

## 26. • *Chicago Gay Liberation Front*

# A LEAFLET FOR THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (1970)

After the 1969 Stonewall Riots, queer activist groups formed under the name the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). Emboldened with a new revolutionary fervor, these activists challenged the prevailing social norms around homosexuality including the belief that homosexuals were "sick." Up until the mid-twentieth century, the consensus within the medical and psychiatric communities was that homosexuality was an illness that should be treated. However, influenced by Alfred Kinsey and other pioneering researchers in the 1950s and 1960s, an increasing number of doctors began to question this view. Gay activists like those in the GLF argued that the pathologization of homosexuality encouraged antigay attitudes and that to the extent that homosexuals experienced psychological problems, the cause was the discrimination they faced, not something intrinsic to their sexual orientation. Activists in the Chicago GLF distributed "A Leaflet for the American Medical Association" to doctors attending the 1970 convention of the American Medical Association. Three years later the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of psychiatric disorders.

The establishment school of psychiatry is based on the premise that people who are hurting should solve their problems by "adjusting" to the situation. For the homosexual, this means becoming adept at straight-fronting, learning how to survive in a hostile world, how to settle for housing in the gay ghetto, how to be satisfied with a profession in which homosexuals are tolerated, and how to live with low self-esteem.

The adjustment school places the burden on each individual homosexual to learn to bear his torment. But the "problem" of homosexuality is never solved under this scheme; the anti-homosexualist attitude of society, which is the cause of the homosexual's trouble, goes unchallenged. And there's always another paying patient on the psychiatrist's couch.

Dr. Socarides claims, "A human being is sick when he fails to function in his appropriate gender

identity, which is appropriate to his anatomy." Who determined "appropriateness"? The psychiatrist as moralist? Certainly there is no scientific basis for defining "appropriate" sexual behavior. In a study of homosexuality in other species and other cultures, Ford and Beach in *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* conclude, "Human homosexuality is not a product of hormonal imbalance or 'perverted heredity.' It is the product of the fundamental mammalian heritage of general sexual responsiveness as modified under the impact of experience."

Other than invoking moral standards, Dr. Socarides claims that homosexuality is an emotional illness because of the guilt and anxieties in homosexual life. Would he also consider Judaism an emotional illness because of the paranoia which Jews experienced in Nazi Germany?

We homosexuals of gay liberation believe that the adjustment school of therapy is not a valid approach to society.

We refuse to adjust to our oppression, and believe that the key to our mental health, and to the mental health of all oppressed peoples in a racist, sexist, capitalist society, is a radical change in the structure and accompanying attitudes of the entire social system.

Mental health for women does not mean therapy for women—it means the elimination of male supremacy. Not therapy for blacks, but an end to racism. The poor don't need psychiatrists (what a joke at 25 bucks a throw!)—they need democratic distribution of wealth. **OFF THE COUCHES, INTO THE STREETS!**

We see political organizing and collective action as the strategy for effecting this social change. We declare that we are healthy homosexuals in a sexist society, and that homosexuality is at least on a par with heterosexuality as a way for people to relate to each other (know any men that don't dominate women?).

Since the prevalent notion in society is that homosexuality is wrong, all those who recognize that this attitude is damaging to people, and that it must be corrected, have to raise their voices in opposition to anti-homosexuality. Not to do so is to permit the myth of homosexual pathology to

continue and to comply in the homosexual's continued suffering from senseless stigmatization.

A psychiatrist who allows a homosexual patient—who has been subject to a barrage of anti-homosexual sentiments his whole life—to continue in the belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality, is the greatest obstacle to his patient's health and well-being.

We furthermore urge psychiatrists to refer their homosexual patients to gay liberation (and other patients who are victims of oppression to relevant liberation movements). Once relieved of patients whose guilt is not deserved but imposed, psychiatrists will be able to devote all their effort to the rich—who do earn their guilt but not their wealth, and can best afford to pay psychiatrists' fees.

We are convinced that a picket and a dance will do more for the vast majority of homosexuals than two years on the couch. We call on the medical profession to repudiate the adjustment approach as a solution to homosexual oppression and instead to further homosexual liberation by working in a variety of political ways (re-educating the public, supporting pickets, attending rallies, promoting social events, etc.) to change the situation of homosexuals in this society.

Join us in the struggle for a world in which all human beings are free to love without fear or shame.

## 27. • *The Combahee River Collective*

# A BLACK FEMINIST STATEMENT (1977)

The Combahee River Collective (CRC) was an activist group who wanted to draw attention to the intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. After attending a meeting of the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973, members of the Collective saw the need for a new organization, one with a more radical vision and that would better address issues that were important to black lesbians.