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# Fighting for Inclusion: The Origin of Gay Liberation at the University of Michigan

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# FIGHTING FOR INCLUSION: THE ORIGIN OF GAY LIBERATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Eric W. Denby, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2015

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of turbulence, militancy, and unrest in America. The post-World War II boom in consumerism and consumption made way for a new post-materialist societal ethos, one that looked past the American dream of home ownership and material wealth. Many citizens were now concerned with social and economic equality, justice for all people of the world, and a restructuring of the capitalist system itself. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan was a hotbed of student activism. As an early headquarters for the Students for a Democratic Society, a location of various student and faculty led demonstrations against the U.S. occupation in Vietnam, and the home of the Black Action Movement, the University of Michigan was no stranger to the emergence of a dissatisfied and action-oriented youth culture. Increasing scholarship has focused on gay liberation movements within this context, yet a gap exists in specific liberation efforts on college campuses, including the University of Michigan.

The struggles of recognition and inclusion for lesbians and gays at the university are traced to the founding of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation front in March of 1970. In just two years, the Gay Liberation Front was recognized as a student organization, held the first gay dance in Michigan, and was instrumental in the creation of the Human Sexuality Advocates office, the first institutional student services office dedicated to gay and lesbian students. In a period of growing political backlash and public prejudice, these achievements were remarkable.

This thesis addresses the origins of gay liberation at the University of Michigan. Through careful analysis of organizational records, official communications from university administrators, and local media reports, what ultimately emerges is a gay liberation group that adopted the rhetoric and tactics of other new left movements but used those strategies to gain not institutional destruction or overthrow, but inclusion and acceptance.

FIGHTING FOR INCLUSION: THE ORIGIN OF GAY LIBERATION  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

by

Eric W. Denby

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College  
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I also wish to thank the Graduate College for their generous financial support and the staff of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan.

I dedicate this thesis to William and Margaret Denby who since my birth have not only provided me with choices, but supported them with an unwavering commitment. Without them, I would not have experienced the life I have.

Eric W. Denby

## Notes

Similar to many other authors of gay history, the use of identity labels is often messy. An individual or organization's use of a specific term is a personal decision. Consequently, I have adopted the standard practice of referring to a movement or organization as they would have been during the historical period in which they existed. Hence, for much of the 1960s and 1970s, "gay" or "lesbian and gay" would have been used to refer to a community of homosexual individuals. Additionally, although the term "homosexual" had been discarded by some, many of the archival sources continued to refer to gays and lesbians as homosexuals. At no point should my misuse of a term be construed as a lack of sensitivity

Additionally, there are many instances of only first names being used in the records. This could be for a variety of reasons, including anonymity or the rejection of formality. Whenever possible, I provide the full name of the person.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

While there's nothing immoral about being black, brown, red, or female – well, being a pervert is something else. (Russell Kirk, *Of a Liaison between Gays and Straights*)<sup>1</sup>

Homosexuality is not a lot of things. It is not a makeshift in the absence of the opposite sex; it is not hatred or rejection of the opposite sex; it is not the result of broken homes ... homosexuality is the capacity to love someone of the same sex. (Carl Wittman, *A Gay Manifesto*)<sup>2</sup>

If the University is to be more than an extension of societal repression toward homosexuals, then the University must stop [sic] bowing to the sick threat of bad publicity, and begin to defend, not suppress, the rights of homosexuals. (Joint Letter to the Editor of the *Michigan Daily* from the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front and the Student Government Council)<sup>3</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of turbulence, militancy, and unrest in America. The post-World War II boom in consumerism and consumption made way for a new post-materialist societal ethos, one that looked past the American dream of home ownership and material wealth. Many citizens were now concerned with social and economic equality, justice for all people of the world, and a restructuring of the capitalist system itself. According to Max Elbaum, the traditional narrative of the 1960s begins with an “idealistic, impassioned” youth working on voter registration and civil rights and

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<sup>1</sup> Russell Kirk, “Of a Liaison Between Gays and Straights,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 12, 1972, sec. A, Bret Eynon Papers, Box 1, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Wittman, “A Gay Manifesto” (The Red Butterfly, 1970), <http://paganpressbooks.com>.

<sup>3</sup> Gay Liberation Front of Ann Arbor and Student Government Council, “Letter: Gay Liberation Front to President Fleming,” June 10, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.



ends with “days of rage as the sixties movements, frustrated by the Vietnam War, became irrational and self-destructive.”<sup>4</sup> What started out as middle-class students organizing in the American South for civil rights slowly transformed into “the emergence of the New Left, the antiwar movement, women’s liberation, and identity-based politics.”<sup>5</sup>

The New Left protest groups of this decade are important to gay radicalism. Although Homophile organizations existed in the 1940s and 1950s, gay radicalism did not fully blossom until the language, style, and strategies of the New Left emerged during this decade of discontent, chiefly embodied by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Black Panther Party.<sup>6</sup> In Maurice Isserman’s and Michael Kazin’s view, “the New Left was a profoundly American movement, inspired by the civil rights movement, and fashioning its early political beliefs from a combination of American radical traditions.”<sup>7</sup> Originally, the New Left focused on social justice issues – poverty, race, equality – through consciousness raising events. Eventually, as the Vietnam War

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<sup>4</sup> Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che*, New Edition (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 15.. The “Good Sixties, Bad Sixties” narrative, exemplified in Todd Gitlin’s *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, is contested by multiple scholars, including Terence Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York’s Gay Liberation Front, 1969–1971,” *Radical History Review* 1995, no. 62 (March 20, 1995): 105–34.

<sup>5</sup> David A. Reichard, “‘We Can’t Hide and They Are Wrong’: The Society for Homosexual Freedom and the Struggle for Recognition at Sacramento State College, 1969-1971,” *Law & History Review* 28, no. 3 (August 2010): 636.

<sup>6</sup> Various rights group adopted the term “homophile” because it denoted same-sex love and not just sexual acts. The homophile movement wanted to persuade “hetero and homosexuals alike that gay men and women should be considered full participants in the pageant of American civil right.” See John Dennett II. Master, “A Part of Our Liberation’: ‘ONE Magazine’ and the Cultivation of Gay Liberation, 1953-1963” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Riverside, 2006), 361. For more, see Martin Meeker, “Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 78–116; James T. Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation*, Gay and Lesbian Studies (New York, N.Y: Harrington Park Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, 4th ed. (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011), 161.

escalated, and the stark realities of American imperialism became more apparent, many adopted a militant approach.<sup>8</sup>

Gay radicalism is easily placed within the larger New Left struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. Following the turbulent Stonewall Riots of 1969, a new form of activism emerged: gay liberation.<sup>9</sup> Many of the narratives regarding gay liberation place Stonewall as the beginning of the movement, both in scholarly literature and public memory. Although most historical scholarship no longer places the Stonewall Riots as a starting point to gay liberation, many of those associated with the movement considered the events as an inspiration for action. Although Stonewall's primacy is contested terrain, the riots did have a direct and lasting impact; a few days after the riot, the Gay Liberation Front of New York (GLF/NY) was formed.<sup>10</sup> The GLF/NY quickly adopted "the rhetoric of political manifestos" from the numerous "self-identified minority group activist organizations."<sup>11</sup> Within a year, gay liberation organizations sprouted in many American cities, including Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington D.C., and Detroit.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Terrence R. Restivo, "The Building of a New Left Conglomerate in the City of Ann Arbor: VOICE, the Black Action Movement and Human Rights Party (1965-1975)" (Master's Thesis, Duquesne University, 2006), 6.

<sup>9</sup> The Stonewall riots started on June 28, 1969, after a police raid on the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village.

<sup>10</sup> Ronald J Hunt, *Historical Dictionary of the Gay Liberation Movement: Gay Men and the Quest for Social Justice* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 15–16; Kissack, "Freaking Fag Revolutionaries," 108; Margaret Cruikshank, *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement* (New York NY: Routledge, 1992), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Robert B. Marks Ridinger, *The Gay and Lesbian Movement: References and Resources*, Reference Publications on American Social Movements (New York; London: G.K. Hall ; Prentice Hall International, 1996), 64.

<sup>12</sup> Hunt, *Historical Dictionary*, 16; Simon Hall, "The American Gay Rights Movement and Patriotic Protest," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (September 2010): 561; Kevin J. Mumford, "The Trouble with Gay Rights: Race and the Politics of Sexual Orientation in Philadelphia, 1969-1982," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (June 2011): 54; Stephan Cohen, "An Historical Investigation of School and Community-Based Gay Liberation Youth Groups, New York City, 1969--1975: 'An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail'" (Ed.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2004), 216.

The University of Michigan was a hotbed for future student radicals. Home of Alan Haber and Tom Hayden (two of the more well-known founders of the SDS) the campus climate, and a touch of serendipity, created an ideal climate for the beginnings of student radicalism.<sup>13</sup> Through the years, Ann Arbor was the home to many other student activist groups including the Human Rights party, the White Panthers, and the Black Action Movement.<sup>14</sup>

The University of Michigan was also home to the first campus office charged solely with addressing the concerns of gay and lesbian students: the Human Sexuality Office.<sup>15</sup> Considered the first of its kind in the United States, Jim Toy and Cindy Gair, members of various gay liberation groups, created this office in 1971 at the urging of the local SDS, the Gay Liberation Front, and women's liberation groups on campus.<sup>16</sup> That same year, Gayle Rubin organized Ann Arbor lesbians and formed the Radicalesbians at the university.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, one of the first graduate employee unions in the nation was organized in 1971; during their contract negotiations, the Graduate Employees Organization added non-discrimination language, protecting gay and lesbian students.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The SDS formed in 1960. Alan Haber was a member of a "tiny group of campus leftists called the Student League for Industrial Democracy," which eventually changed its name to the Students for a Democratic Society. Tom Hayden was the student editor of the Michigan Daily when he met Haber. See Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 161.

<sup>14</sup> Restivo, "The Building of a New Left," 6–8.

<sup>15</sup> Jim Toy, "38 Years of Queer Liberation," *The Michigan Daily*, September 15, 2007, <http://www.michigandaily.com/content/38-years-queer-liberation>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; David M Halperin and Valerie Traub, eds., *Gay Shame* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>17</sup> JJ Pionke, "A Queer Timeline," *Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan*, October 11, 2012, <http://bentley.umich.edu/exhibits/queer/>.

<sup>18</sup> The University of Wisconsin-Madison Teaching Assistant Association was the first graduate student union in the nation. The TAA began their organizing drive in 1966 and ratified their first contract in 1970. Members of the University of Michigan Graduate Employees' Organization signed their contract on March 14, 1975, after a month-long strike. For more on GEO's history, see Graduate Employees' Organization at the University of Michigan, "A Narrative History of GEO," n.d., <http://www.umgeo.org/about-geo/a-narrative-history-of-geo/>.

This nexus of activity makes the University of Michigan ideal for the study of gay liberation and its intersections with other 1960s and 1970s movements.

This thesis addresses the origins of gay liberation at the University of Michigan. I focus on three major events in the early years of the 1970s: the founding of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front (GLF), the conflict to hold a Conference on Homosexuality at the university, and the creation of the Human Sexuality Advocates office.<sup>19</sup> All three of these focal points share a common denominator – the results of struggle. Through careful analysis of the archives, including organizational documents, internal and external communications, and local media reports, my thesis reveals a gay liberation group that adopted the rhetoric and tactics of other New Left movements but used those strategies to gain institutional inclusion and acceptance, not institutional revolution. To accomplish this, the GLF remained flexible in their political orientation, welcoming both radical and liberal alike.

### **Secondary Literature**

My thesis intersects with several strands of historical writing: works discussing the advent of gay liberation and activism in the United States; urban case studies, exploring the creation of both organizations and space; focused research on gay liberation groups on college campuses; and the influence of other “New Left 1960s groups, namely the Black Power and antiwar movements.

Perhaps no review of the literature is complete without John D’Emilio’s *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United*

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<sup>19</sup> For simplicity, I will refer to the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front as GLF for the remainder of the paper.

*States, 1940-1970*.<sup>20</sup> Published in 1983, most historians consider *Sexual Politics* as the first book written about the gay rights and liberation movement. D’Emilio set out to challenge the myth of an invisible gay culture prior to the Stonewall riots. Activists in the 1970s “repeatedly stressed ... the intertwining themes of silence, invisibility, and isolation” although those same groups were able to mobilize quickly, allowing the movement to grow “with amazing rapidity.”<sup>21</sup> D’Emilio finds this to be a “curious inconsistency,” one that he remedies in his book.<sup>22</sup> D’Emilio searches for the “roots of the gay liberation movements in the political efforts” prior to Stonewall. Through a look at multiple decades of gay action and inaction, D’Emilio concludes there was a flurry of pre-Stonewall activity, which lay the groundwork for the movement’s success in the 1970s and 1980s. As various political and cultural structures began to weaken during the turmoil of the 1960s, the gay liberation movement “accumulated victories [that] can only be explained by the persistent, plodding work of the activists who preceded them.”<sup>23</sup>

John D’Emilio’s main contribution to the discourse of gay rights is his persuasive (and almost canonical) assertion that Stonewall was not the simplified and unburdened beginning to gay rights. He acknowledges the importance of the homophile organizations of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the protests and actions those groups enacted during the time of McCarthyism. D’Emilio writes, “Before a movement could take shape, that process has to be far enough along so that at least some gay women and

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<sup>20</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

men could perceive themselves as an oppressed minority, sharing an identity that subjected them to systematic injustice.”<sup>24</sup>

Many of the questions addressed in subsequent scholarship on the gay liberation movement included how important the Mattachine society and other homophile groups were; the eventual paths that various gay activist groups endured; and the type of goals these organizations embraced, typically expressed as either liberationist or assimilationist.<sup>25</sup> The Mattachine Society was one of the more influential homophile organizations. Founded in 1951, the Mattachine Society focused on defending the rights of homosexuals. They accomplished this through education, advocacy, and direct action that mirrored strategies employed by the Civil Rights movement. Justin Suran characterizes homophile groups as being “aggressively polite,” using “a strategy of militant respectability and tactics of protest comparable to those adopted simultaneously by the Civil Rights Movement.”<sup>26</sup> Additionally, many homophile organizations viewed homosexuality as “symptomatic of a psychic abnormality.”<sup>27</sup> The majority of new gay liberationists ignored any homophile successes, in essence throwing those 1950s organizations “on the defensive in the wake of Stonewall.”<sup>28</sup> Most gay liberationists

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>25</sup> Craig Rimmerman writes, “The lesbian and gay movements in the United States have endured searing conflicts over whether to embrace the assimilationist or liberationist strategy.” Craig A. Rimmerman, *The Lesbian and Gay Movements: Assimilation or Liberation?* (Philadelphia, PA: Westview Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Justin David Suran, “Coming Out Against the War: Antimilitarism and the Politicization of Homosexuality in the Era of Vietnam,” *American Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 458.

<sup>27</sup> Steve Seidman, “Identity and Politics in a Postmodern Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes,” in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 109.

<sup>28</sup> Rimmerman, *The Lesbian and Gay Movements*, 19.

disavowed the homophile claim that gays should integrate in society, instead focusing on recreating society itself to be more inclusive.<sup>29</sup>

Another consistently asked question, and still somewhat debated today, was the primacy of the Stonewall Riots. Popular myth places those riots as the origin of the gay liberation movement. To many of the gay liberationists themselves, Stonewall began all gay activism. David Carter writes, “It is also commonly asserted that the riot . . . marked the beginning of the gay rights movement.”<sup>30</sup> Simon Hall concurs, offering Stonewall as the “year zero” of “public consciousness and historical memory.”<sup>31</sup> As D’Emilio and numerous others have shown, Stonewall was not the origin of activism.<sup>32</sup> Meaghan Nappo believes Stonewall simply possesses a large mnemonic capacity that allows for a unified “beginning” in the collective memory of many individuals, both within and outside of the gay community.<sup>33</sup> Others have asserted the myth of Stonewall was a conscious effort, on the part of gay liberation activists, to provide a simple breaking point between the assimilationists and single-issue focus of 1950s homophile groups and the new liberation strategies after Stonewall.<sup>34</sup> John D’Emilio believes the mythology

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<sup>29</sup> Steven Epstein, “Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States Dilemmas of Identity,” in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, ed. Barry D Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 40.

<sup>30</sup> David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Simon Hall, “The American Gay Rights Movement and Patriotic Protest,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010): 540.

<sup>32</sup> D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Martin B. Duberman, *Stonewall* (Dutton, 1993); Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants/How Gay Liberation Began in America, 1969-1971*, 1st. pbk. ed (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin’s Press, 1995); Carter, *Stonewall*; Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (October 1, 2006): 724–51.

<sup>33</sup> Meaghan K Nappo, “Not a Quiet Riot: Stonewall and the Creation of Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Community and Identity Through Public History Techniques” (Master’s Thesis, University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2010), 11.

