

## REDUCING HETEROSEXISM IN CHINA

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As a result of my lectures at Beijing University and Shanghai Medical University, and after speaking with a number of gay and lesbian activists in Beijing and Shanghai during my trip to China in November 2001, I have come up with some suggestions for effective strategies to reduce heterosexism in China. I was tremendously impressed with the amount of change now going on in China, and feel that China has the potential to become an international leader in the area of sexual freedom. In fact, I predict that within the next two decades there will be greater sexual freedom in China than in the United States. I come to this perhaps somewhat shocking conclusion due to several factors.

First, public opinion in China is not inhibited by domineering religious ideologies like Christianity or Islam, which have limited public acceptance of same-sex eroticism in the United States, in Latin America, and in Arab nations. Religion has been a major factor in preventing attitude change. When people do not have their ideas constrained by ancient sacred texts they are often more open to reconsidering their attitudes. The arguments that I heard in China against acceptance of homosexuality were

based on rational thoughts, and when I made a rational counter-argument based on logic I found that many people responded by rethinking their prejudices. It is hard to get people to reconsider when they form their opinions based on quotations from the Bible or the Koran.

Second, China has had great success in drastically changing public attitudes during recent decades. For example, since the establishment of the People's Republic entrenched sexist attitudes toward women have drastically declined, to the point where women in China today experience more gender equality than is true in most other nations. If China, which was one of the most sexist cultures in the world before 1949, can undergo so much dramatic change in only fifty years, then prospects for future change in heterosexist attitudes are also realizable. It is important to keep the long view in mind, and not be discouraged by temporary resistance and setbacks.

Third, China is not burdened by having numerous laws that criminalize sexual behavior. Getting police to stop arresting gay people in the accusation that they are "hooligans," and persuading the Chinese Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, are both great victories that will have a huge impact on future generations of homosexuals and bisexuals. As I understand it from conversations with local people, there are now no laws in China that

criminalize homosexual behavior. The two laws that still criminalize sexual behavior are an “age of consent” law that prohibits sexual activity for anyone below age 17, and a law against prostitution. While these laws are not specific to same-sex relationships, they do provide a legal basis for continued prosecution of gay people. They are, at base, a violation of the principle that individuals should be able to conduct their own private consensual sexual behavior without the intrusion of government.

The world is not yet at the place where the freedom to love is recognized as a basic and important human right, but it is obvious that the governments that busy themselves in trying to regulate the private consensual sexual behavior of their citizens are consistently the worse governments. Such governments, from Egypt to Romania to Zambia, violate the rights of their people in other respects as well.

I doubt that there will be much opportunity in China to repeal either the age of consent or the prostitution laws anytime soon. However, I will suggest a new strategy of law enforcement to allow for more sexual freedom even if these laws continue to be part of the criminal code [see “Need to Encourage Non-Reproductive Sexuality in China” below].

Fourth, the mood that I saw among people everywhere in Beijing and Shanghai is a realization that China’s movement into the global economy, as

represented by membership in the World Trade Organization, will bring about great change in Chinese lifestyles. People do not seem to fear this greater future involvement in the wider world, but welcome it. This welcoming attitude comes from realization that change is necessary for China's future economic progress. For example, an article "Academics Seek to Match West," in the SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST on November 16, 2001, page 10, reported on a meeting of the leaders of China's top universities. The academics stressed that their "new emphasis is on fostering creativity and innovation.... and other means of allowing students to reach their full potential.... Education reformers who attended the seminar agreed that the past practice of teaching students that non-conformity ran against the basic tenets of Confucianism and communism should be abandoned.... China has to improve its education methods to prevent a brain drain."

Chinese people realize that a more open attitude toward sexuality is now part of emerging global values, and they do not seem shocked that a greater openness in society will bring about more sexual freedom among Chinese people in the future. If acceptance of homosexuality and bisexuality can be shown to be good for future economic progress, then both the government and public opinion will be more accepting.

