TRANSADVOCATE

A Look Back at the T in the 1979 “Gay March” on Washington

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Abstract

Official Souvenir Program of the 1979 National March on Washington, Page 40 It should be noted that the organizer of the 1st MOW was Ray Hill from Houston, Texas. Hill was a significant supporter of both trans inclusion and trans empowerment. Trans Leader from Houston, Phyllis Frye (center, holding American flag) Phyllis Frye, leading the [...]

Article

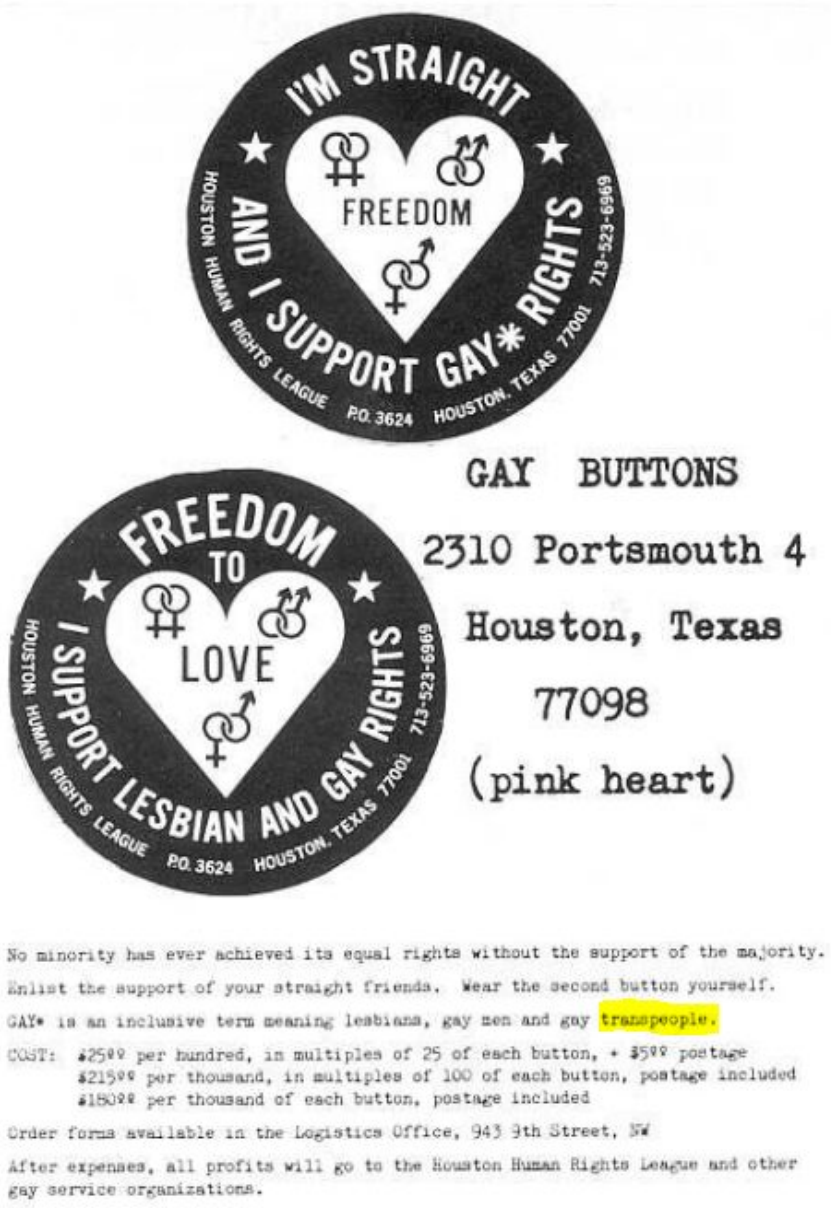

Figure 1. 121912_0456_LookBackatt1[1]