<sup>34</sup> Armstrong and Crage, “Movements and Memory,” 725. Marc Stein writes that the Stonewall Riots as the beginning of gay liberation myth was “popular not only in straight society but also among post-Stonewall gay liberationists and lesbian feminists, whose generational hubris discouraged respectful recognition of predecessors.” See Marc Stein, “Theoretical Politics, Local Communities: The Making of

surrounding Stonewall was in response to gays and lesbians, at that time, having no discernable past from which to fashion their goals and objectives.<sup>35</sup>

This thesis also interacts with several urban studies of gay communities, including one of the first geographical-based investigations into gay life, George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World*.<sup>36</sup> As Chauncey and others have proven, gay rights did not start in a vacuum; the actions of previous groups and individuals, during the periods both before and after World War II, all contributed to the creation of liberation movements in the United States. Consequently, knowledge of pre-Stonewall gay rights history informs my research focus on gay liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

A common narrative in GLBT history is that gay identity had largely been a private affair prior to World War II. The war created the opportunity for individuals to express their sexuality, away from their families and communities, while serving on ships and foreign bases.<sup>37</sup> Those veterans returned armed with a newfound joy, willing to be more "open" in the public sphere. While this argument has many merits, and is one of many explanations as to the proliferation of homophile groups in the 1950s and 1960s, Chauncey did not agree with its simplicity.

*Gay New York* was Chauncey's direct refutation of this claim. His purpose was to show that not only did a gay scene exist in New York prior to World War II, but also that

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U.S. LGBT Historiography," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11, no. 4 (2005): 607. Simon Hall writes the new liberationists wanted to demonstrate a break with the past by "denying that lesbian and gay politics even had a past." See Hall, "The American Gay Rights Movement and Patriotic Protest," 546.

<sup>35</sup> John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, New Feminist Library Series (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 101.

<sup>36</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> The definitive study is Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York N.Y.: Free Press, 1990).



it was extensive and well-known. By using the sources typical to a gay history – court and criminal records, oral history, and newspapers - Chauncey, in a systematic manner, proved the previous assertions of gay isolation, invisibility, and internalization were simply myths.<sup>38</sup> Gays were not invisible, as previous scholars asserted, but were thriving in “Harlem, Greenwich village, the Lower East Side, and Times Square.”<sup>39</sup> The previous metaphor of being “in the closet” was no longer the dominant scholarly understanding of pre-World War II gay identity. In *Gay New York*, drag queens, fairies, pansies, and all sorts of gender-bending gays were not only present, but in some cases ubiquitous in the New York social scene.<sup>40</sup> Chauncey demonstrated a “highly visible, remarkably complex, and continually changing gay male world” in New York City, one that retained “relative cultural autonomy,” replete with speakeasies and saloons, drags balls and dances, and a variety of public and private spaces.<sup>41</sup> Similar to other marginalized groups, pre-world war II gay men did have to take precautions, but unlike previous assumptions, “they were able to construct spaces of relative cultural autonomy.”<sup>42</sup>

Many books followed in the footsteps of *Gay New York*, including Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons’ *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians*, and Gary L. Atkins’ *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging*.<sup>43</sup>

Both books offer similar explorations of their respective cities, from pre-World War II

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<sup>38</sup> Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 2–4. Chauncey provides further discussion on both the problems facing historians of gay culture as well as detailed notes on his specific sources in *Ibid.*, 365–372.

<sup>39</sup> Sherry Wolf, *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation* (Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket, 2009), 48.

<sup>40</sup> Stein, “Theoretical Politics, Local Communities,” 614.

<sup>41</sup> Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009); Gary L. Atkins, *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2003).

communities to the ever-increasing gay rights and gay liberation movements present in their streets during the long 1960s.

Even more relevant to my work are the numerous community studies focused on college campuses. In the past decade, several articles have appeared exploring the public emergence of gay communities on college campuses.<sup>44</sup> According to Brett Beemyn, one of the first college groups to embrace a homophile agenda was at Cornell University. The Student Homophile League at Cornell was purportedly the second group to be organized in America, behind Columbia University.<sup>45</sup> Beemyn, in his article, sees these two groups as defining events in the future of gay militant action on college campuses. He writes, Cornell and Columbia “played a key role in laying the groundwork that would enable a militant movement to emerge following the [Stonewall] riots.”<sup>46</sup> Beemyn asserts that through an understanding of how these two SHL groups emerged – both of which were pre-Stonewall and pre-Gay Liberation Front - historians may find a clearer picture of the gay liberation movement becoming increasingly militant.<sup>47</sup> The rhetoric and strategies of Power movements encouraged many gay groups to “become more visible and more confrontational.”<sup>48</sup> Beemyn’s article traces the development of Cornell’s SHL, including their tactics to increase membership, the “ditching” of

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<sup>44</sup> Examples include Kathryn Staley, “Gay Liberation Comes to Appalachian State University (1969-1979),” *Appalachian Journal* 39, no. 1/2 (2011): 72–91; Reichard, “We Can’t Hide and They Are Wrong”; Brett Beemyn, “The Silence Is Broken: A History of the First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (April 2003): 205–23.

<sup>45</sup> Beemyn states the Cornell Student Homophile League was initially a chapter of Columbia University’s SHL. See Beemyn, “The Silence Is Broken,” 205. See also Brett Genny Beemyn, “Student Organizations,” *GLBTQ Social Sciences* (glbtq, Inc., 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Beemyn, “The Silence Is Broken,” 205.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

conservatives in their ranks, and the various student protest groups the SHL interacted with.<sup>49</sup>

Kathryn Staley takes a different approach when studying gay liberation at Appalachian State University.<sup>50</sup> Believed to be a conservative campus in Watauga County, North Carolina, the movement “affected multiple socio-political spheres and increased the public’s awareness of lesbian and gay issues.”<sup>51</sup> Staley was able to show the “existence of a discreet subculture” that was originally hidden from the university administration and the community at large.<sup>52</sup> Staley’s article traces the political activity of Jeff Isenhour and his fight to have the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association recognized in 1979.<sup>53</sup> Similar to other communities across the United States, the explosion of liberation rhetoric and activity, post-Stonewall, encouraged many student groups to demand formal recognition on campus.<sup>54</sup>

A final example of gay students fighting for recognition is David Reichard’s study of gay rights groups at Sacramento State University from 1969 to 1971.<sup>55</sup> The main struggle for gay recognition at Sacramento was the university’s unwillingness to support gay issues and activities, citing its duty *in loco parentis*.<sup>56</sup> Analogous to other groups, the Society for Homosexual Freedom faced numerous challenges, “including fear of coming out publicly and outright resistance from members of the campus community, alumni, or community members.”<sup>57</sup> Reichard seeks to examine and understand this “struggle-for-

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>50</sup> Staley, “Gay Liberation Comes to Appalachia.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>55</sup> Reichard, “We Can’t Hide and They Are Wrong.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 637.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 632.

recognition” by tracing how the legal challenge progress and how that affected both the campus and city communities.<sup>58</sup>

A final body of literature that will be useful for this thesis concerns the relationship between gay liberation groups and New Left organizations. A typical interpretation states that Homophile groups adopted the rhetoric, tactics, and strategies of the American Civil Rights Movement, while the gay liberation groups looked toward the “Power” movements of the 1960s.<sup>59</sup> While the homophile groups attempted “political and social integration,” the gay liberationists “spoke in the hyperbolic phrases of the New Left ... [talking] of liberation from oppression, resisting genocide, and ... revolution against imperialist America.”<sup>60</sup>

By 1969, the Black Panther party had become the “ultimate vanguard of the new American left.”<sup>61</sup> It is not surprising that GLF groups looked toward the rhetoric of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale as they created their own public image.<sup>62</sup> As Diwas KC demonstrates, from “its inception, the Gay Liberation Front of New York” hoped to unite with “the movements of feminism, people of color, antiwar activists, hippies, students, workers, and not least, the Third World.”<sup>63</sup> In fact, the GLF in New York specifically took its name from South Vietnam’s National Liberation Front and offered support, both

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 633.

<sup>59</sup> With regard to homophile adoption of civil rights language, see Hall, “The American Gay Rights Movement and Patriotic Protest,” 540.

<sup>60</sup> Steve Valocchi, “Collective Action Frames in The Gay Liberation Movement, 1969-1973,” in *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective*, ed. Hank Johnston (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 56; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 234.

<sup>61</sup> Diwas KC, “Of Consciousness and Criticism: Identity in the Intersections of the Gay Liberation Front and the Young Lords Party” (Master’s Thesis, Sarah Lawrence College, 2005), 7; Dennis Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (New York N.Y.: New York University Press, 1993), 16.

<sup>62</sup> Not all members of gay liberation groups subscribed to the rhetoric and tactics of the Black Panther Party.

<sup>63</sup> KC, “Of Consciousness and Criticism,” 17.

in spirit and with financial contributions, to the Black Panther Party.<sup>64</sup> Many other gay liberation groups followed GLF/NY in their support of other New Left causes. Stephen M. Engel writes, the GLF/NY was “disgusted with the moderate tactics and assimilationist aims of the MSNY [Mattachine Society of New York]” and specifically set out to create a new militant arm of the gay movement.<sup>65</sup>

Protests surrounding the Vietnam War were also important to gay liberation groups. Justin David Suran reconsiders Stonewall’s importance to gay liberation by providing evidence of deeper connections with the antimilitarism of the Vietnam War.<sup>66</sup> Suran argues that the organizing of antiwar protests and rallies was in fact sexually liberating.<sup>67</sup> The rhetoric, tactics, and skills learned during this time may have influenced future gay liberationists more than Stonewall.

Caution must be heeded though. Relationships with other liberation groups were tenuous. Elizabeth A. Armstrong emphasizes that gay liberation “was torn between redistributive and identity politics.”<sup>68</sup> As the movement progressed, various rifts occurred within both specific groups and the movement at large. The GLF of New York, comprised of cells and affinity groups, is a prime example. As the more radical elements pushed for stronger associations to the Black Panther Party, other participants split and formed the Gay Activists Alliance.<sup>69</sup> In essence, it became the familiar trope between assimilationist and liberation.

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<sup>64</sup> Hall, “The American Gay Rights Movement and Patriotic Protest,” 547.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen M Engel, *The Unfinished Revolution: Social Movement Theory and the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42.

<sup>66</sup> Suran, “Coming Out Against the War.”

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 456–458.

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 20–21.

<sup>69</sup> The Gay Activists Alliance was formed in December of 1969 due to the increasing politicization of the Gay Liberation Front of New York. See Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries,” 117.

The relationship with other 60s groups was questionable as well. One example is the way many New Left activists used the word “faggot” to express weakness and unmanly qualities of various people.<sup>70</sup> Similar to the struggle of place for women within New Left protest groups, gay men had to stay closeted if they were to participate in the hyper-masculine organizations of the New Left and Black Power.<sup>71</sup> Dennis Altman writes, “It took withdrawal from ... these organizations and the formation of their own before gays felt able to demand acceptance by fellow radicals.”<sup>72</sup> This conflict between New Left organizations and gay liberation is a key component to discovering the relationships that were cultivated or denied during the nascent period of gay liberation groups. This, of course, is not to diminish the New Left’s influence on gay liberation; instead, it forces scholars to view the relationship without rose-colored glasses, noticing the web of complexities between acceptance and denial, between support and outright bigotry.

To begin with, I explore the creation of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front in Chapter Two. Along with receiving official recognition as a student organization, the GLF also actively pursued various educational and counseling programs; examined their own goals, purpose, and politics; and sought to both support and be supported by other campus organizations. Chapter Three details a year-long struggle to hold a Midwest Conference on Homosexuality using university facilities. As a new student organization,

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<sup>70</sup> Citing Terrence Kissack, Hillman writes the use of “faggot” was an “all-purpose insult,” revealing not only “their gendered bias against homosexuality but also the masculinist assumptions of the political militancy.” See Betty Luther Hillman, “‘The Most Profoundly Revolutionary Act a Homosexual Can Engage in’: Drag and the Politics of Gender Presentation in the San Francisco Gay Liberation Movement, 1964-1972,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (January 2011): 168.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, 31.

this request should have been automatically approved. Instead, the university fought to exclude the event based on a combination of political and public pressure and fear of legal repercussions. During this fight for a conference, the university did create the Human Sexuality Advocates Office. Chapter Four outlines the concept, creation, and execution of the nation's first LGBT student services office.

## CHAPTER II

## GAY LIBERATION COMES TO ANN ARBOR

Carl Wittman, writing in *A Gay Manifesto*, provided words for the fledgling gay liberation movement that swept the country after Stonewall. He wrote, “Where once there was frustration, alienation, and cynicism” there is now “love for each other.” As “we recall all the self-censorship and repression” of so many years, “a reservoir of tears pours out of our eyes.” Wittman called upon all gays and lesbians to free themselves, to clear their “heads of the garbage that’s been poured into them.”<sup>73</sup> These were the sentiments of many homosexuals living in the United States. This call to action spoke to the many gays and lesbians still feeling inadequate, oppressed, and discriminated against.

The New Left movements of the 1960s provided gay liberationists a template: a combination of direct action, confrontational performance, and the rhetoric of revolution. According to Alan Sears, gay liberation emphasized visibility, militancy, and an end to the “sexual regulation and the monopoly of the ... family system.”<sup>74</sup> These new movements spoke of “liberation from oppression, resisting genocide, and [the need to] make a revolution against Imperial America.”<sup>75</sup> Slowly Black Power, women’s liberation, and gay liberation groups intersected, all fighting to change their respective circumstances. In turn, radicals were attracted to each other because of their “shared political perspective.”<sup>76</sup> The Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front is no exception to this

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<sup>73</sup> Wittman, “A Gay Manifesto,” 1.

<sup>74</sup> Alan Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?,” *Science & Society* 69, no. 1 (January 2005): 96.

<sup>75</sup> John D’Emilio, “The Gay Liberation Movement,” in *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, ed. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 130.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*



national trend. Similar to the goals of other revolutionary groups, the GLF sought to combat the prejudice and discrimination against homosexual students at the University of Michigan; they saw the university as a structural barrier to true liberation. First, they sought to create an organization to support the needs of gay and lesbian students. Then, after much discussion on the political ideology and direction of the group, the GLF started to support other “New Left” organizations on campus, mainly the Black Action Movement (BAM) and Women’s Liberation.<sup>77</sup> Finally, as their organization became more structured and defined, they sought recognition from the university as a registered student organization. This all occurred at a time when the university’s unofficial policy toward homosexuals was one of removal, not of respect.<sup>78</sup>

The University of Michigan followed the national tendency to oppress and persecute gays before 1970.<sup>79</sup> According to Timothy Retzlloff, pre-1970 university records mentioned homosexuality, but typically only concerning solicitation and sexual deviance.<sup>80</sup> The university colluded with the police to crackdown on the “perceived

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<sup>77</sup> For more on the Black Action Movement, see Zachary White, “The Black Action Movement: An Assessment of Its Goals, and Effects on University Policies and Procedures” (Bentley Historical Library, April 22, 2014), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, <http://bentley.umich.edu/research/topics/bam.php>; “Black Action Movement, Misc. Documents” (Bentley Historical Library, 1970s, 1980s), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, <http://bentley.umich.edu/research/topics/bamdocs.php>.

<sup>78</sup> Margaret Cruickshank theorizes gays and lesbians have been feared for many reasons including “sexual anxiety in puritanical America, the need for scapegoats in times of rapid social change, fear of the unknown, new visibility and perceived power of homosexuals, [and the] perceived threat to the nuclear family.” See Margaret Cruickshank, *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 10.

<sup>79</sup> For a concise overview of the nation’s climate toward homosexuals during the 50s and 60s, see D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, Chapter 3.

<sup>80</sup> When questioned about the gay purges of the 1960s, University of Michigan Executive Vice President Marvin L. Nichuss responded that he did not “want the University to become known as a happy home for these people.” See Denise Wacker and Philip Sutin, “Police, ‘U’ Crack Down on Homosexual Activities,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 28, 1962. Timothy Retzlloff points out the archives “ignore the rich but perforce clandestine gay and lesbian life” that existed during the witch-hunts of the 1950s and 1960s. See Tim Retzlloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast: A Documentary History of Lesbians and Gay Men at the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Study Committee on the Status of Lesbians and Gay Men, University of Michigan, 1991), 111.

homosexual menace,” including arresting thirty-four men in restrooms on the charge of solicitation.<sup>81</sup> Many of those rounded up in the arrests were either fired, as a matter of routine, or suspended from the university; the school would readmit students “upon the recommendation of a psychiatrist” and if those students were “considered good social risks.”<sup>82</sup> Jim Toy remembered the campus climate as not very welcoming: “When I first came here 10 years ago, two male homosexuals couldn’t have walked ... holding hands without all sorts of nasty stares and comments.”<sup>83</sup>

The University of Michigan was fertile ground for student and community activists. In the 1960s, various groups protested the university’s policies regarding the Vietnam War, lack of minority enrollment, and overpriced student housing. In 1965, a group of professors enacted a two-day teach-in to protest the Vietnam War, with over 3000 students attending lectures from 200 faculty members.<sup>84</sup> Two years later, hundreds of students occupied the administration building to protest the university’s ties with the U.S. government and its research on war-related projects.<sup>85</sup> Student activists also occupied the Reserve Officer Training Corps building protesting their presence on

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<sup>81</sup> In 1991, the University Committee of Lesbians and Gay Men commissioned a study on past relations. Timothy Retzloff provided a documentary history as an appendix to this study. See Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 112. For more on the gay purges, see Daniel Tsang, “Gay Ann Arbor Purges,” *Midwest Gay Academic Journal* 1, no. 1 (1977); Albin Michael Rose, “Historical Perspectives on the Midwestern Gay and Lesbian Academic Community: Stonewall and the Ivory Tower” (Masters Thesis, Michigan State University, 1995), 28.

