said it, with such authority and conviction, the way a bull terrier might say it if he could speak.

By the time I handed Dwayne the keys to the Chevy Nova I'd bought him I stood 5 feet 9 inches tall, his height. I knew his current car was in bad shape so I called and offered him the Nova no strings attached in exchange for all the trouble I'd caused him. It was second-hand but I'd had it

repainted and outfitted with a good car stereo and new tires. Dwayne accepted the keys the same way he might have accepted a truckload of cement, he was so indifferent! He complained that the gas tank was only half full and that he didn't have any decent tapes to play so I gave him all the cash I had on me which amounted to less than 300 dollars. He didn't thank me or accept my invitation to dinner, just took the car and money and drove

off, screeching his tires the way kids sometimes do. I was afraid that Dwayne might be one of those Born To Run types, that he'd head off towards the nearest steel mill or oil refinery, and I shrunk to think I might never see him again.

When he came to my apartment drunk a few nights later, I honestly couldn't remember ever being happier to see someone in my life. Once, as a young boy, I'd gotten separated from my parents while attending a Tri County Voices choir concert at the state fair. There were thousands of families in the exhibit halls, people from across the state viewing the well-developed livestock and oversized vegetables that, for some sad reason, appealed to them. I left and headed towards the midway which was crowded with teenagers wearing hooded sweat shirts and cheap wind-breakers. The boys there traveled in packs, drinking rum in their cokes and forming rowdy lines for the rides, which would cause them to vomit. They provoked one another into fistfights over the impossible games but ultimately disappointed me by turning their driving attention towards the packs of cheap-looking teenage girls who, in my opinion, were no more interesting than the 4-H displays at the exhibit hall.

I kept crying that I was lost and alone but nobody paid any attention. I wandered around for hours and,

CAE- SUR-

A

BY DAVID
SEDARIS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ISA MASSU

OUT/LOOK



when I got hungry enough, searched the trash barrels for shreds of cotton candy and half-eaten franks. Knowing that nobody else wanted them made the scraps taste much better than the bland, square meals I'd always been told were coveted by the starving peoples of India and China. I told myself then that I would get used to living like this and can clearly remember my bitter disappointment when my mother, accompanied by six policemen, finally found me looking for coins beneath the Tilt-A-Whirl. I hadn't wanted her to find me. I had wanted Dwayne to find me.

And realizing it made me smaller.

Dwayne told me that he'd lost his job at the warehouse after spending the last 36 hours in jail. He'd been out driving the car I'd bought him when a group of rich kids challenged him to a race and Dwayne, with his very masculine, very genuine pride, had taken them up on it. While the other kids had gotten off scot-free, Dwayne had been arrested and, when he failed to show up at work, lost his job. He said that it was my fault for having given him the car, and of course he was right. Without a job he couldn't keep his room at the boarding house so I invited him to move in with me.

I remember that first night when, having turned down my offer of shrimp caribe in favor of a simple porterhouse steak, Dwayne said that there was no way on earth he'd share a bed with a cocksucking shit head like me. So I moved out onto the couch. I didn't mind the couch but would get up every few hours and sneak into Dwayne's room to watch him sleep. He slept like a baby, his hairless, muscled body splayed upon the bed as if he had

been dropped there from a great height. I would sometimes touch his lank brown hair where it lay on the pillow and strain my eyes trying to trace the crack of his magnificent ass beneath his soiled white briefs. Just standing there in the doorway, examining the fresh cigarette burns in my great-grandmother's double-wedding-ring quilt, I could actually feel my robe inching closer to the floor.

There was so much cleaning and repair work to be done with

Examining the fresh cigarette burns,



I could actually feel my robe inching closer to the floor.

Dwayne in the house. He was so primitive, so clumsy! It wasn't that he disrespected my things on purpose, just that he'd never been taught that such things merited respect. And after a while, I couldn't help but try and see things his way. For example, who's to say that buckled veneer might "ruin" a Sheridan writing desk? Who was it that decided coasters were important in the first place? What good was my Pennsylvania redwing puzzle jug when I never really used it to begin with?

Every day I would wash Dwayne's sheets and pillowcases just for the quiet thrill of spending a few hours sniffing

out the place where he'd slept, tracing it with my tongue. I used to pre-wash all his towels, jeans, and briefs with my mouth until my tongue became raw and I lost my taste for food.

Dwayne just hung around the house all day, working on his car and watching TV. I had sensed from the start that he was a very talented musician and bought him an electric guitar hoping he might use it to develop his natural skills. Oh, the neighbors complained when Dwayne started playing his music. Phil and Jerry, my first-floor tenants, were pounding on the door every 20 minutes until Dwayne finally told them that if they didn't like it then they could just fucking move the fuck out. I used to like Phil and Jerry. We used to antique together and do the Gay Men's Chorus but when I looked at them from Dwayne's perspective I started to realize just how narrow and conservative they really were. How could they be in the chorus and turn their backs on other kinds of music? Who were they to judge anyone else's taste? "Music is just fucking music" that's what Dwayne says and I agree.

When Phil and Jerry moved out, I lent the first floor to Dwayne's friend Paulie who needed a safe place to work on his motorcycles. Before he moved in downstairs Paulie used to visit quite often. He and Dwayne would sit up half the night, drinking beer, smoking dope, and sharing information on the cheap girls they admired but, thank God, never brought around. I saw Paulie as a bad influence on Dwayne. It was one thing for Dwayne to boss me around; I didn't mind waiting on him but it irritated me when Paulie started in. Paulie was nothing to me. I only put up with him because Dwayne threatened to leave if I

wouldn't treat him like a respected guest.

The two of them used to drop in on me at Collridge/Tillman where I worked as a marketing analyst. When several of the secretaries noticed their purses missing I defended Dwayne and Paulie with everything I had. When Tillman refused their future admittance into the office I quit. For one thing Tillman's daughter Yvonne is just as trashy as they come and yet *she's* allowed in the office. Tillman was just stereotyping Dwayne and Paulie and it pissed me off. I'd wasted 15 years working for that asshole and quitting was just the incentive I needed to get out and open my own firm. Fuck Collridge/Tillman.

Dwayne didn't like having me home during the day. He became more moody than ever and would storm around the apartment breaking things. When I'd ask what his plans were he would cuff me against the side of the head, leaving me woozy and pleasantly vulnerable. He'd say, "Hey Fuckface, why don't you just suck my dick," and I'd get worked up to do so but he'd always change his mind. It made me small.

By the time he was shitting with the bathroom door open I stood three feet tall. Dwayne didn't like for me to stare but if I was quiet I could crouch behind the ottoman and watch him wipe his plump ass and then examine the stained paper, inspecting it closely as if it were proof of some real achievement or defeat, a diploma or subpoena. At the time I was buying all of my clothing at the Small Fry Boy's Shop so I traded all my old clothes to Dwayne in exchange for allowing me to watch him shower. He rejected most of my Armani as too faggoty but filled out my leather in ways I had only

dreamed of. His showers were taken quicker than I would have liked and it was hard to see over the edge of the tub.

By the time he allowed me to run my tongue over his ass I was using my old watchband as a belt. Dwayne's ass was like ambrosia, not the kind that Phil and Jerry used to make with the braised baby oranges and fresh shredded coconut, but like life itself.

When Dwayne finally allowed me to suck his cock I was, of

**I plan to carry
myself to term,
until they drag me**



**wailing back
into the
world.**

course, too small to take it inside my mouth. His cock was massive, my twin, and all I could do was straddle it and boost myself up and down until he lost patience and flicked me away.

I gave him my credit cards and savings passbook. I know it was wrong but I wanted to love Dwayne harder. I wanted to spend my days hidden in his briefs, crowded by his full, hairless balls. I wanted to stand thigh-high in the slit of his dick and finally, when I was small enough, I wanted to slip unnoticed into the lush, private world he had guarded so heavily.

Last night I waited until Dwayne was asleep and then I

headed up his asshole. I brought some supplies—three croutons, a strawberry, and a small B12 vitamin—and felt my way through rules of intestines until I found a comfortable place for myself. I'd planned to stay awhile in a warm, safe place. I wanted a fresh start.

I was here less than six hours before I heard Dwayne refer to Paulie as "girl," as in "Girl, you'd better help me do something with this apartment."

He called dealers and sold what was left of my antique furniture before hiring movers to carry in his Tassio lamps and white leather DeFagglio sofa with matching side chairs. Although he plans on having the floors "reconsidered" he shouted at the movers and complained when his stainless-steel end table was dragged, leaving a deep scratch in the foyer.

After dinner and his fuck, Dwayne, very conscious now of a growing pain in his stomach, searches my medicine cabinet for something that might help.

I am growing larger by the moment and my weight is causing him a great deal of pain and stress. Dwayne drinks a bottle of antacid and takes a couple of aspirin.

"You'd better get used to it!" I shout. But my voice, for now, is thin and puny, barely audible over the noise of his bleached heart. He wants the pain to go away but I plan to dig in my heels and carry myself to term, until they drag me wailing back into the world. ▼

David Sedaris is a writer from North Carolina. He currently teaches at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He lives there in Chicago.

About the artist: Isa Massu is a French photographer who lives and works in San Francisco.

wouldn't treat him like a respected guest.

The two of them used to drop in on me at Collridge/Tillman where I worked as a marketing analyst. When several of the secretaries noticed their purses missing I defended Dwayne and Paulie with everything I had. When Tillman refused their future admittance into the office I quit. For one thing Tillman's daughter Yvonne is just as trashy as they come and yet *she's* allowed in the office. Tillman was just stereotyping Dwayne and Paulie and it pissed me off. I'd wasted 15 years working for that asshole and quitting was just the incentive I needed to get out and open my own firm. Fuck Collridge/Tillman.

Dwayne didn't like having me home during the day. He became more moody than ever and would storm around the apartment breaking things. When I'd ask what his plans were he would cuff me against the side of the head, leaving me woozy and pleasantly vulnerable. He'd say, "Hey Fuckface, why don't you just suck my dick," and I'd get worked up to do so but he'd always change his mind. It made me small.

By the time he was shitting with the bathroom door open I stood three feet tall. Dwayne didn't like for me to stare but if I was quiet I could crouch behind the ottoman and watch him wipe his plump ass and then examine the stained paper, inspecting it closely as if it were proof of some real achievement or defeat, a diploma or subpoena. At the time I was buying all of my clothing at the Small Fry Boy's Shop so I traded all my old clothes to Dwayne in exchange for allowing me to watch him shower. He rejected most of my Armani as too faggoty but filled out my leather in ways I had only

dreamed of. His showers were taken quicker than I would have liked and it was hard to see over the edge of the tub.

By the time he allowed me to run my tongue over his ass I was using my old watchband as a belt. Dwayne's ass was like ambrosia, not the kind that Phil and Jerry used to make with the braised baby oranges and fresh shredded coconut, but like life itself.

When Dwayne finally allowed me to suck his cock I was, of

**I plan to carry
myself to term,
until they drag me**



**wailing back
into the
world.**

course, too small to take it inside my mouth. His cock was massive, my twin, and all I could do was straddle it and boost myself up and down until he lost patience and flicked me away.

