

SEE BELOW PETER TATCHELL essay on "Our Lost Gay Radicalism" and "THE COMING SEXUAL REVOLUTION" by Walter L. Williams in response.

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[\\*\\*http://u.tv/News/Our-lost-gay-radicalism/5ce44827-ea57-46dc-a3d4-321ae5feb270\\*\\*](http://u.tv/News/Our-lost-gay-radicalism/5ce44827-ea57-46dc-a3d4-321ae5feb270)

\*Our lost gay radicalism\*

\*\*Peter Tatchell: The Stonewall riots of 40 years ago led to demands for liberation. Now we meekly hope for equality\*\*

This weekend marks the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York when, for the first time in history, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people fought back against -decades of police harassment.

Previously, LGBT people worldwide had largely complied with arrest and criminalisation. But not in New York on the nights of 27 and 28 June 1969. What began as a routine police raid on a gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, turned into sporadic street battles. In the aftermath of this history-making q\*\*\*\* resistance, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed in New York and similar groups sprang up across the US and the world. The modern LGBT rights movement was born.

There had been earlier homosexual law reform and welfare organisations in the US, Britain and the Netherlands. But these were small, discreet lobby groups. Their members were brave trailblazers but very defensive and mostly closeted.

The global GLF movement was radically different. It was a watershed in q\*\*\*\* consciousness - the moment LGBT people discarded victimhood and stopped -apologising. Instead of pleas for tolerance, the demand was unconditional acceptance. Thousands came out. This had never happened before.

I joined London GLF, aged 19. Our slogan: Gay is Good. These three simple words were revolutionary. Until then, nearly everyone - including many LGBTs - believed that gay was bad, mad and sad. Whereas mainstream society saw homosexuality as a problem, we said the problem was homophobia. Straight supremacy was, to us, the equivalent of white supremacy.

Our vision was a new sexual democracy, without homophobia and misogyny. Erotic shame and guilt would be banished, together with socially enforced monogamy and male and female gender roles. There would be sexual freedom and human rights for everyone - q\*\*\*\* and straight. Our message was "innovate, don't assimilate".

GLF never called for equality. The demand was liberation. We wanted to change society, not conform to it. Equal rights within a flawed, unjust system struck us as idiotic. It would mean parity on straight terms, within a pre-existing framework of institutions and laws devised by and for the heterosexual majority. Equality within their system would involve conformity to their -values and rules - a formula for gay submission and incorporation, not liberation.

We argued then, and I still argue now, that accepting mere equality involves the abandonment of any critical perspective on straight culture. In place of a healthy scepticism, it substitutes naive acquiescence with the hetero mainstream. Discernment is surrendered in favour of compliance. While heterosexuality has its good points, it also has its downsides, like the machismo of many hetero men, which is linked to gang culture and violence against women.

In the 40 years since Stonewall and GLF, there has been a massive retreat from that radical vision. Most LGBT -people no longer question the values, laws and institutions of society. They are content to settle for equal rights within the status quo. On the age of consent, the LGBT movement accepted equality at 16, ignoring the criminalisation of younger gay and straight people. Don't the under-16s have sexual human rights too? Equality has not helped them. All they got was equal injustice.

Whereas GLF saw marriage and the family as a patriarchal prison for women, gay people and children, today the LGBT movement uncritically champions same-sex marriage and families. It has embraced traditional hetero-sexual aspirations lock stock and barrel. How ironic. While straight couples are deserting marriage, same-sexers are rushing to embrace it: witness the current legal fight in California for the right to marry. Are queers the new conservatives, the 21st-century suburbanites?

Don't get me wrong. Despite my critique of marriage and my advocacy of a more democratic, flexible model of relationship recognition and rights, I oppose the ban on same-sex marriage. It is homophobic discrimination. Sadly, most of the LGBT movement in Britain is now too feeble to demand marriage equality. It meekly accepts civil partnerships instead of civil marriage. This is not equality. Separate laws are not equal laws. There would be riots if the government banned black people from getting married and offered them civil partnerships instead. It would be denounced as apartheid. Well, that's what civil partnerships are: sexual apartheid. Same-sex couples are banned from civil marriage (homophobia) and opposite sex couples are banned from civil partnerships (heterophobia). Two wrongs don't make a right.

