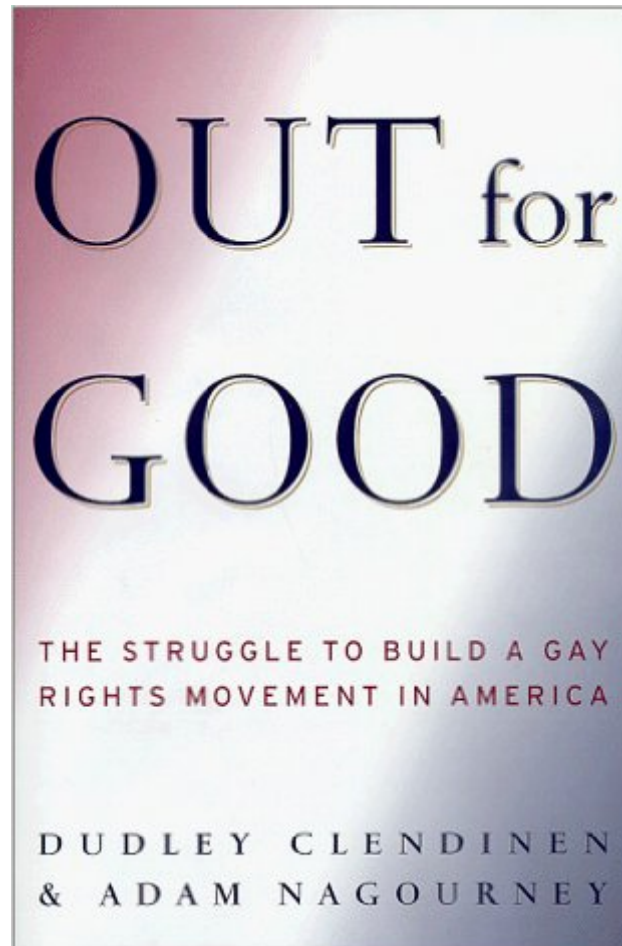


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# Out For Good: The Struggle To Build A Gay Rights Movement In America



## Synopsis

This is the definitive account of the last great struggle for equal rights in the twentieth century. From the birth of the modern gay rights movement at the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969, through 1988, when the gay rights movement was eclipsed by the more urgent demands of AIDS activists, this is the remarkable and until now untold story of how a largely invisible population of men and women banded together to create their place in America's culture and government. Told through the voices of gay activists and their opponents, filled with dozens of colorful characters, *Out for Good* traces the emergence of gay rights movements in cities across the country and their transformation into a national force that changed the face of America forever. Drawing on hundreds of interviews, archival research and reporting in key cities -- New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Atlanta and Washington, D.C., among them -- Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney reveal the political tensions and emotional conflicts that at times tore the movement apart. There are epic plots and battle scenes between gay activists, the Democratic and Republican politicians they sought to move and the opposing forces of the religious right. But there are also surprising struggles between radicals and moderates within the movement, between gay men and lesbians, between lesbians and feminists and between gay activists and AIDS activists. This was, in important ways, a movement without precedent, and the authors describe how it struggled to find leaders and a voice, and eventually succeeded in organizing to affect the outcome of elections throughout the country. *Out for Good* contains vivid portraits of dozens of unheralded figures who founded and shaped the movement, often at great personal risk: Franklin Kameny, the Harvard astronomer fired from his government job who first sued for homosexual rights and ran for Congress from Washington; Martha Shelley, who shouted the gay rights movement into shape in New York; Rev. Troy Perry, who founded the first gay church in Los Angeles; David Goodstein, the autocratic millionaire who bought a gay newspaper to try to put his stamp on the movement; Virginia Apuzzo, the ex-nun who battled at two Democratic National Conventions to get homosexual rights included in the party platform; Del Martin, whose public repudiation of gay male sexism captured the early depths of the difficulties between lesbians and gay men; Ivy Bottini, who was expelled from leadership in the women's movement after her lesbianism became known; Arthur Evans, the philosophy graduate student who drew on the United States Constitution in writing a constitution for the first mainstream gay rights movement founded in New York after Stonewall; and Steve Endean, who built a gay rights movement in Minneapolis and then in the nation's capital before losing a fight for leadership, then his life to AIDS. Like *Parting the Waters*, Taylor Branch's monumental history of the birth of the civil rights movement, *Out for Good* is the unforgettable chronicle of an important --

