

MAIL

Come Out of Your Closet Before It's Nailed Shut

Alright, get the straight once and for all, so we can dispel all these ridiculous portrayals of homosexual life. There are no makes on every corner, there are no \$200 sugar daddies for most of us. The vast majority of homosexuals in this country live perfectly normal lives, look perfectly average, never lead the glamorous escapades set forth in this tripe type of picture. They do not go bouncing from crotch to crotch. But you never hear of them, you never even notice them. But we are here — probably 50% of the male population, and every one of us scared shitful of even admitting it. Afraid to get caught, afraid to be disgraced, afraid to jeopardize our reputations — and even if we weren't worried about all that, we're afraid to confront each other for fear of rejection! The key word to homosexuality is not sexuality — it's fear!

I went to a movie and a guy sat down next to me, with billions of empty seats around, smacked his leg against mine and waited. Both my testicles were in my throat. I froze like solid ice. I awkwardly moved my leg and he left. I was afraid of what might happen (too proper to simply accept this as sign language — and I was equal to that poor guy whose face I never even dared to turn to see. (My apologies, buddy, but you came on awfully fast.) But why did I do that — why did I turn from that glorious chance to meet someone? Hung up on stupid proprieties, that's why. I'm so blasted proper, so damn shy — so damn stupid!

Most of us want to meet with more subtlety anyway. A glance, an idle comment, strike up a conversation slowly — get to know each other as people, not just bodies. We just can't take a flying leap into bed — we're looking for more than that. Yes, we're hung up on things like emotion, love, a lasting and meaningful relationship — why not call it marriage? So is it a crime to be sincere? Look, I can masturbate all by myself. I don't need anyone to help with that. But I can't love all by myself, and that's the thing I'm really after (and so are most people, despite the sexual pleasures without it).

We're not promiscuous as a rule — only the ones you happen to notice are that way, and that's the reason you notice them. Most of us you never even see. (Hello, all you proper queers — keep looking. I'll find one of you yet!) But it ain't easy — not by a long shot. Cruising is tasteless, burpish-knoozies to you. No, it has to be subtle because nobody we want to be hooked up to should be that promiscuous. We can't advertise either — nobody proper would do that, and nobody proper would answer it, either! So what the hell are we supposed to do? Become "spinstuds"?

Well, that's what becomes of most of us, I suppose. (Maybe we marry some broad because we can't get what we really want. Yes, queers marry all the time. All of my propositions have come from married men! Figure that out. And I turned them all away, and for the same proper reasons which you'll hate. Why should I be the "utiles man" that might possibly screw up a marriage? I don't think there's anything morally wrong with homosexuality — it hurts no one. It does not harm whatever. It only satisfies the love desire of two people, the same way heterosexuality may. But if you screw up a marriage in the process, then you are doing something wrong. So I won't.

So here I am — a nice, responsible, clean-cut, not so bad-looking guy, with lots of things just ready to explode. So much to give somebody I might love — and nobody's there. I'm not being egotistical, but damn it, I would make a good catch because I'd really appreciate what a magnificent thing it is to have another man to love me in return. I'm not even gay — you could introduce me to your most suspicious relatives and they'd never suspect a thing. So what good is it all? Anyone like me is hiding under the rug's the same way I am. If they'd just leave us the hell alone, and get their damn legs raised out of our bedrooms and mind their own business. What the hell does anyone else care what we do in our bedrooms anyway? It's a pretty dull story if there besides — still a virgin! Would you believe? I'm more "respectable" than anyone I know, yet I'm the one with all the quiet hangups! Now that's how it really is, so plain that it'd let the truth be known.

Sorry I can't sign this, but I have to be careful, I'm always careful. I'll probably be the first one they catch. Isn't that always the way?

Wish me luck... I need it!

—A Proper Stranger—

Dear COME OUT,

I am writing this letter for two reasons. The first is Pride in myself for what I have done to change my life. The second is hope that some of the many "Closet Gays" that will possibly see this letter might take a fresh look at themselves and at their life styles.

I am a young man of Twenty-Three years, gay, and fairly intelligent. I like to believe. Not so long ago, I was a perfect example of the Closet Homosexual. I hid behind the facade of a Heterosexual, playing at girl chasing, declining effeminate acquaintances as "Queers" and considering Marriage to the point of Engagement — all in an attempt to hide the truth about myself from myself.

