

Sept 1969

NEWSLETTER

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS . N.Y. CHAPTER . GRAND CENTRAL P.O. BOX 3629

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THE BIRTH OF GAY POWER

On July 2, 1969, a new chapter was written in the history of the homophile movement. Outraged at political-ly-inspired raids on the Stonewall Inn and other gay bars, 400 male and female homosexuals rioted in the streets of Greenwich Village.

A homosexual riot? The police were astounded, the gay community was astounded. Homosexuals have traditionally been passive in the face of persecution, have traditionally declined to fight their tormentors. Yet bottles and parking meters were hurled, and four policemen were sent to the hospital. Rioting continued on the following night, and on Wednesday night.

And the homophile groups responded. A Gay Power Vigil was called, co-sponsored by the New York Chapter of DOB and the Mattachine Society. On Sunday, July 27, over 500 homosexuals gathered around the fountain in Washington Square Park to hear speeches by Martin O'Brien of Mattachine and Martha Shelley of DOB. They spoke about the potential economic and voting strength of the gay community, about our need for self-respect and the respect of society. And when the speeches were ended, 1,000 people marched down the street to the Stonewall and sang "We Shall Overcome" in Sheridan Square Park.

On Sunday, August 10, 50 homosexuals from Mattachine and DOB, as well as

members of other groups, gathered in a small park in Kew Gardens - the site of another instance of harrassment, the park where vigilantes had chased homosexuals with flashlights and had cut down trees in order to deny them a place to meet. Speeches were made to the homosexuals and to the local residents who had gathered around, and a play was put on, the first play written and performed by homosexuals to satirize the heterosexual community. (We need more plays like this -- more art which describes the realities of homosexual life and the realities of heterosexual prejudice, as we see it. We have had enough of their distortions.)

As a result of the vigil in Queens, Miss Shelley was invited to participate in a discussion of Gay Power on WMCA's "Power Line", along with Mr. O'Brien and Jerry Hoose of the newly formed Gay Liberation Front on Saturday Night, August 16. They answered questions phoned in by the audience.

The theme of these speeches and discussions, indeed of Gay Power itself, is simply that homosexuals are no longer going to wait for a handout from society. We are going to walk in the sunshine at these vigils -- without asking for permission. The theme is self-respect, which we must assume ourselves, since it cannot be granted to us; and our rights as citizens, which we must demand. We are Gay Power.

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Gay Power cont'd...

It was interesting to note that the Village Voice, a so-called liberal paper, covered the Stonewall riots in a style that was patronizing and contemptuous. After receiving a flood of angry mail, they covered the first vigil respectfully, dropping such terms as "faggot" and "dyke." The hatred of reactionaries is bad enough--the pity and contempt of liberals has been even more damaging to us. But we have begun to put the liberal community on notice that we will no longer tolerate such attitudes: we are not pitiful, not the "poor sick creatures" of psychoanalytic myth--but a force to be reckoned with. We are a power in the world--Gay Power.

NEW COURSES AT NYU

"Che Guevara: Revolutionary" and "The Homosexual in Society" are two of several new courses for adults enrolling in New York University School of Continuing Education in the fall semester. The School is for adults who wish to continue their education in both liberal arts and professional areas.

NEW EDITOR

The NEWSLETTER will have a new Editor-in-Chief starting this September. She is Allison who will be assuming the editorship after Yashima Dee, our present editor. Dee, who had been Editor-in-Chief since the beginning of this year is resigning because her work and school schedule does not permit her time to continue with the NEWSLETTER. Now that Allison is Editor the NEWSLETTER staff and all DOB'ers wish to extend congratulations. All look forward to see her good work.

REPRINT FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES,  
 OF WEDNESDAY AUGUST 20, 1969

HOMOSEXUAL SEEKS TO RETAIN SECURITY CLEARANCE

Benning Wentworth, an admitted homosexual, yesterday fought another round in his three-year effort to prevent the Defense Department from revoking his security clearance.

Mr. Wentworth, works for an unidentified private concern that does business with the Government. His counsel, Dr. Franklin Kameny, president and founder of the Mattachine Society of Washington and Miss Barbara Gittings, a member, argue that Mr. Wentworth's public acknowledgement of his homosexuality frees him from attempts at bribery and coercion that could make him a security risk. Neither counsel is a lawyer. Both say they are homosexuals.

"We consider the very existence of this case to be part of the Government's improper, unethical, and immoral effort to enter into the field of private morality, and to force conformity to a particular sexual code," says Miss Gittings.

In the hearing, Defense Department examiners questioned Mr. Wentworth about the intimate details of his sexual life," Dr. Kameny said.

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In 1966, Mr. Wentworth was accused of having had relations with an 18-year-old who had later joined the Air Force.

The youth told a chaplain and a psychiatrist that he was a practicing homosexual. Subsequently, Air Force investigators seized a notebook belonging to him and found Mr. Wentworth's name in it.

The youth later received a general discharge from the Air Force. Mr. Wentworth denied ever having had relations with him.

At a hearing, Mr. Wentworth, who had held a security clearance for material classified "secret" for seven years, was given a statement detailing the charges. After the hearing the Defense Department ruled against him and Dr. Kameny and Miss Gittings appealed the decision.

An appeal board ordered that another hearing be held "to afford department counsel opportunity to examine applicant, and to submit information concerning matters relevant to a determination as to the probability that applicant will continue in the future to engage in sexually perverted conduct."

"We think," Miss Gittings said, "that the only relevant question should be, 'Is this person capable of safeguarding classified material?'"

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

August 11, 1969

The letter about Women's Liberation in the July issue of the newsletter made me both sad and angry. The writer's assumptions about women in our movement were as narrow, prejudiced, and stereotyped as most peoples assumptions about Lesbians are! The Women's Liberation Movement is dedicated

to radical change regarding the roles women are forced to play in our society. We are pledged to destroy not only discrimination in areas of employment, consumer-fashion-hysteria, abortion murders\* and other such blatant forms of oppression, but to completely revamp the concept of the family as it now stands, and to liberate all people's sexuality -- ending the male-dominated culture that treats women purely as sex-object pieces of meat.

Certainly no "formal" agreement with DOB was intended nor resulted from the appearance of a Women's Liberation group at a DOB discussion. We are just not "into" formality of any sort. We merely want to establish warm relations with any group that is concerned with women's rights in any area, and feel that the time has come for "straight" women to stop being spooked by their homosexual sisters.

Personally, as a member of both Women's Liberation and DOB, I hope very much that informal talks will continue, and that in getting to know each other better, we will smash the barriers of ignorance that keep us apart.

In sisterly solidarity,

Robin Morgan

\*Over 10,000 women die each year in the U.S. from illegal abortions. Each death is an execution by the State.

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FREE!

To good homes - four healthy, lovable kittens, born August 26th. One grey, one tiger-stripe, one charcoal, one black. Sex as yet unknown. Will be available in six weeks. See Martha Shelley -- first come, first served. Cat lovers only need apply.



"Newsletter Daughters of Bilitis/New York Sept 1969." Daughters of Bilitis (DOB): New York Chapter, Sept. 1969, pp. [1]+. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/KSFMPP235793979/AHSI?u=gale&sid=bookmark-AHSI](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/KSFMPP235793979/AHSI?u=gale&sid=bookmark-AHSI). Accessed 7 May 2023.