The strongest mood in China today seems to be in favor of things that will benefit the future economy of the nation. Accordingly, an effective strategy will be to show government officials, business managers, and the mass public how an acceptance of sexual variance will be a benefit to economic growth. If the government and business leaders can be persuaded that acceptance of same-sex love will produce more profitable businesses, then resistance to homosexuality will decline. You should try to come up with other realistic arguments to make this case, but here are some arguments that might be utilized:

1. Research has shown that if those who prefer a same-sex partner can do so without social censure, they will be happier and more productive workers. Those who have to spend their life hiding, and worrying about someone else finding out that they are homosexual or bisexual, will be less effective in their job than those who can be open in their life. It is for this reason that many leading corporations are instituting policies to protect their employees from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Profit-oriented companies realize that they do not want to lose good workers due to the prejudices of other workers. Everyone should be judged on the basis of the job they do, not on the basis of their private life outside of the work environment.

2. As international business becomes more prominent in China, there will be more business people coming from abroad who are openly gay or lesbian. Those Chinese business people who are prejudiced against homosexuals will not be as effective in dealing with such foreigners. Therefore, it is to China's economic advantage to have business people who are not heterosexual.

3. Childless gay people from the United States and Europe have more disposable income and tend to travel a lot more than heterosexuals with children. If China has a welcoming non-heterosexist attitude, more gay tourists will come and China's tourist industry will benefit. Since gay people are prominent in the media and in advertising industry, their good response to China will be influential in establishing an improved international reputation for China, resulting in other tourists coming to China. I have written a proposal for developing a tourist resort based on sexual freedom, that would be highly profitable if developed by China's tourist industry. I can send that proposal to you if you are interested.

The fifth reason why I feel positively about the potential for future change is because of China's role in leading the world in its efforts to reduce population growth. Traditional Chinese culture stressed that everyone

should get married and produce large numbers of children. But within the last two decades that cultural imperative has been revolutionized, at least in the cities, as most married Chinese people have only one child. While the “one child” policy was very controversial when it was enacted in the 1970s, the current consensus of public opinion seems to have concluded that this policy has been a wise decision. Most people seem to realize that having fewer children is a policy that will benefit China’s future progress.

Most other nations realize the need to reduce population GROWTH rates, but only China recognizes that an actual reduction in the number of people on the planet is necessary if humanity is to survive. Gay activists should work closely with China’s population control advocates, and with officials of the United Nations population programs, to offer homosexuality as one among several effective strategies to reduce population growth.

China’s emphasis on economic growth and population control offer the most important reasons for my high hopes for China’s future acceptance of sexual freedom. If Chinese have accepted having FEWER children in only two decades, prompted by people’s desires for improving their own and the nation’s economic progress, it is not a major leap to get people to accept that a certain proportion of people may wish to have NO children. Following that, it will not be long before it will be socially acceptable for

sex to be considered primarily as a means of personal enjoyment, irrespective of reproduction. Once this change in attitude filters through society, people will come to recognize that there is no logical reason why a person cannot enjoy sex with a person of the same sex as well as a person of the other sex.

The strategy that I suggest is not based on the minority rights protest movement approach that was used in the United States. While that strategy might have accomplished a lot in the context of American society's respect for individual liberty, it also provoked a powerful backlash. If such an approach were done in China today, it would provoke an even more powerful backlash from the government. Instead of protesting against the government, I suggest a quieter strategy that focuses on lobbying government officials, the media, and the families of homosexuals themselves, to produce the most effective change. The most effective approach will be to convince people that an acceptance of same-sex love can be a positive benefit to the future progress of China. Homosexuality should be presented not as an alien threat, but as a positive benefit for the future.



