

## "Gay Lib vs. AIDS" —The Real War

■ The growing conflict between gay and lesbian progressive organizations and AIDS groups was inaccurately referred to as a "civil war" in Eric Rofes's article in your last issue ("Gay Lib vs. AIDS: Averting Civil War in the 1990s" Spring 1990). AIDS groups nationwide, often rooted in spinoffs of gay and lesbian community-service organizations, are being co-opted by homophobic straight people and closeted homosexuals. They are deliberately excluding open gay and lesbian activists from their boards, driving a wedge between multi-issue and single-issue (AIDS) activists, and actively working to undermine and destroy gay and lesbian civil-rights groups (that have become an embarrassment to them) and social-service agencies (with whom they compete for funds).

Rofes gives only half the truth when he says that about five years ago it was decided by the national gay leadership to de-gay the AIDS issue. The decision was to make AIDS the *only* issue, even if that meant decimation of the gay and lesbian civil-rights movement. Gay and lesbian groups were expected to continue full support of AIDS programs, but AIDS groups began to abandon and attack gay and lesbian programs as divisive and embarrassing. The fact is that gay/lesbian and lesbian organizations are deteriorating while the AIDS support movement is growing and prospering.

Single-issue AIDS groups should exist for those who want to work exclusively on this important public-health pandemic. But we must insist that open gays and lesbians be permitted to participate in them as such, and we must not misrepresent the fact that gays are the major victims of this disease in this country at this time. The gay

and lesbian civil-rights movement is a parallel one, not to be pushed aside, manipulated, and exploited for expediency. The issue is not whether the AIDS organizations should adopt a progressive agenda (that is, support gay and lesbian causes), as Rofes maintains, but that they should stop subverting gay and lesbian organizations and compromising homosexuals who choose to be up front about their lifestyle. The AIDS groups are crucifying their very saviors.

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■ Eric Rofes's article reminded me of some past encounters with the pit pomeranians of "political correctness," and vast time and energy focused on process rather than purpose. I have often wondered at the true motives of those who hijack a group with their curious abstract standards of human contact and, with all the obstructive sanctimony of one who drives precisely the speed limit in the fast lane, throw the finger at all who might dare to get around them and (heaven forbid!) try to get something done. Surely our worst enemies could not do better than to see many worthwhile organizations and goals hamstrung by philosophical debates of no practical value.

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## Gay Men Aren't Women

■ I found "The House That Brenda Built" by Michael Adams (Spring 1990) informative and well written, but it left me irritated and slightly puzzled as to the usage of the pronoun "she."

This article was about a boarding house for male transvestites (many with AIDS) in Brazil, and

the man responsible for running the house, Brenda Lee. Transvestites that they may be, they are *men*. Cross-dressing in "women's" clothes and taking on "women's" names, does not a woman make.

I have respect for men and women alike who do not conform to strict socialized sex roles. I fully support men who want to wear dresses, skirts, and jewelry. I consider it a bold political action to do it in this society that so enforces men's macho roles and so despises women. But I am offended when drag queens, transvestites, or gay men for that matter, refer to themselves or other men as "she."

To me it's akin to a white American wearing cornrows and a dashiki and calling themselves African. I find it insulting and demeaning to think someone can assume to take on another's identity by the simple use of semantics.

I would instead encourage men to challenge sex roles, to dress as you like and to embrace the body you were born into.

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## Intergenerational Sex & OUT Write '90

My joyful experience of OUT Write '90 was shattered in the final moments of the "Before Stonewall" panel when a woman from the audience took over the microphone between speakers and said: "I need to say that not all of us support sex between children and adults. I speak both for men and for women. There's room for everyone to say that they do, and we're not censoring that right. But there also needs to be at least one statement before the conference is over that not all of us support that, and I plan to make that statement just right here."

It was a strange juxtaposition of ideas—two speakers [on the panel], Harold Norse and James