

OUT[®] FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

LGBTQ+ History Lesson

Inquiry Question: How did the movement for LGBT equality go from assimilation to “coming out” in the 1950s - 1970s?

Standard: 11.10



Inquiry Question:

Question: How did the movement for LGBT equality go from assimilation to “coming out” in the 1950s - 1970s? (Change Over Time)

Peta Lindsay

plindsay@laleadership.org

@petalindsay

Content Standards

CA Social Studies Standard: 11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.

CCSS Standards:

History and Social Science:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Speaking and Listening:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Overview of Lesson

In this lesson students learn about the diverse perspectives and organizations that shaped the movement for LGBTQ equality from the 1950s through the 1970s. Students will participate in a simulation where they play the role of members of specific, historically significant organizations that emerged in the LGBT movement between 1950-1970s, trying to form a united coalition and make decisions about the big political questions of the day. Students will have to collaborate to write and present statements that represent their organization's perspective in a political conference that will last 3 rounds. In each round they will discuss and debate a major event/topic in the historical LGBT movement. Then they will vote on proposals. Ostensibly, the group will try to reach consensus but the goal is greater understanding of the arguments, experiences and material conditions that shaped the movement.

This lesson aligns with LGBT history month and could be incorporated into a larger unit on the Civil Rights movement (understanding the mechanics of movement building, how oppressed groups achieved civil rights).

Students will be able to: analyze the historical context and major political ideas in the movement for LGBT rights between 1950-1975. Students will read, discuss and analyze primary and secondary source historical documents in small groups. Students will collaborate to write and orally present historical arguments in a simulated political conference.

Sources

- Hook: The Ladder Cover, 1957
- Primary Source Groups 1-5:
 - Group 1: Mattachine Statement of Purpose, 1951
 - Group 2: ONE Magazine Statement of Beliefs and Purpose 1952
“I am Glad I am a Homosexual” ONE magazine 1958, Hollister Barnes
 - Group 3: Statement of Purpose - Daughters of Bilitis 1955
What About the DOB? From the Ladder 1959
 - Group 4: Gay Liberation Front: Program Platform Statement, 1970
 - Group 5: The Woman-Identified Woman, Radicalesbians 1970
- Conference Material - Primary Sources:
 - Document A: Society for Individual Rights (SIR) Homosexual Bill of Rights
 - Document B: The PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) Flyer, 02/11/67
 - Document C: ONE, Inc. promotional materials (1960/1969), Promoting first Gay-In, Griffith Park 1968
 - “Coming Out” PowerPoint presentation: lgbtcenter.org/ofss-ppt
- “Coming Out” Handout Packet:
 - Groups 1-5 Background Info and Primary Source (pg. 1-15)
 - I-IV Reading Questions, Primary Source Analysis and Discussion Questions, Instructions for Opening Statement and Logo/Poster (pg. 16-17)
 - Opening Statement Template (pg. 18)
 - Conference Notes sheet (pg. 19)
 - Reference List (pg. 20)

Procedures

This lesson may take 3 days to complete.

Day 1: Introduce lesson, assign groups and reading

Day 2: Prepare Opening Statements and Logo

Day 3: Conference Simulation

1. Instructor will begin with provocation/quick write question on slide #2 of ppt presentation, to introduce theme of assimilation versus coming out. Draw student attention to the visual, ask them to imagine what it’s supposed to represent. Use about 5 minutes for a quick-write, followed by a think-pair-share discussion on this slide.



2. Slides #3-8 provide historical context and background on LGBT struggle before Stonewall. Optional, you may have other background materials that you prefer. Slide #4 includes lesson explanation and goal:
In this lesson, YOU will play the role of an LGBT activist in the decades before and after Stonewall! Our goal: to better understand the historical leaders, moments and choices that transformed this powerful movement for equality.
3. Slide #9 front loads concept of “Assimilation”, pause on this side for pair-share discussion for processing of concept.
4. Slide #10: Guiding question - Begin activity. Assign students to small groups, I prefer mixed-ability small groups as a scaffold/differentiation.
5. Slide #11: Instruct students to choose small group roles for the activity. Explain that everyone will collaborate throughout activity but each person will be ultimately responsible for their job. Can have more than one researcher or recorder if groups are large.
6. Slide #12: Rubric for small group discussion. Go over rubric with students. Explain that for Day 1 of this lesson they will be graded on verbal participation in their small groups. For grading I use a spreadsheet with students names in rows and 4 columns: On-Task, Explain, Text, Build. Then circle the room while they talk, mark when you hear/see skills.
7. Assign each group a number, 1-5.
Group 1: Mattachine Society
Group 2: ONE Inc.
Group 3: Daughters of Bilitis
Group 4: Gay Liberation Front
Group 5: Radicalesbians
Materials are located on pages 1-17. Each group member should get a copy of the background reading on their group (2 pages), the primary source reading on their group (1 page) and the Reading Questions and activities (2 pages, located on pages 16-17 in handout). Primary source documents may include difficult language/concepts, might want to encourage students to annotate. Be ready to offer support.
8. Instructor monitors group while they read and discuss documents. Award points using Small Group Discussion rubric.
9. Slide #14: Explain to students that we will be simulating a conference where they are going to have to represent their group. Encourage them to think of creative ways to do this, will they wear costumes? Consider awarding points for creativity. Instruct students to write an opening statement for the conference that explains who their organization is and what they want. Tell students they can adopt new personas (new names, ways of speaking) to better represent their group if they’d like. Warn them against using harmful stereotypes, urge them to be as authentic as possible. Suggest they do more research to prepare if necessary. Students should also prepare a visual representation for their group, a poster or logo. See Instructions on handout page 17 for more details.
10. Slides #15-16: Go over Meeting Schedule (procedure) with students, refer back to this slide throughout the conference when necessary. Welcome students to conference and go over ground rules. Remind them that respectful discussion, hearing everyone out is the goal.

Each group should take turns sharing opening statement and presenting poster. Poster can be displayed where group is sitting throughout the conference.

11. After Opening Statements, distribute Conference Notes sheet (page 19) so that students can keep track of conference discussion (important for reflection activity).

12. Go over instructions for replying to each question. Refer back to this slide as necessary.

13. Instructor introduces Questions A-C. **For each question, you may wish to provide additional background information using your own sources or video.** For each question, distribute the appropriate primary source documents (Documents A-C) to each group. Follow the procedure on slide 16:

Introduce Issue

Group discuss response (5-10 min)

Group writes response (5-10 min)

Groups share response (5-10 min)

Rebuttals? (5 min)

Vote on Issue

Repeat for Questions A-C. Encourage students to write summaries of arguments and conference decisions on Conference Notes sheet.

14. After final vote, give students research and reflection assignment.

Students can choose whatever topic, group or individual featured in lesson most interests them. Students should conduct independent research on their topic using at least 3 different sources, answer question:

In what ways were the discussions, topics or decisions reached in our conference similar to or different from the real history person, topic or event? What do you think might account for these differences?

You can assign short answer or essay response.

2. Community Building Activity:

Pass out 4-5 post-its to everyone. Instruct students to brainstorm various identities that they have and write them on the post-it's. Give example if needed.

