

# The Public Eye

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## Gay Conservatives *Pulling the Movement to the Right*

"[T]he day of leftist orthodoxy in the gay community is coming to an end. Capitalism and limited government provide freedom and individual rights for everybody but require individual responsibility. That's what gay people should want and what an increasing number of us do want. It's time to tell America that story."

— David Boaz, *Bay Windows*, Feb. 1, 1996

BY SURINA KHAN

The gay liberation movement has succeeded in bringing homosexuality out of the closet and into the political, economic, and cultural mainstream. A combination of grassroots organizing, movement-building, and political pressure has created a gay rights movement that has power, momentum, and influence. This success has been an important factor in generating a backlash within the larger society—nurtured and funded by the secular and Christian Right. The Right has used stereotyping and scapegoating to attack gay and lesbian people, portraying them as one of the major causes of the decline of "family values" and "morality" in US life.<sup>1</sup>

The agenda of the Right is now enshrined in the Republican Party platform, the result of the takeover of the Republican Party by its right wing. It is fair to say that the Christian Right now has a stranglehold on the GOP. On the eve of the recent Iowa Republican Party primary, the Christian Coalition held a rally that used as its central theme a pledge to oppose same-sex marriage. Every GOP candidate who attended the rally signed the pledge.

It seems unlikely that a gay person would support the political party that

uses the demonization of homosexuals as a central recruitment theme. It seems equally unlikely that gays would support the party that stonewalled addressing the AIDS epidemic because its bigotry allowed it to demonize those who are HIV-positive. The party that has organized anti-gay referenda across the country seems an unlikely place for gays to park their loyalty.

But a growing sector of the gay community sees itself as supporters of and members of the Republican Party. Known as Log Cabin Republicans (LCR), these gay conservatives are part of an increasing number of gays and lesbians (primarily gay men) who identify with part or all of the Right's agenda. They are not a fringe group and should not be dismissed as such. In fact, the gay conservative movement is growing at a fast pace, garnering a great deal of mainstream media attention in the process, and serving as an active part of the Right in attacking gay progressive institutions and liberalism in general.

Though the gay community is generally considered to be liberal by most people, it is in fact quite complex and consists of different factions. There are roughly five sub-groups within the gay community: radical activists including the cultural stream of gays, also known

as the now largely defunct group, Queer Nation, who use radical rhetoric and direct action in order to achieve visibility for gay people; lesbian separatists, who favor separatism from all men over building coalitions with gay men; progressives, who work towards a politics of inclusion and building coalitions with other oppressed groups in an effort to end racism, sexism, and economic exploitation as well as homophobia; a large number of gay people who are not organized politically; and gay conservatives, who will be the focus of this paper.<sup>2</sup>

Gay conservatives, like their heterosexual counterparts, generally reject welfare and affirmative action, and are opposed to immigration. They have strong libertarian leanings in that they believe in limited government, individual rights, and individual "responsibility"—values they claim to share with the majority of American people. These

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# From the Director

**F**or us at PRA, Pat Buchanan has been the news of the Republican primary season. For many months we had predicted he would surprise everyone in New Hampshire. That prediction was nearly always greeted with polite dismissal.

What we did not predict was that he would focus so heavily on GATT and NAFTA as the cause of the dramatic decline in the prospects of blue and white collar workers in the last fifteen years. We thought he would focus on the scapegoats of past campaigns—immigrants, welfare recipients, the “Israel lobby,” and “elites.” But instead he elevated the pain of the downsized worker, embarrassing the rest of the political pack when this theme proved so powerful.

It appeared to some that Buchanan was hanging his political message on anger rather than hate. But to make such a distinction is not possible for Buchanan. He is a hate man from way back. So, intertwined in his anti-corporate, populist message were the Buchanan standbys of race hatred, gay-bashing, and anti-abortion extremism—all wrapped in the mocking, “locked and loaded” sneer of the town bully.

This may seem a difficult package to sort out. The anti-corporate message makes Buchanan look like a man of the people. The anti-abortion fanaticism makes him look like a man who takes stands and sticks by them. The attacks on the Republican Party make him look like a man who does not practice opportunism or “do lunch” with the power elites.

But all it takes to understand Buchanan is a little homework. This combination of characteristics is not original to him. All you have to do is examine his record to see what positions he has taken over and over during his career, then examine right-wing populism and connect the dots. Buchanan is so much the right-wing populist (with all its frightening implications as a building block of fascism) that making the match is not difficult.

Yet the journalists who covered Buchanan treated him as if his style and message were *sui generis*. Buchanan is *not* an original and his message is well-known and well-documented. It seemed as if journalists covering the Buchanan story were consistently self-censoring, or silenced by fear. Perhaps it was fear that if they said what was true, they would be marginalized—or perhaps attacked by Buchanan himself.

Let's speak clearly. Buchanan is a threat to all those he has fingered as the cause of the “decline of America.” He is also a threat to the very people he pretends to defend. His right-wing populism is not just stirring the cauldron of resentment and hatred. As our colleague Chip Berlet has said, it is fascism coming too close for comfort.

— Jean Hardisty

## The Public Eye

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Jean Hardisty

*Editors*  
Judith Glaubman  
Surlina Khan

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conservative values contribute to the ideological tensions intrinsic to gay conservatism. The principal tension is between their conservative values, which lead them to support the *status quo*, and their pariah status within that *status quo*. Like many gay religious people, gay conservatives have beliefs that are part of a structure that often excludes them.

Two strategies are used by gay conservatives to resolve this tension. First, in the case of gay Republicans, they work to convince the Republican Party that it needs gay votes to push forward its conservative agenda and that it should be a "big tent" party that recruits voters from the gay community—a practical solution that gives gay conservatives a place to be conservative, but does not necessarily resolve the tension. A second strategy is to emphasize libertarian values, seeking resolution through a shared belief in the free market system and limited government intervention in personal conduct. Some gay conservative activists are clearly employing both strategies simultaneously.

While gay conservatives don't deny that the policy positions of the Right are homophobic, they continue to work within, and often mimic the rhetoric of, the heterosexual conservative establishment. Rich Tafel, executive director of LCR, says their role is to stir things up and make the Republican Party deal with the gay rights issue. This leaves unanswered the question: make them deal with it in what way? If gay conservatives are not interested in a fundamental transformation of society's attitudes toward gay and lesbian people, but instead are interested in assimilating into the existing societal structure and preserving the *status quo*, can gay conservatives realistically stop the rising tide of anti-gay Christian Right influence over the Republican Party as they claim? More important, what impact will gay conservatives have on the gay movement? By abandoning coalitions with other oppressed groups and choosing allies primarily on shared economic philosophies, are they obstructing a movement toward human rights and dignity?

