

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE LOS ANGELES LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY

We are a group of concerned Jews, originally formed by the Jewish Lesbian Feminist Study Group of L.A., who have organized to fight Briggs/6. Between now and election day we are organizing to go into the Jewish community (temples, community centers, etc.) to educate people about the Briggs initiative. A question has come up in the lesbian and gay community as to the necessity of separately working against Briggs.

We feel that the Jewish community is an obvious outlet for education, since we understand at a gut level the parallels between gay and Jewish oppression. We realize that both Jews and gays hold marginal positions in this society, and thus can be easily scapegoated during times of economic hardship (i.e., gays are immoral and Jews are "Christ killers").

We are writing this letter because we are concerned that lately the parallel being drawn between pre-Nazi Germany and Amerika today is being used as an object lesson for American gays. It is true that gay teachers were the first victims of the Fascists' laws. While we feel it is very important to point this out; as Jews we feel that more caution and sensitivity needs to be used when talking and generalizing about the Holocaust. The non-Jewish community has, until recently, virtually ignored the Holocaust and the fact that 6 million Jews were successfully exterminated without protest by the rest of the world. Much of the world, in fact, actively complied. While we don't hold the gay community personally responsible for these horrors, we hold everyone responsible to educate themselves as to what the Holocaust was and what it means to the survivors, and to all Jews. This means that we cannot go out and use a slogan like "No Gay Holocaust" or use the Holocaust opportunistically.

This and other issues show us that there is much anti-semitism not dealt with in the gay community. For example, Harvey Milk, at the July 2 Christopher Street West rally, announced something to the effect that "It is fitting that after the Rabbi speaks, we pass the hat for money", perpetuating the myth that Jews and money are inherently connected. Another example is a statement widely used these days at gay political events, that "we will not be led off like lambs to the slaughter". This is a common statement referring

to why 6 million Jews were murdered; perpetrating the myth that we did not resist the Nazis, and therefore we allowed our own extermination ("Jews are natural victims", "Jews didn't fight back"). This is a distortion of the facts to fit a stereotype. As Jews growing up in this country, we, too, were indoctrinated with these stereotypes. We are in the process of re-educating ourselves to the truth. We feel it is essential for the lesbian and gay community to do the same, so that the facts, not the myths, can be used responsibly and sensitively. We are willing to dialogue with any interested person or group about these issues.

We find it essential for us to organize separately as Jews, and together with other gays. We are proud to be part of a large scale mobilization to fight this attack against our rights.

In Struggle,

JAB/6
(Jews Against Briggs/6)