

# The Political Influence of Homosexuals in the United States: Their Pattern of Action and Sources of Power

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In 1993, one important event surprised many Americans. Bill Clinton, the new Democratic president, the "first in twelve years, announced that he would issue an executive order which would lift the armed forces ban on homosexuality. Earlier in 1992, Clinton had stressed the importance of reducing the budget deficit and had called for smaller government in his Democratic nomination speech, which had been considered very much like a Republican candidate. Therefore his positive attitude towards homosexuality, which was still a divisive issue, especially in the military, was received with great surprise, and gave people a strong impression that he was indeed a liberal, Democratic president and an advocate of human rights.

In this paper, I will describe the current status of the gay rights movement and the impediments the movement faces. I will also explain the historical background of the movement and its sources of power, in the following order.

First, I will explain the social status of homosexuals in the United States, and the particular rights they are longing for. I will utilize results from public opinion polls among U.S. citizens in my explanation. Secondly, I will review the history of the gay rights movement. Homosexuals have existed ever since the ancient times, but the history of the gay rights movement is not very long. Merely thirty years have passed

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since the emergence of a full-fledged organization devoted to gay civil liberties. Thirdly, I will explain the activities of the gay rights groups, as well as their achievements at Congress, local governments, the federal government, and private corporations. Finally, related to the third point, I will analyze why such activities of the gay rights groups are possible.

## I    THE DEMANDS OF THE GAY RIGHTS GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

American peoples' (mostly heterosexuals) feelings towards civil rights for homosexuals differ across different states as well as across generations. We can summarize the demands of the gay rights groups as follows: first, extending the rights of married couples (heterosexuals) to homosexual partnerships; second, legislation to guarantee non-discrimination at the federal government and state level employment matters, and third, establishment of legal measures to abolish crimes targeting homosexuality. On the first point, most Americans are skeptical. In fact, President Clinton signed a bill in September 1996 in which he explicitly limited marriage to heterosexual couples. On the other hand, most Americans are quite sympathetic to the second and third demands.

The attitudes of most American people towards homosexual marriage are quite negative. According the Epic-Mra-Mitchell research poll conducted in July 1997, 33% approved of homosexual marriages while 63% did not. However, homosexuality itself is considered acceptable as long as it is somebody else's matter. In a *Time* magazine article (June 27, 1994), 6% of respondents said homosexuality can be accepted for oneself as well as others, while 52% said only among others it can be accepted and not for oneself, and 39% said that it can not be accepted among others or oneself.

Why do American homosexuals care so much about their rights? It is because discrimination does exist when they let it known that they are homosexual. This is the reason why Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a homosexual rights group, pressed for the introduction of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, it is still legal in thirty-nine states to discriminate against people in employment matters, on the basis of their sexual preference. On the other hand, there is good news. More than half of the *Fortune* 500 companies have adopted an employment policy along the lines of the spirit of ENDA, and bills to abolish

discrimination against homosexuals have been passed in eleven states, and Washington D.C., as well as 160 local governments. It is also shown in a report published by HRC that many politicians and company managers strongly approve of ENDA.

President Clinton stated, "I support ENDA, because I believe in the most important principles that bind us together as a nation: justice and equality." At the same time, Paul Area, CEO of XEROX, stated, "It does not cost us anything to improve our working environment by abolishing discrimination according to sexual preferences. We believe in our ideals, and the diversity of values among employees is important in enhancing the sense of contribution among our employees." These are only some examples, but it is important that there are people in public office and among top management who approve of and publicly call for non-discrimination as rights.

According to the results of opinion polls included in the same report (conducted between April 8 and April 10, 1997, among 1000 adults), 68% approved of ENDA, 25% disapproved, and 7% were not sure. Not surprisingly, 84% of Democrats approved, but it is noteworthy that 75% of Republicans also approved.

Thus, it can be observed that Americans generally believe that employment discrimination based on sexual preferences is a violation of human rights and that it should be abolished, although they may not approve of homosexual behavior itself. However, as I will discuss in Section 3, the current status is not all that favorable for homosexuals.

## II A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

It took thirty years of concentrated struggle before the kind of rights I mentioned in the previous section were achieved among homosexuals. However, one can argue that the gay rights movement was successfully politicized in a rather short period of time, given that other social battles, such as discrimination towards minorities, and abortion, have not been so successful. If it is the case, why did the gay rights movement succeed?

