

# BLACK LESBIAN SPEAKS OUT

You are supposed to be able to protect yourself. But I did it, and I went to jail, not because I'm just Jane Doe walking down the street, but because I'm Black and I'm a gay, that's right, and a woman.



Everybody saw me. They looked at me like I was an Amazon in a tailored suit.  
 --feels like Stencircle's 'A De's Growth' in Pat Stencircle's Street, February 1977

In Detroit, Cynthia Rogers and Deborah Posey, two Black gay women, have been charged with felonious assault for defending themselves against physical attack. (See October 15-November 14, 1977, issue of the "Torch/La Antorcha.") The Revolutionary Socialist League has launched the Gay Rights Defense Committee to build support for these women. Below we are printing an interview with Deborah Posey.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** What do you think are the basic issues behind the attack on you and Cynthia?

**Deborah:** This is a case of anti-gays attacking gays.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** Are attacks like this common? How often are gay friends of yours harassed?

**Deborah:** Every day.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** What forms do these attacks take?

**Deborah:** All different kinds. Landlord-tenant disputes are common; confrontations with the police; on-the-job harassment. Society in general seems like it's down on gay people.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** You and Cynthia are fighting back against this harassment. What effect do you think it's going to have?

**Deborah:** What I basically

hope for it to do is to make gay people start fighting back against this kind of stuff. What I hope to accomplish is to bring gays together and make them realize that we can't do it ourselves. It's a whole class of people that's got to get together to fight this kind of thing.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** A whole class--what do you mean by that?

**Deborah:** Working-class people, all the people that are oppressed. Because if we're separated, we're just one small group trying to buck the system.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** What is the reaction of the police and the judge to the fact that you are gay?

**Deborah:** From the beginning, the way the police handled the situation was what caused it to go as far as it did, because they refused to prosecute a straight person for attacking a gay person. And at the time of our arrest, the verbal harassment that we got from the police officers was just asinine. Asking my aunt, was she funny too? And making the statement that gay people are always causing trouble. And that you shouldn't let people know your business, because then you wouldn't have this kind of trouble. In other words, keep your shit hid in the basement.

**Torch/La Antorcha:** Did they tell you straight-out that they wouldn't prosecute the other people?

**Deborah:** Yes. They told

# BLACK LESBIAN SPEAKS OUT



FITZGERALD, WILLIAM A.  
 PSEUDONYM: HETEROSEXUALITY IN PRISON AND OUT: A STUDY OF THE LOWER CLASS  
 BLACK LESBIAN  
 CITY UNIVERSITY  
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gay versus  
**Women's** versus  
**Black** liberation

time. But this time instead of submitting to the cops abuse, the gays fought back; pulling up parking meters and throwing rocks at the cops.

There is friction among movements. The Gay Activists Alliance claim they are a one-issue-organization... GAY! But where does that leave women? Women's liberation is often geared for white women, so where does that leave black women? Every movement today, the sit-ins, the pray-ins, the marches, the protests...; they have ALL followed behind the black movement for equal recognition and power.

**Not a New Idea**

The women's liberation movement is a revival of feminist activity and protests that began as early as 1647.

In colonial days, or the frontier, a sex-based division of labor did not imply difference in status and all work was considered for the betterment of the community. But as communities and homesteads became wealthy, differences based on sex began to become both unequal and oppressive.

During world war I and II, when there was a shortage of labor, this country was run by women with well-paying jobs, opportunities for training and free child care centers. When the war was over, however, it became these women's patriotic duty to let GI's take over their jobs and go home to produce babies instead of machinery.