I gave him my credit cards and savings passbook. I know it was wrong but I wanted to love Dwayne harder. I wanted to spend my days hidden in his briefs, crowded by his full, hairless balls. I wanted to stand thigh-high in the slit of his dick and finally, when I was small enough, I wanted to slip unnoticed into the lush, private world he had guarded so heavily.

Last night I waited until Dwayne was asleep and then I

headed up his asshole. I brought some supplies—three croutons, a strawberry, and a small B12 vitamin—and felt my way through rules of intestines until I found a comfortable place for myself. I'd planned to stay awhile in a warm, safe place. I wanted a fresh start.

I was here less than six hours before I heard Dwayne refer to Paulie as "girl," as in "Girl, you'd better help me do something with this apartment."

He called dealers and sold what was left of my antique furniture before hiring movers to carry in his Tassio lamps and white leather DeFagglio sofa with matching side chairs. Although he plans on having the floors "reconsidered" he shouted at the movers and complained when his stainless-steel end table was dragged, leaving a deep scratch in the foyer.

After dinner and his fuck, Dwayne, very conscious now of a growing pain in his stomach, searches my medicine cabinet for something that might help.

I am growing larger by the moment and my weight is causing him a great deal of pain and stress. Dwayne drinks a bottle of antacid and takes a couple of aspirin.

"You'd better get used to it!" I shout. But my voice, for now, is thin and puny, barely audible over the noise of his bleached heart. He wants the pain to go away but I plan to dig in my heels and carry myself to term, until they drag me wailing back into the world. ▼

David Sedaris is a writer from North Carolina. He currently teaches at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He lives there in Chicago.

About the artist: Isa Massu is a French photographer who lives and works in San Francisco.

Half a decade later, when I encountered the post-Stonewall gay movement in New York, a similar one was being launched back home in Sydney. Out of that early contact with gay liberation in New York, I wrote my first book, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*—and thus found myself, somewhat unwittingly, a spokesperson for the new movement back home. At one point I even was attacked as being an “agent of American cultural imperialism in Australia.”

Objectively—to use a once-popular Marxist term—that is probably an accurate description. Yet while the American movement and individual activists within it have had an enormous impact around the world, it would not be correct to assume, as did the author of that particular attack, that other lesbian/gay movements exist solely because of American influence.

The Australian gay movement started because there were conditions demanding it here, and it has flourished where it has been able to fit Australian needs and possibilities. Attempts to commemorate Stonewall, for example, never caught the local imagination, but Mardi Gras, the enormously popular gay festival that takes place in Sydney each February, did grow out of those first attempts. Yes, we follow what happens in the United States with considerable interest, but we decreasingly see the United States as a model.

NONETHELESS, the United States occupies a special place in the imagination and fantasies of lesbians and gay men around the world. Castro Street, West Hollywood, and Fire Island (and, for women, the Michigan Women's Music Festival, as well) are for us what Berlin and Paris were for American homosexuals between the wars. Our fashion, music, and books come largely from the United States. So does much of our media; around the world, thousands of homosexuals have learned how to be gay from American culture, from Rita Mae Brown, Edmund White, and Armistead Maupin. (I once met a man in Kuala Lumpur whose knowledge of AIDS was based on having seen the film *An Early Frost* on Malaysian television.)

It is hardly surprising, then, that those in seemingly less promising environments are tempted to look to the United States for inspiration. I notice this particularly among Anglophones in Montreal, who seem remarkably unaware of the strong tradition of gay organizing in Toronto (which is also a comment on Canada's unique problems). Yet the structures built up over the past two decades by the American gay and lesbian movement are so much the product of American conditions and culture that they only have limited use in other societies.

Over the past few years—largely because of AIDS—numbers of gay/AIDS activists have traveled to the United States, attended your conferences, and read your publications. Because of the different frameworks within which we operate here, almost all of us return appalled by the situation in the US. As one of Melbourne's gay community workers summed it up, “In Australia people still have a notion of trying to reach out and help people with AIDS. In America it's not reach out, but keep them out.”*

We return, too, frustrated by the apparent indifference in the US to anywhere else, the very American conviction—shared by all world powers—that there is nothing to learn from other countries and other systems. I was told the story of a reception for overseas delegates at an American Lesbian and Gay Health Conference, where one of the organizers said she was delighted to share US experience with the visitors so they would not need to go home and reinvent the wheel. This was said to some of the most experienced workers in the field, many from countries that are far ahead of the United States in health and welfare systems.

Coming back to the United States in late 1989, I was struck by the new vitality of the lesbian and gay world, the enormous reservoirs of energy, imagination, and anger that have been tapped by ACT UP and other activist groups across the country. Above all, I was impressed by the emergence of a new generation of activists, people to whom the Stonewall generation—mine—seem as ancient

* SJC, “Angel of Mercy: Bill O'Loughlin,” *Outrage*, October 1989, p. 22.

as the founders of Mattachine and the Daughters of Bilitis do to us.

For my generation, particularly for the men, reaching middle age has been unpredictably and tragically affected by the AIDS epidemic. The gap in experience, both of sex and loss, between generations very easily could have led to bitterness and a separation even greater than the one my age group felt from earlier, almost entirely closeted, generations. That it has, instead, produced a great outpouring of activism and commitment linking us across lines of age, gender, and race is one of the most heartening things I encountered in the United States this trip. Mark Thompson of *The Advocate* compared what is going on now to the rebirth of a forest after a major fire—a very useful simile. Or, as anthropologist and longtime activist Esther Newton said to me, at the Yale Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference in October, sounding just like a proud teacher at graduation, “What encourages me is all the kids.”

The large number of lesbians and gay men in their early 20s who are participating in new organizations and protests share with the founders of gay liberation the same arrogance and sense of certainty, the same unawareness of what has gone before, the same moral commitment, and the same ability to turn protest into drama. But the late 1980s are not the same environment to organize within as the early 1970s were, and AIDS has made the stakes far higher. What you do may not be directly relevant to us as a model, but the centrality of the United States in the world means that it is of critical importance for us elsewhere.

Every time I visit the United States I am torn between exhilaration and despair, optimism and pessimism. By the standards I am used to, yours is a barbaric country—one where the electorate has, for 12 years, elected presidents who uphold the worst features

of unbridled selfishness, where there is widespread acceptance of inequalities on the scale of Brazil or India, conspicuous waste coexisting with real starvation, and extraordinary violence hand in hand with unctuous religiosity. But it is also a country of extraordinary energy and wonderful people, where a lesbian and gay community, of which I am proud to be a part, has come into existence in our lifetime.

How do we reconcile these contrasts? Most important, is one the prerequisite for the other (as, clearly, some sort of liberal democracy is a prerequisite for a gay movement to come into being)? There are certain aspects of American life that make it particularly fertile ground for the creation of lesbian and gay identity as compared to, say, Italy or Japan: the tradition of interest-group and ethnic politics, the importance of local politics, and the weakness of political parties; the sheer hostility of the religious right and the countervailing ideas of liberal individualism; and, above all, the very American belief that we have the power to invent ourselves from scratch (which Frances Fitzgerald saw in the gay community

she described in *Cities on a Hill*).

One strand in the gay movement has always been that our liberation depends upon major changes within the United States. From the early gay-liberationist flirtation with the Black Panthers, there is a clear line to today's insistence by many in ACT UP on seeing the politics of race and class in health care delivery. This type of analysis is in the tradition of Emma Goldman, one of the first activists to include the liberation of homosexuality within the framework of radical politics.

But there is a countervailing trend, espoused by gay Republicans and some gay theorists, of those concerned only with “making it” within the existing structures. Such people, whom I am tempted to call Gomperists, as

**I was attacked
as being an
agent of
American
cultural
imperialism in
Australia.**

against the Goldmanites, think of "the gay [sometimes 'and lesbian'] community" as almost entirely white and middle-class, with all the priorities of that class. (The most sophisticated version of these ideas is found in Richard Mohr's book *Gays and Justice*.)

This tension is far less pronounced in most other Western countries, where the lesbian and gay movement has had fewer problems identifying with the left—using that term in its broadest sense. This does not mean that gay movements should not cooperate for specific purposes with politicians from all parties, but it does mean that no vision of gay liberation can exist in a political vacuum and just ask "Is it good for the gays?" as if we were exempt from broader concerns of social justice and freedom.

It is these larger questions of political theory, vision, and strategy that seem to me most lacking in the current upsurge of interest in lesbian and gay studies. It is, of course, exciting to see groups concerned with the development of such studies gradually emerge at places like Yale, City University of New York, and several campuses of the University of California. But it is also disquieting that so much of the energy in lesbian and gay studies seems devoted to appending homosexuality to existing academic disciplines. The Yale Conference, for example, was dominated by arcane papers written in the particular language of specialist disciplines, with very little attempt made to discuss the larger questions of constructing a meaningful language and theory of liberation.

Before I am denounced, I am aware that several sessions at the Yale Conference dealt with some of these issues, and I am not so arrogant as to believe I am the only person who recognizes these concerns. I do believe, however, that politics, in the large sense of that word, is not sufficiently central in the creation of lesbian and gay studies, and that academic timidity is restricting us unnecessarily. Other

than its specific subject matter, gay studies, as it has been constructed so far, is surprisingly conservative.

ONE of the ironies of the American gay movement is that, despite its pre-eminent influence outside its borders, it plays a very small role in attempts to create a lesbian and gay internationalism. The United States, for example, is largely inactive in the International Lesbian and Gay Association, and there is very little awareness of or concern with international issues. This is, of course, a reflection of far larger national characteristics, perhaps inevitable with any great power. As Spanish prime minister Felipe González said, "Americans want so much to be liked. But they also have enormous power, and that is not easily compatible with the affection of other people. This gives me a feeling of tenderness toward them."*

I share with González the sense of affection, but also the sense of frustration at the apparent indifference to knowing more of the world outside the United

States—in New York, one sometimes feels, this indifference extends to everything west of the Hudson River. The American lesbian and gay world has achieved a great deal and has constructed the dominant paradigm of homosexuality for the latter part of the 20th century. But there are other paradigms and other achievements that can enrich yours if only you will make contact with them. ▼

Dennis Altman teaches politics at La Trobe University, Melbourne, and has spent considerable time in the United States. He is the author of six books, including AIDS in the Mind of America (Doubleday) and The Homosexualization of America (St. Martin's).

This piece was stimulated by the 1989 Yale Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference and my many conversations over the past years with Simon Watney.—D.A.

* *Time*, 23 October 1989.

**Gay liberation
cannot exist
in a vacuum
and only ask
"Is it good
for the gays?"**

A Cause for Celebration

If you're an *OUT/LOOK* subscriber, you've probably received several fundraising appeals from us. Why do we have to do this? After all, *Time* doesn't ask its subscribers for contributions.

Most publications are started by people whose primary purpose is to make money. *OUT/LOOK*, though, was conceived by five community activists whose main interest was to provide a well-designed, thoughtful magazine for the lesbian and gay community and our friends. We decided to form a non-profit, tax-exempt organization (the *OUT/LOOK* Foundation) to carry out this goal.