### (1) Origins of the Movement

It is said that there are more devout Christians in the United States than in Europe, and thus sexual activities between homosexuals were

condemned, and homosexuals themselves were discriminated against at every level of society. When homosexuals started to move out of places where there were severe discrimination, such as the South, to the Northern and West Coast cities, they began to deepen communication among themselves and began to form alliances. These alliances became linked with 60s and 70s progressive movements such as those for sex liberation, and ending the war in Vietnam.

The epoch-making event during this period was the Stonewall Inn incident, which occurred on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1969, in New York City, at a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn. A few weeks prior to the incident, many police officers had been patrolling the Greenwich Village area, where many gay bars were, and are still located. The police finally entered one of the bars on the grounds that liquor was sold without a license. The customers were ordered to leave, but they did not, and remained standing around the bar. A quarrel with the police occurred when some customers, including those who were slightly drunk, went back into the bar. A couple of glasses were thrown across the bar, a fire started, and 13 people were arrested. The customers were furious, and posted a sign which said that the police had violated their rights, and called for the legalization of gay bars.

This incident further strengthened the antipathy towards the police among the members of the gay community. In the background of all this was the anti-sodomy law (a law which outlawed certain sex acts and, which still exists in many states. Since it was the police who enforced these laws, many homosexuals tended to consider the police to be their enemies.

One leader of the gay rights movement reflected upon the Stonewall Inn incident in a gathering of core members at a church (some denominations are more open to homosexuals than others). He claimed, "The police should be strongly criticized, but it is important for us in the gay community to have a friendly relationship with the establishment. It is only through the education of straight people that homosexuality can be truly understood and approved in the society."

The first step in educating straight people was for homosexuals to publicly announce that they are gay and to make their presence known in society. The Gay Liberation Front was formed, and one month after the incident, 3400 people gathered in Washington Square Park to march for a demonstration. This movement which began in New York soon spread worldwide, to London, Paris, Rome, and Sydney.

## (2) Social Understanding and the Harvey Milk Incident

In 1975, there was good news for homosexuals: the American Psychiatric Association eliminated homosexuality from its list of psychological diseases. In the same year, the U.S Civil Service Commission announced that homosexuals would not be excluded from civil service. Ellen Noble won the Congressional Election as the first publicly-announced homosexual. Eighteen states in the United States, including New Hampshire, abolished their anti-sodomy laws. Additionally, the gay rights protection bills were passed in cities such as Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Minneapolis, Seattle, and Miami.

However, as the gay rights movement became successful, reaction from conservatives heightened. Under such circumstances, the Harvey Milk Incident—another incident which immediately became symbolic like the Stonewall Inn Incident—occurred.

The background of this incident is very complex. A brief description of the incident is that Harvey Milk, who publicly announced that he was gay, was elected to become a city councilman after his second running for office, but then was shot to death by a conservative fellow assemblyman. What made other homosexuals more furious was that the sentence of Harvey Milk's murderer was considered too light.

In 1975, Harvey Milk, a Jewish immigrant from New York who had succeeded in his camera shop business, ran for the city council of San Francisco (number of seats: 6). In the 1970s, the city of San Francisco was actively trying to promote tourism and its financial and other businesses. As a result, many college-educated young people moved to San Francisco, many of whom were gay. San Francisco became Mecca for gay people in a short period of time. It was in this kind of environment that Harvey Milk nurtured his political ambitions, and in 1973, he decided to run for city council. He ran as an anti-corporate candidate. During his campaign, he organized a boycott against Coors Beer (which was famous as a conservative firm publicly proclaiming that they would not hire homosexuals), met with labor union leaders, and organized a shop-owners' coalition in Castro Street, where his own shop was located. In 1975, he came close to being elected, coming in seventh after the six incumbents.

In his second try in 1977, he was able to gain support from many homosexuals who had moved into San Francisco. Many of them were middle-class and white and he succeeded by focusing on this group as his core supporters.

Dan White, the fire fighter who was to later kill Milk, was also elected. He was Irish, and was a typically conservative man who ran from a working-class dominated district. Once the city council meetings began, Harvey Milk immediately proposed a bill seeking the non-discrimination of homosexuals in housing and employment. Milk and White, the openly professed homosexual and the stubborn conservative, tended to conflict with each other on many occasions, including television talk shows.