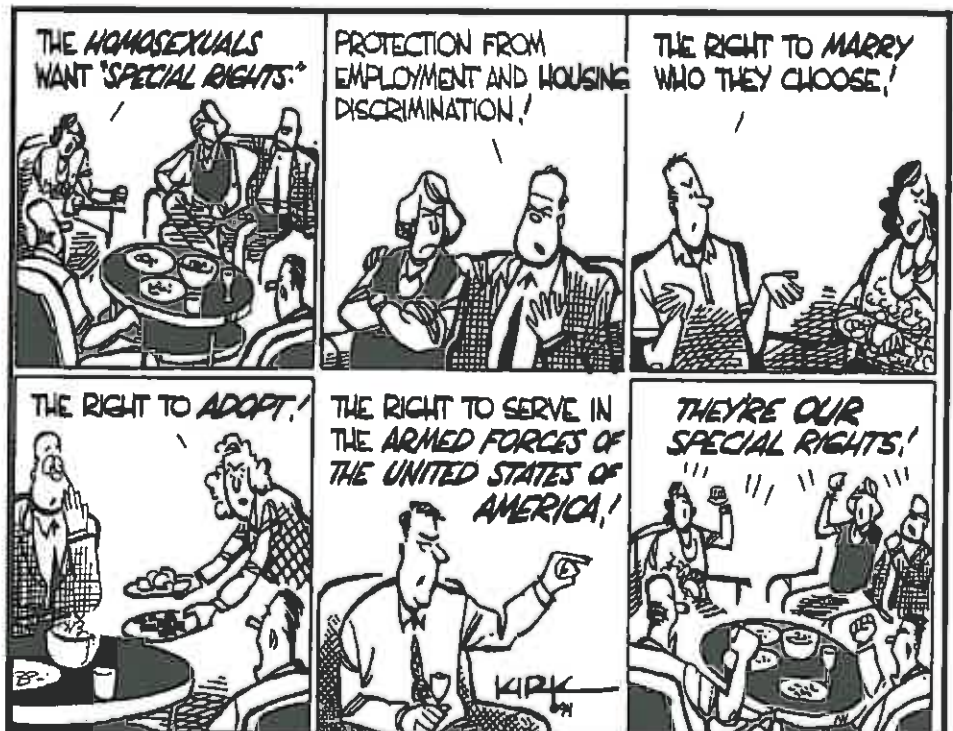
**A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Despite the prevailing notion that gay conservatism is a new phenomenon, the history of conservatism in the gay community dates back at least to 1953, when members of the Mattachine Society, one of the first gay liberation organizations, abandoned what historian Martin Duberman, in his book *Stonewall*, called a "startlingly radical" analysis of homosexuality and adopted an assimilationist tone. The Mattachine Society was founded in 1950 in Los Angeles by a small group of left-wing gay men who pioneered the notion that gays were a legitimate minority living within a hostile mainstream culture—indeed a radical analysis for its time. This notion fell out of favor from mid-1953 until 1969. During that time Mattachine was controlled by conservatives who were primarily interested in winning acceptance, not in challenging mainstream values. After the Stonewall rebellion of 1969, liberals again dominated the gay rights movement.<sup>3</sup>

In her 1995 book, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*, Urvashi Vaid notes that "the tensions between the radical founders and conservative members of the [Mattachine] society created a political split that still exists." Writes Vaid,

"Seen narrowly, the split between radicals and conservatives was about whether the communist background of the founders would harm the newly formed organization. Seen more broadly, the disagreement centered on the vision and goals of the progressive founders. Fights within Mattachine quickly broke out over its agenda and the direction of the movement. Red-baiting, an activity from the McCarthy era, scared moderates and conservatives away from the gay communist founders." Vaid notes that leftists in the lesbian and gay movement still evoke similar harsh reactions, noting that critics who attacked the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) for hiring Melinda Paras opposed her for her involvement with communist organizations.<sup>4</sup>

The conservatives who wrested control of Mattachine from the left in 1953 were, like gay conservatives today, interested primarily in legal change and in being accepted by the heterosexual majority. This meant conforming to heterosexist roles. Very often at Mattachine demonstrations a strict dress code was enforced, a dress code that contemporary conservatives seemingly long for. In the October 1994 issue of *Insight* magazine, LCR's Rich Tafel urged gay activists to get back to



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their roots, citing as part of those roots the rigid dress code of the first gay rights demonstrations, when "[m]en wore suits and women wore dresses." According to Tafel, most gays want to lead quiet professional lives in which sexual practices are a private matter. This doesn't mean they want to stay in the closet; rather, some gay conservatives say a silent confidence in being "out" represents the maturation of the gay movement. In this way, gay conservatives claim a higher level of gay consciousness than those activists who fight for equality by challenging the system, through dress or other actions.

The contemporary gay conservative movement was launched in 1978 when a handful of gay Republicans separated themselves from the mainstream gay and lesbian organizing against California's Briggs Initiative, a state ballot proposition sponsored by then-state Senator John Briggs. The initiative would have barred gay people from teaching in public schools and would have allowed schools to fire any employee for "advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging or promoting" homosexuality. Lou Sheldon, currently head of the Traditional Values Coalition which has vociferously worked against the gay community, was the state field director for the initiative in 1978. The gay Republicans also opposed the Briggs Initiative, but worked within the Republican Party and called themselves the Log Cabin Club in honor of Abraham Lincoln, the GOP's first successful presidential candidate and a strong supporter of individual rights. Based in San Francisco, the group was small, but it won a key conservative ally in California's former governor, Ronald Reagan.

The Briggs initiative was defeated and the Log Cabin Republicans went on to form chapters around the country. By 1990 nine chapters had formed, including the Chicago Area Republican Gay Group, Gay Republicans of Washington, and Republicans for Individual Freedom. In 1990 the nine clubs came together to form the Log Cabin Federation. And in 1993 the LCR national office opened in Washington, DC.

## CONTEMPORARY GAY CONSERVATIVES

Gay conservatives are not all alike. There is a similar amount of political disagreement and bickering within the gay conservative movement as within most political movements. Many gay conservatives are Republicans, some are Democrats, and others are registered independents. Some believe in abortion rights; others work within the pro-life movement. Most are white men, but small numbers of people of color and women are also active within gay conservative ranks. It should also be noted that many gay white men, for the price of remaining in the closet, have held positions of

"...some gay conservatives say a silent confidence in being 'out' represents the maturation of the gay movement."

power and influence within the conservative ruling elite. Gay conservatives include the arts critic and former *American Spectator* writer Bruce Bawer, who wrote the widely reviewed *A Place at the Table* and the forthcoming book *Beyond Queer, New Republic* editor and author of *Virtually Normal*, Andrew Sullivan; LCR executive director Rich Tafel; Congressman Steve Gunderson (R-WI); David Brock, author of *The Real Anita Hill*; the libertarian Cato Institute executive vice president David Boaz; W. Scott Thompson, who worked in both the Ford and Reagan administrations and details his experience as a gay neo-conservative in his memoir *The Price of Achievement: Coming Out in Reagan Days*; State Representative Chuck Carpenter (R-OR); Justin Raimondo, who has campaigned for Pat Buchanan since 1992 and is the author of *Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of*

*the Conservative Movement* (to which Pat Buchanan wrote the forward); Kevin Smith, Chief of Staff for Massachusetts Governor William Weld; Massachusetts Revenue Commissioner Mitchell Adams; and Michael Duffy, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), whose 1990 campaign for state representative from Boston's South End is said to have brought together many gay Republicans despite the fact that Duffy lost the election to the progressive candidate Byron Rushing, a long-time friend to Boston's gay community.

While the number of people of color in gay conservative ranks is small, African American gay conservatives include: Cornelius Baker, deputy executive director for policy at the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA); Abner Mason, vice chair of LCR; Carolyn Handy, a longtime Republican who was a member of Reagan's transition team after his first presidential election; and Toni Young, executive director of the National Women and HIV/AIDS Project in Washington DC, who voted for both Reagan and Bush in the 1980, 1984 and 1988 elections.<sup>5</sup>

The presence of lesbians in gay conservative ranks is minimal at best. It is unclear whether this is because most lesbians reject conservative ideas or because they object to the sexism that exists within gay conservative circles. All 19 board members of LCR are men. Staff members at LCR's Washington, DC headquarters are all (white) men, though last summer LCR hired Susan Jester as a development consultant to organize events in Texas, Georgia and Michigan. In fact, Tafel describes the LCR membership to be "generally white men in their 30s and 40s who live in cities."

More women are involved in the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians (PLAGAL), a gay anti-abortion group. Out of ten chapter contacts for PLAGAL, five are women. PLAGAL president Phillip Arcidi says women make up one third of PLAGAL's members.

