



How completely the *Voice* was untouched by Mailer's concept of the moral and sexual revolution can be demonstrated by examining their Classified Advertising policy towards the Gay Community.

In the August 7th issue of the *Voice*, members of Gay Liberation Front placed an ad in the Public Notices section of classifieds. The substance of the ad dealt with requests for articles, photographs, art work, etc. for COME OUT. The lead-in to the ad read "Gay Power to Gay People." Our friendly community monopoly newspaper accepted the ad with payment in full and then before printing simply deleted "Gay Power to Gay People" without the knowledge or consent of G.L.F.

At the regular Sunday meeting of G.L.F., general outrage was expressed at the assumed right of the *Voice* to censor classified ads. The feasibility of an action against the *Village Voice* was discussed and dismissed on the basis of insufficient evidence. GLF, however, felt that the *Village Voice* had committed itself to a morally bankrupt policy. Classified ads represent a community service, and are not the newspaper's main income source. Therefore, it should follow that classifieds should be verbally expressive of individuals who are paying for the service.

We decided at this point to submit another ad using the word "Gay". The opportunity presented itself again in the issue of September 4. GLF then used the *V.V. Bulletin Board* to advertise a dance for Friday night, September 5th, using the lead-in - Gay Community Dance. Again the ad was accepted when and as presented. Next day the person who placed the ad received a call from *VV* which explained that it was the policy of *VV* to refrain from printing obscene words in classifieds and *VV* thought "Gay" was obscene. When questioned why anyone would consider such a word obscene, the *Voice* said that the staff had decided "Gay" was equatable with "fuck" and other four-letter words, and that either the ad would have to be changed or the ad could not be printed. Since "homosexual" was also not acceptable,

and since GLF wanted the ad for the dance placed, we accepted their only admissible substitute, "homophile" (which is a genteel bastard word not included in most dictionaries). The *Village Voice* also promised a written explanation of their opposition to the words "Gay" and "homosexual." GLF "deviously" planned to utilize this explanation as the basis for a civil rights suit (Civil Rights Law of 1964: denial of rights of free speech by a public or quasi-public institution). But true to tradition, the *Voice* promised more than it delivered, and we never received such a written explanation.

Undeterred, GLF began proceedings with our lawyers for suit in Federal Court. At this point we finally met Ed Fancher, when we were forced to deliver a letter stating our proposed action to his home (since Mr. Fancher was never available in his office). At this time we asked to speak to him about the *Voice* Classified policy. He refused to discuss the issue with us (as he had once before by phone) and mumbled that we should not have done such an outrageous thing as to have come to his place of residence, while he politely but firmly closed the door in our faces.

While GLF considers itself open to reason, it also reserves the right to take appropriate action based on the reality of a given situation. Clearly, we felt Fancher had closed the door on dialogue. At the general meeting of September 7th, a course of action was decided, a course of action which included a picket line and other street actions.

The day Gay Power laid itself on the line for the first time started at 9 a.m. on September 12, 1969, with much communal coffee and even more communal confusion. Ed Fancher arrived at 10 a.m., received a proclamation of our grievances, and promptly disappeared through the door into *VV* bureaucracy.

At 4:30 p.m., during the peak of the demonstration, a member of GLF submitted a classified ad saying "The Gay Liberation Front sends love to all Gay men and women in the homosexual community." The pic-

ture outside the *Voice* was characterized by a chanting picket line, a supply of 5000 leaflets being rapidly exhausted, and large numbers of people signing the petition charging the *Voice* with discrimination.

At this point, Howard Smith emerged from the door of the *Village Voice* (to boos from the crowd) and requested three representatives from GLF to "meet with Mr. Fancher". Once inside and upstairs, the representatives encountered a cry of outrage that GLF has chosen the *Village Voice* as a target (sooo liberal we are). The suggestion was made that we negotiate the three points in dispute 1) changing classified ads without knowledge or consent of purchaser, 2) use of the words "Gay" and "homosexual" in classifieds, and 3) the contemptuous attitude of the *Village Voice* toward the Gay Community. GLF explained that the two issues involving classified ad policy were not negotiable and that the substance of the paper should be of legitimate concern to a responsible publisher. Ed Fancher replied that the *Village Voice* exercised no censorship of its articles, and that if a writer wanted to say derogatory things about faggots, he could not in good conscience stop him. Fancher also said that we had no right to tamper with "freedom of the press."

