

CHRISTOPHER STREET LIBERATION DAY

by two Lesbians

It celebrated a battle.
Shoeban Square looked less than normal. Queens and young street people were conspicuously absent. It was early. A 12-year old walking along with his father nervously laughed "They're all over."

But there weren't many at first, drifting out, missing out at the last moment as if they were watching to see if the others were going to show. A couple of eggs were thrown. Would the queens be busted? The old women saying, "Fridja see that sign Sappho-was-a-right-on-woman?" The people were wearing their favorite clothes and two sweatshirts in the crowd - butch and femme. Yes it was a put-on. Getting poppies and pinning the posters on and there wasn't a cloud in the sky.

Cameras were everywhere . . . "Listen, do you mind if I take your picture". So now it's what does the animal look like and what is its species. Galled by the sawtooths the parade took shape. We covered 15 blocks! Marching with our arms around each other, yelling to the crowd join us out of the closets, into the streets and they did join us. The "bright red, green, purple, and yellow silk banners high in the warm afternoon air" were good for our "image" and they made us feel good. Someone called it therapy.

2-4-68 Gay is just as good as straight
"No" says a woman "Gay is twice as good as straight."
Approaching Johnny's Desperation Bar women hinted at taking the parade there and liberating the place. But no, we were running a nice parade here . . .
The march kept its definition as did many in the Sheep Meadow.
On the anniversary of a battle we watched a pseudo-betoo couple in a kissing marathon:
we watched a "Screw" photographer take pictures of two women lying together on the grass their heads buried together hidden. They are still making money off of us.
And a woman said "I didn't know the men were still using 'she' as a put-down."

In the Sheep Meadow with kite-streamers overhead the smiles of the people were important, the smiles of those unafraid of each other.
And in another part of town a certain neighborhood bar was very busy. Women never came in like that on a Sunday afternoon.
Usually the place was deserted except for the hard-drinking regulars and none of them could be seen in that sort of march even though news photos are hazy. They were friendly and there was no accounting for this phenomenon. Perhaps they had just sensed something.

The women were quiet. Would there be a Lesbian Center? Women filtered in off of the streets and came as far as Sioux City and Oregon.
Upstairs in the church was the Communal Supper which was at first a table with hot water, bread, salami and mustard. Then miraculously all this food appeared - chicken, watermelon, salads and cakes, each person bring what they could. As we began sharing this food together we began talking about our experiences in small spontaneous groups. We talked about the struggle of overthrowing everything they tell us we are. It's time to decide what you want and what you are and not let anyone tell you different.



And downstairs we danced in the hall decorated with our posters - the windows wide open, the breeze, it was the spring, the juke playing the quarter beer and people giving what they could at the door.
We realize again that our sisters are incredibly beautiful, and the way they move with the music, dancing close and dancing in circles, together, so beautiful. Now a struggle inside. It celebrated a battle.

You can only do it once. For some people it was the first time they were out on the street and it was the beginning of a revolution for them.

For some it was the chance to show off - in drag, in feathers and flowers. A reporter asked why we considered a gay picnic political.

We told him that gay oppression was different from race oppression; that tearing off the mask of anonymity is the first step in our liberation. And we must take the first step. But you can only do it once.

We thought we wore masks to hide from other people; then we found that we ourselves didn't know who we were until we took off the masks. Next year we won't need a parade. We don't know what we will be next year.

Fifth Avenue was filled with fifty thousand women at 5:30 P.M. on August 26, 1970. The newspapers gave conservative estimates of a crowd 80,000. Well, what can you expect from the white man's media? If you had been standing on the corner of 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue you would have seen one solid mile of women. That sight alone must have chilled the heart of the hottest chauvinist. Thirty thousand women marched down Fifth Avenue for the first time in 1913. Here we are again, a new and energetic movement on the Avenue once more, this time for equal rights. Here we are again committing the same mistakes our grandmothers did fifty years ago.

The suffragette movement was dominated by wealthy and middle class women and its goals were understandably the goals of wealthy and middle class women. Revolution was not the issue. The issue was gaining some power in the white man's government. Once we possessed the vote it became painfully clear that we possessed little else. We couldn't really run for office except for a few states that let us by. The media establishment was busy digging up misleading blue laws to keep us away from the streets of imperialist government. But our grandmothers had raised a great deal to get us the vote, why couldn't they push one step further and get us equal rights?