## ENCOURAGING HOMOSEXUALITY TO REDUCE OVERPOPULATION

A major motivation for changing attitudes is to show that acceptance of homosexuality will bring advantages to society in the future. It is important to stress to economists and business leaders that China will advance economically if it continues to reduce its overpopulation. Business leaders, population control specialists, and government officials should all be lobbied to support equal rights for homosexuals, on the basis that this will make the government's population control programs more effective and thus help the economy. That is, government policy should not just tolerate, but actively encourage, those who prefer to pair up with a same sex partner to do so, as a benefit for the future of China. No one should be forced to become homosexual if they do not want to, but same-sex couples should be awarded preferences in gaining inexpensive housing, old age pensions, and other benefits, in exchange for their promise not to reproduce. Government should also provide police protection for same-sex couples who are discriminated against by bigoted individuals. This would also help to change the attitude of law enforcement officials, since police should be trained that their job is to protect non-reproductive sexual minorities as a benefit for the nation.

To further reduce overpopulation, China's government should especially encourage homeless children, who are often warehoused in crowded government orphanages, not to reproduce.

## ENCOURAGE LESBIANISM AMONG ABANDONED GIRLS

China now has a major problem in caring for homeless children. Most of such children are girls who were abandoned by their parents due to parental preference for a son. When these girls grow up, they will most likely become heterosexual and reproduce. But because they do not have elder parents who wish to have grandchildren, they might be more amenable to not reproducing if given alternatives. The alternative I suggest is based on an example from China's history: two centuries ago, in Guangzhou Province. A "Marriage Resistance Movement" arose among young women who did not wish to marry. Instead of pairing up with a man, they typically joined an all-female silk weaving collective, and they lived their entire life as part of this commune. These women worked as silk weavers until their old age, after which the commune supported them. Most of these young women paired off with another female weaver, and they lived together as a couple in the all-female commune. Some of these female couples were

likely non-sexual, but many of them were sexual. Their relationships were respected, and they were not pressured to get pregnant and reproduce.

This historical example could be a model for lesbian feminists today, who with the help of government or private companies, could establish profitable businesses to be run by all-female workers who live together as a commune. Young girls who have been abandoned by their parents, or girls who became homeless for other reasons, could be taken in and raised by these communes. As they grew up they could be encouraged to remain living in the commune as adults. If such female communes could be located in isolated rural areas, the girls could be kept away from males, and thus they would not likely get pregnant. The girls and women would live and work in the commune, then be taken care of in their old age by the next generation of younger female workers in the commune. With the encouragement of government, a significant percentage of girls could be raised in such self-supporting feminist communes, and they would be encouraged to pair up with another woman and to remain non-reproductive. No one should be forced to engage in homosexual behavior if they do not wish to do so, but for girls raised in an all-female setting many would likely do so if such lesbian relationships are not stigmatized. They would be free to leave the commune as adults, but with a guaranteed job as part of the

commune many would remain in the home where they grew up. This idea would do more than any other single government program to cut down on rates of female pregnancy and population growth, while at the same time saving the government money in not having to operate orphanages for homeless girls.

#### ENCOURAGE MALE HOMOSEXUALS TO ADOPT HOMELESS BOYS

Most homeless children are girls, but the boys who are abandoned by their parents often tend to be disabled. There is no strong tradition in China for adoption, and so most abandoned children remain in government orphanages or become homeless street children. Government policy should encourage childless male homosexual couples or singles to adopt an abandoned boy to have a son of their own. This would save the government money, by cutting down on the need for expensive government orphanages. Homosexuals would gain social respect by caring for these abandoned children, who otherwise would likely end up as criminals on the street and cause so many problems as is so commonly the case in Latin America and other nations.

As discussed in my book *THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH: SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE* (Beacon Press, 1986

and 1992), many Native American tribes considered childless homosexuals to be the logical adoptive parents for homeless children. Homosexuals were integrated into the family structure by becoming adoptive parents, and when they were elderly their adoptive children took care of them in their old age. Such traditions of adopting homeless children should be encouraged among homosexuals in China. Are there any restrictions now, for single persons to adopt homeless kids in government orphanages? If not, gay activists should encourage homosexuals to adopt such abandoned kids.