Perhaps the most well-known gay

conservative is LCR executive director Rich Tafel. Tafel has been quoted or featured in almost every major US newspaper as well as on television programs including *Nightline*, *Larry King Live*, *Good Morning America*, and the *McNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*. *Newsweek* magazine named him one of the 30 most influential gay leaders in the country.

Tafel is an ordained Baptist minister and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School. Tafel centers his argument for gay rights on shared values with the American people. "There's a values crisis in America, no one can argue with that," says Tafel who in debating the anti-gay sector of his party, focuses on the fact that "we're working, paying taxes, fixing up neighborhoods." Tafel believes most gays want to be welcomed into the system and want to find common ground with their fellow Americans. He is a strong believer in capitalism, which he says is built on self-interest, and most people, he says, are self-interested. His argument is based in a classic free market view of the gay community, which leaves out poor gay people and more important, fails to see any limitations to gay liberation associated with capitalism.

Like anti-feminist conservative women, Tafel doesn't think people should view themselves as oppressed. "I think it's very demoralizing to constantly talk about how victimized you are. I think it's patronizing to think of Black people as victims. I find that racist, frankly. Because as soon as you look at the groups that you're picking out, it's always Blacks, Latinos, and women. I can't imagine a more unhappy coalition than people who sit around and talk about how oppressed they are."

The fact that gay conservatives have done valuable work on issues of importance to the gay and lesbian community should not go without recognition, yet poses a dilemma at the same time. For example, gay conservatives in Governor William Weld's administration were instrumental in coordinating the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for gay and lesbian youth, the first program of its kind in the country. And

one of the top priorities of LCR is the Ryan White Care Act, something they have in common with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), which defines itself as a progressive organization. LCR was the first gay organization to testify before the 104th Congress for funding for the Ryan White Care Act when it looked as if the Republican-controlled Congress might slash AIDS funding. LCR was also invited to work in coalition with a number of groups including the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a mainstream gay rights lobbying organization, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization for Women, the American Psychological Association and NGLTF on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

Gay conservatives are also scattered on the boards of many mainstream gay and lesbian organizations. Urvashi Vaid writes, "The boards of gay and lesbian non-profits are filled with people who hold this elite-centered view of political leadership. They tend to stress access to power, money, and media visibility over qualities like moral principle, accountability, and personal integrity."<sup>6</sup> For example, both the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, which gives money to openly gay candidates running for office, and HRC have given money to Republican candidates. HRC also gave \$5,000 to the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee in hopes of "encouraging moderate Republicans." But openly-gay Representative Barney Frank (D-Mass) notes that all but two or three of the Republicans who benefited from this donation voted consistently to abolish Medicaid as a federally guaranteed program. Vaid notes that "the gay and lesbian movement is led by middle- to upper-middle class people who act on their economic interests as frequently as they act on their sexual politics."

Part of the danger of gay conservatives is that they're not easily identifiable, particularly within the gay community which often denies the existence of gay conservatives or perceives them to be a fringe group. Because gay rights are important to virtually all gay people, gay conservatives often work

hand in hand with gay progressives on both the national and local levels without ever being identified as conservative, yet effectively setting an agenda limited to gay rights as a single isolated issue. Within the gay community there is a tendency to assume that most gays are liberal when in fact, gay conservatives are scattered throughout local communities as well as national organizations. Tafel believes there are large numbers of gay conservatives who have been hesitant about coming out as such because of the lack of support they anticipate getting from the gay community. But, says Tafel, with increasing numbers of gay conservatives coming out and organizing, more people are feeling comfortable about coming out as gay and conservative than ever before.<sup>7</sup>

## GROWING NUMBERS

Author and critic Bruce Bawer, like Tafel, believes that there are enormous numbers of gay conservatives. Writes Bawer, "Indeed it sometimes seems to me that there are a lot more gay conservatives than gay liberals."<sup>8</sup> LCR claims to be the country's largest gay and lesbian partisan organization. Since the LCR national office opened in 1993 the organization has grown from 9 chapters to 52 affiliated chapters in 28 states with more than 10,000 members in 1996. LCR has been more effective in building a grassroots movement that empowers its members at the local level than have many other mainstream national gay rights organizations. By the end of 1996 LCR plans to increase to 70 clubs in 35 states. In three years their budget has more than doubled: in 1993 they had a budget of \$150-200,000 and two staff members; in 1996 they have a budget of \$500,000 and four staff members. LCR recently moved to new office space in Washington, DC and expanded its Washington staff to include a Development Consultant, a Director of Public Affairs, an HIV/AIDS consultant, and an administrative assistant.<sup>9</sup>

In an effort to continue the growth process, LCR voted to merge with the Log Cabin Federation, the umbrella organization of the grass roots clubs. The

merger, which passed at Log Cabin's Annual National Convention held in Cincinnati, Ohio in August, 1995 combines the two organizations under one board of directors (all of whom are men) and will "unite and strengthen the gay conservative movement," according to *Log Cabin Talk*, the newsletter of LCR. Board members include Abner Mason (Boston, MA) as vice-chair, Gregory Curtis (New Orleans, LA) as director of club development, and Alex Wentzel (Laguna Beach, CA) as director of membership. The regional directors include Monty Cornell (Boston, MA), Mark Mead (Atlanta, GA), John Ammitzball (Paterson, NJ), Patrick Ball, (Houston, TX), Sam Collins (Cincinnati, OH) and state Rep. Chuck Carpenter (R-OR), an openly gay Republican who was elected as a regional director despite his endorsement of state Senate President Gordon Smith, who unsuccessfully ran for the Senate seat vacated by Bob Packwood. Smith had accepted the endorsement of the Oregon Citizens Alliance, which has repeatedly sponsored statewide and local anti-gay-rights initiatives. And despite pressure from the local LCR chapter to oust Carpenter from the LCR board for his support of Smith, Tafel and the national LCR board voted to keep Carpenter on the LCR national board of directors.

## PLAGAL

Though many gay men and lesbians are pro-choice, there is a small and growing group called the Pro Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians (PLAGAL). Started in 1990 by a small group of gay men, PLAGAL has 500 members and has, in the last year, doubled from five to ten active chapters located in: Boston, Massachusetts; Cleveland, Ohio; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Omaha, Nebraska; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Birmingham, Alabama; Portland, Oregon; Rochester, New York; San Jose, California; and the national headquarters in Washington, DC. Two more chapters are forming in San Francisco and Chicago.

Though PLAGAL is not as large as LCR and doesn't define itself as a conservative group, like LCR, it works within a larger conservative move-

ment—the anti-abortion movement—that is currently dominated by the political Right. Not surprisingly, according to several PLAGAL members, the group has received more support from the pro-life movement than from the progressive gay community. LCR is supportive of PLAGAL's efforts, even though LCR doesn't perceive abortion to be a gay issue.

For the past four years PLAGAL has

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had a contingent at the annual March for Life in Washington, DC. Despite the support they claim to get from the pro-life movement, PLAGAL was officially excluded from this year's march. Nelli Gray, the March for Life coordinator, refused to accept PLAGAL's \$50 registration fee and prohibited its members from marching under their banner. The group marched anyway evoking an anti-gay reaction from Gray who told a *Washington Blade* reporter: “That group's agenda is not compatible with ours. [Homosexual] actions have already been declared as not compatible with a good human society. I think they have a mixed message.” Like LCR and other gay conservatives, PLAGAL is trying to gain acceptance for its political position within a larger movement dominated by the homophobic Right.

An open letter from PLAGAL to the Pro-Life movement, that was distributed at the March for Life in January, 1996 states: “PLAGAL is particularly situated to extend the pro-life debate into areas from which mainstream pro-lifers have been traditionally excluded.

