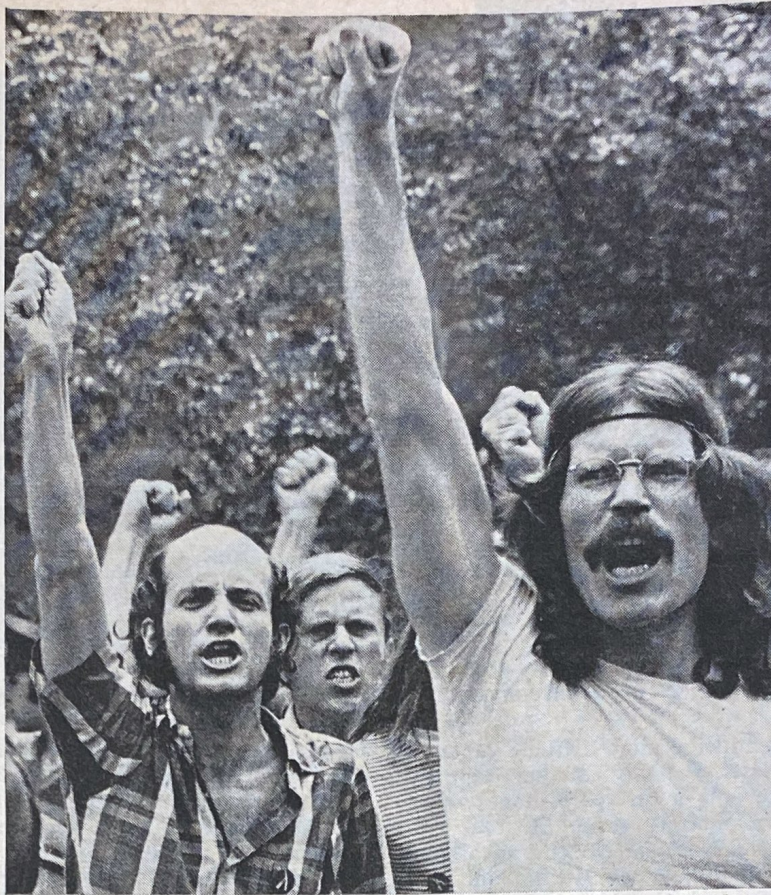


The Militant Homosexual

A prominent American writer confesses in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* that his life of almost 25 years as a "closet homosexual" has been an agonizing lie. An outspoken defender of the rights of homosexuals runs for the District of Columbia's Congressional seat and collects more votes than the black-power candidate. At the University of Minnesota, a 29-year-old graduate student whose campaign poster brazenly features him in high-heeled shoes is elected president of the school's student association by a 2-to-1 margin. And in major cities across the country, thousands of young homosexuals, their arms locked affectionately around one another and their fists defiantly clenched in the air, parade proudly through the streets chanting: "Two, four, six, eight—Gay is just as good as straight."

All of these events took place within the past seven months—events that would have been barely imaginable a few years ago. What they signal, in an America grown increasingly permissive in matters sexual and supersensitive to any charge of discrimination, is the advent of yet another aggrieved minority group—this one rallying under the exotic banner of the "Gay Liberation Movement." Homosexuality, once the most shameful and carefully guarded of private secrets, is now a matter of personal pride to increasing numbers of what used to be known as "sexual deviants." And today's militant homosexuals are demanding not merely acceptance, with the full legal, social and economic equality that goes with it; they want approval as well.

To supporters of gay liberation, marching in the streets and holding hands in public are only minor gestures of assertion. They are picketing the Pentagon, testifying at government hearings on discrimination, appearing on TV talk shows, lecturing to Rotary Clubs, organizing their own churches and social organizations and, perhaps most important of all, using their real names. "Two or three years ago, a homosexual who tried to explain what he and the gay movement were all about would have been ridiculed," says Troy Perry, a homosexual minister who established Los Angeles's Metropolitan Community Church in 1968 and has been a movement hero ever



Bettye Lane

Gay activists: Out of the closets and into the streets

since. "But now I can speak on radio, go to Junior Chamber of Commerce meetings, talk with legislators, and I am treated with normal curiosity."

In truth, perhaps the most startling thing about gay liberation is the suddenness with which it has surfaced as a full-fledged social-protest movement. Until two years ago, recalls Craig Rodwell, a New York gay-lib leader, homosexuals were "scared, scared of everything." The flash point occurred one balmy June evening in 1969, when New York City police staged a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village frequented by homosexuals. Instead of letting themselves be herded into the paddy wagons, however, as had happened dozens of times in the past, the group in the bar resisted arrest, threw bottles and bricks at the police and required the officers to call for reinforcements.