## NEED TO ENCOURAGE NON-REPRODUCTIVE EROTIC MASSAGE IN CHINA

Even with government encouragement, however, homosexuals will still remain a minority of the population. Research in cultures that do not stigmatize homosexuality shows that the majority of people still wish to interact sexually with the other sex. Therefore, the effort to control overpopulation requires a larger focus than just homosexuality. The most important need is to de-stigmatize non-reproductive erotic behaviors. Encouraging same-sex behavior certainly will help, but there are other ways that even male-female couples can avoid pregnancy. Abstinence has been held up as the only choice for young people in China, but while abstinence is

certainly effective for some, it is not realistic to expect that everyone will remain abstinent. As a consequence of the failure of the government's abstinence programs, there is a thriving prostitution industry in China today. Any government official who does not recognize this elemental fact of life is not dealing with reality.

Any government campaign against prostitution, no matter how many resources are committed to it, will be doomed to failure. This is for the simple reason that large numbers of people (mostly men) have strong sexual desires that will lead them to engage in erotic pleasure—even if they have to pay for it. Anti-prostitution drives in the United States have been a miserable failure, even as they cost much money and take up many resources of the police. To prevent this waste of money to the government, more realistic approaches like that followed by the government of Turkey have decriminalized prostitution so that government inspectors can better regulate prostitution.

There are four concerns that underlay anti-prostitution laws: moral issues, pregnancy, the spread of sexual diseases, and mistreatment of the prostitutes. I would like to suggest a new approach to law enforcement that can deal with these four issues. In the past, a major reason why prostitution was condemned as immoral had to do with the dangers of pregnancy outside

of marriage, and the resulting problems in raising fatherless children in a patriarchal society. Prostitution also contributed to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STD)

My idea that I would propose for China is that, rather than trying to repeal the prostitution law (which may be politically impossible), this law should be reinterpreted to apply only to penile-vaginal or penile-anal sexual intercourse. Other forms of erotic interaction between two people, such as mutual masturbation, intercrural “between the legs” body rubbing, or oral-genital contact, should not be classified as “sex” and therefore not subject to prostitution law enforcement. This decriminalization would thereby encourage prostitutes to restrict their business to behaviors that do not lead to pregnancy and will help to inhibit the spread of HIV disease and other STD. Legally, under this reinterpretation of the law the person who avoided intercourse would be considered not as a prostitute. Instead, that person who charged would be considered as a masseur who specializes in erotic massage. Massaging the genitals would be considered no differently from masseurs who massage other parts of the body. Because such erotic massage is no longer considered as prostitution, masseurs who are mistreated would have no reluctance to ask the police for help. Because they have done nothing illegal (as long as they did not engage in

intercourse), they are not selling “sex” and therefore are not breaking the law. Rather than being forced to walk the streets in search of customers, they could operate in massage parlors and out of their homes.

Masseurs should be required to get a license from the government, and in order to get a license they must be trained by AIDS educators in ways to do erotic massage that will not likely contribute to the spread of HIV and other STD. Manual masturbation is the safest way, along with non-insertive body rubbing. When I did research in Indonesia on the sexual practices of Javanese, I found that a popular form of erotic interaction was for the male to lie down on top of his partner (either female or male) and insert his penis between the legs of his partner. The person on the bottom crossed their legs at the ankle, thus producing tighter pressure on the penis. The man on top then thrust his penis in and out between the legs until ejaculation, without any insertion into the vagina or anus of the other person. This erotic practice, which I call “outercourse,” is not likely to transmit HIV or other STD.

Unless the masseur has a cut in the mouth or bleeding gums, even oral-genital contact is not likely to lead to HIV transmission. It is certainly much safer than intercourse. Masseurs should be trained to do behaviors that will minimize their likelihood of catching, and spreading, other STD.