I was successful in avoiding this knowledge totally until I was nineteen. At that time I realized that I could not achieve Sexual or Emotional satisfaction with a Woman. I reasoned that I was undersexed, due to a strict religious training and decided that my only alternative was to be a Celibate. I ignored the fact that I liked to watch Men, considering it a basic appreciation of beauty.

After reaching my conclusions about my sexual life, my attitude towards Homosexuals changed and I became a "Straight, Sympathetic Liberal". Ironically, I began surrounding myself with Gay Friends and developed a great appreciation for cruising — "freak kinks" — or so I thought.

When I was Twenty-One, I finally realized that I was Gay. I was stunned and ashamed, and very much frightened that someone else might find out and expose me. I couldn't accept the fact. The trouble was that I believed what I had heard about Homosexuals, not what I saw, felt.

I became worse. I resigned myself to a life of loneliness and became very embittered with life. It didn't take me long to start hating myself and become destructive to all around me.

When I was Twenty-Two, I went to work for a Gay Friend's Lover. We struck up a great friendship right away. I could see at the time that we had a great deal in common. This individual was also closeted and had basically the same fears of exposure as I. He, however, was much older and fairly set in his life style.

We developed the habit of playing judge and jury over all around us. It was enjoyable at the time. Then, at a Dinner Party given by my Gay Friend, I was fortunate to see what a bitter, Self-Destructive Man his lover was. It was a bit like looking into a mirror. I felt as if I were seeing the Me of the future. I didn't like what I saw. The prospects of a creative life without changing myself were nil, so I decided it was time to reevaluate myself.

Since then, I have stopped caring what Society thinks of Gay people. I am much happier now that I am in the open about it. People must now accept me for what I am, which has little to do with my choice of bedmates. I am not interested in friendships with people who let this be a determining factor in who they associate with. Society's image of what a Man and Woman should be is totally ridiculous for all, gay or straight, male or female. As for me, since I have turned down my closet, I feel I am once again a Creative Being, and am most anxious to help all "Closet Cases" dismantle their Closets.

Michael F. Boyle

Dear Friends,

I read about your organization and activities in the current Advocate. Bravo! We need a more aggressive approach in the nonviolent revolution to achieve homosexual rights.

Enclosed is my check for \$10 for which please put me on your mailing list for all literature, including your forthcoming newspaper COME OUT.

I have been active in the homophile civil rights movement since 1953; was for three years national Director of Education for the Mattachine Society, and edited the organization's Education Handbook under my former penname Carl B. Harding. Because I will never again be in sensitive employment, my penname now belongs to the past and I write and work under my real name in our cause.

With every good wish for success in your new imperative adventure.

Sincerely,
Elver A. Barker, Member
Mattachine Society of N.Y.

Can Gay people live among straight friends and relatives without feeling alienated?

Thus far I have been able to function comfortably amidst roommates, friends and relatives. While at school I just told my roommate that I was going out and that was a satisfactory explanation for my conduct for the evening.

Now that my living situation has changed, will my parents now wonder about me — I wonder?

Would it be best for those in this situation or ones similar to this to be honest when faced with direct "are you or aren't you" questions? I don't know.

Scott
New Haven, Conn.

Dear Scott,

Your question is universal to all Gay people but the answers you arrive at have to be tailored to your own particular needs. There is no question that you will feel more whole and happier when you can be who you are all of the time. This is no easy thing, I know. It took me until age 32 to finally give in to myself and though I felt at the time that I was losing everything (the good opinion and sanction of the society from my family right on up to any career dreams I have had) I have in truth gained the whole world. I feel at a loss to convey to you right now what that means. I can just say that I have never felt better in my life. I know now in retrospect that I only began to be really alive when I was able to take this step.

When dealing with friends in a dishonest way you instill in yourself guilt feelings which should not be there. You mention "friends" but it is hard to have real meaningful relationships with people who do not know this part of your life. You do not mention your age or if it is necessary for you to live with your parents at this time. You must think practically — but at the same time you should be getting yourself in a position where you will be able to hold your head up and say who you are, just for your own self respect. Why don't you come and see us GLFers. We've all been through it and getting to know us might be a good and groovy experience.