In the fall of 1978, White announced that he would resign from city council for family financial reasons. However, after a meeting with his supporters, representatives of the real estate industry and the police department, he asked the mayor to assign him as city councilman once again. This was not possible, due to pressure from Milk and other political enemies. Upon hearing this news, White was furious, and on November 28, 1978, he killed the mayor and Harvey Milk.

The sentence White received was a very generous one, only seven years and eight months' imprisonment. There were no black, Asian, or homosexual members in the jury. After the sentence was delivered, angry homosexuals gathered around City Hall, criticized the jury and the police, and burned many police cars. Sixty-one policemen and several hundred homosexuals were sent to the hospital in this incident. (There is an epilogue to the Harvey Milk incident: after being released from prison, Dan White shot himself to death.)

Even in the late seventies, in Northern California, an area that was supposed to be the most respectful of gay rights, this was the reality.

In 1977, a Gay Rights Protection bill was passed in Dade, Miami. But soon after that, a former Miss Oklahoma pop singer, Anita Bryant, declared that she would lead the movement to abolish this bill. She testified that "Approving homosexual rights violates my own and many other honest and moral citizens' rights." As soon as the bill was passed by five to three, she organized Save Our Children, Inc., and collected 65,000 signatures asking for a referendum. Thus, an organized movement to stop and resist the gay rights movement began.

The Governor of Florida said that he did not want publicly declared homosexuals to teach children, and in Catholic churches, a letter from the Pope asking for the abolition of the bill was read aloud. A referendum actually took place in June 1977, and Bryant's side won a victory by a vote of 202,319 to 89,562. This movement spread to other states, such as Minnesota. In the late seventies, many new right-wing Christian

activists started to appear on television calling for a ban on abortion, opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, and an insistence on school prayers. They often emphasized that homosexuality is not allowed in Christianity.

### (3) AIDS and Solidarity

1981 was a year of suffering for homosexuals. Conservative Republican Ronald Reagan defeated President Carter, a liberal Democrat with an understanding towards homosexuals. Moreover, the AIDS epidemic spread. Since the majority of the AIDS patients were homosexuals, AIDS was perceived as a disease of homosexuals.

The AIDS problem had a serious impact on the gay rights movement of the 1970s. Congress members who were prepared to abolish the anti-Sodomy Law stopped their action, worried that they would be criticized as spreading the AIDS epidemic. So the activists had to count on the Supreme Court judgement. However, in 1986, the Supreme Court confirmed by five to four that concerning the anti-Sodomy Law of the state of Georgia, all states have the rights to consider sexual activities between consenting private citizens a crime.

Solidarity among homosexuals became much stronger. On Columbus Day in 1987, more than 200,000 people, mostly homosexuals, gathered in Washington D.C. and spread a quilt made up of thousands of hand-sewn and decorated squares, each of which memorialized a person who died of AIDS. The quilt was as large as two football fields. Jesse Jackson, then a Democratic presidential candidate, also gave a speech, and the meeting appeared to have been very successful. However, the actual political impact was small. Three days later, both the House and the Senate passed a supplementary article which banned using the federal budget for programs or projects that directly or indirectly promote homosexual activities. The AIDS epidemic strengthened the sense of solidarity among homosexuals, and gave the impression to straight people that they were well organized. In addition, the cold-heartedness of the two Republican presidents, Reagan and Bush, further motivated homosexual political groups to take action.

### (4) Rising Social Awareness

President Clinton, the first Democratic President in twelve years, sought to gain support from homosexual groups in the course of his campaign. California was a decisive state for the election, having the largest

number of electoral votes. As I mentioned earlier, there are many homosexuals in California. Therefore, Clinton visited California before the primaries, and promised to abolish the ban on homosexuality in the military, and to actively deal with the AIDS epidemic. At Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, he promised this in public, responding to a student's question. Representatives of homosexual organizations attended the Democratic party presidential convention.

Many people were surprised that Clinton began dealing with the military problem by issuing an executive order. This aroused major criticism from many in the military and from conservatives. The resignation of the Joint Chief of Staff, Colin Powell, who gained nation wide support during the Gulf War, was said to be due to the fact that he was opposed to approving homosexuality in the military. Even though the President was eager, the general public was not. The gay rights movement was experiencing major defeats in the referendum held during the presidential election. Thus, the President could not take action, and he postponed his decision until July. Many were disappointed, but already a worldwide movement had begun to advocate lifting the ban on homosexuality. In the end, a compromise conclusion, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy" was adopted. According to the Service Members Legal Network, the number of those who were criticized for their sexual orientation or were sexually harassed declined from 941 in 1990 to 682 cases in 1993 and 597 cases in 1994, but increased to 751 cases in 1995. Depending on one's perspective, homosexual rights can be seen as mostly approved or, or still denied.