They can be taught to clean the penis and inspect it, and to avoid oral contact (or use a condom) if there is any pus or sore, and to encourage the person to get tested or medical treatment if there is any suspicion of STD. To inhibit the spread of HIV, a mandatory oral HIV test (with the results immediately available) might even be required before getting a massage. This would result in widespread identification of HIV positive people, to encourage them to get medical treatment and to avoid intercourse so they would not infect others.

China needs to move quickly to stop the spread of HIV before it gets worse. If China makes the same mistakes that were done in the United States and many African nations, by denying there is a problem, HIV will spread widely. Encouraging erotic massage rather than intercourse is a constructive way to address China's current realities. Today, in China, it is very easy to find a prostitute in China's flourishing sex trade. So, rather than trying to deny this reality, it would be much more productive for the government to accept reality and try to get illegal prostitutes to become legal masseurs instead.

By encouraging massage, people can gain other benefits as well. Massage is shown to be effective in reducing stress and helping to deal with pain and body soreness. It can help to meet people's needs for intimacy and

enjoyment, beyond its sexual aspects. Teenagers should be trained in high school to do massage, including both non-erotic and erotic forms of massage. Since erotic massage is not legally defined as “sex,” then such behaviors engaged in by those under the age of seventeen would not be illegal. It can be argued that the “age of consent” law should continue to be enforced for penile-vaginal and penile-anal intercourse, on the basis that young people should not be subjected to the risk of pregnancy or sexual diseases. And laws against body assault should continue to be enforced for a person of any age, but especially the young, to prevent rape and other forms of non-consensual sexual assault. The emphasis should be to get young people to avoid sexual intercourse, and instead to engage in non-insertive erotic “outercourse.”

This encouragement will have additional benefits as well.

Psychological research has shown that people tend to “imprint” their favored sexual practices. That is, whatever sexual behavior was experienced as their first pleasurable erotic experience, is the type of behavior that the person will tend to favor throughout their life. If a young person’s first pleasurable erotic experience was sexual intercourse, that is what they will prefer to do as their usual sexual practice. But if their first pleasurable sexual experience was mutual masturbation, or body rubbing, or oral sex, that is what they will

tend to find most pleasurable. Both because of the need to avoid pregnancy and to inhibit AIDS and other STD, it is to society's benefit to encourage people to begin their sexual life with these "outercourse" experiences. The extent to which this trend can be encouraged, is to China's future benefit. Therefore, police and the courts should not prosecute young people who engage in outercourse erotic behaviors below the age of 17.

Convincing government officials to stop prosecuting people for erotic behaviors below age 17 will be difficult, but not impossible. When I was in Beijing in November, I read a newspaper article about an exhibition for teenagers about puberty, contraception and STD prevention, that was held in Beijing's Zhongshan Park. Jointly sponsored by the state and the municipal family planning department, the article quoted Yuan Tiexiang, deputy director of the Beijing Family Planning Commission's educational center, who said that adolescents need sex education. Perhaps an official like this person could be lobbied to educate teenagers about "outercourse." Activists should attempt to get jobs working in government agencies that deal with these issues.

Another way to popularize these "outercourse" erotic behaviors is through the People's Liberation Army. The Army should encourage its recruits to remain disease free, and not to cause pregnancy. At the present

time, the only way that a person in the Army can openly engage in sex is through marriage. But the Army loses skilled personnel if the recruit wishes to marry and live with their spouse in a regular job. Armed forces personnel are required to move around, often upon little notice. Having a spouse interferes with the mission of the military. The Army is forced either to lose the recruit, or to pay for the additional costs of supporting the soldier and his spouse (and child as well).

