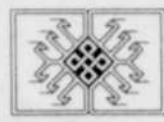


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COMMENTARY

Wake up!

Inaction at this time in our history could mean death!

by Marvin Liebman

My younger friends invariably open a conversation with "What's happening? Not much." The same can be said about lesbian and gay activism in 1994—not much.

Twenty-five years after the birth of the gay and lesbian movement at Stonewall, our community faces a mortal danger from a swiftly growing and powerful enemy—the self-styled "Christian" right—who would like to see us erased from the face of the earth, literally.

Make no mistake. This is not the mainstream type of religious bigotry we have learned to endure. Do not underestimate the visceral and virulent hatred of these people for gay men and lesbians. To them, we are the sons and daughters of Satan put on earth to destroy the "Christian family" and their version of Christianity itself. We are the new Antichrist. The "Christian" leaders will do anything to protect and defend what they consider the very essence of their being from those who they believe threaten it. Witness the murders of doctors who perform abortions by "Christians" defending the "right to life." This is only the beginning. Open lesbians and gay men are next. The ever-sanctimonious Jerry Falwells and Pat Robertsons really believe that the Kingdom of Heaven will never be achieved so long as we are around. It is important

HRCF, competing for attention and money from an increasingly apathetic constituency. But the action is in the cities and the states, and no longer in Washington, D.C.

Last year, 1993, was probably the best year for all of us. Our community was united around the debate on gay men and lesbians in the military, and the March on Washington. In spite of defeat, political betrayal, and the continuing growth of the Christian Coalition, we appeared united as a community. As the final months of 1994 approach, nationally, we are nothing.

The situation of our community today would suggest complacency—the complacency that comes after a victory has been won. We have won nothing; it is not complacency. It is a deep and clinical depression with symptoms of total apathy, severe fatigue, and an inability to do anything. What has caused this? The lack of charismatic leadership? The almost total dependence on President Clinton and his political party? The absence of a dramatic cause such as gay men and lesbians in the military?

Whatever the malaise is that has so affected the gay and lesbian population, we had better get over it, and quickly. We had better look to our neighborhoods, our towns and our cities—only so far as our state capitols—and begin to take on the enemy.



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that we comprehend this, and that we do not minimize the potential threat to each and every one of us.

Scary? Yes! What is being done? Except for local action against city and state discriminatory efforts, not very much. Our community is awash in apathy. Our two leading national organizations have become increasingly less visible as 1994 draws to a close. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is beset by financial troubles and the consequent resignations, firings and demoralization. The Human Rights Campaign Fund faces similar problems with firings, resignations, and the lack of any cohesive program. The plethora of HIV/AIDS organizations, and the consequent bureaucracy thereof, are thrashing about attempting to maintain public and government interest in the plague that continues, grows, and is infecting a new generation. ACT UP? Queer Nation? Where are they? All the other organizations? Who can hear their voices? What has happened to the anger?

The Victory Fund, the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, Gay and Lesbian Americans, what remains of the debt-ridden Gay Games and Stonewall 25—they're all still out there, along with NGLTF and

Our national organizations are no longer able to do the job. There are no national fights that we have a chance of winning in the foreseeable future except, perhaps, in the Supreme Court. We must take responsibility for ourselves, and our future. The battle is at home, where we live and work.

For over 70 years now, I have witnessed many momentous events—the rise and fall of Communism, the defeat of Nazism, war and peace, depression and prosperity, the civil rights movement, the revolution within the gay and lesbian community in the United States. I have seen it all, and I have actively participated in various public actions for almost six decades. But never in all those years have I seen a force which is so inimical to a cause which I espoused—this time, that of my gay brothers and sons, my lesbian sisters and daughters, and my grandchildren throughout our country.

Wake up! Inaction at this time in our history could mean death!

*Marvin Liebman is the author of
Coming Out Conservative.*