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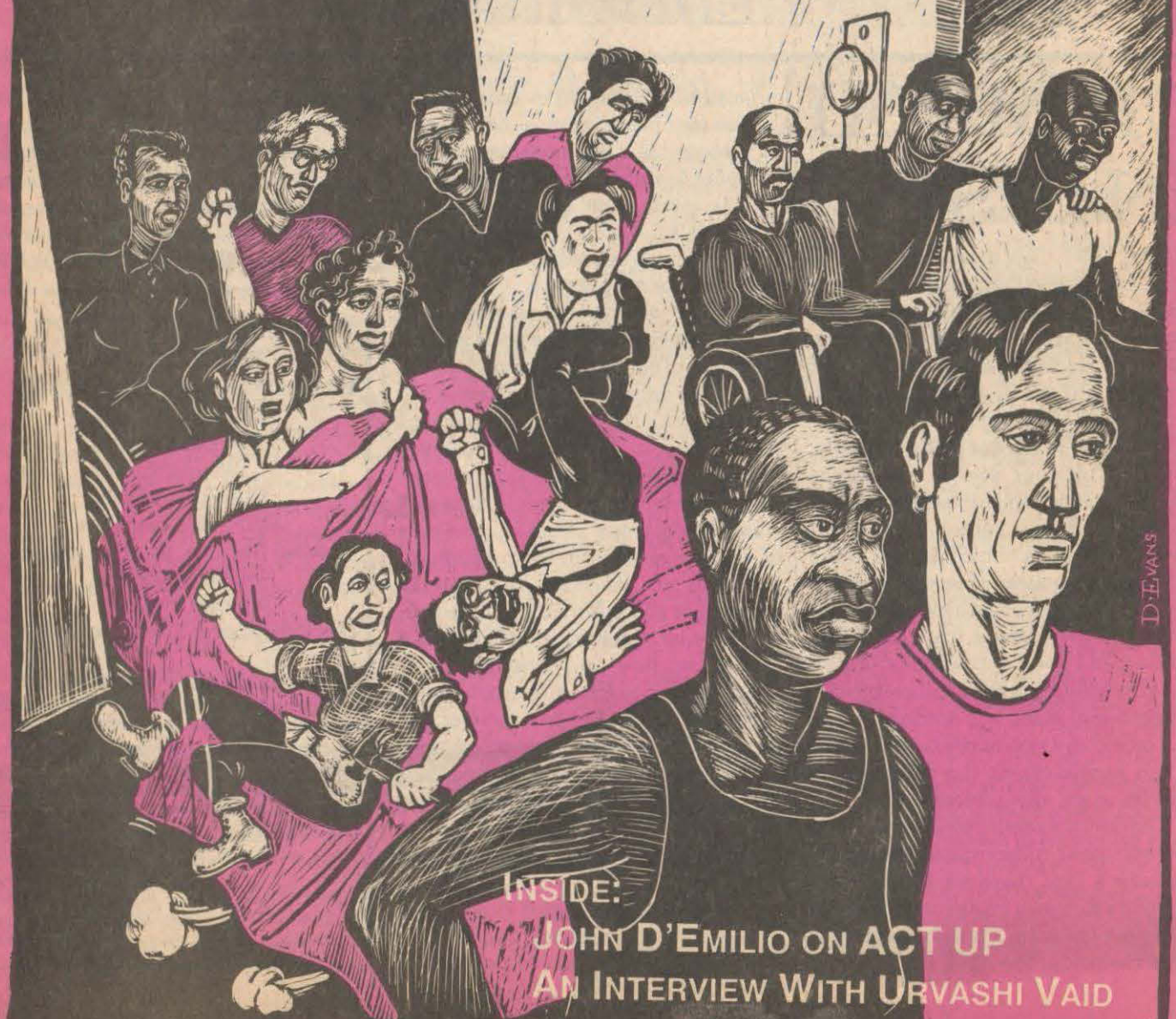
DEMOCRATIC Left

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OUT IN FORCE:

LESBIAN AND GAY
POLITICS IN THE '90s



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EDITORIAL

CRIMINAL INJUSTICE

MAY 6, 1991. This morning I woke up to the horrifying images of people fighting in the streets of Washington, DC. During the night, as official Washington slept peacefully nearby, police shot a young Latino man -- and the community reacted with outrage.

The ugly images of police brutality, projected into our lives so recently by television news, demonstrate most poignantly the obscene failure of conservative "get tough on crime" policies. When fighting crime means more guns, more jail cells, and more death penalty executions, the government finds itself supporting and even encouraging brutality. When the Bush administration uses a language of violence to condemn crime, and promotes a violent response to crime, it can hardly expect the agents of its policies to act any differently.

As our cities collapse, impoverished and brutalized, conservatives would have us believe that there are but two approaches to crime: brutal crackdown or complete leniency. To defeat the powerful rhetoric of the right, the left must

voice an alternative vision of justice, one that is both compassionate and responsible. Our condemnations of police brutality must be informed by this vision, and by the reality of people's lives -- people who are surrounded by the degrading and paralyzing fear of crime everyday.

We, as democratic socialists, call for a restructuring of the goals and institutions of our criminal justice system at both the national and local levels. We demand that the federal government provide people with the means, financial and otherwise, to develop community-based solutions to crime. It is only when the the police are an integral part of, and responsive to, their communities, that we can begin to solve the problem of police brutality. Police officers must be representative of the people they serve; they must speak the languages of our communities and understand the traditions and lives of the people who live there. When people work in cooperation with the police and their neighbors to end crime, not only do they reduce the chances of police brutality, but they also regain power within their own lives.

As official Washington slumbers in its shameful complacency, the people of our cities -- working people, poor people

-- are fighting and killing one another. The left was quick to come up with responsible alternatives to Bush's violent policies in the Middle East. Now we must respond with as much urgency to the brutality at home.

--by SHAKOOR ALJUWANI

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Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

Organizing For More Than Rights

Why should a predominantly heterosexual socialist organization devote a special section in its magazine to lesbian and gay politics? Is not the lesbian and gay movement simply a social movement seeking equal rights through an identity politics that has little to do with economic justice?

It is difficult to answer these questions in a brief introduction, or even by publishing this special section. Yet I hope the beginnings of a response do emerge throughout this issue.

As a gay man who has devoted his political work to activism primarily, though not exclusively, to struggles outside of the "gay rights movement," I recognize the limitations of identity politics. In different ways, those limitations have been recognized by the contemporary lesbian and gay movement since its founding during the Stonewall riots of 1969. The first post-Stonewall political organization, the Gay Liberation Front, demanded a socialist revolution as the only way to free lesbians and gay men from the prejudices and oppressions of straight society. In their efforts to transcend and transform mainstream America, gay liberationists combined cultural and political radicalism. Tensions surfaced within the movement as activists raised questions of sexism, the movement's focus on fighting imperialism versus demanding rights, and the efficacy of countercultural activism. Rather quickly, these tensions led to a disintegration of gay liberation organizing.

Nor have they disappeared. Recent conflicts within ACT UP chapters have split those demanding an exclusive focus on AIDS treatment and those labeled "socialists," who make connections between the struggle for AIDS treatment and

the struggles to end homophobia, racism, and sexism. Lesbians work as AIDS activists and care-givers, while urging gay men to get more involved in the struggles around reproductive freedom and violence against women. Similarly, the question of what gay male image to project to mainstream America -- from drag queens to fresh-faced suits and ties -- continues to generate controversy.

Amid these long-standing tensions, a multi-faceted political movement has emerged demanding social justice through the empowerment of lesbians and gay men. This movement overcame past dichotomies between street activism and electoral politics by doing both. Many lesbian and gay activists recognize that the AIDS pandemic requires a national health care program to overcome the barriers of insurance discrimination, government inaction, and access limited by race, class, and gender.

As socialists, we understand the fundamental role class plays in defining the life choices of lesbians and gay men. We demand that queers, like all people, have the means and opportunity to make the decisions that govern our lives. As socialists, we recognize the many roots of oppressions that lead to the forest of connections in people's political and personal experiences. The values of solidarity, social justice, and freedom unite different social movements. The means to implement those values is coalition politics, like the politics developing around the issues of domestic partnerships and national health care. Lesbians and gay men are a key part of our coalition. We hope this first issue of *Democratic Left* devoted to lesbian and gay politics, will make a contribution to strengthening the democratic left. --by Michael Lighty

Don't Leave Us Out of The Equation

Violence Against Gays And Lesbians

by Claire N. Kaplan

April 23, 1990 was an historic day in U.S. history. As representatives of national gay and lesbian organizations stood witness with other civil rights groups, George Bush signed the Hate Crimes Statistics Act into law. It requires the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) to collect data on crimes based on race, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Subsequently, the DoJ opened a toll-free nationwide hate crime reporting hotline. These significant victories, the culmination of many years' work, were not won easily, and are only the first step toward recognizing the civil rights of sexual minorities.

Most progressives accept the need to include anti-gay/lesbian violence in hate crimes legislation. Yet as long as homosexuality remains on the fringe of a broader left analysis, viewed at best as a private matter or at worst as the result of bourgeois hedonism, it's easy to keep the reality of homophobic violence at arm's distance -- an even greater distance than the more familiar violence perpetrated against women and racial, ethnic or religious minorities.

A 1987 report, published in the

Journal of Interpersonal Violence, on the criminal justice system's response to bias crime concluded that "homosexuals are probably the most frequent victims of hate violence in the U.S." That report was subsequently suppressed by the DoJ. In this era of AIDS, it's easy to forget that homophobia can also be deadly.

The two examples that follow are from a 1990 report of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute:

On May 13, 1988, Claudia Brenner and Rebecca Wright, partners of three years, were shot while on a camping trip in Pennsylvania. Rebecca died at the scene. Claudia, shot in the arm, head, neck and face, survived. Stephen Roy Carr had stalked them, watched them make love, then shot them. He was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life without parole, in part because the judge wouldn't allow the defense to claim the women "teased" Carr with their sexuality.

On January 21, 1990 on Staten Is.,



Ellen B. Neipris/Impact Visuals

A Pink Panther Patrol takes back the night.