<sup>82</sup> Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 113.

<sup>83</sup> John E. Peterson, “The Gay Scene at Michigan,” *Detroit News*, December 28, 1971, Bret Eynon Papers, Box 1, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. According to a self-biographical statement, Jim Toy was the first gay man to come out publically in Michigan. He was a founding member of both the Detroit and Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Fronts and has been at the center of most gay and lesbian activist activity at the university. See Jim Toy, “Profile: Jim Toy,” *The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Religious Archives Network*, June 2004, <http://www.lgbtran.org>.

<sup>84</sup> Glenda Insua and Teresa Hebron, “A Decade of Dissent: Student Protests at the University of Michigan in the 1960s” (Bentley Historical Library, Fall 2006), <http://bentley.umich.edu/exhibits/dissent>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

campus.<sup>86</sup> These demonstrations, along with the actions of the Black Action Movement and the Students for a Democratic Society, weakened the administration and led the way for the founding of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, when a group of gay men and women organized to change the way the university dealt with their homosexual students.<sup>87</sup>

The Gay Liberation Front's goals, purposes, and tactics were too diverse to place neatly into a simplified narrative of college LGBT activism.<sup>88</sup> While the group did borrow the rhetoric and tactics of other liberation organizations, their objective focused more on inclusion within the university and Ann Arbor communities rather than the defeat of oppressive social structures. This focus on inclusion parallels what other gay student organizations were attempting to achieve throughout the nation. Though their actions and public perceptions appeared radical, the GLF sought institutional approval instead of the customary liberation objective of restructuring the social and political system. Moreover, the GLF created relationships and coalitions with both radical and non-radical groups in an attempt to further their aims, a common tactic among other gay liberation organizations.<sup>89</sup> The group, wishing to be inclusive and encourage support

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> John D'Emilio writes that many gay student organizations took advantage of "the relatively weakened condition of university administrators who were reeling from years of demonstrations, student strikes, and building occupations by black and white student radicals." See John D'Emilio, "The Issue of Sexual Preference on Campus," in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1992), 130. The Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front formed during a meeting on March 17, 1970, with eighteen people in attendance.

<sup>88</sup> Similar studies of the complicated relationships between gay and lesbian groups and campus communities include Beemyn, "The Silence Is Broken"; Staley, "Gay Liberation Comes to Appalachia"; Reichard, "We Can't Hide and They Are Wrong."

<sup>89</sup> Many of the original members of gay liberation participated in other new left struggles, including homophile groups, the civil rights movement, and antiwar demonstrations. See Simon Hall, "Protest Movements in the 1970s: The Long 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (October 2008): 662.

from straight people, proved flexible and fluid in their activities, participating in radical direct actions as well as institutional processes.

This chapter explains the founding of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front. As disenchanting and oppressed gay and lesbian students began to organize, the prospect of changing society's attitudes toward homosexuality began to brighten. Based on the available sources, I uncover two main tensions surrounding the creation of the GLF. First, there was a tension between the members themselves, as expressed by their always-present debate on political ideology and direction. Secondly, tension existed between the GLF and other protest groups as the GLF attempted to define its place within the wider activist community at the University of Michigan. Ultimately, an undefined political ideology allowed the GLF to use both radical and liberal tactics to achieve their goals.

### **The Founding of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front**

A group of homosexual men formed and operated a chapter of the Mattachine Society, a homophile civil rights group, from 1958 to 1960, but organized homosexual organizations "remained virtually non-existent" until the creation of Gay Liberation chapters in Detroit and Ann Arbor in the early months of 1970.<sup>90</sup> Likewise, homophile groups typically excluded those under the age of 21 for fear of being viewed as sexual deviants; many young homosexuals had no structured manner to express their anger and despair.<sup>91</sup> A group of mostly men, some of whom participated in the Detroit group, created a chapter of the Gay Liberation Front in Ann Arbor on March 17, 1970. Minutes

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<sup>90</sup> The Mattachine Society was an early homophile organization focused on building a grassroots organization of gay people and fighting for the end of anti-gay discrimination. See Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine*. For Mattachine's connection to Detroit, see Tim Retzloff, "Detroit," *GLBTQ Social Sciences* (gltq, Inc., July 4, 2005), <http://www.gltq.com/>; "Minutes of the Detroit Gay Liberation Front," 1970s, James W. Toy Collection, Box 12, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>91</sup> Suran, "Coming Out Against the War," 467.

from the first two months of the GLF only mention a few women participating, though these records do not provide comprehensive attendance lists.<sup>92</sup>

The founding participants of the GLF were tired of being an oppressed minority in America.<sup>93</sup> In a statement released to the public on March 27, 1970, the Detroit GLF outlined their grievances and goals. The release read, “We are forced into an artificial environment [unable to] express our sexual inclination to any degree in public” and “we are obliged to assume the mask of heterosexuality and to lead double lives if we are not to be ridiculed, scorned and rejected.” As homosexuals, they were subjected to “blackmail, police harassment, job refusals, and physical brutality.” The GLF declared that homosexuals brought up in a straight society felt internal shame and guilt, leading to mental distress and emotional issues. In an effort to free themselves from the shackles of an ignorant and prejudiced majority, the GLF codified a set of guiding principles: to develop self-confidence and to come out and be themselves; to initiate “political activity and learn how to defend” themselves; to improve the image of the homosexual, both internally and externally; and to identify and collaborate with other oppressed groups fighting for liberation.<sup>94</sup> The Ann Arbor chapter also adopted this language.

A checklist from an early group meeting listed additional goals as well. In addition to developing themselves as political activists, the GLF also planned to become a university recognized student organization, “support movements other than BAM,”

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<sup>92</sup> Within one month of its founding, the GLF had over 50 people attending their meetings, with some meetings having over 120 participating.

<sup>93</sup> The process of gays self-identifying as a minority group began in the early days of homophile organizing. See D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 2, 75, 249; Hall, “The American Gay Rights Movement,” 540. On the comparison between gay liberationists and racial minorities, see Lisa Duggan, “‘Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall,’ New York Public Library, June 18–September 24, 1994,” *Radical History Review* 1995, no. 62 (March 20, 1995): 3; Mumford, “The Trouble with Gay Rights,” 51.

<sup>94</sup> “Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front Press Release and Constitution,” March 27, 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Ann Arbor - Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

establish a legal aid fund, set up counseling services, and begin to educate as many people as possible, dispelling the many myths of homosexuality.<sup>95</sup>

It was important to liberationists to provide as much internal support to each other as possible. To accomplish this, the GLF created training groups, helping each other deal with the pressures of being gay, and actively created educational campaigns reaching out to other groups.<sup>96</sup> Members contacted trained professionals seeking information on how to create discussion groups. Additionally, the group planned to operate a crisis center and phone hotline.<sup>97</sup> Even though the gay liberationists believed in “coming out” as a political and public act, they were sensitive to an individual’s personal needs.<sup>98</sup> The group achieved one of its primary goals a year later, when the university hired two homosexual persons to act as advocates for gay and lesbian students.

The group was also concerned with the social aspects of liberation. In the early 1970s, gays and lesbians had few options for public gatherings. In an effort to create safe atmospheres, many of these early liberation groups created their own social spaces, including coffee houses, community centers, dances, and picnics. Some of the early gatherings were open to other groups; for example, the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front invited the White Panthers, Women’s Liberation, and the Detroit GLF to their April 25,

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<sup>95</sup> “Checklist of Goals for the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 20, 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Ann Arbor - Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>96</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 30, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 7, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>97</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 23, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>98</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 7, 1970. For more on coming out as a political act, see Suran, “Coming Out Against the War,” 464, 473.

1970 picnic.<sup>99</sup> Most, if not all, of the social activities centered on companionship and comradery and bolstering the growth of liberation. These activities were in direct contrast to those of previous homophile groups, which would often focus on public outings, day trips, and cultural events.<sup>100</sup> Of course, there were generational differences between the new Gay Liberation Front's and homophile groups, which could explain this variation in goals.

A final objective of the GLF was to educate the public. As early as March 23, 1970, members discussed the lack of gay culture and history taught in university classes. Larry, a member of the GLF, pointed out the disparity between recognizing the contributions of gay people in college work, reminding the group that "significant things are done by minorities."<sup>101</sup> To remedy this lack of understanding, in their first year many gays and lesbians of the GLF participated in classroom discussions, mainly in the Department of Psychology.<sup>102</sup> They discussed their own sexuality as well as the goals of gay liberation. Although some in the GLF were troubled with the possibility of exploitation, the general feeling of most members seemed to be one of assent to the concept. Creating a laundry list of potential goals seemed to be easy during the first months of the organization, but deciding on the political direction of the group would take more time.

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<sup>99</sup> See "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," April 17, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. The White Panthers were a new left organization formed in Detroit, loosely modeled on the Black Panther Party.

<sup>100</sup> ONE in Detroit, an early homophile group, focused a good portion of their energy on social activities, including overnight trips to Chicago and Saugatuck, as well as cultural events. See "ONE in Detroit Newsletter," n.d., Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan. In fact, a proposal to attend *Pirates of Penzance* showed "little interest" for the members of Ann Arbor's Gay Liberation Front. See "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," April 9, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>101</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 23, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>102</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," April 17, 1970.

### Defining a Political Direction

In the wake of the Stonewall Riots, considered by the early activists themselves as the beginning of the gay liberation movement, the Ann Arbor GLF struggled to define itself politically.<sup>103</sup> It was clear to many that a political agenda was necessary to combat the prejudices and persecutions of the past.<sup>104</sup> Members of the newly formed GLF asked, “Would they be radical or liberal?” Would they participate in direct protest actions or tempered engagement with established authorities? These questions were the topic of discussion in the early weeks of the GLF. At the first known meeting of the group, a member asked, “What shall be our orientation? ... Are we working within the present system or seeking to change it?”<sup>105</sup> A week later, John Morris argued the GLF “should be flexible enough to include all political facets. We need a unity of active and passive political elements.” For many, the question of accepting homosexuals was “inextricably entwined with consideration of the nature of a repressive society.”<sup>106</sup> The concept of liberation was one that applied to all aspects of dominance, be it societal, spiritual, or political.<sup>107</sup>

The group also discussed what issues outside of those typical to gay and lesbian liberation should be addressed, like changing the voting age to eighteen and the

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<sup>103</sup> The Stonewall Riots started on June 28, 1969, and lasted for several days. Once considered the start of gay liberation, many scholars have complicated this simplistic narrative. A prime example is found in D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. For more on the myth of Stonewall, see Armstrong and Crage, “Movements and Memory”; Martin Duberman, “Stonewall: After Many a Summer Endures a Symbol - The Making of a Myth,” *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 1, no. 3 (July 31, 1994): 4; Benjamin Shepard, “History or Myth? Writing Stonewall,” *Lambda Book Report*, September 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Cruikshank, *Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 17, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Dennis Altman writes that by “choosing to go outside the bounds of liberalism ... gay liberation has intentionally limited its appeal.” See Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, 1.



legalization of marijuana, two topics of concern common on college campuses.<sup>108</sup> A few others wanted to “actively join forces with politically-active groups.”<sup>109</sup> John Morris, during a committee meeting, reminded the group that elasticity was fundamental to their success; the group must “be flexible enough to include all political facets. We need a unity of active and passive political elements.”<sup>110</sup> One way to grow the group, according to Larry, was to stay sympathetic to straights, who were active participants in the cause.<sup>111</sup> There was a hope among some that by possessing a political direction - any direction - the group could attract “politically-minded straights” as well as gays.<sup>112</sup> This flexibility, this willingness to engage in all aspects of political action, would prove to be one of the main reasons for the waxing and waning strength of the group in the early years. Although this did not provide organizational stability, it did allow the GLF the ability to gain traction with a wide variety of organizations, be they liberal or radical.

Many in the early days of GLF believed a show of solidarity with other New Left groups was integral to the future effectiveness and growth of the organization. As early as late March, the GLF began discussing its positions regarding other New Left organizations. While there are many instances of GLF members voicing support for other groups on campus, the minutes show a battle between whether to support these organizations in an official capacity, by endorsing these groups, or simply providing GLF members with information about upcoming events.<sup>113</sup> In the first few months of the

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<sup>108</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 17, 1970.

<sup>109</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 23, 1970.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 29, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>113</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 23, 1970; “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 17, 1970.

organization, the GLF sent representatives to Women's Liberation meetings, participated in Black Action Movement demonstrations, and marched in antiwar protests.<sup>114</sup>

The group did support other gay liberation organizations as well. Within just a few months of both the Detroit and Ann Arbor chapters forming, the first meeting of the Michigan Conference of Gay Liberation was held in Detroit. Thirty or so people participated, representing Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Lansing gay liberation groups.<sup>115</sup> Along with status reports from each of the three chapters represented, others discussed happenings on the West Coast, the frequent police confrontations occurring throughout the nation, and the "heavy criticism of the gay establishment paper *The Advocate*."<sup>116</sup> Of course, no meeting of gay liberationists would be complete without an argument of political ideology; the moderates wanted to focus on gay rights while the radicals wanted "revolutionary struggle and alliance with other oppressed groups."<sup>117</sup> In future years, the GLF would affiliate and support a wide range of groups, from radical student coalitions to academically focused organizations.

Following the late 1960s antiwar demonstrations and protests at the university, a coalition of black student organizations began to demonstrate and protest in support of increased minority enrollment and increased hiring of more black professors, faculty, and staff. This first Black Action Movement culminated in an eighteen-day strike in March

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<sup>114</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," 1970 March 23, 1970; March 30, 1970; April 17, 1970. An FBI file also mentioned the GLF had associated with a radical coalition of campus groups "in support of a violent, sustained strike at UM ... in connection with the demands of the Black Action Movement." See "FBI File, Gay Liberation Front," 1970, Daniel Tsang Papers, Box 2, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan April 30, 1970. According to Simon Hall, these forms of public protest became more prominent after the Stonewall Riots. See Hall, "Protest Movements in the 1970s," 660.

<sup>115</sup> "Detroit Opens State Gay Conference," *Detroit Gay Liberator*, October 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Ann Arbor - Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

and April of 1970 that closed down the campus.<sup>118</sup> Certain members of the GLF called for more action on their groups' part. Fred participated in a BAM march with two others and mentioned that their participation, as gay men, was well received.<sup>119</sup> Fred also made it clear during an early meeting that marching with BAM "enriched" him. There was some concern, though, of how BAM protestors would treat gay men "because of their feelings about masculinity."<sup>120</sup> These fears were both common and stereotypical in the early days of gay liberation. Although many gay liberationists viewed Black Power as the proto-typical liberation movement, many black revolutionaries held the same prejudices toward gays as the larger society.<sup>121</sup> More than likely, this discussion on supporting BAM was more about how involved the group should be with any radical protest group. The documentary evidence does not provide any clues on the racial composition of the GLF but at least one key figure, Jim Toy, was a person of color; he self identifies as a Chinese-American.<sup>122</sup>

Not all members felt focusing on the Black Action Movement was a good use of their time. In fact, a number believed they were "being railroaded into support of BAM."<sup>123</sup> On April 17, 1970, GLF member Felicia called on the Gay Liberation Front to support the BAM strike; no members present voiced any dissent, so the group agreed to join the picket line.<sup>124</sup> Some records indicate this was GLF's first public action as a group.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Emily Barton, "Birth of the Black Action Movement," *The Michigan Daily*, December 1, 2006, <http://www.michigandaily.com/content/birth-black-action-movement>.

<sup>119</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 23, 1970.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Many works discuss this tension, including Engel, *The Unfinished Revolution*, 64; Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, 15; Matt Bell, "Arresting Developments: Counter-Narratives of Gay Liberation" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Tufts University, 2006), 125.

<sup>122</sup> Toy, "Profile: Jim Toy."

<sup>123</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 25, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>124</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," April 17, 1970.