We launched *OUT/LOOK* with \$8,000 from our families and friends. Looking back on that now, we see how laughable that amount was. Most magazines need hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars to begin. We've been able to continue publishing with the help of thousands of people (no kidding) who have either volunteered their time or given money. *OUT/LOOK* is truly a community project in that the community (broadly speaking), rather than advertisers, must support it for its continued existence.

But having capital or even a well-defined community of readers doesn't guarantee a magazine's success. Many publications are started each year, yet only some survive. Recently one highly capitalized magazine for the Asian-American community, *Rice*, tried to follow the commercial route; after struggling for two years, it folded last summer. *Ms.*, run as a non-profit for many years, was finally purchased by a commercial company, which has been unable to run it profitably. The owners canceled the December issue, and the future of the magazine is uncertain.

Much of our donated income comes from our Sustainer program. We have over 500 Sustainers, who have each made tax-deductible contributions of \$50 or more. These people provide ongoing unrestricted support for the magazine. The *OUT/LOOK* Foundation also established a Writers & Artists fund last year to pay for some of the creative costs of the magazine, primarily fees for writing and artwork. We are now able to pay writers and artists after more than a year of publishing only donated material.

Out Is In

On March 3 we will be hosting our first major gala fundraising event in San

Francisco. In conjunction with *OUT Write '90*, the first national lesbian and gay writers' conference (sponsored by *OUT/LOOK*), the event will mark our second anniversary of publication and honor six pioneering lesbian and gay writers. We hope to raise enough money at the party to cover this year's deficit. If you're planning on being in the Bay Area then, please plan to come and meet many of the people associated with *OUT/LOOK* and have some fun.

We expect close to a thousand participants at the *OUT Write '90* conference to hear such noted writers as Judy Grahn, Allen Ginsberg, Sarah Schulman, Larry Kramer, Marilyn Hacker, Jewelle Gomez, Dennis Cooper, Melvin Dixon, Dorothy Allison, Edward Albee, Tee Corinne, George Stambolian, and many others. Over 150 panelists will address the political, artistic, and practical aspects of writing and publishing. *OUT Write '90* will be a historic event literally the largest gathering of lesbian and gay writers in history.

New Staff and Board Members

We'd like to welcome two new staff members: art director, Dominic Cappello and publishers' assistant, Kelly Lee. Dominic also works with H₂O, which develops and designs educational materials on a wide range of health and cultural issues. Kelly comes to us with valuable administrative experience in cultural and business organizations and is pursuing a self-designed Ph.D. in arts and consciousness. We also welcome two new editors to our editorial board: Rudiger Bustos, a graduate student in the ethnic studies program at the University of California, Berkeley; and Bo Huston, a columnist for *The San Francisco Bay Times* and the author of *Horse and Other Stories*.

Five new individuals have recently joined the *OUT/LOOK* Foundation Board of Directors: Thom Bean, publisher and editor of *Quarterly Interchange*, an interracial gay magazine; Robin Kojima, a lawyer with a philosophical bent who edits legal practice books; Don Pharaoh, a professional fundraiser and community organizer currently working with The Shanti Project; Sandra Whisler, journals manager at University of California Press; and Karen Wickre, magazine publishing consultant, formerly with the publishers of *PC World*, *MacWorld*, and *Publish* magazines. They bring energy, wisdom, and vision to the organization and will play a large role in developing our fundraising plans. ▼

— Jeffrey Escoffier and Kim Klausner





OUT/LOOK: National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly Presents
The First National

Lesbian & Gay Writers Conference

Saturday & Sunday, March 3 & 4, 1990 8:00 am-6:00 pm
Cathedral Hill Hotel, Van Ness & Geary Streets, San Francisco

The largest gathering of lesbian and gay writers in history. OUT Write '90 brings together more than 1000 writers, editors, publishers, booksellers, agents, critics, and readers to discuss the latest trends in lesbian and gay publishing, the practical issues that affect writers, and the artistic questions confronting writers and the lesbian and gay communities.

Keynote Speakers Allen Ginsberg & Judy Grahn

Registration \$40. For more information call 415/626-7929

Telling (Hi)stories:

Rethinking the Lesbian and Gay Historical Imagination

by Scott Bravmann

ABOUT two years ago I taught an undergraduate seminar on lesbian and gay politics. From the outset I wanted this course to reflect the diversity of lesbian and gay experiences—a goal that has lately become fashionable to talk about if not actually *to do anything about*. This meant including readings on and encouraging discussions of such topics as racial difference and racism, homophobia and heterosexism, the AIDS epidemic, and lesbian and gay parenting. As the instructor of the seminar, I was ultimately responsible for deciding its content, and I felt I could achieve much by bringing in material that reflected a

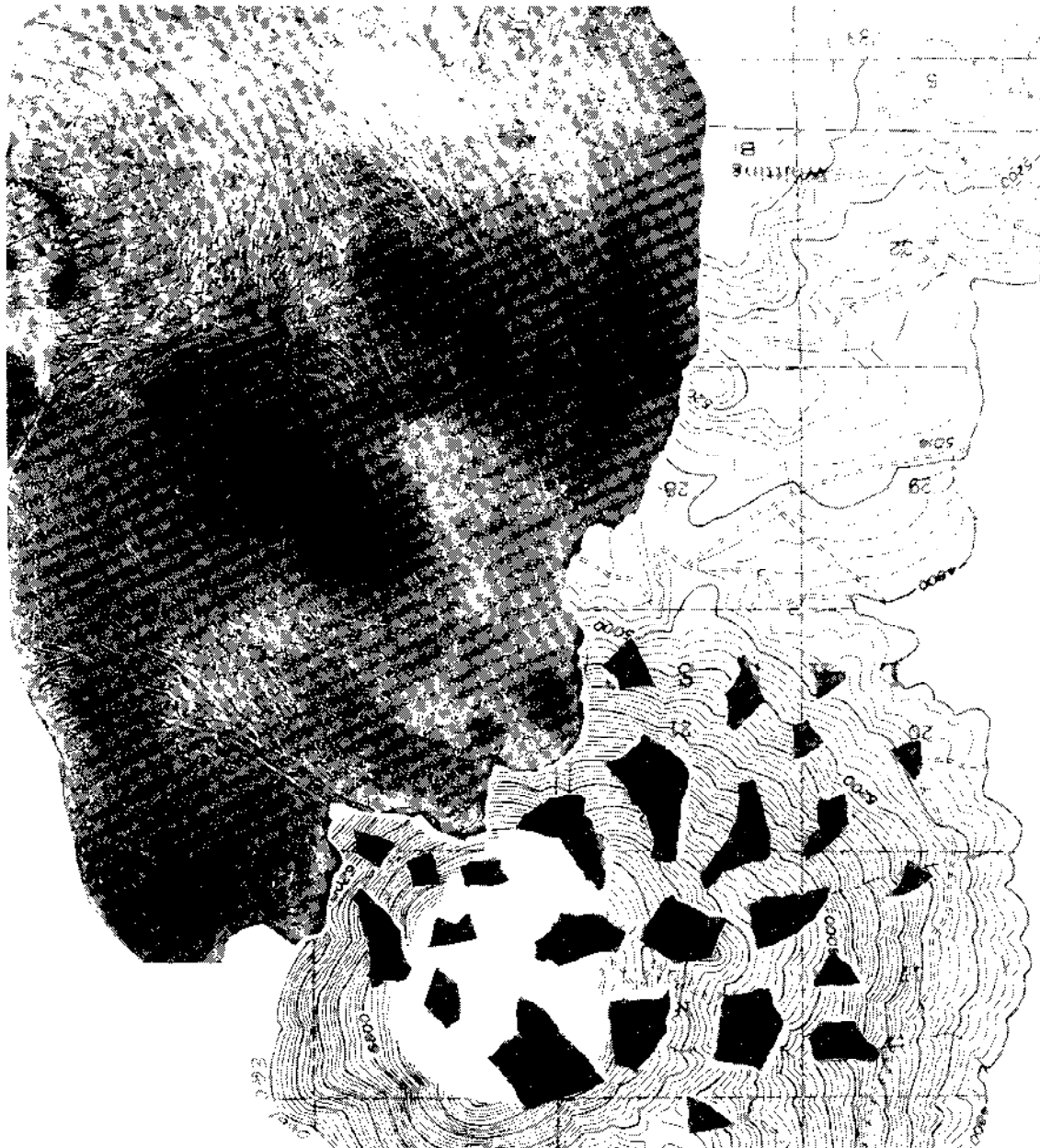
I would like to thank Tomás Almaguer, Gloria Anzaldúa, Jackie Goldsby, Donna Haraway, José Limón, and Carter Wilson for their various contributions to this paper.—S.B.

reality often quite different from my own as a young urban middle-class white male.

In spite of flaws, I think I managed to accomplish this goal in terms of content. As the quarter progressed, however, I began to notice a problem that existed on a deeper, more formal level: my syllabus reflected an allegiance to a specific historical model of community development and movement formation.

Regardless of the theoretical approach, however, the uneven recovery of the lesbian and gay past—gay historiography—has tended to reproduce rather than actively challenge existing lines of race, class, and gender dominance. Reflecting upon my teaching, I realize that the way I organized my course served to exclude the experiences and histories of (par-

E. G. CRICHTON



ticularly) people of color and failed to account for the multiple contexts in which lesbian and gay politics is anchored. The growing cultural and political work by lesbians and gay men of color demands a more accountable, self-conscious history, a history that this work itself is very much engaged in writing.

Creating a Gay History

Among the most provocative theoretical essays on lesbian and gay history is John D'Emilio's "Capitalism and Gay Identity," a compelling analysis of historical change that enabled me to understand the specificity of contemporary lesbian and gay politics in the United States.¹ At first I found D'Emilio's social history convincing because it offered an explanation, sorely lacking up to then, for the relatively recent emergence of organized lesbian and gay political activity.

D'Emilio argues that lesbians and gay men have *not* always existed—rather, our lesbian and gay identities are a product of a particular historical period and are connected to economic changes that deeply impacted the organization of family life. By the 19th century, the American family began to lose its economic self-sufficiency as men and women became more involved in, and dependent on, the capitalist free-labor system. As child labor laws and other changes took effect, children increasingly became financial liabilities instead of productive assets. Gradually, heterosexual expression began to be conceived of as a way to achieve intimacy, happiness, and pleasure, rather than primarily as a (re)productive act. These changes, D'Emilio suggests, made it possible for some women and men to survive financially outside an interdependent familial economy and to develop a personal life based on an emotional and sexual attraction to their own sex.

This newly emergent gay identity and social interaction, however, reflected the same differentiation based on gender, race, and class that pervades capitalist societies. This means that when it first emerged, gay life was the domain of middle-class urban white men. There simply was no space for women, poor people, rural residents, and people of color to identify as lesbian or gay. Although D'Emilio is critical of this gender-, race-, and class-based differentiation, his argument fails as a satisfactory explanation of the early histories of lesbian and gay life. Not only is the argument academically incomplete, but, more crucially, D'Emilio *accepts* a "universal" historical theory that reproduces non-white, non-male, and non-urban exclusion.