It would save much money for the People's Liberation Army if the Army would test all its recruits and make sure they have no HIV or other STD, then train them in the art of massage. The male recruits could be encouraged to give massages to each other, and this might include erotic massage if they desired. Again, no one should be forced to give massages to someone they do not wish to do it with. But because such erotic forms of massage are not defined as "sex," this mutually-supportive behavior should be encouraged as a morale builder for the Army. If activists can convince Army officials of the benefit of this plan, then many young men can be trained to do non-reproductive and non-disease forms of erotic release that they will carry with them throughout their life. This will also help the government's population control programs to be more effective.

Likewise, for female recruits in the People's Liberation Army, it would be good to encourage young women to go into all-female units (like the Women's Army Corps in the United States Army during World War II, which was a virtual paradise for lesbians). There, they could be encouraged to do erotic massage with other female recruits. If such young women remained in the Army until age 45 (after they had passed menopause), then they would not become pregnant. This is especially important for reducing population growth in rural areas, since many of the Army recruits come from rural areas. A command structure like the Army can drastically alter behavior, by offering different norms from the top down. Most recruits conform to the different requirements of Army life, even though these requirements may be very different from their rural upbringing. The Army is an ideal place to change China's sexual culture, for both male and female recruits, by encouraging non-reproductive erotic behaviors among members of the same sex. This does not require individuals to define themselves as "gay" or "lesbian," but only to be relaxed in engaging in erotic massages with their friends.

Another way to encourage the destigmatization of same-sex behavior within the army is to assign masseurs to each Army unit. Attractive gay men, and even transgendered persons, can be encouraged to volunteer to

serve as masseurs for the male units, and lesbians for the women's units. The masseurs should be trained in safe-sex non-insertive erotic massage. Each soldier could be offered a massage once or twice a week (unless they were being disciplined for bad behavior). The masseur could offer to masturbate the soldier as part of the massage. If the soldier is not interested, they should not be forced to do it, but it should be destigmatized. The masturbation, body rubbing, or oral contact would not be defined as "sex," but only as an optional part of a massage for the purpose of relaxation.

As with the teenagers who engage in these erotic behaviors, if they enjoy it they will likely imprint these non-reproductive safe-sex behaviors into their personal life for their future, even after they leave the Army. Those recruits who wish to marry will likely leave the Army after a few years, but those who can adapt to unmarried life should be encouraged to make the Army their career. This will save the Army much money if they do not have to support spouses and children of their soldiers. The childless soldiers would be totally committed to the Army, and able to be transferred at will without worry about disrupting the lives of their spouse and child.

Soldiers could more likely avoid marriage and parenting if they were provided an adequate pension after they retire from the Army. Parents often encourage their adult children to marry and have a child, so that they will

have someone to support them in their old age. However, if the Army provides a good pension, with medical care and a pleasant retirement center for aged veterans, then such a person does not need to reproduce a child. This program will also help to reduce population growth.

If such a program is enacted for the Army, it might also be adopted for other government employees. That is, in exchange for the promise not to reproduce, a government employee might be given a guaranteed pension, with medical care and housing in their old age. Since one of the main reasons that people want to have children is to have support in their old age, this will eliminate much of the economic incentive for people to reproduce.

Still other areas where government policy could encourage safe-sex intercourse has to do with prisoners. Prison guards should continue to prevent intercourse, and prisoners who have tested positive for HIV should be segregated to prevent further transmission to prisoners who are HIV-negative. But prison guards should not interfere when prisoners engage in other consensual erotic behaviors. Hopefully, prisoners who learn safe-sex intercourse and erotic massage techniques in adult and juvenile prisons will take these safer behaviors with them when they get out of prison and merge back into the general population.

This does not mean that every such person involved in same-sex erotic massage should be considered or labeled as “a homosexual,” but that those who are inclined toward the same sex can fit into this new honored and respected class of childless individuals. Therefore, the basic need is to encourage respect for ALL people who choose not to marry and reproduce.