Other actions included participation in antiwar and anti-military demonstrations. Jim Toy, one of the founding members of both Detroit and Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Fronts, spoke in an antiwar rally on April 15, 1970. Reports from the meeting minutes state his speech was well received and over 30 gay and lesbians joined the protest, which “set a laudable precedent.”<sup>126</sup> Many of the GLF’s earliest flyers specifically targeted the U.S. military and cited its intrinsic male chauvinism, its discrimination against homosexual persons, and its “power-sex syndrome ... in support of imperialism” as causes for sexual repression.<sup>127</sup> Gay liberation organizations across the country would frequently protest the war in Vietnam and the draft.<sup>128</sup>

The early minutes of the group indicate a willingness of members to participate in an assortment of actions; this flexibility and open-mindedness of the group met with approval from radically minded individuals while not alienating many in the liberal ranks. In essence, the group wanted to have a “broad approach” and “inform many people and frighten none.”<sup>129</sup> Whether these moves were strategic or happenstance, this flexibility of GLF members created a space within the organization for almost any left-of-center ideology, belief, or moral stance. Liberationists and liberals alike were encouraged to participate and the future success of the group depended on a wide coalition of supporters

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<sup>125</sup> Jane Bartman and W.E. Schrock, “Gay Lib: Resisting Repression of the Homosexual,” *The Michigan Daily*, April 12, 1970, sec. 1, 10, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. According to John D’Emilio, gay liberation groups attached themselves easily to the late 1960s and early 1970s new left movements, which allowed them a “natural” path for radical activism on college campuses. See D’Emilio, “Issue of Sexual Preference,” 130.

<sup>126</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 17, 1970.

<sup>127</sup> Larry Glover, “Flyer: Passed Out on Diag,” May 26, 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Ann Arbor - Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>128</sup> For more on the connection between gay liberation and Vietnam, including the transition from antiwar marches to gay pride rallies as public shows of gay solidarity, see Suran, “Coming Out Against the War.”

<sup>129</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” March 25, 1970.

### **GLF Receives Official Recognition**

Without resolving the tension between a radical or liberal direction, or to what extent the group would support others, the GLF created and approved a constitution.<sup>130</sup> As early as March 23, 1970, members of the organization obtained information on how to receive official recognition as a student organization.<sup>131</sup> The most basic requirement was the creation and adoption of a constitution, essentially a pro forma document. Members of the Ann Arbor GLF passed out a press release used by the Detroit chapter along with Ann Arbor GLF's draft constitution. The majority of the document addressed the bare minimum requirements needed for school recognition, but in the preamble, the GLF provided their first concise statement on why the GLF needed a presence in Ann Arbor.

The preamble read:

We, who are concerned about the problems of the homosexual and the community, seeking to improve the self-concept of homosexuals and their relationships with each other and with the community at large, endeavoring to provide counseling to homosexuals, and intending to serve as a source of information to the academic community concerned with studies of sociological and psychological behavior, do hereby establish this constitution of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front.<sup>132</sup>

Omitting any of the radical rhetoric used in other communications with the media and the Ann Arbor community, the GLF outlined a series of foundational principles key to achieving their goal of ending sexual oppression. Much of the same language would be used to justify the creation of the Human Sexuality Advocates office, showing the obvious connection between the GLF and the creation of the office. The rest of the one-page document outlined very basic requirements for membership, a simple majority vote for any action, and a minimum requirement to establish a quorum. While the constitution

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<sup>130</sup> "Constitution of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 30, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 14, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>131</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 23, 1970.

<sup>132</sup> "Constitution of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front."

did not explicitly create committees, an attached document listed publicity, legal aid, education, and social activities as focal points of its organization. In just a few short weeks of their March 30 meeting, the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front was an established student organization, receiving approval from the Student Government Council (SGC), and they were preparing to test this newly granted status by requesting university space for a conference on homosexuality.<sup>133</sup> Oddly, the administration did not attempt to deny recognition, although they would deny other services and support in the years to come.<sup>134</sup>

The GLF achieved their first major success on campus, even though it was the easiest to achieve; the Student Government Council was sympathetic to many of the new left causes of the day and Jerry DeGriek, a member of the SGC, was a strong ally to the GLF. DeGriek eventually came out as a gay man after winning his election to the Ann Arbor City Council. The GLF's fight for the use of university facilities would prove much more combative and place the university on the defensive in the eyes of the public and the law.

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<sup>133</sup> Bartman and Schrock, "Gay Lib: Resisting Repression of the Homosexual"; Jim Toy and Jean Hasler, "History of the Gay Constituency vs. the UM," February 22, 1973, James W. Toy Collection, Box 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.. Interestingly, the administration quickly conducted a survey of other big ten universities to see how they were dealing with gay organizations and requests for facility use. See Lloyd Putnam, "Memo: Survey of Big 10 Universities Registration of Homosexual Student Organizations," April 14, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>134</sup> Groups on other campuses would confront opposition from administrators, frequently taking the university to court seeking official recognition. See Reichard, "We Can't Hide and They Are Wrong," 637-638.

### CHAPTER III

#### A MIDWEST CONFERENCE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

One of the chief concerns of early gay liberationists was the education of straights and gays on homosexuality complete with all its social, physical, and emotional complexities. For inclusion to occur, activists knew an open dialogue needed to take place. It is apparent from the minutes of the Detroit and Ann Arbor liberation groups that a combination of advocacy, education, and liberation were key principles of both organizations. The Detroit Gay Liberation Group (GLG) mentioned the conference idea first. On March 8, 1970, the Detroit GLG discussed a conference geared toward self-help.<sup>135</sup> Two days later, the steering committee created an internal education committee tasked with organizing workshops and educational topics and to help plan the forthcoming conference.<sup>136</sup> The steering committee further fleshed out details, proposing the conference be held in May, ideally on a weekend to allow a dance afterward. The theme of the conference was to be “self-education and methods of building the liberation movement.”<sup>137</sup> The conference program would include hands-on workshops, updates from local liberation groups, and presentations from professionals (e.g., lawyers, psychiatrists, and clergy.) The Detroit group also planned to use this forum as an opportunity to expand its ranks and disseminate its message. A few weeks later,

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<sup>135</sup> “Minutes of the Detroit Gay Liberation Front,” March 8, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 12, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>136</sup> “Minutes of the Detroit Gay Liberation Front,” March 10, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 12, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>137</sup> “Minutes of the Detroit Gay Liberation Front,” March 10, 1970.

members of the Detroit chapter formed the Ann Arbor GLF; shortly thereafter, notes on planning and executing the conference appeared in the Ann Arbor minutes, including almost verbatim the plan to offer workshops, status updates from gay liberation groups, and panels of professionals.<sup>138</sup>

The stewardship of the Midwest conference had now transferred to the Ann Arbor group. During a meeting of the GLF on April 7, 1970, Jim Toy suggested holding the conference at the University of Michigan, perhaps due to the lack of available space in Detroit and Ann Arbor's recent recognition as a student organization.<sup>139</sup> Previous discussion took place on the possibility of a conference at the university, including a fear of police attention and whether or not President Fleming would approve the event.<sup>140</sup> Toy also committed to contacting the Student Government Council on access to the Student Activities Building as a potential site. Even though the idea may have been generated in Detroit, in just a few short weeks the records indicate the Ann Arbor GLF was going to pursue this conference as its first coordinated and organized project as a student group. Although the GLF was a registered student organization, they had yet to explore just what rights and privileges the university would grant them with this new classification. They wanted to test their support and force the administration to sanction a public homosexual event. The actual conference itself becomes a symbol of the struggle for inclusion. Over the next ten months, the GLF created lasting coalitions with other radicals and received support from student-run institutions on campus. These

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<sup>138</sup> The minutes from the Detroit GLF show the group actively searching for a conference location, including Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo. See "Minutes of the Detroit Gay Liberation Front," April 2, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 12, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>139</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," April 7, 1970.

<sup>140</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 23, 1970; "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," March 29, 1970.



relationships helped propel both the overall cause of the Gay Liberation Front and the specific injustice of being denied university space for a group related activity.

### **A Request Made. A Request Denied.**

On April 13, 1970, Jim Toy sent a letter to the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs requesting approval and facility use for a Midwest Conference on Homosexuality. Toy presented a cogent argument, affirming that the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front was a recently recognized student organization on campus and that one of their chief concerns was “the problems of the homosexual” and the improvement of “the self-concept of homosexuals and their relationships with each other and the community at large.” He continued, indicating the conference would offer workshops to homosexuals and members of gay liberation groups as well as presentations and panel discussions “by outside specialists [*sic*] as jurists, doctors, and religious leaders.”<sup>141</sup> Toy requested six small meeting rooms in the student union, a larger space in the library, a lecture hall in a nearby auditorium, and the Union Ballroom for a dance to follow the conference.

Immediately after receipt of Jim Toy’s letter, Barbara Newell, Acting Vice President of Student Affairs, sent a memo to E.A. Cummiskey, a university attorney. She asked if it would be “legal and/or proper for the University to provide facilities to the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front” for its conference.<sup>142</sup> Cummiskey immediately replied with his opinion. He wrote, based on the proposed constitution filed by the GLF, as well as the proposed conference title of “Gay Lib: Resisting Repression of the Homosexual,”

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<sup>141</sup> Jim Toy, “Letter: Jim Toy to Willi Smith,” April 13, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>142</sup> E.A. Cummiskey, “Memo: The Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 15, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

the group's objective seemed to be promoting homosexuality.<sup>143</sup> He quoted a *Michigan Daily* article, which reported the GLF "is a coalition of homosexuals, lesbians, bi-sexuals, and straights who say NO to sexual repression."<sup>144</sup> It is unclear how many bisexuals and straights were involved in the GLF at the time, but the group purposely remained flexible in political ideology allowing them to attract anyone interested in gay liberation. Based on existing Michigan law regarding homosexuality, Cummiskey advised that the holding of "such a conference in University facilities would be illegal or, to say the least, highly improper."<sup>145</sup> Deviating from a legal opinion, he also observed that although the university would not be an official sponsor of such an event, in the minds of the community the university would look as if it endorsed the conference. He also provided excerpts from the Michigan Penal Code to support his findings; the highlighted statutes dealt with the commission of gross indecency between individuals of the same sex or the attempt thereof.<sup>146</sup>

Armed with a legal opinion and his own apprehensions, University of Michigan President Robben Fleming denied GLF's request on April 20, 1970.<sup>147</sup> In a communication with Barbara Newell, Fleming argued that since the University of Michigan is a state-funded institution, and the Michigan Penal Code "contains strict provisions on the subject of homosexuality," the use of university facilities for this

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Jane Bartman and W.E. Schrock, "Resisting Repression of the Homosexual," *The Michigan Daily*, April 12, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>145</sup> Cummiskey, "Memo: The Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front."

<sup>146</sup> As of 1970, see State of Michigan Penal Codes 28.569, 28.570, 28.570(1), and 28.570(2).

<sup>147</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, universities frequently denied requests as a way to control homosexuality on campus and to comply with current state and federal laws. See Reichard, "We Can't Hide and They Are Wrong," 636; Staley, "Gay Liberation Comes to Appalachia," 76. President Fleming was not always seen as an obstacle for progress. Upon his death, many 1960s and 1970s radicals remembered him fondly. See Alan Glenn, "Ex-Radicals Remember Robben Fleming: Bill Ayers, Others Recall UM President in Turbulent Times," *The Ann Arbor Chronicle*, January 24, 2010, Online edition, <http://annarborchronicle.com/2010/01/24/ex-radicals-remember-robben-fleming/>.

conference would not be available.<sup>148</sup> The letter continued, “In order to qualify for the use of university facilities, any conference on the subject of homosexuality ought, in view of the law, to be clearly educational in nature and directed primarily toward those people who have a professional interest in the field.”<sup>149</sup> Fleming would repeatedly cite the criteria listed above for remainder of the year.<sup>150</sup> At an open meeting of the GLF three days later, members discussed Fleming’s denial, which included a fear of bad publicity, police intervention, and the determination that the conference was not educational enough.<sup>151</sup> In essence, a conference targeted toward counselors and health care professionals would be acceptable but a conference for and by homosexuals would not be.

In response, the GLF decided to take action. Members of the GLF proposed immediately going to Fleming’s house, which was centrally located on campus, to discuss the matter. A few liked the idea, but wanted to wait until the student newspaper started publishing again after the spring recess. The group decided to picket the upcoming Alumni Tea Party, an annual event hosted at President Fleming’s home.

The GLF’s first action was a grass roots informational campaign. The group distributed a flyer titled “University Repression,” laying out their case: the university had refused a legitimate student organization their right to hold a conference for fear of bad publicity and police attention. The flyer stated Fleming had “implied that the conference would be illegal. Any attorney except Fleming realizes this is absurd. Show your

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<sup>148</sup> President R.W. Fleming, “Letter: Fleming to Barbara Newell Re: Original Denial of Conference Request,” April 20, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.; Hester Pulling, “‘U’ Bans Gay Lib Conference,” *The Michigan Daily*, May 7, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>150</sup> Fleming also implied that this type of conference would hurt the University’s relationship with the state legislature. See Retzliff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 7.

<sup>151</sup> “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 23, 1970.

support for the rights of the Gay Liberation Front and other oppressed groups: Come to Fleming's Alumni Tea Party ... on Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>." The final line asked everyone to "bring friends, groups, hordes and plenty of signs."<sup>152</sup>

The Tea Party demonstration was a success. The GLF had created relationships with other campus groups, including those of the New Left and they established themselves in the media as a bona fide organization, one with clearly identified goals. The GLF achieved a victory when Fleming gave them permission to hold a "gay" dance on university property. Some of the earliest discussions of the conference included having an after-party in the form of a dance, although a few people were worried about the legal issues involved.<sup>153</sup> According to multiple sources, this dance was most likely the first of its kind in the state.<sup>154</sup>

Joined by the Students for a Democratic Society and the Women's Liberation Front, as well as Gay Liberation members from Detroit and Chicago, the GLF expressed its displeasure with Fleming's refusal by picketing and chanting during an otherwise low-key affair. The *Michigan Daily* reported one sign read "take a homosexual to tea" while an undercover FBI agent advised his superiors the signs were obscene and the "group chanted vulgar ... slogans."<sup>155</sup> Both accounts state around 30 people were present.

Whether or not the protest was profane, Fleming did capitulate and allow two representatives to speak with him a few hours after the protest had started. GLF member Larry Glover reported Fleming "reiterated his previous position about the conference but

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<sup>152</sup> Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, "Flyer: University Repression," 1970s, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Ann Arbor - Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>153</sup> "Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front," April 7, 1970.

<sup>154</sup> See Retzliff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 7; "Gay OK at U of M," *The Detroit Liberator*, July 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Detroit, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>155</sup> "FBI File, Gay Liberation Front" April 30, 1970.

suggested, when we asked about the possibility of a dance, that we talk with the Office of Student Affairs.”<sup>156</sup> Other members wondered how Fleming would have an issue with an educational conference but not with same-sex dancing and intimacy. Glover declaimed, “We are asserting our humanity and our right to assemble,” making it clear that no matter what Fleming’s thinking was, the GLF would continue its push for the full recognition and rights traditionally afforded to student organizations.<sup>157</sup>

The first of many editorials supporting the conference appeared in the *Michigan Daily* on May 8, 1970. Comparing the Midwest Conference on Homosexuality to a ten-day convention on military operations held in 1969, co-editor Alexa Canady asked how President Fleming could object to a rare, first-hand glimpse into the status of homosexuality in America but not object to a weapons conference. She wrote, “Why, then, did he [Fleming] prohibit the GLF conference which most assuredly could not even approach the barbarity of a weapons meeting?”<sup>158</sup> She concluded, “All the GLF wishes to do is open a forum to discuss the multitude of problems facing a significant segment of our society, while the weapons conference is trying to find the most effective and the cheapest way to kill ... the University has once again demonstrated its lack of interest in solving people’s problems.” The editorial from the *Michigan Daily* declared to the campus community that whether or not a person finds homosexuality distasteful, the university is obligated to provide space for the open discussion of ideas.

Of course, there was opposition to the conference. In a letter dated from June, Professor Emeritus F.N. Menefee cautioned Fleming, “I believe that one good way to

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<sup>156</sup> Pulling, “‘U’ Bans Gay Lib Conference.”

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Alexa Canady, “Strange Priorities: Weapons over People,” *The Michigan Daily*, May 8, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

alienate hundreds of alumni of the university would be to yield to the demands of GLF ... if they want to have a meeting, let them go elsewhere than the University for it.” Another letter, this time from alumni in support, stated private actions and individual choices must be protected and surely “the University is big enough to tolerate the personal private variations of its student body.”<sup>159</sup>

With the momentum of a sympathetic student press and backing from other campus groups, the GLF submitted a second request to Fleming, this time with sponsorship from the Student Government Council. The letter opened strongly: “If the University is to be more than an extension of societal repression towards homosexuals, then the University must stop bowing to the sick threat of bad publicity, and begin to defend, not suppress, the rights of homosexuals.”<sup>160</sup> In addition to the repression of GLF’s right to free assembly, the letter reminded President Fleming of the student government’s exclusive right to recognize student organizations and to grant access to university facilities. Furthermore, the letter argued the use of the Michigan Penal Code as a reason to deny the conference was wrong; the code itself did not prohibit the “condition of homosexuality and several states have ruled on the rights of homosexuals to meet.” The letter also disputed Fleming’s logic in interpreting the conference as not educational, referencing the original purpose to “offer workshops on homosexuality ... and public lectures and panel discussions by such outside specialists [*sic*] as jurists, doctors, and religious leaders.”<sup>161</sup> The SGC and GLF demanded President Fleming “stop

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<sup>159</sup> F.N. Menefee, “Letter: Opposition to GLF,” June 3, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Catherine Stahl and Stanley H. Stahl, “Letter: Alumni to Fleming,” July 14, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>160</sup> Gay Liberation Front of Ann Arbor and Student Government Council, “Letter: Gay Liberation Front to President Fleming.”