NY, two men repeatedly stabbed a gay man, ripping open his chest and then slashing his throat. Witnesses had seen them follow the man, calling him "faggot" and "queer." The assailants pleaded guilty to second degree murder. Previously, they had been arrested for locking another gay man in the trunk of a car and planning to blow it up.

These are but two examples. Violence against sexual minorities ranges from subtle harassment to mutilation murders. It happens on Appalachian trails, New York streets, in the "safety" of police custody, in homes, workplaces, and the so-called "open" environment of college campuses. A recent National Gay and Lesbian Task Force report quotes several campus surveys, all of which had consistent results. Among gay, lesbian and bisexual student respondents at the University of Massa-

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Activism Seething With Rage

ACT UP Forces the Nation to Confront AIDS

by John D'Emilio

President Bush recently attacked ACT UP, an AIDS activist group, calling their direct action tactics "totally counterproductive," and accusing them of "an excess of free speech." Not since the days of SNCC, SDS and the Black Panther Party in the 1960s has a militant social change organization received such acknowledgment.

In the four years since the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) assembled in New York City, its activists have repeatedly made headlines across the country for their brash actions. They have disrupted the workings of the New York Stock Exchange, chained themselves in the headquarters of AZT producer Burroughs Wellcome, shut down the offices of the Food and Drug Administration, and drowned out a speech by Louis Sullivan, head of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This new breed of activist is not only found in cities with heavy AIDS caseloads, such as New York, San Francisco, Boston, and Los Angeles; among the dozens of ACT UP groups are chapters in Oklahoma City, Shreveport, Orlando, and Kansas City.

To understand ACT UP's evolution and impact it must be placed not only in the context of the epidemic, but in the context of the gay movement as well. A late child of the 1960s, gay liberation gained momentum during the '70s, creating thousands of mostly small and local organizations. The achievements of the first decade came less in the areas of legislation and public policy, and more in the realm of culture and social life. In many cities a visible gay and lesbian community appeared, bound by a common allegiance to new notions of pride and public affirmation and by a web of



Donna Binder/Impact Visuals

community institutions -- not just the commercialized settings of bars, but movement-generated institutions such as community centers, bookstores, churches and synagogues. By the beginning of the '80s, the texture of daily life had improved profoundly for many lesbians and gay men.

Outspoken Hostility

The political climate, however, was becoming outspokenly hostile to the demands of gay and lesbian people. The appearance of the New Right, the election of Ronald Reagan, and the rise of a new breed of Republican politician, exposed the political weakness of the gay movement. Its organizations lacked the size, resources, and influence to affect the political process in decisive ways. There were exceptions to this, particularly at the level of municipal politics; but at the federal and state levels, gay activists found their access to power and decision-making under attack by these powerful new political forces.

This situation -- of urban commu-

nities that had recently coalesced and a political movement still finding its way -- shaped the initial response of the gay community to the AIDS epidemic. When AIDS was first identified in the summer of 1981, the gay community mobilized quickly to provide services for the sick and to spread information about the deadly new threat. Within a few years impressive organizations such as the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City, AIDS Project-Los Angeles, and the AIDS Action Committee in Boston were created, performing herculean tasks. AIDS-service organizations popped up in smaller towns and cities that had previously seen little gay activism.

Yet the gay movement of the early and mid-1980s was frustratingly ineffective at confronting the federal health bureaucracy. The movement was unable to force the Reagan administration to launch a full-scale effort to contain the spread of AIDS and promote the search for effective treatments and a cure. Neither could it convince the media

that the disease deserved attention. The *New York Times*, for instance, printed only seven articles about AIDS in the first 19 months of the epidemic; by contrast, it carried 54 articles on the Tylenol scare in a period of three months. As the number of diagnosed cases multiplied -- 1300 cases in early 1983, 15,000 by summer 1985, 32,000 in March 1987 -- the founding of ACT UP became a political necessity.

No Business As Usual

The catalyst for ACT UP's formation was a speech by Larry Kramer, a founder of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, at the New York Gay and Lesbian Community Center in March 1987. His polemical articles had already helped to mobilize gay activists. In his speech he blasted the gay community for its political immaturity and attacked the federal bureaucracy's lack of response to the epidemic. Two days later, 300 activists returned to the community center and gave birth to ACT UP.

The new direct action group committed to using any means, short of violence, to achieve its initial agenda of "drugs into bodies." It was amazingly successful at capturing media attention. Two weeks after its founding, with the theme of "No Business As Usual," ACT UP members blocked morning rush hour traffic in the Wall Street area, dangling an effigy of FDA chief Frank Young above passersby. Anticipating media coverage of tax day at the main post office, activists appeared with stark "Silence=Death" posters, and fliers calling for "tax dollars for AIDS research." The October 1987 March on Washington, which drew 500,000 demonstrators, provided a time for national networking among direct-action AIDS activists and for the formation of ACT UP chapters across the country.

ACT UP's direct action tactics have led to victories. Its demonstration at the FDA in October 1988, a national action that drew thousands, and later actions at the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control, have forced changes in the testing and approval policy for new drugs and expanded access to experimental drugs. Its actions have pried money from state and local governments and

convinced federal bureaucrats and politicians to push for AIDS funding.

But the influence of ACT UP has extended beyond these concrete policy changes. Within the gay community, it has become the conscience of the movement. By demonstrating the effectiveness of militant direct action tactics it has prodded others to work harder, to act creatively and to extend their spheres of action. Many AIDS organizations formerly devoted to providing services have added public policy advocacy to their agendas. Mainstream movement organizations, such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, have moved beyond a focus on lobbying, and have endorsed direct action. And ACT UP has become a training ground where thousands of young gay men and lesbians are learning to be political activists.

ACT UP provides the lesbian and gay community with a broader analysis of the AIDS epidemic and the roots of lesbian and gay oppression. Although access to treatments has remained at the heart of its politics, the problems that the epidemic raise push ACT UP to make wider connections. In targeting Burroughs Wellcome, ACT UP exposed the huge corporate profits earned through a system of government subsidies. To highlight the international nature of the epidemic, ACT UP also revealed that the giant pharmaceuticals company invests in South Africa, while the high price of AZT makes the drug inaccessible to Africans. Demands for increased AIDS funding have been coupled with calls for cuts in defense spending. And to address the housing needs of people with AIDS, ACT UP has formed coalitions with homeless groups.

Systemic Oppression

ACT UP's comprehensive analysis is beginning to inform the broader gay and lesbian movement. Not since the days of radical gay and lesbian liberation in the early 1970s has there been so much talk about the systemic nature of oppression and the need for far-reaching change. And not since early gay liberation has there been so much action in the direction of coalitional politics. Legislative victories in 1990 -- the Hate Crimes Statistics Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act -- were pos-

sible because gay and lesbian organizations tenaciously worked with a host of other constituencies to achieve mutual goals. In the past five years, the gay movement has shifted its emphasis from a liberal reform agenda calling for equal rights, to a progressive analysis demanding broad social change.

ACT UP's ability to wrest concessions from a health care bureaucracy that wraps itself in the mantle of scientific authority has altered other activists' view of the medical establishment. Cancer and Alzheimer's disease activists have acknowledged the influence of ACT UP on their organizing strategies. The strain of the AIDS epidemic on the nation's health care infrastructure, along with ACT UP's challenge to the system, is contributing to mounting demands for comprehensive reform, including calls for a national health care system.

Shocking Images

The strong commitment of ACT UP members comes from the immediacy of the life-and-death issues many of them face. The organization's success is due to its openness to new members, its thorough articulation of complex scientific and policy issues, its use of shocking images that capture media attention, and the willingness of its members to put their bodies on the line. ACT UP brings to its work a sense of outrageous humor that is distinctively gay and lesbian. When District of Columbia police, wearing yellow latex gloves to "protect" themselves from infection, arrested activists outside the third International AIDS Conference, a group of ACT UP demonstrators chanted, "Your gloves don't match your shoes/You'll see it on the news!" Surrounded by sickness and death and seething with rage, ACT UP members recognize that collective political action is also about community, empowerment, and the celebration of human strength and resilience. Amid the grief and mourning they haven't forgotten how to laugh. ♦

John D'Emilio has written widely on the gay movement and the history of sexuality. He teaches at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro and is co-chair of the board of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Struggling From Within

An Interview With Urvashi Vaid

Urvashi Vaid, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), is a longtime feminist activist and community organizer. Her involvement in the gay and lesbian movement spans more than a decade. Vaid, an attorney, has worked for prisoners' rights and has written extensively on prisoners with AIDS and HIV.

The NGLTF struggles for gay and lesbian liberation and for broad social change through lobbying, grassroots organizing and public education.

Democratic Left talked to Vaid about the persistent discrimination gay and lesbian activists face in the progressive movement and about the possibility for creating broader movements that respect the lives of gay and lesbian people.

Democratic Left: What is the mission of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force?

Urvashi Vaid: The Task Force is a unique institution in the gay and lesbian political movement, because it's the one with the broadest vision of social change. It was founded in 1973 at a time when there was no national membership gay and lesbian organization. We exist to do two things, to eliminate prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to build a movement for social change. As part of our mission statement we have a commitment to ending racism, sexism and other systems of oppression.

In 1980, the Task Force opened a field office in Washington, and began the work of establishing relationships

between the gay community and our allies in the civil rights and labor movements. It's important for people to remember how new our history is -- how recent the organizing and interactions between the gay community and other communities are. Because gay people have been so stigmatized and so disregarded by the left, the fact that we are sitting here having this interview today, and the fact that the Task Force has the visibility and the stature that it does today, is really quite remarkable.

D.L.: What are some of the problems lesbians and gays continue to face when they work in progressive organizations and coalitions?

U.V.: The biggest problem is that the left is not above the homophobia that pervades our culture. It's carried by all of us, just as racism and sexism are carried by all of us in some ways. And progressive institutions -- even if they have non-discrimination clauses in their mission statements -- don't necessarily understand the nuances of heterosexism.

And so when gay people work in the labor movement, or the peace movement or the women's movement, we



Urvashi Vaid

have experiences such as this: "Well, we support equal rights for gay people, but that's not what we're here to talk about -- we're here to talk about housing, we're here to talk about peace." But there are gay and lesbian perspectives on each of these issues. We have experiences of discrimination that are particular, and should be aired in these forums.