We have taken a lead in exposing the link between abortion and breast cancer and in championing the effective treatment of HIV-positive expectant mothers. We have uncovered and challenged the diversion of funds from various AIDS Walks to abortion providers. We have confronted and confounded the abortion industry by properly refocusing the debate on the taking of human life and not the fiction of a denied 'personal freedom.' There are few who care more about personal freedom than do gays and lesbians, and yet we also recognize better than most that if the unborn are not considered 'fully human,' other groups outside the mainstream of society can be likewise dehumanized and denied the right to life. PLAGAL affirms that to be pro-life is to be pro-freedom.”

Central to PLAGAL's argument about why gay people should work against legalized abortion is that by allying itself with the pro-choice movement, the gay community is contributing to the genocide of gay people. PLAGAL members believe that recent scientific studies suggesting that homosexuality may be genetic will result in women aborting fetuses for fear they might give birth to a gay child. According to PLAGAL: “The Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians has consistently reminded our brothers and sisters that it is only a matter of time before scientists find genetic markers for a predisposition to homosexuality. When that happens, couples uncomfortable with the prospect of raising a gay or lesbian child will be free to do away with 'flawed' children before they are born. Tragically, the gay community's compulsive support of abortion on demand will have enabled the machinery of our own genocide. Consistent with its pro-life sentiments and principles, the new Congress can provide the means to prevent our extermination.”<sup>10</sup>

Progressives support abortion not for the reasons of selecting the sex of the fetus or selection of the “perfect” child, but because of the right of women to determine their reproductive lives free from the dictates of church or state. And many progressive gay people see the inherent connection be-

tween women's reproductive choice and gay and lesbian sexual freedom.

### MEDIA VISIBILITY

The increasing numbers of gay conservatives and the novelty of their apparently odd political allegiance has attracted coverage by both mainstream and gay media. Several national and regional gay publications run regular columns by gay conservatives, including the national gay newsmagazine, *The Advocate*, Boston's gay weekly *Bay Windows*, and *Windy City Times* in Chicago. Bruce Bawer, a former writer for the right-wing publication, *The American Spectator*, now writes regularly for the notoriously conservative *Wall Street Journal*. He also has written occasionally for the *New York Times* and regularly writes a column in *The Advocate*.

Rich Tafel and LCR have been featured on just about every major television network as well as in mainstream print media. Tafel has also written an op-ed for the *New York Times*. Stories about PLAGAL have been featured in the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Phoenix*, the *Village Voice*, *Out* magazine, and the *Washington Blade*. Andrew Sullivan's book *Virtually Normal*, published about the same time as Urvashi Vaid's *Virtual Equality*, was reviewed far more widely in the mainstream press. It's also important to note that the *New York Times* assigned conservative Bruce Bawer to review Vaid's *Virtual Equality*, with predictable results.

### ELECTORAL POLITICS

In the past, conservative gay men and lesbians working in the electoral sphere were often closeted. A well-known example is Terry Dolan, who was closeted when he worked as director of the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), the organizational attack dog of the New Right in the 1980 elections. Another example is Robert Bauman, a Maryland Congressman who was charged with the criminal misdemeanor of solicitation for sexual purposes and lost his political office as a result.<sup>11</sup> Yet another example is Marvin Liebman who came out in 1990, and though he

doesn't identify as being conservative any longer, was responsible for the formation of several right-wing groups including Young Americans for Freedom and the American Conservative Union.

In 1996, largely because of the efforts of the gay rights movement, it is increasingly possible to win office as an openly gay person. In the case of Republicans, openly gay Republicans are not necessarily winning political office, perhaps because a Republican officeholder may provide an official sanction of the homosexual lifestyle. Nevertheless, gay Republicans are becoming increasingly active in support work for Republican political campaigns.

Many gay Republicans have tried to play an active role in the 1996 Republican presidential primaries. (Presidential candidate Bob Dole accepted, then returned, and later again accepted a \$1,000 campaign contribution from LCR, garnering a great deal of mainstream media in the process.) In 1994, LCR raised more than \$200,000 for Republican candidates and continues, as part of its mission, to build relationships with Republicans in the House and Senate. These political activities come at a time when most candidates seeking the GOP presidential nomination are making overtures to the Christian Right, which has been unequivocally opposed to gay rights.

Gay Republicans have been effective in helping to elect several Republicans to office. Among them: California Governor Pete Wilson, Massachusetts Governor William Weld, New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, as well as Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, both of whom were the first Republican mayors elected to office in their cities in a generation. Among those whom gay conservatives campaigned for and who were not elected to office are Mitt Romney and Michael Duffy, both in Massachusetts.

Republican political consultant Roger Stone notes that although most gay political activists are Democrats, gays could become a significant factor in Republican politics if the Party hews to a libertarian line on social issues. Stone adds that the Republican Party

could be a natural place for gay activists if they are willing to stick to the Republican Party's traditional role of "keeping government out of your pocket and out of your private life." And by the looks of it, gay conservatives may find a spot under the so-called big tent of the Republican Party, given their conservative views on immigration, welfare, defense, economics, and government.

In a direct mail fundraising appeal LCR states that they "adamantly oppose affirmative action and were the only gay group to enthusiastically endorse the Contract With America." The Contract was notable for its avoidance of controversial social issues such as gay rights and abortion. Unlike progressive gay organizations, which denounced the Contract With America for its cuts in welfare and Medicaid, LCR praised it. "In contrast to the 1992 Republican platform, the contract sharply focused on the most critical issues facing our country and offered solid Republican solutions, avoiding divisive issues like abortion and anti-gay rhetoric that needlessly drive wedges between the many parts of the majority coalition," wrote Rich Tafel in a *New York Times* op-ed.

What Tafel and other gay Republicans offer the GOP is a compromise: Say nothing pro or con and stick to economics. "That's a formula sure to win half of the gay vote away from the Democrats," says Tafel. Indeed exit polls after the 1994 election, which overturned the Democratic Congress, showed that 34 percent of voters who identified themselves as gay said they had voted Republican.<sup>12</sup> In 1992, only 17 percent of those who identified themselves as gay had voted Republican.<sup>13</sup>

This drastic increase suggests two things: that more gays are coming out within the Republican Party, and that with the increased visibility of gay Republicans, more gay conservatives feel comfortable admitting that they voted Republican. Either way, the statistics are dramatic, particularly when compared to voter statistics of other populations traditionally identified as liberal-leaning. For example, the Times Mirror Group notes that a greater percentage

of gay voters voted Republican than did Jewish voters.

## RACISM AND INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

Both racism and internalized homophobia have long plagued the gay community. As the gay liberation movement matures, both these themes have become more subtle and more complex. Internalized homophobia has become more subtle as many gay people come out of the closet, but are not ready to own the more explicit sexual aspects of gay culture. Racism has become less acceptable as the profile of gay people of color has risen within the movement, and the particular nature of their dual oppression (with the addition of sexism in the case of lesbians of color) is better understood by the dominant white gay community. Yet racism persists among many white gay men and lesbians and has deadly consequences when the movement does not respond with equal fury to the death of men of color as it does to the death of white men. The increase in the rate of HIV infection among African American men, and the epidemic of anti-gay violence, often against men of color, are examples.