Our struggle had been bottled in one form or another since Abigail Adams warned her husband concerning women's rights way back during the Constitutional Convention. It had taken generations to get us this far and many women were dead. They had picked up the banner from their mothers and had spent a lifetime fighting for suffrage. Many had focused only on the vote and when it was granted in 1920 they thought the objective reached. The more frightened wing of the movement regrouped around the National Woman's Party at 144 Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C. These women pushed for an Equal Rights Amendment and Alice Paul, now in her eighties, is still at 144 Constitution Avenue fighting for the amendment. The suffrage movement was exhausted, fragmented and drenched in class ignorance. The movement was spent and yet a handful of women like Miss Paul were left to carry on. But today the issue of equal rights is a reformist issue rather than radical, and it is a reformist issue to the distinct disadvantage of working class women. If our middle class sisters succeed in getting the amendment passed it will be at the expense of other women.

Perhaps this can be seen more clearly if we view the issue through the eyes of the existing

government. In May of 1968 a group of women from N.O.W. visited Patric A. Hitt in her offices at the Health, Education and Welfare Building. After much bombast concerning the unrest of American women with tokenism, Betty Friedan told this first point blank that the Equal Rights Amendment would be a clean way to buy off American women. Mrs. Hitt was to transmit this analysis to President Nixon. Apparently she did. Miss Friedan was often cynical when she assessed the value of the Equal Rights Amendment to this present administration. Being a clever politician, she translated the amendment into terms that spelled benefit to the white male government. Of course, she went for amendment because of what it can do for middle class women as well as what it can do for her hoped-for political career. But this always was, was, was. The amendment is to refuse the revolutionary wing of the Women's Liberation Movement and to open vistas of establishment opportunity for professional women. It's very simple. When the amendment is passed and ratified, women of the middle class will concern themselves on furthering their own status and neglect the 'daughters' issues the revolutionaries have raised. These women do not begin to question the basic structure of our nation. They are gaining too many benefits from Wall Street and its colonies. Even when child care centers and abortion clinics are established across the land, the country will not be shaken. It will free more women to work for more rich men who can then exploit more poor people here and abroad. More women, especially white heterosexual women, will be phoned off into the sexual market and before you know it, women will become as proficient at exploitation as men. Money talks, you dig?

Another aspect of this amendment is that its passage signals the suspension of all protective legislation. At least that's what Attorney General Mitchell has stated. Creditability should be attached to male statements only when those statements refer to punitive actions to be taken against women. In that case, Mitchell is selling the truth. Washington is full of surprises! The removal of protective legislation will not affect editors, magazine writers and public relations women, but it will affect factory workers or to put it more clearly, working class women or all races.

Working class women have neither the time nor the resources to fight their exploitation in the white man's courts. Childless bars, lunch hours, safety measures, work hour limitations, minimum wages, premium pay for overtime, weight-lifting regulations will all be wiped off the books. Since only 15% of the women workers are unionized, the prospect of quickly

fighting their way doesn't look promising. Given the male leadership at most unions it looks impossible.

The middle class women pushing for the Equal Rights Amendment have not addressed themselves to the problem of protective legislation for women workers. Their class privilege makes them blind to even a superficial recognition of the interests of oppressed women. The point is not the protective legislation per se, but the absence of consciousness in middle class women regarding other women's lives and livelihoods.

If this amendment passes, it will succeed in splitting women along class lines. The amendment will probably pass. A few white male leaders will make ridiculous and/or phony statements concerning the amendment and sweet femininity but the tide has turned. Even Emmanuel Celler, reigning bard over the House Judiciary Committee, is being forced to give ground. Celler has held the amendment up in his committee for decades with the intelligent declaration that it will get out of his committee over my dead body. Perhaps he is giving ground due to an unpublicized terminal disease (such as galloping dementia to the brain cells), but more than likely he is giving ground because larger pieces of system movement than himself are pressuring him. Given these embarrassing facts, is there any way out?

An obvious alternative is for middle class women to give up their privileges and join less privileged women so we can fight white male exploitation together. But how many people do you know who have given up their privileges lately? If working class women, Third World class women and lesbian women might join the struggle, it should be stressed that most middle class women are working out of an absence of class consciousness not out of malicious class hatred. Saying that middle class women need a consciousness of how they oppress other women is not as easy as helping them gain it. The American middle class is famous for its hostility to any concept of how they might be damaging other people. It took Blacks three hundred years to drum the idea of racial prejudice and its effects into white middle class heads—some still haven't gotten the message.

One hope lies in the fact that all women, regardless of race, class and sexual preference, are treated as less than full blown persons every day in their lives. The firms that takes deals with race, class and sexual preferences, but the corroding effects on the psyche are the same:

anger, frustration on one end and despair and helplessness on the other. Many women attempt to alleviate the damage by throwing themselves into 'acceptable' pursuits. If this recognition can be transmitted to the middle class women some might renounce their privileges over other women.

However, if middle class women continue to exercise their privileges with full knowledge of how this oppresses other women, those middle class women are destined to share the fate of the existing power structure. When non-white women, lesbians and working class women rise up against oppressors, those oppressors will be swept away.