The left has a long history of problems in dealing with the lavender question, and dealing with sexuality in general.

D.L.: What should the broader left do to break down the barriers that exist between our organizations?

U.V.: It's critical for non-gay left insti-

It's critical for non-gay left institutions to learn about the lesbian and gay movement.

tutions to talk about the issues, to learn about what the gay movement is up to, and what the problems are that lesbians and gay men face today. There are many opportunities for alliance around specific issues. There are many coalitions -- on AIDS policy, on anti-violence issues, on family issues -- that progressive organizations should participate in with us. There is a lot of work that's happening in the gay movement-- work that's being led by the gay movement. So there are many opportunities for coalition and alliance with us.

D.L.: Are there particular problems that are faced by women and people of color who are also fighting for gay and lesbian rights?

U.V.: The gay community itself is not immune from sexism and racism. The gay community is in fact not a community, but a series of communities united by the experience of oppression because of our sexual orientation. We are African American people, Latino/Latina people, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, white, men, women; we are sexual minorities within our own community, the leather community, the S&M community, the transsexual community, the transvestite community. There is a tremendous diversity within what is commonly called "the gay and lesbian community." Sometimes it's a miracle that we actually coalesce as a movement, because we are so diverse.

But there's a fascinating process underway within the gay and lesbian movement. We are engaged in developing a diversity politics, a politics that respects difference and allows us to work together. The institutions of our community are changing because women and people of color are rising to posi-

tions of power in those institutions. I'm the first woman of color to run a major national gay and lesbian organization. My being here is not a historical accident, it's part of a process within this organization of opening up and of transformation, a process of broadening the vision and the mission of this organization to be more inclusive. As women and people of color come into this organization, we bring a multi-issue agenda into the gay movement.

We're not a single issue movement

There's no gay person who does not live in fear of losing his or her health insurance.

anymore -- we're not just a movement for gay civil rights. We are becoming a movement for liberation -- for broad progressive change.

D.L.: The gay and lesbian movement has been at the forefront of the movement for national health care reform. Is there a potential to create a truly diverse coalition around this struggle?

U.V.: Yes, there's a tremendous alliance that can come together around that issue. There's a tremendous potential for making connections to the specific struggles of gay people. There's no gay person who does not live in fear of losing his or her health insurance. There's no gay person who doesn't have a horror story that his or her friends have gone

through -- about having to pay \$10,000 for AZT treatment, or just being sick and not having any transportation to get to the doctor. You know, basic stuff. So, it's very personal to lesbians and gay men today.

The experience of living with AIDS for many gay and bisexual men, and the experience of women who have been fighting for a long time for a more equitable health care system, has led the gay community to support national health care. There are a number of proposals floating around Washington, and we in the gay movement are analyzing them and developing positions on them. And we are getting involved in the broad national health care reform coalitions that are forming.

D.L.: I understand that ACT UP New York has called for a national health care march in the spring of 1992.

U.V.: Yes, that's very exciting. My vi-

sion is that it would be a truly broad coalition -- the kind of coalition effort that I have yet to see -- where gay and lesbian people, people with AIDS and HIV, unions, feminist groups, health care people, all would be sitting around the table and producing this national demonstration that would speak to all of the constituencies. No one would be put to the back of the bus. So, that's very exciting. If that can happen, it would be really wonderful. ♦

Ginny Coughlin, DSA's Assistant to the National Director, interviewed Urvashi Vaid for Democratic Left. She worked with the NGLTF Anti-Violence Project as a student at Temple University.

Undocumented Aliens in the Queer Nation

Reflections on Race and Ethnicity in the Lesbian and Gay Movement

by Charles Fernandez

Relected in the general public's image of the typical homosexual, in the lesbian and gay media's depiction of its target audience, in the movement's agenda and strategies, in the academy's methodology and theorizing, and in the lesbian and gay community's own self-understanding, is this movement's subject and protagonist: a white and middle class person. This typical gay subject defines herself or himself exclusively in opposition to the category of heterosexual. Both personal and communal identity are constituted by this opposition, and the political action resulting from that identity is against homophobia and heterosexism. The struggle against these twin oppressions becomes the primary agenda of that person's movement for liberation or, all too often, assimilation.

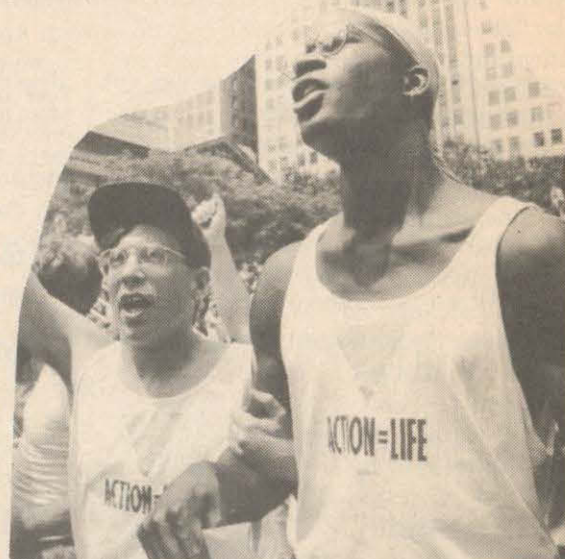
That central subject of the gay movement exists in sole opposition to a heterosexual category, but he is not defined merely by his opposition to that category. Race and class are as deeply embedded in his identity as is his sexuality. (Gender privilege is also a large part of that subject's identity, but I have chosen to focus this piece on the dynamics of race and class, in which too many white middle class lesbians share a similar position as their male counterparts.) In challenging the power dynamics of heterosexism, the gay movement's subject remains profoundly invested in the power and privilege that accrues to him or her by not challenging the dynamics of race and class. In fact, much of his activism seems predicated on that privileged status, as she or he seeks not to transform an oppressive society, but to

tinker with it in order to reclaim -- as an out, proud gay man or lesbian -- his or her rightful position of privilege.

Richard Mohr argues that coalition politics -- engaging substantively in common struggle against sexism, racism, or classism -- is fundamentally a drain on the lesbian and gay movement. That some gays might be obliged to struggle against racism, or sexism or class oppression is a fact neither Mohr nor perhaps most movement leaders are in any way concerned with; those are, as he points out, the struggles of other groups, not of gays.

The Invisible Queer

These views effectively stunt the full participation of those among us whose personal and political ideologies are defined by more than just opposition to heterosexuality; and it robs the lesbian and gay movement of sorely needed allies. Norma Alarcon has argued that "the inclusion of other analytical categories such as race and class becomes impossible for a subject whose consciousness refuses to acknowledge that 'one becomes a woman' in ways that are much more complex than in a simple opposition to men. In cultures in which 'asymmetric race and class relations are a central organizing principle of society,' one may also 'become a woman' in opposition to other women." Similarly, by building an identity exclusively around sexuality and developing a political agenda that either excludes or subordinates other oppressions, the lesbian and gay movement has narrowly construed its primary subject. In



T.L. Litt/Impact Visuals

disregarding the concerns of people of color and our agendas, it effectively dismisses us as subjects of this movement.

We are rendered invisible even as our differences are touted as examples of the colorful diversity of our gay and lesbian community. The lesbian and gay movement has been unwilling to explore a more substantive understanding of "diversity," one which would compel an examination of its collective assumptions about race and class. When the movement and I weren't ignoring my ethnicity or my class background, we were exoticizing it, trivializing it, and evading the personal and political implications of my and our multiple subjectivities.

The agenda of the early gay liberation movement was to transform society and, in the process, liberate a safe social space for lesbians and gay men. But what was originally intended as a metaphor, "social space," meaning the freedom to live openly gay lives, became concretized in the gay ghettos of our major cities. The movement's understanding of "space" has evolved along with the community's changing sense of itself as a "people" or a "tribe." Now that quest for social space has been taken a step further in its development

as a concrete concept, and we are witnessing the rise of queer nationalism. One may well wonder if all this won't soon result in a call for a queer homeland.

In the "melting pot" of our Queer Nation, all difference becomes subsumed within the homogenizing construct of the "gay and lesbian community." Political and philosophical differences are dismissed. The ominous rise in queer nationalism -- majority white and English-speaking only -- leaves some of us wondering if we are to be second-class citizens, or three-fifths human, or recolonized subjects within it. The historical precedent offers little comfort.

The strange advent of queer nationalism may perhaps be attributed to the lesbian and gay community's even stranger tendency to view itself as something akin to an ethnic "minority." Oppressed by a hostile majority from whom it sought assurances of certain rights and privileges, the movement fashioned itself in the image of other groups struggling for liberation. Somehow, the sexual minority that is the lesbian and gay community -- one whose subject we have already described as white -- has come to identify itself as comparable to a community of color.

Gay Ethnicity?

Robert Epstein, in his article "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Construction," argues that the lesbian and gay movement's self-identification as an ethnic minority coincided with a revival of ethnicity during the 1970s -- a revival Epstein asserts was "essentially a phenomenon of white European ethnic groups." But the gay community doesn't compare itself to those white ethnic communities that have traditionally experienced prejudice, such as the Greeks, Italians, or Polish. Instead, the gains, losses, and obstacles experienced by the movement are measured against the struggles of groups battling for power in our society: African-Americans, Latinos, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans.

There is, of course, a fundamental difference between the lived reality of white ethnicities

and communities of color in this country: the force of hundreds of years of genocide, slavery, colonization, imperialism and racial hatred. In that context it's troubling to witness a white-dominated movement compare its gains and grievances to those of communities of color without examining its own dynamics of race and class. But it is when that movement actively competes against those communities of color, as it is increasingly doing, that its race and class assumptions are most distressingly revealed.

Claiming Victim Status

Against the assertion that communities of color have endured centuries of brutalizing racism, one could well argue that homosexuals have fared no better. It is difficult to navigate this critique without becoming beached on the barren rocks of ranked oppressions. Yet one cannot help but appreciate the irony of a white-led movement that has largely banished concerns with racism from its discourse using the stigma of race and ethnicity as legitimating tools.