Are They Sick?

What seemed then a relatively minor clash is now enshrined in gay-lib lore as the "Stonewall Rebellion." Within weeks, the first of scores of militant homosexual groups, the Gay Liberation Front, was formed in New York. The new mood quickly crossed the continent, leading to the creation of similar organizations in Los Angeles and San Francisco. By the first anniversary of the Stonewall incident, the militants were on the march in a dozen cities. By the second anniversary, they were celebrating Gay Pride Week with an elaborate panoply of parades and protests. The

movement already has a book-length history in print and some of its more imaginative propagandists have even begun to speak of a "Stonewall Nation."

Thus, on the face of it, gay liberation is following a well-established pattern of minority protest movements in the U.S.—with one fundamental difference. What sets the militant homosexuals apart from society is not a matter of birth or ethnic origin or philosophical convictions; it is a set of attitudes and behavior patterns that many medical authorities regard as literally sick. Thus the gay activists' demand for equal rights inevitably raises medical and psychological issues. In keeping with Freudian doctrine, most psychoanalysts today still consider homosexuality as a neurosis, particularly difficult if not impossible to cure. Yet many sociologists reject the notion of homosexuality as sickness or aberrant behavior, preferring to view it as "an unexpected accident of the child-rearing process" or simply as an alternative lifestyle. "The definition of homosexuality today," says T. Laud Humphreys, a sociologist at the State University of New York, "is in such flux that it is almost impossible to get any agreement on what it is." Although many people may still regard homosexuals as sick, some of the prevailing uncertainty in the scientific world has implanted doubts in the minds of a growing number of enlightened laymen.

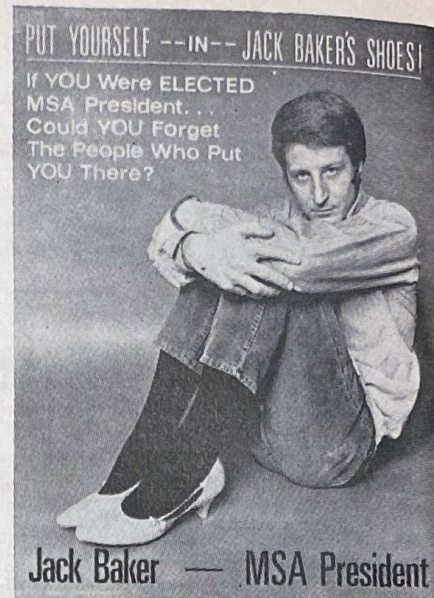
Beyond doubt, however, the gay liberation movement does share one important characteristic with some other activist groups today. Like the Black



James D. Wilson—Newsweek



Frank Leonardo © 1971 New York Post Corp.



New gay life-styles: Public displays of affection, 'wedding' ceremonies, running for office

Panthers and the more extreme women's liberationists, the gay militants actually constitute only a tiny percentage within their own minority group. By best estimate of the National Institute of Mental Health, there are some 4 million men and women in the U.S. who consider themselves homosexuals (though some homosexual organizations estimate the number as high as 10 million). Yet the total of active gay liberationists certainly does not exceed 100,000 and is probably a good deal smaller. And while some older homosexuals may secretly sympathize with gay lib, the vast majority of them continue to conceal their sexual lives and remain uninvolved with the movement. Many, in fact, resent the far-out antics of the militants. "Most adult homosexuals believe gay lib is going much too fast and creating a false image of the homosexual," notes Barry M. Dank, a California State College sociologist who specializes in the study of homosexual behavior. "They don't relate to gay lib any more than many students relate to SDS or the Weathermen."

Refusing to Live a Lie

Despite such resistance from what the militants derisively call the "homosexual Establishment," the gay liberation movement has already made a significant impact on the nation's homosexual community—particularly among the young. "The greatest change has come in gay people under 25," says Tom Maurer, a middle-aged San Francisco minister and counselor to homosexuals. "They have decided their sexual identity is gay and they'll be damned if they will live a lie." It is these young homosexuals, ranging in age from 16 to 30, who dominate the movement and are rapidly turning gay liberation into an American subculture, replete with its own churches, rituals, clubs and publications.