Instruct students to place post-its on the appropriate poster (try not to reveal these prematurely) around the room, labeled:

- Hobby/interest
- Race/ethnicity
- Faith/spirituality
- Sexuality, gender identity
- Job/responsibility
- Disability
- Relation to others
- Socioeconomic
- Language



Play music and instruct students to do a **gallery walk** looking at all the identities posted around the room. When the music stops, find a partner and share about one of your post-its nearby. Repeat this 3-4 times as time permits.

3. **Response group:** Instruct students to listen to the statement and move to a spot in the room correlating to “strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.”

- My K-12 schooling represented identities that are important to me.
- My K-12 schooling helped me be proud to be me.
- My K-12 schooling included LGBTQ stories.
- It’s important to me that I am represented in history classes.

If time permits, use GSA’s Prezi about the Fair Act to introduce it.

4. **Pre-Reading/Preview Strategy:** Split students into groups of three by handing out an image, a vocab word, or a definition to each student. Give students 5 minutes to find their group and read the definition to each other. Instruct students to create a short skit illustrating the vocab word.

Possible words:

- state bill (SB)
- senator
- vetoed
- legal right
- judiciary
- discriminatory bias
- sexual orientation
- gender identity

5. **Response group - Write-around close-read:**

Pass out a poster with excerpts of the SB48 legal text. Model for students to circle words or phrases and annotate nearby:

- This is interesting but what if/about...
- This is the most important part because...
- A question I have about this is...

Have students pass the posters to the next group. They will be responding to the previous group’s by adding:

- I agree because...
- I disagree because...

6. Instruct students to write a 1-2 sentence summary of their excerpt to report back to the class.



7. Show video entitled [How SB 48 Will Impact Your Children](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJx1tpqe5W8). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJx1tpqe5W8>.

Choose 1-3 questions from the Critical Media Literacy framework (Share 2016). Have students discuss the question with the elbow partner, referencing the video. Use a poster and markers to record answers to the questions from student volunteers.

8. Show video excerpt of youth voices advocating for LGBTQ history in education during the 2011 Senate Judiciary hearing:

[Senate judiciary committee part 1 & 2](https://www.senate.ca.gov/media-archive?title=&startdate=04%2F05%2F2011&enddate=04%2F05%2F2011) 1:27 part 1, beginning of part 2. Retrieved from <https://www.senate.ca.gov/media-archive?title=&startdate=04%2F05%2F2011&enddate=04%2F05%2F2011>.

Use CML questions to frame discussion with partner. Record answers on another poster.

Assessment

Reading Questions for each group

Primary Source Analysis - Discussion Questions

Small Group Discussion of documents (see rubric on ppt slide #12)

Written Opening Statement - can be graded for historical accuracy, depth

Oral Presentation of Opening Statement

Group Poster/Logo - can be graded for accuracy & visual presentation

Conference Notes Sheet

Written/oral arguments during conference

Research and Reflection extension

Bibliography

All primary source documents courtesy ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives unless otherwise noted

Primary Sources

Blasius, M., & Phelan, S. (1997). *We are everywhere: a historical sourcebook of gay and lesbian politics*. London: Routledge.

Faderman, L., & Timmons, S. (2006). *Gay L.A.: A history of sexual outlaws, power politics, and lipstick lesbians*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gay Liberation Front Platform Statement, December 2, 1970. (1970). University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections. Tim Mayhew Collection on Gay Rights, Seattle, WA.

Katz, J. N. (1992). *Gay American history: Lesbians and gay men in the U.S.A.* New York: Meridan Books.

Keetley, D., & Pettegrew, J. (2005). *Public women, public words: A Documentary history of American feminism (Volume II)*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.



Marcus, E. (1992). *Making history: The struggle for gay and lesbian equal rights, 1945-1990: An oral history*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial.

Radicalesbians. (1970). *The Woman-Identified Woman*. Retrieved from <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/radicalesbianswoman.html>

Zonkel, P. (2015, June 8). Long Beach LGBT activist Carolyn Weathers recognized as 'unsung hero' who keeps on fighting. *Press-Telegram*. Retrieved July 26, 2018, from <https://www.presstelegram.com/2015/06/08/long-beach-lgbt-activist-carolyn-weathers-recognized-as-unsung-hero-who-keeps-on-fighting/>

Photos

Gruber, J. *Christmas party of the Mattachine Society* [Photograph found in Coll2011-003 Harry Hay papers, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]. Retrieved July 26, 2018, from <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll4/id/5756/rec/2>

Classroom at ONE [Photograph found in Coll2011-001 ONE Incorporated records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]. (n.d.). Retrieved July 26, 2018, from <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll4/id/337/rec/14>

"*Ida*," a member of the *Gay Liberation Front and the Lavender Menace*, 1970. Photograph by Diana Davies. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Diana Davies Papers. Copyright Diana Davies. Digital ID: 1582182 <http://web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/radicalesbians.html>

Four in costume at Gay-In at Griffith Park, Los Angeles. 1970 [Photograph found in Coll2012-031 Gay Liberation Front (GLF) Los Angeles records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]. Retrieved June 26, 2018, from <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll4/id/344/rec/3> (Originally photographed 1970)



Source A: Society for Individual Rights (SIR) Homosexual Bill of Rights

A HOMOSEXUAL BILL OF RIGHTS

I

BASIC RIGHTS

1. Private consensual sex acts between persons over the age of consent shall not be offenses.
2. Solicitation for any sexual act shall not be an offense except upon the filing of a complaint by the aggrieved party, not a police officer or agent.
3. A person's sexual orientation or practice shall not be a factor in the granting or renewing of Federal security clearance, visas, and the granting of citizenship.
4. Service in and discharge from the armed forces and eligibility to VA benefits shall be without reference to homosexuality.
5. A person's sexual orientation or practice shall not affect his eligibility for employment with federal, state, or local governments.

Prepared & Distributed by

**SOCIETY FOR
INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTS**

S.I.R.

83 SIXTH STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

A HOMOSEXUAL BILL OF RIGHTS

II

AREAS FOR IMMEDIATE REFORM

1. Police and other government agents shall cease the practice of enticement and entrapment of homosexuals.
2. Police shall desist from notifying the employers of those arrested for homosexual offenses.
3. Neither the police department nor any other government agency shall keep files solely for the purpose of identifying homosexuals.
4. The practice of harassing bars and other establishments and of revoking their licenses because they cater to homosexuals cease.
5. The practice of reviewing less-than-honorable military discharges, granted for homosexual orientation or practice, shall be established, with the goal of upgrading such discharges.
6. The registration of sex offenders shall not be required.
7. City ordinances involving sexual matters shall be rescinded and these matters left to state legislatures.
8. Conviction for homosexual offenses shall not be the basis for prohibiting issuance of professional licenses nor for the revocation of these licenses.
9. No questions regarding sexual orientation or practice shall appear on application forms, personnel data sheets, or in personal interviews.
10. No governmental agency shall use the classification of homosexuality to limit the freedom of any homosexual.



Source B: The PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) Flyer, February 2, 1967.

CRISIS

FOR INFORMATION

CALL

666-5312

OR

936-7809

POLICE LAWLESSNESS MUST BE STOPPED!!