Perhaps this travesty speaks to the lesbian and gay movement's complete failure to clearly communicate its political message in terms of sexuality, resorting instead to the discourse of race and ethnicity. Perhaps this in itself speaks to the role of racialized subjects in our society as among the most visibly "marked" of victims -- and our overwhelming tendency to engage in political action by claiming victim status. Perhaps a white-dominated movement, particularly one so concerned with "visibility" that some of its (white) leaders have in the past wished for a "skin color" that would readily identify them as gay, would naturally seek the "mark" and the victimization that "minority" status ostensibly confers. And perhaps it should come as no surprise that disenfranchised whites should seek empowerment at the expense of communities of color: such was the tactic adopted by white suffragettes vis-a-vis African-Americans during the first wave of feminism earlier this century.

When the gay and lesbian community embraces an ethnic self-understanding, who ultimately benefits? How does

it determine political discourse and strategy, or the possibility for radical political change? What impact does it have on the possibility for coalescing with communities of color, or engaging substantively with them in the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation? These are some of the questions I have asked myself as I juggle the seemingly irreducible demands of structuring my political commitments. One possible explanation may lie in the fact that fractious disenfranchised groups competing in the marketplace of rights, representation and privileges pose no great danger to the hegemonic political and social systems which oppress us all.

Part of the problem may lie in the role identity politics has played in the discourse of contemporary politics, including those of the lesbian and gay movement. While identity politics has illuminated new areas of human experience ripe for politicization, taken to the extreme it has resulted in a fragmentation of subjects. It has dead-ended in an over-emphasis on identity and personal development instead of political values like liberation, justice and solidarity. It may, perhaps, be unreasonable for me to hope to find myself as a Latino in the lesbian and gay movement. But it is not unreasonable to demand that the movement include my concerns if it expects my support and participation. One may hope that a more integrated analysis of what it means to be gay or lesbian will help spawn a movement that recognizes multiple subjects and the necessity to move toward liberation across a greater spectrum of struggles. ♦

Charlie Fernandez is a Latino gay activist living in New York City. He coordinates the Funding Exchange's OUT Fund for Lesbian and Gay Liberation.

This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the IV Annual Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference at Harvard University in 1990 and an article published in OUT/LOOK magazine, a lesbian and gay quarterly. For a one-year subscription please send \$18 to OUT/LOOK, 2940 16th Street, Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103.

A Struggle of the Spirit

Lesbian and Gay Communities of Faith

by Rev. Will Leckie

In the late 1960s and '70s, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals began coming out in mainline churches, insisting on our right to be "included at the table of God" from which we had been excluded for so long. As we became more aware of the need to be personally involved in struggles for justice and liberation on a global level, lesbian and gay people realized that to keep our personal lives hidden and secret left us vulnerable to the abuses of unchecked power. Our insistence on being visible was met with resistance, then some grudging acceptance. But the eighties set us back, so that today we face a violent anti-gay and lesbian backlash sanctioned by an increasingly vocal and politically self-righteous conservative minority.

The mainstream churches' struggles with the "issue," each of them eventually making some sort of embattled public statement about "the right of homosexuals to exist," while "loving the sinner and hating the sin." One or two even called for open affirmation of and the ordination of lesbians and gays.

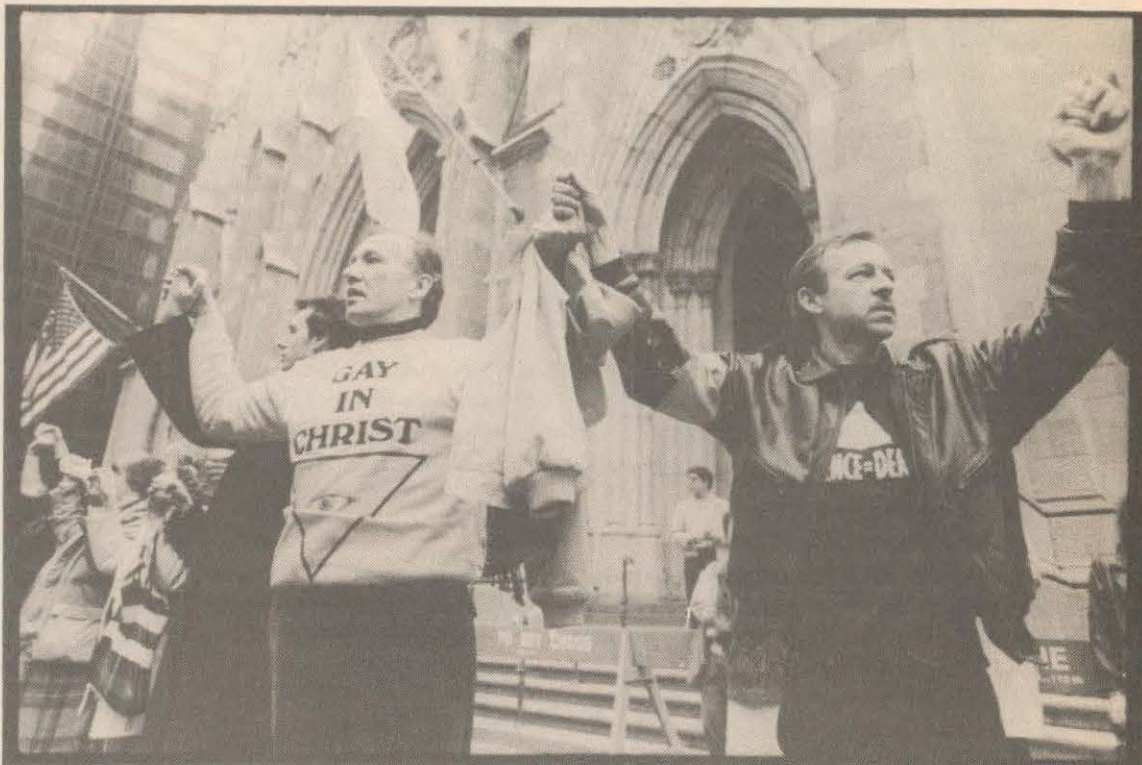
Many of us remained within the denominational structures, unwilling to give up our church to small-minded reactionaries, for the church had been a place where we had been taught about, and embraced, the reality of a loving power that worked toward change for

the better in our world. And so we stayed, believing that love in the midst of hate would be victorious.

However, as mainline congregations dwindled in size and relevance in the 1980s, panic set in, and hostility to lesbians and gays surfaced first. Those denominations with affirming state-

for gay and lesbian rights within the Episcopal church, advised his candidates for holy orders in 1990 to "go back into the closet for now, until the [backlash of reaction] has passed."

With good reason lesbian, gay and bisexual people are skeptical about the church. We have seen it give with one



Lesbians and gay men hold an Easter service outside St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

ments in their polity were not willing to place openly gay or lesbian candidates in their churches. "The issue is too hot," said one United Church of Christ Conference minister in 1988. "There are no gay or lesbian people in [that] congregation," said one Presbyterian, assuming that lesbian and gay people could minister only to lesbian and gay people. Fear of losing political power in an atmosphere of increasing conservatism motivated some leaders to retreat. One bishop, who had been an insistent voice

hand and take with the other. We have learned the hard way not to trust an institution that seems more concerned with its own survival than with the doing of justice. We have begun rethinking what church means. Churches that are safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and all people in solidarity with us are emerging in new denominations (the Metropolitan Community Churches), as churches ousted from mainline denominations (primarily Lutheran and Meth-

continued on page 19

David Vira/Impact Visuals

RESOURCES

♦ *Pride at Work: Organizing for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Unions*, by Miriam Frank and Desma Holcomb of New York City's Lesbian and Gay Labor Network. Over 70 pages of information on non-discrimination clauses, building lesbian and gay rights committees in unions, organizing for domestic partner benefits and AIDS education, services and health & safety. Individual copies are \$5, plus \$1 for postage and handling; bulk orders (10 or more) are \$3 plus \$3 per 10 for postage. Send check or money order payable to Lesbian & Gay Labor Network, Box 1159, Peter Stuyvesant Station, NY, NY 10009.

♦ Join the new DSA National Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission and receive the commission's newsletter, *Socialism and Sexuality*. Annual membership is \$15, \$20 for two or more people at one address. Subscriptions alone to *Socialism and Sexuality* are \$8/year (four issues). Send checks payable to "Chicago DSA" to DSA LGB Commission, c/o Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee #403, Chicago, IL 60647.

♦ *OUT: A Fund for Lesbian and Gay Liberation*, a new program of the Funding Exchange, will support projects that are organizing against homophobia and heterosexism, identifying connections between these and other oppressions, and working to forge coalitions and take action on these issues. For information about seeking a grant or making a donation, call (212) 529-5300.

♦ *Crisis!*, a video presentation on the American health care system (21 minutes) is available in VHS format from Families USA for \$25. Send check or money order payable to Families USA Foundation, Attn: Barbara Campbell, 1334 G St., NW, Third Floor, Washington, DC 20005.

♦ *Health PAC Bulletin*, published by the Health Policy Advisory Center, reports on the U.S. health care system from an informed activist point of view. It serves as a unique progressive voice for changing consciousness on health priorities and challenging a "medical-industrial complex" to provide decent, affordable care. Subscriptions are by \$35 membership for individuals. Send to Health PAC, 17 Murray Street, NY, NY 10007.

♦ *Organizing For Social Change: A Manual For Activists in the 1990s*, by DSA'er Steve Max, Jackie Kendall and Kim Bobo of the Midwest Academy. Available at the DSA National Office. Call (212) 962-0390.

♦ The Spring issue of the *Activist*, the journal of the DSA Youth Section, features articles on feminist health care, needle-exchange programs, the student peace movement and an interview with Billy Bragg. To get your copy, or to receive bulk copies for distribution, call us at (212) 962-0390. Keep up with the student movement for democratic socialism -- subscribe to the *Activist*. Send \$5 for three issues to DSA, 15 Dutch Street, #500, NY, NY 10038.

SAVE THE DATE

♦ The DSA Convention, the broadest policy-making body of the organization, will meet in Chicago November 8-11. Join an extraordinary group of activists to decide DSA's upcoming course.

