

## ***Frank Kameny and/or Barbara Gittings, Activists***

### **Frank Kameny Biography**

You were born in Queens, New York to a middle class Jewish family. Your first academic interest was in science, and by the age of seven, you pledged your commitment in becoming an astronomer. You began your undergraduate degree in physics at Queens College, but you were interrupted by WWII, where you served as an Army Mortar crewman in Europe. Your mother described you as excessively shy, but your time spent abroad during WWII brought you out of your shell. You returned from the war, finished your undergraduate degree, and went on to receive your PhD in physics from Harvard University in 1956 after being awarded a scholarship.

You have a dominating personality that is a cross between egotism and revolutionary. You have a habit of questioning the status quo and supporting your own conceptions. When you were a teenager, you proclaimed yourself an atheist to your parents. This attitude continued into your teaching fellow years at Harvard where you refused to sign a loyalty oath without attaching qualifiers, stating, "If society and I differ on something, I am willing to give the matter a second look...If we still differ, than I am right and society is wrong."<sup>1</sup>

Kameny was not so much concerned with changing society in so much as he refused to let society effect his own life. You avoided the exploration of your sexuality, and were therefore unsure of your orientation. You preferred spending your time in observatories. While finishing your dissertation in Arizona, you became friendly with a group of homosexuals and attended a gay bar, to which you stated, "I've come home". You took full advantage of your sexual revelation, and spent the near future making up for lost time.

After receiving your doctorate, you worked as teaching assistant for the astronomy department at Georgetown University, before transferring to the Army Map Service in the heat of the Cold War. During this phase of life, you helped the army more accurately target their nuclear weapons by using points around the U.S to calculate the distance towards targets around the world. In 1957, Army security officials questioned your sexuality, to which you responded by asserting that your personal life was not the business of the federal government. You were immediately dismissed, leaving you jobless and dependent upon charity during the dawn of the space race; a time that should have been the greatest opportunity of your life. The Federal government's position was that homosexuality made a person unsuitable for federal employment. You had been dismissed just as hundreds had been before you, but you became the first to ever officially challenge this policy. Initially, legal efforts failed, and even your lawyer determined it best to abandon the case. You pressed on, outlining a case in which you argued that the discrimination you experienced was no less illegal and no less odious than discrimination based upon religious or racial grounds. After citing the Kinsey report, you presented reasonable grounds to believe that 15 million U.S citizens were gay and subject to the same persecution.

When the Supreme Court refused to hear the case once more, you moved to create a movement by founding the Mattachine Society of Washington, which was named after a group of medieval court jesters who were allowed to articulate unpopular truths under the secrecy of masks. The Mattachine Society of Washington was one of the first homosexual organizations to act under the mission of political activism, and focus its efforts on public awareness; its mission: "to act by any lawful means to secure for homosexuals the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of

happiness”. Your influence stemmed heavily from surveying the black civil rights movement, and you eventually shifted homosexuality from a mental health issue to a civil liberties issue. You argued that your opposition was basing its arguments on emotion rather than reason, which prevented the pursuit of education and awareness. You claimed that homosexuals were more likely to have an employment issue than they were a mental health issue due to their sexual orientation.

You enacted a civil rights militancy strategy, taking to the streets, media, and the courts. Although your movement was legally focused, you understood that homosexuality’s classification as an illness was the main obstacle to overcome. You used your background in the sciences to demonstrate that the current view of homosexual psychology was based on psychiatric observations made on behalf of mental patients only, thus ignoring the millions of healthy gay Americans spread throughout the country. Your organization was the first that claimed homosexuality to be, “a preference, orientation, or propensity, on par with, and not different in kind from, heterosexuality”. However, negative stigmas for homosexuality existed in propensity, thus counteracting the logic of your claims. You modeled a slogan after the African American movement’s, “Black is Beautiful”, thus coining the phrase, “Gay is Good”. America loves slogans, and the country’s “gut” began to shift into your corner. Today you are considered a pioneer in the homosexual civil rights movements, and cited as one of its most important figures.