HAVING ASKED FOR
A BADGE NUMBER,
A YOUTH IS HANDCUFFED
AND BRUTALLY THROWN
TO THE PAVEMENT.



THIS HAS HAPPENED IN
COUNTLESS STREETS, BARS,
AND RESTAURANTS IN ALL
SECTIONS OF OUR CITY.

Because Police Lawlessness is not just a problem of the Sunset Strip
but a problem that exists throughout the City of Los Angeles,
there will be:

SIMULTANEOUS DEMONSTRATIONS in **Silverlake**

Sunset & Hyperion

3900 Sunset Blvd.

&

Sunset Strip Watts East L.A. Pacoima Venice

**Arbitrary Arrests -
Illegal Search & Seizure
Police Perjury in Courts**

ENTRAPMENT

ABUSE of OUR RIGHTS & DIGNITY

**must
stop!**

SATURDAY FEB 11 9:00 P.M.

Source C: ONE, Inc. promotional materials (1960/1969), Promoting first Gay-In. Griffith Park. 1968.

Come and CAVORT!
at the Gala Los Angeles **gay-in**



MEMORIAL DAY (Thursday, May 30th) at 2 - 5 P.M.
at the "Merry-Go-Round" Area of Crystal Springs Picnic Ground, Griffith Park

BRING YOUR LUNCH

PUNCH 'n CRACKERS PROVIDED

LIVE (VERY LIVE) MUSIC

This historic first, a gay day in the park, is co-sponsored by:

The Los Angeles Advocate
The National League for Social Understanding, Inc.
One, Incorporated
Pursuit & Symposium
The Southern California Council on Religion &
the Homophile
Tangents

Special Guest Speaker:

Tuesday, June 4th, along with the party primaries, Los Angeles voters will be electing a District Attorney - a public official who has a lot to say about how the police enforce the laws. The homophile organizations of Los Angeles want to hear, and invite you, and members of all police-harrassed minorities to hear, what candidate Mike Hannon has to say about his race for this non-partisan job.

Hear MIKE HANNON speaking, and answering questions on:

"HOW TO REBUILD RESPECT FOR THE LAW"

Saturday night, after the "GAY-IN", candidate Mike Hannon will make a tour of "Gay Bars" - starting early on Main Street and proceeding to the "Little Strip", West Hollywood, the Adams District and ending up in the Valley about closing time. This will be another chance to air your complaints.

Issued by the Los Angeles "Gay-In" Committee. For further information, contact any one of the sponsoring organizations listed above.

Handout Packet for Class exercise: “Coming Out”: From Assimilation to Visibility

Group 1: Mattachine Society



Gruber, J. Christmas party of the Mattachine Society [Photograph found in Coll2011-003 Harry Hay papers, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles].

When Mattachine founder Harry Hay first began to contact his friends about creating an organization for homosexuals, many of his friends told him that he was crazy. The year was 1948 and the Lavender Scare had just begun, resulting in vicious campaigns by federal and local authorities to identify LGBT people (called “perverts” at the time) under the idea that they presented a threat to national security. By 1953 the State Department reported that they had fired 425 suspected homosexuals from their ranks. Many were being persecuted, arrested and fired. Many of those identified as homosexuals or associated with them, were ruined. Suicides were not uncommon among this group.

As a young man, Harry Hay had heard of homosexual organizations that had begun in the 1920s, many of them in Europe and just a few in the United States. The US organizations that had come before his had all dissolved and he was told by those who’d been a part of the earlier movement to understand their failure as a warning that what he was attempting to do could not be done. But Harry Hay had another organizational influence: he had also been a member of the Communist Party at a time when they were extremely active, organizing strikes for workers rights and protests against racism, all over the country, despite being a constant target for government scrutiny and prosecutions. From his time in the Communist Party, Harry Hay learned how to organize “underground”, in secret anonymous cells, or small groups. He decided to apply the tactics he learned in the Communist Party into a new organization for the advancement of gay Americans. He called his new organization the Mattachine Society.

The name Mattachine comes from a society of French actors who kept their identities secret and used their art as to protest against oppression of the French peasantry. According to Hay, “We took the name Mattachine because we felt that we 1950s gays were also a masked people, unknown and anonymous, who might become engaged in morale

building and helping ourselves and others, through struggle, to move towards total redress and change” (Katz, 1992, p. 413).

Hay and friends set about building their organization by going to known LGBT hangout spots and engaging people in conversations about politics, war and homosexuality. Secrecy and anonymity were extremely important to this group, so they would very discreetly invite people they met to private meetings at members’ homes. Both men and women were invited to participate but mostly men joined, many of whom were upper class professionals and feared losing their jobs if they were identified as gay. Sometimes men brought women to the meeting as a cover. Mattachine required that their members dress conservatively (wearing suits) and not attract attention by acting too “flamboyantly”. Trans people were excluded from this organization. Members of Mattachine used the word “homophile” instead of “homosexual” in order to avoid negative associations with the word homosexual. In this super-secret group, there were no membership lists and members were organized into individual cells, each cell did not know the members of other cells. Leaders were not identified to the members. Harry Hay said, “At the start of our organizing [we] felt that if we made bad mistakes and ruined the thing it might be many, many years before the attempt to organize Gay people would be tried again. So we had to do it right, if possible” (Katz, 1992, p. 413).

Mattachine operated in secrecy until their first big case in 1952. That year, Mattachine member Dale Jennings was arrested on charges of soliciting an officer to commit a homosexual act. Jennings had been approached by an undercover officer and the officer claimed that Jennings had tried to solicit him for sex. This seemed to be a very typical case of entrapment by the LAPD, something that many members of Mattachine were familiar with and hated. Mattachine took up Jennings’ case and decided to launch a political defense, forming the Mattachine Society of Los Angeles Citizens’ Committee to Outlaw Entrapment. The charges that Jennings received (vagrancy and lewdness charges) were very typical for gay men at the time, but his defense against those charges was NOT typical. Usually men in his situation would claim that they were not homosexual and were thus innocent. In this case however, Jennings declared that he was homosexual but was NOT guilty of the acts with which he was charged. He and the Mattachine organization believed this to be an important struggle for civil rights. With the help of a skilled lawyer, the charges against Dale Jennings were dismissed and it was the first time in California history that an admitted homosexual was freed on vagrancy and lewdness charges. This was a big victory for Mattachine.

With success came great growth, in the following weeks and months many more people joined Mattachine and the organization grew. This also meant more public scrutiny for Mattachine, an organization that depended on secrecy to protect the lives and livelihoods of their members. This created tension within the organization, as members feared being exposed and discredited. Many began to fear being associated with Communists, always a possibility because the founding members of Mattachine were Communists and they borrowed heavily from Communist organizing tactics. A split developed in the organization with the newer, more middle-class membership calling for political radicals to be removed. As Harry Hay recalls, “In 1953 Joe McCarthy was still around, and we would have to become respectable” (Katz, 1992, p. 417). Harry Hay soon resigned his membership in Mattachine.