This GLF accepted with the absolute understanding that Gay Power has the right to return and oppose anything the *Village Voice* staff chooses to include in the paper. On the Classified Ads policy he conceded completely. He said that not only would the *Voice* not alter Ads after payment, but that in Classified Ads the words "Gay" and "homosexual" per se were no longer issues. One of the GLF representatives in the upstairs office stepped to the window facing Seventh Avenue and flashed the V for Victory sign to the waiting crowd below. WE HAD WON!

BITCH: Summer's Not Forever

by Marty Stephan

So I'm sitting in this crummy park in Queens on a muggy, overcast Sunday afternoon — the kind of turf you always see in Grade B movies as the wrong side of the tracks — and I'm listening to our peerless fearless leaders rapping about how Gay people are a two thousand year old minority group. I'm sitting there grass-stained ass-wet, wondering if this is what I waited fifteen years to be a part of and if so, why did I feel so bad about it? Maybe it was the uninspired circular picketing which felt like prison yard exercises or the abortive attempt to sing "We Shall Overcome" or the request to have two obviously embarrassed guys dance in our circle. I knew it wasn't the straights watching us — I'm a drag butch; I've been on exhibition all my life. So what was bothering me? I remembered the Washington Square rally where I was so goddam proud I stood right up front; I was so close the speakers almost stepped on me getting up and down from the fountain rim. And when we started to march to the Stonewall I wanted to be up front again but I lost my buddy who was looking for his buddy, and when we found each other we were near the back and I was pissed off until we reached the triangle of streets just before Sheridan Square Park. There I saw a line of gay people stretched out and pouring into the park. It was a beautiful thing to see, 500 of us marching, chanting, clapping in cadence — us, dammit, after all these dead years. We went to the park so we could be opposite the Stonewall and after some clapping and cheering we sang "We Shall Overcome" and I looked at us and at that dumpy bar and a little of the elation wore off. The song turned me off. I've sung it before joyfully. But here it seemed inappropriate, like I was doing somebody else's thing.

I left feeling a little down, not knowing why. I knew why here in Queens — the bastards cut down the trees and in the city the fuzz and the politicians raided the bar, but the turned off feeling wouldn't leave until the reason hit me. I didn't want to protest only at hid-

ing places — I wanted more — I wanted to picket City Hall and Ma Bell and Con Ed and exploitative movies and the *Village Voice* if necessary and all those imperious autocratic places where we are screwed — sometimes without any special malice — just shit on like everybody else. And why do we only COME OUT in times of trouble like a vast army of relatives who are strangers to each other, who only see each other at the funerals of places; why don't we come out simply to enjoy the freedom of being together, to rejoice in each other, to get our heads together?

When I tuned back into the speeches, Martha Shelley was congratulating us on our courage for showing up because maybe some of us could be fired for coming — she didn't think we would be accused of homosexuality, just canned for some general reason. So we couldn't make a civil rights case out of it. "We're not economically depressed as a group" she said. "What we really want is social acceptance." Now there is a heavy thought. If a man is bypassed for a promotion because he isn't married, he may not be economically depressed on a poverty scale, but he is earning less than he should earn — which may result in the kind of depression you feel when your human resources are not being fully realized. And if your earnings are not equal to your abilities, aren't you economically depressed? Isn't social acceptance currently geared to your salary — the more bread you make the more socially acceptable you are?

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ALTERNATES

Suppose lots of us did lose our jobs — dig it — 50,000 — 100,000 — 500,000 — 750,000 of us unemployed — then we would be an economically depressed minority. Imagine 1,000 homosexuals and lesbians a day — coming out, declaring themselves Gay, being fired or just quitting as a protest and demanding welfare. Wow — think how mad the straight taxpayers would be when they discovered they couldn't have new schools built because we took their school money in welfare payments. We could get into those poverty programs with all that poverty tax money and all that good poverty political clout. Think of those politicians coming to our community control centers promising us legal reforms if we would all please just go back to work. The thought blew my mind.

What the hell is social acceptance anyway? Does it just mean not being hassled and not being stared at anymore? Does it mean being dug by people who didn't dig you before, just because you were gay? Or does it mean courteous treatment from the places and people where you spend your bread? Sure, I'm sick of morons doing their shitty put downs, but is this all I'm fighting for? What the hell is social acceptance anyway?