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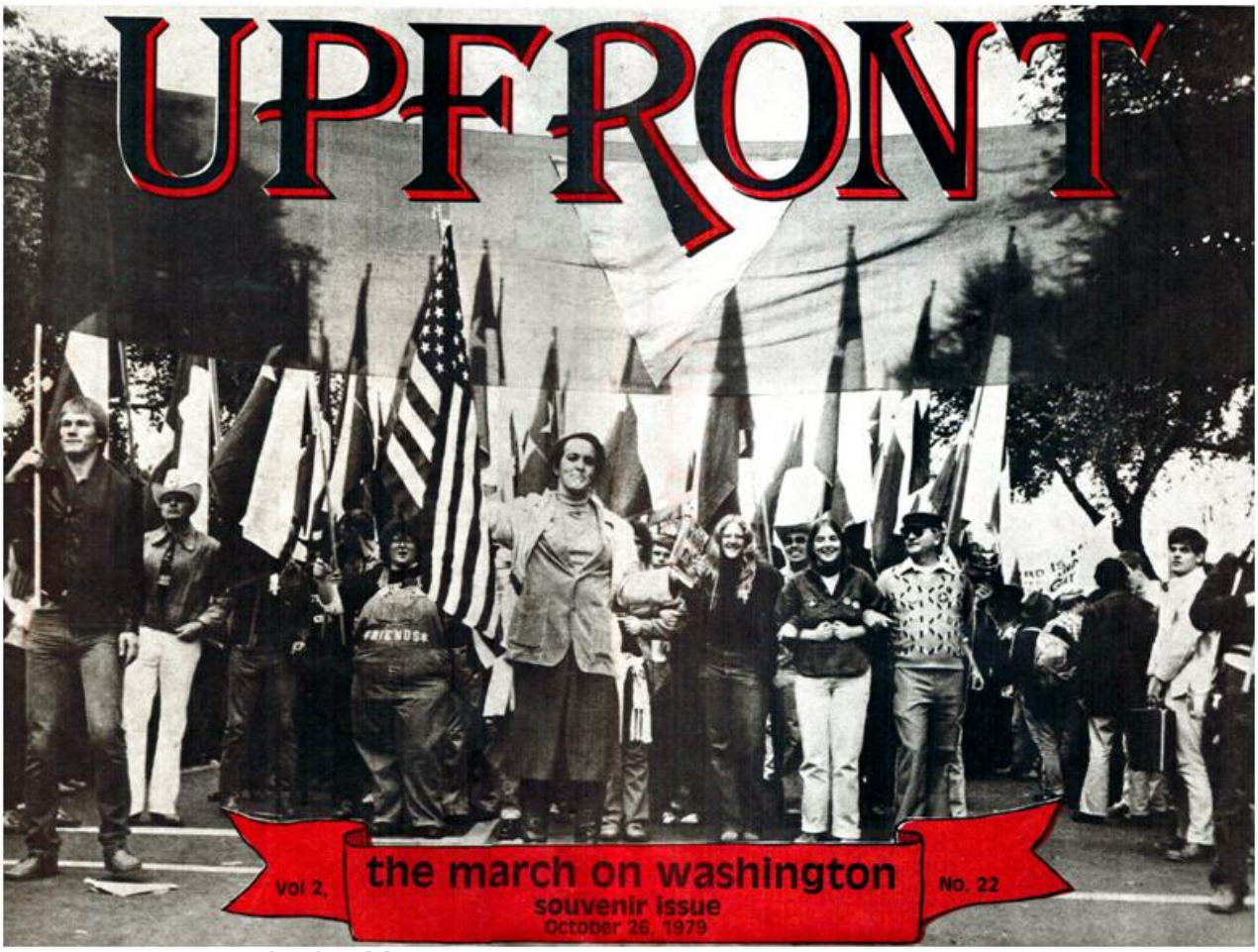
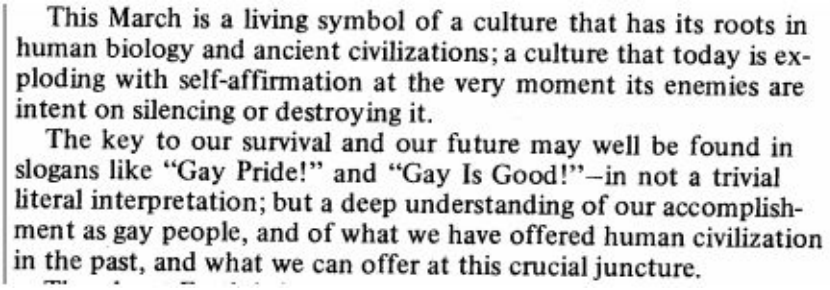


Figure 2. 121912_0456_LookBackatt2[1]

Trans Leader from Houston, Phyllis Frye (center, holding American flag)

Figure 3. 121912_0456_LookBackatt3[1]

Phyllis Frye, leading the Texas contingent



This March is a living symbol of a culture that has its roots in human biology and ancient civilizations; a culture that today is exploding with self-affirmation at the very moment its enemies are intent on silencing or destroying it.