After 1953 Mattachine became more conservative in their political orientation, though they continued to advocate for homosexual civil rights. They focused on legal struggles, took loyalty oaths to the United States and encouraged members to emphasize that they were just like everyone else, they just wanted a few laws changed. By 1956 the research director for Mattachine went so far as to declare that they wanted to find the cause of homosexuality and “end the problem” (Faderman & Timmons, 2006, p. 115). Though their politics changed over time, Mattachine’s legacy is important to the modern LGBT struggle. They were one of the very first organizations to advocate for LGBT rights in an incredibly repressive and dangerous time. They proved that it could be done. Many original and early members of Mattachine went on to become leaders in future LGBT organizations and struggles.



Group 1: Mattachine Society Primary Source

Mattachine Statement of Purpose, 1951:

1. TO UNIFY: - while there are undoubtedly individual homosexuals who number many of their own people among their friends, thousands of homosexuals live out their lives bewildered, unhappy, alone, - isolated from their own kind and unable to adjust to the dominant culture. Even those who may have many homosexual friends are still cut off from the deep satisfactions man's gregarious nature can achieve only when he is consciously part of a larger unified whole. A major purpose of the Mattachine Society is to provide a consensus (sic) of principle around which all of our people can rally and from which they can derive a feeling of "belonging".
2. TO EDUCATE:- The total of information available on the subject of homosexuality is woefully meagre and utterly inconclusive. The Society organizes all available material, and conducts extensive research itself - psychological, physiological, anthropological, and sociological - for the purpose of informing all interested homosexuals, and for the purpose of informing all interested homosexuals, and for the purpose of informing and enlightening the public at large.

The Mattachine Society holds it is possible and desirable that a highly ethical homosexual culture emerge, as a consequence of its work, paralleling the emerging cultures of our fellow minorities... the Negro, Mexican and Jewish Peoples. The Society believes homosexuals can lead well-adjusted, wholesome, and socially productive lives once ignorance, and prejudice, against them is successfully combated, and once homosexuals themselves feel they have a dignified and useful role to play in society. The Society, to these ends, is in the process of developing a homosexual ethic... disciplined, moral and socially responsible.

3. TO LEAD - It is not sufficient for an oppressed minority such as the homosexuals merely to be conscious of belonging to a minority collective when, as is the situation at the present time, that collective is neither socially organic nor objective in its directions or activities, - although this minimum is in fact a great step forward. It is necessary that the more far-reaching and socially conscious homosexuals provide leadership to the whole mass of social deviants if the first two missions, (the unification and education of the homosexual minority), are to be accomplished. Further, once unification and education have progressed, it becomes imperative (to consolidate these gains) for the Corporation to push forward into the real of political action to erase from our law books the discriminatory and oppressive legislation presently directed against the homosexual minority.

The Society, founded upon the highest ethical and social principles, serves as an example for homosexuals to follow, and provides a dignified standard upon which the rest of society may base a more intelligent and accurate picture of the nature of homosexuality than currently obtains the public mind. The Society provides the instrument necessary to work with like-minded and socially valuable organizations, and supplies the means for the assistance of our people who are victimized daily as a result of our oppression. Only a Society, providing an enlightened leadership, can rouse the homosexuals... one of the largest minorities in America today... to take the action necessary to elevate themselves from the social ostracism an unsympathetic culture has perpetrated upon them.

Source: Courtesy of ONE Incorporated records, Coll2011.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California



Group 2: ONE Inc.



Classroom at ONE [Photograph found in Coll2011-001 ONE Incorporated records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles].

“A mystic bond of brotherhood makes all men one” - Thomas Carlyle (poem that inspired ONE Inc name)

In 1958 the magazine of the organization ONE Inc printed the shocking headline: “I am Glad I am a Homosexual”. To understand how shocking this was, consider the state of homosexuality in the 1950s. At the time, homosexuality was officially classified as a mental disorder and thanks to Executive Order 10450 it was also seen as a threat to national security. Many lived with the fear that if one was exposed as a homosexual or someone who associated with homosexuals they could be arrested or fired from their jobs. Most other organizations that advocated for homosexual rights at the time tended to be very apologetic in tone, emphasizing the same-ness of homosexuals and their desire to live quiet, productive lives. ONE Inc. had no use for such a tone and set themselves apart with bold statements in articles like the one described above.

ONE Inc was an early leading organization in the so-called “homophile” movement of the 1950s. Many members of the ONE organization first joined the movement through the Mattachine Society, though by the mid-1950s they saw Mattachine as too conservative and wanted a more outspoken organization for their rights, with a national magazine. ONE Inc. was founded in Los Angeles in 1952, they chose the name “Inc.” to establish themselves as a corporation and avoid being associated with Communists (a problem for groups like Mattachine). ONE Inc had a very diverse membership from the beginning, as some members had previously belonged to anti-racist organizations as well. Early membership included African American Merton Bird, Japanese American John Nojima (a survivor of internment at Manzanar) and flamenco dancer Antonio Reyes. Some women worked with the organization as well, though they were never in the majority.

ONE Inc. launched their magazine in 1953 and soon had accomplished the seemingly impossible feat of putting a magazine dedicated to homosexual issues on newsstands across the country. They sold about 5,000 issues a month

and soon had LGBT people all around the country following their statements and sending them their stories. They added the line “The Homosexual Viewpoint” to their magazine and began to set the political agenda for a new LGBT national consciousness. From the pages of their magazine ONE Inc became one of the first American organizations to argue that homosexuality was not an inherently bad thing and could be positive and life-affirming (Blasius & Phelan, 1997).

When they opened their first office in downtown LA, ONE Inc became the first LGBT organization with a central office, setting the model for LGBT centers to come. Most ONE members would take turns staffing the office after work, most had full-time jobs and volunteered when they could. They did not have many writers and some wished to remain secret, so many of the articles were written under different pen-names.

Seemingly, from the moment their first office opened, the harassment from law enforcement officials began. Just seven months after their first publication, their office was raided and all of their magazines were seized. The raid was authorized by the US postmaster; under the Comstock Law of 1873 it was illegal to send “obscene” materials through the mail. At the time, a magazine about homosexuality (which was illegal in many cities and states at the time) could be prosecuted under this law. In that first case, the magazines were eventually returned- but the harassment continued. ONE Inc. appealed to the ACLU for help in these cases, but the ACLU was not interested in taking their case. Lawyers who worked with known homosexuals also risked their reputation and careers at the time. Young civil rights attorney Eric Julber defended ONE Inc. alone and eventually took their case all the way to the Supreme Court. Surprisingly, in 1958 the Supreme Court decided that the post office was discriminating against ONE Inc and denying their Constitutionally mandated equal protection under the law. This was a landmark ruling for LGBT rights, it was no longer a crime to discuss homosexuality in mailed materials. The topic of Homosexuality itself was no longer “obscene”. As ONE Inc member Dorr Legg remarked: “ONE Magazine has made not only history but law as well and has changed the future for all U.S. homosexuals. Never before have homosexuals claimed their rights as citizens” (Faderman & Timmons, 2006, p. 120).