Gay conservatives consistently demonstrate that they hold negative stereotypes about gay culture. These negative stereotypes seem to be based in a sense of superiority over and disdain for the most explicit aspects of gay culture. Gay conservatives cannot tolerate the practices of the gay sex culture—their relationship to being gay does not allow for the sexual practices of gay people to be elevated. Thus gay conservatives tend to reject that part of the gay community which they choose not to identify with, once again effectively mimicking the homophobic elements of the right wing. This distancing is apparent in the description of gay culture in their written work, in their personal biographies, and in interviews.<sup>14</sup>

Lifestyle diversity within the gay and lesbian community is particularly problematic for gay conservatives, especially in regard to drag queens and others who are either not interested in

assimilating into a hostile mainstream culture, or cannot assimilate because they are unable to pass for straight. In his book, *A Place at the Table*, Bruce Bawer writes about his dismay at a New York City Pride parade: "It seemed as if people who wore suits and ties on the 364 other days of the year had, on this particular morning, ransacked their closets for their tackiest, skimpiest, most revealing items of clothing. There were hundreds of bare chests, bare bottoms, mesh pants, nipple rings, leather shorts, and tight designer briefs without anything covering them."<sup>15</sup>

Bawer complains that such "extreme" behavior has "helped to spread among heterosexuals an appalling and profoundly distorted image of homosexuality." He argues that it is this behavior that has contributed to the difficulty in convincing heterosexuals that nothing about homosexuality is intrinsically contrary to their values. Tafel agrees. "There's certain things you should leave in the bedroom," he says.

Gay conservatives would argue that this is not a matter of self-loathing, since they do not see this aspect of the gay community as related to themselves. By isolating themselves from explicit gay culture, they remain gay activists, but representing and advocating for only a segment of the gay community.

Gay conservatives' arguments against diversity go beyond the gay sex culture to issues of multiculturalism. Bruce Bawer criticizes New York's Rainbow Curriculum controversy in 1992. "In point of fact there was much to dislike in the Rainbow Curriculum: it didn't just promote tolerance, it promoted a multicultural mindset. Instead of encouraging children to judge one another as individuals, it sought to reinforce their awareness of differences, to think of one another of belonging to this or that group."<sup>16</sup> Bawer's argument is strikingly similar to mainstream right-wing arguments that attack multiculturalism for undermining the traditional American values that derive from "our European roots." Instead of honoring the many differences that exist in a pluralistic society and that are part of our rich histories, the Right

longs for a "color blind" society. In the current distribution of political and economic power, the enshrinement of the "color blind" society preserves the privilege of white males. When combined with the widespread anti-immigrant position of many gay conservatives, the evidence of their racism accumulates.

Several gay conservatives, like Terry Dolan, Robert Bauman, and Marvin Liebman, have not only worked against the gay community while they were closeted, but also diligently worked to push back the gains of the civil rights movement.

## DIVISIONS

As the gay conservative movement grows, so do divisions within the gay movement. In some areas of the country, progressive gay organizations have been under direct attack by gay conservative organizations.

In San Antonio, Texas the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, a multi-issue, racially diverse umbrella organization which is the center of progressive, as well as gay and lesbian organizing for the area, has been directly attacked by the area's only gay publication, *The Marquise*. The attack centers on a number of issues including Esperanza's efforts to make arts institutions culturally diverse; its inclusion of issues of race, class, and gender within gay and lesbian politics; and the sexually explicit art exhibited at Esperanza-sponsored gay and lesbian art shows.<sup>17</sup>

Over the last two years, several gay white men have written articles and letters attacking the progressive politics of Esperanza, specifically attacking an art piece by Chicana lesbian artist Ana Fernandez which was exhibited in an Esperanza-sponsored art show. Fernandez's work describes several of her dreams, one of which discusses her finger-fucking US Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX). Glenn Stehle, editor of *The Marquise*, sent out the passage describing this dream and asked people to condemn the "obscene" work promoted by Esperanza. Stehle wrote to the Lt. Governor of Texas, the mayor, and the City Council asking them to



defund Esperanza. He also sent letters to several neighborhood associations, mainstream arts organizations, and other non-profit organizations questioning Esperanza's legitimacy as an arts organization, and as a lesbian/gay organization.

After San Antonio Councilman Roger Perez appointed a staff person from Esperanza to the City's Cultural Arts Board, Stehle wrote the following to Councilman Perez and then reprinted the letter in a March 1995 issue of *The Marquis*: "You choose the most blasphemous, obscene, racist and anti-American group in town to award city monies and thus legitimize [Esperanza] as exemplary of the gay and lesbian population. I am here to tell you, Mr. Perez, that not all gays and lesbians are Marxists, nor do we all subscribe to the theories of French poststructuralism... We don't go around picking fights with the Catholic church nor any other religious or secular group in town with our loudmouthed in-your-face histrionics. In the political spectrum, [the lesbian and gay community] voted more Republican than the Jewish, Black and Hispanic populations in the last election...."

Stehle's tactics worked. Esperanza was one of two arts organizations in the city that was defunded. They lost 25 percent of their total arts fund—dollars that were earmarked for their Youth Media Project and their Women of Color Arts Cooperative.

In addition to the letter writing campaign, Esperanza's offices were repeatedly vandalized, particularly after gay-related events. This raised questions about whether these were anti-gay attacks or sexist and racist attacks by gays. Sanchez notes that Esperanza got hate calls after an invitation to a lesbian/gay art show was sent to an exclusively gay list. "When continuous lies are spread within the community, a climate of paranoia and distrust is created—paranoia among friends and distrust of Esperanza and its leadership by the larger community," notes Sanchez.<sup>18</sup> Harassment of the organization varied from break-ins to a slashed bra wiped with feces left on a tree branch near where Esperanza's staff park their cars, as well as feces spread on the windows and by the front entrance of

the Esperanza office.

When gay conservatives attack the more radical sectors of the gay rights movement, they use arguments similar to those used by the Right to attack all gay people. In so doing, they set themselves off from the larger gay community and align themselves with the values of the Right. The arguments used against Esperanza are the same "morality" arguments used to attack Robert Mapplethorpe and the NEA four: Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, Karen Finley and

"The impact on the  
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promoting intolerance."

John Fleck. These four artists were granted funding from the NEA which then revoked the grants because it didn't approve of the artists' performances, all of which had gay content. Gay conservatives, in their attacks on queer art and culture, are using the same morality-based argument, but adding their protest that certain art exhibits or certain undesirable behavior make gays and lesbians "look bad."

### THE IMPACT OF GAY CONSERVATIVES

The appearance of gay conservatives in growing numbers within the gay liberation movement is not an anomaly. Social change movements, whose driving purpose and goal is to empower a sector of society that has been excluded, silenced, or disdained by the larger society, often begin with a unity born of shared oppression and a shared vision. Success in achieving that vision opens the door to compromise and division within the movement itself. A taste of acceptance

and increased access to power brings out the stratifications within the movement that exist within the larger society. Those most able to "take" the power not previously available to them are less and less likely to see themselves in solidarity with those who remain marginal and critical of the larger society. This phenomenon has been called "selling out" and is well known to social change movements.

Further, as the Right becomes more powerful, it seems its rhetoric has come to influence the entire society, even communities that have been the target of right-wing attacks. Growing numbers of gay people see themselves as part of the mainstream, and are therefore open to messages that appeal to the mainstream. They are able to be convinced, as others within the mainstream have been, that people of color, or immigrants, or welfare recipients, or government bureaucrats, or butch lesbians, or drag queens are the problem. By effectively scapegoating these people, gay conservatives are simply melding in with the general political drift of the larger society. The impact on the gay and lesbian movement is to move it to the right, into a tighter collaboration with the forces that pursue power by creating scapegoats and promoting intolerance. Because gay conservatives do not identify with those who are the object of that intolerance, they feel no political responsibility for them.

There is an important debate emerging in the gay liberation movement about the roots of the movement and its grounding political ideology and vision. For gay conservatives, the roots of the movement lie in the vision of conservative gay activists who struggled for acceptance and admission to the larger society. For progressive gay and lesbian activists, the struggle has been for equal rights for gay and lesbian people and for *all* excluded people. This vision leads naturally to solidarity with other movements—the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the disability rights movement, and the

welfare rights movement, for example—and a suspicion of the political establishment that historically has been hostile to the community's very existence.