♦ DSA's Commission on Religion and Socialism and its publication, *Religious Socialism*, will sponsor an ecumenical conference "New Visions for the Religious Left" in Washington DC, May 31 - June 2, at the Hotel Harrington. For information contact Jack Spooner at (717) 766-2114.

♦ The 16th annual Summer Youth Conference will be held at Cleveland State University, August 22-25. The conference is a time to meet student and youth activists from around the country who share common concerns about racism, access to education, rights of working people, the environment, feminism, and gay and lesbian liberation. For information call (212) 962-0390.

Order Your DSA Manuals Now And Get A Special Spring Discount Just \$2 each!

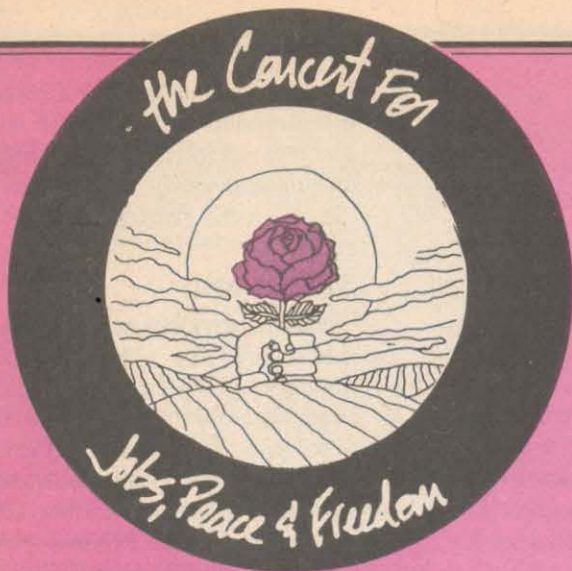
- Reproductive Freedom Organizing Guide
- Solidarity: A Labor Support Manual for Young Activists
- DSA Youth Section Organizing Manual

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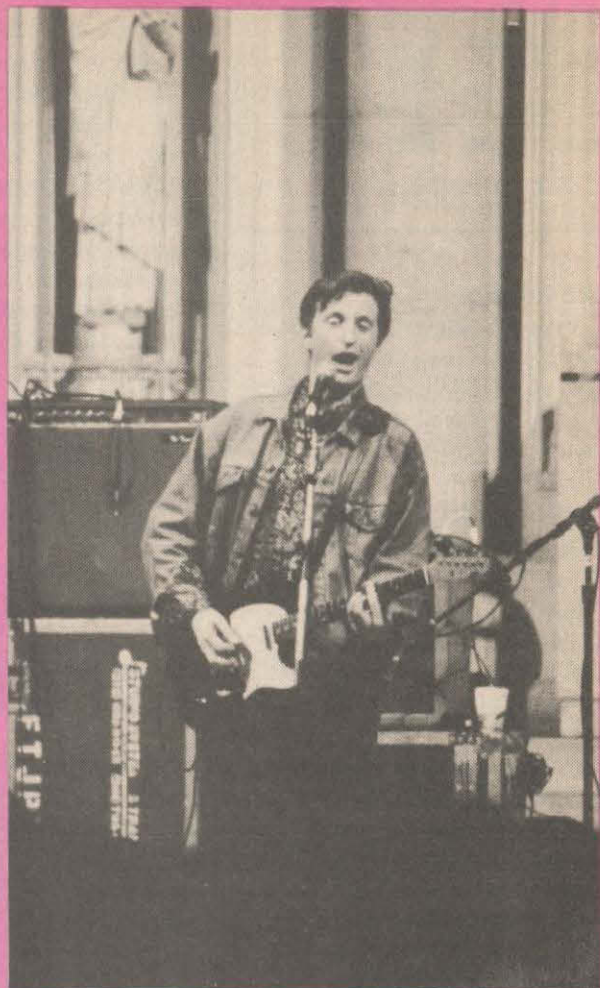
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On April 23, DSA brought together a crowd of over 800 at the Riverside Church in New York City to hear Billy Bragg, Pete Seeger, Gretchen Reed, Robin Holcomb, and Kate and Anna McGarrigle. Amid the stunning atmosphere of the church, the performers entertained and inspired the audience with songs and stories of the struggle for social justice. DSA'er Rafael PiRoman served as Master of Ceremonies and Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger introduced the event. The concert was sponsored by Youth For Jobs, Peace and Freedom, a project of the Institute for Democratic Socialism and the DSA Youth Section.

The following night in St. Louis, Billy Bragg sported a DSA T-shirt on stage and spoke highly of DSA during the concert. "It was great exposure for DSA," said David Nibert of the St. Louis Local.



Dorothee Benz

Billy Bragg performs his version of "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," a tribute to Phil Ochs.



Leslie Warren

Pete Seeger sang with an entourage of guest performers, including Gretchen Reed, a gospel singer.

ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

CALIFORNIA

John Beauchamp, of DSA and Health Access, spoke at a San Diego DSA forum on the prospects for national health care reform and the health care agenda in California.

At a Valley DSA event, Leo Whitaker discussed Gary Wills's new book, *Under God: Religion and American Politics*. Duane Campbell, chair of Sacramento DSA and the Anti-Racism Commission of DSA was elected co-chair of the Health Care Action Committee of the Sacramento Central Labor Council. Sacramento DSA has put together a Health Care Committee to assist the Labor Council committee's health care organizing.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

William Winpisinger, former President of the International Association of Machinists and DSA Honorary Chair, addressed the question "Can Labor Save the Democrats?" at DC/Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA's 1991 Spaghetti Dinner and Forum. DSA Vice Chair Bogdan Denitch was featured at a March forum on "Socialism and the New World Order."

ILLINOIS

Chicago DSA endorsed Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis's unsuccessful bid to wrest the Chicago mayoralty from Richard Daley. The Northern Illinois University DSA chapter co-sponsored a well-attended teach-in on the Persian Gulf war. Speakers included DSA'er J. Hughes, editor of the *Eco-Socialist Review*, the newsletter of DSA's Environmental Commission. NIU DSA has drummed up a great deal of debate on campus with a weekly newsletter, *Our Times*.

KENTUCKY

Central Kentucky DSA held a successful membership meeting and forum on "The Aftermath of War: America and the World," with speakers Ann Patterson, Ernie

Yanarella and Richard Mitchell. Activists gathered for some socialist socializing at a potluck dinner and video night featuring "Born on the Fourth of July."

MARYLAND

Baltimore DSA activists report that they are attracting new members to DSA and are working to reinvigorate the progressive community in the wake of the Persian Gulf war. The local sponsored a workshop on democratic socialism at the American Friends Youth Awareness program and are campaigning for union organizer Robert Simpson's bid for city council. Activists here have joined the local Jobs With Justice campaign for national health care.

MASSACHUSETTS

Activists in Boston DSA put together a successful Spring School, with Noam Chomsky speaking on "U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changing World" and Michael Miller, of Massachusetts Health Care For All, teaching a session on health care activism. The Spring School also included an "Introduction to Democratic Socialism" taught by Tom Gallagher, chair of Boston DSA.

MICHIGAN

Electoral politics and national health care have been the activism focus for Ann Arbor DSA. The local DSA Political Action Committee here has been campaigning for progressives running for mayor and city council. The local has been working in coalition with other

When Your Politics Are More Than Posturing

DSA made quite a splash at the April Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City. With two of the most popular panels, a reception that attracted over 200 people, a lively literature table and a glossy poster that borrowed from Madison Avenue, DSA projected both its seriousness and sense of humor.

DSA's panel on "Multiculturalism and the Left" with Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornel West and Jim Sleeper was the hit of the conference. Our panel on "Socialist Perspectives on Health Care," with Victor Sidel and Linnea Capps attracted over 100 activists. New York City DSA organized a thought-provoking panel discussion

on Multicultural Coalition Building with former DSA Field Organizer Shakoor Aljuwani and Vernice Miller of the Center for Constitutional Rights. At our reception, Cornel West, Frances Fox Piven, Bogdan Denitch and Michael Lighty gave convincing pitches for joining DSA and inspiration to current members.

If you haven't already, be sure to check out the now-famous DSA Counterhegemony ad starring Frances Fox Piven and Bogdan Denitch. "When your politics are more than posturing... DSA classics!" Congratulations to Bogdan Denitch and CUNY DSA for putting it all together.

--G. C.

groups around universal health care. DSA'er **Perry Bullard**, a State Representative, spoke at a DSA forum on universal health care in Michigan.

NEW JERSEY

Cornel West, DSA Honorary Chair and director of Princeton University's African-American Studies Program was profiled in the *Christian Science Monitor*. **Harry Fleischman**, former national secretary of the Socialist Party and biographer of Norman Thomas met with Princeton DSA to discuss the life of Norman Thomas.

NEW YORK

Ithaca DSA sponsored a discussion entitled "Voices America Misunderstood: Middle Eastern Attitudes on the Gulf War," with Cornell professor **Shibley Telhami**. **Nassau DSA's** successful Saturday seminars continued in March and April with **Patrick Kelly** speaking on the new Germany and **Bill Spinrad** discussing a new political agenda for the United States. The **Long Island Progressive Coalition** held a forum on the Gulf war featuring **Noam Chomsky**.

New York City DSA welcomed many new and old members with its Introduction to Democratic Socialism featuring **Jim Chapin**, **Mark Levinson**, **Bogdan Denitch** and **Joanne Barkan**. In its second course, the New York City DSA's School for Democratic Socialism explored the health care crisis and socialist alternatives with **Oliver Fein**, **Ronda Kotelchuck**, **Sid Socolar** and **Linnea Capps**.

The **City University of New York -- Graduate Center DSA** organized a forum entitled "The

A Latino Health Care Agenda

Developed by the DSA Latino Commission

1. Establish neighborhood health centers with bilingual outreach to bring prenatal care and nutrition education to the Latino community.
2. Provide quality health care for all children.
3. Provide childcare with bilingual professionals trained in health care techniques.
4. Provide free, well-balanced nutrition programs for all children in schools, including breakfasts.
5. Allocate new funding for emergency health services in all areas. Bilingual professionals should be on staff in appropriate areas.
6. Remove all citizenship and residency requirements for emergency health care, particularly for children.
7. Expand drug rehabilitation clinics and associated services.
8. Provide adequate scholarship monies to increase the number of bilingual Latino nurses, nurse practitioners, paramedical workers and doctors.
9. Develop medicorp programs to provide health care for migrant workers and others in rural areas.
10. Establish a new approach to rural health care, including the prevention and treatment of pesticide-related illnesses.