In addition to their groundbreaking magazine, ONE Inc also launched educational programs like the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies. This was the first gay studies program in the United States and it began in 1955. They would hold Saturday classes where members could study a range of fields: from history, to biology, law, religion and literature and use that knowledge to advocate for homosexual identity and rights. The office in Los Angeles soon attracted LGBT people from around the country and members wanted to provide social services, counseling, housing, legal and employment help for their community. This led to the creation of a Division of Social Services, which welcomed LGBT people from all across the country who would turn to them for help and advice.

Eventually differences within the leadership of ONE Inc. led to a major split in the organization around 1965. Questions of funding, organizational focus and leadership resulted in a split between the business manager and magazine editor that generated a lengthy court battle over ownership of the name, magazine and archives. Today, the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives is located at the University of Southern California Libraries and it remains the oldest existing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organization in the United States and the largest repository of LGBT materials in the world, a powerful testament to the literary and educational mission of ONE Inc.



Group 2: ONE Inc. Primary Source

ONE Magazine Statement of Beliefs and Purpose 1952:

ONE does not claim that homosexuals are better or worse than anyone else, that they are special in any but one sense. And in that one sense ONE claims positively that homosexuals do not have the civil rights assured all other citizens. ONE is devoted to correcting this.

ONE means to stimulate thought, criticism, research, literary and artistic production in an effort to bring the public to understand deviants and deviants to understand themselves as the two sides are brought together as one.

ONE advocates in no way any illegal acts, condones none in the past, incites none in the future. This magazine is not and does not wish to be merely an erotic publication.

ONE is frankly at odds with present unjust laws pertinent to deviations and with present authorities who abuse their offices in unjust treatment of deviants.

ONE is backed by no political or social group, leans toward none, is wholly and completely unfinanced. ONE has no paid employees yet and its growth is dependent entirely upon its readers.

I am Glad I am a Homosexual (Excerpt)

ONE magazine 1958, Hollister Barnes (Dorr Legg)

“I am proud of being a homosexual.” This powerfully affirmative statement, made by a speaker at the Constitutional Convention of the Mattachine Society, in April, 1953, acted as an electrifying catalyst. Some few applauded its forthrightness. Others, whether consciously or not, rallied together defensively as a bloc... Thus, two radically opposite attitudes towards homosexuality were thrown into bold relief. During the years since then the divergence has become even more clearly marked... What are these opposing views?

The term asexual might be used a bit sardonically as characterizing the attitude, if not the behavior, of the majority of homophiles. They tend to agree with popular opinion - that homosexuality is wrong; that it is sinful; that it is shameful; to be vigorously curbed by self-denial, sublimation, or other methods (even masturbation). They seem to feel that homosexuals should at all costs present a public appearance of conformity and “normalcy”, of asexuality if necessary. The homosexual and his organizations, should cooperate to the fullest extent with “public authorities” according to this view. Above all things, the individual is held to be obligated to be an all-around “good guy”. “Act square,” is the motto. “It’s only sensible,” they say...

The admitted homosexuals are a smaller group, comprised mainly of those claiming to be more intellectually sophisticated, and of the flaming queens. This group, in whatever terms, express pride in their homosexuality, finding nothing either sinful or shameful in it. They feel that homosexual men and women should be in every way as free to practice their sexual preferences as are other segments of the population; that they should enjoy the same legal and social privileges as others, no more, but also, no less. They feel themselves under no obligations whatever to conform to the particular social standards of any particular community; that instead of their adjusting to popular mores, the mores should be adjusted to their own wishes...

Source: Courtesy of ONE Incorporated records, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California



Group 3: Daughters of Bilitis



The Ladder Cover, 1957. Source: Courtesy of ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

When young lesbians came to Los Angeles or San Francisco in the 1940s, they found a new world of social possibilities. World War II brought many women from all over the US to these cities, promising abundant work in war production or common middle-class jobs for women (teaching, nursing, social work, secretaries) and the promise of independence and fun. Adventurous women who'd felt isolated in their hometowns could come to the west coast and find themselves in a thriving community of women like them, women who loved women and wanted to share their lives together. Los Angeles in the 1940s offered lesbian beer halls, dance clubs, beaches and even sports leagues. Though many women were able to find comfort and companionship in these communities, the threat of police harassment, police brutality and vicious raids still hung over each of these new institutions.

In the 1950s, police harassment against lesbians increased. While gay men were most often arrested for vagrancy, lewdness and solicitation – lesbian women were often arrested on different charges, most common among them “masquerading” or wearing clothing that was seen as male. During World War II women were recruited to work in factories and shipyards and at that time it became much more common to see women in the city or at the nightclubs, wearing pants instead of dresses or skirts. But in the 1950s government officials began to actively campaign against what they saw as “subversive” and “unfeminine” behavior, encouraging women to give up work and find husbands and leave the pants-wearing to the men. West coast cities with thriving gay scenes often had large communities of lesbian women or transgender men, who adopted a masculine or butch style, and these individuals were subject to arrest, over and over again for the simple crime of dressing, or wearing their hair in a style that the authorities didn't like. Arrests outside of gay clubs or in the company of known lesbians could be catastrophic for a working woman in those days, costing them their employment and their freedom, as well as much pain and suffering. This harassment was not enough to deter some rebellious women though, as Nancy Valverde, a barber from Los Angeles said of the police at the time: “They used to tell me ‘I want to see you in a dress’. I said to them ‘Sit down and wait ‘cause your gonna get tired’” (Faderman & Timmons, 2006, p. 95).

In this context, Daughters of Bilitis - the nation's first lesbian organizations, was founded in San Francisco in 1955. It was not originally intended to be a political group but more of a secret social club for women who did not want to venture out to bars or lesbian gatherings that could be disrupted by the police. It was a way to bring lesbian women

together, to explore their lives and identities in private, with less fear of arrest. The name Daughters of Bilitis refers to an obscure poem, founders of this organization intentionally chose a name that would not give away the reason for the group's existence.

The Daughters of Bilitis conducted secret meetings in the homes of members, where women could come together and talk for hours about what it meant to be lesbian. Though they didn't start with a political focus, once they began meeting in groups and having discussions, those discussions often became political. According to Los Angeles DoB founding member Stella Rush, "We'd talk about our problems and fears- like how we risked losing our jobs if we didn't lie about who we were. We'd assure each other that society made us lie, and not that we were bad people because we weren't allowed to be honest" (Faderman & Timmons, 2006, p. 130). In DoB discussions, lesbians began to develop their shared political consciousness by discussing the impact that homophobia had on their lives and then discussing what could be done about it, for women in their community.

The Daughters of Bilitis published a literary magazine called *The Ladder*, it was the first national Lesbian publication in the United States. It was edited by DoB founders Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin. Many lesbians in the early 20th century looked to literature to explore their feelings and identity. *The Ladder* continued this literary tradition, often publishing short stories, poems, book reviews and lists of lesbian literature, as well as letters from readers and notes from meetings of the DoB. Prominent African American author Lorraine Hansberry contributed to the *Ladder*, using a pen name because she hid her true sexual identity throughout her life. In early editions of the *Ladder*, editors assured potential subscribers that they would not reveal their names or identities, secrecy was still necessary to many lesbians across the US. This magazine was supported by organizations like Mattachine Society and ONE Inc. Historian Marcia Gallo wrote of *The Ladder*, "For women who came across a copy in the early days, *The Ladder* was a lifeline. It was a means of expressing and sharing otherwise private thoughts and feelings, of connecting across miles and disparate daily lives, of breaking through isolation and fear."

