

Expose Yourself!

The only thing wrong with being gay or lesbian is that we are the objects of prejudice and discrimination. The question here is not whether or not it's OK to be gay or lesbian (forthwith referred to, for brevity, simply as "gay"), for most of us know that it is, and furthermore, we are aware of the alternative(s). The question is, How do we rid ourselves of this negative and unjustified burden? The answer, my brothers and sisters, is through exposure and education. People are afraid of what they do not understand; through increased gay public exposure will come education of the masses, and through education will come enlightenment, and enlightenment will ultimately signal the disintegration of our stereotyped, ill-conceived and misconstrued chains of oppression.

Since there is nothing intrinsically evil about homosexuality, our problems are largely ones of image. The natural progression would seem to be that as exposure unfolded, acceptance would increase. Unfortunately though, as Voltaire said, "Prejudice is the reason of fools" and prejudice increases as people become threatened by a minority's increasing numbers and obvious social presence and potency. Hence, we cannot merely expose ourselves; we must teach our audience simultaneously and be conscious of what we project.

Regrettably, in the past, the undiscerning eye of society has seen only the very decadent, very criminal, or very androgynous side of gay life. I do not condemn gays who are "on the fringe," but WE all know that all lesbians don't wear flannel shirts and drive pick-ups and that all gay men don't do drag and drugs and that we all certainly don't have AIDS. Not that I condemn anyone who has AIDS or who cross dresses or who drives a pick-up, but it is important for the general public to become cognizant of the diversity among gays and for us to assert that as for a single, all-encompassing gay lifestyle, that is something people adopt when they have no style of their own.

I maintain that if the Republicans can sell Ronald Reagan, one can sell anything. Unfortunately a national ad campaign is beyond the resources of gay rights organizations. Thus, it is up to YOU to sell yourselves. Now I'm not saying that you men all have to put splints on your wrists or that you women must all adorn yourself with eyeshadow and acrylic nails to facilitate the appearance of normality. Just be yourself and let people know that you take pride in who and what you are! If you internalize your oppression and don't counter it, not only will society at large feel and appear justified, but you yourself will come to believe that your sexuality is wrong.

Gays deserve to be taken more seriously than as a bunch of deviates running around engaging in clandestine "crimes against nature." As cliché or hackneyed as it may sound, people are people, and there are good gays and bad gays just as there are good and bad heterosexuals, good and bad Christians, or good and bad Caucasians. We all know that, but as a minority trying to gain social acceptance, we must illustrate our diversity and OPENLY promote ourselves with a positive image. Furthermore we must never apologize for our respective sexual orientations. "You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and stars; you have a right to be here.... Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him [or Her -ed] to be, and keep peace with your soul" [from the "Desiderata"] Show society this inherent right and this internal peace. Drag them kicking and screaming into the 1980s. Expose yourself!

-Arthur Goodman, III

Political Homophobia: What can we do?

A recent news feature reported on the difficulties that the new Democratic National Chairman Paul Kirk is having in reaching an accommodation with conservative Southern Democrats. Alabama governor George Wallace was quoted as saying, "The Party's got to get away from some of the ultra-liberal positions that they [have] advocated."

In the event that you, like I, were wondering just what these "ultra-liberal positions" might be, the article provided a chilling illustration from the Alabama state party chairman, "We in Alabama reserve the right to discriminate against homosexuals."

Make no mistake about it, we are the lightning rod, the hated and feared minority as "morally depraved" as abortionists, as "unnatural" as women's "libbers," as misguided as "godless atheists." Compared

to us, labor unions, the general Black population, and "Mondale liberals" seem almost redeemable.

Various articles in The New Republic and other neo-liberal publications are making more moderate calls for the abandonment of "special interest politics" by the national Democratic party and for efforts to reach an accommodation with conservative, local Democrats, especially in the south. Will the party concede the "right to discriminate?" If it entertains the notion, what can we as "the minority it is perfectly legal to hate" do to forestall it and the more general challenges we face these days to our rights and personal dignity?

For starter's I'd suggest contributing to the Human Rights Campaign Fund, a dependable "gay PAC" which has used cam- (see page 4)