

HOUSTON TOWN MEETING I

JUNE 25, 1978

ADDRESS OF FRANCES T. FARENTHOLD

THE QUESTION HAS ALREADY BEEN PUT TO ME! WHAT BUSINESS DOES A <sup>SUPPOSED</sup> ~~HARRIED~~ WHITE WOMAN WITH FOUR GROWN CHILDREN HAVE ADDRESSING THIS CONVOCATION OF GAY MEN AND WOMEN? THE ANSWER SHOULD BE SELF-EVIDENT.

NO ONE IS FREE UNLESS WE ARE ALL FREE. *A society is neither just nor civilized unless those that are not abused are as abused as those that are*  
WE CANNOT OPEN THE DOOR TO SOME MINORITIES WHILE

DENYING ACCESS TO OTHERS. RACISM IS NOT A "STRAIGHT" ISSUE-MOTHERHOOD AND CHILD-CARE ARE NOT "STRAIGHT" ISSUES-SEXISM, OPPRESSION, AND THE DENIAL OF HUMAN DIGNITY ARE NOT "STRAIGHT" ISSUES-VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION TAKE NO NOTE OF CLASS, COLOR, AGE, CREED OR SEXUAL PREFERENCE. HUMAN RIGHTS IS A UNIVERSAL ISSUE.

ON JUNE 21, 1978, IN WASHINGTON, PRESIDENT ~~JIMMY~~ CARTER TOLD LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE STRONG EMPHASIS TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS DESPITE CRITICISM OF THE POLICY BY SOME GOVERNMENTS.

"MY GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE DETERRED FROM OUR OPEN AND ENTHUSIASTIC POLICY OF PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS, IN WHATEVER WAYS WE CAN," OUR PRESIDENT SAID. AND YET INEQUALITY AND BASIC HUMAN INJUSTICE RUN RAMPANT WITHIN OUR OWN NATION. IT IS TOO EASY TO VIEW HUMAN RIGHTS FROM A DISTANCE. FOR TOO LONG THIS HAS BEEN OUR NATIONAL HABIT. ONE EXAMPLE COMES FROM OUR 19TH CENTURY HERITAGE:

BOSTON MATRONS KNITTING COVERLETS AND CLOTHES FOR IRISH BABIES DURING THE POTATO FAMINE WHILE IN THEIR OWN CITY SIGNS ARE POSTED BARRING THE IRISH FROM PUBLIC FOOD AND LODGINGS. <sup>IMMIGRANTS</sup> TWO HAZARDOUS TYRANNY OF THE 19th <sup>to be original of 124</sup> <sup>124</sup> <sup>LEADERS</sup>

*There are*

SOME HAVE ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO FOLLOW WHO INDULGED IN INTOLERANT RELIGIOSITY. IN NAZI GERMANY NEARLY A QUARTER OF A MILLION HOMOSEXUALS WERE EXECUTED BY THE NAZIS BETWEEN 1937 AND 1945. IN YOUR OWN LOGO FOR TOWN MEETING I, YOU HONOR THOSE LOST PEOPLE WITH THE TRIANGLE. MANY PEOPLE REMEMBER THE YELLOW STAR OF DAVID WORN BY PERSECUTED JEWS BUT FEW RECALL THE PINK TRIANGLE FORCED UPON EUROPEAN HOMOSEXUALS AT THE TIME OF THE HOLOCAUST. LET IT BE REMEMBERED IN AMERICA TODAY. WE IN AMERICA ARE NOT A SOCIETY CAUGHT UP IN GENOCIDE, BUT SUCH INTOLERANT RELIGIOSITY, AS WE HAVE WITNESSED RECENTLY IN THIS COUNTRY, CAN LEAD TO A SIMILAR WHOLESAL DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS HAPPENED

IN GERMANY AND, INDEED, IN THIS COUNTRY IN THE CASE OF RACIAL AND OTHER MINORITIES. IT IS A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM WHICH MUST NOW BE FACED. LIKE ALL MINORITY GROUPS BEFORE,

