

OPERA:  
OPERATION  
OPPRESSION

B. Payne

I am oppressed by the race that says my face  
Must be white and my hair straight so I can be beautiful

By an economy that puts a price on me  
Which isn't tax free and is unclaimable

By a morality which damns Homosexuality and co-opts  
Heterosexuality for sexual freedom

By a tradition which puts down abortion  
For the sanctity of pregnancy

I am oppressed in an ecology that is altered drastically

That drowns me in a sea of pee and detergent  
and calls it drinkable

That suffocates me in an air of filtered tars and nictines  
carbon monoxides and sulphur dioxides  
and calls it breatheable

I am oppressed by nature-boys who cut down nature's green  
And replant dead and counterfeit in greedy greens and bloody Reds

Whose hands are pressed in sanctity beneath a trinity  
Of protection fees, corporations, and commodities

Whose heads are bowed religiously with eyes designed not to see  
Black, Red and Yellow atrocities

I am oppressed by another human being claiming I'm hers  
(Or I'm his) !!! ???  
Can't be my own property

Oppressing herself believing male puppy-dog-eyes  
And using us the same way they do

Oppressing herself worshipping "masculinity"  
Obliterating sensitivity  
Crushing sentimentality.

Oppressing us.

“I'm convinced that only in getting our rightful place in the movement and demanding an end to our own oppression can we ever really make changes for homosexuals.”

# homosexuals ..

Pat: The first question I would like to ask you to discuss is what is your concept of the movement?

Kay: People are always asking me what the movement means, I am always asking other people what the movement means, and I don't quite know myself. For 9 or 10 years, the movement has meant to me personally the peace movement.

Bernard: Kay, the movement means something a little bit wider than you have expressed. Movements have developed all over the world, and the movement has meant to me — I've been in the movement over 50 years — any attempt to change. Whether it be political change, social change, or economic change. The movement, as I understand it, means that people organize or even work privately and individually to make changes in the country. Historically there are times when you work individually, and

all student organizations. Also the John Reed Club. As time went on I got more and more involved but always from a political end because I was convinced that nothing but a change in the system could change the oppressions against blacks, against women, against children who were being unfairly employed at the time. Also against homosexuals. Now I'm working with homosexuals in the movement because I'm convinced that only in getting our rightful place in the movement and demanding an end to our own oppression can we ever really make changes for homosexuals.

Bob: I was instrumental in forming the 7 Arts chapter of CORE. Most of my past work has been with non-whites. In this chapter we demanded rights for Black people in show business. The first thing we did was break down the industrial shows. No non-caucasian had ever been

You can feel very foolish in a swimming pool in a strange land. Nigger and nigger lover were the two words we kept hearing. You are scared but we all looked happy. Thankfully Joan, a big girl was much better than us pretending happiness. We splashed each other and kept our hands joined. I looked at Joan, who was taller than I. The water had been up around my breasts which were huge — but suddenly my breasts were exposed — the water was behind them. I thought she had just raised herself up but then I looked and I noticed the water was going down. In 20 minutes we were standing in an empty pool!

Bernard: In the early days of demonstrations the thing we had to fear the most was the mounted police. Most of us were under the hoofs of police horses all the time. You know children, men, women — even old people. What I found was that this kind of reaction to



there have been times when the movement catches up masses of people as it did in Russia before the revolution. Now the movement includes people who want to make changes whether they be Panthers who are changing the system for black people, or Woman's Liberation who are concerned with changes for women, or socialists who are concerned with changes in the system. Or whether it be an organization like the Gay Liberation Front concerned with fighting against the oppression of homosexuals, but fighting within the framework of the wider movement. These problems are not isolated, but within the context of the oppression of the system against us all.

