Correspondence

Pederasty Is Part of Gay History

To the Editor:

Perhaps if we're "ransacking history" (Sept.-Oct. 2011) we might reclaim the one glaring truth about gay history that seems consistently lost in the last 25 years of so: any acknowledgment whatsoever that the primary form of homosexuality recorded over the last 2,500 years of history has been pederastic in nature.

Don’t get me wrong: I appreciate that The Gay & Lesbian Review goes further than other gay publications on this point. The issue touches on Catullus and Juvenius, J. J. Winckelmann getting caught "withdrawing quickly from a young boy" by Casanova, and Henry David Thoreau's agonized love poetry to an eleven-year-old Edmund Sewell. And I'm not saying I'm always delighted in William A. Percy's spirited letters to the editor. But is that really all there is?

As a pederast myself finishing a lengthy prison term for a pederastic relationship, it never ceases to amaze me how pederasty seems to have been scrubbed entirely from the blackboard in any discussion of gay history. This wasn’t always the case. Any perusing of gay literature, say, pre-HIV/AIDS, will clearly show a more realistic portrait. (See, for example, old Gay Sunshine Press editions.) But today our pederastic history has been sacrificed at the altar of cultural assimilation.

This began with the HIV/AIDS era, and a shocking illustration was NAMBLA’s banishment, for the first time ever, from participation in the 1986 Christopher Street West Pride Parade in Los Angeles. Harry Hay was outraged by the ban and determined to enter the parade bearing a sandwich board declaring, "NAMBLA walks with me." This did not please parade organizers, who had Mr. Hay surrounded by mounted policemen, who threatened him with arrest unless he removed the offending sign. The father of the gay rights movement! Things just went downhill from there. It seems Anita Bryant was at least somewhat successful at causing the gay movement to doubt itself.

Today, I wish any burgeoning young gay person luck in finding any mention of pederasty whatsoever in publications like Out, XY, or The Advocate. Was eliminating our history really a fair price for adoption and gay marriage? Many who now find themselves within the cultural mainstream would think so. They wouldn’t even think twice about a review of a book titled Sex Panic and the Punitive State, which makes hardly any mention at all of pederasty, never mind that hundreds of civilly committed pederasts in the state of California now occupy space vacated by ordinary homosexuals in the 1950’s, 60’s, and 70’s.

So we’ll skip down the yellow brick road with our newly married spouses and adopted children, and we’ll live in a new era where our history isn’t quite so inconvenient as it once was. After all, who cares about history? It’s history, as the saying goes.

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