

come out!

25c

a liberation forum for the gay community



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GAY LIBERATION FORUM

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Growing up obscene

by Perry Brass



We all grew up obscene. Obscenity is in the mind of the beholder. I grew up in an obscene society when the old world of the 1950's was meeting the new world of the 1960's. I don't really remember the 1950's. My father died in 1958 when I was eleven. I don't remember Eisenhower. All I remember of the 1950's was at the end of it my father died. But then where I grew up there was no time, except possibly after the War, either World War II or the Civil War, most probably the Civil War. But I grew up in an obscene society in which it was considered normal that blacks sat in the back of the bus and no one was homosexual, at least I knew because the people I know were too good to be that way. I was first made aware of homosexuality when I was twelve and one of my classmates called me a queer. I thought that meant anyone who had been ostracized from society and since I already thought my society was worth used toilet paper, I readily agreed that I was a queer. I didn't come out until I was sixteen. The man who brought me out told me that homosexuality was like magic and most people were afraid of magic because they couldn't understand any other forces in their lives except hatred.

The first time I saw the Beatles was in 1963 or 1964. I was watching television at the homes of some "friends". We had just had a discussion about "integration". It had been suggested by the son of one of the rabbis in our town that as Southern Jews the best way we could help the "Negro" was being kinder to our

"Schvartzes" (moids). Then when it was time for Ed Sullivan, the high point of Sunday night, some one turned on the box and I saw the Beatles for the first time. One of the boys present, who was in the Air Force and was dating a girl from a good Jewish family, saw them and said they looked like the queens on Market Street in San Francisco. I decided to go to San Francisco as soon as I could. I had to go through one more year of obscenity at the University of Georgia before I could split. The high point of that year was discovering that liberals didn't like "queens" any more than rednecks. I also discovered that if you told people exactly what they wanted to know, they thought you were alright. I rated high enough in my durability masculinity tests by calling women "cunts". I played sadistic tricks on the few people I allowed myself to get close to. I got drunk with my best friend so that we could kiss each other and blame it on being too drunk to know what we were doing.

I did not begin to grow up until I left. I lived in downtown Los Angeles for a while and made \$1.40 an hour working for a department store. The job lasted for about five weeks when I was laid off for lack of business. I had to hustle to make money. The men who picked me up used to lecture me on the degradation of hustling. They paid me anyway. They asked me how could I sell my body. I asked them how they could try to buy my youth. I hated them and I knew they got the best of the

business. But I felt and have always felt that I was a fugitive from an obscene society and fugitives must make a way, however they can.

When I came to New York, I started working in advertising. I still called women cunts so that the other "men" I worked around would think I liked women. I discovered what real male prostitution was - working for something you hated to keep going in a society that used you and then spit you out when you were no longer useful to it. I got fired a lot. "Geo, you're a sweet guy and we think you're really creative but right now we can't use your type"...in other words, go home and be a starving artist.

I am still growing up, the obscenity still continues. A gallery owner in the Village told me last weekend that he couldn't sell my work; it was too depressing. I would have to do more positive happy things for the "public". Work that didn't deal with real things who wants to have Viet Nam in their living room? I told him I'd rather go back to working in advertising first or maybe go back to hustling. Montovan music was playing in the back room of his shop. He was very pleasant. He told me he wouldn't afford for his shop to become a museum. Why should it, when he was already?

When I try to sell "Come Out" on the streets, a lot of people walk past me, Uttar, and tell me "I've come out a long time ago!" then they walk on. I'm sure this is not the last obscenity I will encounter in my life.

COMMIES FREAK OUT PINKO QUEERS

3.

On Wednesday, October 14, eight GLF'ers (four women and four men) went to the Federal Courthouse to demonstrate in support of Angela Davis, a sister who was being arraigned inside. When they arrived, two picket lines had already been formed - one under the banner of the Communist Party, and one consisting of Third World people.

Since the GLF'ers were white, they could not march under the Third World banners; nor did they wish to march under the Communist Party banner. One of them, Debi, went home and made a banner out of a sheet and shoe polish. It read, "Gay Liberation Front Women." The GLF'ers took the banner and then tried to join the line headed by the Communist Party.

A C.P. representative informed them that they couldn't march with that banner. When asked why, he said it wasn't relevant. Debi said it was women supporting a woman, and hadn't the C.P. ever heard of women's liberation. The C.P. representative told her that it wasn't relevant to the working class; and Ronnie,

another gay sister, pointed out that gay people were definitely a part of the working class.

The C.P. representative then fell back on the capitalist principle of ownership and said that it was the Party's picket line, and that GLF members could march under the C.P. banner, but couldn't hang the GLF banner onto the line. Then some straight sisters came over from the line and said, "Are you here to support Angela Davis?" The GLF'ers shouted, "Yes, Right On!" And the sisters replied, "Come on the line and open your banner."

The Communist Party members then physically knocked the gay people, or tried to, repeating, "You can't get on the line with that banner." And the GLF'ers asked, "If we get on and open it, what are you going to do? Call the pigs?" The Communists replied, "Yes, if we have to."

The Communists then started yelling, "Gay red-baiting," and the gay brothers shouted, "Gay-baiting." Soon the crowd picked up the chant, "Gay-baiting,

gay-baiting."

Ronnie said, "We know that you're the only group on the left that doesn't recognize gay liberation." The C.P. representative sneered, "We're the only group on the left that has any sense." He then said that he would have to go and speak to someone for permission for the gays to carry their banner, but our brothers and sisters said that they weren't waiting for anyone's permission, and with the support of everyone else on the line, they opened up their banner.

The Communists made a final attempt to control the demonstration - they ran off and got a huge banner reading "Communist Party - U.S.A." and marched right in front of the gays, blocking off the gay banner whenever photographers appeared.

The march went on for two hours. When the chant of "Black, black power to the black, black people" was raised, the GLF'ers inserted "Gay power" after "Woman power" and the YAWF and other groups picked it up. The Communist Party freaked out every time.