

1965

## WHY ARE HOMOSEXUAL AMERICAN CITIZENS

### PICKETING AT INDEPENDENCE HALL ON JULY 4 ?

July 4 — the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence — is traditionally the day for a re-statement and re-affirmation of the liberties and rights, with the proclamation of which our country was born in 1776.

July 4 is a day for serious, solemn, and probing thought. It is a day properly to ask: Are we guaranteeing to ALL of our citizens the rights, the liberties, the freedoms, which took birth and first form in the Declaration of Independence and in the documents (such as the Constitution and its Bill of Rights) which followed upon it? Or are these concepts merely being given lip-service for some of our citizens?

We are picketing because to the first of these questions, we who are picketing, and the fifteen million homosexual American citizens in whose behalf we picket, must answer with a resounding: NO; and to the second question: Yes.

To examine these matters more explicitly:

—The Declaration of Independence says: "All men are created equal."

But in no walk of life, and in none of his dealings, whether with his fellow citizens or with his governments (Federal, state, or local) is the homosexual American citizen treated as equal to others; he is always placed in a status of inferiority. Systematically and unrelentingly, he is placed into and kept in the category of a second-class citizen.

That the homosexual American citizen is a homosexual is always noted; that he is also an American citizen, with all that goes with that status, is always forgotten.

—The Declaration of Independence says: "All men are endowed with certain unalienable Rights — among these are — the pursuit of Happiness."

But the homosexual American citizen, upon savage penalty of law, and upon pain of loss of livelihood and other severe disadvantage, is denied the proper pursuit of harmless happinesses open to other citizens.

—The Declaration of Independence says: "Governments are instituted — deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

But homosexual American citizens find themselves placed under laws and regulations, their activities directed, their freedoms limited, the conduct of their lives disposed of, all without consultation and without their consent. They have asked — as citizens in our democracy have a RIGHT to ask (in the proper expectation that their request will be granted) — to meet with their officials, in order to discuss those aspects of their government and their laws which directly and immediately affect them, in which they are deeply involved, and in which they have a strong interest. Consistently they have been refused.

—The Declaration of Independence says: "In every stage of these Oppressions We have petitioned for Redress — Our repeated Petitions have been

answered only by repeated injury."

Homosexual American citizens, too, have petitioned their government for redress of their grievances and oppressions. Their petitions, too have been ignored, in any constructive sense, and have been answered only by repeated injury.

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The homosexual American citizen feels that he is being systematically denied many of the liberties and freedoms guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence and enjoyed by his fellow citizens. The homosexual feels that for him, these concepts are all too often just so many fine-sounding words, from which he is gaining none of the benefits and advantages properly gained from them by his fellow citizens,

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According to reliable estimates, there are some fifteen million homosexual American citizens (both men and women) — about 10% of the non-juvenile population — making this the nation's largest minority group after the Negro. Whatever statistics may be adopted, it cannot be denied that this group is a significantly large segment of the populace.

This group of American citizens finds that it does not enjoy the rights, liberties, freedoms which make our American way of life so unique.

Equality: The homosexual American citizen finds that he is denied the equality of opportunity which is so essential a part of our American system. Simply and only because he is a homosexual, he is denied jobs which, in every way, he is fully competent to hold. Were the homosexual as "visible" as is the Negro, our nation would have close to fifteen million unemployed homosexuals — for no good reason.

We feel that a man's private, out-of-working-hours life is in no possible way relevant to his employment.

He is denied service in our Armed Forces, and when found there, is given a less-than-fully honorable discharge (blighting the remainder of his life), regardless of the quality of his service, upon the basis of military regulations couched in offensive and insulting language of a sort which no American citizen should find directed at him by his government.

He is denied a security clearance, not upon judgement of him as an individual, upon his own merits — as every American citizen has a right to be judged — but simply upon a disqualification as a member of a class or group.

He is subjected to unceasing official harassment. He is hunted down and ferreted out. Officially and unofficially, he not only feels himself in a position of inferiority; he finds himself being kept there. When he attempts to improve his situation, he finds all avenues of recourse resolutely closed to him.

In many places he is denied the right — possessed by other citizens — peaceably to associate with others of his own choosing.

He finds the newspapers and other media of communication shut to him, leaving

him with no means for the presentation of his case.

He is denied his dignity and his proper feeling of worth as an individual and as a human being, on a basis equal with that of his fellow human beings.

He is judged not upon his merits as a person, but upon the most personal aspects of his private life — aspects which are irrelevant to any proper basis for judgement of any sort.

Pursuit of Happiness: Surely a citizen's private sexual relations with consenting adults are an important and proper part of his personal Pursuit of Happiness. Yet, upon pain of severe punishment by the criminal law, and of the harshest of sanctions by the society around him, the homosexual American citizen finds himself denied this inalienable right.

Government by the Consent of the Governed: We would not expect, in this country, that laws, regulations, ordinances, would be established, deeply and directly affecting (for example) Negroes and Jews, without consultation with spokesmen for the Negro or Jewish citizenry. We see representatives of the poor being included in plans for the Anti-poverty program.

Spokesmen for the homosexual community have asked — and asked and asked and asked — for meetings with their public officials (especially those at the Federal level) to discuss laws and regulations affecting them. Almost without exception, such meetings have been refused.

This is not government with the consent of the governed!

Appeal for Redress of Grievances: Homosexual American citizens have appealed repeatedly to their Federal government for redress for their grievances. They have not even been granted hearings with their public officials. In many instances, letters have not received the common courtesy of an answer, or even of an acknowledgment.

Even in the South, we find officials meeting with representatives of the Negro community there, to discuss problems and grievances, and to work toward a solution of them.

The homosexual American citizen asks from his government what the Founding Fathers asked from the British government of their day — reasonable, constructive, meaningful action, taken in good faith, to remedy genuine grievances and to solve major problems of long standing. Surely this is not an unreasonable request to make upon a government founded upon the Declaration of Independence. Thus far the request has been totally denied.

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Other of our minority groups know that they have the active assistance of their governments in their fight for their proper rights, and for their proper status of full equality with their fellow citizens. The homosexual American citizen meets only with the active, virulent hostility of his governments.

The homosexual American citizen finds himself a member of the only major national minority group which is systematically denied an opportunity to achieve the

equality which all other citizens have. This country claims that it has no second-class citizens. Perhaps this claim can be made because the homosexual American citizen is never allowed to rise as high as second-class status.

In Summary:

The homosexual American citizen finds himself denied many of those unique and special features of American life whose initial affirmation we both solemnly and joyously celebrate at Independence Hall on July 4.

He finds shut to him the usual channels of communication of his grievances, and the usual methods, open to all other citizens, for the improvement of his status. He finds that in his petitions to his governments, for redress of grievances, he is firmly ignored.

He feels himself disowned and outcast — and for no good reason — by the nation of which he is a part.

Every other possible lesser means of remedy for an intolerable situation having been tried without success, we now try to bring our case directly before the public — before our fellow citizens — on a day and at a place which are singularly appropriate. We do so confident that we will have a fair hearing from our fellow American citizens.

In sum and in brief: We ask for the homosexual American citizen, the right, as a human being, to develop and achieve his full potential, dignity, and self respect; and the right, as a citizen, to make his maximum contribution to the society in which he lives. We ask for the homosexual American citizen, his proper equality under law, equality of opportunity, and equality in the society of his fellow citizens.

That we do not now have these basic essentials to a life lived in the American tradition is the reason for which homosexual American citizens, and other enlightened citizens who support them, are picketing in front of Independence Hall on July 4.

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