Bob: The movement today gets me a little up tight. I find people saying I am the movement. The movement can be 5 people who refuse to pay the subway fare. During the Christmas week vigil there was a little old lady marching with me and she had on her Dove button. She was terribly non-violent and marching for what she believed was right: she wanted political prisoners freed. A cop hassled us and I was very angry. I called him a pig. She said, "Let me do it." She was sort of a hooker type — sort of a tough old broad, and she charmed him. She came back and said, "You have your way, and I have mine. That's true. This woman is as much a part of the movement as I, even though we are working in different ways.

Pat: I would like to ask you specifically — what ways have you found to get involved in the movement?

Bernard: Well, my first activity was when I was 5 years old. My parents had organized the first Student Friends of the Russian Revolution I had a tray of little red flags and I put them on people and got money from them. When I was about 13 lots of us were arrested for picketing and handing out leaflets and demonstrating. We were helping the workers who were locked out, we were protesting the war budgets, we were protesting growing unemployment. At college, I helped organize the first NSL — The National Student League — which is the granddaddy of

hired. We threw a picket line around 8th Ave. and 57th St. where most of the Auto show rooms are. We also got off to the World's Fair — that was one of the times I was busted.

Kay: It seems that we had been arrested together. I was arrested at the World's Fair too. Politics make strange cell mates. I think I got into the movement first as a Quaker. As a Quaker I looked out my window in the West Village and noticed a lot of children smashing things. I thought in a few years they'll be big enough to push the button and, you know, somebody ought to do something now. I sort of got kidnapped by the children and started a thing called Workshop of Children which I ran for three years. During this time the civil rights thing was building up but since I was working with these children who had a great deal of trouble with the law, I felt I couldn't be arrested. I thought they couldn't distinguish between civil disobedience and crime exactly. However as soon as that thing folded I was delighted to go to jail at the CORE demonstration you referred to, Bob.

Bob: I wasn't delighted.

Kay: I volunteered to be arrested and the Pinkerton men were so new and so non-violent it was really difficult. I finally had to dance on the bar at the Schaffer Pavillion. Then I worked with the Survivors of Nagasaki Hiroshima who were traveling around the world. I worked with the people at New England Committee for Non-violent Action. We participated in the blockade at the missile base of Lamakaza, in Canada, at the white house, at prisons, and at submarine bases. And I went into the Peace Corps. I can't think of any other exciting things to brag about.

Bob: I went south after the civil rights bill was signed. We went to a public swimming pool in one demonstration. Myself, a very big black girl, and a black boy. We had a big hassle getting in; but finally we demanded in, and we got in. We joined hands and jumped into the water. There were about 50 people when we got there and in one or two seconds there were three.

brought a stronger commitment from us. And also brought more and more people to the movement. I wonder if the powers that be are aware that they build the movement themselves with their actions.

Pat: It seems here as you talk about your own experiences and some of the thoughts and feelings which have come to you from those experiences we're getting a fuller meaning of the word oppression. So we might tie it up here by saying the movement is making changes in the establishment where it oppresses us. Your experiences seem to have been radicalizing. If you are in a situation where you see the extreme degrees of the establishment oppression — you see the actual physical effects on people — you become radicalized. Like you were saying, Bernard — about —

Bernard: — about the system being it's worst enemy.

Pat: I would like to ask you how you see the Gay Liberation Movement.

Bernard: I see the Gay Liberation Movement as a process which will help liberate gay people by making them fully part of the whole liberation movement. The movement for change in the system that will eventually annihilate any form of oppression. Before GLF I was active in these movements, but anonymously — nobody was conscious of the fact that I was homosexual. I think the only way we can gain respect for ourselves and any of the help that we need from everyone else in overcoming our oppression is by showing that we participate even though they don't understand why we participate. I think even among a lot of our own people we have to fight for the right to participate as homosexuals.

Bob: I've always been active as a homosexual. Openly, but never publicly. In the past six or seven months I have suddenly found myself living the life of a public homosexual. I find resentment in many parts of the movement. When I find it, I confront it. This is very healthy for me; and it's very healthy for the movement. We can't hold the movement up as being any better or any worse than the rest of us. Gay