

NARTH BULLETIN

The well-known national organization "Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays" (P-FLAG) serves as a support group for parents seeking guidance for their homosexual children. P-FLAG is recommended as a resource group by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice in its upcoming manual, "Preventing Youth Hate Crime." Many schools, community agencies, and even nationally syndicated newspaper columnists refer families to it. P-FLAG has affiliates in all 50 states, with about 70,000 families among its membership.

A look at some of P-FLAG's literature and recommended books, however, reveals an approach to child guidance which is consistently both *sexually and socially radical*. First-person stories aimed at teens tell in pornographic detail of the delight of a young girl's sexual seduction by her lesbian teacher; of gay relationships between teenage boys and much older men; and of the precise how-to's of masturbation. Teenagers are specifically encouraged to *use only their feelings* as a guide to sexual behavior; to be their own judge of what is right and wrong; and to "have fun" experimenting. If a sexual behavior feels good, the logic says, it will tell them "who they are." Teenagers are encouraged to see religious traditionalists as mean-spirited and hypocritical, while at the same time, to see gay consciousness as "sacred." *Were similar books recommended by parenting groups for "straight" teenagers, they would be considered violations of community standards of decency.*

Recommended Reading for Teenagers?

A Closer Look at P-FLAG

Some of the recommended books are relatively "tame" on the surface, justifying teenaged homosexual experimentation with the usual "This is me. This is who I am." Others go much further—glorifying sex with animals, witchcraft, feminist goddess worship, worship of sexual pleasure as a form of religion, promiscuity with hundreds of partners, bisexual orgies, and voyeurism. *If the reader is uncertain of what evil is—or dismisses it as socially constructed—or questions whether evil even exists—perhaps he will understand what it is when he has finished some of the books which P-FLAG recommends for teenagers.*

Ironically, one of their booklets, "Beyond the Bible: Parents, Families and Friends Talk about Religion and Homosexuality," has a section entitled, "Caution: Hate Groups." Listed organizations include Promise Keepers, Focus on the Family, Concerned Women of America, and Family Research Council.

That pamphlet recommends that religious seekers read *Gay Soul: Finding the Heart of Gay Spirit and Nature*, a book which labels gay sex

"sacred." In it, first-person stories are told of gay men delightedly flouting their vow of celibacy in seminaries; of a man reporting that he had a peak orgasmic experience during sex with God; and of sado-masochic torture being enjoyed by a psychotherapist as a mystical experience. Another writer in this anthology labeled as "sacred" the experience of incest between fathers and brothers. (*Gay Soul* was reviewed in the April 1997 *Bulletin*.)

But the most damaging P-FLAG pamphlet is "Be Yourself: Questions and Answers for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth," which includes a recommended reading list specifically aimed at teenage readers.

From the pamphlet's recommended book *Young, Gay and Proud!* by Don Romesburg, ed., AlyCat Books, 1995—one of the "tamer" publications:

In the chapter, "Getting Started":

"There are all sorts of stupid rules, like that...guys shouldn't wear dresses. Girls aren't supposed to shave their heads. People might say that certain kinds of sex are dirty...we all know about all these 'rules'...Many of them are more than just foolish—they can be destructive...No one has the right to make anyone else feel bad about their sexuality or their sexual choices...

"There is no right or wrong way

boys or girls should act, and sex by itself never hurt anyone. The only rules we need are simple: *do what feels right to you*, and take care not to hurt anyone else. That way, maybe we can all be comfortable with being the best thing of all—ourselves.”

From the chapter for teenage boys, “Doing It: Gay Men”:

“Learning how to give and receive love through sex is an important part of loving ourselves and becoming more comfortable with our sexuality. It also shows the straight world that we’re not going to live according to their narrow-minded myths about men, women, and sex...Most of all, just have a good time. Sex should be fun...”

From the chapter for teenage girls, “Doing It: Lesbians”:

“In lesbian loving, there are no rules, and we don’t want any...Being a lesbian means exploring.” (The author proceeds to suggest that her teenage reader masturbate, graphically describing how best to do so, and suggesting techniques for mutual masturbation with a girlfriend.)

“No one can tell you what is right for you, but you...Sex with someone you choose, at a time and place of your choosing, can be exciting and fun...you’re the only one that can know what you’re ready for, and when.”

Another book recommended for teenagers by the same P-FLAG pamphlet is *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*.

