

PART TWO
RADICAL GAY PERSPECTIVES

Carl Wittman

Refugees from Amerika:
A Gay Manifesto

—Wittman's persuasive article has been referred to by some as the bible of the Gay Liberation Movement. The author carefully solidifies his argument that the homosexual is a viciously persecuted individual. In effect, this piece constitutes an elementary "bill of rights" for homosexuals—both male and female.

San Francisco is a refugee camp for homosexuals. We have fled here from every part of the nation, and like refugees elsewhere, we came not because it is so great here, but because it was so bad there. By the tens of thousands, we fled small towns where to be ourselves would endanger our jobs and any hope of a decent life; we have fled from blackmailing cops, from families who disowned or "tolerated" us; we have been drummed out of the armed services, thrown out of schools, fired from jobs, beaten by punks and policemen.

And we have formed a ghetto, out of self protection. It is a ghetto, rather than a free territory, because it is still theirs. Straight cops patrol us, straight legislators make our laws, straight employers keep us in line, straight money exploits us. And we have pretended everything is OK, because we haven't been able to see how to change it—we've been afraid.

In the past year, there has been an awakening of gay liberation ideas and energy. How it began we don't know: perhaps we were inspired by black people and their liberation movement; we learned how to stop pretending from the hip revolution. Amerika in all its ugliness has surfaced with the war and our national leaders. And we are revulsed by the quality of our ghetto life.

Where once there was frustration, alienation, and cynicism, there are new traits among liberated gays: we are full of love for each other and are showing it; we are full of anger at what has been done to us. And as we recall all the self-censorship and repression for so many years, a reservoir of tears pours out of our eyes. And we are euphoric, high, with the initial flourish of a movement.

We want to make ourselves clear; our first job is to liberate ourselves, and that means clearing our heads of the garbage that's been poured into them. This pamphlet is an attempt at raising a number of issues, and present some ideas to replace the old ones. It is primarily for ourselves—a starting point for discussion. If straight people of good will find it useful in understanding what gay liberation is about, so much the better.

It should also be clear that these ideas reflect the perspective of one person, and are determined not only by my homosexuality, but my being white, male, and middle class. It is my individual consciousness. Our group consciousness will evolve as we get ourselves together—we are only at the beginning.

VII. ON COALITION

Right now the bulk of our work has to be among ourselves—selfeducating, fending off attacks, and building our free territory. Thus basically we have to have a gay/straight vision of the world, until the oppression of gays is ended.

But two problems exist with that as a total vision: 1) we can't change Amerika alone, we need coalition with other oppressed groups at some point; 2) many of us have "mixed" identities—we are gay, and also we are part of another group trying to free itself—women, blacks, other minority groups; we may also have taken on identities which are vital to us.

CONCLUSION: AN OUTLINE OF IMPERATIVES FOR GAY LIBERATION

1. Free ourselves: come out, everywhere; initiate self-defense and political activity; initiate community institutions; think
2. Turn other gay people on: talk all the time; understand, accept, forgive.
3. Free the homosexual in everyone: we'll be getting a lot of shit from threatened latents: be gentle and keep talking and acting free.
4. We've been playing an act for a long time: we're consummate actors. Now we can begin TO BE, and it'll be a good show!