Uncertain Future of the Middle Class" with DSA Honorary Chair **Barbara Ehrenreich**, **Mark Levinson** and **Fred Siegal**.

OHIO

Cleveland DSA'ers continue to work for universal health care in their state. Local activists are helping to plan the Summer Youth Conference at Cleveland State University. **Columbus DSA's Bob Fittrakis** has become a local hero for his creative electoral campaigning and anti-war organizing.

PENNSYLVANIA

The International Women's Day Awards Party of **Pittsburgh DSA** honored **Joni Rabinowitz**, a long-time anti-hunger community or-

ganizer with Just Harvest. She was a founding member of the New American Movement in the 1970s and DSA in the early 1980s. Pittsburgh activists report that their film screening and discussion of "Berkeley in the '60s" was very well attended.

Philadelphia DSA held two recent forums, one on the anti-war movement and another on socialist-feminism. Philly DSA'ers are also campaigning for progressive city council candidates.

Reading DSA members **Alice Swoyer-Smolkowicz** and **Darlington Hoopes** are candidates for a commission to study the Berks County government. Activists are pulling out all the stops to organize DSA'er **Mark Smolkowicz's** run for city council.

Guillermo Ungo Remembered. . .

by Patrick Laceyfield

Short in stature, balding and eternally clad in a three-piece suit (bullet-proof vest sometimes optional, more often not), my friend Guillermo Ungo seldom fit the picture folks have of a revolutionary. Opportunities to strike heroic poses were few and far between. Neither was fire-breathing rhetoric exactly his forte. When I received the call that he had passed away from a heart attack in a Mexico City hospital, shy of his 60th birthday, I thought oddly enough of Victor Laszlo, the Czechoslovak anti-fascist leader played by Paul Henreid in the movie *Casablanca*.

"Welcome back to the fight," the much-travelled Laszlo says to burnt-out case Humphrey Bogart. "This time I know our side will win." Guillermo Ungo's hope and optimism, like that of the fictional Laszlo, saw him through difficult years in exile -- another round of meetings and airplane trips, cajoling a government official here and stitching together a fragile coalition there. He died of natural causes -- an unusual way for a Salvadoran democrat and radical to go -- just ten days before the legislative election that would have made him a member of the National Assembly.

I met Guillermo Ungo on my first trip to El Salvador in 1979, only months before the young officers coup that would elevate him to the governing junta in October of that year. When, after three months, he saw that hard-line elements in the military were determined to carry on the repression and stonewall any significant reforms, he resigned and stepped into the opposition. When the entire executive committee of the opposition Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) was captured in broad daylight,

killed and mutilated by Salvadoran army units in November of 1980, Guillermo Ungo assumed the presidency of the FDR. Forced into exile by the repression, he logged more air miles than I, with my fear of flying, like to think about -- pleading the case for a regime of social justice in El Salvador, for a halt to U.S. intervention, and for a negotiated political settlement. He was a fre-

a politician. That is to say, he understood that politics is a question of power as well as ideals -- understood through bitter experience. While critical of the guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) at many turns -- his democratic socialist values being only one difference -- he nevertheless defended the FDR's political alliance at a time when U.S. policymakers sought

*Ungo seldom fit the picture
folks have of a revolutionary.*

quent speaker at Democratic Socialists of America gatherings -- most recently the DSA National Board meeting last November in San Francisco -- and he and I broke bread together often at meetings of the Socialist International, of which he was a Vice-President.

In March of 1989, Ungo launched his presidential campaign in El Salvador under the banner of the newly-formed Democratic Convergence coalition. For the last three weeks of the campaign, I often rode "shotgun" -- not quite literally but not quite figuratively -- as he pressed the flesh in urban markets and dusty, sun-baked aldeas. At one stop, Santa Elena, he recalled how he and Jose Napoleon Duarte had campaigned there in 1972 when they were, respectively, candidates for the vice-presidency and the presidency of the Unified National Opposition (UNO). On that occasion, the military intervened to deprive Ungo and Duarte of their rightful victory. Our State Department was pointedly uninterested, noting in a memo that both candidates were "leftists."

If Ungo was an idealist, he was also

to separate democrats such as he and Ruben Zamora from the FMLN. How odd that the State Department would ask what use the FMLN would have for democrats like Ungo if they came to power while ignoring the consequences Jose Napoleon Duarte suffered by his Faustian pact with the army and with U.S. policy.

It is ironic that Guillermo Ungo did not live to see the strong showing by his Democratic Convergence in Salvador's March 10 legislative balloting. Despite frauds and irregularities that cut heavily into the opposition vote, the Convergence boosted its percentage from less than four percent to nearly 13 percent, winning eight deputies -- the first representation of the Salvadoran left in the Assembly since the beginning of the war. The Convergence established itself as the third political force in the country and finished second to the rightist ARENA party in the capital, San Salvador. For the first time, elections were not counterposed to negotiations but seen as consistent with them. Also for the first time, the FMLN did not



Impact Visuals

Guillermo Ungo addresses a Democratic Convergence rally before the 1989 elections.

... Amid Hope For Peace In El Salvador

seek to obstruct the balloting. ARENA, despite a multi-million dollar campaign, saw its vote drop ten points to 44 percent and lost its majority in the Assembly. The abstention rate, however, was nearly half. Opposition spokespeople claim that at least 15 percent of the people could not vote due to election irregularities and incompetencies. Since ARENA voters can be counted on to turn out, due to their relatively higher incomes, opposition successes in the future will rest on higher turnouts.

In addition, as I pen this, the Salvadoran government and the FMLN are sitting down to twenty consecutive days of negotiations in Mexico City under the auspices of the United Nations. Sticky issues remain, first of all, on the reduction in numbers and power of the Salvadoran army and the establishment of a board to examine officers' human rights records. Reform of the judicial system and of the electoral system also

are on the table. So, too, are the details of any cease-fire. The challenge faced by all parties is to craft an agreement that allows the country's political differences, as vast as ever, to be played

***"Welcome back
to the fight,"
Laszlo says.
"This time I
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will win."***

out in the political instead of the politico-military arena. The Democratic Convergence and the FMLN will be looking for guarantees that protect their right to organize and grow. The Convergence, in particular, now has the political space to lose an election. The

question for the future, magnified by the ARENA fraud in the recent balloting, is whether the powers-that-be and the United States will guarantee the right of the Convergence, someday, to win.

If peace does indeed come to troubled little El Salvador, it will be in no small part due to the efforts of Guillermo Ungo, of Hector Oqueli (murdered last year by death squads in Guatemala), and their compatriots gone but not forgotten. I can picture my friend Guillermo with his Monsignor, Archbishop Oscar Romero, kicking back with their favorite Scotch to toast a settlement while looking down from on high. Rest In Peace Guillermo. Father and husband. Democratic socialist. Son of El Salvador. ♦

Patrick Lacefield, a longtime DSA'er, is Associate Director at the Commission on U.S.-Latin American Relations.

chusetts, for example, 45% had been verbally threatened or harassed and 21% had been physically confronted or assaulted. The report also revealed that among high school and junior high students, 33-49% had been harassed, or had experienced threats and/or violence while in school. The 1988 New York Governor's Task Force on Bias Related Violence found teens surveyed about their biases against various minorities reacted more negatively to gay people than any other group -- perceiving gays as "legitimate targets" that can be openly attacked. A number of students even threatened violence against gays.

While hate group attacks constitute a minority of crimes against gay and lesbian people, they are dramatically rising. In prison, rape of gays is widespread and generally condoned by prison officials. Severe beatings by

in the NGLTF study were also influenced by the fear that their sexual identities would be made public, bringing the usual consequences: loss of jobs, homes, rejection by families, etc.

Similarly, judges all too often are impediments to justice. The NGLTF report cites the following:

In a 1988 case involving the beating death of an Asian-American gay man, a Broward County (FL) Circuit Judge jokingly asked the prosecuting attorney, "That's a crime now, to beat up a homosexual?" The prosecutor answered, "Yes, sir. And it's also a crime to kill them." To this the judge replied, "Times have really changed."

As with sexual assault survivors, the victim is often blamed for provoking his or her attack with the "homosexual panic defense." This accuses the victim of being sexually aggressive

raised his crony, Orrin Hatch, who supported the legislation. It passed by a vote of 92-4. The DoJ, however, hardly a friend to sexual minorities, then failed to inform hotline operators that they were to take reports on anti-gay/lesbian violence in addition to the others on the list. The resulting protest brought the contrite DoJ back to its senses, and the department agreed to accept these reports.

Hate crimes bills containing clauses regarding sexual orientation have passed in the District of Columbia, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Vermont. In Georgia, Missouri, New York and Pennsylvania, anti-gay legislators blocked or defeated these bills precisely because they included such a clause. Legislation is pending in California, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, Utah and Washington.

As anti-gay, lesbian and bisexual violence rises, so does activism within the community. Everything from classes in defusing violent situations to lobbying for hate crimes bills to Pink Panther community patrols in New York City are evidence that the gay/lesbian and bisexual community is actively resisting homophobic violence. Coalition work has paid off on the federal, state, and local levels. Yet even in coalitions, homophobia in other target groups prevents effective educational efforts to link violence against lesbian and gay people to violence against oppressed minorities and women.

But just as sexist violence cannot be stopped by women, or racist violence cannot be stopped solely by people of color, ending homophobic violence is not just the responsibility of gay people. This means a visible and vocal presence of non-gay people in the fight against homophobia and heterosexism. Democratic socialists must not only take a stand against this violence, we must exhort non-gay activists to participate in gay mobilizations and educational efforts to eliminate homophobia. ♦

Claire Kaplan is co-chair of the DSA National Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission.

Ending homophobic violence is not just the responsibility of gay people.

guards, isolation in strip cells and verbal abuse are not uncommon. The Iowa Men's Reformatory requires gay prisoners to wear black dots on their ID tags, making them perfect targets for abuse.

