The Empty Closet

January 1971
The ROCHESTER GAY LIBERATION FRONT is an association of people studying the nature of gay oppression and the potential for liberation. Meetings are open to all who believe that basic civil rights and human dignity for all minority groups come from organized effort.

THE WORLD IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT.
LET'S MAKE IT TOGETHER. COME OUT!
still 48 states which consider sodomy a "crime against nature," and 5 prescribing life imprisonment for this heresy.

But why? Is the church's influence so strong that they may legislate "morality" at will? Or does the "heterosexual" hate and fear the homosexual so much because he is unsure of his own sexual orientation? And on other levels, more questions. Should psychiatrists be allowed to prattle about the sickness of homosexuality when every strata of our entire "system" is full of normal well-adjusted homosexuals? Indeed, why is the word "homosexual" used so much as a noun when most people have had enjoyable experiences with people of both sexes? Why does a sincere love between two people become evil when they happen to be of the same sex? Is not overpopulation an evil "crime against nature?" Can it ever happen that economic and social discrimination be eliminated for all people regardless of race, creed, sex or sexual orientation?

There are no easy answers to these questions, and this column will never attempt to supply any. But some thinking must be done if gay liberation is to happen and the awakening humanist movement is to fully reflect the human condition.

The first step in consciousness-raising. You, dear Reader, are not alone. Most of your friends have had homosexual experiences, too, and they have the same hangups you do about them. In answering the above questions, maybe you can see yourself as part of an expanding movement desperately searching for a better world.

REPORTS FROM UPSTATE GROUPS

The Cornell Gay Liberation Front
(24 Willard Straight Hall, Ithaca, N.Y.; telephone 607-256-3729)

The Cornell Gay Liberation Front is three years old, the second oldest student group in the country (after Columbia). We changed our name this September from the Student Homophile League in order to identify ourselves with other Gay Liberation Fronts and their ideals. We are working politically to end the sexual discrimination found in laws, job hiring, and police harassment. We are working socially in several ways: small groups (of 2-4 people, male and female) speak at fraternities, sororities, dorms and meetings of other groups about Gay Liberation, sexuality, sexual roles, and the need for change by straights; we hold weekly meetings, usually at 8pm Wednesdays in Anabel Taylor Hall on the Cornell campus, for rapping and business matters, such as a constitution and Bill of Rights for Homosexuals; we've held dances too, one in September and one November 21. Both dances were successful, with large numbers of gay and straight people attending. We put out a newsletter—The Cornell Gay Liberation Front News—about once a month, which is available on subscription at 50c per year (which pays the postage). We have a library of many magazines, newspapers and newsletters from groups around the U.S. and the world (some in Dutch and Swedish). We have for sale copies of our own pamphlet HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE DRAFT at 15c, as well as S.L.H.'S THE ARMED SERVICES AND HOMOSEXUALITY (50c), the ADVOCATE (50c), COME OUT (a publication of N.Y.G.L.F. gay collective—25c) AFTER DAIK (not about homosexuality, but run by gay people and very worthwhile, a "magazine of entertainment"—75c), QQ (Queen's Quarterly—$2.00).

DEAR ANN LANDERS:

Soon the seasonal rat-race called the office Christmas party will be upon us. It's a hideous ritual which I have always deplored. Although I've been reading your column for years, this is the first time I've had the courage to write for advice.

I happen to be a homosexual who is making it in the straight world. I live in a rather small town where people view homosexuals as freaks who should be read out of the human race. The man I live with does not come to the office. We've been seen dining out together but I'm sure no one figures we're a couple. I've dated several girls (strictly a cover) but I've given up that sort of thing because I don't think it's fair to the girls. When they hint at marriage I feel like a heel.

I'm tired of living a lie and want to tell the chairman of this year's Christmas party that I'd like to bring my "wife" who happens to be a male. If the chairman doesn't like it, I won't go. Do you recommend the move?—ZERO HOUR

Dear Zero: If you want to lose your cover—go ahead, but figure in advance what you're going to do for an encore. Also have another job lined up—just in case.

by BRIAN (Monday) TANGEN

How about you? Are you tired of living a lie? Are you tired of being called a faggot—queer—lezy—pansy? Are you tired of trying to hide the fact that you are gay—afraid of being seen with another guy or girl—sneaking around in the dark because of outdated laws and ultra-conservative public opinion?