and nearly lost -- chapter in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The stories and the narrative here are great and well-explained. True, the authors don't explain much about where the characters come from and just tell us that the characters are there and deal with it. Another fault here is that the authors don't really try to carry themes through the book or explain anything within a broader picture. The entire book is in the here and now and there is no big-picture thought. It's good at what it is but I wish the authors had tried to do more. Or maybe they'll write another book...And as always, the role of San Francisco in the GLBT movement gets short shrift. In the book's foreword the authors say that's because SF has been so well-documented. Hogwash. I can name a dozen books that have beat the NYC GLBT movement to death and only a couple about SF (most by one man). Last comment: the authors again ignored the contributions of the various subsets of GLBT culture. In particular the authors never mention the leather community nor the drag community except in passing and as kind of footnotes to what everyone else did. That's revisionist history and gives short shrift to some of the hardest-workers in the movement. Come on guys, a leatherman started the Advocate and the first GLBT community center, for example, yet neither is mentioned in those terms.

Clendinen and Nagourney have performed a detailed documentation of a period in gay history (1950s through the late 80's) with a typical emphasis during the five year period surrounding the 1969 Stonewall riot. The history serves as a rich illustration of the individuals (although lacking in

academic detail as to why certain people were chosen to be highlighted and others were not). The book is based on a series of interviews made during 1993 and especially 1994, with many who are no longer living. As such, the period of time to document the interviews and then the prolonged period to get to print creates a book that while rich in period detail (1965-1975) rapidly peters out in its discussion of AIDS, election of Clinton, etc. which have created far greater impacts on Gay rights, Gay Culture and the evolving acceptance (as slow as it is) of gay people in American society. A strong point is its balanced view and discussion of the gay movement prior to Stonewall and its attempt to demystify the importance given to this one particular event. Its discussion of the ongoing conflicts between the various social classes involved in the gay movement and showing that this was present from the very start is important for any younger gay person today trying to understand why certain ongoing tensions and conflicts exist in the gay community and why certain national gay rights groups exist (e.g., NGLTF, HRC, etc.).

This is an unsatisfactory book, mean-spirited and inaccurate. The authors reduce the homophile (pre-Stonewall) movement, the Gay Liberation Front, and the Gay Activists Alliance to a series of petty squabbles. They utterly fail to appreciate the courage and magnanimity of the pioneers in the struggle for gay rights. They fail to convey the radical vision of GLF or the political savvy of GAA. The most important publications, activities and demonstrations are not even mentioned. People who willingly sacrificed their careers for the movement are denigrated in crass physical terms -- as "roly poly" or looking like a "string bean" or a "turtle", or having a "nasal" voice, or sounding like a "foghorn", or being "tight little-old-mannish". There are dozens and dozens of mistakes. The authors seem unaware that Morty Manford was a President of GAA. They don't know the year of the GAA fire (1974), or that GAA continued on a smaller scale for a number of years after that. Above all, the book is BORING. And whatever else you can say about the gay liberation movement of the '70s, it was not boring.

As both authors are press people, it is not surprising that the most consistent criticism of this book is the lack of context and background. It is often said that news writers sacrifice the larger picture for the sake of detail. That also applies to news writers doing history. That said, this is a damn good book, primarily because of the details. For those thinking the account is too New York centric (after all the two authors come from the New York Times), all I can say is that the contributions from places other than New York and San Francisco (such as Minnesota and Miami) are acknowledged. However for me the biggest elephant in the room for this book is the almost total

neglect of the news and popular media's role in the shaping of the gay movement. I always thought newspaper people like to talk about their business. But it seems that the authors prefer the "fly on the wall" position. And I think that is a bit dishonest.

this is the first book i have seen that truly only focuses on the gay rights movement in the last half of the twentieth century in america. it is one of the most captivating nonfiction books i have read in a long time and i had trouble putting it down. this book is perfect for any body who has an interest in the gay rights movement... or any movement for civil rights.

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