Even as he criticizes the free-labor system, D'Emilio ultimately comes to appreciate its role in the emergence of a lesbian and gay identity over the last several generations. While capitalism might create contradictory demands and possibilities, D'Emilio maintains that the nature of the economic system is the central force giving rise to a lesbian and gay identity. Like other Marxist social histories, D'Emilio's history of gay identity is organized entirely in terms of the social relations of production.

In preparing my course, I tried to respond to these exclusions by expanding D'Emilio's model to include "other differences" instead of challenging its intellectual and political authority. As I gain critical distance from my seminar, though, certain questions that began troubling me then have become clearer and more pressing. What difference do these techniques of exclusion and inclusion make in writing our histories and in building our contemporary communities? How can we reconcile the demands to acknowledge multicultural lesbian and gay male experience in the present with the absence of an equally multicultural historical record? The more I push these questions, the more rapidly the seamless logic on which I had based my own thinking unravels. For me the original attractiveness of D'Emilio's attention to historical specificity is precisely the cause of its disintegration.

Rethinking the "Modern" Homosexual

The economic changes, social dislocation, and restructuring of family life that D'Emilio outlines are characteristic of the modern world. My critical rereading of D'Emilio's essay rests on the adjective "modern"—as in Ken Plummer's phrase "the making of the modern homosexual."² To its champions, the arrival of modernity marks a step toward eventual human liberation. "Modernism," the cultural response to the experience of modernity, seeks an understanding of the world by making sense of constantly changing circumstances. The term "modernism" is difficult to define precisely; literary criticism, social theory, and historiography each employ the term in different and sometimes inconsistent ways.³

Part of modernism's promise is the security of individual development and a stable self-identity in an ever-changing world. For lesbians and gay men this promise is met by coming out of the closet—the way we develop and eventually claim "who we really are." In recuperating the past, modernism posits a linear developmental model of history in order to root present identities in a stable and coherent personal and social past. The coming out process produces the secure illusion of a unified self and wraps the content of valid historical reconstructions around a set of distinctively modernist criteria. But the totalizing sweep of this movement overrides, disallows, and denies other experiences. The stable and coherent social past that D'Emilio offers grounds the emergence of modern lesbian and gay existence within specific race, class, and gender experiences.

Modernism also claims that "[i]t unites people across the bounds of ethnicity and nationality, of sex and class and race."⁴ But this denies the very deep, often contradictory differences that exist across and within these bounds. In a sense, the claim tries to wish away difference and antagonism, rather than to move to careful consideration of them. By building his historical account on a modernist framework, D'Emilio reconstitutes the multiple exclusions he criticizes.

This universalizing move by D'Emilio takes a turn by addressing previously ignored questions of sexual identity, but the Marxist

logic nonetheless persists and privileges capitalist modernization as the cause of historical change. Lesbians and gay men who lived in poor, non-white, and/or rural worlds seem simply not to have been "freed" or "freeable."

As with other historical periods, when the American economy began its rapid shift toward an industrialized labor force, people of color were exploited in complex ways that, quite tellingly, are cursorily noted but unscrutinized in D'Emilio's essay.

D'Emilio's argument is unalterably compromised by the profoundly unfree labor of Black slaves and, after emancipation, sharecroppers in the South, the displacement and genocide of Native Americans during imperialist expansion, the annexation of Mexican lands to "fill out" the contour of the country, and the virtual enslavement of Chinese male labor to build the network of railways that ultimately enabled a national market economy. Given the extent to which D'Emilio's thesis develops out of the notion of "free labor," the formation of a modern urban gay identity must have depended on the subjugation of people of color.⁵

While D'Emilio does admit that "the system" discriminates along lines of race, gender, and class, he subsumes this action under the totalizing experience of modernity's arrival. This linear, almost mechanistic analysis of lesbian and gay community development leaves out and even denies ostensible inconsistencies that might challenge its authority. This history does not meet the level of complexity necessary to understand or write a heterogeneous and multicultural reflection on "our" past. Although there is little recovered history of, for instance, lesbians and gay men of color, this cannot be taken as evidence that such history will not be recovered. Rather, new histories may well prove to be an indictment of current lesbian and gay historical theory.

Remapping Queer Histories

In a collection of writings produced by and for women of color, Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "The lesbian of color is not only invisible, she doesn't even exist. Our speech, too, is inaudible. We speak in tongues like the outcast and the insane."⁶ Given Anzaldúa's intended audience and my own implication in the lesbian of color's non-existence, how do I as a white man

hear the silenced voices of invisible, cast-out women who speak in tongues? Where does my authority to talk about them begin and end? And on whose terms? Although it would be an interpretive and political copout for me simply to dismiss writings and experiences that are "too different" from my own, I must be vigilant of and resistant to "theoretical tourism...where the margin becomes a linguistic or critical vacation, a new poetics of the exotic."⁷ Avoiding a colonialist holiday means recognizing that while heterosexual oppression affects my daily life as a white gay man, I nonetheless stand in a position of privilege compared to lesbians of color. This recognition does not, I think, reinvoke the

notion of a hierarchy of oppression. Rather, it demands critical attention on my part to the heterogeneity and unevenness of the social field in which lesbians and gay men are actors.

The fractured experiences that lesbians of color write about directly challenge the modernist drive for unity informing the way "we" produce "our" politics and history. What I call a postmodernist history would deny the tenability of a modernist singular, linear development of self and community; each "mark of difference"—race, class, gender, sexuality, among others—is in tension with competing issues. Postmodernist representations of the past would show us heterogeneous "realities" grounded in shifting, unstable positions negotiating across multiple socially constituted dif-

ferences and their attendant geographical boundaries.

In their organizations and their writings, lesbians of color have claimed a politics for themselves where the liberation movements of homosexuals, women, and racial minorities intersect. Yet their location within and across these movements indicates the need for a radical transgression of modernist political strategies. I want to consider two contemporary lesbians of color to help set the frame for how to begin to think about the multiplicity of lesbian and gay histories.

Recalling non-conformity in Greenwich Village during the 1950s, Audre Lorde describes in *Zami* an acute splitting of herself at various intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality. "For some of us there was no particular place, and we grabbed whatever we could from wherever we found space.... Each of us had our own needs and pursuits, and many different alliances."⁸ Moving from the Bagatelle, a lesbian bar in the Village, to Hunter College, where she was a student, from her mother's home in Harlem to the library where she worked, Lorde's subjectivity constantly crossed lines of fragmentation. Everywhere she went "there was a piece of [her] bound in each place" (p. 226), but *only* a piece, not her whole self, was present.

As D'Emilio's theory anticipates, the Village provided the space where Lorde could be gay, but his model cannot account for how the invisibility of Black women there radically informed her experience.

[I]t was hard for me to believe that my being an outsider had anything to do with being a lesbian. But when I, a Black woman, saw no reflection in any of the faces there week after week, I knew perfectly well that being an outsider in the Bagatelle had everything to do with being Black. [p. 220]

Lorde's identification as a lesbian raised new questions of difference, shattering the modernist illusion of unity across the bounds of sex, class, and race. As Lorde puts it, "Self-preservation warned some of us that we could not afford to settle for one easy definition, one narrow individuation of self" (p. 226).

The very structure of Lorde's "biomythography" deauthorizes D'Emilio's proj-

ect, which seeks "a new, more accurate theory of gay history."⁹ *Zami* repeatedly calls attention to the imagination's intervention into accounts of the "real" world. The neologism "biomythography" captures this point, reminding us that myth literally interrupts the act of writing, cutting through and informing both life itself (=bio) and the written account (=graphy).

In contrast, D'Emilio attempts to transcend the role of the imagination in the history writing process, making the claim for a true history knowable through the seemingly transparent medium of a dematerialized language. Yet, because language and historical narrative are material factors, D'Emilio's purportedly transparent representation of "reality" can be reinterpreted and resisted. The modernist narrative structure underlying D'Emilio's essay is no less an intervention of the imagination than is the myth in Lorde's biomythography. That D'Emilio and Lorde write different sorts of narratives about the past reveals the different traditions in which their lives are enmeshed, rather than some more (D'Emilio) or less (Lorde) valid representation of the past.

Writing both literally and metaphorically about space or location, Anzaldúa contributes to "a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*... a consciousness of the Borderlands."¹⁰ For the working-class, lesbian-feminist, *tejana* Chicana writer and poet, being in many spaces, crossing borders, speaking Spanish, and traveling from one place to another all suggest a strong clash with the claims of modernist identity-based politics. The *mestiza* who has no country, the lesbian who has no race, the feminist who challenges her several cultures mends her fractured identities and ruptured spaces by "participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it" (p. 81).

Through rich layerings and interweavings of myth, imagination, poetry, and linguistic "code switching," Anzaldúa articulates a highly specific experience at the margins, in the psychological, sexual, and spiritual borderlands. She locates the convergence of these specificities in a *mestiza* consciousness that "keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new para-

digm" (p. 80). *Borderlands* insists that difference is central to the writing of history.

Importantly, Anzaldúa's newly emergent "'alien' consciousness" (p. 77) retains the urgency of the *internal* struggle against the modernist search for a way to allow action in the outside world.

The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it happens first in the images in our heads. [p. 87]

Anzaldúa's demand for specificity rather than universality, her internal rather than external orientation, is substantially at odds with the totalizing logic of D'Emilio's urban, publicly experienced gay identity.

The claims of Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa demand a reconsideration of the ways in which historical theory has unified or undercut fragmented identities. The requirements of modernist lesbian and gay historiography have disallowed the articulation of these identities precisely because they refuse to—indeed, cannot—stand still. This fundamental diversity necessitates a way of writing history that is itself fragmented, unfinished, and self-critical. This means looking at richly complex cultural experiences through a theoretical lens that allows a mapping of multiple historical narratives, rather than one overarching account of historical development.

As I began formulating this essay, I would turn immediately to the writings of lesbians of color to help clarify my thinking. While there are certain strategic, if not "logical," reasons for this, the paucity of writings by gay men of color affected my choice as well. Often found only in journals, newspapers, and magazines,

Great new books for you

from

A · L · Y · S · O · N
P U B L I C A T I O N S

**THINGS
THAT GO
BUMP IN
THE NIGHT**

SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT, by Jeffrey N. McMahan, \$8.00. Eight eerie tales of suspense and the supernatural by a new-found talent. Jeffrey N. McMahan weaves horribly realistic stories that contain just the right mix of horror, humor, and eroticism. A gruesome Halloween party, a vampire with a conscience, and a suburbanite whose problem with his lawn is a killer.

"McMahan's little book is a midnight gem. For those who share an addiction for horror, a book like *Somewhere in the Night* is a champagne fix." — *Lambda Rising Book Report*



**SOME-
WHERE
IN THE
NIGHT**

THE TALENT OF SUSPENSE BY
Jeffrey N. McMahan

CURTAIN-CALL

FINALE, by Michael Nava, ed., \$9.00. Eight carefully crafted stories of mystery and suspense by both well-known authors and new-found talent: an anniversary party ends abruptly when a guest is found in the bathroom with his throat slashed; a frustrated writer plans the murder of a successful novelist; a young man's hauntingly familiar dreams lead him into a forgotten past.