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

using the University as an instrument of repression and recognize the rights of the GLF to hold their conference.”<sup>162</sup> Attached to the letter was a resolution from the Student Government Council asserting GLF’s right to exist, their right to hold a conference, and a call for SGC to “endorse and sponsor peaceful demonstrations which will call attention to the oppression of homosexuals by the University and by society.”<sup>163</sup> The *Michigan Daily* reprinted both the letter and the resolution.<sup>164</sup> If bad publicity was a concern before, Fleming now faced a coordinated effort between two highly active organizations. The *Michigan Daily* article also reported that the GLF scheduled a strategy session to “organize demonstrations, one being guerrilla theatre.”<sup>165</sup>

This time, President Fleming responded swiftly. Instead of having his Vice President of Student Affairs reply, Fleming personally provided his reasons in a letter to the GLF/SGC coalition and had it printed publicly in the June 12 edition of the *Michigan Daily*. Fleming wrote, “No one denies that homosexuals are human beings with rights and privileges in the society. There are, however, some very practical considerations which bear on the GLF proposal for a Midwest conference of homosexuals at the University.”<sup>166</sup> In his estimation, these factors far outweighed any of those in support of the conference. In a carefully worded response, President Fleming outlined his logic.

First, while the actual conference itself was not illegal, the gathering of “Midwest

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Jerry DeGrieck, “Resolution: Rights of the GLF,” June 8, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>164</sup> Hester Pulling, “GLF, SGC Hit Fleming, Demand Gay Conference,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 11, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>165</sup> Hester Pulling, “GLF, SGC to Demand ‘U’ Permit ‘Gay’ Meeting,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 3, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. These “zaps” were common to “gay liberation-style activism,” being deployed by groups across the country. See Epstein, “Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States Dilemmas of Identity,” 40.

<sup>166</sup> President R.W. Fleming, “Fleming Responds: Gay Conference Would Hurt ‘U’ Image, Funds,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 12, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; President R.W. Fleming, “Letter: SGC, GLF to Fleming Re: Conference of Midwest Homosexuals,” June 11, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

homosexuals will inevitably be associated in the public mind with the act [of homosexuality], and [we] must therefore accept ... the strong public disapproval.”

Secondly, he expressed concern with how the state legislature would react, pointing out over 70% of the direct cost of educating students came from their appropriation bills.

Thirdly, the university was in the midst of a new program to increase admission of disadvantaged students; this program could not succeed if the university “needlessly alienates the public.” Finally, because of the violence and destruction on campuses nationwide (presumably referring to antiwar and minority demonstrations) there was a greater public hostility toward colleges and by authorizing this conference the university would increase negative public sentiment.<sup>167</sup> “No one has said that the local group could not carry on an educational program. There are adequate opportunities for a Midwest conference elsewhere,” he concluded, “It does not seem wise to me to jeopardize much needed public support ... by holding a conference of this kind.”

In the midst of a back and forth media battle between the GLF and Fleming, the *Michigan Daily* editorial board took another jab at the President and his decision. Brimming with sarcasm and satire, Hester Pulling asked, “Will the Gay Liberation Front ever fade away? Poor President Fleming has asked them twice not to bother him with their request” to hold a conference. Pulling further reported a sympathetic Regent expressed an understanding for GLF’s demands during the Alumni Tea rally, but “the time is bad – the state legislature is fed up with all the BAM [Black Action Movement] demands.”<sup>168</sup> After recounting the GLF’s struggle to date, Pulling wrote, “the University

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<sup>167</sup> Fleming, “Letter: SGC, GLF to Fleming Re: Conference of Midwest Homosexuals.”

<sup>168</sup> The Black Action Movement (BAM) at the University of Michigan focused on the grievances of African-American students. Although led by Black-student organizations, many of their demands affected other minority groups on campus. In 1970, the primary focus of BAM was an increase of “black



should not participate nor condone the repression of any group, especially one peacefully struggling against prejudice and discrimination” and that by refusing the request for the conference “Fleming is extending society’s repression and tacitly approving of it.”<sup>169</sup>

### **A New Round of Support**

Even though the GLF had won a small victory by holding their dance on June 12, they were not abandoning their attempt for a conference.<sup>170</sup> As the GLF continued their fight in the press and through administrative channels, a new round of support emerged from university organizations. The SGC urged the GLF to continue its plans for the conference while the Student Relations Committee, made up of faculty and students, passed an informal resolution firmly supporting the Student Government Council’s sole right to “authorize campus events by recognized student groups.”<sup>171</sup> On June 18, 1970, the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front decided to continue its plans for the conference with a target date for the fall. Jerry DeGriek, Executive Vice President of SGC, was quoted in the *Michigan Daily* reminding readers “Fleming has no role in the issue because of a 1965 regental decision giving SGC the power to recognize, approve and schedule events of student organizations.”<sup>172</sup> In the same article, Fleming rejected DeGriek’s premise

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enrollment” of 10% by 1972, a commitment to hire more African-Americans in the faculty ranks, and the establishment of support services for African-Americans. See White, “Black Action Movement Assessment.”

<sup>169</sup> Hester Pulling, “Fleming: A Second Chance (editorial),” *The Michigan Daily*, June 10, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>170</sup> Dances were a key recruiting tool for early gay liberation groups. According to Diana Mankowski, dances were “a way to recruit new members, raise funds, and further shatter the isolation of gay life.” These dances also provided information on gay liberation to the attendees. See Diana L. Mankowski, “Gendering the Disco Inferno: Sexual Revolution, Liberation, and Popular Culture in 1970s America” (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2010), 51.

<sup>171</sup> Hester Pulling, “GLF to Picket Tomorrow at Regents Meeting,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 17, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; J Wehrer, “Letter: J. Wehrer to Robert Knauss Re: SRC Resolution,” June 17, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>172</sup> Hester Pulling, “GLF Proceeds with Plans to Hold Conference at ‘U,’” *The Michigan Daily*, June 19, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Additionally, a letter dated July 2, 1970, from

saying, “I don’t agree with their interpretation of the Regent’s decision ... the by-law dealt with eligibility of University facilities, not with their assignment.”<sup>173</sup>

Fearing the GLF could sneak past the bureaucracy of a large university, a flurry of urgent memos and communications followed the *Michigan Daily* article. In reference to GLF’s plans to hold the conference with or without official approval, President Fleming wrote Barbara Newell “we are sufficiently loose around here in our administrative relationships that we might just wake up and find that this had been done.”<sup>174</sup> In response, Harlan Mulder, assistant to Barbara Newell, distributed a memo to officials at the Michigan League, Michigan Union, and Auditorium scheduling. The memo cautioned each recipient to be vigilant when reviewing space requests because the Gay Liberation Front may attempt to gain permission under “the name of some other organization.”<sup>175</sup> Additionally, Mulder asked the head of Auditorium scheduling to communicate with his counterparts at the Towsley-Dow Conference center, the Chrysler Conference center, and the North Campus Commons to alert them of this new possibility.

During the summer semester, the GLF attempted to secure space at the Michigan Union. After a staged guerrilla theatre event on July 1, the director of the Union denied their request. This guerilla theatre had been performed before; sources indicate the GLF and Women’s Liberation groups performed numerous times in the months leading up to

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the SGC to Fleming, strongly asserted the SGC “will continue to grant or reject approval for student organization sponsored events” and that the President’s office “does not share in that power.” See Bob Nelson, “Letter: Bob Nelson to Fleming Re: Approval of Student Organizations,” July 2, 1970, Student Government Council Records, Box 5, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>173</sup> Pulling, “GLF Proceeds with Plans to Hold Conference at ‘U.’”

<sup>174</sup> President R.W. Fleming, “Memo: Fleming to Newell, Gay Liberation Front,” June 24, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>175</sup> Harlan Mulder, “Memo: Harlan Mulder to Wilma Steketee, Robert Wagner, and Stan Wells,” June 26, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

this protest.<sup>176</sup> According to press reports, the theatre event sparked controversy, portraying President Nixon giving a press conference while United States soldiers committed wartime atrocities in the background.<sup>177</sup> The final scene included a simulated rape of a Cambodian woman by soldiers and by Nixon himself.<sup>178</sup> The *Michigan Daily* article stated members of the GLF, along with Students for a Democratic Society and Women's Liberation, participated in the event, although some accounts indicate the GLF did not officially sanction the action.<sup>179</sup> Since Union Director Stanfield Wells claimed that it was solely sponsored by the GLF, the other groups were not banned from the student union. Wells used this "unpleasant performance" as a means to withdraw consent to union facilities for the GLF.<sup>180</sup> After a meeting with Jim Toy following the incident, Wells proceeded to ban the GLF permanently from all space within the union.<sup>181</sup> Shortly after the decision, Stanfield Wells' authority was questioned. The President of the Union Board, Jim Sandler, expressed doubt on the permanency of a lifetime ban and called a board meeting for July 21. Until a full vote of the union board, the GLF could continue to use union rooms for membership meetings. In response to the ban, the GLF, along with SDS and Women's Liberation, decided to protest once again in mid-July. The centerpiece of the protest would be a recreation of the original "Rape of the Cambodian Woman." The *Michigan Daily* reported the GLF had requested the Student Government

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<sup>176</sup> For a detailed account of the program, see Debra Thal, "Women's Liberation, GLF Hold 'Guerilla Theatre', Blast ROTC," *The Michigan Daily*, May 28, 1970; "Detroit Gay Liberator" (Gay Liberation Front of Detroit, July 1970), Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>177</sup> Bill Alterman, "General Manager Bars GLF From Using Union," *The Michigan Daily*, July 8, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>178</sup> For specific details on the performance, see "Women-Gay Alliance Takes Theater into the Streets," *The Gay Liberator*, July 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Detroit, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>179</sup> Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, "Flyer: You Are Probably Wondering Why We Are Here," July 14, 1970, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Ann Arbor - Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>180</sup> Alterman, "General Manager Bars GLF From Using Union."

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

Council begin making final arrangements for a Michigan gay conference to be held in August.

In one of the more detailed leaflets available, the Gay Liberation Front outlined their final argument for acceptance and recognition during this second guerrilla theatre protest. In a flyer titled “You are probably wondering why we are here” the GLF wrote, “The homosexual experience in America can be hell.”<sup>182</sup> The flyer described that in the first few months of its existence, the group had “been thrown out of two places ... been denied the right to a conference, received insulting and dehumanizing letters from President Fleming, and been the target of any kind of harassment policy the university administration can dream up.”<sup>183</sup> The flyer accused Stanfield Wells of looking for any reason to ban GLF’s use of the student union and he used the guerrilla theatre protest on July 1 as a way to demonstrate he was a member of the “University Administration team.”<sup>184</sup> The leaflet asked the university community “what is it about Gay Liberation that so threatens the capitalist society ... [other than heterosexual’s] traditional value orientation is threatened with destruction?” The flyer concluded with the ubiquitous liberation chant “hear it clear / hear it loud / gay is good / gay is proud / Power to the People.” It is hard to tell how much traction the leaflet actually provided in their fight, but the Gay Liberation Front, similar to other protest groups of the day, resorted to tactics that had become commonplace on university campuses across the country: leafleting, picketing, and guerrilla theatre. One can question the link between the confrontational antiwar spectacles performed in July and the fight for a conference on homosexuality, though it is evident the demonstration generated both increased public awareness of

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<sup>182</sup> Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, “Flyer: You Are Probably Wondering Why We Are Here.”

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

GLF's goals as well as further frustrating university officials. Agitation was a key strategy used by GLF to achieve their goal of holding the conference and gaining institutional inclusion in the university community.

A brief, shining moment of victory occurred on July 22 when the union board overturned Wells' decision. Board President Jim Sandler declared the guerrilla theatre an expression of the groups' feelings and that no group or individual should judge the validity of that expression.<sup>185</sup> Consequently, Sandler and the board voted unanimously to lift the ban. Stanfield Wells abstained.<sup>186</sup> The student union was once again available to the GLF for meetings, but the issue of the conference had not been determined. Even though the SGC had already reserved rooms, a letter from Barbara Newell to Wells once again reiterated that President Fleming's "education program" criteria was still in effect even though the board had effectively ruled in favor of the Gay Liberation Front.<sup>187</sup> The *Michigan Daily* reported that Wells attempted to meet with Jim Toy to review the educational nature of the proposed conference, but Toy refused.<sup>188</sup> Wells then temporarily refused the reservation while awaiting a final decision from university executives. Once more, Fleming denied the GLF their request on August 13 after he met with his executive staff.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Bill Alterman, "Board Overturns Union Ban on Gay Liberation," *The Michigan Daily*, July 23, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Bill Alterman, "U May Ban State GLF Conference from Union," *The Michigan Daily*, August 12, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Barbara W. Newell, "Letter: Newell to Stanfield Wells Re: The Law and the Conference," August 6, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>188</sup> "GLF Ban Reiterated by Wells," *The Michigan Daily*, August 15, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

## Something is Better than Nothing

Despite continuous denials from the administration, the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front held an all-Michigan conference on August 15, 1970. After the most recent denial to use the union, Jerry DeGriek simply opened the Student Activities Building with his own keys.<sup>190</sup> Around 35 people attended, including members of Gay Liberation groups from Detroit, Lansing, and Kalamazoo, in addition to Ann Arbor.<sup>191</sup> The original plan to have speakers and panel discussions was set aside; the majority of the conference centered on the familiar debate on the political nature of gay liberation. Some believed they needed to accept a radical ideology and form stronger bonds with groups like SDS. Others argued gay liberation groups should focus entirely on the needs of homosexuals and disregard any larger struggle.<sup>192</sup> According to Bill Alterman, after the conference attendees performed guerrilla theatre at the Michigan Union, and held a small protest outside of President Fleming's house. There was no reported disturbance in opposition to the conference, confirming Jerry DeGriek's statement that "the only adverse reaction comes from the fact that Fleming decided to make an issue of the conference."<sup>193</sup> The administration did dispatch a representative to report on the day's events. In a memo to Barbara Newell, David Patch dismissed the event as being poorly attended, adding his own impression was "over half of the groups' viability as an organization stems from enthusiasm in confronting the University administration's rather ambivalent attempts to repress it."<sup>194</sup> There is a question of Patch's sincerity. Some

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<sup>190</sup> Bill Alterman, "Gay Lib Groups Hold State Conference in SAB," *The Michigan Daily*, August 18, 1970, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> David J. Patch, "Memo: Patch to Newell Re: Gay Liberation Conference," August 17, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

reports indicate he provided false information to the administration in an effort to get them off the backs of the GLF.<sup>195</sup> Regardless, the administration did not seem to continue their full-throated opposition.

After months of fighting, the GLF had succeeded in holding a conference of some sort, although not in the way originally envisioned. In reality, the Michigan-only conference mimicked a general membership meeting, but with fewer people in attendance.<sup>196</sup> The same topics of conversation – is gay liberation a part of the larger radical movement, should they support other radical groups like the SDS – replaced the earlier planned workshops and panel discussions. Additionally, since the group had not secured approval from the administration, the conference itself was more akin to a protest action; the GLF had yet to receive administration consent, hence they had not really gained inclusion or institutional support from the university.

However, the GLF did not cede ground on holding a larger Midwest Conference on Homosexuality. At the start of the new semester, the GLF once again submitted a letter to Vice President Newell reasserting their argument that as a duly recognized student organization, the GLF had the right to use any university facility for organization business. The GLF requested “the Regents consider the issue at their September meeting and that they instruct President Fleming to abide by and impartially support their 1965 decision” referring to a regental bylaw empowering the SGC the authority to “recognize, approve, and schedule events of student organizations.”<sup>197</sup> In a reversal of his once

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<sup>195</sup> Nick Burris, “Our History, Spectrum Center, University of Michigan” (The Spectrum Center, n.d.), <http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>.

<sup>196</sup> Early meetings of the Ann Arbor GLF regularly drew around 50 people, with some meetings having over 120 in attendance. See “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” 1970.