The LGBT community's retreat from radicalism signifies a huge loss of confidence and optimism. It has succumbed to the politics of conformism, respectability and moderation. What a shame. GLF dared to imagine what society could be, rather than accepting society as it is - and so should we.

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## THE COMING SEXUAL REVOLUTION

By Walter L. Williams

Peter Tachell's essay "Our Lost Gay Radicalism" is correct to point out that today's efforts to gain legal marriage, military service, and other efforts for equality are different than the 1960s calls for liberation. However, he does not place those calls for liberation in the context of larger

historical changes. I would argue that those calls for liberation were just the first small rebellion against the basic idea that sex is sinful. That idea did not exist in most of human history. In the vast majority of our history as a species, going back to our first emergence as *Homo sapiens* about 200,000 years ago, human beings interacted sexually with a rather wide range of individuals. People survived primarily as members of a band, and sexual partnerships were loose and easily changeable. Sexual interaction with a number of individuals, within the band and outside it, was the norm for people of all ages.

The first religion of early humans was animism, which was concerned mostly with healing of the body and the mind, and spectacular entertainment through ceremony. The shamans were the religious leaders, medical doctors, mental health specialists, theatrical performers, and teachers of their small societies. Because people who had children were kept busy in finding food for their offspring, the shamans tended to be people without children. Many of them were transgender or homosexual. They held highly respected and even venerated roles [see my book *THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH: SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE* for an example of one area of the world that had typical animistic religion. My most recent book (with Toby Johnson) *TWO SPIRITS: A STORY OF LIFE WITH THE NAVAJO* looks specifically at one culture with these attitudes]. In a context where sex was seen as a gift from the spirit world, to be enjoyed freely and widely, the sexual differences of the shamans were not looked down upon but were on the contrary seen as exceptional and wonderful.

It was only with the agricultural revolution, beginning about ten thousand years ago, that we start seeing the emergence of strict rules on sex. Agriculturalists started looking down on nomadic hunter-gatherer band-level peoples, whom they characterized as “primitives” and “savages.” Agriculturalists saw themselves as sexually-restricted “civilized,” as opposed to “savages” who were sexually free. These rules on sex were not something that happened by accident. Agricultural societies only work well where the mass of people are compelled to labor quite hard, as peasants or slaves, to support the elite class. Strict rules, including sexual rules, were part of the larger effort of military elites to rule and control large populations. Elites soon realized that an effective means to intimidate people and keep them in line was through religion. A new priestly class emerged, typically preaching that people should sublimate themselves to God’s rules, and to God’s rulers on earth. Because sexual desire is so strong in humans, as in our mammal relatives, god-given rules on sex were a guaranteed way to make people feel guilty and to lead them to come to the church for forgiveness. Sex became the basis for the priests’ control over the masses of people. By teaching that sex is sinful, and that it should be limited according to the sex of the partner, as well as by age, race, class, and other arbitrary rules, religious leaders set themselves up as major authorities who must be obeyed. Military elites kept power by physical force, and they turned to the religious authorities to keep people in line by fear of damnation after death. Sexual rules, like other rules, kept people in line.

Such rules were, in general, beneficial for forced-labor agricultural societies. However, within the last two centuries there has been the second major change in human history. If the first great change was the agricultural revolution, the second great change was the industrial

revolution. This change very gradually led to challenges to the powers of the military and religious elites. The very dawn of the industrial revolution was greeted by the American Revolution and the French Revolution, when people started rebelling against kings and priests. This process continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a series of challenges to sexual rules started emerging. People challenged the religious idea that “the only purpose of sex is reproduction,” and that anything other than that was unnatural and sinful. This challenge happened first with the issue of masturbation, which was a major means for the church to control people because practically everyone did it. The next challenge was on the legalization of birth control. Restrictions on marriage by race were followed by restrictions on marriage by sex. But, because more people were remaining outside of marriage, loosening attitudes toward non-marital sex became evident. 1960s gay liberation must be understood within that context.