There were many disagreements and divisions within Daughters of Bilitis. The organization encouraged members to hide in many ways, to play by the rules of respectability and to dress very feminine at their meetings and events. This was difficult and undesirable for many members of their community, who were more comfortable in the "masculine" style that the DoB did not approve of. Openly butch and transgender men were not welcome in this organization. Members were required to wear dresses and skirts to events. Some members like Helen Sandoz, thought it was extremely important to work with male homophile groups, seeing common cause in the struggle of gay men who also faced raids and repression at the time. But many women in the DoB had had such bad experiences with men in their lives that they did not want to interact with men at all. Class also divided the women of DoB, as most of them were educated and middle-class and not comfortable with working class lesbians and their manners and activities. Some leaders tried to expand the group to include more working class people, but the respectability demanded by the organization kept them from appealing to everyone in their community.

In the 1960s the rise of the women's movement brought changes to the Daughters of Bilitis. In 1963 Barbara Gittings took over editing the *Ladder* and the magazine began to get more expressly political in its views. While working with men had always been a question, in the 1960s it caused a split as some older members wanted to remain close to male-led homophile organizations, while others wanted to align more closely with women-only groups and focus on women's issues. Lesbians faced different issues than gay men, many argued and had more in common with other women. In 1970 the DoB disbanded but its legacy as the first national lesbian organization lived on. Countless women were inspired and activated by their conversations and publications and carried their work into the decades to come.



Group 3: Daughters of Bilitis Primary Source

Statement of Purpose - Daughters of Bilitis 1955

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

1. Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all of its social, civic and economic implications- this to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining as complete a library as possible of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.
2. Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.
3. Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.
4. Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in state legislatures.

What About the DOB? From the Ladder 1959, Excerpt:

“Organized Homosexuals?”

The DOB membership is comprised of women interested in the problems of the homosexual in our society- some mothers, some heterosexual women and of course, Lesbians themselves. The Lesbian who joins would tend to be the thoughtful, public spirited, responsible type, for the organization places particular emphasis on helping her to understand herself and her relationship to society. If this means “organized homosexuals”, then it is an organization for social, not anti-social ends.

Clandestine Organization?

Clandestine means “secret, hidden or underhanded”. Those who would question the existence of our organizations would seem to infer the “underhanded” definition. They base the accusation upon the fact that the organizations have declared quite openly that with the exception of national officers, the anonymity of members and subscribers would be protected. This would seem to be very logical under the circumstances in which we live in this society. Ignorance breeds fear and hostility and until education in this field relieves the necessity, concealment of identity is only practical. Just as many authors who have broached a controversial subject have chosen to use a pseudonym, many members do likewise. This matter is left entirely up to the individual.

Source: Courtesy of ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California



Group 4: Gay Liberation Front



Four in costume at Gay-In at Griffith Park, Los Angeles. 1970 [Photograph found in Coll2012-031 Gay Liberation Front (GLF) Los Angeles records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s revolution was in the air, in the United States and all over the world. This was when the Gay Liberation Front was born, in the midst of many powerful movements against racism, sexism, imperialism and war. It was just weeks after the Stonewall Riot of 1969 that chapters of this organization began to form in major cities like New York and Los Angeles, as well as smaller cities and campuses all across the US. Those who joined the GLF were young people who had come of age witnessing and participating in the rise of the Civil Rights movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement and national liberation struggles all over the Third World. This group was not concerned with respectability, hiding or playing by the rules. This organization wanted liberation for LGBT people and in the firestorm of protests, rebellions and direct-action of the 1960s, they saw a clear playbook for how to get them.

Radical LGBT activists at this time were not interested in equality and assimilation into heterosexual society, they wanted to fundamentally change society itself. They were strongly influenced by revolutionary leftist movements that were rising all over the world, invoking the “liberation front” in their name as a nod to these movements. They strongly opposed racism and organized in solidarity with African Americans and other minorities who were fighting for their rights. Many were active in the women’s movement as well and saw traditional gender roles as oppressive and patriarchy as the root of oppression against homosexuals. In the 1960s and 1970s Marxist and socialist movements were popular and the GLF was heavily influenced by New Left publications and organizations. The counterculture and hippies also helped develop this new militant streak in young LGBT activists, as it became more common to dress and present yourself in ways that defied traditional roles. All of this combined led to a youth movement that was done hiding and ready to be free.

According to GLF activist Martha Shelley: “I felt like I didn’t have to fit in anymore- at least I didn’t have to pretend to fit in. There was a whole movement that was supporting my not fitting in. The Civil Rights movement gave me a deep underpinning. The women’s movement questioned sexual roles. The yippies and the left-wing movements of the sixties questioned the politics I grew up with and the economic and social underpinnings of the whole society” (Marcus, 1992, p. 179).

Members of the Gay Liberation Front prioritized visibility, they wanted members of their community to stop hiding their sexuality, step forward and demand respect. This is evident in the name of their publication: “Come Out!”. Their attitude was in sharp contrast to the organizing styles of LGBT organizations of previous decades, who often met in secret and rarely used their real names (for fear of being arrested or fired, a very real possibility in the 1950s). Though many members of the GLF had participated in older organizations like Mattachine and the Daughters of Bilitis, they were very critical of the previous generations of activists who tended to downplay their sexuality and emphasize respectability and conformity to white, middle-class culture. GLF activists also differed in their fundamental political perspective, GLF members believed that all of US society needed to be changed - not just the laws that directly impacted LGBT people. As Shelley recalls:

“Those of us in GLF who had come from Mattachine and DOB were to the left of the rest of the members of those organizations. We felt that we were being held back in our politics and our beliefs... In Mattachine and DOB we couldn’t openly state that we were against the Vietnam War because they believed that getting mixed up in other struggles was bad strategy. They thought that fighting for gay rights was difficult enough without having to take on all these other struggles. But those of us in GLF felt that the struggles should be united: the Black civil rights movement, feminist politics, socialist politics. Every ethnic group had its own civil rights cause. And, of course, the gay cause” (Marcus, 1992, p. 182).

The GLF organized dramatic actions, often using direct action and guerilla theater tactics to bring media attention to their causes. They were known for organizing “kiss-ins” at establishments that weren’t gay friendly, rallying dozens of same-sex patrons to fill up a hostile bar or restaurant with kissing same-sex couples, in defiance of taboos against same-sex affection in public. They considered the LGBT bar scene to be repressive and organized their own dances, which emphasized community and acceptance. They also organized demonstrations against police brutality and police targeting of LGBT people, often partnering with other victims of police violence like African Americans, in these actions. Calls for solidarity with the Black Panthers incited some debate within the organization, as some left groups like the Panthers were known to use anti-gay slurs in their speeches. Many in GLF saw the struggle against racism as highest priority and urged supporting the Panthers. By 1970, the chair of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton put out a statement in support of gay liberation, an extremely significant signal to those trying to build solidarity between the two movements on the ground. Still, some GLF activists left the organization over this issue.