Back in the 1950s, the early activists in ONE Institute in Los Angeles had a big debate about their future goals. All of them wanted to reduce prejudice against people who were involved in same-sex relationships, but they differed over the most effective strategies to accomplish this goal. The first faction said that gay people are a separate and distinct kind of person, and the best approach is to build a strong gay and lesbian community to stand up for the rights of this sexual minority. The second faction said that the focus should be on sexual freedom for everyone, and that any person should be respected in being able to choose their mate of any sex without discrimination. They opposed the development of a separate gay community, and favored integrating the acceptance of same-sex behaviors into the mainstream of society.

This debate at ONE was won by the first group, and ONE committed itself to building a strong gay and lesbian minority. They appealed for equal



rights on the same basis as the African-American civil rights movement. Both movements changed history, and resulted in much new acceptance for gays and lesbians and for black people. But in the process of making a claim for minority rights, they still remained a minority. This movement for minority rights provoked a vicious counterattack from the majority who saw these civil rights movements as a threat. Looking back on it, I think the worst effect of the gay rights movement was the impact in forcing many people to declare “I am not gay,” and setting themselves as part of the heterosexual majority. Otherwise, many such persons might have been open to a more accepting attitude that everyone deserves the right to choose their own mate according to their own desires. By forcing everyone to make a choice: “Am I homosexual/gay or am I heterosexual/straight?” the gay movement alienated many potentially bisexual people and many others who might have been supportive. Many reacted against a minority that seemed to be claiming “special rights” for their particular minority group, rather than attempting to overturn sexual repression for everyone.

Activists in China are now at the stage that the United States was in during the 1950s. The decisions you make now will affect many future generations. If you decide to follow the minority civil rights approach of the United States gay movement, you will certainly provoke much reaction from

China's government officials and from the general public. However, if you quietly approach the government and offer them a way to avoid another struggle in the public venue of human rights, it might be more effective in accomplishing the ultimate goal.

In other words, instead of trying to “get rights for gay people,” it might be more effective to work to destigmatize childlessness and non-reproductive erotic behaviors for everyone. If someone engages in oral-genital contact with another person, it is less important who the sex of that other person is, than the need to get the police to stop arresting ANYONE for oral-genital contact. The movement for change is thus conceptualized as the right of all people to have the freedom to love the person of their choice, without opposition from the government or employers or society in general.

## CONTROL OF SEXUAL DISEASES

Besides reducing overpopulation, as suggested above, there is a need to change sexual behavior for health reasons. Up to now, penile-vaginal intercourse has been the only socially acceptable method of sex, because it was done for reproduction. In imitation of that, male homosexuals did mostly penile-anal intercourse. Unfortunately, both of these forms of intercourse are the most dangerous in terms of transmission of sexual diseases, and especially AIDS. Other forms of erotic behaviors, including mutual masturbation, body rubbing and oral sex, are much safer than intercourse. All kinds of eroticism of a woman with another woman are much safer for her than intercourse with a man. For males, penile rubbing between the legs, mutual masturbation, and even oral sex, are much safer than intercourse. Given the seriousness of the AIDS epidemic, it is important for sex education to encourage other forms of eroticism besides intercourse. Condoms can be effective in preventing sexual diseases if worn throughout intercourse, but it is also important to educate young people about other kinds of erotic interaction that are less dangerous. Especially for sexually-active females, it is clear that sexual behavior solely with other females is the most effective means of avoiding sexual diseases and pregnancy.

For all of these reasons, to promote happiness of people, prevent social stigma and conflict, help to make the government's population control programs more effective, help to take care of homeless children, and to cut down on sexual diseases, a more accepting attitude toward same-sex love can help to improve China for the future.