During this time several episodes made Americans aware that homosexuals are not special people, but ordinary citizens surrounding them. The high-ranking military officer who testified about the treatment of homosexuals in the military admitted that his son was homosexual, although he stressed that homosexuality could not be allowed in the military. In addition, it was exposed that the sister of the conservative leader Newt Gingrich was a gay rights activist.

President Clinton kept his promise and recruited many homosexuals for public office. This was highly welcomed by homosexual organizations. The number of homosexuals in public offices are increasing. In Clinton's second term in 1997, he assigned Fred Hochberg, a New York businessman and leader of the gay rights movements, to become the deputy administrator of the Federal Small Medium Business Agency. He



also assigned Virginia Appuzzo, former representative of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, to be the White House Assistant of Administrative Management, and James Hormel, a businessman and human rights activist, as Ambassador to Luxemburg. In June 1994, the Justice Department announced that they would change the policy the Republican administration had adopted, and allow HIV positive athletes to enter the United States for the gay Olympics. However, these liberal policies did lead to backlash against the President. In the election of 1994, the Democratic Party suffered major losses, and lost control of both houses. Of course there were other reasons, such as confusion in diplomatic and security matters, and the delay in the health insurance reform, but one important reason for the loss seemed to be a reaction to policies sympathetic to homosexuals.

### III POLITICS AND HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

In Section I, I described the kind of rights homosexuals are demanding, but I have not explained exactly at what level these issues are discussed. In this section, I will explain what the most immediate issue is at the federal and local level, and to describe the results. Furthermore, I will explain the responses of the Republican party, considered more conservative than the Democratic Party, to homosexuality-related issues.

As I mentioned in Section I, the major goal of homosexual organizations in the United States is to call for approval of homosexual marriages, and to abolish discriminatory employment practices. Only one third of the general public support the former issue. Conservative congress members who felt threatened by this idea, proposed the Marriage Defense Act in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1996.

#### (1) The Congress

The Marriage Defense Act (Bill#3396) passed by an absolute majority of 342 to 67 on July 12, 1996. The bill was immediately sent to the Senate, and President Clinton made a statement through Press Secretary McCauly that he “considers marriage as an act between a man and a woman,” and stated that he would sign the bill if it passed the Senate. In fact, the Senate voted for the bill by 85 to 14 on September 14, and the president signed the bill on September 21.

No state actually allows for marriages between partners of the same sex, but this bill was meant to build a legal firewall against such possi-

bilities. In the Act, all states are allowed the right to deny same-sex marriages that were conducted in other states. In addition, marriage is defined as a linkage between one man and one woman, and even if same sex marriage is to be legalized at the state level, all benefits given to spouses in Social Security, tax reduction, insurance and pension were determined to be offered exclusively for heterosexual marriages.

Why was this all done in such a hurry in 1996? First, there was a possibility that the State Supreme Court in Hawaii was going to allow for same-sex marriages, and if this happened, all other states would be obliged to let those rights be transferrable, according to the constitution. Secondly, there was a political motivation to contain the political power of homosexual groups in the Presidential election, which would take place in November. In order to do so, the Republicans, according to the observation of Democrats, wanted to score politically by making clear that same sex marriages would not be allowed. One evidence of this is that the name of the act was “Marriage Defense Act”.

The following is part of the actual debate that took place at the Senate hearings on July 11 and the debate on the Congressional floor on July 11 and 12, reproduced from the *Congressional Weekly Report*. As a whole, we can observe the hard-line stance of the right-wing Republicans. Among the Democrats, human rights activists are conspicuous in the debate.

At the Senate, a conservative Republican, Orrin Hatch of the Senate Justice Committee called the hearing as a “necessary and healthy reaction” to the decision in Hawaii to allow for same-sex marriage. One opponent of the bill, Edward Kennedy did not deny the possibility of the bill passing the Senate, but stated that he would attempt to add an amendment to outlaw employment discrimination against homosexuals.