Gay conservatives are effectively shaping the direction of the gay movement, particularly in the current conservative political climate. In their failure to understand that sex, race, and class are gay issues, gay conservatives are helping to shape a movement based in a single issue agenda: gay rights and only gay rights. The gay community has long organized itself around sexual identity. This form of identity-based politics has brought gay people together as a marginalized community, which of course has its benefits in terms of finding a sense of community and support. Yet defining and organizing exclusively around the interests of gay identities hinders the development of a strong progressive political movement that works to transform the existing structures perpetuating racism, sexism, homophobia and economic exploitation—all of which are directly related to the oppression of gay people. Gay conservatives do not see the limits and, indeed, the dangers of identity-based politics centered only around gay rights. A broader progressive vision is based in social and economic justice, diversity, and multiculturalism in the context of gay liberation and human rights.

The struggle within the gay and lesbian movement is, in many ways, a struggle between the vision of conditional acceptance and that of actual liberation. It is little wonder that the vision of conditional acceptance for gay and lesbian people is flourishing in the current political climate of punitive intolerance.

*Surina Khan is an Associate Analyst at Political Research Associates.*

*Call or write for information on footnotes and bibliography for this article.*

## Cheer up, it's party time!

*Political Research Associates is 15 years old this year!*

*At a time when there is precious little to celebrate, we plan to mark our anniversary with events in Boston and New York (this Spring) and Chicago and San Francisco (in the Fall). If you live in one of these cities, and you're a Public Eye subscriber or PRA donor, look for your official invitation in the mail. Come join us for the festivities— and the camaraderie of friends and political kin. We promise good food, great company, and mercifully short speeches.*

*So far, we have scheduled the following:*

*New York: Sunday, April 28— teach-in on the theme "Uniting for Democracy, Challenging the Right" Room 703, Main Building, New York University, 100 Washington Square East from 2.00 to 4.30 p.m. Speakers include: Loretta Ross, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights Education; Scot Nakagawa, Field Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Mallika Dutt, Associate Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership; and Chip Berlet, Senior Analyst, Political Research Associates. The moderator will be Leslie Cagan. A reception will follow at the offices of the Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, 116 E. 16th Street, New York from 5.00 to 7.00 p.m.*

*Both events are co-sponsored by PRA and Astraea.*

*Boston: Tuesday, May 14—reception at the African Meeting House, 46 Joy Street, Beacon Hill, 6.00 to 8.30 p.m.*

*As we mark this 15 year milestone, PRA's services are in greater demand than at any time in our history. The irony is inescapable: we wish we were not so needed. But the fact is that PRA is playing an important role in the urgent task of defending democracy and diversity. Because of what we know about the right, we also have much to contribute to the resuscitation of an effective movement for equality and justice. Both are long-term projects. Both require considerable time and money. Please join us for the long haul by becoming a PRA Sustainer. Thank you.*

*Yes! You can count on me for the consistent support you need for your work.*

*Please sign me up as a PRA Sustainer. Here is my pledge of:*

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Street \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Zip or Postal Code/Country \_\_\_\_\_

**Corrections:** In the last issue of *The Public Eye* (Fall/Winter 1995), page 5, column 3: "Rev. Tim LaHaye's Focus on the Family," should have read "Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family." On page 17 Dennis King was incorrectly identified as the author of *Habits of Mind: Struggling Over Values in America's Classrooms*. The author is Melinda Fine.

# BOOKS RECEIVED

## A Selected, Annotated List

*Stauber, John and Sheldon Rampton*  
**Toxic Sludge is Good for You!  
 Lies, Damn Lies and the Public  
 Relations Industry**

Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995, 236 pages, with notes, suggested readings and Index.

Fast-paced and wryly written, this scrupulously researched and documented expose of the public relations industry is a must read. The chapters range from the history and techniques of the industry to sobering examples of nefarious campaigns including those for dangerous products, murderous foreign policy, anti-democratic ideology, as well as ruthless corporations. It demystifies how news is spun, public opinion is created, and the democratic process is undermined through intentional campaigns of bribes, spies, and lies.

*William R. Stevenson, Editor*  
**Christian Political Activism at the  
 Crossroads**

Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1994, 200 pages, including endnotes and references.

This collection of essays examines the history and different strains of Christian political activism. Contributors—predominantly career activists and Christian scholars—range from liberal to conservative. The purported aim is to illuminate the debate between the religious right, with its morality emphasis, and the more issue-oriented social justice activists within the Christian community. Certainly there is substantial dissection of the philosophical and theological issues that separate segments of the church community. And the results of opinion surveys conducted among rank-and-file members of religious activist groups, probing their interests and motivations, make for interesting reading. However, the book is limited by the exclusion of any progressive Christian voice and the editor's self-conscious evenhandedness. Those looking for a stimulating critique of how the religious right's

theocratic ambitions square with traditions of democratic and religious freedom will be disappointed.

*Hill, Jim and Rand Cheadle*  
**The Bible Tells Me So: Uses And  
 Abuses Of Holy Scripture**

New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1996, 155 pages, with notes, further readings and photo/illustration sources.

In this well-conceived and timely book, Jim Hill and Rand Cheadle present a fascinating examination of how the Bible has been used, and continues to be used, to justify, condemn, persecute, condone and otherwise influence public opinion and political policies based upon scriptural interpretations. Each chapter is actually a proposed statement reflecting how the bible has been used or abused in relation to a significant social, cultural, political or religious issue. The range of issues covered is diverse and presented in a fair and non-judgemental way, making this book a useful reference work. In addition, *The Bible Tells Me So* reads as a captivating social and cultural history.

*Garber, Marjorie and Rebecca L.  
 Walkowitz, Editors*  
**Secret Agents: The Rosenberg  
 Case, McCarthyism and Fifties  
 America**

New York: Routledge, 1995, 309 pages, with notes and Index.

Although encumbered by the oppressive postmodern lingo of cultural criticism, this collection of essays contains genuinely interesting ideas, necessary reminders, and intelligent examinations. The first of three sections, "Secrets," includes a hilarious deconstruction of Jell-O by Marjorie Garber as well a timely discussion of censorship regarding uranium mine epidemiology by Robert Proctor. Part two, "Agents," deals mainly with the identities of the Rosenbergs and their persecutors with respect to Jews, intellectuals, leftists, queers, and notions of

motherhood. Part three, "Testimonies," considers the implications of what, as well as who, were and remain on trial. Despite its turgid prose, *Secret Agents* is well worth reading to understand the cultural contexts of the Rosenberg case, the period, and its legacy.

*Swearingen, M. Wesley*  
**FBI Secrets: An Agent's Expose**

Boston, MA: South End Press, 1995, 192 pages, appendices, Index, foreword by Ward Churchill, includes footnotes.

A compelling and brooding personal testimony by one experienced agent involved in illegal FBI break-ins and other abuses of government power who came to realize his role in subverting democracy—and stood up to oppose it.



Contrary to the explanations of media misleaders, the Dunblane horror is not the result of guns, it is the result of rampant homosexuality and sex perversion, condoned and promoted by parasites who wish to use your tax money to convert the world to their own loathsome condition. What we need is pervert control, not gun control.

—From an Editorial in the *Liberty Lobby's Spotlight*, (April 1, 1996) about the Scotland school massacre.

### LIMERICK

You think if you're timid as mice,  
 You'll be treated as normal and nice.  
 But when push comes to shove,  
 Iron fist's velvet glove  
 Will teach you appeasement's real price.

# Virtual Liberation?

Urvashi Vaid

## Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation

New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1995, 401 pages plus notes and index

In her provocative and informative new book, *Virtual Equality: the Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*, veteran gay and lesbian liberation activist Urvashi Vaid explores the implications of what she sees as the mixed blessing of the mainstreaming of gays and lesbians in the American political system.