Perhaps the clearest illustration of the existing problem and its future solution can be seen in the events of August 28th in New York City.

At 11:00 A.M., N.O.W. picketed the Stock Exchange and then went to lunch at White's, a chic mid-level restaurant in the area. At 1:00 P.M. they filed into Battery Park and made speeches thereby insuring that they would miss the working class women of the area, who lunch from 12 to 1.

As the Stock Exchange Sternroopers set down to their regular and make gaseconomic reaction a far more significant event was taking place at White's, another story. The waitresses had heard that August 28th was to be a Women's Strike. Strikes to working class women means action. These waitresses on their own initiative set down on the job at the height of rush hour and refused to serve the fat cats. Since the women were sitting in the dining room with the renowned market restaurants it was a highly charged scene. Our sisters demanded higher wages. They refused no production in this action as they have no union, furthermore they didn't ask support from Women's Liberation, nor did they seek publicity. Finally they did serve the men, but their point was made when the worker on the bottom of the heap refuses to work, the system totters quickly. The worker on the bottom of the heap is a woman. To date no information has been received as to whether the waitresses have been fired for their spirited action.

Working class women tuned in to the publicity their middle class sisters so carefully sought after, and the working class women interpreted the strike in their own direct and demarcating way to suit their own needs. In New Jersey a grandmother (name withheld by request) was



Photo by Ellen Bezos

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transvestite & transsexual liberation

by Angela Douglas

Definitions

Many transvestites are not homosexual, although the public generally classifies (and appraises) all transvestites as being such.

Transvestites and transsexuals are actually in quite different categories, but many transsexuals consider transvestition to be a necessary phase of transsexualism — so they are joined together in a certain degree.

A transvestite is a male or female who wears the clothing of the opposite gender and usually assumes the voice, habits and manner of the opposite gender. Transvestites are also known as *cross dressers*. *Female mimics* are usually men who dress as females for purposes of entertainment. *Female impersonators* also applies to such persons, but also covers criminals — such as a bank robber who would disguise himself as a woman. There is some evidence that espionage agencies of various nations train men to be expert female impersonators, and such a character was portrayed in the film "From Russia With Love." Police occasionally use officers dressed as females to attract other homosexuals, and are usually called *drag queens*.

Many transvestites are heterosexual, and are married to females who are either sympathetic to them or find sexual gratification with transvestite males. Some of these females are latent homosexuals.

Laws vary concerning transvestition in public or private, but in California there is no law prohibiting transvestition. In Hawaii where male transvestites are many, they are required by law to wear buttons with the word "flow" on them. In the Waikiki area, many transvestites are openly engaged in prostitution. In South Vietnam, male transvestite prostitutes are known as *Kai tai* and are quite popular with American servicemen.

A transsexual is a male or female who changes their physical sex characteristics usually through cosmetic surgery and female (or male) hormone treatments which are taken in both tablet and injection form. In the case of a male-to-female transsexual, breasts develop, hips spread, the muscular tissue dissolves, there is some loss of facial and body hair, the skin becomes softer, and there are many psychological changes as well. Some transsexuals also get silicone implants for breasts and hips.

In the case of female-to-male transsexuals, an artificial penis is attached to the body, and the breasts are either removed or made smaller. At present, the male-to-female operation is far more advanced than the female-to-male.

There are many *partial* transsexuals. This would be a person who only changes their sex characteristics partially. For example, a male who takes female hor-

mones, develops breasts, etcetera, but does not obtain the cosmetic surgery where the male genitals are re-erected or removed.

There are few doctors who perform such operations, and the cost is rather high. When Christine Jorgensen changed her sex, it cost around \$10,000, seventeen years ago. A similar operation can be obtained in Mexico for \$2600, and in Europe for \$3000-5000. There are several sex change clinics at universities in the U.S.A. where the operations are performed and research is being carried out.

No one really knows how many transsexuals there are.

There are some legal problems involved. In England, a court ruled that a marriage between a transsexual and a male was invalid, that a person's sex was fixed at birth and could not be changed. The ruling is being appealed. Transsexuals are also called "changelings."

Some transsexuals find relationships with "natural" females satisfying, and could be considered to be engaged in lesbianism.

Some of the problems:

As the anti-homosexual attitude in the U.S.A. is so harsh and vast, many male homosexual transvestites refuse to accept the reality of their homosexuality and claim, "I am a woman — I'm not a faggot." Of course, they are physically and "legally" males, and engage in homosexual practices with other males. Some males become transsexuals to escape the harshness of the anti-homosexual attitudes.

In most cities, transvestites have no clubs or places in which to meet other transvestites without fear of being exposed or possibly blackmailed. Most clubs that do exist are geared for a homosexual clientele, although there are some which are limited to heterosexuals or mixed.