In the House, opinion was also divided. For example, one hardliner, Tom Coburn (R. Oklahoma) declared that homosexuality was morally wrong, and that it was lust and perversion. He added, probably having thought that he had made too strong statement, that it is not the person, but the action itself.

John Lewis (D. Georgia), pointed out that the bill denied the pursuit of happiness that is included in the American Declaration of Independence, and that no one can tell others not to love someone. Barney Frank, a Democrat who openly says that he is gay, asked fellow congressmen, “Is the fact that I love a man a threat to your marriage?”

As the debate proceeded, those against the bill proposed several

amendments, but were all denied. Finally the Marriage Defense Act was passed, 342 to 67 in the House and 85 to 14 in the Senate.

Another important bill for homosexual organizations was the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. On September 10<sup>th</sup>, homosexual organizations and their sympathizers were expecting the “last fortress” to fall. However, the bill did not pass, denied by 49 to 50, and the dream of homosexual groups faded away. It is said that it is because Senator David Pryor (D. Arkansas), who was expected to vote for the bill, could not leave his district because his son was going through a cancer operation. It was expected that the vote would be a tie, and then Vice President Gore would return to Washington from his campaign trail to make the decisive vote.

In the deliberation process, Orrin Hatch (R. Utah) argued that “the bill will lead to an explosion of law suits on the grounds that one was fired due to his or her sexual orientation. Then, managers will try to protect themselves by showing that they have fired homosexuals in the past. This will lead to managers trying to find out workers’ sexual orientation, which is a violation of privacy.” More radical was Don Nickles (R. Oklahoma), the majority whip and Jesse Helms (R. North Carolina) who argued that “The government is crushing the feelings of people who believe that homosexuality is immoral through threat. At the heart of this debate is the moral and psychological survival of this country.”

## (2) The State Level

In 1997, after the signing of the Marriage Defense Act by the President and the denial of ENDA in 1996, the gay rights movement shifted its focus to the state and local government. The objective was to start from the local government since it seemed impossible to start from the federal government.

As of March 1997, according to the research by the *Washington Blade*, more than twice the number of homosexuality-related bills were proposed in fifty states, compared with the same time in 1996. In 1997, 88 bills were proposed; in 1996, 37 were. In contrast, the number of anti-homosexuality related bills were 89, only 30 more than the previous year.

According to David Smith, public relations director of the Human Rights Campaign, this is a reaction to the number of anti-same-sex marriage bills that were presented in the two previous years. He argued that “the flood of anti-same-sex bills made homosexual activists more determined than ever that they should be treated equally. The public opinion

is gradually changing, to support fair and just treatment of homosexuals. Although it may be true that same-sex marriage may be disturbing to some people, most do support equal treatment of homosexuals.”

Among the 88 positive bills, 30 were for more severe punishment for criminals of hate crimes based on sexual preference, 24 were for banning discrimination based on sexual preferences in certain areas (employment, housing, public facilities), 13 were for public support in medicine and pension for cohabiting partners, 7 were for abolishing anti-homosexuality laws. On the other hand, the 89 anti-homosexuality related bills were as follows: 65 of them were to ban same-sex marriages, 14 were to ban any discussion of homosexuality in school and legalize parental rights to research texts used in school, and seven were to prevent homosexuals from adopting children.

As of March 1997, among the 177 bills, 47 were rejected, 24 pro-homosexual and 23 anti-homosexual. What is interesting is that 75% of the anti-homosexual bills were presented by Republicans, and 78% of pro-homosexuality bills were presented by the Democrats. Therefore, one can argue that this is a highly partisan issue. It is important to note here that the only eleven states including California and Connecticut allow for non-discrimination based on sexual preferences. The bill has passed the legislature, and the governor has signed the bill. At the same time, twenty-one states including Alabama, Arkansas, and Arizona have (but do not necessarily enforce) anti-sodomy laws.

### (3) Homosexuality and the Republican Party

The Democratic Party has been the party more likely to support the gay rights movement in the United States. This comes from the history of the Democratic party as the supporters of minority and women's civil liberties, abortion rights and other human rights related movements. However, aside from right wing Republicans such as the Christian Coalition, there are now more homosexuals among the Republican supporters than in the past. Now, the number of homosexual organizations that support Republicans are 54, with more than 10,000 members. Of course, the national-level Republican homosexual organization, Log Cabin, still represents the minority. And unlike similar Democratic organizations, they could not send representatives to national conventions, and support for Presidential candidate Bob Dole and Vice President candidate Jack Kemp was not decided until very late in the campaign. Among the presidential candidates, all candidates except for Richard Lugar supported

the resolution of the Christian Coalition not to admit same-sex marriages.