From the chapter “Summer Chills”:

“I was lonely that day...I couldn’t find anyone that excited me the way I needed to be excited...I decided to go for a walk in the park...I put on the briefest outfit I could find...I only lived three blocks from the park, but because of my anticipation, the walk seemed to take forever. When I got there, I found the park filled with men in the same horny, hungry state of mind I was in. They were as undressed as I was...” (The story goes on to describe a sexual encounter in terms too pornographic to quote here. The author describes the “delicious pain” he feels during anal sex in the bushes with a stranger, as he is observed by a circle of chanting, swaying male voyeurs.)

From the recommended book for teenagers, *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* (L. Hutchins and L. Kaahumanu, Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991. (Some of the following excerpts are almost too pornographic to print, but their shock value is important for reader understanding):

(From the chapter, “The Queer in Me”): “I make a decision each time I have sex. I choose to honor the purr in my c-nt that says, ‘Gimme.’ I choose the thrill of attraction and the promise of pleasure, the c—nt, the c-ck, the fire in the eyes.

My partner now is a gay man and no, Mom—we’re not just friends...”

(From the chapter, “She Kissed Me!”) “One day while Sarah and I were studying, she asked me to go to the bathroom with her. As soon as the door closed, she kissed me. I was shocked, but got over that quickly...Later, we arranged to study at my house. We studied all of five minutes before Sarah began pulling the sheets back on my bed. We spent three wonderful hours exploring and making each other feel good.”

(From the chapter, “My Life as a Lesbian-Identified Bisexual Fag Hag”): “I got some measure of vicarious, voyeuristic thrills in watching the guys cruise...But come 2 a.m. they went off in two’s, or whatever, and went home. Somehow I was once again not being allowed to play. So I turned dyke...In the privacy of my own heart I knew that what I really wanted was to be wild and free, happily nonmonogamous, or even kinky (if I felt like it), like the faggots seemed to do with such ease...I was delighted to find that...a greater tolerance seems to exist [in the bisexual community] for things like open relationships, multi-person relationships, cross-dressing, group sex, kinkiness, and even for a mixed-up, lesbian-identified fag hag who was finding that she was not mixed up at all, but the people who were laying trips on her were...”

“Isn’t it about time to reconquer the realm of sex for ourselves? Isn’t it time for this woman to ask, ‘What do I want? What turns ME on?’...Isn’t it time to drop ALL labels of sick, or sinful, or politically incorrect?...Oh, honey, you bet yer ass!”

(From the chapter, written by a “once-straight” married man, “A Gift to Myself”): “After a few years of marriage, I happened across a classified ad for a rap group at the Bisexual Center in San Francisco. Bisexual? My vocabulary had never included that word...something told me to check it out...after I discovered others who felt loving and erotic feelings for *people* rather than a specific gender, I could never go back. I had my first sexual encounter with a man, ended my marriage, and finally accepted myself for the feelings I now knew were normal.”

(From the chapter, “Love, Friendship and Sex”): “My coming-out as a bisexual began at sixteen and is an ongoing process that will probably never stop. As long as we continue to examine who and what we are, we will always learn more about ourselves...In my early years I experimented and learned about sex with several people my own age, both male and female. It was exciting and naughty, and quite a lot of fun...”

“Eventually I came to the conclusion that since nearly all sex is recreational, as opposed to procreational, it really makes no difference whether you engage in sex with people of your own gender, or of the opposite one. The only

If the reader is uncertain of what evil is—or dismisses it as socially constructed—perhaps he will better understand, after reading the books P-FLAG recommends for teenagers.

requirement is that you both enjoy it...Other friends satisfy their bisexual needs in a group relationship. That may take the form of a communal threesome or foursome...Sex without love is equally normal...the term 'f-ck buddies' is sometimes used to describe people who have sex together just for the enjoyment of it..."

"...it is imperative to be true to oneself, which might mean experimenting and satisfying some curiosities."

(From the chapter, "Coming Out in Spirit and Flesh"): "I was in love with the man I married, but not with the role I felt pushed into playing...After the wedding, we were no longer seen as two individuals who loved each other, but as people who had functions to fill, chiefly to have children and to 'make a nice home'..."

"...I started drifting back to religion. I did not miss in the slightest the process of scraping my soul for sins to confess, nor the gory stories of tortured saints. However, I missed the atmosphere of magic, where light was transformed by stained glass into dark jewels, and water turned to wine...Before graduate school, I took a course on feminism and theology...what captured my imagination were essays about women who were forming groups and celebrating...rituals that used images of the goddess, and symbols from nature..."

"The night of the last class I took down a phone number and joined a coven of four women. Many times since then we have stood in a circle, chanting the names of goddesses, feeling our strength, our power to heal each other...I found myself repeating our ritual blessing when making love with a woman, 'Bless your lips...bless your breasts'...In Wicca, the goddess becomes a metaphor...She could even be He; there are covens who celebrate the horned God...I draw strength from my religion in which 'all acts of love and pleasure are Her rituals.'"

