

July 11, 1976

## Speech at NYSCGO Demonstration

David Thorstad

Thorstad was at this time one of the organizers of this demonstration, former president of New York City's Gay Activists Alliance, co-author of the book *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement, 1864-1935*, and plaintiff in a lawsuit filed by the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund challenging the constitutionality of New York State's sodomy law. The NYSCGO was the New York State Council of Gay Organizations.

Sisters and Brothers,

Let me share with you a few things that I know about gay.

I know that gay is good.

I know that gay is proud.

I know that gay is beautiful.

The gay liberation movement taught me that.

But I also know—and I feel it in my guts—that gay is angry! I did not know this at first. At first, I—like so many of us here—turned my anger inward on myself. But the gay liberation movement opened my eyes and taught me how to look around and see oppression where it was. It taught me how to recognize injustice. Now, I hate injustice. Now, I turn my anger outward, at the injustice of this society toward my millions of sisters and brothers. I have learned that the only way to correct injustice is to fight back against it. That's what we're doing today.

And we're fighting not only for ourselves, but also for those millions of homosexuals who have not yet opened their dark closets of fear.

It is sad, but true, that we still have few friends among other oppressed peoples willing to join us in this fight. But their numbers are growing. We know that we are the cutting edge of the revolution for a better world. We know something about oppression. And we know something about freedom too. Freedom is something we have never tasted.

We are here today to send a message to the world. That message is this: So long as one homosexual remains in bondage, no one—whether they be

Black, Indian, Puerto Rican, Chicano, women, or workers—will be free. There can be no revolution without us!

We're here today to demand basic rights that everybody else takes for granted. But we know, deep down, that we're struggling for much more too. We're not satisfied with merely being tolerated—though we're not even *that* yet. We're not satisfied with token gay planks in party platforms—though we did not even get *that* from the Democratic circus performers who will be showing off across the street. No. We want a new and better world, in which gay will be unchained and free. We want a world in which not only we, but everyone else too will know that gay is good and gay is beautiful! We want a society that will throw all the oppression and garbage of capitalism into the trashcan of history.

But we will never be free if we rely on others to free us. We must build our own struggle, as we are doing here today, and make no concessions to anyone. Kurt Hiller, a hero of the early homosexual rights movement in Germany, said it well in 1921: "The liberation of homosexuals can only be the work of homosexuals themselves!"

JUSTICE!