

Coming Out of the Gay World

—Anonymous

The following article was written by a NARTH supporter. Formerly married, he drifted into the gay community because of a desire for greater closeness with men. He never found what he was looking for. (Name withheld by request.)

I have always loved men. I've got one sister and no brothers. I always dreamed of having a brother. As a kid, I loved playing Davey Crockett, or Wyatt Earp, and having a posse with some really cool guys. Growing up, I yearned for close buddies. I joined a fraternity in college because I wanted to be "one of the boys."

During the 80's, I got married to a woman and lived in Silicon Valley, an hour south of San Francisco. I got involved in men's work because I wanted some close male friends; then, I began to notice that I wanted to get closer than the other guys on my team did. I answered a personal ad, and quickly had a boyfriend. In the back of my head I wondered, "Am I gay?"

As my marriage began to fail, I felt a magnetic pull to San Francisco. I'd recently quit my job of 11 years, had done well in real estate, and I decided I was ready for the next transition in my life.

So I moved to San Francisco in 1990, and lived there for four years. I made some treasured friends during those years. But I had a terrible time meeting "normal" gay guys. Everyone seemed to have an abusive background, be estranged from his family, or be into weird sex, alcohol and drugs, along with the associated problems those things bring. I couldn't believe how scared most gay men were of women. How could they dissociate themselves from half of their own species? Most gay men have never had sex with a woman. Why would they cut themselves off from all that beauty, tenderness, and radiance?

I linked up with spiritual groups in the City because I wanted to get away from the cruising, bars, and sex clubs. I attended The Healing Circle, A Course in Miracles, The California Men's Gathering, and the Gay Buddhist Fellowship. But even there, everything seemed to focus on sex. The focus of any event was on the youngest, buffest, and hunkiest guys.

One time Keith, a gay community leader, invited us to a "Sex Theater" that evening at 18th and Castro—that is, to join him in blocking the intersection, stripping down to combat boots, and having sex in the street. I was horrified. Wasn't sex a loving, intimate connection? I certainly was

no prude. But this scene was like a children's camp gone mad. Sex had become a weapon of the gay outlaws, to freak out anyone with any morals, especially right-wing Christians.

I was beginning to conclude that I was never going to find the close loving relationship I was looking for. Maybe I had picked the wrong gender. Most gay men I met had no time for relationship: there is too much sex to be had. Gay sex is typically quick, a one-time encounter, in the dark, drunk or stoned, and without getting to know each other. It creates an "illusion" of relationship, without any of the dynamics of a real relationship. After all, if you could meet and have sex with someone in the same night, what was there to go back for? You'd experienced the entire relationship in one night. Tomorrow, it was time for someone new.

I'd heard about guys who ignore safe-sex guidelines, how HIV negative men felt "left out," and that they didn't mind sero-converting, since it made them feel "more part of the club." And I knew about gay philosopher Michael Foucault, who believed gay sex was a revolutionary act, and that it was more important to have sex than to live. I couldn't see the logic.

I'd also made a practice of asking my potential partners what their status was. I was HIV-negative, and unwilling to take a chance. But I began to notice that no man ever asked me first what my status was. It was dawning on me that sex was a drug, with all intelligent precautions secondary.

In the gay community there is an acceptance of anyone, any act, any abuse. Personal values are lost; transgendered butchery is accepted as the next wave, and anything and everything can be explained away with the expressions, "I felt like it," "He made me do it," or "I did the best I could." Having been an Eagle Scout and Sunday School teacher, this troubled me. I knew values gave my life strength and meaning.

It began to seem that having sex with another man did not begin a relationship, actually limited or ended it. This was painful to me because I thought sex was a vehicle to deepen my connection with someone. I'd feel awful when I'd have sex with a guy and then he'd ignore me the next day. And certainly, reading the statistics that the way for gay lovers to stay together was to have "open" relationships didn't appeal to me. The charm of the lifestyle began to fade.

I also noticed if I spent a lot of time with a guy, and really

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got to know him well, it probably meant our relationship would be platonic. Gay sex was too shameful to do with someone you knew well. It was only for an anonymous encounter. But that went against the values I cherished of human love and closeness.

The way out of the gay world came after I had left San Francisco and moved to Sonoma County. I'd met a guy at a gay potluck, and made a date for the next Friday. He then broke the date for Friday, made it for the next day, then broke that date. That Saturday night, I found the NARTH website on my computer. I

couldn't believe the articles, the truth that was being told. I knew it in my gut. Why hadn't I ever seen this anywhere before? Why was this knowledge being hidden?

I don't have all the answers yet, but I believe I'm on the edge of a new understanding.

I know there are millions of women searching for a good man. I am now "in training" --developing my skills every day that I roll out of my crib, so to speak, and into this world. That's what life fully lived is all about. ■