

cient reaction to the emancipated sixties and seventies.

*See also* Celibacy.

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### ASIAN-AMERICANS, GAY AND LESBIAN

Asian Americans who are gay or lesbian live within the same social constraints as their heterosexual counterparts, facing many of the prejudices and cultural exclusions of modern North America. Among identifiable ethnic peoples, Asians, even those of the third, fourth, or fifth generation, are most likely to be considered foreign, illegal aliens, unable to speak English and so forth. This perpetual state of being foreign—not being part of the American cultural milieu—stems from multiple historical roots.

An initial wave of immigration from China and Japan in the late nineteenth century to meet labor demands in the railroad industry was followed by the Chinese Exclusion Acts which explicitly aimed at stopping immigration from Asian countries. These obstacles to Asian immigration were not eased until the 1960s, when a new wave of immigrants from Asian countries, mostly middle-class and professional people, was allowed into the United States. Continuity and growth of viable Asian ethnic communities were also hampered during World War II by the mass internment of Japanese Americans (and Japanese Canadians), resulting in massive dislocation and dispersion of Japanese American families and communities who had settled in the Western states.

*Gay Men and Lesbians.* In the gay community, Asian gay men and lesbians experience the same alienation, being perceived as "The Other": the foreign, the exotic, the non-American. The preoccupation of modern gay male culture with the sexual images and physical types of the fifties and sixties—the short-haired blue-eyed all-American boy who symbolized the United States in its empire-building, expansionist phase—has also resulted in the exclusion of Asian men from the sexual and romantic interchange of modern gay male life in the United States. Among both gay men and lesbians, popular stereotypes of Asians as being subservient, passive, and eager to please inform many of their relationships with their non-Asian counterparts.

Within their ethnic communities many Asian gay men and lesbians keep their homosexuality hidden from families and friends. While Asian traditionalists may tolerate instances of homosexuality if discreet and surreptitious, an open avowal of gayness is often condemned as a Western corruption. Asian gay people with more traditional families also have to contend with intense social and cultural pressures to marry, to reproduce the family line, not to disgrace the family name and so on. For those who have immigrated more recently there are other pressures: immigration laws that exclude homosexuals and that threaten HIV testing and dependence for cultural support on ethnic communities which are largely homophobic.

*Organizing.* To provide support and to air and resolve many of their common problems, Asian gay men and lesbians have organized in many of the largest cities of the United States. Through their activism, many of the groups also challenge the exclusive identification of American gay culture and gay communities with Caucasian men.

A major impetus to organizing began with the first National Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference (October 12–15, 1979) held in conjunction with the

First National Lesbian and Gay March on Washington. The handful of Asian lesbians and gay men who met at the conference, many for the first time, lobbied hard to have an Asian gay person (Michiyo Cornell) speak at the March rally. Tana Loy, an Asian lesbian from New York City, also addressed the Third World Conference. The energy and support generated as a result of this first meeting led many to see the value of support and organizing in their local areas. The Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians (BAGMAL), the first Asian gay group in the United States, was already a few months old at the time of the conference. The Gay Asians of Toronto was formed shortly afterwards by a participant at the conference.

Throughout the eighties other groups appeared in major cities. Some are of the more social club variety with leadership and participation by both Asian and non-Asian gay men. These clubs, modeled after the Black and White Men Together groups, sprang up in such cities as Chicago, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. Other groups have agendas determined more directly for and by gay Asian men and Asian lesbians themselves. Included among these are the Alliance of Massachusetts Asian Gay Men and Lesbians, the Gay Asians of Toronto, and the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (based in San Francisco and formed in 1988). Among Asian lesbian groups there is the Asian Lesbians of the East Coast (based in New York and formed in 1983), while on the West Coast the group called Asian Women organized in 1984 around the journal *Phoenix Rising*, then regrouped as Asian Pacific Sisters in August, 1988.

The First West Coast Asian/Pacific Lesbian and Gay Conference was held July 18, 1987 in West Hollywood, California, and the first North American Conference for Lesbian and Gay Asians was held August 19-21, 1988, in Toronto, Canada. The year 1988 also saw the formation of new groups for lesbians in San Francisco and Washington (D.C.) and the inaugura-

tion of Asian gay men's groups in San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Washington.

A distinctive feature of the North American gay Asian movement is its international perspective. Many individual activists and organizations maintain ties with gay groups and activists in East and South Asia—the political and cultural exchanges that have developed have enriched the movement on both sides of the Pacific. Of note is the gay South Asian newsletter *Trikone* (formed as *Trikon* in January, 1986) based in Palo Alto, California, which has inspired chapters in the Indian subcontinent as well as throughout North America.

*Communities.* With the rise of local groups and the building of local communities the climate for coming out for Asian gay men and lesbians improved throughout the 1980s. Asian gay communities in most cities are a diverse mix of North American-born and foreign-born men and women from a variety of East and South Asian cultural backgrounds with a substantial proportion of persons of mixed cultural heritage. These communities vary substantially from city to city. For example, groups in San Francisco with its high incidence of AIDS concentrate on AIDS-related issues while providing support and services for infected Asian people. In Toronto where a high proportion are Hong Kong-born Chinese, a lively gay Chinese culture based on the Cantonese dialect has developed. All communities were enlivened by the influx of Southeast Asian refugees into North American cities during the eighties.

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## ASTROLOGY

The history of astrology, the pseudoscience which claims to divine events from the positions of the heavenly bodies, has attracted considerable recent scholarship, but the sexual aspects have been neglected. In a passage in the *Confessions* (4:3), Augustine condemns astrology because it could excuse sin as under the