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# Historical Clarifications

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## Historical clarifications

*Cigar*  
*Feb 16, 1975*

To the Cigar:

Frank Singewald's letter to the Feb. 2 Cigar is full of fallacies. His notion that homosexuality somehow increases in times of social disorder is historically inaccurate.

Those temples in northern India which so many tourists are flocking to are only some of many examples, from every ancient civilization in the world, that homosexuality has been a part of human society since people discovered the pleasures of sex and the joy of love.

Not talking about homosexuality or driving it underground does not make it go away; it has always been with us, it always will be.

Moreover, throughout history the leisured classes of every society have had the privacy, freedom and money to pursue their sexual preferences.

The historical evidence of homosexuality is almost entirely

drawn from the diaries, letters and art of upper class people, although legal records sometimes shed a shadowy light on working class homosexuality.

These different forms of evidence make a point. An upper class person can explore the emotional and psychological aspects of being gay no matter how illegal it is; a working class person usually "gets in trouble" for being gay.

Working people have another stake in removing legal strictures for gays. Gays who challenge traditional male chauvanist stereotypes can help working class men redefine their relationships with their families for the better. Some working class men use male chauvanism as an excuse for taking their legitimate frustrations from work out on their children and their wives at home. They confirm their macho images by making fun of gays and

feminists. Breaking down sexual stereotypes can help us all end devisions among workers and plan for a more unified labor movement.

What does increase in times of deprivation and disorder is the turning to the myth of the traditional family for comfort and stability. During the Great Depression of the 30's images of women became increasingly conservative; the greater tolerance for sexual liberation of the twenties disappeared.

Singewald's letter is a perfect example of the way in which people return to conservative values during troubled times in order to stave off fears and anxieties.

Civil liberties become "extras" which we can do without until "things settle down." Those of us who are working for a more humane society reject this approach. We recognize the fact there is an intimate connection between those who would outlaw gays, break labor unions, and deny sexual liberation to women.

Sharon Hartman Strom