<sup>197</sup> Jim Toy, “Letter: Jim Toy to Barbara Newell,” September 3, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

stalwart position, Fleming wrote a letter to the Regents outlining the events to date and suggested the union board handle the matter and that future recognition of events be under their exclusive purview.<sup>198</sup> Among the several reasons listed, Fleming wrote the continued “press for permission to hold the Midwest conference” was attracting the ire of other groups, namely the “SDS, Women’s Liberation Front, and even some elements of Student Government ... [all of which] has a potential which extends considerably beyond the organization and the cause.”<sup>199</sup> GLF’s coalitions with radical groups, the student government, and a sympathetic university paper forced Fleming to waver. A separate document, most likely from the Regents, mentioned that since the GLF had “drawn very little student interest,” future requests should go through normal channels, essentially removing future decisions from the school’s top administrator.<sup>200</sup> Since the administration had now seen the number of attendees a conference could draw and the continued negative press on campus, Fleming believed to continue a fight against the GLF would simply offer more risk than reward. In September 1970, fifteen GLF members met with the Regents to discuss the conference. The Regents informed the GLF any future requests would require an agenda and a list of potential speakers; the GLF declined to provide this material.<sup>201</sup> An official release from the Regents a few weeks later reaffirmed the original educational criteria outlined by President Fleming.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Fleming, “Memo: Fleming to Newell, Gay Liberation Front.”

<sup>199</sup> President R.W. Fleming, “Memo: Fleming to Regents Re: Gay Liberation Front,” September 9, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>200</sup> “Gay Liberation Front: For Meeting with Regents,” September 17, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>201</sup> “FBI File, Gay Liberation Front” October 28, 1970.

<sup>202</sup> University of Michigan Board of Regents, *Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1969-1972)*, 2000, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/acw7513.1969.001>; Fleming, “Letter: To Barbara Newell, Original Denial of Conference Request.”



Ostensibly not happy with the potential for different standards among student organizations, Jim Toy wrote a letter to Robert Knauss, now Vice President of Student Affairs, on October 2, 1970, asking if requests from all student groups must follow the new guidelines of preapproved conference agendas and programs.<sup>203</sup> Knauss replied a few weeks later, indicating there was no current policy that would deny a local or statewide conference to a recognized student group other than for financial reasons.<sup>204</sup> Knauss further indicated the Regents requested he create a new policy for both the recognition of student groups and the use of facilities by any party.

As the winter semester of 1971 began, the GLF shifted their goals and decided to cease any further attempt to hold a Midwest conference at the university. An article in the *Michigan Daily* on January 8, 1971, indicated the 30 members present at the first GLF meeting of the year wanted to wait for the Regents to reconsider their position before proceeding with further action. The article continued, reporting the Office of Student Services Policy Board asked the Regents to reverse the educational criteria required for the conference, though no mention was made of the likely outcome. Some discussion took place among GLF members about holding a series of workshops on “methods of counseling homosexuals,” but for the most part, the meeting concentrated on activities from other campus groups and chapters of Gay Liberation.<sup>205</sup> The desire for a conference abated among the general membership.

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<sup>203</sup> Jim Toy, “Letter: From Jim Toy to Robert Knauss,” October 2, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>204</sup> Jim Toy, “Letter: From Robert Knauss to Jim Toy,” October 19, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>205</sup> Zachary Schiller, “GLF Holds First Meeting of Term, Postpones Action on Conference,” *The Michigan Daily*, January 8, 1971, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

A statement issued by the faculty Civil Liberties Board on February 6, 1971, offered new support. It stated that although the university is “primarily an educational institution,” in severely limiting that definition the university would “isolate the campus community from the full range of perspectives on social and philosophical issues.” The statement also called into question Fleming’s fear of retribution from the Michigan legislature, rightly reminding him a “variety of controversial speakers and conferences (including the 1968 SDS national convention)” resulted in no backlash from the state house.<sup>206</sup> The community “must have a free and open University where the same values [of freedom and truth] are espoused.”<sup>207</sup>

Unfortunately, the momentum from the previous year had subsided as the group’s motivation and attendance declined. FBI reports show the university had finally given permission to hold the conference, and the GLF declined to do so. The report also specified the group “remains small, ineffectual and more social than political in nature ... [with] no regularly scheduled meetings, finances, or members.” As of June 28, 1971, the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front was not listed as a recognized student organization.<sup>208</sup>

The Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front achieved the beginnings of acceptance and inclusion in the early 1970s. Through coordinated and organized efforts, the GLF targeted the institutionalized homophobia of the university and its administration. The coalitions and relationships built during this first year of activity proved stable enough to propel and further GLF’s goals. Even though the motives of radical campus groups are

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<sup>206</sup> Martin Hirschman, “Civil Lib Board Responds to the Ban of a GLF Conference,” *The Michigan Daily*, February 6, 1971, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>207</sup> Zachary Schiller, “Liberties Unit Backs Gay Rights,” *The Michigan Daily*, February 5, 1971, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>208</sup> “FBI File, Gay Liberation Front” July 10, 1971.

unclear from the documentary evidence, both Women's Liberation and the SDS assisted the GLF during their fight for a Midwest Conference on Homosexuality. Their support, along with employing New Left rhetoric and tactics, the GLF gained the backing of student government and the *Michigan Daily*, ultimately forced President Fleming to overturn his original position because of continued public pressure. The GLF proved that the fight for inclusion was compatible with radicalism. The strategies and tactics used during this conference fight would prove useful as gay and lesbian activist groups on campus created a more inclusive and accepting community for years to come.

## CHAPTER IV

### INSTITUTIONAL ACCEPTANCE OR PLACATION

Standing in front of 150 college counselors and psychologists, Dr. Ralph Blair read from a piece of paper in the Queen's College cafeteria saying, "Many students must cope with homosexuality without assistance from counselors ... and often must contend with the apathy or the hostility of these professionals."<sup>209</sup> Believed to be the first meeting of its kind in the nation, this daylong workshop in Queens began to address a growing issue on college campuses: how to deal sympathetically and without prejudice with the growing population of gay and lesbian students. Blair concluded his talk declaring a school's attitude toward their gay students "constituted the greatest single example of negligence in their profession."<sup>210</sup>

Attitudes toward homosexuality were changing in the early 1970s. The previous successes of the late 1960s student protest movements paved the way for both societal and institutional acceptance. Nationally, many were starting to question the manner in which mental health professionals dealt with homosexuals. In 1967, the National Institute of Mental Health Task Force concluded that "homosexuals can be found in all walks of life, at all socioeconomic levels" and that society's repression of these

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<sup>209</sup> Eric Pace, "Parley Urges College Facilities for Counseling of Homosexuals," *The New York Times*, December 15, 1971.

<sup>210</sup> Robert Reinhold, "Campus Homosexuals Organize to Win Community Acceptance," *The New York Times*, December 15, 1971, sec. Front Page.

individuals cause a “loss of manpower, economic costs, [and] human costs.”<sup>211</sup> The report concluded that changes must take effect immediately to deal with “problems associated with homosexuality.”<sup>212</sup> While the report did not contain any notions of liberation from sexual oppression, it was the first in a series of steps made toward a more inclusive society, one that dealt with same-sex interaction as an acceptable form of sexuality.

Through a collective effort of community members, students in the Gay Liberation Front and Radicalesbians, and sympathetic administrators, the University of Michigan hired two gay and lesbian peer counselors, effectively creating the first LGBT student services office in the nation.<sup>213</sup> Using the rhetoric of 1960s radicalism, the GLF and Radicalesbians won a major victory. Reversing the previous policy of denying homosexual groups legitimacy on campus for fear of legal and public relations problems, the administration recognized the need to institutionalize services for homosexual students. The University of Michigan hired two student program assistants in the area of sexuality for the Office of Student Services in September of 1971. In little over a year, the university had gone from opposing the Gay Liberation Front’s attempts to hold a conference on homosexuality to recognizing the need for an internal mechanism that

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<sup>211</sup> John. M. Livingood, M.D., ed., *National Institute of Mental Health Task Force on Homosexuality: Final Report and Background Papers* (Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1972), 2.

<sup>212</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>213</sup> The Radicalesbians formed shortly after the founding of Ann Arbor’s Gay Liberation Front, in part to address issues related to the differences between gay men and lesbian women. Gayle Rubin mentioned many of the men in the GLF expected the women to make coffee and referred to them as girls. See Jess Eagle, “Weird Feminists You’ll Love, Part 2: Radicalesbians,” accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.houseofflout.com/weird-feminists-youll-love-part-2-radicalesbians>. Alan Sears points out the excitement surrounding gay liberation crowded out a deeper understanding of power relations, often at the expense of women. See Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism,” 97. Many lesbians repudiated their sexual orientation as a “type of desire,” and interpreted it as more of a “personal, social, and political commitment” with other women. See Seidman, “Identity and Politics in a Postmodern Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes,” 110.

addressed the diverse needs of homosexual students on campus. This chapter follows events leading up to the creation of the office, the immediate response, and the office's lasting legacy for gay and lesbian students. What ultimately emerges is the perception of institutional acceptance without true institutional support, at least in the first few years. The 1960s had created more clearly defined and protected groups of people, namely African-Americans and women, creating a tension between those "accepted" minorities and the homosexual community. It would take many years before the university fully embraced the office, offering the appropriate level of funding and staffing almost five years later.

### **A Seminar on Homosexuality**

One of the first administration-approved university programs dealing with homosexuality was a series of seminars and workshop held in May and June of 1971. The Office of Religious Affairs sponsored the events after recognizing the nationwide push to decriminalize same-sex activities and as an effort to alter the "homosexuality-as-sickness" medical model in use for decades.<sup>214</sup> According to a comprehensive national study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health, "homosexuality is often viewed with either disgust or anxiety, emotions which interfere with an objective understanding."<sup>215</sup> Over a period of four weeks, university counselors from all major areas interested in the well-being of students, along with gay and lesbian community members, discussed the many problems facing homosexual students in the nation and at the University of Michigan.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Retzliff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 117.

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in Lynn Whitnall, "Seminars on Homosexuality: Searching for Understanding," *The Michigan Daily*, June 16, 1971, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

The majority of the discussions focused on two immediate areas of concern for gay and lesbian students: the current legal sanctions facing homosexuals and the war in Vietnam.<sup>217</sup> Michigan's sodomy laws contained draconian penalties for same-sex activities, including the possibility of a felony conviction and up to fifteen years in prison. Even though the majority of convictions were misdemeanors, and these infractions were infrequently enforced, the existence of these anti-homosexual laws could cause a variety of emotional and mental stresses to an individual as well as the fear of losing one's job. According to one seminar participant, the diversity of legal statutes and the random enforcement cause an "undue amount of uncertainty for a gay or lesbian person."<sup>218</sup> Obviously, these undue stresses would easily interfere with a students' ability to excel academically.

The Vietnam draft was another area of concern. A homosexual male could receive a deferment if they admitted their "deviant" sexual preference. On the one hand, they would avoid military service and likely save their life. Conversely, their avowed status would follow them throughout their lifetime, interfering with employment, especially within the government. The United States military discharged many who "served in secret."<sup>219</sup> The seminars and workshops aimed to understand how these laws and restrictions affected homosexuals.

Around the same time of the workshops, an ad-hoc committee of "campus homosexuals" and representatives of the university were deliberating and deciding on how best to serve the needs of gay and lesbian students. In May, the committee proposed the hiring of two staff advocates "to extend the University's attempt to aid oppressed

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

minority groups.”<sup>220</sup> The committee simply wanted the university to recognize the concerns of homosexuals just as they had with “blacks and women ... particularly in the area of civil rights and employment practices.”<sup>221</sup> These advocates would assist students as peer counselors working for the “abolition of sexual oppression.”<sup>222</sup> The memo stated that services, when offered, are paternalistic and oppressive and “homosexuals are still being oppressed and repressed on many levels ... even for what is considered an enlightened environment” at the University of Michigan.<sup>223</sup> As the Gay Liberation Front increased their public demonstrations and received more support, pressure began to mount against the administration to remedy the situation. In GLF’s eyes, the university had a duty to offer a “multi-faceted” program that would address the institutional oppression that for years had gone unchecked.<sup>224</sup>

The actual proposal called for the creation of a committee of homosexual community members, faculty, staff, and students, who would oversee a staff of two part-time advocates: a gay male and lesbian female.<sup>225</sup> The list of proposed projects included research on how other universities were addressing the needs of their gay and lesbian population, facilitating discussion between different groups on campus to educate and dispel common myths, and to advocate on behalf of students to abolish discrimination and oppression. The memo cautioned to hire individuals who could “interact with both

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<sup>220</sup> Lynn Whitnall, “Memo to Knauss: Ad Hoc Group Wants ‘U’ to Add Homosexual Advocates to OSS,” *The Michigan Daily*, May 26, 1971, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Jan Benedetti, “Gay Advocates Named to New OSSP Office,” *The Michigan Daily*, December 10, 1971, Bret Eynon Papers, Box 1, Bentley Historical Library.

<sup>221</sup> “Background for the Appointment of Two Students Assistants for Programming and Services in the Area of Homosexuality,” September 23, 1971, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>222</sup> Whitnall, “Memo to Knauss: Ad Hoc Group Wants ‘U’ to Add Homosexual Advocates to OSS.”

<sup>223</sup> “Proposal for Human Sexuality Advocates Office,” May 1971, James W. Toy Collection, Box 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.



the homosexual and heterosexual communities,” and not base decisions on the individual’s level of education.<sup>226</sup> The committee requested an annual budget of \$10,000, with the majority to be spent on staffing expenses.

The initial response from the university was lukewarm. According to a *Michigan Daily* article, the newly created Office of Special Services and Programs (OSSP), the most likely place for the Human Sexuality advocates, did not yet have a policy board.<sup>227</sup> That, along with the sensitivity of the concept, could cause possible delays, even though Angela Lawson, assistant to Vice President for Student Affairs Robert L. Knauss, “was optimistic about the proposal’s eventual success.”<sup>228</sup> In fact, Lawson originally suggested to Jim Toy that the GLF request office space.<sup>229</sup> Out of those conversations sprouted the idea for a full-fledged, university-approved program.

Internally, there was some opposition to the concept. Two medical professionals seemed uneasy with noncredentialed persons assuming counseling roles. Mental health professionals were both a source of opposition and support at this time. Since the medicalization of homosexuality in the late 1800s, the medical and mental health professions have assumed a position of authority when dealing with the perceived illness of homosexuality.

David Kopplin, from University Counseling Services, voiced his concerns in a memo to Knauss. While he commended the efforts of the committee, he was concerned

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Whitnall, “Memo to Knauss: Ad Hoc Group Wants ‘U’ to Add Homosexual Advocates to OSS.”

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.; Jim Toy, “How America’s First Campus Center for Gay and Lesbian Issues Was Founded,” *TheHuffingtonPost.com*, November 17, 2001, [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com); Toy, “38 Years”; Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 117–118.

with one of the suggested duties: peer counselor.<sup>230</sup> He was “uncomfortable about the actual ability of a person to integrate the advocacy and counseling roles.” Offering a valid argument, Kopplin pointed out that while some heterosexual counselors may have a bias against homosexual students, gay and lesbian counselors may possess that same bias as well. Additionally, Kopplin urged that any staff person designated as a counselor actually have the appropriate training for the position. He was not convinced that only homosexuals could address other homosexuals’ needs, just as he did not believe a counselor to any subgroup needed to be member of that group. In his estimation, “advocates against repression” was an entirely valid and worthwhile activity but counseling should be provided by a professional staff.<sup>231</sup> His statements were similar to the familiar concerns voiced by many psychiatrists and psychologists of the time.<sup>232</sup> Because of the fear of influencing or “turning” a person gay, many mental health professionals were “uneasy about the readily availability of homosexual social activities in the presence of impressionable adolescents whose sexual identities are not fully crystalized.”<sup>233</sup>

A member of the Internal Medicine faculty posited a similar argument. Dr. Robert E. Anderson rescinded his initial support of the Human Sexuality advocates on June 2, 1971. In addition to sharing concerns with David Kopplin on the title and related job duties of a counselor, Anderson also believed that the overwhelming majority of

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<sup>230</sup> David A. Kopplin, “Memo: Proposal for 2 Staff Assistants for Homosexual Students,” May 21, 1971, James W. Toy Collection, Box 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Many professionals viewed homosexuality as an illness and medical condition. See Wittman, “A Gay Manifesto,” 5; The Red Butterfly, “Gay Oppression” (The Red Butterfly, February 13, 1970), 2, <http://paganpressbooks.com/jpl/TRB.HTM>; Anthony Ralph Smith, “College Town Radicals: The Case of the Ann Arbor Human Rights Party” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980), 101.. The American Psychiatric Association finally removed homosexuality from their list of mental disorders in 1973. See D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 238.

<sup>233</sup> Reinhold, “Campus Homosexuals Organize to Win Community Acceptance.”

homosexual students on campus did not want access to such services. After talking with eight homosexual students, Anderson concluded the GLF did not accurately represent the community and the perceived lack of services “was being blown way out of proportion.”<sup>234</sup> Surely, Knauss and other administrators heeded the caution of these two experts, although it did not impede the process of creating this unique program.