"*Finale* is a superb collection of stories and a must read. These are turning points not exclusively in gay fiction, but any fiction. All printed here should be justly proud of themselves." — *George Baxt, author of The Dorothy Parker Murder Case*

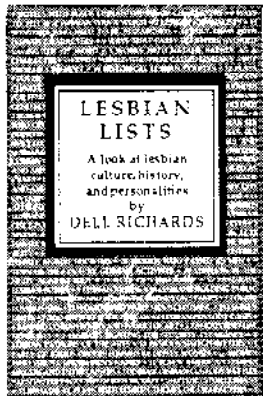


TAN LINES

ISLANDERS, by Douglas Simonson, \$20.00. The men of Hawaii are an exotic mix of races — Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, and Samoan. Douglas Simonson, a figurative artist living in Hawaii, captures these young men in pencil, watercolor, and acrylic paints which are reproduced in full color. Simonson's nudes reflect the natural sensuality of the islanders, as well as the slow, easygoing rhythm of the tropics.

HEARTH-TO-HEARTH

THE GAY FIRESIDE COMPANION, by Leigh Rutledge, \$9.00. Leigh Rutledge, author of *The Gay Book of Lists* and *Unnatural Quotations*, has written fact-filled articles on scores of subjects: fascinating mothers of famous gay men; footnote gay people in history; public opinion polls on homosexuality over the last twenty years; a day-by-day, year-by-year history of the AIDS epidemic.



**8 HOLY DAYS FOR
LESBIANS**

LESBIAN LISTS, by Dell Richards, \$9.00. Lesbian holy days is just one of the hundreds of lists of clever and enlightening lesbian trivia compiled by columnist Dell Richards. Fun facts like uppity women who were called lesbians (but probably weren't), banned lesbian books, lesbians who've passed as men, herbal aphrodisiacs, black lesbian entertainers, and switch-hitters are sure to amuse and make *Lesbian Lists* a great gift.

TO ORDER

Ask for these titles at your favorite bookstore. Or use this coupon to order.

Enclosed is \$_____ for the books I've listed below. (Add \$1.00 postage when ordering just one book. If you order two or more, we'll pay postage.)

Please send me these books:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

name: _____

address: _____

city: _____

state: _____ zip: _____

ALYSON PUBLICATIONS
Dept. C-42; 40 Plympton St.
Boston, MA 02118

A
DIFFERENT
LIGHT

**Over 7000
Gay and Lesbian
Titles**

Books - Magazines
Videos and More!

PHONE ORDERS MAIL ORDERS SPECIAL ORDERS
GIFT CERTIFICATES

SAN FRANCISCO
489 Castro Street @ 18th St.
S. F. 94114 (415) 431-0891

LOS ANGELES
4014 Santa Monica Blvd.
L.A. 90029 (213) 668-0629

NEW YORK
548 Hudson Street
N. Y. 10014 (212) 989-4850

Open 7 Days

St Maur - Bookseller

Gay and Lesbian Fiction
Scarce-Rare-Out of Print
First Editions

Purchasing single volumes
and collections Periodic Catalogues.

820 N. Madison
Stockton, CA 95202
(209) 464-5530

 **AMAZON
BOOKSTORE**

LESBIAN

- Mail order anywhere
- New 1990 annotated catalog (send [2] 25c stamps)
- Visa/MC/checks accepted

CRAFT

1612 Harmon Place
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 338-6560

CREATIONS



**GIOVANNI'S
ROOM**

America's world class
gay, lesbian & feminist book store.
featuring

Monthly lists of new women's and
new gay men's books.

Current AIDS bibliography, abuse
booklist, foreign-language booklists.

Credit Card orders accepted.

Visit our newly expanded & renovated store
or phone us for mail order information.

1-(800)-222-6996 (outside PA)

1-(215)-923-2960 (inside PA)

345 So. 12th St. Phila., Pa. 19107

TIRED OF "GWM SEEKS GWM" ADS?

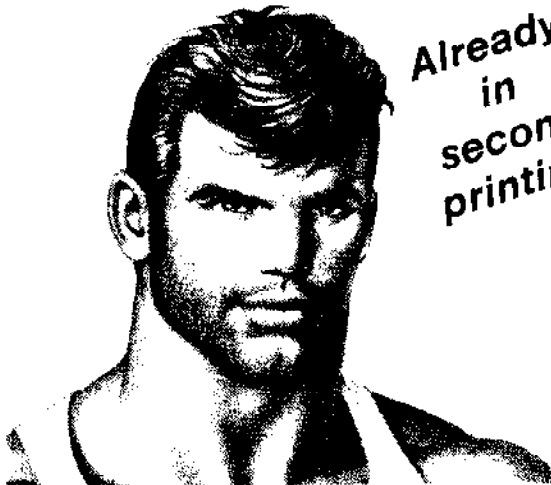


Subscribe to the leading interracial gay magazine

QUARTERLY INTERCHANGE

- Four Times A Year Of Others
- The largest, interracial, interracial Classifieds in the world
- Features of interest to interracialists, world-wide
- Interviews with activists you should know about
- Thought-provoking and incisive Editorials
- Hot Man Profiles—men you'll want to see
- The Advisory—our advice column and one of our most popular features
- Cathartic Comics—an integrated, outrageous cartoon strip
- Letters to the Editor, where you, the reader, share your point of view
- And much, much more!

If Of course you've been missing, subscribe today! Only 21¢ or over, please \$20 for one year, plus a FREE 40-words-or-less ad if sent when you subscribe! (that's not here \$24). Write: QUARTERLY INTERCHANGE, P.O. Box 42502, San Francisco, CA 94110



Already in second printing!

TOM OF FINLAND retrospective book

1946 - 1988

192 pages 8½ x 11"-nearly 200 illustrations, many of them not published before.

Softbound \$22.00

Hardcover edition \$45.00

plus \$3.50 shipping/CA residents add 6½% tax

TOM of Finland

P.O. Box 26716 Dept. O
Los Angeles, CA 90026



Contemporary Gay and Lesbian Writing from NAL

WOMEN ON WOMEN

An Anthology of American Lesbian Short Fiction

Edited by Joan Nestle and Naomi Holoch. These 28 stories from established and up-and-coming lesbian writers offer a historical overview of the genre as well as a showcase for the most exciting new voices.

© PLUME 0-452-26388-3 \$9.95 May

SHE CAME IN A FLASH

By Mary Wings. Featuring an intrepid lesbian heroine, this quick mystery is "witty on cult politics, metaphysics, and finances. Wings has a nice, unsentimental, wry touch." — *Kirkus Reviews*

© PLUME 0-452-26384-0 \$8.95 March

PERMANENT PARTNERS

Building Gay and Lesbian Relationships That Last

By Betty Berzon, Ph.D. "Offers indispensable, practical advice on keeping same-sex relationships alive and well." — *Lambda Rising*

© PLUME 0-452-26308-5 \$9.95 January

UNDER HEAT

By Michael David Brown. "...Genuinely explosive first novel about a troubled Kentucky family." — *Kirkus Reviews*

© PLUME 0-452-26372-7 \$8.95 January

HIDDEN FROM HISTORY

Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past

Edited by Martin Baum Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. The history of homosexuality is revealed and explored in many cultures and various eras in this groundbreaking volume of essays by leading researchers in the field.

© NAL BOOKS 0-453-00689-2 \$24.95

HORSE CRAZY

By Gary Indiana. "Superbly wrought...A well polished gem." — *Publishers Weekly* "...a remarkable first novel..." — *Newsday*

© PLUME 0-452-26427-8 \$8.95 June

Prices subject to change. Write to the NAL Education Department at the address below for a free Literature and Language catalog.

**NAL
NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY**

A Division of Penguin, USA
1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019

Refusing to

- smile at
- cook for
- kowtow
to men:

The Separatist Revival

by
Ann Japenga

(In most cases, names have been withheld in order to protect the safety of women who talked freely about their separatism.)

At the end of a winding Oregon dirt road, just past a rusted school bus submerged in blackberry brambles, a woman is selecting leeks for her lunch. Standing alone in the garden, with her flannel shirt flapping at the sleeves and her unwashed hair standing up in tufts, she looks like a scarecrow.

She would not fit in—nor probably even be admitted—to a trendy West LA women's bar. This is not the socially acceptable lesbian who came into her own in the eighties. Unlike the suave city dyke, the scarecrow is as defiant in her habits as in her appearance. She lives in a shack, licks leftovers from her wooden bowl, squats to pee on the ground whenever she pleases, and proudly renounces men.

It's a testament to her tenacity that this woman can be found here, digging in a garden plot that has fed women exclusively for 15 years. Because, if contempt could obliterate, lesbian separatists like her would be extinct. Over the last 15 years separatists have been ridiculed, reviled, and trivialized—especially by other lesbians. You can choose pretty much any slur that has been leveled at feminists or at lesbians—immature, unrealistic, racist, rigid, neurotic, angry, dogmatic, and dowdy, for instance—and chances are the term has been recycled and applied to separatists. "You can't pick up an issue of *off our backs* without getting some sep-bashing," said a 29-year-old separatist from Madison, Wisconsin.

The proliferation of sep-bashing inspired Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Julia Penelope to edit a massive new anthology about lesbian separatism, *For Lesbians Only* (Onlywomen Press, 1988). In their introduction Hoagland explained, "We would not have undertaken this project were it not for the persistent attacks on separatism by feminists and lesbian feminists."

One contributor to the book, Bev Jo, elaborates, "When I go to a lesbian event, the group that I'm most likely to hear being attacked are separatists—more than capitalists, socialists,



OUT/LOOK

J.C. COLLINS

religious groups, straight women, men, or anyone else."

But separatism has somehow managed to survive this relentless scapegoating. In fact, the movement that began in the early seventies and faded for most of the eighties is enjoying a renewed visibility. About 60 women attended an international separatist conference last summer in Wisconsin, where the topics discussed included planning separatist communities and sep-language (usage tip: try not to address a roomful of separatists as "you guys").

Those who live in the heartland of US rural separatism, southern Oregon, report an increase over the last year in the number of inquiries from lesbians interested in moving to one of the half-dozen women's communities scattered along I-5 between Eugene and Grants Pass. Not all of these outposts expressly identify as separatist, but most of the residents subscribe to separatist values and live an essentially separatist existence; as long as you stay on the land, there's no interacting with men. As one 14-year resident of one of the state's women's land settlements put it, "Around here we are all in agreement: we don't want to live with men and we don't want to sleep with men. My life here is totally dedicated to women. I surround my life with women."

This woman is a carpenter who lives in an elegant homemade cabin worthy of a Ralph Lauren advertisement. Her dealings with men are limited to a perfunctory visit with her father and brother about once every three years; for survival reasons, she also maintains cordial relations with the men who work at the local hardware and building-supply stores. She finds that one of the greatest challenges to her separatist existence is carrying on a relationship with a non-separatist—a Hollywood producer who lives in a world of "men, money, and power." At first her lover wanted to know: "What is this separatist bit?" Now, the carpenter said, they've reached a temporary truce: when the separatist visits LA, she endures power lunches with the boys; when the

producer comes to southern Oregon, she lives like the seps do.