Love and strength,
Lols and Bob

"COME OUT," PHOTOGRAPHERS, ARTISTS, WRITERS, all of you talented members of the Gay Community. Contribute to your paper to make it the best this country has ever known. Don't just sit there carting your chains. COME OUT. c/o Bob Fontanella 251 W. 99 Street New York 10025

SEXUALITY IN THE AMERICAN MALE

COMMUNITY CENTER

SEXUALITY AND THE AMERICAN MALE

by Bob Fontanella

In America, sexual interpretations have become standard explanations for almost anything — whatever the situation or problem may be. We are taught to sexualize all of our needs and desires, which, quite often, have little or nothing at all to do with sex.

The American male is offered very little opportunity for a warm contact with members of his own sex. Often he needs this closeness or a nonsexual physical contact with another male. Since he has learned to sexualize these desires, he becomes frightened that he may have homosexual tendencies. He projects these fears onto the homosexual who then becomes the target for his frustrations, and his hatred. What one irrationally hates in others is what he fears most in himself.

The American homosexual male also is guilty of sexualization of his needs. Because of society's emphasis on sex, the homosexual male often sexualizes all of his inner needs and as a result can only accept himself on a sexual level. Because of the fears built up through the nonacceptance of the whole individual, sexualization is often a means of protection against what could be a more meaningful relationship.

We, as homosexuals, must place sex into a proper perspective as an important part of our beings but not the entire basis for our existence. By becoming aware of the brainwashing imposed on us, we will realize that we are total human beings with many different desires and many different needs.

lois hart

It has been two months now that Gay Liberation Front was conceived: a turbulent, violently divisive collection of opposing and attracting forces that coalesced sufficiently that the embryonic spirit could be named. During demonstrations, meetings and groups the forces continued to collide and explode, to coalesce and reform — new members, new structures emerged — unexpected accords were discovered. And all the while the spirit gets stronger and more harmonic.

Where are we going? What are we all about? I ask myself not really wanting or expecting an answer but rather to savor the experience of this growing romance — more to enjoy the wonder of what is happening to us.

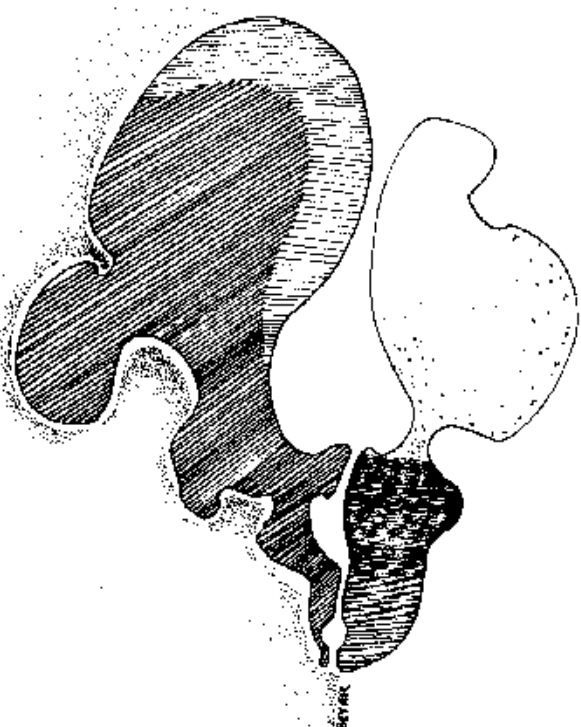
At first it seemed that I was mainly aware of what I didn't want. Leo has said it well — to no longer consent to be the victims — to throw off every piece of shit that has held me down until now. Shit like "dyke", "sick", "degenerate", "non-woman", "queer", "corruptor of children", "unnatural", "sinful", "demonized". In our groups we trace the outlines of our pain; we delineate the scaffolding of a society that has arranged our crucifixion. That festival of life, our Zap of the Village Voice, was more May saying. A beautiful day when we said "NO" to the oppressor. But the capitulation of the Voice was not our greatest victory that day. It was that we were there together joyfully, earnestly standing up for ourselves, reaching out to other responding Gays, seeing the respect and affirmation of the Village community Gay and straight.

