

# Gay Liberation comes to D.C.

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by d. aiken

The gay liberation movement has finally reached Washington.

People who identify themselves as homosexuals and who want to openly confront the repression they feel came "out of the closets and into the streets" long ago in other major cities such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago.

This week (June 22-28) is Gay Pride Week. It marks the first anniversary of the "Christopher Street Riots," when the gay brothers and sisters of New York City fought off a gang of cops who were trying to bust a Greenwich Village gay bar. This was the event in which gay people first "came out" and told Puritan Amerika to shove off. The anniversary is being celebrated in cities across the country.

It takes a while for such consciousness to reach our nation's kapital, it seems, but things are now moving. The last issue of Quicksilver carried a letter from Mike Yarr, an ex-Air Force member who works for the Washington Peace Center, inviting homosexuals interested in forming a Gay Lib group to get in touch with him. Many did. A meeting for everybody who is interested in helping get such a group together has been scheduled for Tuesday, June 30, at 8pm in Georgetown University annex.

Some of the aspects of the repression felt by gay people are obvious. They are faced in all states except Illinois with archaic "sodomy laws" which, although seldom enforced, contribute to a furtiveness and paranoia about human relationships which should be open and free. (Even in Illinois, which repealed its "sodomy law" more or less by accident, pigs use any number of pretexts to bust gay bars which don't pay enough protection money.

Gay people usually try to conceal their orientation from their employers rather than take the risk of being fired. Not all employers would do so, of course, but even a person who is generally liberal can have a blind dread of homosexuals.

Finally, gay people usually have a hell of a time finding other gay people. Relatively few gay people walk around with little pink booties, lavender lace blouses, and limp wrists, so it's hard to identify who's gay. Most guys don't have the chutzpah to walk up to another guy and say, "Hey buddy, ya wanna fuck?"

So most gays are forced to seek tricks either in dangerously public places (parks, toilets, etc.) or in one of the ghettoized bars, all of which must pay off the pigs and many (though somehow not all) of which charge outrageous prices for watered drinks and have a typical at-



mosphere of forced frivolity.

In a word, the gay person lives in a ghetto without boundaries. He lives among the straights, but in his head he's an outsider.

Naturally, these forms of repression must be fought. Laws must be changed, firings of gay people must be protested, overpriced gay bars must be boycotted and social events must be arranged where gay people as well as straight people can meet each other in a relaxed atmosphere. These are some of the things Gay Lib groups in other cities have done.

But an even more basic need would remain even if all these things somehow were accomplished. That is the need for self-respect.

It's no surprise that the "straight world" expresses its dread of homosexual feelings with repressive tactics. What is really tragic, however, is that those who experience these feelings accept the prevalent notion that they are unspeakable dirty, evil, and sinful, and repress themselves.

A social psychologist named Martin Hoffman has written a right-on book titled "The Gay World," in which he looks at, among other things, the problem most male homosexuals feel in developing a lasting, deep relationship with another guy that's not built exclusively on sex. He says:

"To put the matter in its most

simple terms, the reasons the males who are homosexually inclined cannot form stable relationships with each other is that society does not want them to... Closeness between men is considered a sign of something wrong with the individual's mind, he immediately defines himself as a sissy, faggot, degenerate, etc... Sexual arousal provides sufficient impetus to overcome the social prohibition against genital contact, but not to overcome the prohibition against intimacy. To overcome this second kind of condemnation would require a kind of freedom from social constraint that is not really to be expected, except in a few cases."

Well, that's where Gay Lib comes in, folks. Gay is Good. There's no reason why men shouldn't be close to men, and women to women, in a lasting, loving way. But there's a hell of a lot of internal hang ups to overcome before this can happen.

That's why we need a group. Everybody who needs to come to grips with their feelings, and with the repression they feel in a society which demands conformity, can use a little help from their friends.

We want to reach all the people in the area who have homosexual feelings, whether or not they're ready to come out and identify themselves as "gay." It's hard to recognize and deal with desires and feelings that you've been taught are dreadful and unnatural. But it's important to realize that they're not "unnatural," that you're not "sick" because you feel them, and that psychiatrists who say something like "all the homosexuals I see are sick" are leaving out the other side: all of the heterosexuals they see are probably sick, too.

It's especially important that gay women get together as well as gay men. There's already enough male chauvinism among heterosexuals; a gay movement shouldn't contribute to it by concerning itself only with male homosexuality. Women will almost certainly want to have their own separate rap sessions, but there's a lot that gay men and gay women can do together.

Gay people are perhaps the last oppressed group to get themselves together. Blacks, Indians, Puerto Ricans, women - everybody's getting organized. It's time for gays to surface, join with their comrades (both gays and right-on straights) and fight repression in all forms.

If you want to rap with somebody about the idea of gay lib, call Mike Yarr during the day at 234-2000, or at night phone Dave Aiken at 234-4287 or Miles Gritz at 965-2734.

Power to the People! Gay power to gay people!