

Force. The preponderance of black citizens in the District of Columbia has fostered the rise of a vibrant local black gay culture and a favorable local political climate.

Sodomy statutes enacted by the federal Congress for the District of Columbia were repealed in 1981 by the City Council, but the same year Congress overrode the repeal ordinance, leaving sodomy still criminal.

Washington does, however, have one of the strongest **gay rights** laws in the nation, adopted in October 1973 as one of the first such. The Human Rights Law, of which it is part, is enforced by a 15-member commission. At the end of the eighties, four of the commissioners were openly gay or lesbian.

In 1979 and again in 1987 Washington was the scene of national marches for gay rights that attracted myriads of activists and supporters from all parts of the country, showing that in the decade since 1969 the movement had grown from a score of semi-clandestine organizations hiding in the bohemian quarters of the large cities to a phenomenon as vast and variegated as the fabric of American life itself.

Ward Houser

**WEIRAUCH,
ANNA ELISABET
(1887-1970)**

German prose writer and playwright. After an eight-year stint (1906-14) as an actress with Max Reinhardt's famous ensemble in Berlin, Weirauch discovered her true calling as an author. She began with attempts at dramas but soon turned to prose, and in 1919, the first year of her long career, she published four novels and three novellas. One of these was the first volume of a trilogy entitled *Der Skorpion* (1919, 1921, 1931), which is the work for which Weirauch is remembered today.

This three-volume *Entwicklungsroman* (novel of personal develop-

ment) presents the story of Mette Rudloff as she learns and grows from the various loves she experiences for other females. The first volume portrays her from childhood through her early twenties. Although Olga, the woman she loves, does bend to social opprobria and commits **suicide**, Mette refuses to succumb to the prejudice and hostility heaped upon her. She pursues her own path toward happiness, no matter how difficult it proves. Over the course of the next two volumes, Mette learns about the lesbian and homosexual **subcultures**, has several love affairs, and builds her own character so that, at the conclusion, she stands confident in the validity of her choices and at the same time hopeful and able to build a long-lasting relationship with another woman.

The first edition of the initial volume quickly sold out. Readers, especially lesbian readers, praised the sympathetic—and convincing—depiction of lesbian characters which they found here. They begged Weirauch to tell more of Mette's story, a request she then granted twice over. The novels have been translated into several languages. In English alone, they have had seven editions in various forms.

No other of her 64 prose works approached the success of *Der Skorpion*. Her long and successful career, however, was based on her ability to tell a story which the public wanted to hear and which it could easily digest.

A complicated and private person, Weirauch shared her life for almost six decades with another woman.

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James W. Jones