When the Department of Defense launched an investigation into the sexuality of a young man named Benning Wentworth in 1969, you took the opportunity to testify. Charles Socarides was an expert witness for the prosecution. Your speech, “We Throw Down the Gauntlet” is not a classic in the gay rights movement. It is available here: <http://www.kamenypapers.org/gauntlet.htm>.

### **Barbara Gittings Biography**

You are a Librarian, activist and a pioneer of the American gay rights movement. You founded the New York chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis and edited its magazine, *The Ladder*.<sup>2</sup> One of your life-long goals has been to get public libraries to provide more information on homosexuality to the public.

You were born on July 31, 1932 in Vienna, Austria. Your father, a career diplomat, was transferred back to the US in 1940, and your family settled in Delaware.

During your freshman year at Northwestern in 1949, you sought out therapy because you believed you might be a lesbian. The psychotherapist offered to cure you. Rather than submit to treatment, you went to the libraries to find information on homosexuality. The few resources you discovered were filed under 'perverted' or 'abnormal.' Moreover, the material on offer dealt almost exclusively with gay men.

As a result of the time you spent in the library researching homosexuality, you failed out of Northwestern. When you returned 'back east,' you moved to Philadelphia.

But you continued your research. In Philadelphia, you discovered a book titled *The Homosexual in America* (1951), written under the pseudonym 'Donald Webster Cory .' You contacted the publisher and eventually contacted the author Edward Sagarin, who introduced you to the

fledgling homophile movement, including the Mattachine Society.

When you went out to California to meet with the publishers of ONE, you met Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, leaders of the lesbian organization Daughters of Bilitis. They asked you to found a chapter in New York, even though it meant a commute from Philly. You accepted.

At a DOB meeting in 1961, you met another activist named Kay Lahusen. The two of you fell in love and soon became partners for life.

You succeeded Lyon and Martin as editor of DOB's magazine, The Ladder. During your three-year editorship, The Ladder began to publish articles critiquing medical authorities as well as the notion that homosexuals were sick.

In the early 1960's, your position in the DOB lead you to meet and collaborate with Frank Kameny. Kameny's Washington DC chapter of the Mattachine Society was becoming more and more aggressive in its public advocacy, and you were encouraged. In 1965, you joined Kameny in a picket of the White House. And the two of you organized annual demonstrations on July 4 at Independence Hall in Philly.

These tactics were not entirely welcome in the community at the time. You left the DOB because of these conflicts and joined Kameny's Mattachine society full time.

## Game Objectives

You are the leader of the Gay-PA. After the Stonewall protests of 1969, you've become committed to the idea that street-level protests and direct nonviolent confrontation ('Zaps') are the most effective mechanisms of social change. You organized the San Francisco protests of 1970, and you have some ideas for 1971 and 1972.

The Gay-PA (in reality, the Chicago branch of the Gay Liberation Front) should issue something like following proclamation at the beginning of the conference in 1971 (distribute it as you see fit – i.e. post it to the door of the room, hand it out as players enter, etc.). It is vital that the draft is approved by the other members of the Gay-PA (Fryer, Hooker, Gold), and you should consult the secret 'young turks' (Marmor, Spiegel):

The establishment school of psychiatry is based on the premise that people who are hurting should solve their problems by “adjusting” to the situation. For the homosexual, this means becoming adept at straight-fronting, learning how to survive in a hostile world, how to settle for housing in the gay ghetto, how to be satisfied with a profession in which homosexuals are tolerated, and how to live with low self-esteem.

The adjustment school places the burden on each individual homosexual to learn to bear his torment. But the “problem” of homosexuality is never solved under this scheme; the anti-homosexualist attitude of society, which is the cause of the homosexual's trouble, goes unchallenged. And there's always another paying patient on the psychiatrist's couch.

Dr. Socarides claims, “A human being is sick when he fails to function in his appropriate gender identity, which is appropriate to his anatomy.” Who determines “appropriateness”? The psychiatrist as moralist? Certainly there is no scientific basis for defining “appropriate”

sexual behavior.... Other than invoking moral standards, Dr. Socarides claims that homosexuality is an emotional illness because of the guilt and anxieties in homosexual life. Would he also consider Judaism an emotional illness because of the paranoia which Jews experienced in Nazi Germany?