One of the most famous actions of the Gay Liberation Front took place in Los Angeles in 1970, an event known as the Biltmore Invasion. When the American Psychiatric Association planned a meeting that advocated “curing” gays and lesbians with electroshock therapy, 25 members of the GLF stormed the stage and shut that meeting down. The APA had classified homosexuality as a mental illness, members of GLF objected strongly to this classification. As member Carol Weathers told the Press Telegram: “We were sick of being labeled as mentally ill. Gay and lesbian kids were raised thinking they were mentally ill and sent to institutions because they were thought to be mentally ill. We knew we weren’t ill, and we wanted the label removed” (Zonkel, 2015). Immediately after that dramatic action the APA began to meet with GLF and three years later they stopped classifying homosexuality as mental illness. It was a victory for the GLF.

GLF meetings were organized as open forums, there was no hierarchy in the organization and no official leaders. Some in the organization believe that this contributed to the organization’s demise, as meetings became endless debates. Within 2 years of its creation, the GLF disbanded. But in those 2 years they helped bring about a new, bold and militant direction for the LGBT rights struggle.



Group 4: Gay Liberation Front Primary Source

Gay Liberation Front: Program Platform Statement

Adopted by Seattle Gay Liberation Front on Tuesday, December 7, 1970

The basic purpose of the GLF is the liberation of homosexual men and women in this society suffer under three principal types of oppression:

- 1) Societal oppression: Much of society's oppression of homosexuals stems from ignorance which produces fear, and the consequent alienation of heterosexual society from the recognition of homosexuals as individual men and women. Basically, American society has reacted violently out of fear of the unknown, out of an inability to accept differences from the norms by which they function. Unexposed to a climate in which they can learn about homosexuality, heterosexual society accepts, reinforces, and perpetuates myths and ignorance regarding homosexuality. This programming becomes increasingly less susceptible to change the more it is reinforced by the rest of the heterosexual society. We are encouraged by an apparent beginning toward change in this atmosphere among young people, who seem increasingly to desire to learn about various life styles and accept individuals as individuals.
- 2) Psychological oppression: The psychological oppression of homosexuals takes two forms. One is an internalized oppression of the homosexual by himself. This reflects that programming perpetuated in the society that creates the feeling within many homosexuals that they are somehow "sick" or "perverted" The ramifications of such a feeling for the individual are extremely damaging, since he or she is unable to accept him/herself fully and feel free and healthy in his/her sexuality. The second form of the psychological oppression is homosexual's oppression of other homosexuals. Again this reflects entrenched societal programming which causes the homosexual to reflect the sexist views of heterosexual society onto other homosexuals. Hence, rather than dealing equally with individuals we find homosexuals practicing sexism towards other homosexuals.
- 3) Legal/Quasi-political oppression: Reinforcing and embodying societal ignorancies(sic) the "legal" oppression of homosexuals. This facet of oppression encompasses a wide range of laws, discriminatory practices, and more insidious harassment. This includes laws which prohibit sexual activities between consenting individuals, laws forbidding bodily contact between two members of the same sex, discriminatory hiring practices, to mention only a few. Often even more oppressive than the letter of the law and more difficult to deal with is the misuse of legal avenues to harass homosexuals, particularly as they frequent gay establishments.

Political Statement

The goals of the GLF revolve around social change. In order to accomplish this social change, political action is necessary. The Gay Liberation Front is interested in homosexual freedom, but we must realize and support the cause of freedom for all people. We will thus take political action when and where necessary in a manner deemed appropriate by the GLF membership. We too, will support those actions of other groups concerned with the freedom of people to determine their own life pattern and recognize all forms of human relationships as valid. Our goal is to establish a society in which all people enjoy freedom of existence and freedom to relate to each other in whatever manner they see fit, without fear of oppression or condemnation.



Group 5: Radicalesbians



"Ida," a member of the Gay Liberation Front and the Lavender Menace, 1970. Photograph by Diana Davies. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Diana Davies Papers. Copyright Diana Davies.

In the late 1960s American women were rising up. What has since become known as the Second Wave feminist movement was then in full swing, as women all across the US began to form feminist organizations and protest for the rights, respect and equality that had long been denied them. Inspired by the heroism of the Civil Rights movement, where young people from many communities built a powerful movement that changed US law and social customs, women in cities and college campuses were setting out to do the same thing.

Writers and icons like Betty Friedan helped to articulate this new restlessness and desire for change among American women. Her National Organization for Women (NOW) attracted young feminists and many lesbians who desired to fight for the rights of women. Unfortunately, Betty Friedan made it clear that she did not welcome lesbians in that organization, calling them a "Lavender Menace" that threatened to undermine the mainstream feminist movement. Many lesbians who had been working within NOW were offended by this characterization and by the organization's refusal to take up lesbian issues. For many, the final straw was when NOW removed the Daughters of Bilitis as a sponsoring organization of their First Congress to United Women. In response to all this, radical lesbian organizers planned a disruption of the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York city, 1970. They wrote a statement called "The Woman Identified Woman" and distributed it to congress attendees. Then, during the beginning of the first panel they staged a dramatic action where 17 organizers wearing t-shirts that said "Lavender Menace" stormed the stage and announced that they were going to discuss lesbian issues. They were well received by the congress attendees, organizers recall that many women cheered and decided to join them. They were able to discuss policy, advocate resolutions and encourage other women to join consciousness raising groups. After



this meeting NOW began to pass official resolutions in support of lesbian issues. The success of these lesbian organizers within NOW lead them to continue organizing across the country, eventually adopting the name Radicalesbians for their group.

Many of the organizers who formed Radicalesbians had been members of the Gay Liberation Front first, but found that though that organization welcomed lesbian organizers, they mostly focused on issues that were important to gay men. Entrapment and police brutality, for example, were issues that many women felt impacted gay men more than lesbian women. Workplace equality was an issue that lesbian women cared about, and it was one that was taken up by the second-wave feminist movement, not the GLF. So some women in the GLF began to advocate aligning more with feminist organizations than traditional gay organizations. Additionally, women in the GLF felt excluded from leadership roles in the organization and felt like men in the organization were behaving in sexist ways, asking them to take notes or make coffee at their meetings. It's important to note that women in many different movements at the time, Civil Rights organizations, anti-war groups and radical socialist groups - often had very similar complaints from women organizers who felt they did much of the work and received little of the spotlight, compared to male counterparts. Women who were working to build powerful movements to transform society felt that they weren't being respected within those movements. So, the Radicalesbians decided to form their own organization. As GLF activist Michelle Ross wrote in the Los Angeles Free Press in 1970: "We feel we must find our own identity and our own cause as gay women" (Faderman & Timmons, 2006, p. 182).