Well I am and I don't agree with Ann Landers' answer a damn bit. She is trying to push Zero Hour back into his closet for good and that's where the majority of people think we should be. Are we supposed to be the sub-class citizens just because of our sexual orientation? Are we to be harassed and persecuted just because of whom we love and what we do in bed? We don't have to be!

This is what G.L.F. is about and for. We need to pull together in a group—to show people that we are not afraid—to change laws and public opinion. This can only be done with help from everyone, not just the same few all the time.

The world is what you make it. Come out of your closets, Show people we are not afraid—support G.L.F.!
A Manifesto

BY Debbie Lestz

Gay Liberation is more than a group of oppressed people joined together to seek freedom and justice. Gay liberation is a call to power.

We must all seek our brother's hand and look with longing and hope toward a world of unity, equality and understanding. If our brother denies his hand we must not be defeated but rather continue to work toward our goals and hope in time that he will decide to come with us and will extend his hand in brotherhood. If our brother raises his fist against us or through the sheer force of the numbers of apathetic people like him he endeavors to hold us down or repress us--then must he know the anger and militancy of our entire movement. Gay liberation is a call to power.

We must all seek to change the unjust laws of this land until we can truly say that this country promises justice to all people of any distinction or sexual orientation. If the system continues to perpetrate injustice and there is no hope in sight for us then the system must know the full force of a subject people who will be kept down under no longer. Gay liberation is a call to power!

It is necessary and beautiful to worship the dove of peace but in this worship it is too easy to be apathetic and unwilling to fight using the dogma of this religious worship as an excuse.

We must not be repressed and oppressed because of our (for anyone else's) fear and apathy. The time to pick up the gun will come. We must be ready.

Gay liberation is a call to power!

Inside the classroom

BY LARRY FINE and R.J. ALCALÁ

On December 7, three members of UR Gay Liberation Front led a discussion on homosexuality in Dr. Vincent Nowlis' Social Psychology Seminar: Sex and Gender Role. They initiated the talk with statements which stressed the need for change in existing social attitudes toward homosexuality. It was mentioned that homosexuality is seldom presented as a viable mode of self expression. For instance, when one is told the facts of life, homosexuality is usually presented with a negative attitude if it is mentioned at all. One creative thinker suggested that children be told that sometime in their life they may want to share a special relationship with someone (without reference to gender), and that the physiological aspects of both homosexual and heterosexual love should be explained to them. The presentation was made with such candor that several of the class members felt free enough to speak of their own encounters with homosexuality. The speakers were given an encouraging reception by the professor and students.

As part of G.L.F.'s public information program, we have speakers available to any group anytime. Contact the GLF office in Todd for details.

The G.L.F. Bookshelf

Here are some books of interest to G.L.F. readers. All are to be found in the Rochester Public Library (call numbers are given for easy reference) or ordered through any bookstore. One bookstore to remember is the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, 291 Mercer St., New York City 10003, the only gay-owned gay bookstore in New York.

NONFICTION:


ONE IN TWENTY by Bryan Magee (1966, Stein and Day) 132.754 M191o. Results of Magee's research into the European gay world in preparation for two BBC programs on homosexuality. Part one deals with male homosexuals, part two with lesbians.

THE SAME SEX by Ralph Weltge, ed. (1969, United Church Press) 132.754 S187s. A collection of articles covering homosexuals vs. the psychiatrists, the law, the church; each written by an expert.

THE SIXTH MAN (1961, Doubleday) 132.754 S799s

THE GRAPEVINE (1964, Doubleday) 132.75 S799s

Both by Jess Stern. The author is a reporter from the straight press, trying to explore the "problem" of homosexuality. The first book is on male homosexuals, the second is on lesbians; both are a collection of interviews and read like a long newspaper article. Despite intensive research, the author still manages to write with little insight and no sympathy. Read, but carefully.

THE BOYS OF BOISE by John Gerasi (1966, MacMillan) 132.754 G358b. There was a crackdown on the male gay community of Boise, Idaho (pop. 50,000) in 1955-56 that ended up tearing the city apart. The story of persecution and oppression is retold by an outstanding journalist.