Secondary victimization by police and the judicial system is so common that, like women survivors of sexual assault, gay/lesbian and bisexual people fear reporting crimes committed against them. In an NGLTF survey of six major cities, beatings of gays by on and off-duty cops increased dramatically in Boston, New York and Minneapolis/St. Paul. (Ironically, reports of abuse in L.A. decreased last year.) The result is as much as an 81% failure to report victimization. Forty percent of victims

(reversing the role of victim and assailant), causing the defendant(s) to experience acute panic and attack in "self-defense." As bizarre as this seems, the defense works because it appeals to the old stereotype of gays as sexual predators. If a gay victim has been murdered and thus cannot refute this accusation, the panic defense is even more successful.

The federal hate crimes bill, not surprisingly, encountered fierce opposition from the gang of anti-gay screamers in Congress, especially the King of Homophobes, Jesse Helms. (Coincidentally this occurred during the height of threats by activists to "out" closeted gays who vote against gay rights legislation.) Helm's virulence even embar-

odist), and as base communities of faith that are more quickly responsive to the personal and political needs of an oppressed community. The arena of power is shifting as the needs of our communities become clearer.

Recently I was interviewed by a national church news magazine and was asked, "Don't you believe it's because homosexuals have used their sexuality merely to gain political power that many people in the churches feel threatened and skeptical?" This question assumes a heterosexual right to power. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are affirming the use of new models of power in our new religious communities. Rather than competing for rights within a dominant, hierarchical model, we are doing the time-consuming, intentional work of being communities of consensus. We begin with an acknowledgement that there are different power dynamics. The power of the dominant sociopolitical system is not the power we desire. Power that is power-over is destructive; it is the injustice that Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to as "the violence of the spirit." We do not seek to defeat or humiliate those we identify as opponents. The tension is between justice and injustice, between the forces of right and wrong, between the isolation of the individual and the caring of the community.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have a unique awareness about the power inherent in becoming visible, of refusing to be hidden. It is the desire for justice that creates its own power. Any time that people dare to name themselves and claim their right to be, whether in this country or in South Africa, it is a political statement. To say "I Am!" is both profoundly political, because it declares our rightful presence in the world, and profoundly spiritual, because it changes our relationships to ourselves, others, and our deity.

The emerging base communities of faith within the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities are moving away from the privatistic understanding of God and ethics. For too long this idea of a

private God has been used by many religious institutions to disempower people and centralize authority. The idea that God can "surgically insert" divine will into our lives and effect change in just one individual belies the reality of interconnected lives in which every action we take has a direct effect on everyone and everything else. In the liberation of community, in the celebration of our several and various "I Ams!"

suggested that our anger will either consume and destroy us or it will transform us into people of hope. When we live without hope we often choose violence. Imprisoned, we often choose to hurt ourselves, or another, in order to break free.

Being politically correct is not enough to maintain hope. It takes an understanding, an inner awareness that the oppression we are engaged against is

The end we seek is life lived in compassionate caring and justice-making.

we find the source of collective power that impels us to work for the liberation of all people from injustice.

This work takes on various forms. At Spirit of the River, for instance, we utilize an old technique, a Telephone Circle, to mobilize the community for political action: demonstrations, meetings, letter-writing campaigns, marches, civil disobediences, lobbying. Any member of the community who needs to can start the circle of communication. There is no hierarchy of need, ut there is an understanding the Circle is not started unless the need for justice-making in a given context is present.

In community we meet one another at the places of our coming out, the places where we make ourselves available to one another and hence to the world. In these places of vulnerability we care for one another by listening to each other very carefully. This is not a model of power that we have experienced in our day-to-day living within the dominant culture. In listening we discern how to direct our own spiritual, social, and political energies against the forces of evil rather than against the persons caught up in those forces.

Understandably our inner resources to keep doing this work become depleted, and we find ourselves on the verge of becoming like our oppressors, enraged and fearful. James Baldwin

not the sort of power we wish to achieve. The power we are fighting for is the power unleashed when a mutually empowering community of people gathers to stem the flood of injustice in a specific time and in a specific place. We gather to declare our own "I Ams!" in the face of all oppression, and to empower the weak, the broken, and the suffering to stand with us.

This is the circle of emerging lesbian, gay and bisexual spiritualities. The power we gain by being together in worship and in a safe community allows us to touch again the reserves that keep us going -- doing the same work, meeting the same hate day after day, year after year. For the doing of justice is not the end we seek, but the means. The end we seek is life lived in compassionate caring and justice-making. The end is liberated and mutually empowering relationships between all people and the earth. ❖

The Rev. Will Leckie, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, is co-pastor of Spirit of the River, a base community of faith exploring what it means to follow the way of Jesus Christ in New York City and the world. The community gathers for celebration, affirmation, justice-making, and healing Sunday evenings at 6:00 p.m. at 215 West 98th Street in Manhattan.

Searching for Signs of Life

A Chronicle of Socialist Feminism

by Felicia Kornbluh

WOMEN, CLASS AND THE FEMINIST IMAGINATION: A SOCIALIST-FEMINIST READER edited by Karen V. Hansen and Ilene J. Philipson, Temple University Press, 1990, 624 pp.

In *Women, Class and the Feminist Imagination*, Karen Hansen and Ilene Philipson chronicle a sad story. The essays collected describe a progression from the heyday of socialist feminist theorizing and organizing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to theoretical confusion and organizational collapse from about 1976 to 1981. They indicate that socialist feminist thinking then retreated into the academy and its organizing simply ceased. In their editors' introduction to this weighty volume, Hansen and Philipson ask: "Can [socialist feminism's] unbridled radicalism offer a fresh and challenging perspective on life in the 1990s? Or is it doomed to irrelevance in a country with little history of socialism and a current distaste for left-wing ideas?" Unfortunately, from the essays they present, the latter scenario is more likely.

Now, I wasn't there, so I don't entirely know, but the history of socialist feminism doesn't seem so deeply dour. So the socialist strain in feminism was eclipsed by "radical" goddess-worshippers and pornography obsessives. Nutsy left sectarians made leader-averse, unwieldy women's groups ultimately unmanageable. And many of the early apostles lost their way -- had babies, got deeper into their careers, stopped going to meetings or moved into organizing for reproductive rights or for peace. The 1980s and early 1990s haven't been fun for any of us.

The Longest Revolution

But let's stand back for a moment. As Juliet Mitchell wrote in the article that leads off this volume, women's has indeed been "the longest revolution." It was a long time coming, and there were never good reasons to believe that it would finish in a hurry. Think about what socialist feminism has accomplished, as a grid for looking at the world and a strand of intellectual life, if not as an autonomous social movement. Consider the many activists and organizers --

like Karen Nussbaum of the working women's union Nine to Five -- who make cameo appearances in the book, and others who came too late to be noticed, but not to be influenced, by the 1960s-70s generation. Consider the writers and scholars, like cultural critic Barbara Ehrenreich, historian Linda Gordon, novelist/historian Meredith Tax and political theorist Zillah Eisenstein, who continue their work as socialist feminists. And consider how widely they are heard -- Tax's novel, *Livingston Street*, sold in supermarkets; Ehrenreich writes a column for *Time*.

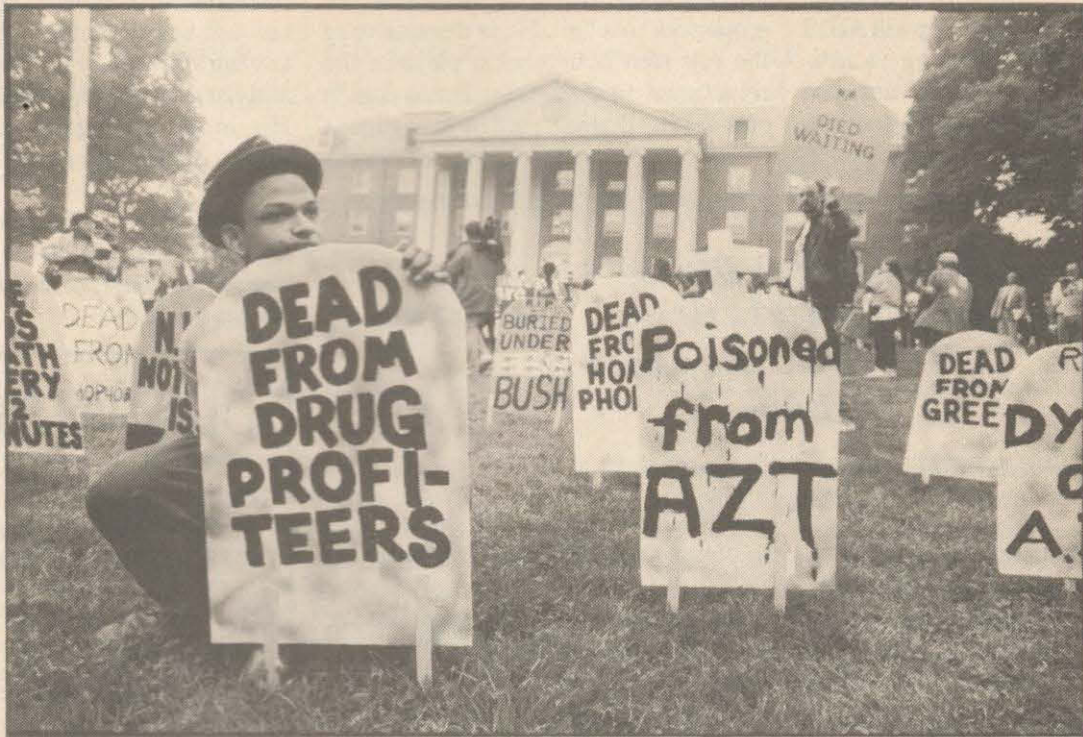
Despite these signs of life in socialist feminism, a rise-

*Is socialist feminism
doomed to irrelevance
in a country with
little history of
socialism?*

and-fall narrative dominates the book. The first section, "The Past," contains four essays each on the theoretical foundations of socialist feminism, its organizations, reexaminations of theory and organizing. Theoretical essays showcase the movement's strengths -- its engagement with Marxism and vast horizons of contemporary scholarship, its intellectual rigor and ability to reexamine its own ideas. Among the classics are Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women," the anthropological essay that introduced the concept of a "sex/gender system" operating in all societies, and Heidi Hartmann's "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," a landmark work of economic theory that demanded attention to "the role of men -- ordinary men, men as men, men as workers -- in maintaining women's inferiority in the labor market."

