

BLACK LESBIANS  
**REPORT**  
& GAYS UNITED

by Amani

The issues of oppression, both internal and external to the Lesbian/Gay community, have been at the forefront of the community dialogue for the last year. Concern over these issues has been forcefully expressed from the perspectives of both individuals and groups of community members. The sharing of these perspectives is important to the Lesbian/Gay community as it becomes more aware of the diversity of lifestyles, opinions and needs which exist within it. However, the emotional expression seldom gets to the examination of solutions to problems.

An important aspect to problem resolution is an understanding of the causes as well as the effects of the problem. Examining a socio-economic system which condones and perpetuates oppression lends another perspective when looking for solutions to the problem of oppression. This perspective should prove educational to those who believe themselves to be "non-affected" members of the community, i.e., those who do not identify with the oppressions of people who do not fit into any of their defined categories of concern. To isolate any oppression, or segments thereof, is to fail to see the overall scope of effect that correlative oppressions have on the community-at-large.

It is important for the Lesbian/Gay community to recognize the effects that dominant society has on it. It is a disservice to pretend an immunity to the overall system in which people have been made to participate since

childhood. To ignore the issue of the "isms" of dominant socio-economics and claim them to be personally non-affecting is at the very least a passive participation in the oppressive system. To believe that the proclamation of one's sexuality is the automatic mechanism for unlearning the "isms" is deceptive. Denial of one's participation in an oppressive system makes it easy for one to classify others as participants in self-victimization. It makes it acceptable to avoid examining oneself. In an extremely illustrative quote, Tolstoy says [the pronouns are expanded to include women], "I sit on a person's back, choking them and making them carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for them and wish to lighten their load by all possible means — except by getting off their back." This quote is applicable today when many seem to find it easier to disclaim responsibility for century old acts than to address the issue of oppression today.

How does one so adamantly use the concept of First Amendment Rights to justify and support the perpetuation of oppressive racial stereotypes, then ignore this same concept to campaign against performers who present negative gay stereotypes? How does one protest their own diminished status, yet ignore the universally diminished status of women? Individuals who put aside "principle" so readily when they bear the brunt of the attack, need to re-examine 1) the principle and, 2) the degree of their participation in the oppression of others.

Finally, one of the premises of traditionally "non-affected" groups is "We must all learn to laugh at ourselves." If this philosophy holds true, then all existing reasons for protest by the Lesbian/Gay community are invalid. If there is truly a belief that promotes the "laugh together" theory, then there are no issues that will offend this community. If you chose to work from this premise, the universality of laughable items must be developed.

If the needed sensitivities that will develop a congruent community are to exist, the community will have to realize that a threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

## Just Advice

Dear Advisor:

I just received a letter from my parents. It seems that they want to visit me from out of town next month. I have just moved into a lovely two-bedroom apartment with my lover. We use one bedroom as a bedroom and the other as a combination study/library. It is obvious that only one bedroom is used as such.

I am in a quandary. Should we rent a bed for the library and pretend that one of us sleeps there, or should we come clean and tell them everything.

— *Petrified in Portland*

Dear Petrified:

No doubt you already have some advice. Advice, even good advice is generally available from every source on the planet. Ministers have it as do friends, teachers, shrinks, people on the street and even parents, (although you probably have not consulted them on this one). What you want is advice

that comforts you when you scream, "What am I gonna do?" to the heavens or your bedroom ceiling. Since God works in mysterious ways; ways many times too mysterious for mortals to figure out, we may not be able to give you that universal confidence of knowing that you are doing the right thing. What we can offer are the experience of sharing the same problems, the legwork of research and the chance to give your concerns a public forum. So please return next issue for a reply to your question.

Dear Readers:

We need questions. My partner and I are expert solvers. We sit around and for hours on end discuss problems you have not even heard of. We have a solution to the toothpaste tube dilemma. We know what to say to the cook of a horrible meal. We know, we really do know what to do when parents come to visit. So write us care of this paper. Please keep yourselves anonymous for objectivity's sake, (we may know you, after all). We promise smart, concise, literate advice full of authority and concern. (Until next issue you may have to settle for the counsel of your landlord.

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