FICTION:

LORD DISMISS US by Michael Campbell (1967, G.P. Putnam's Sons) Homosexuality is not a dominant theme in this look at life in a British boy's school, or is it?

THE LORD WON'T MIND by Gordon Merrick (1970, Bernard Geis Assoc.) A story of Charlie Mills and Peter, his lover. It is a love story with nothing censored, and a happy (artificial?) ending. This book got bad reviews everywhere, even from the Village Voice, but managed to make the New York Times Bestseller List for a couple of months despite everybody.
Dance, anyone?
By Larry Fine and R.J. Alcala

On December 5, UR Gay Liberation and UR Women's Liberation co-sponsored a Liberation Dance in the lounge of the Frederick Douglass Building at the U of R. The band was the Albatross. They were going through their warmup while some of us went about putting candles in the windows, setting up the colored flashing lights, the incense, the beer counter, and trying to figure out where the change boxes were.

In Todd, Perry Brass, editor of *Come Out*, and two others from New York City Gay Liberation were speaking at the UR Gay Liberation Front meeting, while the preliminary blizzard of the evening raged outdoors. Meanwhile, back at the FDB lounge, people started buying tickets. The candle on the ticket table kept going out. As the dance floor began to sprout writhing bodies of all kinds (MMMMMM!), we started to stop worrying about how much money we could conceivably lose. The Albatross kept the sound flowing.

It was indeed a liberation dance. Girls were dancing with girls, guys with girls, guys with guys, and gays with straights without the inhibitions of social pressure or police harassment. "It's like a great big party," someone said. "My dear, it's far better than any bar!* commented another. We thought so too. It was a much more relaxed situation than we usually see on Saturday nights. For one thing, alot of our friends showed up. Secondly, there were more than just a couple of token girls around, and not everybody there was gay. There were just alot of people dancing, talking, and sitting around listening to the music.

Of the nearly 200 people there, some 60% were from the U of R; the rest were from area colleges and the Rochester community.

On Norms and Nature
(reprinted with permission from the UR CAMPUS-TIMES)

TO THE EDITOR:

What happened in the MDC lounge Saturday, December 5th? I was there; let me tell you a little about it. There were male homosexuals, female homosexuals, heterosexual women, heterosexual men, blacks and whites. What was such an unusual conglomeration of people doing in the lounge? They were participating in the most progressive and beautiful activity I've ever seen on this campus.

It was the Liberation Dance sponsored by the UR Gay Liberation Front and UR Women's Liberation. But more than a dance, it was a unique experience in human interaction, free from the rules and regulations of a society that dictates to its people what is and is not natural for them. I believe the people in attendance found out more about human nature than they ever could from one of our current textbooks.

What's more, perhaps for the first time in their lives, these people found out what homosexuals are: a group of people who are in no other way but their sexual orientation different from any other group of people; people who enjoy each other's company and who interact with each other with warmth and sincerity.

I hope to see activities like this dance continue because they are essential for the realization of liberation. Only by giving people of different backgrounds opportunities to interact with each other in settings that they mutually find natural can they see that their differences are not so great after all.

Patricia Evers

The Rochester Gay Liberation Front has opened an office in room 202-D of Todd Union (on the UR river campus) with telephone 273-6181. It features a library, copies of gay literature for sale, and a staff of people to rap with you about gay problems. Call or come in.

These places have been very cooperative in posting our advertising and we should support them with our business:

- The Great Rainbow--Main St. East
- Electric Walrus--East Ave.
- The Frog--Clinton Ave.
- Euphoria--Court St.
- The Turf Bar
- The Riverview--South Ave.
- The 212--York St.

CONTINUING EVENTS:

SUNDAYS--the Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier meets alternate Sundays in Buffalo at the Unitarian Church on West Ferry.

SUNDAYS--U.R. Women's Liberation meets Sundays at 7:30 in Anthony Lounge.

WEDNESDAYS--The Cornell Gay Liberation Front meets Wednesday nights in Ithaca in Anabel Taylor Hall on the Cornell campus.