The ideas discussed above are long-range proposals for change in the attitudes of government and society. But in the meantime, what can activists do to improve the lives of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons? Below are some specific suggestions that I think would be most valuable, based on my prior research and on conversations with people in China. I make these suggestions based on the theoretical positions that I explain in the Introduction and the Cross-Cultural chapter that I wrote in my book *OVERCOMING HETEROSEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA: STRATEGIES THAT WORK* (edited by James Sears and Walter Williams, Columbia University Press, 1997), and in my website *OVERCOMING HETEROSEXISM: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES* which you can find at the title page of the *INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN REVIEW* <http://www.usc.edu/gayreview>

See especially the essay at <http://www.jtsears.com/intout.htm>

on successfully coming out to relatives and friends.

You are already doing some of these things, but I include them in the list to show which projects have the most potential. An important distinction is to encourage all people to feel comfortable in interacting erotically with a friend of the same sex, rather than restricting the campaign to a minority that identifies as “homosexual,” “gay,” “tongshi,” or even “bisexual.” It is fine that some people accept those identities, but they should not engage in the kind of anti-bisexual prejudice often seen among gay-identified persons in the United States. What is important is to open up sexual freedom for everyone, no matter what their identity.

## STRENGTHEN WEB SITES FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS

As you already realize, the internet is the most valuable resource for publicizing information on the world wide web. Include in your web sites writings on the naturalness of same-sex feelings and behaviors. Translate major writings, and link to major web sites like the INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN REVIEW <http://www.usc.edu/gayreview> For those persons who do not have access to the internet, translate and print out short

summaries of the major reasons for self-acceptance. People have to accept that there is nothing wrong with themselves before they will be able to be open and public in their life.

## PROVIDE A HOTLINE FOR PERSONS WHO HAVE SEXUALITY QUESTIONS

Rather than a “Gay Hotline,” it would be more influential to have a “Sexuality Hotline” for all people. This does not require someone to attach a “gay” or “homosexual” label to themselves, before making a phone call. Just be sure that all telephone counselors are trained to be accepting of homosexual inclinations, and can refer callers to counselors who are openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. The hotline should have therapists to help those with same-sex attractions to be able to accept themselves without repression. It should have lawyers who can help homosexuals or bisexuals who are being threatened with blackmail. There should be contacts for jobs and housing, as well as people looking for roommates or partners/friends through social group meetings. Lastly, there should be available some accepting parents and relatives of gay people, and referral to a Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) chapter in major cities.

## ORGANIZE COMING OUT DISCUSSION GROUPS

Encourage people to accept that there is nothing wrong with their same-sex attractions. When they are ready, and are able, encourage them to quietly come out to their families, or at least to express pro-sexual liberation ideas to their relatives, friends and co-workers. Research has shown that this is the most effective strategy for long-range change of social attitudes. They do not have to place a “gay” or “homosexual” label on themselves, but they should be able to be open about their same-sex attractions, feelings, and relationships to their families, friends, and co-workers.

## ORGANIZE “PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS” (PFLAG) CHAPTERS IN MAJOR CITIES

Family pressure is the leading source of oppression for those with same-sex attractions. PFLAG deals directly with trying to change the attitudes of parents, other relatives, and friends, by having parents who are already accepting of their same-sex children to speak to them. It might be better to rename this organization something other than “Lesbians and Gays” to be more inclusive of bisexuals and others who do not wish to attach a label to themselves. For example: People for Erotic Liberation (PEL).

## ORGANIZE A LOBBYING GROUP OF ACTIVISTS FOR THE MASS MEDIA

Social attitudes are greatly shaped by the mass media, especially movies, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and popular books. Whenever there is a negative article in a newspaper or on a TV broadcast, call the editor or director and set up an appointment to discuss why this representation is offensive and inaccurate. Take two or three activists to meet with the editor or director, and discuss the issue calmly. Leave them something to read. One-time meetings often do not have much impact, so try to schedule repeat meetings to slowly move them along. Gently state why they are not doing their job if they do not accurately report the situation on sexual variance. Try to connect with the government officials who are responsible for setting standards on media, and convince them of the need to allow more open reporting on sexual minorities. Volunteer to work with them, to serve as consultants, and to help them do their job more effectively.