In recent years, homosexuals have effectively established the beginnings of a

distinctively gay public life-style. In a dozen cities around the country, homosexual clergymen have set up their own churches, where they perform all normal religious rites, including marriage. Since 1969, more than 100 homosexual couples have been "married" in this fashion although the legality of their unions is doubtful. Social and service organizations catering exclusively to homosexuals have also proliferated. In 1967, the entire U.S. homosexual community was served by a mere two dozen such associations, most of them designed to protect the homosexual from the hostile society around him. Today, there are well over 100 and they vary from social clubs—which provide an attractive alternative to the tawdry gay bars where homosexuals have congregated for years—to counseling centers, communes and small encounter and "rap" groups. Gay students have formed homophile leagues on more than a dozen U.S. campuses, a number likely to double within the next year. Upwards of 200 newspapers, magazines and newsletters—most notably, *The Advocate*, a Los Angeles-based national biweekly with a circulation near 40,000—now provide news and internal communication for the gay community.

Underlying all these efforts is a basic goal of the gay liberation movement: to help homosexuals overcome deeply ingrained feelings of inferiority and take pride in their sexual identity—in effect, to build a new psychological self-image. For all homosexuals, gay activists argue, the key step is "coming out," the often painful self-recognition that one is homosexual. But with the arrival of gay liberation, coming out now includes a second, and more important, dimension: a public admission of homosexuality. "In the gay life these days, you now have two debuts," says Jim Owles, the 24-year-old president of New York's militant Gay Activist Alliance. "First, you admit it to yourself, and then you admit it to

anyone who asks you. A lot of people are now doing both simultaneously."

Coming out in public is a traumatic experience for any homosexual. "It's not easy to accept yourself as a good and worthy person," says Tom Maurer, "when your church tells you you're a hopeless sinner, the state tells you you're a criminal and your doctor tells you you're sick." There is usually trouble with family and straight friends. When Minnesota student president Jack Baker finally decided to tell his family, his eldest brother bluntly told him, "Don't come around the house any more." Frequently, relatives and friends simply refuse to believe the truth. "When I told my mother I was a lesbian and was living with Alberta, she just was unable to accept it," recalls a New York graduate student. "Finally, she replied, 'I don't think you are, but I think Alberta is.'"

'I am a Homosexual'

The fashion in which homosexuals come out will vary widely. For a teacher at City College of New York, the moment arrived while he was conducting a workshop on oppression and he suddenly decided to use his own experience as a "closet queen" to illustrate the point. Critic Jill Johnston, who publicly flaunted her lesbianism by staging a celebrated love-in with two lesbian friends at a Manhattan symposium on women's liberation, had come out ten months before, choosing for her debut the first anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion. Author Merle Miller was moved to write his confession in *The New York Times* by an earlier article on homosexuality he considered unfair. "I realized," he says, "that I had no right to say the piece was bigoted and false unless I wrote that I knew this was so because I am a homosexual."

Whatever the reason, coming out always makes an enormous difference in a homosexual's life. "Now that everyone

knows," says a Los Angeles student, "I really feel at ease with myself for the first time in my life." Many others, such as a New York intellectual who made his homosexuality public in his late 30s, feel a sense of "enormous exhilaration" at having ended a dismal dual life of straight by day, gay by night.

The idea of the homosexual as "normal," of course, is central to gay liberation—and it is an idea the movement is actively seeking to inculcate not only in the minds of homosexuals themselves but in the public consciousness as well. As gay libbers see it, the two institutions most responsible for keeping the homosexual from attaining normal status in society are the psychiatric establishment and the government. Accordingly, they have launched a vocal—and sometimes violent—attack on both.

Freedom for Consenting Adults

In their assault on government, gay militants have used the familiar tactics of demonstration, harassment and disruption to point up discrimination against them in housing and employment opportunities. Their ultimate goal is a Federal law, similar to the one enacted in Great Britain four years ago, that would eliminate criminal penalties for homosexual acts in private between consenting adults (four states, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois and Idaho, now have such laws). A more immediate concern, however, is forcing legislators to take public cognizance of their demands. During recent election campaigns in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, pressure from gay-lib groups helped persuade candidates to take an open stand on homosexuality. In New York, both city and state legislators have introduced bills aimed at expanding present laws against discrimination in housing, public accommodations and employment to include the phrase "sexual orientation."