SATURDAYS--Rochester Gay Liberation Front meetings weekly, 7:30 pm in Todd Hall, second floor, on the University of Rochester river campus.
REFLECTIONS: I

Thoughts on Gay Liberation

By Bob Osborn

I grew up in the "South," and went to the deep south on civil rights projects. Ten years ago people were assuring me that the "Nigras" were happy in their place and didn't want northern-style "liberation." They had jobs and schools and anyway, there weren't so many of them that people should worry about their economic problems or their self-respect too.

I'm telling this because I see the Gay world in that light. The straight world thinks of the homosexual as a substandard person but a member of an insignificant minority group. There are two major differences, however. First, it was not a crime to be black and to act the part. The church has decreed that it is a crime to commit homosexual acts, and the state has written this discrimination into the legal system. Secondly, it was generally impossible for the Negro to conceal his minority membership--his black face gave him away. He had to accept the life the world planned for him or change it--there was no middle ground. The homosexual, on the other hand, can easily hide in the straight world and live a double life in secret. He or she actually has something to risk by working as part of an oppressed group for liberation.

The Gay Liberation Front exists to create a human world; a place where people are respected because they are human beings, not because they are indistinguishable from the majority or are a part of the "system." In realizing this we realize that our struggle is no different from the struggle of other oppressed peoples, and that none shall be free until all are free.

To borrow another example from the black civil rights struggle; the laws must be changed, and they can be. But this is not enough; attitudes must also change, both inside and outside the oppressed group. A black family may not be legally restricted from moving to a house in the white suburbs, but there are still things that prevent him. Similarly, repeal of the sodomy statutes in Illinois and Connecticut has not turned Chicago and Hartford into gay sanctuaries.

I, like Martin Luther King, I have a dream:

And in this dream I see a world where there are constitutional guarantees of protection against discrimination not only by race, creed, national origin, or sex, but also by sexual orientation...

I dream of a world of love in which it will be perfectly natural to see gay men and women holding hands and kissing on the main street of Rochester and dancing along with straight couples at public dances...

A world in which a person may share love with a person of the same sex without fear that he is locked into homosexuality, or that his whole life may be ruined thereby...

A world in which the words "queer" and "faggot" have disappeared from the language along with the other words of oppression like "nigger," "kike," "broad," and "gook."

The atmosphere of the whole room was dynamic yet relaxed and filled with such a feeling of people really enjoying and understanding each other. It was one of the best experiences of my life and the beautiful vibrations of that room are still very much a part of me.

I supposed I am prejudiced slightly because of a simple action on Allan Ginzburg's part that brought me ecstatic, childish joy at first and later moved me almost to tears. In rapping throughout the evening we discussed gay problems and he came to know I was a gay woman. As I left, Allan kissed me goodbye on the mouth--not as a man to a woman or a gay man to a gay woman but as one caring human being to another. It was the most beautiful compliment I have ever been paid.

I guess that's what it really is all about. People need to care about each other as human beings first and respect and love all those things that go along with this. Other relationships will easily and more sincerely follow.

by Debbie Lestz

Allan Ginzburg, the poet and performer, had an exhilarating effect on me as I listened to him in Upper Strong auditorium. He commanded my respect and almost adoration not only because of his fine achievements but because of his fame and acceptance in the straight world.

After his program, I and several other members of Rochester G.L.F. attended a relatively small private party at a home nearby. It is still with great emotion I recall the fantastic warmth and intelligence of this man. He was so much into each person he conversed with and had such strength and awareness...

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I long to touch you
Alone, unafraid
My mouth to seek yours
To capture all of your hardness
and softness.
I week for your body
Warm and breathing heavily against me.
The rhythmic pulsating
Of the happiness I want so much to give you.
Lisa, if only the faces were not at the window.
If only the staring moon-shaped eyes
Would fade and die with the burst of mornings fire.
I seek to entwine my body
So lovingly with yours
Until I and me are no more.
Are forgotten, are withered
And only we remain, only us
Only the beauty and sacredness of our unity together.
But God—the faces, the horrid awful fucking sneers
And grins and sounds of fingers fumbling to get inside my window.
I won't let them come.
I won't let the faces defeat me.
Dear Lisa,
Sweet soft tender one lying with your lips against my breast—