### **The Plan Approved**

Shortly after the initial proposal for the Human Sexuality advocates, and amidst the growing pressure of gay and lesbian groups on campus, Elizabeth Davenport, director of the Office of Special Services and Programs (OSSP), approved the committee’s proposal and hired Jim Toy and Cynthia Gair as quarter-time program assistants creating the first homosexual services office in the nation.<sup>235</sup> While many in the community lauded the decision, a few believed it was a way for the administration to nullify the militant gay and lesbian organizations on campus by giving in to one of their demands. The OSSP made their decision in late September 1971, but it took a few months before the office was operational. A press statement soon followed, outlining the reasons why this program was needed.<sup>236</sup> Using language from the original proposal, the release mentioned the rising consciousness of black, Chicano, and women’s groups, and the steady influence of gay and lesbian organizations, all committed to ending employment and housing discrimination, repealing unjust laws, and changing the general attitude of

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<sup>234</sup> Dr. Robert E. Anderson, “Memo: Statement Regarding Staff Assistant for Homosexual Students,” June 2, 1971, James W. Toy Collection, Box 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>235</sup> Benedetti, “Gay Advocates Named to New OSSP Office.” Jim Toy and Cynthia Gair were leaders of the Gay Liberation Front and Radicalesbians respectively. See Burris, “Our History.” Numerous media reports mentioned the pressure placed on the university, including “Gay Organizations,” *Ann Arbor Sun*, September 6, 1974; “Gay Is Beautiful,” *Ann Arbor Sun*, February 4, 1972.

<sup>236</sup> It is slightly unclear if this document was a press release, although it does include the traditional three hashtags at the end of the document used to indicate the end of a press statement. See “Background for the Appointment of Two Students Assistants for Programming and Services in the Area of Homosexuality.”

society toward minorities.<sup>237</sup> Justifying the creation of the office by comparing it to national trends, the release indicated there were over fifty campus groups associated with gay and lesbian concerns nationwide, and that the Student Government Council at the university had recognized the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, “opening up to those groups the rights, responsibilities, privileges and services” afforded any student organization. By hiring Jim Toy and Cynthia Gair, the university was committed to becoming more “aware and attentive to the concerns and problems of homosexual students on campus” and to treating those concerns with “rationality and balance.”<sup>238</sup>

A *Michigan Daily* article on December 10, 1971, served as the official announcement of the program. Elizabeth Davenport, director of the newly created OSSP program, stated, “We’re committed to go ahead with this program and bring issues concerning gay students to the University community.”<sup>239</sup> She stressed that Gair and Toy were just a few out of many staff members who will work with minority groups, advocating on their behalf. Vice President Knauss concurred adding, “Gair and Toy are part of a developing program building around the theme of Human Sexuality.”<sup>240</sup> Both Gair and Toy were quoted in the story discussing their goals: to educate both homosexuals and heterosexuals, to dispel myths propagated by mass media, and to help their peers. In fact, Toy used the specific phrase of acting as “peer advisors,” possibly as a way to placate the concerns voiced by David Kopplin and others.

The initial public response to the hiring of two self-identified homosexuals was underwhelming. *Detroit News* reporter John Peterson wrote, “There were no angry

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Benedetti, “Gay Advocates Named to New OSSP Office.”

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

denunciations from politicians, few expressions of concern from faculty and parents.”<sup>241</sup> The article also spoke to the growing trend among colleges nationwide to include gays and lesbians in the approved campus community. As the militant and radical sixties washed the taboos of previous generations away, gay liberation groups and homosexuals started to proclaim pride in themselves and in their homosexuality. Once again, though, VP Knauss had to squelch the commotion, stating that these new assistants would act as liaisons between the gay and straight communities and they were in no way advocating any illegal activity.<sup>242</sup> This reply from Knauss would become a common refrain by administration officials for the next couple of years. Universities would have to continually battle serving the needs of their students while not appearing to approve their actual behavior, the majority of which was illegal at this time.

Shortly after the public announcement and initial press releases, Charles M. Allmand, Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, received an interesting memo. An employee in the personnel office requested clarification about the university’s unofficial policy toward homosexuals. James Thiry, an administrator in the personnel office wrote, “The employment of two self-professed homosexuals as advocates ... raises a question as to the University’s current position regarding homosexual conduct.”<sup>243</sup> It had long been the position of the university to discharge employees discovered as homosexuals.<sup>244</sup> This policy was in line with others throughout the nation; since the sexual act of homosexuality was unlawful, many homosexuals were discharged from

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<sup>241</sup> Peterson, “Gay Scene.”

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Charles M. Allmand, “Memo: Inconsistency in Practices Dealing with Homosexuals,” January 5, 1972, Michigan University Personnel Officer Box 4, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>244</sup> Daniel Tsang wrote of the Ann Arbor gay purges of 1959 and 1962. Using the standard tools of sexual enforcement, the Ann Arbor police and the university performed a series of stings. Students were suspended or expelled from the university while employees and faculty were dismissed. See Tsang, “Gay Ann Arbor Purges”; Rose, “Historical Perspectives on the Midwestern,” 28.

their positions, presumed guilty. They asked if there was a change to this past practice. He wrote that it seems the university is willing to stay out of the private affairs of homosexuals “unless such conduct interferes with availability for work or the effective performance of work.”<sup>245</sup> There was no response found in the archives, but it may be assumed, because of subsequent events, that allowing open homosexuals to continue their employment became the unofficial status quo at the university.

One reply may shed light in how the administration dealt with internal opposition. Replying to Gordon J. Van Wylen, Dean of the College of Engineering, VP Knauss indicated that setting the priorities of his office was difficult at times, but the university should be at the “fore-front in the recognition of counseling problems.”<sup>246</sup> He continued, explaining these two positions were created only after conducting an exhaustive study and they were not created based on “tactics of a small pressure group,” presumably referring to the Gay Liberation Front and Radicals. He reminded, and subtly reprimanded, Dean Van Wylen that a “strong burden of proof must be placed on those attempting to repress innovative counseling programs.”<sup>247</sup>

### **An Abomination at the University of Michigan**

While some within the community felt the university was simply attempting to silence the building protest in support of the human sexuality program, it nevertheless remains true that the University of Michigan adopted an unpopular position and would suffer a variety of criticism.<sup>248</sup> Full-throated opposition to the hiring of two known

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<sup>245</sup> Allmand, “Memo: Inconsistency in Practices Dealing with Homosexuals.”

<sup>246</sup> Robert L. Knauss, “Letter: Knauss to Van Wylen,” December 29, 1971, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 28, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> The Detroit *Gay Liberator* echoed this sentiment, acknowledging the creation of the office was a milestone in the gay liberation struggle, but that it was “probably nothing more than a liberal move to co-opt the energies and anger of gay people.” See “Moving In at U of M,” *The Gay Liberator*, January 1972,

homosexuals began in January of 1972 shortly after an increase in statewide and national press coverage. The vast majority of these letters included biblical quotations as justification for their opposition. These letters ranged from short missives to multi-page diatribes. Many resulted to name-calling; all of them denounced the sinful President Fleming.

Two such letters reference an article in the *Detroit News* from the previous month. John Brake, a resident of Erie, Pennsylvania, scolded President Fleming for humiliating “a once great university,” calling Fleming “weak as the pansies” and intimated that he probably attended all the GLF social activities.<sup>249</sup> William Brumm, alumnus from the class of 1956, wrote a more cohesive letter. In two typewritten pages, Brumm warned Fleming not to play with fire “as you are likely to get your fingers burnt.”<sup>250</sup> Brumm compared the hiring of two homosexuals to counsel other homosexuals akin to hiring two unrepentant drunks to counsel those with alcohol addictions. For Brumm, homosexuality was not a disease or “different social custom,” but a grievous sin, one that violated “the moral laws of God.” He demanded Fleming read multiple passages in the Bible to come to the same conclusion that he had: “homosexuality is abominable ... [and is] some of the lowest filth that is possible to perform.”<sup>251</sup>

Robert Knauss replied to Brumm’s letter, regretting that he “reacted so violently to [the] recent attempt to meet the needs of students on campus.” Knauss added information from the National Institute of Mental Health Task Force Report restating,

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Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Detroit, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>249</sup> John Brake, “Letter: Fleming from John Brake,” January 10, 1972, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 28, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> William Brumm, “Letter: William Brumm to Fleming Re: Human Sexuality Office,” January 10, 1972, Bret Eynon Papers, Box 1, Bentley Historical Library.

“Efforts must be made on both the individual and social levels to deal with the problems associated with homosexuality.”<sup>252</sup> Attempting to clarify the university’s position, Knauss concluded the reply by saying that “we believe the University should be on the forefront in providing services to students to the same extent that it is in the forefront in research and educational development.”

Matters worsened with the publication of a nationally syndicated column, written by conservative Russell Kirk, excoriating the University of Michigan. Kirk wrote that the University of Michigan was now offering “services for sodomites and lesbians in the student body” and the University of Michigan hired two “sexual deviates” with salaries to attend to the needs of homosexuals on campus.<sup>253</sup> Kirk dismissed the concept that homosexuals are a minority group needing special attention. “While there’s nothing immoral about being black, brown, red, or female,” Kirk wrote, “Well, being a pervert is something else.”<sup>254</sup> He concluded his column calling President Fleming a “weak sister among university presidents.”

President Fleming did have a reply at the ready for many of these messages. In two such replies, to James T. Balog, a magistrate in the United States District Court of Illinois, and William DeHollander, a medical doctor from Illinois, Fleming responded in similar ways, leading one to believe Fleming may have used a template for many of his replies. Responding to Balog, Fleming wrote that Russell Kirk’s article was “a vicious distortion of a whole series of facts, ranging far beyond the homosexual issue, and it

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<sup>252</sup> Robert L. Knauss, “Letter: Knauss to William Brumm,” January 20, 1972, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 28, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>253</sup> Kirk, “Of a Liason.”

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.



hardly deserves the dignity of answer.”<sup>255</sup> Fleming recognizes that attitudes about homosexuality had changed since he was a college student. He wrote, “The practice, as far as I can judge, is no more attractive to this generation than it was to mine,” but the university realizes that homosexuals cannot be ostracized “simply because they are homosexuals.”<sup>256</sup> He stressed the creation of these two positions had not encouraged more homosexual activity among the students.

David Hyman, a high school student from Paulding, Ohio, wrote the fiercest denunciation. Upon reading Russell Kirk’s article, Hyman became sickened. He asked Fleming, “What do you think you’re doing giving the [homosexual] students a deserved privilege? What you are doing is giving credence to perversion.”<sup>257</sup> He suggested Fleming consult a Bible and read the Old Testament to discover the truth about homosexuality. He feared that President Fleming liberated himself from “old Puritanical ideas,” but should be aware that “God doesn’t modernize his thinking to make it easier for queers and weak-kneed College Presidents!”<sup>258</sup> Hyman proceeded to call Fleming a mutant and lamented the possibility that his actions were part of a new vanguard of thought, one that would dupe his “generation into eternal hell.” David Hyman concluded his diatribe by letting Fleming know that he would not attend the University of Michigan if it were the last college in existence.”<sup>259</sup>

Of course, opposition letters were not the only ones received by the university.

John J. Drabek, of Baltimore, Maryland, believed Russell Kirk to be the same “kind of

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<sup>255</sup> President R.W. Fleming, “Letter: Fleming to James Balog Re: Kirk Article,” January 21, 1972, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 28, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> David Hyman, “Letter: David Hyman to President Fleming Re: Human Sexuality Advocates,” January 25, 1972, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

creep who works of out [*sic*] of the men's room of the Greyhound Bus Station just so he could catch some perverted queer in the action." David E. Newton, class of 1960, wrote Fleming to tell him how proud he was to hear of this development and that he was sure "that this was not an easy decision to make at the outset, but if time has not already proven it a wise one, it most certainly will."<sup>260</sup> Finally, Dr. Joseph H. Fleck wrote how pleased he was to have Jim Toy speak to his "Contemporary Sex Roles" class and he "will certainly make use of it in the future."<sup>261</sup>

### **A New Era of Services for Gay and Lesbian Students**

By all accounts, the Human Sexuality advocates hit the ground running. Continuing the work started by the Gay Liberation Front and Radicalesbians, Jim Toy and Cynthia Gair outlined a series of objectives and goals for the office. In addition to being an institutional arm of the university's wider advocates program, Toy and Gair also concentrated on ending all sexual oppression on campus and in the larger community.<sup>262</sup> They wanted to "help both gay and heterosexual persons reach an understanding of gayness not based on fear, myth, or prejudice."<sup>263</sup> According to John D'Emilio, these organizations and offices both provide support for coming out and the opportunity to "break down stereotypes among the majority student population."<sup>264</sup> To accomplish

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<sup>260</sup> David E. Newton, "Letter: David Newton to Fleming Re: Support of Human Sexuality Advocates," November 19, 1974, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 240, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>261</sup> Joseph H. Fleck, "Letter: Joseph Fleck to Henry Johnson Re: Human Sexuality Advocates," December 13, 1974, James W. Toy Collection, Box 15, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>262</sup> "Gay Assistants Job Descriptions," September 27, 1971, James W. Toy Collection, Box 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>263</sup> James Toy and Jean Hasler, "Advocates Help Students Confront Gay Stereotyping," *The Michigan Daily*, September 6, 1973, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>264</sup> D'Emilio, "Issue of Sexual Preference," 131.

these goals, Toy and Gair categorized their job into four main duties: researcher, facilitator, peer counselor, and advocate.<sup>265</sup>

In the early 1970s, inclusion of homosexuality in an academic setting was virtually nonexistent. In the few instances where it was discussed, it would be done so in a highly medical, scientific, and many times, judgmental manner, typically found in medical, psychology, or sociology courses.<sup>266</sup> The advocates wanted to change the culture at the university, both within student services and academically. As mentioned at early GLF meetings, education was paramount to changing the university culture and to launching a gay studies program.<sup>267</sup> The advocates planned to research course offerings and programs at other universities to see if the University of Michigan could offer similar programs.<sup>268</sup>

Another important activity of the office was facilitating discussions among the various constituencies on campus. To achieve a true liberation from the stale stereotypes and taboos of the past, the office would “implement discussion between homosexuals and other groups in the University.”<sup>269</sup> They wanted to “change behavior in heterosexuals towards homosexuals,” allowing both groups to see their individual merits and not focus on simply their sexual activities. In essence, the advocates hoped to create safe spaces

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<sup>265</sup> “Proposal for Human Sexuality Advocates Office.”

<sup>266</sup> According to Brett Ginny Beemyn, a few universities offered courses specifically focused on the lives and history of gays and lesbians in the early 1970s, but the number of course offerings did not reach a peak level until the 1990s. See Brett Ginny Beemyn, “Colleges and Universities,” *Glbq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, September 7, 2006, <http://www.glbq.com>. At the University of Michigan, Daniel Tsang taught the “Politics of Lesbian and Gay Liberation” in 1976. See Retzliff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 120.

<sup>267</sup> “Gay Liberation Front: Purpose of Meeting with Regents,” July 16, 1970, President (University of Michigan) records, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; “Newsletter of the Gay Liberation Front of Detroit and Flyers,” September 22, 1970, James W. Toy Collection, Box 12, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>268</sup> “Proposal for Human Sexuality Advocates Office”; “Job Descriptions.”

<sup>269</sup> “Proposal for Human Sexuality Advocates Office.”

for open dialogue and discussion, a model that would become standard in future LGBT student services offices.

Likewise, the advocates saw themselves as peer counselors. Toy and Gair set out to “establish training for counselors and fight for civil rights.”<sup>270</sup> Many within the homosexual community did not feel comfortable talking with professionals; the value judgments and medicalization of homosexuality did not sit well with many who were in fear of being outed. Notwithstanding the initial objections from the professional counseling staff at the university, the Human Sexuality advocates implemented advising in-person, on the phone, or by mail. By September 1972, advertisements in the *Michigan Daily* indicated there were three hotlines available for homosexual persons: a 24-hour service operated by the office, and two business hours only hotlines operated by the Gay Awareness Women’s Kollektive (GAWK) and Gay Liberation Front respectively.<sup>271</sup>

With the lofty goal of smashing sexual oppression, the advocates would actively pursue opportunities to change the systematic repression common to social institutions at the time. Of course, their focus was set on the university, although they were not limited in scope. In later years, the advocates would assist other groups in securing a human rights ordinance in Ann Arbor as well as pressuring the City Council to proclaim a Gay Pride Week in 1972, the first municipality in the nation to do so.<sup>272</sup> In the more immediate future, the advocates created “educational programs and activities” to combat prejudice, akin to the often used consciousness raising and T-groups employed in the

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<sup>270</sup> Burris, “Our History.”

<sup>271</sup> “Advertisement: Gay Is Great,” *The Michigan Daily*, September 8, 1972, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 119. During this time, GAWK seems to be the main activist lesbian organization on campus.