We homosexuals of gay liberation believe that the adjustment school of therapy is not a valid approach to society.

We refuse to adjust to our oppression, and believe that the key to our mental health, and to the mental health of all oppressed peoples in a racist, sexist, capitalist society, is a radical change in the structure and accompanying attitudes of the entire social system.

Mental health for women does not mean therapy for women—it means the elimination of male supremacy. Not therapy for blacks, but an end to racism. The poor don't need psychiatrists (what a joke at 25 bucks a throw!)--they need democratic distribution of wealth. OFF THE COUCHES, INTO THE STREETS!

We see political organizing and collective action as the strategy for effecting this social change. We declare that we are healthy homosexuals in a sexist society, and that homosexuality is at least on par with heterosexuality as a way for people to relate to each other (know any men that don't dominate women?).

Since the prevalent notion in society is that homosexuality is wrong, all those who recognize that this attitude is damaging to people, and that it must be corrected, have to raise their voices in opposition to antihomosexuality. Not to do so is to permit the myth of homosexual pathology to continue and to comply in the homosexual's continued suffering from senseless stigmatization... We furthermore urge psychiatrists to refer to the homosexual patients to gay liberation (and other patients who are the victims of oppression to relevant liberation movements). Once relieved of patients whose guilt is not deserved but imposed, psychiatrists will be able to devote all their efforts to the rich—who do earn their guilt but not their wealth, and can best afford to pay psychiatrists' fees.

We are convinced that a picket and a dance will do more for the vast majority of homosexuals than two years on the couch. We call on the medical profession to repudiate the adjustment approach as a solution to homosexual oppression and instead to further homosexual liberation by working in a variety of political ways (re-educating the public, supporting pickets, attending rallies, promoting social events, etc.) to change the situation of homosexuals in this society.

Join us in the struggle for a world in which all humans are free to love without fear or shame. (quoted in Rosario, 2002)

As a non-member of the APA, you cannot vote on the **definition of mental illness**. But be sure to advocate for one that does not penalize or marginalize those with harmless social differences.

### ***Specific Assignments***

Participate in the 1971 panel discussion with John Fryer and Evelyn Hooker. The texts of Kameny and Gitting's actual speeches are not recorded (to my knowledge), but Gittings' was probably titled "Gay, Proud and Healthy." Eyewitnesses record that Kameny was more

confrontational and antagonistic to psychiatry while Gittings was more conciliatory. Kameny is quoted as arguing that “We're rejecting you all as our owners. We possess ourselves and we speak for ourselves and we will take care of our destinies.” (Quoted in Bayer, 2002 p. 106).

As B. Gittings, propose a study, similar to E. Hookers, on lesbians, recruiting from the Daughters of Bilitis in 1971. You can see the gamemaster or the original Siegelman, 1972.

Petition the conference committee for a display booth for 1972 titled 'Gay, Proud and Healthy', get Fryer and others to sit at the booth and take questions. As a student, if you are interested, there are photos of the actual booth available at <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?1606166>. You should distribute a pamphlet as well (the Kameny papers archive has a copy of the original, for inspiration).

You should maintain 'zapping' events where you determine discrimination, or the intellectual basis for discrimination, occur.

Help organize a symposium in 1973 on the topic of “Should Homosexuality Be in the APA Nomenclature?”

## Must Read

Read the legal and personal documents of Frank Kameny at <http://www.kamenypapers.org/index.htm>

Read the story of the 1971 APA in DC: <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/html/apazap.htm>

Story of Barbara Gittings: <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/gittings.htm>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Bullough, V.L. (2002). *Before Stonewall*, p. 210

<sup>2</sup> For more on the early development of the Daughters of Bilitis and its magazine, check out: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/h2/pulse/skarlan/the-ladder-the-first-lesbian-magazine-established-in-the-195>