Gay liberationists concentrate their political campaign on the Federal government, which is the nation's largest employer. Open homosexuality is still ground for dismissal in most Federal agencies because a homosexual is considered vulnerable to coercion. But the Washington office of the American Civil Liberties Union is currently fighting five such firings, four of which challenge the Defense Department's withdrawal of security clearances from homosexuals working for companies funded by the Pentagon. One suit, which is expected to provide a critical decision in the fall, argues that the plaintiff's open avowal of his homosexuality for the past ten years renders him invulnerable to coercion.

But even more than the government, it is the psychiatrists who have experienced the full rage of the homosexual activists. Over the past two years, gay-lib organizations have repeatedly disrupted medical meetings, and three months ago—in the movement's most aggressive demonstration so far—a group of 30 militants broke into a meeting of the

American Psychiatric Association in Washington, where they turned the staid proceedings into near chaos for twenty minutes. "We are here to denounce your authority to call us sick or mentally disordered," shouted the group's leader, Dr. Franklin Kameny, while the 2,000 shocked psychiatrists looked on in disbelief. "For us as homosexuals, your profession is the enemy incarnate. We demand that psychiatrists treat us as human beings, not as patients to be cured!"

If the gay liberationists are angered by the psychiatrists and government bureaucrats, they are dismayed by the similar attitudes toward homosexuals that persist within other activist groups. Thus, radical homosexuals complain that they have to struggle for the chance to participate in the peace movement's antiwar marches. Even stronger resistance has come from militant blacks, who want nothing to do with the gay groups. "In a time when black people are working to create a nation of men and women," Columbia University's student Afro-American Society recently declared, "they don't have time to wallow in the mud with people who cannot decide if they are men or women."

Partly as a result of such rejection, most members of gay liberation are ignoring standard politics and devoting themselves exclusively to homosexual problems. The largest and most important of the gay-lib groups, New York's Gay Activist Alliance and San Francisco's Society for Individual Rights (SIR), are now "one-issue" organizations, and the original Gay Liberation Front, which had hoped for support from political radicals, has broken down into splinter groups and lost most of its force. In addition, the U.S.'s two oldest major homophile associations, the Mattachine Societies and the Daughters of Bilitis, are slowly

moving toward cooperation and identification with moderate gay-liberation groups.

Yet even within the gay liberation movement itself, discord is growing—basically in clashes between male and female homosexuals. Historically, their worlds have tended to remain separate. Lesbians have always been more involved with the "straight" society than their gay brothers: more of them marry and raise children, regularly have heterosexual affairs and maintain quite standard careers. "My boss won't give me a promotion because he is afraid I will get married and leave," says a 23-year-old social worker in Chicago. "I can't very well say to him, 'Don't worry, I won't get married because I'm a lesbian'."

Still the Battle of the Sexes

Despite the fact, then, that lesbians appreciate the common problems of homosexuality, an increasing number prefer to ally themselves with the women's liberation movement than with the gay front. "Women's lib is our central social revolution," says Jill Johnston, "and it is led by women. I believe the lesbian is in the advance of the women's movement because she really is the true woman-identified woman, free from male dominance." Many female homosexuals are, in fact, pressuring the feminist movement to recognize the lesbian struggle as essential to its own; some radical feminists such as Ti-Grace Atkinson and Kate Millet, the author of the best-selling "Sexual Politics," who disclosed her own bisexual inclinations last summer, have publicly announced their solidarity with the lesbian cause. But the majority of women's lib members strongly resent the highly visible and often shrilly vocal lesbians in their midst. "Women's lib is being distorted by the attention paid to a



Diana Davies—Bethel

Johnston: Flaunting lesbianism



Steve Kahn

Perry: Speaking to the 'straights'

small minority," argues Betty Friedan, founder of the National Organization for Women. "Lesbianism within the movement will divide women and play into their worst fears."

If most moderate women's liberationists worry that their movement may be tainted with homosexuality, some prominent homosexuals themselves—particularly in the arts—have also completely rejected any public association with gay liberation. "Very few well-known gays have given any encouragement to the movement," says poet Allen Ginsberg, who himself has never concealed his homosexuality. "In fact, so far it's been the other way around: the average guy in the street has been much more courageous in standing up for his sexual preferences than have the celebrities." Even in those professions society has often considered as "feminine"—hairdressing, fashion, interior decorating—most homosexuals have chosen to remain "in the closet." The same is true among many theater and ballet performers known to be homosexuals. "Most homosexual actors or dancers are as uptight as a gay broker on Wall Street," insists New York activist Jim Owles. "They need a certain public image and often are compelled to be seen in public with a member of the opposite sex."

