

Letters to Lambda

Gays and the *Draft*

Dear Lambda,

The U.S. government is bringing back the draft, ostensibly to beef up its forces in the face of a Soviet "threat," but more likely the real reason is to create a strike force capable of carrying out intervention in Third World countries on behalf of U.S. imperialism.

The rulers of this country are in no mood for "another Nicaragua," especially in the western hemisphere.

I have chosen to resist draft registration and thereby not contribute to these war maneuvers in any way.

Since I'm Gay I could just wait until induction if I wanted to, and then get a deferment by declaring my homosexuality (something the government deems would make me "unfit" to "serve.") I am not doing this for two reasons.

For one thing I do not wish to register at all because I do not want to cooperate with the cannon-fodder-gathering process in any way (to get a deferment I would still have to register.)

Secondly, I don't want to perpetuate the system of anti-gay oppression and discrimination that exists in society by agreeing with the government that my being Gay is somehow a handicap.

Resisting the entire conscription process and the interests that process serves (this country's rulers who make anti-Gay bigotry just as much an integral part of their philosophy as imperialist intervention) is the only thing I can in good conscience do. I urge others, Gay and straight, to do the same.

Steven,
Chapel Hill

Another view of *Cruising*

Dear Lambda,

I will no doubt incur the wrath of that which calls itself the gay community of Chapel Hill by saying this, but the controversy that I keep reading about compels me to say it: I liked the movie *Cruising*. (I can already hear shouts of "renegade")!

Maybe it's not the best film I've ever seen, but it's nowhere near the worst. And I think it's better intentioned than its critics maintain.

Almost all criticisms of *Cruising* have been misdirected. The straight metropolitan press has rarely been so vicious. Reviews in papers like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* use adjectives like "offensive" and "repulsive" to describe the subject matter and bemoan the fact that it got an R rating rather than an X rating. Some of the reviewers go so far as to describe the gays in the sado-masochistic subculture as "losers" and "unsavory elements" and even "degenerates."

One would think that political gays would address these frontal attacks from the press; instead they have devoted their efforts to censoring a movie which is uncondemning of and sympathetic to gays.

In their criticisms of the film, gay politicians usually use phrases like "it is stereotypical," "it doesn't show gay life as it really is," and "it distorts gay sado-masochism."

To briefly summarize my rejection of these criticisms, I respond that stereotypes are depicted only inasmuch as they exist. Yes, there is a heavy-leather scene, and there are drag queens in the Village; around the docks one finds little else. A film set in the docks/leather scene need not depict the wide range of gay experience; it needs only to provide an accurate portrayal of leather bars.

Concerning the content of the film, there is really little room for argument: murders do occur in the heavy-leather subculture; the film was drawn from an actual series of killings that occurred around the Village docks.

Of the numerous gays that I have talked to, I have been surprised by their lack of understanding of the film. I just get blank looks when I mention analysis or perspective, and the conversation usually turns back to a discussion of blood and gore and stereotypes.

The perspective of the film is this, simply put: gays in the S&M subculture are people who are trying to work out psychological problems that arise from social attitudes concerning homosexuality, power and violence. Gay sado-masochism arises out of self-hatred imposed by heterosexist society. Power and violence are dramatically and theatrically concentrated in gay leather bars, but they permeate all levels of social interaction. Gays caught in these social and psychological contradictions are not the perpetrators, they are the sympathetic victims of social violence.

(*Cruising*, cont. p. 10)