<sup>272</sup> Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 121.

early years of gay liberation.<sup>273</sup> It is important to note that in many of their activities, the advocates were virtually inseparable from the two leading gay and lesbian groups on campus. One of the many flyers published by the office clearly advertised the homosexuality advocates as being the main point of contact for the Radicalesbians and Gay Liberation Front.<sup>274</sup>

Two of the more successful coordinated campaigns by gay and lesbian persons in Ann Arbor were the successful proclamation of Gay Pride Week in June 1972 and the passage of a human rights ordinance on July 10, 1972. The advocates, both in their position as university employees and as leaders within their respective gay and lesbian organizations, assisted Human Rights Party council members Jerry DeGriek and Nancy Wechsler in pressuring the Ann Arbor City Council to enact these resolutions.<sup>275</sup>

The Gay Pride Week proclamation was the first in the nation by a governing body.<sup>276</sup> Recognizing the importance of the Stonewall Riots on Christopher Street in 1969, acknowledging that oppression against homosexual persons “pervades every area of [their] corporate life,” and saying that “gay people have not placidly accepted an oppressed status ... but rather have openly and proudly demanded and assumed their rights,” the proclamation read:

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<sup>273</sup> T-groups, or training groups, were a new form of self-counseling where individuals would learn about themselves through interactions with others in the group. The GLF defined the purpose: “to give us self-awareness as men and women, not as society’s definition of us, and to train ourselves to man a crisis center.” See “Minutes of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front,” April 23, 1970.

<sup>274</sup> Human Sexuality Office, “Flyer: Gay Is Great,” July 1972, James W. Toy Collection, Box 12, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>275</sup> Both Jerry DeGriek and Nancy Wechsler came out as gay and lesbian after their election, making them the first openly gay government officials in the United States. See Smith, “College Town Radicals,” 234.

<sup>276</sup> The Ann Arbor City Council passed the proclamation by a vote of 6 to 4, with the dissenting council members citing either indifference to the plight of homosexuals or not believing homosexuals “justify a whole week” of recognition. See Diane Levick, “Editorial: Proclaiming Gay Pride,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 14, 1972, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

NOW BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED, that the City of Ann Arbor on this the third anniversary of Christopher Street, congratulate the members of the homosexual community on their progress toward freedom and equality, and that the week of June 19 through 25 be accordingly proclaimed GAY PRIDE WEEK 1972.<sup>277</sup>

DeGrieck, quoted in the *Michigan Daily*, said the passage of this proclamation “might allow us all to discover the non-exploitive relationships that can exist between those of the same sex.”<sup>278</sup>

The passage of this proclamation would not have been possible without the combined pressure of gay and lesbian groups and the hard work of council members DeGrieck and Wechsler. After their terms concluded, Republican-controlled councils would defeat future gay pride proclamations. In 1974, sixty or so gays and lesbians protested during a council session, carrying signs that read “Smash Straight, White, Male Rule,” forcing the council to adjourn prematurely. It was during this session that all six republicans voted against the resolution for a Gay Pride Week.<sup>279</sup>

The Human Rights Ordinance had a more lasting effect in Ann Arbor. Proposed by Human Rights Party councilmembers DeGrieck and Wechsler, the ordinance prohibited “discrimination on the basis of MARITAL STATUS, EDUCATIONAL STATUS . . . , or SEXUAL PREFERENCE in housing, employment, and public accommodation.”<sup>280</sup> The term “sexual preference” was clarified to include, but not be limited by, “male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality.”<sup>281</sup> Although slightly similar ordinances existed in East Lansing, Michigan, and San Francisco, those

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<sup>277</sup> Quoted from James Toy, “Resolution to the Gay Academic Union Conference of 1973,” November 1973, James W. Toy Collection, Box 13, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>278</sup> Levick, “Proclaiming Gay Pride.”

<sup>279</sup> Cheryl Pilate, “Council Defeats Gay Pride Week During Stormy Session,” *The Michigan Daily*, June 18, 1974, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>280</sup> Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front, “The First of Its Kind in the Nation,” September 1972, Bret Eynon Papers, Box 1, Bentley Historical Library.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

laws specifically dealt with discrimination against homosexuals and applied only to city governments and contractors.<sup>282</sup> The Ann Arbor ordinance was more comprehensive in its coverage. The ordinance, however, did not apply to Ann Arbor's largest employer, the University of Michigan, because it was a state-funded institution.<sup>283</sup> The City Council also missed a tremendous opportunity in adding "transvestites and transsexuals" to its equal rights guarantees.<sup>284</sup>

The exact role of the Human Sexuality advocates in pressuring the City Council to adopt the law is a little ambiguous. Many of the strides made in Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan were a collective community effort and the lines between the gay and lesbian student organizations and the Human Sexuality Office were regularly blurred. In the "Annual Report of the Homosexuality Program" for 1971 to 1972, the advocates "helped work on programs resulting ... in the passage of civil rights legislation guaranteeing non-discriminatory treatment of gay persons in housing, employment and public accommodations in the City of Ann Arbor."<sup>285</sup> Additionally, Jim Toy was in communication with gay rights pioneer Franklin Kameny about the passage of the ordinance, who was at the time working on amending the United States Civil Service

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<sup>282</sup> "Ann Arbor Comes Out," *The Gay Liberator*, September 1972, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Detroit, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan; "E.Lansing Victory," *The Gay Liberator*, April 1972.

<sup>283</sup> "Ann Abor Comes Out."

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Leonard Scott, "Letter: Leonard Scott to Ralph Blair," February 4, 1972, James W. Toy Collection, Box 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

rules regarding homosexuality.<sup>286</sup> Jim Toy, writing to the Gay Academic Union Conference of 1973, clarified: “We helped effect [sic] passage” of the ordinance.<sup>287</sup>

The actions taken by the advocates in successive years are clearer. As with many antidiscrimination laws, the human rights ordinance outlined a series of possible infractions but did not require its enforcement. The Ann Arbor Human Rights Department (HRD) was responsible for the enforcement of the ordinances related to discrimination among protected groups; the lack of action on the part of the HRD caused a series of complaints, actions, and protests, over the next four years. From the onset, many were concerned the ordinance would be enforced haphazardly.<sup>288</sup> Their worries were confirmed over the next few years.

Just six months after the ordinance’s creation, the *Ann Arbor Sun* ran a full-page story on gay life in Ann Arbor.<sup>289</sup> Gay people were still facing discrimination in a variety of places, including local bars and the university. The entrapment of homosexuals was still a favored technique among law enforcement and even though the section of the Michigan Liquor Control act allowing bars to discriminate was found unconstitutional, many business-owners still harassed gay clientele. A series of articles appeared in the *Ann Arbor Sun* indicating the Human Rights Department devoted the majority of their enforcement on “black discrimination and has thus slighted the other

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<sup>286</sup> Franklin Kameny, “Letter: Franklin Kameny to Jim Toy,” July 17, 1972, James W. Toy Collection, Box 20, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>287</sup> Toy, “Resolution to GAU Conference.” The Gay Academic Union at Michigan formed in November 1973. They focused on influencing curriculum and creating a gay studies program. See Retzliff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 120.

<sup>288</sup> David Goodman, “Human Rights Dept. Charged with Inaction on Discrimination,” *Ann Arbor Sun*, June 20, 1975.

<sup>289</sup> Founded in 1697 by John Sinclair, the *Ann Arbor Sun* devoted their coverage to local politics, music, and the arts. At various times, the *Sun* was affiliated with the White Panther Party and the Rainbow People’s Party, both new-left organizations in Ann Arbor.



minority groups, such as women, gays, etc.”<sup>290</sup> The majority of society still did not recognize gays and lesbians as a bona fide minority, creating a rift between many of these oppressed groups. Many charged the department with placing a low priority on “enforcement of sex, sexual preference, marital and educational status provisions in the law.”<sup>291</sup> On March 4, 1974, over 100 demonstrators closed down the regular City Council meeting. They demanded the HRD enforce the ordinance and censure the Rubaiyat, a local bar charged with harassment and discrimination. A few weeks later, councilperson Kathy Kozachenko proposed a resolution to fire city attorney Ed Pear, Chief of Police Walter Krasny, and James Slaughter, head of the Human Rights Department, for their inaction and ineptitude.<sup>292</sup> The resolution failed in the Republican-controlled council.

Matters at the University of Michigan were not much better. Since the university was a state-funded institution, they were exempt from the ordinance, allowing them to discriminate against homosexuals. The advocates, along with GAWK and GLF, began a campaign to amend regental bylaws to include protections for gay and lesbian persons.<sup>293</sup> This fight would take 21 years, when in 1991 sexual orientation was added to existing anti-discrimination bylaws.<sup>294</sup>

The Human Sexuality Office did accomplish much during the early years. In their first annual report, the advocates listed a plethora of achievements: successful peer advising through phone, mail, and face-to-face meetings; the creation of a referral

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<sup>290</sup> “Human Rights Dept: A Vacuum of Power,” *Ann Arbor Sun*, July 12, 1974. The *Ann Arbor Sun* was a publication originally

<sup>291</sup> Goodman, “Human Rights Department Charged.”

<sup>292</sup> “Protest Closes Council,” *The Gay Liberator*, April 1974, Sexual Freedom - Gay Liberation - Michigan - Detroit, Labadie Collection, Special Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>293</sup> Steve Fisher and Mike Minnich, “Gay Awareness in Ann Arbor,” *Ann Arbor Sun*, June 5, 1973.

<sup>294</sup> Burris, “Our History.”

service; implementation of a lending library of gay and lesbian related literature; working with various community groups, including the Human Rights Party, the Ann Arbor Tribal Council, and the City of Ann Arbor; advocacy work both on and off campus; and community education through groups, media, and workshops.<sup>295</sup> This was all accomplished without program funds for the office's first full year of operation.

In 1974, a restructuring of the advocates program threatened to split the various advocates into different divisions of student services. The Black, Chicano, and Native American advocates would be moved to the International Center; those dealing with human sexuality were to be moved to the Office of Ethics and Religious services.<sup>296</sup> Many saw this as way "to water down the program and make it less visible without openly killing it."<sup>297</sup> Additionally, the director of OSSP told the advocates not to make any public statements before receiving approval.<sup>298</sup> Eventually, the Human Sexuality advocates were spared the restructuring; this threat seemed to be the last major attempt to silence or hide the Human Sexuality advocates.

By 1977, the university upgraded the advocates to half-time appointments each, up from quarter-time.<sup>299</sup> In 1982, the office moved to the University's Counseling Services, ending the internal debate on whether or not the advocates were counselors.<sup>300</sup> Moreover, in 1987, the university once again elevated the advocates to full-time appointments, indicating that, at the very least, persistent pressure from the gay and

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<sup>295</sup> Scott, "Letter: Scott to Blair."

<sup>296</sup> Cheryl Pilate, "Dept. Changes Threaten 'U' Minority Advocates," *The Michigan Daily*, February 26, 1974, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>297</sup> Marnie Heyn, "Editorial: Support Advocates Program," *The Michigan Daily*, February 27, 1974, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>298</sup> Pilate, "Dept. Changes."

<sup>299</sup> Toy and Hasler, "History of Gay Constituency."

<sup>300</sup> Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 119.

lesbian community could make the university commit more to student services.<sup>301</sup> Now known as the Spectrum Center, the University of Michigan's LGBT services office is one of the nation's leading advocates for LGBT training, education, and institutional inclusion.

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<sup>301</sup> Burris, "Our History."

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Progress was slow, painful, and excruciatingly hard to come by. Like Sisyphus rolling his boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down, gays and lesbians at the University of Michigan achieved inclusion and acceptance only after a series of fits and starts.

Thousands of homosexual men and women began to demand equality and freedom from repression across the nation. Within the first year after Stonewall, 175 gay liberation groups existed throughout the United States.<sup>302</sup> By tapping into the revolutionary milieu of the time, gay liberationists were able to start demanding freedom from repression. Many of these campus groups focused more on gaining official recognition than on revolution, placing campus gay liberation groups outside of the more aggressive and militant activities found in urban cities. Although radical in spirit and in posture, these campus groups often fought for the same rights that early homophile groups advocated.

After the creation of the Human Sexuality advocates, community members focused their attention on changing the bylaws of the university. With continued pressure from the Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Caucus of the Graduate Employees Organization (GEO), and other campus groups, the newly formed teaching assistants union was able to secure nondiscrimination language in their contract, including a provision for sexual

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<sup>302</sup> Beemyn, "Student Organizations."

preference and sexual orientation. The administration's initial reluctance was based in a belief that gays and lesbians were not oppressed minorities.<sup>303</sup> After the employment contract was signed, Regent Deane Baker stated the sexual preference clause "would prove embarrassing because it institutionalizes deviant behavior."<sup>304</sup> Many were still concerned with state laws prohibiting homosexual behavior.

In 1973, Jim Toy presented an update of sorts to the Gay Academic Union conference. In it, he wrote that the GLF and sexuality advocates had begun to petition the Regents to enact a bylaw that would protect gays and lesbians. He wrote, "We have heard that the Regents regard our proposal as more of a threat ... [than] the black student strike that shut down the University."<sup>305</sup> Fearing the state legislature, the Regents chose not to act on this proposal. In 1975, the Center for the Study of Higher Education joined the GLF and others calling on the university to create a university-wide policy matching GEO's language. By 1977, the Michigan Student Assembly lent their support and approval to the growing list of organizations fighting for the bylaw. It would be another eight years before the administration issued a Presidential Policy Statement banning discrimination in almost all aspects of university life.<sup>306</sup> A Regental Bylaw addressing sexual orientation and preference was finally enacted in 1993 after twenty-one years of advocacy. It would be years before the transgender community was addressed in policies

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<sup>303</sup> Daniel Tsang, "Press Release: Memo on Homosexual Representation on Minority Commission," May 24, 1976, Daniel Tsang Box 2, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Toy, "Resolution to GAU Conference."

<sup>306</sup> The policy statement, issued by President Harold Shapiro, allowed an exemption to the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. See Retzloff, *Outcast, Miscast, Recast*, 125. Shapiro faced off against a legion of groups, including the Lesbian and Gay Rights on Campus, the Progressive Student Network, the Lesbian and Gay Task Force of the Michigan Student Assembly, the Queer Action Committee, the Lesbian Network, and the Gay Liberation Front. *Ibid.*, 126.

and offered institutional support.<sup>307</sup> Although the journey was slow going, in a little over two decades the University of Michigan gradually shifted from a place that was actively unwelcoming to one that began to take pride in its gay and lesbian students.

The actions of the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front were paramount to the slow but steady progress of these changes at the University of Michigan. By incorporating the language and strategies of New Left radical organizations, the GLF was able to tap into a social environment filled with activists, radicals, and protestors. By creating an officially recognized student organization, the GLF had access to students in a way that would not have been possible if relegated to an outsider status. More importantly, the constant tension of political ideology and direction within the group allowed them to attract a wider variety of activist-students. This flexibility throughout the years served the organization well, allowing almost any individual interested in GLF's objectives the ability to join without getting hung up on political ideology.

Their first coordinated protest brought a new level of hope. Although the school would continually deny the GLF access to university facilities for conferences, the protest itself, serving as a symbol of their struggle for inclusion, brought the GLF much needed media attention and support from radical groups, student government, and various academic committees. This initial push laid the groundwork for future gay and lesbian conferences. Perhaps the biggest win for the Ann Arbor Gay Liberation Front was the creation of the Human Sexuality advocate positions. Even though the administration initially consigned the office to a lower rank on campus and starved it of funds and resources, it would eventually grow and become one of the most enduring legacies of 1970s gay liberation at the University of Michigan.

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<sup>307</sup> Toy, "38 Years."

This thesis has confirmed one of my initial beliefs: there is still much to be learned. I was limited to researching only a few years of activity. A larger study, looking at both a longer period of time and including Ann Arbor and surrounding communities, would reveal a wealth of information and allow scholars to bridge the gap between World War II community building, homophile activism, and post-Stonewall liberation efforts. This would further complicate the often used and arbitrary narrative of the Stonewall myth. Moreover, a more comprehensive study could include the valuable contributions of lesbians and their organizations to the successes achieved at the University of Michigan in the early 1970s.

Today the climate at the University of Michigan is much more welcoming. The Spectrum Center, the contemporary name for the original Human Sexuality advocates offices, provides counseling and education services, speaker panels, support groups, and online resources for LGBTQ students. Transgender persons have the option to live in a Gender Inclusive Living Experience with on-campus housing and are able to receive assistance in navigating the muck and mire when trying to legally change their name. There are fourteen registered student organizations available to LGBTQA students. *The Advocate* named the University of Michigan one of the best twenty campuses for inclusion and the Human Rights Committee recognized the University of Michigan's Health System as a leader in LGBT healthcare equality.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Burris, "Our History"; "Office of Student Life, Living at Michigan, Gender-Inclusive Housing," 2015, <http://housing.umich.edu/gender-inclusive>; "University of Michigan Student Life, Maize Pages," 2015, <https://maizepages.umich.edu/Organizations>; Shane L. Windmeyer, *The Advocate College Guide for LGBT Students* (New York: Alyson Publications, Inc., 2006); "Human Rights Campaign 2014 Healthcare Equality Index," 2014, <http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/healthcare-equality-index.black>

In just under fifty years, the University of Michigan transformed itself from an institution in which gays and lesbians were viewed as social pariahs sick with an illness to one that openly embraces the fluidity and variety of gender expression and identity.



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