This sort of cross-cultural relationship between a separatist and non-separatist—with its attendant conflicts—isn't unusual. And the urbanites who regularly visit the Oregon retreats say there's also been a recent resurgence of separatist commitment in the cities, but that the necessity of daily dealings with men makes the activism less apparent there. "I think there is a lot more separatism going on in urban lesbian communities than is visible," said a woman who took the bus north from Oakland to visit sep-land one recent weekend.

Why Separatism Has Stuck Around

One of the reasons separatism has prevailed is that separatists defend women-only space, which many women enjoy, whether it's an aerobics class, a cow-town beauty parlor, or a lesbian separatist commune. Separatists say they are only putting a name to a need and preference shared by many women. Because of this emphasis on being with women, theorists such as Alix Dobkin, Marilyn Frye, and Carolyn Shafer have suggested the movement should be called "lesbian connectionism," not lesbian separatism.

Another reason for separatism's endurance is that its radicalism appeals to those who are disillusioned with the pale and ineffectual women's movement. Lori, a separatist from Madison, a sep stronghold, said, "Separatism is what gives the women's movement its life and its spark. It's the analysis that makes the most sense and tends to be the most optimistic for really building something new." A 29-year-old graduate student in philosophy who came to separatism five years ago, Lori thinks she would have called herself a separatist even earlier if she had been exposed to the concept.

Like other separatists, Lori is an idealist. She believes there is a better world to be made,

Separatists have been ridiculed, reviled, and trivialized—especially by other lesbians.

The movement should be called "lesbian connectionism," not lesbian separatism.

and that women who exhaust themselves grappling with patriarchy are not capable of creating it. This theme, that women who stake out a separatist oasis for themselves are the ones who will change society, is echoed in the recent work of Sonia Johnson, who was excommunicated from the Mormon Church for her feminist leanings. While declaring herself not a separatist, Johnson writes in her book *Wildfire: Igniting The She-Volution*, "Feminists of all political and sexual persuasions understand the Women's Movement would not exist at all if no women had dared to center the whole of their lives around women."

Separatists maintain that spaces where men are not dominant and doors are not locked in fear—even if only a few women inhabit them—can serve as a cauldron of social change, in much the same way as natural habitats are laboratories of evolution. Women-only space "is the only place we can be who we really are," said a British woman who came to the Oregon Women's Land (OWL) farm via a four-year stint "living in the mud" at the feminist Greenham Commons Peace Encampment. "We literally don't know who we are anymore because we're so used to being surrounded by men." She feels that they are doing more than simply reacting to a society shaped by men. Sitting down in front of tanks at Greenham is reacting, she said; adding a room to a cabin where separatists live is creating something entirely new.

Anti-Separatism: Hostility or Fear?

So separatists are women living for and with each other to see how women may evolve when unencumbered by male culture—an experiment acknowledged to be incomplete as yet. Innocuous enough. Why, then, is the concept palatable in utopian science-fiction novels and women's colleges but infuriating when the person doing the talking calls herself a separatist?

Separatists say the hostility has to do with fear. Separatists are the ultimate naysayers to patriarchy, and anyone who has ever said "no" to men in even a small way understands the

risks that action entails. "You can be a lesbian and still pass," explained a woman who has lived with her daughter on OWL farm for three years. "You can be a lesbian and still give your energy to men and reap some heterosexual privilege. But by crossing over to be a separatist, you're saying to men, 'I will not smile at you. I will not perform the behaviors that accord your acceptance.'"

By their insistence on not smiling at/cooking for/kowtowing to men, separatists conjure up many women's fears of male retaliation. The separatist mother said women are afraid, with reason, that if you reject male approval completely, you'll be the target of hostility and even brutality. As another separatist put it, "Lesbians want the American Dream too," and being a sep is not the most expedient way to obtain it—cooperating with men is.

Along with the fear of being cast out of mainstream acceptance, potential separatists are often put off by accusations that separatism is racist. Critics of separatism have said living apart from men is an option available only to privileged white women, and that women of color cannot afford to further distance themselves from a culture that already considers them marginal. Others say women of color must align themselves with men to fight racism; they don't have the luxury of withdrawing to battle a single foe, patriarchy.

These arguments, coming from women of color and white lesbians alike, became so persistent in the early seventies that every separatist you meet these days has a well-honed arsenal of counterarguments to the racism charge. The British separatist, for instance, said the racist accusation is another "tiresome" tactic for trashing separatism. "It keeps women apart is what it does," she said.

Other separatists argue that when women of color align with men of color, the alliance turns out to be for the good of men only. In the *For Lesbians Only* anthology, a separatist named flyin thunda cloud, rdcc., who identifies herself as Jamaican West Indian and Cherokee writes, ". . . well i remember their

I hear more trashing of men by straight women than by separatists.

ratist' has become a hot line to everyone's flushing-boy-babies-down-the-toilet fantasies."

There still are those, though, who come right out and say they do hate boys and men. Lori, the Madison sep, defended the attitude this way: "You have to hate men to love women. If you really love women, you have to hate the men who brutalize them."

Although this stance is bound to revolt some, separatists caution their critics to remember that many straight woman and lesbians hate men as well—they just don't talk about it. "I hear more trashing of men by straight women than by separatists," said a Bay Area separatist. "I think straight women are more damaged by their hate because they don't recognize it and turn it inward on themselves." When asked about boy-and-man-hating, a resident of OWL farm remarked that she hadn't given a thought to men in months. That's not rancor, it's oblivion.

Jean Mountaingrove, a 64-year-old Oregon separatist, says she has learned that "separatism is not an absolute position" when it comes to dealings with men. Mountaingrove, who is a grandmother, said she is currently trying to mend relations with her grown son. "I think it's been hard for him to have a lesbian separatist mother. He never knew if he was welcome where I was living."

She is one of the original settlers of what has become a network of separatist communities known throughout the world by women seeking female utopia. On a recent weekend this matriarch was in bed recovering from pneumonia. Piled under quilts in the guest cabin at Womanshare, she held forth on the early days of women's land in Oregon, while adoring young women darted in and out of the room to bring food or stoke the fire.

Mountaingrove moved to Oregon in the early seventies with her first-time woman lover. "Here we were," she recalled, "two brand-new lesbians in the middle of a heterosexual commune." Soon she came to realize she needed to separate from what she calls the "mind-spirit pollution" of patriarchy. Her theory is that everyone has the right to establish boundaries that afford them safety. "Sepa-

ratism is a conscious setting of boundaries, both psychological and physical. It's a move toward recovery, not isolation."

Mountaingrove and her lover began publishing *WomanSpirit* magazine (which ceased publication five years ago), and "word got out to lesbians all over the nation there were lesbians [living on their own] in southern Oregon." Other parcels of women's land began to appear in the neighborhood. While this early settler attributes the influx of separatists to the misty, mountainous southern Oregon terrain ("The land itself selects us"), it's clear that the matriarch's charisma had something to do with drawing all these women here.

In the early seventies the living was relatively easy and almost any nomad who wanted to experiment with communal life could find the means to do it. "Women were sleeping on the beaches and chanting to the moon. Then, with the Reagan era, things clamped down," Mountaingrove said. "Now those same women who were running around naked in the hills were back managing portfolios in the cities."

Only in the last year have the nomads begun to filter back. This pioneer keeps a file labeled "Travelers" containing letters from women seeking a home on women's land, and the file is beginning to bulge again, she said. "These are women who tried life for a while in the patriarchy, and now they want out. They're not misfits and dropouts. They're lawyers and psychologists and artists."

Mountaingrove believes dividing lesbians into separatist and non-separatist camps is an artificial and divisive way of looking at what really is a spectrum of beliefs. From her cocoon of quilts she counseled, "There aren't that many of us that we need to make divisions." ▼

Ann Japenga is a free-lance writer who lives in Spokane, Washington.

HOW CAN YOU BRING YOUR DRINKING OUT OF THE CLOSET WHEN YOU'RE STILL IN IT?



You don't have to come out to the world to kick your drinking and drug problem. But, research indicates that successful recovery depends on accepting your sexuality.

Come to Pride Institute, America's first in-patient treatment facility run by lesbians and gay men. The professional staff is trained to understand special issues in our community and treat the disease of chemical dependency. Most important, Pride Institute offers a chance for you to become sober, proud and fully functioning in an often-homophobic world.

All insurance and patient records are kept in the strictest confidence. Special phone lines are set aside for family, employers or anyone else to whom you may not be ready to come out.

If you or someone you love needs information, help or referrals in your community, call any time, 24 hours a day, **1-800-54-PRIDE**. In MN, AK or HI, call collect 1-612-934-7554.

**▽ PRIDE
INSTITUTE**

14400 Martin Drive
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Recover with pride.

CLASSIFIED

GIFTS/CRAFTS

UNIQUE, UNUSUAL POSTCARDS. Send \$1 for sample & catalog. Natalici, 32 Union Sq., NYC 10003.

LESBIAN MOTHERS: Begin your family tradition. Unique baby quilts. Lesbian made. Catalog \$1- KQ, Rt. 2, Box 2448AA, Spooner, WI 54801.

LESBIAN-MADE QUILTS, Wall-hangings, pillows. LSASE Kaleidoscope, Rt. 2, Box 2448AA, Spooner, WI 54801.

OUT OF OUR KITCHEN CLOSETS: San Francisco Gay Jewish Cooking. Available for \$12.95 plus shipping (\$2.25) and tax (in Cal. 6.75%). CSZ, 220 Danvers, SF, CA 94114.

PENIS POSTER (23"x35") depicts 12 animal penises (man to whale). A scientific novelty. \$10 ppd: Poster N, PO Box 673, Bloomington, IN 47402.

PUBLICATIONS

ENTRE NOUS: Monthly calendar/newsletter for Bay Area lesbians. P.O.B. 70933, Sunnyvale, CA 94086, for free sample. Subs. \$12/year.

EXPLORE THE CONTROVERSIES in adoption and donor insemination. Send \$2 for sample newsletter to: J. Baer, Box 8081, Berkeley, CA 94707.

GAY LITERATURE. 50 page catalog 1500+ items. Elysian Fields 80-50L Baxter #339, Elmhurst, NY 11373.

NICARAGUA: What's really happening? Barricada International, biweekly news and analysis from the source. P.O. Box 410150 San Francisco, CA 94141. \$35/year \$18/6 mo.

VISIBILITIES, The Lesbian Magazine. Interviews, features, columns, cartoons — all by, for and about lesbians. Publishing since 1987. Subscriptions: \$15/8 issues (\$US 23 Canada and overseas). Sample copies: \$2.25 (\$US 3.00 Canada and overseas). Writers Guidelines: SASE. Visibilities, Dept. OL, PO Box 1258, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009-1258.