Nevertheless, the social recognition of homosexuals and their political presence have become undeniable for the Republican Party. Party leadership also had a strategic motive, that the Republican Party needed to rectify the perception that they had gone too much towards the right, even though they were highly successful in the 1994 election with the conservative wing of the party led by Newt Gingrich playing an important role.

We can observe a difference in Republican attitudes between the 1992 and 1996 Republican conventions. In 1992, one of the presidential candidates, Pat Buchanan, gave a fierce anti-homosexuality speech, and one of the leaders of the Christian Coalition, Pat Robertson criticized the Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton, as a supporter of homosexuality. Neither of them were invited to the 1996 convention. In 1996, Colin Powell, former Joint Chief of Staff, did not use the words homosexuals or sexual preference, but mentioned diversity and discrimination.

#### IV THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE POWER OF HOMOSEXUAL ORGANIZATIONS

Homosexual organizations have become more politically powerful in the recent years. Why is this the case? First, the centripetal force of homosexual groups is an important factor. The goals and the values of these organizations are simple and united, unlike other minority groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics. The goals are public recognition for homosexuality and enhancing the status of homosexuals. On the other hand, other minorities face difficulties arising from affluence, leading to diverse values and complex objectives. Thus, even among the traditionally Democratic African Americans, there are some who support the Republican Party. Of course there are some homosexuals who support Republicans, but their goals and objectives do not differ from the Democrats: establishment of the status of homosexuals and elimination of discrimination.

Members of the homosexual organizations are mostly homosexuals. There are some groups that actively seek to include non-homosexuals, but even when that is the case, the leadership is usually borne by homosexuals. Those who join pressure groups have a strong sense of mission, and this is indeed the case for homosexuals. This sense of mission arises from their experience of having been discriminated against, and

their hopes for overcoming discrimination, which lead them to think about these issues in daily life.

A second point which also enhances centripetal force among homosexuals is that there are few people who publicly declare themselves homosexual, and this leads to high expectations towards the activities of the advocates. It is not that majority of homosexuals do not want to “come out”, but the society does not allow them to “come out”. In places where they secretly meet at night, there are many newspapers and magazines targeted to them. There are also bars only for homosexuals. Of course, the reason why these places function is that they cannot satisfy their sexual desires by ways heterosexuals consider to be standard. Since their sexual activities are denied by law, they need to form a coalition to abolish such laws. It is also true that there are homosexuals who do not go to secretive places, but their sense of bondage among them is stronger than often perceived.

The third point is organization. There are many ways to define the powers of organization. There may be few organizations working towards the same objective, but if each organization has a lot of members, they can have strong influence over the political process. On the other hand, there may be cases where there are many organizations working for the same goal, even though each organization has only a few members. The case of American homosexuals seems to be somewhere in between.

First, there are no accurate data on the number of organizations. What is true is that there are many organizations, relative to the number of homosexuals, the maximum number being one in one hundred Americans. For example, the number of groups that have a homepage registered with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (a group that helps homosexual organizations in each state to push for legislation of homosexual-related bills at the state level), amount to twenty-seven at the state level, eight at local government level and sixteen at the federal level, as of April 1998. These groups are primarily consolidated groups of each states, so there must be more organizations at the lower level. For instance, thirty-nine groups are included in the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition and the Personal Liberty Fund. (For example, the Human Rights Campaign, which I will explain later, has had somewhere around eighty thousand members, but after the leadership changed, there are now 150 thousand members.) Since there are no statistics on this, we can imagine that there are no other organizations that carry so many members.

The national organizations have different characteristics. For example, there are organizations which try to send "out" homosexuals to Congress and other areas of the federal government. There is a local equivalent of this type of group too. There are also groups focusing on educational activities to enhance awareness of homosexuality. There are also African American and Asian American homosexual organizations. Among these organizations, there are some, like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), that have a highly institutionalized information-gathering system and provides the information to its members. NGLTF, as I mentioned earlier, attempts to push legislation of homosexuality-related bills and prevent anti-homosexuality bills at the state and local level, but in order to achieve their goals, they keep a close eye on the details of the deliberation process. For example, the objectives and the current status of the five relevant bills presented to the Ohio legislature can be observed in one glance.

