



## Voices from the Mountains

Kathleen Kalina

An oxymoron is a group of words where contradictory terms are combined. The combination of the many letters VGLBT may be just that; an oxymoron.

First, let's examine where all these letters came from and why or if they represent homosexuality. We can keep the "V" for Vermont.

Now "G," which stands for Gay, is an old term, probably going back 150 years, used once as a secret code in European homosexual communities to describe both men and women in same gender orientation.

At the turn of the century, certain cafes in Paris were famous for protecting people who asked if it was Gay time, since certain hours made it possible for protection from police. Those homosexuals who gathered at "Gay" times quickly proliferated this term. Homosexuals from all over the world flocked to Paris when their own countries held them in illegal status.

Gertrude Stein described her "charmed circle" of friends as creative and "gay," becoming a hero to repressed Americans starved for homosexual literature. The word "Gay" became what we called ourselves in America after Stein made it seem like a good thing.

After Stonewall, organizations throughout the US — mostly on university campuses — called themselves the "Gay Task Force." I was very active in the beginning of the Gay Task Force at my university in the mid-70s. "Gay" meant men and women at that time.

The task force was supposed to be a political and social protectorate. Many of us worked hard to inch our way through the oppression using the Gay Task Force as our uniting political standard.

Somewhere in the beginning 80s, women started to write about the differences in Lesbian culture from gay men. So some radical Lesbians thought it was a great idea to divide the acronym and give Lesbians a special spot, thus giving men the total use of the

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word "Gay." I resented this change because the Gay Task Force as political units across the country had just made tremendous gains under the name "Gay" and it seemed to give away that word to men.

Anyway, so it went. Men became known as "Gay Men" and women were known as only "Lesbian." Then we had national organizations change to "Gay and Lesbian Task Force." Okay, it sounded ridiculous since we had fought so hard under "Gay," but it evolved and is now well established.

Then a great debate occurred as to whether bisexuals should be protected or included in this political unit. Of course, they already were when they practiced homosexual acts, so why did they need protection when they switch-hit to heterosexual? The debate was not a logical one, but a financial one. Scores of bisexuals would enlarge our membership and bring the financial resources needed to mount a forceful legal campaign. So a few Gay and Lesbian Task Forces in California started to change their acronyms to GLB.

Things were moving very fast and by that time the AIDS campaigns were brokered with anyone to get money to support research.

Nearly anyone would go along with any new acronym in order to get money for curing the disease. But when would the adding of acronyms end?

When operations of changing genders became more successful and the price became more affordable, more people began taking advantage of this transgendering process. I should underline PROCESS. In the 90s, this process wanted political protection under our wing as GLBT. Changing gender has nothing to do with being homosexual, except unless you became a sex that now loved the same sex. If after you changed gender and were attracted to the same sex, then you would be covered under the already existing GLB task force. However, many became heterosexual with their new gender.

So why would a transgendering process need a Gay task force inclusion? Again, more numbers enlarge our population and some groups were swayed to feel liberal in their inclusion. I see no good argument for its political inclusion. Transgendering is a process, not an orientation. The individual has support groups to attend until their operations are fully complete, so there is no correct function for a political Gay task force to include them. When the individual completes his/her operations they will fade into that gender. If they place themselves as women loving women, then they are lesbians. If they are women loving men, then they are heterosexual. It is just that simple, politically speaking.

We are, as a gay community, forging ahead with important legal rights for protection and should stop adding slivers of acronyms that might take away from who we are. With mounting opposition from the Christian right wingers, we have to be more serious about the name of our political organization. What would Gertrude Stein say? and the others who struggled from Stonewall and through the seventies at a great personal price. I think they would want the original Gay Task Force who won our first protections to remain and to collect the rewards. ▼

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