Vaid's is a detailed and fairly complicated argument. Tracking political and social developments in the gay liberation movement from pre-World War II, and most especially after the 1969 Stonewall riot, Vaid explores why it is that, despite making significant gains in political access, gays and lesbians remain persecuted, second-class citizens.

"Virtual equality" is a state of conditional equality derived more from the appearance of acceptance by straight America than from actual civil equality. "The irony of gay and lesbian mainstreaming is that more than fifty years of active effort to challenge homophobia and heterosexism have yielded us not freedom but 'virtual equality,' which simulates genuine civic equality but cannot transcend the simulation. In this state, gay and lesbian people possess some trappings of full equality but are denied all of its benefits." [p.4]

Gays and lesbians, Vaid argues, are simultaneously insiders and outsiders in American politics and social life. Gaining access and visibility in government and public affairs, participating in community cultural life—in short, mainstreaming—has "not resulted in the marginalization of the prejudice" gays and lesbians face. These prejudices are rooted in religious and moral principles which have resurged in every decade since the 1940s in a variety of guises—

"from sin to criminality to sickness to psychopathology to sexual immorality and back to sin again." [p.5]

Homophobia, Vaid accurately asserts, is embedded in all the major institutions of American society—the churches, the schools, the government, and the US military where, as we discovered in 1995, one can openly be a Nazi but cannot be openly gay or lesbian.

Vaid insists that continued focus on mainstreaming will never result in genuine liberation for gays and lesbians. Particularly provocative to conservative gays and lesbians is her claim that such liberation demands that gays and lesbians move beyond single focus identity politics and adopt as their issues women's rights, racial equality and class justice. Not only are the gay and lesbian movement's natural allies to be found in these arenas, she argues, but the moral and ethical case for gay liberation is based in the same morality as the case for ending racial, gender and class oppressions.

It is rare to find someone with Vaid's leadership skills—she served as the Public Information Director and the Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)—who is as thoughtful, analytical, and especially as self-critical as she is in this book.

Fellow activists in the gay and lesbian rights movement can no doubt pick specific fights with Vaid's historical interpretations of the strengths and weaknesses of the various strategies different sectors of the movement have employed. But no one can question the courage she displays in taking on heavyweights, be it individuals like David Geffen and David Mixner or organizations like ACT UP. Vaid is on a mission and she proves willing to risk her own personal marginalization in the movement by firing missiles at anyone, herself included, she believes has damaged prospects for genuine gay liberation.

I worry that not enough straights will read and discuss this book. In part because via continual references to "our

people" and "we," Vaid makes it plain it is gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people she is most interested in reaching. But the larger societal marginalization she describes is especially likely to mean too few straights will read this important book. It will be a major loss to all of us engaged in liberatory politics if that happens.

The very first encounter of the book is wonderfully political—the book jacket. Not only is the design perfect for its title, but more importantly the back cover includes a clip-out coupon to be used to provide financial support for six gay and AIDS organizations. It's a terrific and very political move.

The basic background included in the book—the history, the ups and downs of the gay liberation movement, the key decisions made, and so on, should serve as a primer for all activist politics. Pages 164 - 166 alone are worth the price of the book. Stiff and somewhat formal in much of her writing, here Vaid's writing soars as she describes the gay and lesbian and AIDS activists' seduction by the "young, hip White House staff" in the new Clinton Administration. It is a scene I know was replicated at various points in the histories of the Black civil rights and women's movements as well.

Another outstanding chapter is the one on the meaning of the AIDS epidemic for the overall struggle. Vaid does a brilliant job analyzing what organizing to respond to the AIDS crisis contributed to, and yet sadly also took away from, the overall struggle for gay liberation.

But the more important contribution to all activist politics, it seems to me, is Vaid's argument about gay and lesbian liberation's relationship to human liberation. Long ago I concluded that gay and lesbian liberation is indeed the last frontier in human liberation. There will be no people of color or women's liberation until there is gay liberation and vice versa.

I totally agree with Vaid's contention that "admitting its [sex's] true power

over our lives threatens the foundations of denial on which we have built what we call social order" and that the deeper threat gays and lesbians present to heterosexual culture "lies in the disruption that our sexuality and gender nonconformity make in a society invested in rigid gender roles and the myth that the heterosexual nuclear family should be the sole form of relationship." [p.191]

Which brings me to my central quarrel with Vaid's treatise. At the same time she calls for a rejection of mainstreaming as a strategy and objective, Vaid sometimes seems to embrace what appear to me to be reformist, not genuinely liberatory objectives. In a chapter otherwise welcome for its focus on solutions and concrete proposals, Vaid includes among desirable gay and lesbian objectives the right to be judged solely on merit, the right to family as defined in the legalization of gay marriage, and others.

But earlier in the book, Vaid argues that gay and lesbian sexuality and gender nonconformity disrupt the heterosexual nuclear family myth, and in the process represent the potential for full human liberation. It seems to me that there is a contradiction between that argument and her call in this chapter for gays and lesbians to be allowed to par-

ticipate in the continuation of the family and marriage as basic social institutions.

Similarly, in her discussion of the 1994 gays in the military struggle, she argues that one reason this is a legitimate liberation goal is because it is primarily working class and poor youths—gay and straight—who have to rely on the military for job and education opportunities.

When Vaid frames the fight solely in terms of the right to be in the military as openly gay or lesbian and to be free of harassment and dismissal, the argument here is to broaden an existing institution, not to overturn it. A discussion of the economic system that leaves the military as one of the last remaining "outs" for low-income youth, as well as a critique of the military itself as a central weapon of oppression of poor people all over the world, would have strengthened her analysis.

Vaid leaves open for debate whether what is needed is a broader vision or an entirely new one. Though she accurately criticizes the movement for compromising the vision of gay and lesbian liberation, in the end *Virtual Equality* could be read as promoting a vision of a society opened up enough to embrace gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals. In her words: "There is

nothing terribly special about this agenda; it embraces the aspirations of virtually every American." [p. 376]

Here her own words are misleading. Her analysis promotes a progressive approach to gay and lesbian organizing, one that prioritizes solidarity with other liberation movements. In a period of individualization and fragmentation within progressive politics, this message is crucial.

In addition to serving as a comprehensive and important analysis of the gay and lesbian movement, *Virtual Equality* raises important questions about the debate currently raging within the left about what to do next. Urvashi Vaid is a sister in the struggle to define a new and better vision of a progressive democratic politics. Her book should be read by all those—gay and straight—who are engaged in that struggle.

— Deborah Toler

*Deborah Toler is a researcher and writer on Africa and African diaspora political and cultural issues. Currently she is Senior Research Analyst at the Institute of Food and Development Policy (Food First) in Oakland, California. Toler is also a Research Associate at PRA.*

New from Political Research Associates and South End Press

## Eyes Right!

Challenging the Right Wing Backlash

Edited by Chip Berlet

This anthology brings together some of the most insightful and original thinking about fighting the right wing today. Contributors are activists, journalists, and intellectuals, including Jean Hardisty of Political Research Associates, journalist Liz Galst, Scot Nakagawa of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, theorist Matthew N. Lyons, Loretta Ross of the Center for Human Rights Education, author Fred Clarkson, Suzanne Pharr of the Women's Project, and many more. They call for all persons who want to defend democracy and diversity to forge integrated and broad-based coalitions for mutual self-defense on the grassroots and state level. With chapters covering attacks on immigrants, lesbians and gay men, people of color, environmentalists, artists, and educators, *Eyes Right!* shows how these disparate groups are linked by the need to resist the over-arching anti-democratic objectives of the right-wing offensive.



Visit *Eyes Right!* on the World Wide Web at <http://www.publiceye.org/prs>. To order, call 1-800-533-8478 or write South End Press, Orders Department, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02115.