In addition to noting the institutionalization of these organizations, it is important to note that these organizations have long histories. For example, the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition dates back to 1972, when the Rutgers University Student Homophile League, Gay Activists Alliance of New Jersey, Gay Activist Alliance in Morris County, and the William Paterson College Gay Alliance got together in Rutgers University to start an information sharing organization to initiate an event for homosexuals. They met once a month, and they had two objectives. One was for each organization to help each other, and to have a larger sense of alliance as a community. Second was to exchange opinion from political, social, and educational points of view, about the significance of homosexual liberation activities that arose from the Stonewall incident in 1969, and to broaden the perspectives of its members. I will not mention the history beyond this, but we can observe that the Stonewall incident, which I referred to in Section 2, played an important role in the development of these organizations.

The fourth source of their success is their financial power. There is not sufficient data for calculating exactly how much money homosexual organizations are collecting, and are donating to congress members through PACs. According to the documents submitted to the Federal Election Commission, a powerful homosexual organization, the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, has spent \$290,692 between January and June 1997. The monthly amount is between \$38,000 and \$63,000. Since PACs are organizations for donating money to political parties, the majority of this was for this objective.



Some homosexual groups are very affluent. For example, in a fund-raising banquet for Democrats (probably to thank President Clinton for attending and giving a speech at the Human Rights Campaign), each of the twenty-five guests paid \$10,000 to attend. This may be because the Human Rights Campaign has a long history (established in 1972), and had 150,000 members nationwide by 1995. They collected seven million dollars in 1995, 1.5 million dollars more than the previous year. This is not a small amount for a single organization. They announced that they would donate a total of one million dollars to candidates in 150 out of the 435 districts of the Congress.

Most of the donations are for the Democratic Party or the Democrats, but the HRC has donated \$5,000 to the Republican National Committee. In order to gain support for bills to guarantee non-discrimination in employment and same-sex marriage, they needed to appeal for broader understanding among congress members. This is why they have donated to as many as 150 congress members. Among their donations were some intended to secure the voting behavior of those who had already claimed to be their supporters. According to the documents submitted to FEC, the expenditure in 1997 was rather small, probably because there were no elections. The amount was \$169,990 between January and June 1997. In any case, it seems evident that the lobbying activities of homosexual organizations have a strong financial element.

Finally, how do the characteristics of homosexual groups compare with the characteristics of interest groups in general? The first characteristic of interest groups is that they try to achieve their specific objectives by influencing the policy decision and policy implementation process. Secondly, they do not bear any responsibility to anyone beyond their membership for the achievements and results of their activities. Thirdly, their demands are fixed and limited, and based on the pursuit of specific interests. Since homosexual groups fulfill all of these three characteristics, they can be claimed to be typical interest groups.

Burdett A. Loomis and Alan J. Cigler, in their book *Interest Group Politics*, have pointed out that although the existence of organized interests is not new to American politics, we can observe some new developments. They list the following ten points: 1) interest groups have become more diffuse, 2) the head offices have moved to Washington D.C., having been formerly located in places such as New York, 3) technological innovation have progressed to the point where they can process information to promote more sophisticated, timely, and professional



grass-roots lobbying activities, 4) single-issue groups, 5) election finance laws have been revised (1971, 1974) and the PACs have expanded, 6) the penetration of social and economic interests at the official level, in government agencies (including advisory committees), the White House, and Congress, 7) parties have continuously lost their ability to conduct election and policy-related activities, 8) the number and activities of public interest research institutions, such as Ralph Nader's Common Cause, 9) private companies, universities, states, local governments, and foreign organizations have stepped up their influence and 10) interest group activities have expanded and became more sophisticated at the state capital level.

The activities of homosexual groups seem to be highly reflective of these recent changes related to interest groups. The four homosexual groups I interviewed all had their head office in Washington D.C., worked with Congress and other interest groups and helped facilitate the activities at the state and grassroots level. Information collecting was done efficiently and aggressively using personal computers, and many people with professional knowledge, such as lawyers, took part in their campaigns. The contents of their activities differ by organizations, and there is a strict division of labor according to their function. Thus, the grass-roots activities are highly sophisticated. Their activities are funded by supporters including non-homosexuals.