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REVIEWS



ACT UP created this mock graveyard outside the National Institutes of Health last May.

Good Intentions of a Convert

by Dorothee Benz

GOOD INTENTIONS: HOW BIG BUSINESS AND THE MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT ARE CORRUPTING THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS by Bruce Nussbaum, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990, 352 pp.

Bruce Nussbaum's *Good Intentions* is clearly written by someone who is an outsider to his subject. This is both the book's dominating weakness and its greatest asset. Nussbaum, a writer for *Business Week*, seems personally unaffected by the AIDS crisis. He is not a Person With AIDS (PWA); he is not a physician or a scientist; he is not gay; and he is not an activist. Nussbaum is a person who has stumbled upon the horrors that the government and industry response (or lack of response) to the AIDS epidemic have created.

In particular, *Good Intentions* describes and explains the long delay in developing any anti-AIDS drugs and the virtual absence of any alternative treatment to AZT, the predomi-

nant anti-AIDS drug. Nussbaum's incredulity at discovering that drug development has more to do with profit and personal ambition than it does with providing health care is sometimes disturbing, sometimes almost touchingly naive. To AIDS activists, health care reform advocates, and leftists of all stripes--not to mention millions of Americans whose personal encounters with the medical establishment have left them frustrated or despaired--this is not news.

It was not until 1987, six years after AIDS had been identified and thousands had died from it, that the first anti-AIDS drug, AZT, became available on the market. The drug, however, is too toxic for half of all PWAs to use. A few other drugs are now available, but AZT still dominates the market.

Challenging Industry Wisdom

Meanwhile, a growing, organized community of people affected by AIDS has developed its own research and development, which has been arguably more effective than that done by the government and the pharmaceutical industry. PWAs, the physicians that treat them, and the communities

that are most ravaged by AIDS have organized and challenged the government and industry wisdom on effective treatment. For instance, AIDS activists have repeatedly called for research into effective ways of combatting the opportunistic diseases that actually kill AIDS patients, rather than focusing on antiviral drugs. This community has also pushed continuously for faster drug de-

Intentions fails to adequately take other factors into consideration.

Nussbaum makes passing reference to the fact that government AIDS funding was nonexistent before 1985, but he does not acknowledge the enormous consequences this had. He is dismissive of the role that homophobia plays in the reluctance to find treatments and a cure for the disease. And he is negligent

are limited to one or two sentence platitudes. Nowhere in the book does Nussbaum address the underlying issue of a for-profit health care system.

Yet Bruce Nussbaum writes with the fervor of a convert. His indignation has not been blunted by years of frustrating activism or by the cynicism that activists develop to protect themselves. His moral outrage is refreshing and even a little contagious. ♦

Dorothee Benz, a DSA member, is editor of a local New York union newspaper, and is a freelance writer and photographer.

He paints a picture of scientists using AIDS to make their careers

velopment, access to experimental treatments, and changes in the way drug trials are conducted. And they have rallied against the outrageous cost of AZT, which was first marketed for about \$9,000 per year.

Nussbaum argues that the focus on anti-viral treatments for AIDS is a result of the prestige of viral research. He paints a picture of scientists using AIDS to make their careers by searching for breakthroughs in viral medicine. And he maintains that AZT's dominance in the market is a direct result of many careers tied to AZT's success. In his cogent critique of drug development, Nussbaum describes a process controlled by a relatively small number of established, elite scientists--sitting on both government decision-making bodies and industry payrolls.

Devastating Injustice

Nussbaum's crusade is really to take this old-boy network to task for its self-serving ways. Considering that the result of this system has been millions of wasted research dollars, disastrously slow treatment development, an ongoing lack of effective treatment, and thousands upon thousands of deaths, every ounce of anger and disgust he levels at them is certainly justified. But in the process of depicting this devastating injustice, *Good*

in discussing the recent demographic shift of AIDS infection from gay men to intravenous drug users and poor people, particularly people of color. The complexities of this changing PWA population; the obstacles of racism, homophobia, and prejudice confronting drug addicts; and new forms of AIDS prevention, particularly the urgent need for needle exchange programs--all are ignored in Nussbaum's account.

Health Care Connection

And finally, Nussbaum fails to recognize the context in which this crisis has unfolded: a health care system that, in the words of Walter Cronkite, is "neither healthy nor caring nor a system." The book does not deal with the cost or availability of AIDS treatment. Nor does it recognize that the capitalist premise of profit makes the crisis it describes inevitable.

In the end, *Good Intentions* lacks a coherent analysis of the problems it describes. It does not add much insight to the structural problem that has created the crisis Nussbaum so passionately illustrates. The book makes sweeping generalizations acknowledging that the history of AIDS treatment is merely an example of a drug development process that does not work in general, but these gestures at the larger problems

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➔ *Watch for the Annual Labor Day Issue of DEMOCRATIC LEFT Coming in September.*

Kornbluh *from page 20*

The reexaminations include Barbara Ehrenreich's argument that a "dual systems," or "capitalism-plus-patriarchy," model was inadequate to explain conflicts between capitalism and patriarchy. "The Impasse of Socialist Feminism," a roundtable discussion with movement veterans conducted by Philipson in 1985, provides a rethinking of the movement. Deirdre English comments, "It's very sad that in such a short time so much of that energy has drained away, while, in the face of the right, we have to pedal hard to stay in the same place, or fight for demands initiated by mainstream feminists. I still expect a new, reenergizing burst of feminist insight. But when?"

Sounds Groovy?

The essays on organizations point to the movement's weaknesses. "The Social Experience of Bread and Roses," for example, risks reducing its subject to farce. Author Annie Popkin studies "women's community" and "culture" in *Bread and Roses*. An organization that argued viciously about "whether the articles that women wrote and circulated were to be signed or to remain anonymous," and helped its members learn "traditionally 'feminine' crafts [sewing and knitting] in bright colors celebrating womanhood and community," sounds groovy; yet it is far from

the transformative socialist-feminist dream. An overview of local organizations, "Women's Unions and the Search for a Political Identity," offers only a glimmer of hope. Despite the unions' collapse, "many union veterans continue to be politically active in reproductive rights organizing, [labor] union struggles, the peace movement, NOW, National Lawyers Guild, and other progressive organizations and movements. Most... continue to think of themselves as socialists and feminists."

Focus on Pornography

The book's middle section, "The Present," focuses on mothering, the current economy, pornography, and women's work. However, its three essays on pornography are at least two too many. And the essays on economic structure and women's work could have been stronger. Socialist feminism lacks many things, but labor historians and social scientists are not among them.

Strangely, nothing in the section, "Women, Work, and the Labor Movement" discusses the labor movement in any depth. However, Barbara Baran's contribution, "The New Economy: Female Labor and the Office of the Future" shows how socialist-feminist research can influence broader areas of thought. Unlike Harry Braverman's analysis of "deskilling" under industrial capitalism, Baran shows that clerical workers in the present-day economy are actually "reskilling." However, their

wages do not increase as they learn new skills. Baran debunks a left myth about capitalist development and a mainstream myth about the skills needed in clerical work. Without asking both socialist and feminist questions, she would not have reached the conclusions she did.

An Incomprehensible Dream

Most disappointing is the book's final section, "The Future." The privileged last word goes to post-modern theorist Donna Haraway in a piece titled "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Last Quarter." Haraway resists narrativity, which means that she resists readability. She resists "totalizing" theory, which means resisting clear arguments. She certainly resists stating her notions in the familiar terms of socialist feminism. For the future, Haraway offers the incomprehensible dream of "a powerful infidel heteroglossia."

If Haraway's fancy theoretical footwork is all we have to look forward to, then socialist feminism deserves the early death that Hansen and Philipson apparently believe it to have suffered. But if Haraway is not the end of the road, and if the insights from the first section of this book have not been lost completely, then socialist feminism still has much to live for. ♦

Felicia Kornbluh is a research scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies and the Wolfson Center.

JANIE HIGGINS REPORTS

EASTERN EUROPE TURNS LAVENDER

Under Communism, Czech government officials used to deny that homosexuality existed in their country. But now they flaunt it. According to New York's *OutWeek Magazine*, the government newspaper, *Czechoslovak Soldier*, now features a regular column on lesbian and gay issues -- including sexually explicit photographs. The Czechs also have a new national gay and lesbian organization, Svaz Lambda.

A FEMINIST BUREAUCRACY?

It's not often you hear of a high level government official fired for misconduct -- let alone for insensitivity to women. Well, it takes a socialist! It seems that Ontario Prime Minister Bob Rae, a democratic socialist, dismissed his Minister of Financial Institutions for not being enough of a feminist.

PARADE REDUX

New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade made headlines when it refused to allow lesbians and gays to march in their own contingent. But it wasn't a first. In 1935, Mike Quill, president of the Transit Workers Union, was not permitted to march in the parade. Why? Because his politics were deemed "too radical."

GREENS SAVE THE BANKS

The modern industrial robber barons have been telling us for years that protecting the environment means sacrificing growth and financial strength. But, Vermont has shown that green laws may not be such bad news for the nation's failing banks. According to a *New York Times* report, Vermont has been spared from the flood of New England bank failures by the state's strict environmental laws. Those regulations allowed Vermont to stave off the reckless development that characterized the '80s -- and is now devastating lending institutions. Coincidentally, the New England state with the worst record on the environment, New Hampshire, also has the most troubled or failed banks.

SIDESTEPPING SANCTIONS

The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) has proven itself to be as crafty as the capitalists. When J.P. Morgan tried to provide investors a sneaky way of circumventing sanctions against South Africa, ACTWU caught them. The big banking house has been selling stock in South African companies by using obscure stock proxies called American depository receipts (ADRs). When ACTWU protested, a Morgan official replied, "We see ADRs differently."

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