The key to our survival and our future may well be found in slogans like “Gay Pride!” and “Gay Is Good!”—in not a trivial literal interpretation; but a deep understanding of our accomplishment as gay people, and of what we have offered human civilization in the past, and what we can offer at this crucial juncture.

Figure 4. 121912_0456_LookBackatt4[1]

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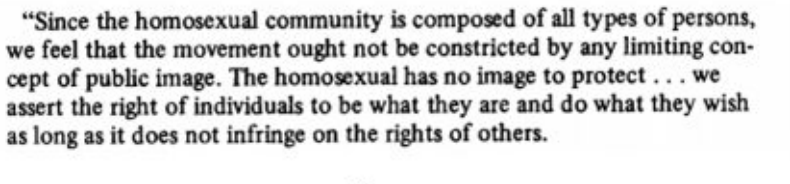
“Gay is Good”

This slogan came out of the 1968 North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO). This meeting was largely funded by transperson, Lee Brewster (a forgotten trans badass who also funded the Mattachine Society, founded the Queens Liberation Front, funded and coordinated the NY anti-GLBT legal challenges that overturned NY anti-gay laws, published most of the early national trans magazines and newspapers, and fought early anti-trans TERFs like Jean O’Leary who wanted to erase trans folk from the queer rights movement). The meeting was attended by Houston activist, Ray Hill (who planned the March with Harvey Milk... Hill was the lead organizer of the March on Washington) along with several other transpeople - including Transgender Foundation of America’s Vice President, Alexis Melvin.

In 1967, NACHO wrote:



“Since the homosexual community is composed of all types of persons, we feel that the movement ought not be constricted by any limiting concept of public image. The homosexual has no image to protect . . . we assert the right of individuals to be what they are and do what they wish as long as it does not infringe on the rights of others.

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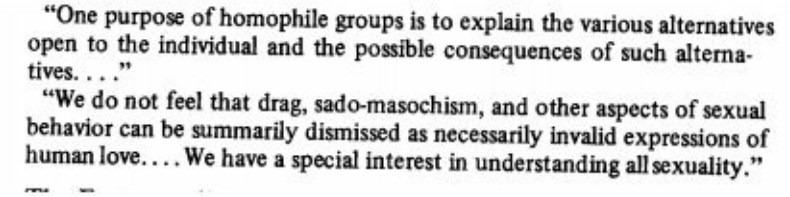
Figure 5. 121912_0456_LookBackatt5[1]



“One purpose of homophile groups is to explain the various alternatives open to the individual and the possible consequences of such alternatives. . . .”

“We do not feel that drag, sado-masochism, and other aspects of sexual behavior can be summarily dismissed as necessarily invalid expressions of human love. . . . We have a special interest in understanding all sexuality.”

Figure 6. 121912_0456_LookBackatt6[1]

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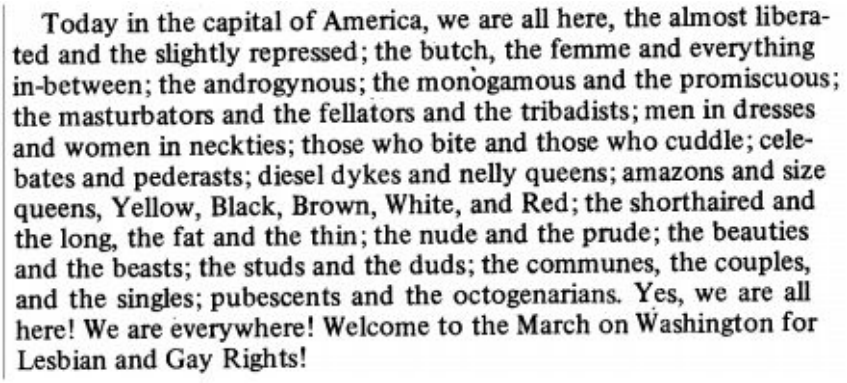

Today in the capital of America, we are all here, the almost liberated and the slightly repressed; the butch, the femme and everything in-between; the androgynous; the monogamous and the promiscuous; the masturbators and the fellators and the tribadists; men in dresses and women in neckties; those who bite and those who cuddle; celebates and pederasts; diesel dykes and nelly queens; amazons and size queens, Yellow, Black, Brown, White, and Red; the shorthaired and the long, the fat and the thin; the nude and the prude; the beauties and the beasts; the studs and the duds; the communes, the couples, and the singles; pubescents and the octogenarians. Yes, we are all here! We are everywhere! Welcome to the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights!

Figure 7. 121912_0456_LookBackatt7[1]

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