Let our pleasure mount until only sleepy soft sighs of closeness remain.
Remain to help us through the night
Until morning when we must part
To hide among the staring statues.
Fuck you!
I won't succumb.
I'll live and love and cry at the beauty of a starlit night.
I'll kiss the brownness of the earth
And search the heavens for my star—
The tiny wavering tingling that greets me
Alone on cloudless winter nights.
Fuck you!
I'll love and live and fight
Until my beaten body can no longer
Once again rise from the ground.
I may die
But it shall not be in defeat.
I have love.
I have Lisa.
I have myself.
I am myself and I am proud.
That I have a love so many will never ever realize.
I am me.
Dear Gale Gay

(Send all problems, suggestions, criticisms to Gale Gay c/o Gay Liberation, Todd Union, 14627)

Dear Gale:

Should I tell my close friends that I am gay? I can't really be close to them because I feel I'm not really being honest about myself but I'm afraid what they'll say.

Dear Upset:

Those `friends` who are truly your friends will try to understand and accept you as what is all about. If they reject you they probably weren't really friends in the first place.

Dear Gale:

I'm afraid my boss at work has found out I'm gay. What should I say if he confronts me with this sometime?

Worried Worker

Dear Worker:

Ideally all gay people should `come out`. I would be honest and tell him the truth knowing you might have to accept the consequences. If you can't accept this stage still growing up to the `coming out` stage must be nurtured and made to take hold within you. Just remember that we must all come out of our closets in order for society to recognize us as human beings and treat us so.

ROCHESTER GAY LIBERATION FRONT

SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 3: GAY LIBERATION--remarks on the gay liberation movement by members of Rochester, Ithaca, and Buffalo homophile groups.

OCTOBER 17: MILITARY SERVICE & THE HOMOSEXUAL--talk on legal rights and remedies in Selective Service and military law, especially as pertains to the homosexual.

NOVEMBER 7: HOMOSEXUALS AND THE LAW--talk by a lawyer on municipal, state and federal statutes that pertain to the gay world, and on your rights if arrested. Discussion of repression and oppression in practice.

NOVEMBER 21: WOMEN'S LIBERATION--talk and discussion of the general women's liberation movement locally and worldwide, and its relation to gay liberation.

DECEMBER 5: GAY LIBERATION NOW--talk on the Movement by members of the New York City and the Philadelphia Gay Liberation Front.

DECEMBER 12: RAF SESSION--Whither gay liberation in Rochester; in the world? What can we do? What must we do?

JANUARY 9: VENEREAL DISEASE--a doctor talks on the problem in upstate New York, and some solutions.

JANUARY 23: PSYCHOLOGY OF HOMOSEXUALITY--a psychologist attempts to bridge the communications gap between the clinic and the real world.

FEBRUARY 6: GAY LITERATURE--group discussion of the books and magazines produced by and about the gay world.

FEBRUARY 20: DIALOGUE WITH THE CHURCH--a panel of clergymen (not all pro!) discuss the church's views on sexuality and human rights.

MARCH 6: HOMOSEXUALITY IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS--a study of one or more of the following: men's or women's prisons, reformatories, boy's or girl's schools, mental institutions, religious orders

All meetings are 7:30 pm in Upper Todd on the University of Rochester river campus. On alternate weeks there are group discussions and committee meetings--same time and place.

GAY COUNSELING SERVICES:
Gay Liberation Front (275-6181)
Rev. Dennis Borst (271-6480)
Switchboard (464-9908)
Crisis Service (275-4445)
Beginning with the February issue, we will accept COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING and CLASSIFIED ADS (buy, sell, roommate wanted, personals, etc.) in order that we may continue to distribute the "Closet" for free.

Classifieds will be printed at a rate of 50% for 15 words or less and 50% for each additional word. Send ad and payment to UR Gay Liberation Front, Todd Union, River Campus Station, Rochester, NY 14627. To insure maximum usefulness, ads will be accepted until the 25th of the month before publication (Jan 25 for February issue).

Call the office (275-6181) for information and commercial ad rates.

THIS IS THE GAY COMMUNITY'S OWN MAGAZINE. SUPPORT IT!!
The Five Freedoms:

1. Freedom of speech and expression

2. Freedom of every person to worship God in his own way.

3. Freedom from want.

4. Freedom from fear.

5. Freedom to love.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE