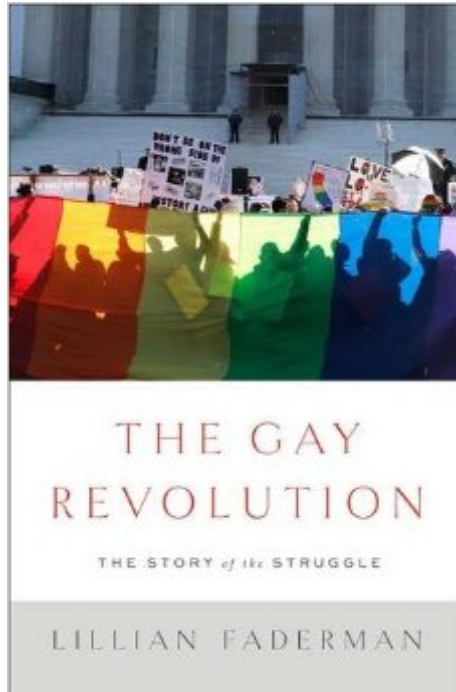


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The Gay Revolution: The Story Of The Struggle



Synopsis

"The most comprehensive history to date of America's gay-rights movement." --The Economist "To read her is like viewing the AIDS quilt, which overwhelms the viewer with the care taken in each of its numberless panels. Any revolutionary would be lucky to stand in a light so steady, so searching, and so sure." --The New York Times "This is the history of the gay and lesbian movement that we've been waiting for." --The Washington Post

Â The sweeping story of the modern struggle for gay, lesbian, and trans rights--from the 1950s to the present--based on amazing interviews with politicians, military figures, legal activists, and members of the entire LGBT community who face these challenges every day. The fight for gay, lesbian, and trans civil rights--the years of outrageous injustice, the early battles, the heart-breaking defeats, and the victories beyond the dreams of the gay rights pioneers--is the most important civil rights issue of the present day. Based on rigorous research and more than 150 interviews, *The Gay Revolution* tells this unfinished story not through dry facts but through dramatic accounts of passionate struggles, with all the sweep, depth, and intricacies only an award-winning activist, scholar, and novelist like Lillian Faderman can evoke. *The Gay Revolution* begins in the 1950s, when law classified gays and lesbians as criminals, the psychiatric profession saw them as mentally ill, the churches saw them as sinners, and society victimized them with irrational hatred. Against this dark backdrop, a few brave people began to fight back, paving the way for the revolutionary changes of the 1960s and beyond. Faderman discusses the protests in the 1960s; the counter reaction of the 1970s and early eighties; the decimated but united community during the AIDS epidemic; and the current hurdles for the right to marriage equality. In the words of the eyewitnesses who were there through the most critical events, *The Gay Revolution* paints a nuanced portrait of the LGBT civil rights movement. A defining account, this is the most complete and authoritative book of its kind.

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Customer Reviews

Honestly, I had big expectations for this book, based on many reviews. I wanted to really love it, not only like it. I wanted to feel the excitement of reading our history. In the end I was disappointed with what I read. If you want to know why, read my review. Otherwise, ignore it. I know that most reviewers love it. I am 66 and have lived with my husband for over 30 years. Both of us come from an era that is described in this book. My public part in our collective gay history is that while a grad student at the University of Chicago in 1976, I acutely felt the absence of a Jewish gay presence. So I put ads in two local papers and the Gay Jewish Group, which later turned into Congregation Or Chadash, the third gay and lesbian synagogue in the world, emerged. Over the years 1,000 people passed through our doors. When I was a medical student in Kirksville, MO. in 1985, I learned of the murder of a local gay high school student. His crime was, as the local judge put it, " he was asking for it." In response, I began the first gay and lesbian support group at what is now Truman State University. At Chicago I earned a library science degree and worked in libraries over several years. I am an historian in my own field (osteopathy) and have also collected gay and lesbian source material for over 30 years. I own a complete run of One magazine and the Mattachine Review which I prize for their record of the early years of the American gay scene. Lillian Faderman is a well known author on the topic of lesbian history. She also collaborated with a gay man on the history of gays and lesbians in LA. She writes well and works hard to document and present her information. She is well thought of in the academic community when it comes to lesbian history. I have many objections to what I read. I will limit myself to two of them: 1) Omissions of major parts of our history and the glossing over of even more. 2) Writing style which often amounts to editorializing vs. presentation of factual data. The title of the book is the gay revolution. This suggests that our history will be presented. What is presented is not only limited mainly to the US, with a few brief mentions of gay history elsewhere, but also skips over what I believe are major parts of our story. The Mattachine Foundation which soon changed its name to the Mattachine Society, played an enormous role in American gay history. It published a monthly which near the end of the group became a bimonthly. The Mattachine Review (1955 - 1966) constitutes 11 years of source material for historians interested in one of the most crucial periods in our history. I use it regularly in my work. It is not mentioned in this work. Instead, Faderman dwells upon One magazine (1953 - 1967), which also is

one of our most valuable source materials. This is equivalent to writing about the current history of the US and mentioning the Washington Post and omitting any mention of the NY Times. Unbelievable for a book which purports to summarize our history. There are many references to be found in other sources regarding our history in both colonial and pre-colonial America. In Europe, the history extends even further. How many know that homosexual rights were granted in the 19th century in places in Europe? This book not only omits all of this but dates the American movement to 1924 when Gerber published his material. The name Emma Goldman must be familiar to many readers. She was justly famed for her brave struggle to advance women's rights, voting for women, abortion rights and, unknown to many, defense of homosexual rights. Magnus Hirschfeld, possibly the most famous fighter for gay and lesbian rights in pre-World War Two Europe, writing in the German lesbian magazine, *Die Freundin*, in 1928, said: "she was the first and only woman, indeed the first and only American, to take up the defense of homosexual love before the general public." Neither of these justly famous and brave souls are mentioned in this book. The most famous lesbian related story from World War Two, one which appears in documentaries on the subject as well as in Randy Shilts' excellent book, *Conduct unbecoming: gays and lesbians in the US military*, revolves around the testimony of Nell "Johnnie" Phelps, a lesbian prominent in the WACS. She is widely quoted as having told future President Eisenhower that if he ordered her to ferret out lesbians in her detachment, that many valuable personnel, including herself, would be on the list. Subsequently, this story has been called into question. This is documented in, *Journal of lesbian studies*, vol.13, issue 4, 2009, Issue: A history of "lesbian history", in the article "The "Ferret Out the Lesbians " Legend :Johnnie Phelps, General Eisenhower, and the Power and Politics of Myth". That none of this is ever mentioned in what purports to be a history of our lives and journey over the years strikes me as fantastic. Finally, the enormous role played by gays and lesbians of faith, especially in my own Jewish community, seems to have received next to no attention. The Metropolitan Community Church, the major initial and still the largest gay and lesbian faith group, is mentioned solely as part of a subtext in larger stories (ex Florida). Etz Chaim, a gay synagogue in Florida, gets a half sentence mention as a hook-on to the mention of MCC(but not in the index). There is no mention of the many other and very important gay and lesbian churches and synagogues representing many thousands of us which played and continue to play such a prominent role in our community. If it weren't for the vital role played in the Dade County, Florida incident mentioned, who knows if even the MCC would have ever been mentioned? What about the enormous role played by mainstream churches and synagogues in supporting the gay and lesbian struggle (ex.the largest Jewish denomination in America, the Reform movement, in 1977 publicly

supported gay rights. The next largest one, the Conservative movement came on board in 2006)? Not even a hint that such momentous events took place. These are but a few of many such omissions of what I believe are vital parts of our collective story. I like my history without any reference to the views of the author. Faderman is quick to put down the views of those whom she reminds us were and are on the wrong side of history. As adults, we can all read and draw our own conclusions. Simply give us the facts which eloquently speak for themselves. These are frequently so horrible and riveting that the linguistic garlands that Faderman constantly provides to let us know who is good and who is bad, how we need to view the show she presents, are not only unnecessary but, I find, frequently detract from the story itself. I believe that a strong historical presentation is ill served by an author's attempts to lead the reader to her own conclusions. Our history can stand on its own. It doesn't require the verbal and editorial adjustments which make up much of this book. Such presentations more than carry the interest of the reader throughout the entire journey. Why two stars? Because it is a useful book and deserves to be read. But the reader needs to be forewarned, caveat emptor: what you are reading is not an accurate rendition of what actually happened.

The author's literary skill is beyond praise, superior to that of most celebrated novelists. Of course the stories she tells, sometimes grim, sometimes encouraging, are true. They combine acknowledged sources with original research and interviews. As one would expect with an established lesbian scholar who has worked well with men, there is a good balance of male and female material. To be sure, it is not so much a history as a series of telling tableaux. There are some contextual limitations. Faderman starts the story in the immediate aftermath of World War II, with only a slight glance at such earlier figures as Magnus Hirschfeld and Henry Gerber. There is little acknowledgement of sources abroad. For example, the word "homophile," dominant in US movement circles after 1950, was coined by a German scholar, Gunther Heimsoth, in 1925. A more significant omission is that of England's Wolfenden Report of 1957, and the decriminalization there ten years after. These events gave great encouragement to our own efforts at law reform. All in all, though, this book is a brilliant success, and may be heartily recommended, both to newcomers and accomplished researchers.

Lillian Faderman, six-time Lambda Literary Award-winning historian of gay and lesbian history and literature, vividly brings to life the fight for LGBT rights in the United States with *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*. This mammoth undertaking runs more than 800 pages, but it is highly

readable, superbly researched and filled with fascinating stories. While many believe the history of LGBT rights in the United States began with the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City, Faderman (*My Mother's Wars*) begins her chronology with Henry Gerber forming the Society for Human Rights in Chicago in 1924. That short-lived organization inspired Harry Hay to create the Mattachine Society for gay men in 1950, and Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon to create its lesbian counterpart, the Daughters of Bilitis, in 1955. Although both organizations were fraught with infighting, power struggles and legal troubles (they were formed at the height of the McCarthy witch-hunt era), they helped members find self-esteem during very repressive times. Post-Stonewall, Faderman delves into the prickly relationship between lesbians and the homophobic early leadership of the National Organization for Women (NOW); the rise and fall of Anita Bryant and her Save Our Children campaign; the election and assassination of Harvey Milk; and the AIDS pandemic and the creation of ACT-UP, with its savvy media committee. Faderman enlivens the courtroom gains and losses in the new millennium with first-hand testimonies of the backstage drama. This is an essential guide to the gay and lesbian movement, brought to life by a meticulous historian who is also a natural storyteller. Discover the fascinating people and their heroic actions behind decades' worth of gradual change in the fight for LGBT civil rights in the United States.

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