WITH INCISIVE REPORTING and thoughtful analysis IN THESE TIMES offers the very best in alternative American journalism. We've built our reputation on addressing the issues the mainstream media ignores, that's why our unique point-of-view has been trusted by thousands of readers for over a decade. Why not see for yourself? You may order a subscription by calling (808) 435-0715 (in Illinois call (800) 892-0753) or by writing to IN THESE TIMES, 1912 Debs Avenue, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. Give us a try, and we'll give you the view from the other side.

EVENTS

CAMPFEST, the comfortable womyn's music festival womyn and daughters only. May 24-28 in PA. Sold out the last two years. Stafford Sisters, Rude Girls, Circus of a Queer Nature, Monica Grant and more. Don't miss out on the fun! Come be part of the magic. RR 5, Box 185, Franklinville, NJ 08322 (609) 694-2037.

3RD ANNUAL WOMONGATHERING the festival of Womyn's Spirituality, May 18-20 in PA at scenic private camp. Go from reading to the practice. Nurudafina, Margot Adler, AmyLee, Sandra Boston

DeSylvia, Jade, Diane Mariechild & Shuli Goodman, Kay Mora, Billie Potts, Beverly Little Thunder and more presenting intensive, experiential workshops. Women only. For brochure write RR 5, Box 185, Franklinville, NJ 08322 (609) 694-2037.

GROUPS

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE LESBIAN ALUMNAE NETWORK Over 350 Nationwide! All lesbian and bisexual womyn with ties to MHC welcome. Send SASE, short bio to D. Albino, 119 Dakota St., Boston, MA 02124.

VIDEOS

LARGE SELECTION of Lesbian videos. Olivia Records Anniversary, 2 in 20 the Lesbian Soap Opera and much more. **Free Catalog** Wolfe Video P.O. Box 64, New Almaden, CA 95042.

SEXUALITY

STORMY LEATHER Hot Catalog of Leather, Latex. Send \$4.00: Stormy Leather, 2339 3rd St., Rm. 50, Dept. Out, San Francisco, CA 94107.

HEALTH

HERBAL REMEDIES for numerous health needs. SASE: Becca, 153L Eastman Hill, Willseyville, NY 13864.

TRAVEL

THIRD WORLD REALITY TOURS Learn the issues firsthand. Meet with labor, religion, peace, environmental organizations, gov. officials and scholars. Tours to Latin America, Africa, Asia, Middle East, the Caribbean and within the US. For more information contact: Global Exchange, 2141 Mission #202, San Francisco CA 94110.

GAY COUNTRY INN Lovely 19-room inn on 100 scenic, private acres in New Hampshire's White Mountains. Lovely views, heated pool, hot tub, hiking/skiing trails. Grace and Judi, Innkeepers. The Highlands Inn, Box 1180L, Bethlehem, NH 03574 (603) 869-3978.

OPPORTUNITIES

DESIGN INTERN Two volunteer positions in the design and production department of OUT/LOOK available. 8 hours a week commitment and experience with Quark or Pagemaker necessary. *Only* written inquiries accepted. 2940 16th St., Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103 Attn: Art Director

To Place a Classified Ad

Rates

per word	\$1.50
per bold word	\$2.00
10% discount for four issue placement	

Deadline

Copy must be received by April 2, 1990 for Summer 1990, Issue 9.

Etcetera

All ads must be prepaid. Post Office boxes, phone numbers, zip codes, abbreviations and initials count as one word. Hyphenated words count as two.

Include your phone number with your order.

No personals.

Send ad copy and payment to: OUT/LOOK Classifieds, 2940 16th Street, Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103.

That's What Friends Are For: The Results

In our Fall 1989 issue, we queered you about the nature of your friendship networks, the quality of your relationships with best friends, and the dynamics between your friendships and lover relationships. Over 300 responses were analyzed by social scientists Peter Nardi and Drury Sherrod from Claremont Colleges. Here are the highlights:


- Gay men appear to have more sex with their casual and close friends than lesbians do. Lesbians, however, are more likely to be best friends with their ex-lovers than gay men are. They also were more likely to have been sexually attracted to their best friend in the past than gay men were.
- Over time, it seems that sexual attractiveness, sexual activity, and romantic love with best friends fade. About 40 per cent of the respondents have had some sexual experience with their same-sex gay or lesbian best friend in the past, but less than five per cent currently do.

	MEN	WOMEN
Networks		
Average number of male casual friends	24	7
female casual friends	12	21
Average number of male close friends	6	2
female close friends	4	6
Average number of same-sex friends respondent had sex with	4	2
Friends and Lovers		
Currently involved with a lover	41%	69%
Average number of years together	6	5
Best Friends		
Years have known best friend (average)	9	9
Profile of best friend:		
male	84%	8%
female	16%	92%
gay/lesbian	74%	62%
straight	22%	24%
bisexual	4%	14%
Sexually attracted to best friend		
in the past (not at all)	28%	14%
in the past (very/extremely)	55%	66%
now (not at all)	48%	50%
now (very/extremely so)	12%	9%
Sexually involved with best friend		
in the past (not at all)	57%	61%
in the past (very/extremely)	24%	27%
now (not at all)	95%	98%
now (very/extremely so)	1%	2%
In love with best friend		
in the past (not at all)	51%	41%
in the past (very/extremely)	37%	38%
now (not at all)	67%	76%
now (very/extremely so)	10%	7%
Best friend is a former lover	11%	34%
Average number of years as lover with best friend	6	63

Whose responses are analyzed: ninety-three per cent of the respondents are gay or lesbian, seven per cent are bisexual. Women account for 60 per cent of the sample (men for 40 per cent). Relatively more of the men are college-educated than the women, and (surprise), their average income is higher. Ninety-five per cent of the respondents are white.

A New Survey:

COMING OUT

Coming out—becoming aware of our homosexuality and then revealing it to others—is an ongoing process for most of us. Rarely are we either in or out, but rather we're in sometimes, and out at others. Professors Stanley Segal and Kenneth Sherrill of Hunter College, City University of New York, will analyze your responses to this questionnaire about the sexual politics of coming out—not just about being gay or bisexual, but about certain sexual practices and health matters as well. Please fill out and mail this questionnaire to *OUT/LOOK* by June 1, 1990. Your responses will be printed in a future issue and, as always, are confidential. 

E.G. CRICHTON



The Details of Discovering and Conveying Your Sexual Orientation

1. At what age did you realize that your feelings toward other people of your own gender were sexual in nature?

2. At what age did you act on the basis of those feelings? _____

3. Did you begin to associate *socially* with lesbian/gay people on a continuing basis:
 ___ before your first homosexual experience?
 ___ after your first homosexual experience?

4. How much time elapsed between those two events? _____

5. Did you: (check one)
 ___ have heterosexual experiences before coming out to yourself?
 ___ have heterosexual experiences after coming out to yourself?
 ___ both before and after?
 ___ attempt, but never have heterosexual experiences?
 ___ never have heterosexual experiences?

6. What per cent of your friends of your own gender are homosexual? _____

7. What per cent of your friends of the other gender are homosexual? _____

8. Who are you out to?

	ALL	SOME	NONE
siblings	___	___	___
mom	___	___	___
dad	___	___	___
other relatives	___	___	___
co-workers	___	___	___
neighbors	___	___	___
friends	___	___	___

9. Was coming out to yourself and/or to others a consequence of membership in: (check as many as apply)

	TO MYSELF	TO OTHERS
a friendship circle?	___	___
a political group?	___	___
a campus group?	___	___
a religious group?	___	___
a community group?	___	___
no organized group?	___	___
random sexual encounters?	___	___

10. What does "out" mean to you?

___ I conceal nothing about myself when the subject of homosexuality comes up.

___ I use certain opportunities with some people to bring up the subject of homosexuality.

___ I bring up the subject at every opportunity.

___ other (specify): _____

11. How important is being "out" to you?

___ very important
 ___ somewhat important
 ___ neither important nor unimportant
 ___ somewhat unimportant
 ___ very unimportant

12. Which aspect of your identity are people *most* likely to know?

___ political party identification
 ___ sexual orientation
 ___ religious preference
 ___ favorite hobby

13. Which aspect of your identity are people *least* likely to know?

___ political party identification
 ___ sexual orientation
 ___ religious preference
 ___ favorite hobby

14. Do you "straighten up" your home when:

	ALWAYS	USUALLY	RARELY	NEVER
parents visit?	___	___	___	___
other relatives visit?	___	___	___	___
co-workers visit?	___	___	___	___
neighbors visit?	___	___	___	___

15. Do you monitor your language:

	ALWAYS	USUALLY	RARELY	NEVER
with parents?	___	___	___	___
with other relatives?	___	___	___	___
at work?	___	___	___	___
with neighbors?	___	___	___	___
with heterosexual strangers?	___	___	___	___

16. Are you "out" about your sexual behavior/practices?

Practice: Is the following practice a common part of your sexual activity? Check if yes.

Identity: Do you identify yourself on the basis of this practice? Check if yes.

When: When did you claim this identity? Write the year.

Out: If you have come out about this practice/identity to people who do not participate in it, give year when.

	PRACTICE	IDENTITY	WHEN	OUT
S/M	___	___	___	___
adult intergenerational sex	___	___	___	___
bisexuality	___	___	___	___
group sex	___	___	___	___
butch/femme	___	___	___	___
transvestism	___	___	___	___
public sex	___	___	___	___
celibacy	___	___	___	___
other	___	___	___	___
(specify): _____	___	___	___	___

17. Have you been tested for exposure to HIV? ___ Yes ___ No

Are you ___ positive ___ negative?

Have you come out with regard to HIV status to:

	YES	NO
family?	___	___
friends?	___	___
co-workers?	___	___
sexual partners?	___	___

18. What do you do when people assume you're heterosexual?

___ Nothing.
 ___ I rarely correct them.
 ___ I correct them about half the time.
 ___ I usually correct them.
 ___ I always correct them.

19. How do you usually respond to homophobic utterances at straight social gatherings?

___ I appear to concur.
 ___ I do nothing.
 ___ I walk away.
 ___ I object to bias, but I reveal nothing about myself.
 ___ I come out and confront the prejudice.

Over, please



Kris Kovick

OUTLOOK RESULTS

65% OF OUR READERS USE LUBRICANTS WHEN THEY READ OUTLOOK.

THE HOTTEST THING THEY'VE TRIED SO FAR IS TACO SAUCE.

MOST OF OUR READERS DATE FOR THE FOOD

20. Do you wear lesbian/gay-oriented buttons in "mixed company?"
___ Yes ___ No

21. What is your date of birth (month/year)? _____

22. What is your gender? ___ Female ___ Male

23. What is your annual income?

	INDIVIDUAL	HOUSEHOLD
Under \$15,000	___	___
\$15,000-\$19,999	___	___
\$20,000-\$29,999	___	___
\$30,000-\$39,999	___	___
\$40,000-\$49,999	___	___
\$50,000-\$69,999	___	___
\$70,000 or more	___	___

24. What is your occupation? _____

25. What is the highest level of education completed by:

	YOU?	YOUR MOTHER?	YOUR FATHER?	ANY GRANDPARENT?
elementary school	___	___	___	___
some high school	___	___	___	___
high school grad	___	___	___	___
some college	___	___	___	___
college grad	___	___	___	___
graduate degree	___	___	___	___

26. What is your religion? ___ Protestant ___ Catholic ___ Jewish
___ Other (specify): _____ ___ None

27. How often do you attend religious services? ___ never ___ 1 or 2 times a year
___ 3 to 11 times a year ___ monthly ___ weekly ___ more often
___ only for funerals, weddings, special events

28. What is your racial/ethnic background? ___ African-American ___ Asian
___ Latino/a ___ Native American ___ White ___ other: _____

(continued below)

Detach this page, fold in thirds, secure with tape, and mail.