## V CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have described some issues homosexuals and homosexual groups face in the United States, and their organizational efforts to overcome these issues. They have been successful, slowly but steadily. One indication is the assignment of an "out" homosexual as Ambassador to Luxembourg, although it has been described as a "campaign prize." Above all, the change in public opinion towards a more realistic attitude, is the most significant change compared to ten or twenty years ago. As I have mentioned in the introduction, the average American view seems to be that same-sex couples who can not bear children cannot be acceptable from a "family values" point of view, but discrimination in employment due to homosexuality is not fair. This is not a completely satisfactory situation for homosexuals, but a steady progress.

However, what I must stress, once again, is that the gay rights movement in the United States has an inherent contradiction. This is because

Christianity has not allowed for homosexuality (although there are now some denominations or individual priests that accept homosexuality), and Americans in general have been more devout and faithful than most Europeans. At the same time, Americans have sought equality, justice, and happiness since the foundation of the nation, and from this standpoint, discrimination against homosexuals has no legal or ethical standing, and should be eliminated. These are two vectors of values which are bound to clash sooner or later.

In the United States, a pattern has been established: conspicuous anti-homosexual discrimination leads to demands to eliminate it, and organized groups seek legislative action, while conservative anti-homosexual groups oppose such legislation, stressing supposed “family values.” It seems unlikely that there will be major change to this trend. In Japan, on the other hand, due to historical conditions, there has been little conspicuous repression of homosexuals.

At the same time, however, the mass media still spread misunderstandings that homosexuality is a disease, and that homosexual teachers proselytize homosexuality among elementary and junior high school students. These circumstances have led to excessive self restraint among homosexuals, and it had been difficult for them to “come out.” Therefore, discrimination can only be known by those who have experienced it. Another result of the “self imposed” repression is that there have been very few organized gay rights movements in Japan. However, organized action has spread starting from the incident in Tokyo, at the Tokyo Municipal House for the Youth in Fuchu, in February 1990.

The Fuchu Youth House case started when a homosexual group, Aka, was harassed by other users of the house when they had a study session at the Fuchu Youth House. When Aka asked for appropriate action to the Youth House, the Youth House responded by denying Aka further usage of their facilities. The Youth House argued that homosexuality is not favorable for the healthy development of youth. Members of Aka then sued the Tokyo Municipal School Board (Educational Commission), and after six years of trial, Aka won.

Although the scale and character of this incident differs from the gay rights movement in the United States we can see aspects similar to the Stonewall and Harvey Milk incidents. But once again, I must stress that since there is little obvious discrimination in Japan, the problems tend to be underrated. There is little interest among non-homosexuals, other than occasional ridicule. In this sense, homosexuals in the United States

are fortunate that they can try to solve problems in a transparent environment. This paper has clearly shown that this is the case.

NOTES

\* On this topic, please refer also to my Japanese article: Atsushi Kusano, "Dousei ai sha no seijiteki eikyōryoku," in Fumiaki Kubo, Atsushi Kusano and Hideyuki Ohsawa, eds., *Gendai Amerika Seiji no Henyō* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1999), 206–238.

<sup>1</sup> *CQ Weekly Report*, September 14, 1996, 2597–2599.

<sup>2</sup> Fact Sheet of the Human Rights Campaign entitled 'To have to hold national gay and lesbian task force.'

<sup>3</sup> As for this section, I owe greatly to Neil Miller, *Out of the Past* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> *Out of the Past*, 365.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 368.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 395–398.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 402.

<sup>8</sup> *Washington Blade*, March 1, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> *Congressional Weekly Report*, Sept. 14, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, July 13, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Fact Sheet of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force entitled 'Capital Gains and Losses in 1996.'

<sup>12</sup> *Washington Blade*, August 16, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, December 27, 1995 and May 9, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, August 16, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Home page of the New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition.

<sup>16</sup> Documents on Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund in Home page of Federal Electoral Commission.

<sup>17</sup> *Washington Blade*, December 26, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> *National Journal*, March 23, 1996, 659.

<sup>19</sup> Documents on Human Rights Commission in Home Page of General Electoral Commission.

<sup>20</sup> Fukashi Horie and Norio Okazawa ed., *Gendai Seijigaku* (Modern Political Science), (Tokyo: Yushindou, 1998) 171.

<sup>21</sup> Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, *Interest Group Politics*, fourth edition. (Washington D.C.: CQ Weekly Press) 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, November 7, 1997.

<sup>23</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, November 24, 1994.