Like the GLF, Radicalesbians believed in revolution and that a complete overhaul of American society was necessary for their liberation as women and as lesbians. They did not seek acceptance by mainstream society as much as they wanted to establish their own organizations and institutions, specifically for lesbian women. Radicalesbians believed in a complete separation from men and from heterosexual life. Many Radicalesbians saw being a lesbian as a political act, or choice that was open to every woman. They wanted to liberate women from feeling like they had to be heterosexual and partner with men, encouraging them to chose lesbianism. Visibility was important to them, as they believed lesbian women could be a living example to their straight and oppressed sisters. The Radicalesbians blamed men for much of the ills in society and encouraged women to stop "sleeping with the enemy". As Radicalesbian founder Rita Mae Brown wrote "Do the Viet Cong cook supper for the Yankees? Are Blacks supposed to disperse their communities and each live in a white home?" She encouraged feminist women to stop "polishing your chains" and choose to love women instead (Keetley & Pettegrew, 2005) . The separatist ideals also meant that many Radicalesbians were vocally intolerant of transgender women, gay and heterosexual men and bisexual men. They would not condone working with these groups or featuring them at events. Many chose to live in women-only communes, completely separate from men.

Though the organization Radicalesbians only lasted for two years, their lesbian separatist politics inspired many radical lesbian activists in the years to come. As a result of these politics, many women began to establish Feminist Health Centers to give women more control over their health, eventually establishing a national Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers. Many lesbian theaters, art galleries, coffee shops and bookstores were opened as well. Radical lesbian women were very dedicated to building women's culture and developing separate cultural spaces for lesbian women outside of the bar scene. In 1973 they even organized a West Coast Lesbian Conference that had over 2,000 attendees. This was very different from the secret meetings organized by earlier lesbian groups. In this conference lesbian women of many ages, races and backgrounds came together publicly, proud of their identity. Lastly, the idea that "the personal is political" is one that was expressly championed by the Radicalesbians and is an idea that had significant impact in both the women's movement and the movement for LGBT equality as a whole.



Group 5: Radicalesbians Primary Source

Excerpts from *The Woman-Identified Woman*

by the Radicalesbians (1970)

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society - perhaps then, but certainly later - cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with her self. She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society--the female role. The turmoil she experiences tends to induce guilt proportional to the degree to which she feels she is not meeting social expectations, and/or eventually drives her to question and analyze what the rest of her society more or less accepts. She is forced to evolve her own life pattern, often living much of her life alone, learning usually much earlier than her "straight" (heterosexual) sisters about the essential aloneness of life (which the myth of marriage obscures) and about the reality of illusions.

To the extent that she cannot expel the heavy socialization that goes with being female, she can never truly find peace with herself. For she is caught somewhere between accepting society's view of her - in which case she cannot accept herself - and coming to understand what this sexist society has done to her and why it is functional and necessary for it to do so. Those of us who work that through find ourselves on the other side of a tortuous journey through a night that may have been decades long. The perspective gained from that journey, the liberation of self, the inner peace, the real love of self and of all women, is something to be shared with all women - because we are all women.

It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy. Those sex roles dehumanize women by defining us as a supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men, and emotionally cripple men by demanding that they be alienated from their own bodies and emotions in order to perform their economic/political/military functions effectively. Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles (or approved patterns of behavior) on the basis of sex; as such it is an inauthentic (not consonant with "reality") category. In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear...

It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for the cultural revolution. Together we must find, reinforce, and validate our authentic selves. As we do this, we confirm in each other that struggling, incipient sense of pride and strength, the divisive barriers begin to melt, we feel this growing solidarity with our sisters. We see ourselves as prime, find our centers inside of ourselves. We find receding the sense of alienation, of being cut off, of being behind a locked window, of being unable to get out what we know is inside. We feel a real-ness, feel at last we are coinciding with ourselves. With that real self, with that consciousness, we begin a revolution to end the imposition of all coercive identifications, and to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression.



I. Reading Questions:

1. Describe challenges faced LGBT Americans at the time this organization was created:

2. What tactics did this organization use? How did they organize members?

3. Describe a major achievement of this organization:

4. Name a leader of this organization whom you could research for more information about this group:

II. Primary Source Analysis- Discussion Questions

DISCUSS AND ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE READING PRIMARY SOURCE DOCS:

1. **Person:** What do you already know about the author(s) of these excerpts? Based on what you know, what do you think this excerpt will be about?

2. **Place:** What do you know about the time and place this document was created? How might that impact the content of the document?

3. **Purpose:** Why do you think this document was written? Who is the audience for this document?





Opening Statement Template (Sample)

Hello, I am [your name] _____

and I am representing [name of organization] _____

at today's conference. Our organization was founded when [describe founding of organization]

We believe that [summarize main ideas/beliefs] _____

It is important that our members [describe what actions members are expected to take]

Our most successful action(s) was/were [describe successes achieved by organization]

We hope that in the future our community can [describe goals of organization]



Conference Notes

Question A: A “Homosexual Bill of Rights”?

1. Our group’s argument was (summarize) :
2. The most convincing argument was (summarize) :
3. What did the Conference decide on the issue (summarize)?

Question B: Protest Police Brutality?

4. Our group’s argument was (summarize) :
5. The most convincing argument was (summarize) :
6. What did the Conference decide on the issue (summarize)?

Question C: A Public “Gay-In”?

7. Our group’s argument was (summarize) :
8. The most convincing argument was (summarize) :
9. What did the Conference decide on the issue (summarize)?



References:

Blasius, M., & Phelan, S. (1997). *We are everywhere: a historical sourcebook of gay and lesbian politics*. London: Routledge.

Faderman, L., & Timmons, S. (2006). *Gay L.A.: A history of sexual outlaws, power politics, and lipstick lesbians*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gay Liberation Front Platform Statement, December 2, 1970. (1970). University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections. Tim Mayhew Collection on Gay Rights, Seattle, WA.

Katz, J. N. (1992). *Gay American history: Lesbians and gay men in the U.S.A.* New York: Meridan Books.

Keetley, D., & Pettegrew, J. (2005). *Public women, public words: A Documentary history of American feminism (Volume II)*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Marcus, E. (1992). *Making history: The struggle for gay and lesbian equal rights, 1945-1990: An oral history*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial.

Radicalesbians. (1970). *The Woman-Identified Woman*. Retrieved from <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/radicalesbianswoman.html>

Zonkel, P. (2015, June 8). Long Beach LGBT activist Carolyn Weathers recognized as 'unsung hero' who keeps on fighting. *Press-Telegram*. Retrieved July 26, 2018, from <https://www.presstelegram.com/2015/06/08/long-beach-lgbt-activist-carolyn-weathers-recognized-as-unsung-hero-who-keeps-on-fighting/>

All primary source documents courtesy ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives unless otherwise noted

Photos:

Gruber, J. *Christmas party of the Mattachine Society* [Photograph found in Coll2011-003 Harry Hay papers, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]. Retrieved July 26, 2018, from <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll4/id/5756/rec/2>

Classroom at ONE [Photograph found in Coll2011-001 ONE Incorporated records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]. (n.d.). Retrieved July 26, 2018, from <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll4/id/337/rec/14>

"*Ida*," a member of the *Gay Liberation Front and the Lavender Menace*, 1970. Photograph by Diana Davies. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Diana Davies Papers. Copyright Diana Davies. Digital ID: 1582182 <http://web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/radicalesbians.html>

Four in costume at Gay-In at Griffith Park, Los Angeles. 1970 [Photograph found in Coll2012-031 Gay Liberation Front (GLF) Los Angeles records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles]. Retrieved June 26, 2018, from <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll4/id/344/rec/3> (Originally photographed 1970)