Transvestites who live in public as females are quite aware of male chauvinism, and some have been raped, ... by heterosexual males.

Women's Liberation

There have been and may be male transvestites and transsexuals active in Women's Liberation, usually unknown to the other females. Some of them have been able to attain promotions to high positions, but as far as it is known, none have actually taken office. There are many reasons why a transvestite or a transsexual would want to be involved in Women's Lib — some seek to perfect their feminine roles as much as possible; some are sexually attracted to aggressive females; others may be intelligence agents.

When Women's Lib became aware of this problem in California, they contacted the Gay Liberation Front for assistance. Not much could really be done. A Transvestite-Transsexual Action Organization was formed and at one of the meetings of this group, several guidelines were proposed:

Transvestites: Male transvestites should not participate in Women's Liberation unless they publicly proclaim themselves as male transvestites and agree to any special limitations or conditions which may be imposed upon them by the particular feminist group.

Transsexuals: Partial and complete male to female transsexuals should be allowed to participate in Women's Liberation without any discrimination.

The overall consensus of the group seemed to be that transvestites and transsexuals should organize among themselves.

It would be best if the various feminist groups make clear policies concerning active participation by transvestites and transsexuals, as there will be many thousands more in a few years, and many will want to become active in Women's Lib.

Gay Liberation

In California, Gay Liberation has not been of much help to transvestites and transsexuals, and there are few transvestites or transsexuals involved in Gay Liberation at this time. Part of the reason is that many male homosexuals are extremely chauvinistic, and dislike anything feminine — and a male wearing feminine attire or a male who seeks womanhood is particularly abhorrent to such individuals.

The transvestites and transsexuals who were involved with Gay Liberation found that they were used only for confrontation's sake at gay power demonstrations, and that nothing was being done to help their lifestyles.

Transvestite-Transsexual Liberation

On June 2nd, six persons visited Los Angeles City College and spoke with hundreds of students about transvestition and transsexualism. Four were male transvestites, two were partial transvestites. Most of us had never been involved in any kind of demonstration before, and it was a unique experience. There was very little trouble from superstitious Black or Chinese students, as had been expected. The conclusion of our time to help inform the public about transvestites, and their education of the youth was of great importance. It was very successful, and several male homosexuals who are in the Gay Liberation front were invited. The GLF had sponsored the "situation" as a follow up to a demonstration of police harassment of homosexuals on the campus. However, the students seemed to be far more interested in transvestition and transsexualism than gay liberation.

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watching the news coverage of the day and saw a poster that said, "Starve a Rat Today." She turned to her long time spouse and declared her cooking days were over and he could damn well cook for her. A protest from her fury time exploiter was answered with a fist on the table and "Liberation or Separation!" He cooked and he's cooking still.

Reports filtered in through telephones and by word of mouth of women demanding the labor be shared. One man in Pennsylvania came home to find a suitcase packed with all his belongings sitting on the front step. The sister had decided to break her chains rather than launch them.

Wall Street was the scene of more activity when a group of women liberated the office workers to unionize. The leafleting was planned as an alternative action to all the middle class pomp and circumstance. These few women have been working for months a few for years;

to help close the class gap. In desperation they have been forced to stop heating their brains out trying to educate middle class women, and they have begun to organize working class women. These women and a handful of other, obscene comments from me — yes, thus some custom financiers tend to drop the mask of respectability when it comes to women unionizing their "shops." The organizers at Wall St. know better than to ask for support from the glamour elements of the movement. All the cheerers and well dressed women showed up on Fifth Avenue and marched down to Bryant Park. There the thousands cheered to the strains of Betty Friedan's "we want to walk groups, among them the Third World women and the lesbians, have been the only elements in New York City willing to tackle the problem. There were no TV cameras on Wall St. and Nassau, no crowds of well dressed women singing, "Liberation Now!"; there were hurried exchanges with file clerks and secretaries afraid of losing their jobs. There were hostile and

hand in hand with men! Gloria Steinem and Kate Millet gave speeches of love and sisterhood. The women were enthusiastic. The only jarring note was when a lesbian grabbed the microphone after being discouraged by the cheerers. She told the crowd to stand behind their lesbian sisters who were being arrested and harassed for no reason at all — except of course, that they are lesbians. And the show went on. No cheers for the Wall Street workers, no cheers for the Black sisters thrown into jails, no cheers for the lesbians beaten senseless on the streets. The cheers were all for a future of protected poodles and for the old Equal Rights Amendment, the hand-aid to heal the gaping, festering wound of rich, white, American male politics.

But the cheers have stirred new women... women who won't make a mockery of the word Liberation... women who trust deeds, not the promise of them... poor women, Black women, Puerto Rican women, Asian-American women, working women and women who love their sisters... women who will bypass rhetoric and make a revolution.