YOU SHARE THE HERITAGE OF DISCRIMINATION. TIME AFTER TIME IN ITS HISTORY THIS NATION HAS BEEN FORCED TO REALIZE <sup>that</sup> THE RINGING WORDS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON <sup>IN</sup> THE BILL OF RIGHTS HAVE NOT APPLIED TO ALL. THE EXCLUDED ARE STILL HERE. THEY ARE HERE TODAY. "WE COME FROM MANY PASTS," SAYS ADRIENNE RICH, THE POET, "OUT OF THE GHETTO, OUT OF THE HOLOCAUST, OUT OF THE CHURCHES, OUT OF MARRIAGES, OUT OF THE GAY MOVEMENT, THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT", (AND I ADD OUT OF THE ~~BARRIOS~~ <sup>BARRIOS</sup> ~~FRONTIERS~~)--INDEED, A MAJORITY OF THIS NATION SHARES A PAST OF OPPRESSION.

HOUSTON TOWN MEETING I IS THE BEGINNING OF THE REALITY OF A SOCIETY WITH A GOAL OF NOT SIMPLY EQUALITY BUT COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION. THE COMING TOGETHER OF GAY MEN AND WOMEN IS THE FIRST STEP IN A VALUABLE HEALING PROCESS. EVERY OPPRESSED GROUP KNOWS THAT ONLY THROUGH SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE GROUP ITSELF CAN THE POWER FOR CHANGE DEVELOP. DO GAY MEN RECOGNIZE THE DOUBLE BURDEN OF DISCRIMINATION THEIR LESBIAN SISTERS BEAR? ARE LESBIANS SENSITIVE TO THE CHAUVINISM RIFLED AGAINST GAY MEN?

THIS MOVEMENT DEALS WITH MANY OF THE SAME PROBLEMS THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT DEALT WITH. PROBLEMS OF SELF IDENTITY AND SELF ASSURANCE AND TRADITIONS ~~REMOVED~~ OF TIMIDITY HAVE CAUSED POLITICAL SILENCE IN THE PAST. PRIVATE SELVES VS. PUBLIC PERSONS WAS ALWAYS, AND REMAINS, A KEY ISSUE. HOUSTON TOWN MEETING I IS THE FIRST EFFORT TO ADDRESS THESE PROBLEMS. YOU HAVE ORGANIZED. YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED AND ISOLATED THE SOCIAL AND LEGAL INJUSTICES LEVELLED AGAINST YOU. YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE CRISIS OF TIMIDITY. ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS BE IMPLEMENTED. SOME SEEK TO MAKE THIS INTO A RELIGIOUS ISSUE, AND A FEW POLITICIANS SEEK TO MAKE THIS INTO A POLEMICAL TOOL, BUT THIS ISSUE MUST BE SEEN FIRST AND FOREMOST AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE- AN ISSUE SPANNING COLOR, CREED, SEX AND NATIONAL ORIGIN. THE RIGHTS OF THIS LARGE MINORITY CAN NO LONGER BE TRAMPLED. TO CONTINUE TO ALLOW THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH BLATANT DISCRIMINATION IS TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A POLICE STATE-A STATE WHEREIN THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL MAY BE IMPERILED THROUGH THE MEREST RUMOR OR NUANCE.

THE FAMOUS QUOTE OUT OF THE SIXTIES SAYS "WE ARE THE PEOPLE OUR PARENTS WARNED US ABOUT. . ." YES, THE PEOPLE WHO CAN AFFECT PUBLIC POLICY THROUGH DIRECT INTERVENTION; THE PEOPLE WHO CAN CREATE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY, A SOCIETY WHERE ALL MINORITIES

ARE GRANTED FULL MAJORITY RIGHTS-RIGHTS BASIC TO HUMAN  
DIGNITY, EVER OTHER MINORITY <sup>who has gained a foothold</sup> KNOWS IF IT DOES NOT MAKE <sup>in the</sup>  
ITS NEEDS, ITS CONCERNS, ITS COMMITMENTS KNOWN, NO ONE <sup>System</sup>  
ELSE WILL. ~~TODAY IS ONE MORE~~ ~~RESUME~~  
~~THERE WILL BE OTHER~~ ~~MINORITY~~  
~~GROUPS TO FOLLOW.~~  
~~FOR WE ARE~~ <sup>only</sup> ~~A~~ ~~MIDWAY~~ ~~IN OUR~~  
~~JOURNEY TOWARD~~

FTF/PC