Please
Place
Stamp
Here

To: OUT/LOOK SURVEY-COMING OUT
2940 16TH STREET, SUITE 319
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

29. Do you live with ___ no one ___ a lover ___ a husband/wife
___ adult(s) of the same sex ___ adult(s) of the opposite sex
___ adults of both sexes ___ other (specify): _____

30. How would you characterize:

	YOUR POLITICS?	YOUR PARENTS' POLITICS?
conservative	___	___
moderate	___	___
liberal	___	___
radical	___	___
apolitical	___	___

31. Do you thing of yourself as:

- ___ a strong Democrat?
- ___ a not very strong Democrat?
- ___ an independent closer to the Democrats?
- ___ an independent?
- ___ an independent closer to the Republicans?
- ___ a not very strong Republican?
- ___ a strong Republican?
- ___ other (specify): _____

32. Who did you support for US President in the 1988 primaries?

33. Were you raised in a home in which values were discussed?
___ frequently ___ from time to time ___ rarely ___ never

34. Are you a parent? ___ Yes ___ No
If YES, do your children live with you? ___ Yes ___ No

35. Do you identify yourself as: ___ lesbian ___ gay ___ bisexual
___ heterosexual ___ asexual ___ other (specify): _____

36. What is your ZIP code? _____

37. Tell us your favorite coming out story about yourself. (Use a separate page.)

BONUS QUESTION:

If you had the option of receiving OUT/LOOK without an envelope, would you choose to? ___ Yes ___ No

SUBSC

How to order your subscription:

For your convenience, you may mail one of these post-age-paid cards today. We'll start your subscription and bill you for \$21.

Or, save \$3 by mailing a card and a check for \$18 in your own envelope.

Please print your name and address carefully and include your zip code. OUT/LOOK will be sent to you in a plain envelope.



Subscription Order

- I am sending this card in my own envelope with a check for **\$18**, for one year, four issues.
- Bill me, instead, at the rate of **\$21**, for one year, four issues.
- Enclosed is **\$18** for a one year gift subscription for the person listed below. (A card announcing your gift will be sent.) My name and address:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Institutions/Groups/Foreign rate: \$29 for one year.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

OUT/LOOK
 2940 16th Street, Suite 319
 San Francisco, CA 94103

I am enclosing a tax-deductible, additional donation of \$ _____.

Subscription Order

- I am sending this card in my own envelope with a check for **\$18**, for one year, four issues.
- Bill me, instead, at the rate of **\$21**, for one year, four issues.
- Enclosed is **\$18** for a one year gift subscription for the person listed below. (A card announcing your gift will be sent.) My name and address:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Institutions/Groups/Foreign rate: \$29 for one year.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

OUT/LOOK
 2940 16th Street, Suite 319
 San Francisco, CA 94103

I am enclosing a tax-deductible, additional donation of \$ _____.

Subscription Order

- I am sending this card in my own envelope with a check for **\$18**, for one year, four issues.
- Bill me, instead, at the rate of **\$21**, for one year, four issues.
- Enclosed is **\$18** for a one year gift subscription for the person listed below. (A card announcing your gift will be sent.) My name and address:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Institutions/Groups/Foreign rate: \$29 for one year.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

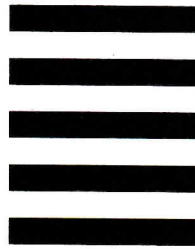
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

OUT/LOOK
 2940 16th Street, Suite 319
 San Francisco, CA 94103

I am enclosing a tax-deductible, additional donation of \$ _____.



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY IF
MAILED IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 23780 SAN FRANCISCO, CA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

OUT/LOOK

2940 16th Street, Suite 319
San Francisco, CA 94103-9755



**SUB
SCR
IBE**

TEAR HERE ▲



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY IF
MAILED IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 23780 SAN FRANCISCO, CA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

OUT/LOOK

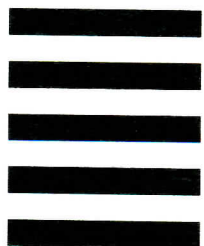
2940 16th Street, Suite 319
San Francisco, CA 94103-9755



TEAR HERE ▲



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY IF
MAILED IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 23780 SAN FRANCISCO, CA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

OUT/LOOK

2940 16th Street, Suite 319
San Francisco, CA 94103-9755



**How to order
your subscription:**

For your convenience, you may mail one of these postage-paid cards today. We'll start your subscription and bill you for \$21.

Or, save \$3 by mailing a card and a check for \$18 in your own envelope.

Please print your name and address carefully and include your zip code. OUT/LOOK will be sent to you in a plain envelope.

OUT/LOOK
National Lesbian & Gay Quarterly
Invites You to

Out is In

A Gala Writers Cabaret and Dance
Honoring six pioneering
lesbian & gay authors
and celebrating
OUT/LOOK's Second Anniversary

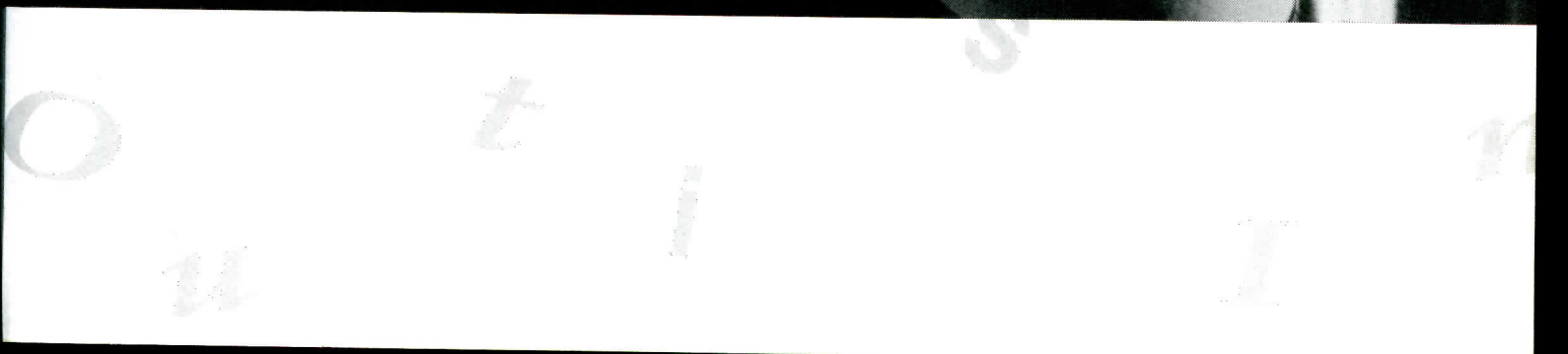
Live Music Dancing Readings Schmoozing

Saturday, March 3 8:00 pm
Comstock Mansion
1409 Sutter (at Franklin), San Francisco

A Benefit for the OUT/LOOK Foundation

Tickets \$35 at the door

For further information,
please call (415) 626-7929.

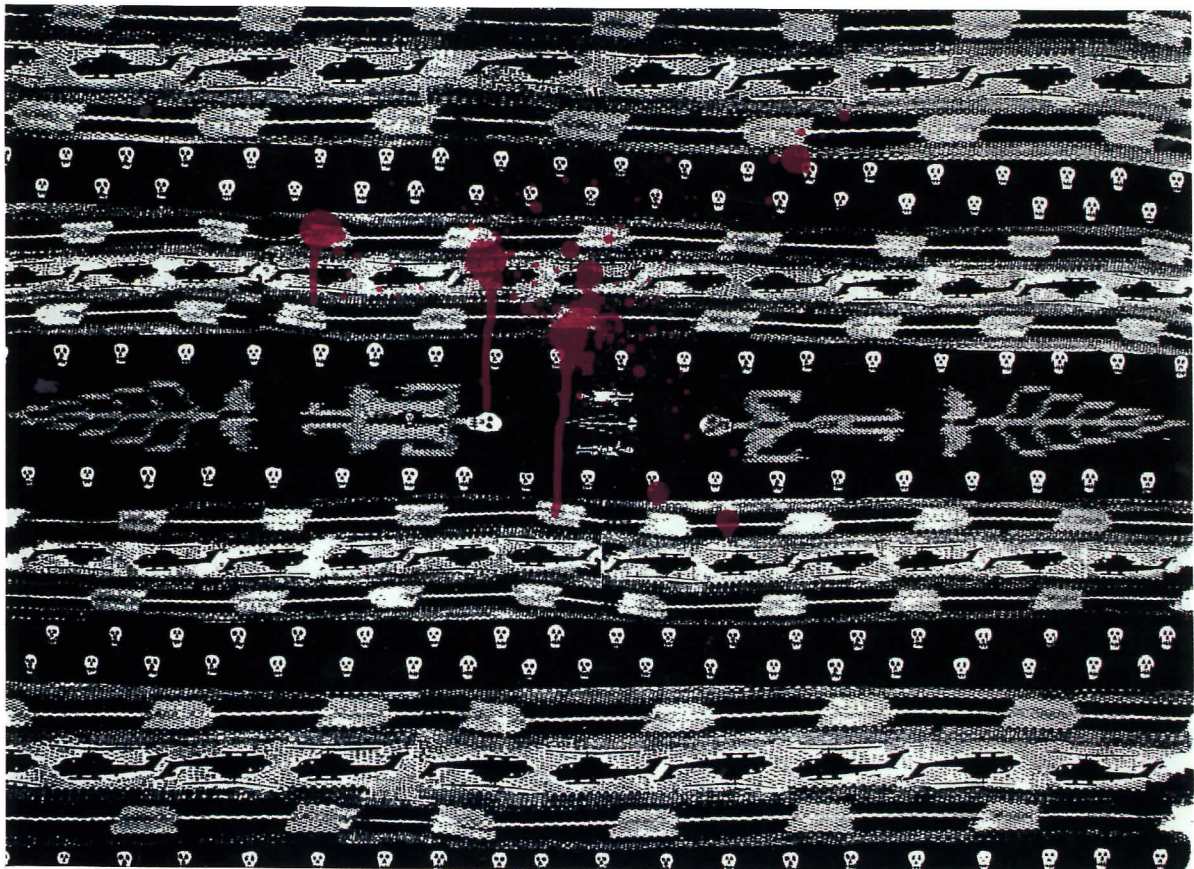


Kevyn Lutton *We all, everyone of us*



Portfolio Feature

RACISM: LESBIAN ARTISTS HAVE THEIR SAY
The Dynamics of Color Art Exhibition



Esther Hernandez *Weaving of the Disappeared / Tejido de los Desaparecidos*