

Pioneering book brings light to gay movement

By GARY KINSMAN

Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A. by Jonathan Katz. New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976, 690 paperback 11.75.

The history of lesbians and gay men has always been hidden. It is only recently with the emergence of the modern gay liberation movement that attention has been focused on this area. Jonathan Katz' new book *Gay American History, Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.*, is an important pioneering study in bringing to light the history of gay oppression and gay resistance. Jonathan Katz himself is a scholar an activist in the American gay liberation movement and a socialist.

As he points out in the introduction, "We have been the silent minority, the silenced minority - invisible women, invisible men. Early on the alleged enormity of our 'sin' justified the denial of our existence, even our physical destruction." Later on he points out that the time of invisibility and acceptance of oppression is over. "The people of

the shadows have seen the light; Gay people are coming out - and moving on - to organized action against an oppressive society," Katz declares.

Katz' massive and well researched collection of historical data covers the years from 1528-1976. It is full of newly uncovered historical research. Katz relies on newspaper articles, magazines, archives and interviews with background notes written by himself, to present a wide-ranging panorama of the gay experience in the U.S.A.

Katz' book is useful in viewing the development of human sexuality in relation to social and economic developments in society as a whole. For him "the concept of homosexuality must be historicized" it is not something that remains static throughout history. Katz is not concerned with presenting simply a good image of homosexuality, but in seeing how an oppressive society has distorted homosexuality as well as heterosexuality.

In his book he gives equal coverage to women and men

which begins to overcome the male oriented bias of most studies on homosexuality. His method is also quite useful in connecting gay oppression to other forms of oppression like racial oppression and the oppression of women.

In his history, Katz covers the American revolution where Thomas Jefferson would suggest castration as the punishment for male homosexuality. He has selections on the 1950's witchhunt that was not only anti-communist but also anti-gay. An appropriate headline from the New York Times reads "Perverts called Government Peril...G.O.P. chief says they are as dangerous as reds."

In referring to psychology the data Katz has collected clearly points out the psychological terrorism that has been directed against gays.

In the section on "Passing Women", Katz points out much that is relevant in examining the privilege of men over women in this society. In the words of Cora Anderson in 1914 describing why she became a transvestite "is it

any wonder that I determined to become a member of the privileged sex..."

In the section on Native Americans, Katz' data points out the phenomena of cross-dressing and transvestism and the institutionalization of this in the form of the "berdache" or witch doctor. He describes that part of as the destruction of Indian forms of sexuality including homosexuality.

In the section on "Resistance" Katz points out the literary defence of homosexuality ranging from Walt Whitman to Radcliffe Hall. He traces the history of gay organizations from the 1895 Cercle Hermaphrodites to the 1924 Chicago Society for Human Rights to the 1948 Mattachine society, and the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955. In an interview with Harry Hay, the founder of Mattachine, the origins of the society are described. Katz' commentary describes the connections between the early gay groups and the socialist left. Hay for example was a member of the Communist Party for 18 years before he founded the Mattachine

Society. In another interesting selection Emma Goldman, a famous anarchist activist, describes her defence of homosexuality.

In his final section on "Love" Katz covers the experience of same sex emotional relations in American history. This includes a description of the male-male intimacy in the American west, and many other moving examples.

Katz' book is not just intended as valuable research but as an important weapon for the gay movement. Katz would not have been able to collect all this data and put it together without a strong political perspective.

Jonathan Katz has opened up a whole new area for historical study. No doubt his findings will be useful not only for the gay movement but for other oppressed people. Katz' book is useful reading for all those interested in North American and gay history and particularly those interested in researching Gay Canadian history an area in which the surface has barely been scratched.

Greenglass interview

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Women who aborted for physical reasons had the highest broodingness score, probably because they regretted not being able to have the child.

There was no difference in adjustment for those who gave social and those who gave psychological reasons. That lends some support to the idea that one cannot separate these reasons.

EXCALIBUR - Did you find any change in the relationship of a woman with her partner after abortion?

GREENGLASS - Half of the single women broke up. Married women stayed together generally.

EXCALIBUR - Is there any single crucial factor effecting a woman's adjustment?

GREENGLASS - Yes, I think my results clearly show that when women have an abortion in a social climate that still regards it as a deviant thing, they internalize this kind of reaction and punish themselves. The fact that you have this uncertainty, that you don't know if you'll have an abortion, the fact that you're getting more pregnant the longer you wait, I think that generates a lot of anxiety and the results reflected that. Also the fact that you don't have a say in a matter which is probably one of the most crucial in a woman's life, that the decision is taken out of your hands and put into the hands of a committee who you never meet. My question is, from a moral point of view, where's the morality in that?

Staff
meeting
today
at 2 pm

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