**PROMISE REAPERS**

Promise Keepers, the rapidly growing Christian Men's movement, has a spin-off group for Christian women—"especially wives of Promise Keepers." The group, Promise Reapers, Inc. is a non-profit corporation which publishes a newsletter appropriately titled, *Adam's Rib*. Started in 1990 by University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney, Promise Keepers says men should "reclaim" their authority from their wives. Promise Keepers continues to draw hundreds of thousands of men to rallies held in football stadiums across the country. The only women present are custodians and concession stand workers.

**FAIR ON TV**

Dan Stein, executive director of the right-wing anti-immigrant group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), has joined the cadre of right-wing media pundits who continuously demonize immigrants. Stein will host *BorderLine*, a national television show co-produced by NET Political NewsTalkNetwork and FAIR. A statement released by FAIR notes that "*BorderLine* raises questions Americans want to hear about most: How is immigration changing America? What kind of

America do we want for our children? Can too many people actually destroy our environment? Can a large influx change the language and culture? Displace American workers? Affect the national economy?" A live, one-hour call-in program, *BorderLine* began airing January 15, 1996 on Monday nights from 9 to 10 p.m. EST.



**TRUE EQUALITY?**

An advertisement for the "Male/White Union" in the Liberty Lobby's *Spotlight* claims to support "true equality" by attacking affirmative action. The advertisement reads: "Our government, by directive, has ordered the practice of discrimination against a selected group of its citizens. This group is of course, white males. Unfortunately, those who depend on the white male for support, have suffered as well. Preferences based on race or gender, have been in effect for over three decades now. These policies of privilege and double standards have also created decades of resentment and division..."

**JOHN SALVI'S POLITICAL TARGET**

Statements by anti-abortion activist John C. Salvi III, found guilty on all counts in the Brookline, Massachusetts clinic

shootings that left two women dead and several persons injured, contain references to obscure but surprisingly widespread conspiracy theories long circulated by a specific sector of right-wing anti-abortion organizations active in the Boston area and nationwide.

Before his arrest Salvi is reported to have: met with a Catholic priest and demanded to distribute lurid photographs of aborted fetuses, charging that the Catholic Church is not doing enough to stop abortions; confronted his parish on Christmas Eve for failing to live up to his interpretation of the Catholic faith and its obligations; quoted the Biblical book of Revelations; and told his parents of wanting to confront Satan. Shortly after his arrest, he released a handwritten note mentioning conspiracies of freemasons, manipulation of paper currency, and conspiracies against Catholics. None of these ideas is unique.

Magazines found in Salvi's residence include *The New American* and *The Fatima Crusader*, both published by right-wing groups promoting conspiracist theories and vociferously opposing abortion and homosexuality. The photographs of fetuses passed out by Salvi come from Human Life International, a right-wing Catholic anti-abortion group that promotes conspiracist theories about freemasons. No one can claim to know the specific source of Salvi's ideas, but at some point Salvi clearly intersected with groups opposing abortion that promote conspiracy theories echoed in his statements.

For many people it is difficult to see the political side of the Salvi case because there is not widespread knowledge about the beliefs of right-wing conspiracist subcultures, and there is an attitude of denial that groups promoting conspiratorial worldviews have growing influence in our political system. Yet no matter what his mental state, Salvi's targets—clinic workers—were pointed out as evil and deserving of death by right-wing anti-abortion groups with which he had somehow come in contact.

Call or write PRA for a full (40 page) report on the Politics of Salvi's Conspiracy Views.



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**RESOURCES**

*continued from page 16*

**ABBREVIATED LIST OF VIDEOS CHALLENGING RIGHT WING PROPAGANDA**

**The Question Of Equality: Testing The Limits**

Public Television series that documents gains and losses in the struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. Four parts, 56 minutes each part. To order call (800) 358-3000.

**Straight From the Heart**

Parents talking about coming to terms with having a lesbian or gay child. Produced by Dr. Dee Mosbacher and Frances Reid. 24 minutes. To order call (800) 343-5540.

**All God's Children**

Deals with the effects of homophobia on African Americans, particularly in relation to their churches, and explores the lives and issues of African American gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Produced by Dr. Dee Mosbacher, Frances Reid, and Dr. Sylvia Rhue/Women Vi-

sion. Approx. 27 minutes. To order call (800) 343-5540.

**In Our Own Words: Dispelling the Stereotypes**

Refutes stereotypes of the Right in the words of lesbian and gay individuals. Produced by the Dallas Gay and Lesbian Alliance. 8 minutes. To order call (214) 528-4233.

**Gay Lives, Culture Wars**

A look at gay and lesbian youth and their relationships with their families, set against the harsh propaganda being delivered by the religious right. Produced by Democracy Media. 27 minutes. To order call (503) 452-6500.

**Sacred Lies, Civil Truths**

Reveals the real agenda of Buchanan, Robertson, and all the rest—to take over the country and impose "Biblical rule." Covers the Oregon and Colorado anti-gay ballot initiatives. Directed by Catherine Saalfeld and Cyrille Phipps. 60 minutes. To order call (718) 857-5685.

**It's Elementary**

A documentary for educators and parents about including gay issues in the classroom. Produced by Debra Chasnof and Helen Cohen, Women's Educational Media & JPD Communications, available in broadcast length version as well as a shorter 30-minute video for use as a teacher-training resource. To order call (415) 641-4616.

**Ballot Measure 9**

Examines controversial anti-gay ballot fight in Oregon in 1992; will be airing on cable, and is soon to be released on home video. Produced and directed by Heather MacDonald. 72 min. To order call (212) 274-1989.

**Setting the Record Straight**

Features lesbian, gay, and non-gay teachers and youth addressing how homophobia damages schools. Produced by The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network. 11 minutes. To order call (212) 727-0135.

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## THE PUBLIC EYE Resources

### **Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation**

116 East 16th Street  
New York, NY 10003  
(212) 529-8021

Founded in 1977 by a multi-racial and multi-cultural group of feminist activists to empower women and girls through financial and organizational support, Astraea makes grants and awards to community organizations, film/video projects, and emerging lesbian writers; provides technical assistance to community organizations; and supports the development of lesbian leadership and activism.

### **International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission**

1360 Mission Street, Suite 200  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 255-8680

A humanitarian organization that monitors, documents, and mobilizes urgent responses to human rights violations against lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and people with HIV and AIDS worldwide.

### **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)**

2320 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 332-6483

A progressive national gay and lesbian organization. Organizes at the regional and national levels and publishes *Fight the Right Action Kit* as well as position papers including *United We Stand: Affirmative Action*; *Attacking Us All: Welfare Reform*; and *The Costs of Scapegoating: Anti-Immigrant Backlash*.

### **National Center for Lesbian Rights**

870 Market Street, Suite 570  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 392-6257

A lesbian, feminist, multicultural, legal resource center that works to change discriminatory laws and create new laws benefiting lesbians in the areas of civil rights, employment, housing, immigration, partner benefits, child custody, donor insemination, adoption, foster parenting, lesbian health, and youth rights.

### **Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force, Inc. (LGRITF)**

P.O. Box 7741  
New York, NY 10116-7741  
(212) 802-7264

A volunteer organization that challenges the widespread discriminatory impact of immigration law on gays and lesbians through a national program of education, outreach, and advocacy.

### **Esperanza Peace & Justice Center**

922 San Pedro  
San Antonio, TX 78212  
(210) 228-0201

A multicultural umbrella organization that includes issues of race, class, and gender within queer politics and culture.

### **Gay Community News (GCN)**

29 Stanhope Street  
Boston, MA 02116  
(617) 262-6969

GCN is a politically progressive national newspaper that provides analysis, commentary, and cultural reflections on queer life.

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