However, now human history is facing a new revolution. Our era is marked by a third major change that follows the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. This new communications revolution is based on computers and the internet. This revolution is so new that it is impossible to predict just how it will affect human history. But we can already see its huge impact on sex, as people meet others online and sexual ideas travel rapidly across the globe. Children who have access to the internet cannot hold the belief, which was common only a generation ago, that they are “the only one to hold such feelings.” Now, any computer-literate person who wonders about their own inclinations merely types in a Google search to locate others across the globe who share those views. It is more difficult for political and religious elites to maintain control when counter arguments can easily be read on the internet.

Right now computers are still quite primitive, but as new forms of voice control and holographic visual images are invented, what will be the impact on sex? Will many people abandon in-person sexual interaction altogether, in favor of online cybersex? Some are already doing that, even with the current low quality of image. If sexual interaction becomes more internet-based, how will people get their emotional needs met? Will online friends replace in-person interactions? Just as the invention of the telephone led to more people living alone (before the telephone, it would be too lonely for most people to live alone), the invention of visual interaction will revolutionize society in ways that we cannot even begin to predict.

I remember how liberating and fundamentally transformed my life became when I became sexually active at age twelve. My introduction to sex was due to my nine year old friend who lived across the street from my house. But after I realized how much I enjoyed sex, my main sexual activity was based on the accidental meeting of a kindly adult man who lived in my neighborhood. I do not feel that I was exploited in any way, but on the contrary he became an important mentor who helped in my mental, psychological and sexual development. For a teenager of the future, whose ability to search for sexual partners is not limited to one residential neighborhood and who can conduct online searches looking for specific traits, what will be the result?

Today, government agents are conducting undercover “stings” of people looking for sex on the internet, which are precisely parallel to the activities of plain-clothes policemen in “vice

squad” activities fifty years ago. Every website that has sexual content is required by law to say the website is for “Eighteen or above only.” Public libraries prevent people below 18 from using computers to contact websites that contain sexually explicit information. How long before such restrictions will be considered to be an unjust infringement on human liberty? Obviously, people need to be protected from online predators who mean to do harm to people, but it is physical harm and not sex per se which should be the focus of law enforcement. For a teenager who strongly wishes to make sexual contact with someone else, why should government take on the role of preventing this willing activity? The only justification is the old agricultural-era idea that sex is sinful. If someone is having cybersex, there certainly is no chance of contacting a sexual disease, or of pregnancy, so why are young people being legally restricted from such websites? The reality is that young people develop strong sexual desires from puberty onward (or, in the case of some, even before puberty). Medical studies show the long-term health benefits of regular ejaculation for adolescents. If sex is not considered a sin, and that old agricultural era holdover is abandoned, what is the justification for preventing young people from interacting sexually on the internet?

Young people are required to be sixteen years old before they can get a driver license, but they are not legally prevented from playing computer games that involve driving a car. They are not even restricted from playing computer games that involve shooting and killing other people in orgies of massive violence, which would be extremely illegal if done in person. However, they are totally prevented from even logging on to a website where people are looking for sexual stimulation. It is only a matter of time before such infringements on the rights of youth are going to be consigned to the dustbin of history, along with plain-clothes vice squads which used to arrest and imprison people on the basis of consensual activity. Countless people’s lives have been made miserable and in ruins because they were only following very basic desires that are part of our human nature. It is unnatural and perverted to try to deny the reality that human beings are sexual.

Thus, sexual liberation is not just a matter of the 1960s versus today, but of clashing values from agricultural societies versus the emergence of the new world of the internet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With such a rapid rate of technological change going on in areas like holographic imagery, within the next several years we will be in a whole new world of visual interaction. The coming sexual revolution, based on increasingly sophisticated computers and the internet, is going to make the 1960s look like a Sunday School picnic. Get ready.