The early women's rights movement was made up of educated

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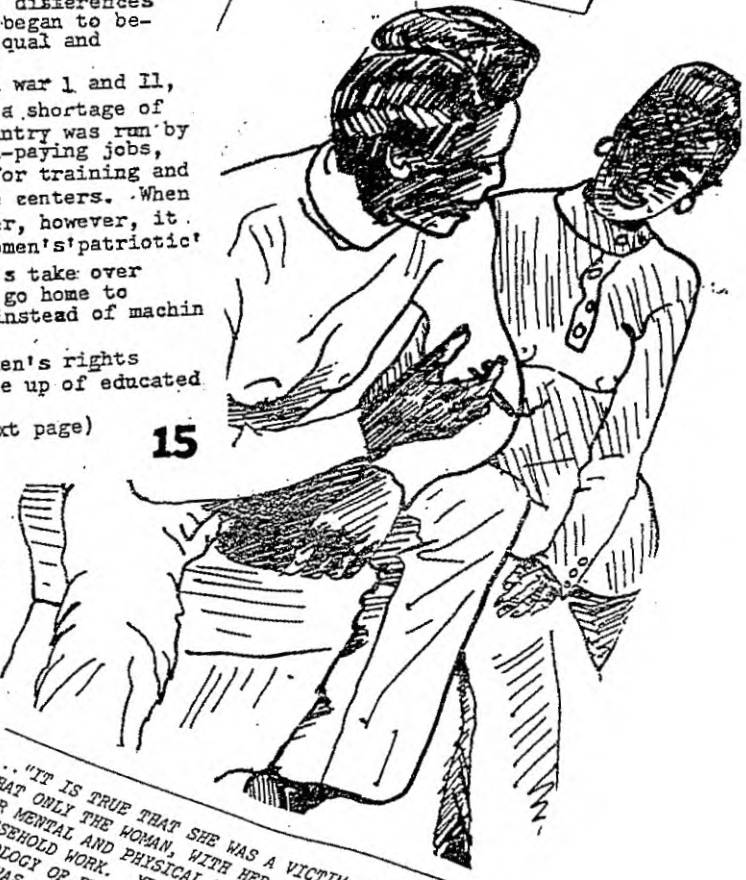
castrated. SHE was raped, sold and abused too. She had to undergo suffering and humiliation to keep her family together. Everyone's always so worried about male pride. What about HER pride?



Gay Liberation was born on June 28, 1969 when New York police started to raid a gay bar in the west village, the Stonewall Inn. Gay bars were frequently raided, especially around election

Black women are in a dilemma when confronted as a woman and as black, and as a GAY, black woman. She is not wrong if she chooses to stand behind the feminist issue, and she is not wrong if she decides to wager the racial war. Yet it's wrong to deny either one.

If the males weren't so chauvinistic in their approach to the women, it would be different. But they don't want the women to EVER have a chance. It wasn't her fault he was



"IT IS TRUE THAT SHE WAS A VICTIM OF THE MYTH THAT ONLY THE WOMAN, WITH HER DIMINISHED CAPACITY FOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL LABOR, SHOULD DO DEGRADING HOUSEHOLD WORK. YEP, THE ALLEGED BENEFITS OF THE IDEOLOGY OF FEMININITY DID NOT ACCRUE TO HER. SHE WAS NOT SHELPERED OR PROTECTED. SHE WAS ALSO THERE IN THE FIELDS, ALONGSIDE THE MAN, TOLLING UNDER THE LASH FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN."  
 ANGELEA DAVIS (Reflections)

ONE: LIVES AND LIFESTYLES

1. Albertson, Chris. Bessie. New York: Stein and Day, 1972; paperback ed. 1974. il \*

Frequently cited biography documents the lesbianism of Bessie Smith and other Black blues singers and performers of the 1920s-1930s, such as Ma Rainey and Gladys Fergussan, male impersonator. Includes photos. Albertson's taped interviews with Ruby Smith concerning Bessie Smith have been deposited at the Library of Congress.

free our sisters ... free ourselves



Fuck Harvard!  
Fuck Yale!  
Get the Panthers  
Out of jail!

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# THE WOMAN WHO LIVED AS A MAN FOR 15 YEARS

Courtroom striptease bares true sex of Mississippi male

INTO THE SMALL, bare office of the mayor of Kosciusko, Mississippi, a policeman walked with a husky prisoner. The mayor, who also acts as city judge in the town of 10,000, asked in a matter-of-fact routine inquiry what the charges were. He was informed the Negro had been driving with improper lights and a pint of whiskey had been found in the car. Then the policeman told Mayor T. V. Rone something that made him sit up suddenly in his straight-back chair:

"When I tried to search him, he protested and told me: 'Take it easy, I'm a woman.'"

The mayor promptly took up the interrogation of the prisoner, who claimed he was not James McHarris as listed on his license but really a woman named Annie Lee Grant.

The mayor slowly chose his words and told the prisoner: "Annie Lee, if you want to prove to me you're a woman you can do it. But you don't have to unless you want to."

While bug-eyed police and the mayor waited in tense silence, the prisoner walked to a closet, discarded shirt, pants and male underwear. The police crowded in closer, strained their necks and jockeyed for position. When Jim walked out almost completely nude, what they saw made their mouths pop open: the man Jim McHarris long known in town as a hard-working laborer as well as a "mighty tough man with the ladies" was no man at all, but a fully-developed, big-breasted woman.

One of the strangest courtroom scenes in American legal history was quickly culminated when Mayor Rone hurriedly fined the defendant \$100 or 30 days in jail. The word of the sensational unmasking of Jim McHarris quickly got around Kosciusko and jarred the quiet small town.

Especially upset were several women who had been girl friends of Jim McHarris, now revealed to be Annie Lee Grant. One woman admitted regularly receiving money from Jim, when "she" was working as a man on a Memphis barge line. Jim called the woman "his wife." Before "his" exposure, Jim had been engaged to marry a high school girl.