People Just Aren't Ready

As gay liberationists are rapidly discovering, what is true of homosexuals in the arts is also true of many other long-time homosexuals, who fear that any association with the militants will disrupt—if not destroy—their painstakingly constructed lives. "We have not had much success in getting older homosexuals interested in gay lib," admits Jim Digger, a 26-year-old militant who went to Texas earlier this year hoping to strengthen the local movement. In the South, where gay-libbers now speak contemptuously of closet homosexuals as "Uncle Toms," the old-line establishment is equally resistant to gay-lib tactics. "I

have to come out sometime, I know," rationalizes one homosexual professor at a conservative Georgia college. "But the people around here just aren't ready for it yet."

Still, for all the troubles it has had in organizing and proselytizing, the gay liberation movement is clearly having a substantial impact on the nation's homosexual community. For one thing, there are surely more homosexuals today willing to admit their sexual preferences—though perhaps no fewer who search for some kind of therapeutic aid. "A greater number of homosexuals now seeking help no longer want to change their sexual identities," says Dr. Judd Marmor, director of psychiatry at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. "Many more are accepting their homosexuality and feeling less guilty about it." For another, a greater degree of tolerance for homosexuals is now evident in the nation's larger cities, where police harassment has been noticeably reduced. Perhaps most important, according to California sociologist Barry M. Dank, "the homosexuality-as-a-way-of-life philosophy is leading to the creation of a gay community in which one's sex life will be increasingly less fragmented from the rest of one's social life."

All that is fine, perhaps, for those homosexuals who are at peace with their own sexual identities or, through gay liberation, are learning somehow to come to terms with it. But the movement's promotion of homosexuality as a legitimate and normal state of being poses several other questions. Is gay really "good" for the millions of pathetically unhappy homosexuals and homosexually inclined people who, if they were able, might elect to change their sexual lives? Even Merle Miller's article, a classic defense of the virtues of coming out, ended more on a note of sadness than triumph. "Gay is good," he wrote. "Gay is proud. Well, yes, I suppose. If I had been given a choice (but who is?), I would prefer to have been straight."

So, presumably, would many other homosexuals. Yet gay liberation, with its rather simplistic rhetoric, is telling them that homosexuality is just another variety of sexual behavior equal in value to heterosexuality. Most experts, however, agree that to cut off all further study and debate on the nature of homosexuality, as some gay militants propose, would be dangerously irresponsible. "If anything, gay lib suggests how little we know about homosexuality," points out California psychiatrist Martin Hoffman. "Clinical research is necessary more than ever to try to determine the causes as well as the effects of homosexuality." In fact, homosexual behavior is a far more complex subject than many gay liberationists would have the public believe. "Homosexuality is not just another form of sexual behavior," says Dr. Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist who has devoted much of her life to research on homosexuals. "For many, it affects their total way of life."

A Dangerous Image of Normality

What all this suggests is a central problem that gay liberation usually chooses to ignore: if the movement succeeds in creating an image of "normality" for homosexuals in the society at large, would it encourage more homosexually inclined people—particularly young people—to follow their urges without hesitation? No one really knows for certain. Dr. Paul Gebhard, the distinguished anthropologist who directs the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University, believes that gay lib "will not convert heterosexuals into homosexuals but might encourage those who are going in a homosexual direction to feel less guilty about it." New York sociologist Edward Sagarin takes an even dimmer view. "If the militants didn't say that it is great to be gay," Sagarin insists, "more adolescents with homosexual tendencies might seek to change instead of resolving their confusion by accepting the immediate warm security that tells them they are normal."

The gay liberation movement is still so new, of course, that it has yet to come to grips with all the implications of its own positions. The progressively liberalizing trend in public opinion may well make the life of homosexuals easier in years to come, and they may eventually win their battle for full civil rights. Yet the status of homosexuals will always depend not simply on the social attitudes and legal patterns they seek to change, but ultimately on their views of themselves. This is an intensely personal issue that will not be solved with rhetoric and parades but must be answered within the hearts and minds of individuals. Expert observers of the vexing subject tend to agree on one telling point that applies no less to homosexuals than to more conventional members of society. "No one," says University of Illinois sociologist William Simon, "ever starts out to raise his kids as homosexuals."



Gay Pride parade in Hollywood: Demanding acceptance—and approval