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## *The Politics of Gay Rights.* Craig A. Rimmerman, Kenneth D. Wald, Clyde Wilcox (Eds.). Review by John F. Longres

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Craig A. Rimmerman, Kenneth D. Wald, Clyde Wilcox (Eds.), *The Politics of Gay Rights*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. \$68.00 hardcover, \$19.00 papercover.

The gay rights movement has come a long way since the Stonewall riots of 1969, although, as the editors argue, the glass is still half empty. Where lesbians and gay once organized clandestinely, today we openly challenge social inequities. We have not come as far as environmentalists, women, and ethnic minorities but in spite of, or perhaps because of, the horrors of the HIV / AIDS epidemic we have accomplished a good deal. Although extremists still see us as a deviant group with an 'special rights' agenda, the weight of public opinion has shifted gradually towards a willingness to see us as an oppressed minority searching for the rights that heterosexuals take for granted: freedom to love, marry, defend our country, and speak openly in political debate. Witness the willingness of Al Gore and Joe Lieberman to acknowledge before a national television audience that, in spite of voting to support the special right of heterosexuals to marry, there was something inequitable in the inability of gay men and lesbians to legitimize their committed relationships. Witness how the Republican vice presidential candidate concurred in this opinion. That George W. Bush talked against what he called "special rights," only made him seem hostage to religious extremists.

The success of the movement is largely because lesbians and gays have been able to state their case so eloquently in writing. There is hardly a bookstore that does not carry gay and lesbian affirming fiction and non-fiction. Gay and lesbian studies journals are readily available in libraries across the country. And, these publications are increasingly finding their way into the regular curriculum of the biological and social sciences and the humanities. For social work programs to be accredited, students must now be educated to work with or on behalf of lesbians and gays.

Rimmerman, Wald and Wilcox are not breaking new ground so much as, carried by the momentum of the movement, extending it further and deeper. After 1973, when social work students were no longer taught that homosexuality is a disorder, content on lesbians and gays has focused on affirming the coming out struggles of gay and lesbian individuals and their families.

Human behavior courses wrested the topic from courses on psychopathology and deviance now teach about the normal lesbian and gay life span. Although clearly intended for political science students, this publication provides social work (and sociology) instructors with a vast amount of content to use in courses on social policy and problems. Likewise, those who would develop policy initiatives and research their effects will have a great deal to build from.

Kenneth Wald opens the edition with an overview of the struggle for gay rights in American politics during the past forty years. He discusses why the topic is important and gives us a loose analytic framework that consists of: examining the discrimination that led to the movement; the resources at the disposal of lesbians, gays and their allies; and the opportunities presented by the way that the anti-gay movement responded to our efforts.

The book is divided into four sections each filled with well documented and thoroughly researched chapters. The first section describes the gay movement since 1969. John D'Emilio emphasizes that progress is neither linear nor uniform and suggests that the movement is presently low key and increasingly mainstream. Craig Rimmerman discusses assimilationist and liberationist ideologies and describes mainstream and grass roots organizations developed by lesbians and gays. Keith Boykin chastises the movement for its lack of inclusiveness of African American voices. Jean Schroedel and Pamela Fiber show that lesbians and gay men have not always worked toward the same goals.

The second section focuses on the opposition, in particular on the Christian right. John Green distinguishes proactive Christians whose chief aim is to keep lesbians and gays on the defensive, reactive Christians that mobilize against particular issues, and instrumental Christians that promote anti-gay rhetoric. Didi Herman describes the desire of the Christian right to demonize gays and lesbians along with women, environmentalists, and "secularism" on behalf of building a Christian state. Todd Donovan and his colleagues show how anti-gay extremists sometimes appear less driven by success than by creating publicity and building resources for themselves.

The third section focuses on the three major issues of our day. Gregory Lewis and Jonathan Edelman writes about congressional

behavior during the Defense of Marriage Act proceedings. Mark Rom discusses the ways that gay men and lesbians were able to trump medical and legal experts while seizing control of the public response to AIDS. Francine D'Amico analyzes the politics surrounding sexuality and the military services.

The last section describes the relative effectiveness of the movement across local, state, and national political arenas. James Button and his colleagues show that although over 100 cities and counties have anti-discrimination laws, the laws are not always forcefully implemented. Donald Haider-Markel offers hope to advocates of conventional political activity by describing the ways that lesbians and gays have influenced state politics as elected officials, lobbyists and activists. Colton Campbell and Roger Davidson show that although an unprepared congress used a special commission to deal with AIDS, it met the challenge of gay marriage through open dialogue and debate. Sarah Brewer and here colleagues review the work of the Supreme Court emphasizing its general reluctance to enter into the fray. Clyde Wilcox and Robin Wolpert finish up by tracing public opinion on gay and lesbian issues.

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Sharon E. Rush, *Loving across the color line*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000. \$23.95 hardcover.

The new millennium is upon us and race relations may be as powerful a force in American society as they were a century ago. The nature and tenor of the debate surrounding race has changed, but the U.S. remains a profoundly racist society and much remains to be done in order to attain equality of opportunity and experience for all citizens—African American and White. Sharon Rush adds to America's discussion about race using a personal account of her life as a White mother raising an African American, adopted daughter. The book adds another dimension to our thinking about race in part because of the personal nature of the story and in part because many of the incidents of racism are seen through the eyes of a young girl. The innocence of the little girl's questions and her significant dismay at others' behavior is