So a "Yes" has come into it. YES, here I am, goddamit! And as I stand up and take that breath I can feel that being here is no static thing. We are not just existing at a time when an old, unworkable world is dying, but we are living as a new one struggles for birth. I feel my oneness with the struggles and roarings of the entire planet. I know that I am reaching for something beyond my own imaginings; that somehow without really knowing the goal I have begun to move toward it. I have stood up in this too noisy, too crowded, polluted, decaying city and am taking a look around. What do I want to do? It has something to do with sharing, with caring for myself and others, with working to transform my immediate environment so that it fosters our growing humanity. What do I have to work with? Well, I have a sort of dream, not a very sophisticated one, and a few ideas that may or may not be okay. I see that there are a number of people standing near me and they seem to have about the same kind of equipment. So here we are scraping the crud off our psyches as best we can and proceeding to get to work.

We need a place, my friends and I, we who call ourselves G.L.F. We need space to be together — to meet, to rap, to eat, to dance, to dig each other and plan our work. It would be a place for our paper, communal dinners, meetings and dances — space where we can begin to break down our fragmentation — to create a communal environment closer to our needs and purposes.

So far we have been checking out ads for lofts, store fronts, even an old firehouse. No luck! We figure a West Village loft, at least 25 x 100, would be a good start. We have enough skilled labor among us to paint, plaster and do the carpentry. We require 24 hour access and to be able to make noise, because we'll hold dances to pay the rent and support COME OUT, if need be. We should be able to make so our communal dinners can continue.

So who knows of a loft we can use? Who has money for the deposit and repairs? Who has the time and energy to give to finding both? COME OUT and help us wherever you are. The life you save may be your own!



A

POSITIVE

IMAGE

by Dr. Leo Louis Martelle

"Homosexuality is not a problem in itself. The problem is society's attitude towards it."

Being homosexual says only one thing about you: Emotionally you prefer your own sex. It says nothing about your worth, your value as a human being. Regardless of how the church, psychiatry or convention has viewed homosexuality you don't have to go through life being baccinated by your guilt. Esser said that done.

As a child you're a sponge, indiscriminately absorbing all kinds of impressions. If you were unloved, rejected or abandoned you may grow up thinking that you will not only never be worthy of love but shall continue through life inadequately coping with life's problems and will always be the object of rejection. An unloved child hasn't the capacity to intellectually analyze the truth. Emotionally he blames himself for his parents' lack of love. He doesn't see it as it is: a reflection of his parents' inability to relate to him. The homosexual, whether born or bred (and the psychiatric argument is still going), has been conditioned into thinking of himself as "sick", and, contrast, a "sinner", unworthy, something to be despised. The minute that he discovers that he's "different" he avidly reads anything he can on the subject. And what does he find? More ammunition for self-contempt. He's told by psychiatric "authorities" that he's "sick". So he begins to tell himself NOT that. The psychiatrists say that I'm sick. B.L.J. "I am sick." He programs himself into perpetual feelings of unworthiness.

Homosexuality is not a problem in itself. The problem is society's attitude towards it. Since the majority condemns homosexuality, the homosexual minority has assiduously accepted this contemptuous view of itself. Right is substituted for "right." The greatest battle of the homosexual in an oppressive society is with himself, not precisely the image of himself as forced on him by non-homosexuals. Everybody tells the homosexual what he is... except the homosexual himself. And when psychiatrists do find a positively self-assertive homosexual, they say his views are "subjective". What they don't say is that their supposed "objectivity" is baseless since they never see healthy homosexuals. A few of their nice books claiming "cures" which in itself implies that homosexuality is a sickness. Of course there's no way to prove these "cures", no way to follow up, no way to check these claims. And as long as these psychiatrists keep telling the homosexual that he's "sick" he has a **ESTABLISHED INTEREST** in the negative self-image of the homosexual at \$25 an hour and up.

Religion has always treated sex as a "sin". It has brainwashed millions into believing that a biologically normal drive is "evil". It has ruled by guilt. It knows damn well that it can't eliminate sex. In fact, it doesn't care to for the following reason: 1) Instill guilt... then absolve the guilt "payments" for life. 2) Capture the minds of children. They don't question, analyze or challenge what they're told. This insures emotional guilt... of children. 3) What is the one universal drive that unites everyone? Sex! Following the adage "The best way to tick a man is between his legs" religion knows that the greater the "sinner", the more he will guiltily defend the very religion that damns him. Theologically, the church and religion has him by his testicles!