Five years ago my buddy came up to me in a gay bar and told me about the 4th of July picketing in Philadelphia. "But," she said, "you can't wear pants. They have a committee that checks you and they're strong on the straight look — dresses and skirts for women, jackets and ties for men."

"Suppose I stood across the street in drag with a picket sign that read ME TOO, how about that?" I was glad the line got a laugh because you can't cry in a diesel dyke bar. It isn't socially acceptable.



I remember years ago, when I had a suit and tie job, being buddies with a straight guy — we were hired the same day — and he was an ex-numbers runner who had a cool head and a nicely-developed sense of justice. We ate lunch together and enjoyed each other's company, and I kept dropping my butch facade without any visible reaction from him. One day when we were in the head he noticed that I was quiet and preoccupied, and he asked why.

"I've got this new job offer — it pays \$22 more a week."

"What are you waiting for? Take it."

"Yeah, but I have to put on a skirt and that's a nowhere scene."

"Why do you have to wear a skirt?"

"Because it's a straight office job and I have to get out of drag and go back to being a broad again."

He looked amazed, glanced wildly around the room at the toilets, urinals and wash basins and ran out of the men's room with his fly open — which shook up some of the secretaries. I think I had social acceptance and didn't know it — but not for myself.

Just the other day one of my co-workers laughed over some small joke. His face radiated friendship and I could feel the good vibrations as he socked me on the arm and slammed me on the back and said, "Marty, you are an all right butch — you're worth 10 guys."

"Thanks, Tony. How old is your daughter now?"

"She's 12."

"When she's older can I get in line with the other 10 guys, ring your doorbell and take her out?"

Tony really did like me, he grabbed his right arm to keep from busting me in the mouth. What the hell is social acceptance anyway?

Suppose a family friend telephones you, makes sure that you still have your job and pad and then invites you to dinner to meet her niece — the one who bounces from resort to relatives and never has a second date. Perhaps on that day you can say "Shove the dinner, put your niece on a leash and forget it. I don't need you — you called me. Now I have social acceptance." Is social acceptance having things and people dumped on you whether you want them or not?

STAND OUT CLEARLY
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After a GLF meeting, five people sit in a pad, four of them rapping about the dreams of the beautiful life styles they want for themselves. I sit there wishing them well, hoping they make it. Then a leading GLF political theorist routinely says of two good people not present, "They're old line homosexuals." Not, "They're in GLF and they do good work and their heads are into costume/transvestism/drag or whatever you want to call it." Three people nod in common understanding — a stereotype has been added to the GLF lexicon; by implication I'm an old line lesbian, and I don't bother to argue.

Although every GLF member does not dig the term at this time, you can damn well bet that as encounter groups evolve into life style and political action groups the term will progress from being a stereotype to a cliché to a shrug, which always precludes both potentiality and argument and requires a whole new civil rights organization to fight it — like maybe the Drag Queen and Drag Butch Anti-Defamation and Liberation League. Knowing that the Gay use of "old line homosexual" zaps your life style, defines you as having a rigid immutable mind and destroys your validity and worth as a person (see COME OUT editorial and disregard if you are into drag) you might yearn for the simpler "drag queen" which only meant cross-dressing and carrying on in public, but the "drag queen" label is a straight put down; Gay radicals try to eliminate straight thinking wherever they find it. Apparently the Aquarian Age and doing your own thing doesn't protect you from either your liberators or your oppressors. Should you discover a common point of agreement between straight and Gay thinking, and should you feel like a third class member in a minority group of second class citizens, and if that homosexual foot on your neck hurts much more than the straight foot up your ass — tough luck, buddy, you just don't live right.

Sure I know I have to decide what my life style really is and what is merely reaction to straight thinking, but those decisions require some hard work and thought, so while I and other drag types are thinking or maybe not thinking, just enjoying our lives and so what? — stop shitting on our life style — we're not shitting on yours.

In fairness to both GLF and COME OUT, both groups will let you take as much responsibility as you can handle and will sincerely compliment you for a good job and no other homosexual civil rights group will allow drag types to do meaningful work. But just being allowed to work is not enough. You will always meet some GLF head who will say "I've heard a lot about you" and you will know in part exactly what he means.

I think Martha Shelley was right after all — social acceptance is where it's at. Perhaps the best definition of social acceptance is just to have your own life style without comment from anyone — straight or Gay.