To get the incredible story of the girl that was Annie Lee Grant and the woman called Jim, EBONY went to Kosciusko, Miss., interviewed scores of persons and heard Jim's defiant declaration that she intends to remain a "man" in what she believes is a man's world.



Annie Lee Grant, alias Jim McHarris, lights cigarette in typical masculine gesture on front porch of house where she lived as a man in Kosciusko. Says she: "I've posed as a man, off and on, most of my life."

Continued on Next Page

126. Baker, Dorothy. Young Man with a Horn. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938.

While not explicit, the relationship between Josephine Jordan, rising young Black singer from Harlem and wealthy, upper class Amy North is of interest. An interracial novel set in the prohibition and jazz era of the 1920s.

...1969 and before.

# WOMEN'S MONTHLY

THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE -- WE DID IT!!

1969  
black & white women?  
black & white women!

Black women and white women can and must work together for their liberation. A women's liberation movement that does not liberate the most oppressed element is not worthy of the name.

Historically, black women in America have been the chief victims of the idea that to be black is to be ugly and evil. In a culture whose female is supposed to embody beautiful and spiritual values, the black women has been represented as 'coarse in looks and animal-like in her sensuality.'

The black civil rights movement of sixties, with its growing militancy and heightened sense of group power has generated a rejection of the self-loathing projected onto black people in America. Black is beautiful. Black

Continued on page 3

Canon Hunter, Double Indemnity:  
The Negro Lesbian in the  
"Straight" White World.  
Dec 9, 1969 for a sociology  
course  
See Unpublished papers file & drawer

Parents Often Cause Male Tendencies in Child  
maladjustment started in childhood. Parents, fathers particularly, often drive girls to the brink of abnormality. Stuck with an unwanted daughter, they force the youngster to play rough and impress upon her mind a love for everything masculine. Later, these same parents are furious when the girl rejects masculine suitors. Without adequate guidance, the girl will become a jealous, possessive man-woman facing the frustration of living in a society which in most instances has not provided an answer to her problem.



Sex hormones helped Gladys Bentley return to womanhood.

This type of jealousy is often reflected in police records. In Detroit, Leatrice Calloway, 21, was sentenced to 10-20 years for the murder of her female "sweetheart" Marlon Ware Miss Calloway said she shot Miss Calloway for dating a man. Ohio was shocked by a similar love slaying. Mrs. Evelyn Butler, 25-year-old mother of two children, was sentenced to the electric chair for strangling and drowning Mrs. Evelyn Clark. Testimony indicated that the two women had been lovers. Mrs. Clark

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## WOMEN WHO PASS FOR MEN



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women. Despised by society, they travel an uncharted road which often leads to a jail cell. Very often the masquerade is only uncovered by an accident or a necessary visit to a doctor. After an automobile accident, Cincinnati doctors discovered that "Charlie Harris"—who had posed as a man for 45 years—was a woman. Harris' true sex was revealed to a woman who knew her as her stepfather. Mrs. Ida Belle Redd said Harris (who died recently in Cincinnati at the age of 107) married her mother in 1902.

At the other end of the spectrum are part-time men: women who for various reasons reject feminine roles and, while retaining female trappings, compete with men for jobs—and other women. These "sometime women" feel contempt for girlish pursuits. Some are athletic women; others intellectual or executive types.

One of these is a famous Harlem woman executive, attractive and youngish, who rejected femininity for a manlike existence. She attends stag parties, takes an active part in jokes aimed at "silly, gullible" women. Her constant companion is an attractive secretary who shares her lavish, one-bedroom apartment.

Problems posed by man-like women are so deep that the public has hardly begun to understand them. Doctors and psychiatrists are co-ordinating their work in the light of new psycho-sexual findings. Their research indicates that operations and psychiatric treatment can free many women of maleness caused by an imbalance of female and male hormones.

Other cases may prove more difficult, although extended psychiatric treatment may cure those whose



Leatrice Calloway killed her female sweetheart.

For 30 years, a hefty Mississippi woman lived as a man, sternly bossing a 10-acre farm and caring for an attractive, cream-colored "wife" and her daughter by a previous marriage. When the "man" died two years ago, an amazed undertaker discovered that Pete Bell was really a woman. At the wife's request, the masquerade was hushed and the burial certificate listed no sex. The widow explained that her husband was an unwanted child who adopted mannish poses and attitudes in order to please a father who wanted a male heir. Incredible citizens in the small town pooch-pooched the report, claiming, "old Pete just couldn't have fooled me."

The deception which characterized Pete Bell's life mirrors the problems of hundreds of women who are trapped in the half-shadow, no-man's land of the mas-