There is only one way in which the homosexual can help himself. He must CHALLENGE every single feeling of worthlessness that he has about himself. He must make sure that he is not accepting an **UNEARNED GUILT**. Deep in his gut he must ask if the deepest, secret, unconscious, inner picture that he has of himself is really of himself... or is it one fostered on him by parents, society, religion, psychiatry, and the heterosexual majority? Are his feelings about himself his... or those of others? Is he being psychologically crippled because of a **baseless self-contempt**? And is this further increased by cultivating others who also dislike themselves, forming unions of mutual contempt? It works this way: if parents keep telling a child, "You're no good. You'll never amount to anything," the child absorbs these negative impressions. He grows up saying to himself, "I'm no good. I'll never amount to anything." He'll do battle with anyone else who tells him this. Yet he will also secretly cultivate those people who confirm his own sense of unworthiness. What he hasn't done is to **CHALLENGE HIS FEELINGS ABOUT HIMSELF**: "My parents said I'm no good. Is that true? They said I'll never amount to anything. Since when are my parents prophets?" Often the homosexual's self-destructiveness stems from a feeling of "Since they never thought any better of me I won't disappoint them." He is not himself but a carbon copy of what others said he was.

Homosexuals handle their societally-induced problem in many ways: They passively accept everything said about them as true and then proceed to act-out and live down to what others say they are. Or they live a double life: Conventionally proper and respectable and in the most intimate area of their lives fortively acting like fugitives from justice. Or some resent, rebel, and flaunt their homosexuality in defiance of the gulfs and self-contempt fostered on them by society. These are all overcompensations. They do not help the homosexual into a sense of his own worthiness.

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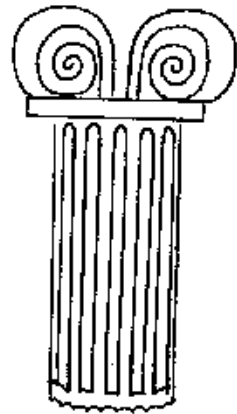
HOMOSEXUAL

STEPS TO A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

1) Did you deliberately **CHOOSE** to be homosexual? Does a black man **CHOOSE** the color of his skin? Did you **CHOOSE** the color of your eyes? Since your biological-emotional drives just happened without deliberate choice they are "normal" to you. **DON'T ACCEPT AN UNEARNED GUILT.**

2) You can't go any higher than your own thoughts. No one can like you more than you like yourself. Like the black man in America, you have to **CHALLENGE** every single negative feeling you have about yourself. Make sure you haven't passively accepted other people's estimates, views, values, standards, beliefs, ideas and prejudices, creating self-doubt and self-contempt. Reject them.

3) If you don't like yourself, ask yourself why. **STOP TREATING YOURSELF AND YOUR FELLOW HOMOSEXUALS THE SAME WAY OTHERS HAVE TREATED YOU (PARENTS, SOCIETY, RELIGION, ETC.)** Psychiatrists have called you sick... don't call yourself sick. Society persecutes you... don't persecute yourself and each other. If you feel deepdown that you are unworthy you will seek out those people who will confirm your own sense of unworthiness. A "feeling" isn't a **FACT** so challenge all your negative feelings.



By Leo

4) Being homosexual doesn't deprive you of all virtues. Nor does it imbue you with them. As human beings and citizens you do have some inalienable **RIGHTS**. Why should others fight for them more than you? Society has used the weapon of divide and conquer. And the supplier for society's ammunition has always been the self-rejecting homosexual himself. Instead of self-assertively organizing to fight for his rights, the self-hating homosexual takes out his spleen on other Gay people. It works like this: If I secretly think of myself as shit then anyone who is involved with me, or who is like me, must be shit too. This is the brainwashed role that all minorities have been forced into. The blacks, Chicanos, poor whites, homosexuals, etc. In order not to be stone join the **GAY LIBERATION FRONT**. Learn about yourself and others, and more importantly, learn to like yourself. Don't be what others say you are (how the hell do they know if not homosexual themselves?) but what you really are, and what you can be.

5) Don't give your enemies the weapons used against you. Reject any idea that being homosexual is synonymous with being sick, unstable, neurotic, etc. The passive acceptance of homosexuality as a perversion or emotional illness **IN YOUR OWN MIND** plays into the hands of your persecutors. This is called **THE SANCTION OF THE VICTIM**. It means that by secretly, subconsciously, passively (regardless of how it is rebelled against) accepting the establishment's "opinion" you give it the weapon for your own psychological destruction.