(From the chapter, "Overview"): "Today we hardly know what is natural, or how to heal the body-hating, homophobic, sex-negative culture we have inherited...Our curiosity and desire, the sacred spark, is thwarted at every turn. But the inner light, the inner truth stubbornly persists...We push ourselves through the accrued fear, the shame, the doubt to rediscover and reclaim the curiosity and passion, the sacred spark of life expressed through...gender and genitalia."

(From the chapter, "Beyond Bisexual"): "I started out monogamous. I ended up with two lovers. At present I have many lovers. There are four main ones. One is a woman I have deeply adored for three years. Another is a female-to-male transsexual/hermaphrodite—the perfect playmate for bi-sex! Number three is a gay man. Then there is my beautiful lover, the sky...I give her all my love and lust. I have an orgasm—

sometimes several. Maybe she has an orgasm too...I [have] had sex with thousands of people of all races, religions, colors, sexual persuasions, tried most every kink and fetish imaginable, worked in pornography and prostitution..."

"...do not judge yourself or others...get rid of any last vestiges of sexual guilt, and feelings that you don't deserve pleasure...abstinence can be dangerous to your health."

(From the chapter, "Growing Up With a Bisexual Dad"): "I was one of those kids always getting caught in sexual encounters. I got caught in the living room by my mother. I got caught in the garage by my father. But I didn't feel that my family was reprimanding me...I always felt comfortable and natural..."

"I began to explore more seriously when I went into the Marine Corps...I remember coming home on leave once, and deciding that I really needed to talk about this with my dad. I was having lots of fun, but somehow I felt that I was

doing something wrong or taboo. My dad just sat there with this blank stare, saying, 'What's the problem?'...Finally, he says, 'Look, all men play with other men, and so do I'... I remember this same conversation came up with my mother. Her response was... 'If he got a little on the side, that was great.'"

(From the chapter "Sacred Rituals"): "Warm, wet mouths suddenly become ravenous as each of my

lovers' tongues eagerly explore my sexual abundance. As I am being caressed, as my sexuality is being celebrated, my consciousness melts into vague memories of holy sexual union...Tonight, my lovers and I are one in orgiastic celebration...Why was I taught to love god the father instead? As I partake in this spiritual, sexual rite, I know that I, a woman, am entitled to express my sexual self in any way that pleases me. Tonight, I got religion, and it was in bed!"

Throughout these books, the same themes are repeated—the imperative to judge for oneself what is good and what is bad; the idea that gay sex is sacred; that traditional religion is ridiculous, if not evil; sexual pleasure is a birthright of everyone, no matter how young; self-restraint is foolish; and marriage need not be monogamous.

Is this how the U.S. Department of Education would guide our teenagers?

Because this, in fact, is what they are learning.

—Linda Nicolosi

Postscript: In response to a pre-publication reading of this article, a spokesman at the U.S. Department of Education agreed to investigate NARTH's concerns.

P-FLAG —
supposedly a parenting
organization— is not what
appearances suggest.

More on P-FLAG:

In their newsletter, "P-FLAG Pole" (March/April 1997), there is an article entitled "P-FLAG Dallas President Comes Out." The president of the Dallas chapter, Pat Stone, describes her support for her adult lesbian daughter. After many years of attending P-FLAG meetings as a married parent, one day she was surprised to discover that she, herself, was unexpectedly "overwhelmed by romantic feelings" for an attractive woman she had just met.

She divorced her husband, explaining, "This is about who you are. There was no way for me to be, other than open and honest and positive: I had to come out. After my years with P-FLAG, how could I do this any differently?" She describes the warm support she received from the other parents of gays and the administration of P-FLAG.

In another article, a P-FLAG mother says, "My son considers his homosexuality a gift. It is a gift to me as well." Another says it is a "gift from God."

The P-FLAG booklet, "Be Your Self: Questions and Answers for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth," also offers as fact the debunked myth that 10% of the population is gay, and repeatedly refers to gays as "minorities" in the same sense that blacks, women, and Jews are minorities. The booklet erroneously states that the American Psychological Association "says it would be unethical to try to change a person's sexual orientation."

The booklet also approvingly quote columnist Ann Landers:

"It never ceases to amaze me that in this day and age, so many people fail to understand that homosexuality is not a lifestyle that is chosen. That 'choice' was made at birth."

Paradoxically, the above inference is then contradicted by another P-FLAG publication: their carefully-researched and written booklet, "Why Ask Why?" which admits what science really *does* say about homosexuality: that "*no researcher has claimed that genes can determine sexual orientation.*" ■

