



# Homophobia: A History

By Byrne Fone

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## Homophobia: A History By Byrne Fone

In this *tour de force* of historical and literary research, Fone, an acclaimed expert on gay and lesbian history and professor emeritus at the City University of New York, chronicles the evolution of homophobia through the centuries. Delving into literary sources as diverse as Greek philosophy, Elizabethan poetry, the Bible, and the Victorian novel, as well as historical texts and propaganda ranging from the French Revolution to the Moral Majority to the transcripts of current TV talk shows, Fone reveals how and why same-sex desire has long been the object of legal, social, religious, and political persecution.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"Antipathy, condemnation, loathing, fear and proscription of homosexual behavior" have taken many forms over the centuries. In this lucid history, Fone (The Columbia Encyclopedia of Gay Literature) charts the ways in which homophobia has induced legal, medical, social and ecclesiastical authorities to punish and kill gay men. Drawing upon accepted classics of gay studies—John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, David F. Greenberg's *Construction of Homosexuality* and Jonathan Ned Katz's *Gay/Lesbian Almanac*, as well as other books and articles—Fone's compendium of social intolerance argues that, despite social progress, hating homosexuals is "the last acceptable prejudice." The litany of horrors—biblical condemnation, slander, whipping, imprisonment, drowning, garroting and castration—is chilling, yet even more disturbing is the author's contention that violence against homosexuals has been central to Western culture. Nonetheless, several flaws keep the book from becoming more than a well-written primer. For one, Fone contributes little original research, instead relying on traditional lesbian and gay scholarship, yet he ignores some of the newest, most challenging work in the field (such as Carolyn Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval*). Most provocatively, while he addresses the differences between essentialist and social constructionist theories of gay identity, he declares that homophobia has a clear, unchanging, social and political character. Also problematic is the book's failure to address the violence perpetuated against lesbians. Still, at a time when the word "homophobia" is dismissed by many as politically correct rhetoric, Fone's work remains a powerful introduction to the undeniable historical impact of the attitudes it describes. (Aug.)

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From Library Journal

Recognizing that homophobia manifests itself in many forms over time, Fone (emeritus, CUNY), compiler of the definitive *Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature* and author of the highly acclaimed novel *American Studies*, suggests that a better term for the phenomena he seeks to explicate is the plural, homophobias, to indicate the variety of expressions of feeling: fear, contempt, disgust, hatred, and prejudice. His historical survey focuses on prejudice against male homosexuality in the West. Each section consists of several essays on particular eras (e.g., Antiquity, Enlightenment, Victorian) and aspects (legal, religious, psychological) of the topic in Western culture. Breathtaking in scope, Fone's work shines with his ability to synthesize vast amounts of material coherently and accessibly. This is not simply a chronology, since his interpretations are thorough and well documented. Recommended for all academic libraries and larger public libraries. D.D.S. Azzolina, Univ. of Pennsylvania Libs., Philadelphia

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Review

"This sweeping introduction to homophobia throughout Western history offers an illuminating . . . way to survey the dimensions of acceptance." ?*Alison Shonkwiler, Out Magazine*

"At a time when the word 'homophobia' is dismissed by many as politically correct rhetoric, Fone's work remains a powerful introduction to the undeniable historical impact of the attitudes it describes." ?*Publishers Weekly*

"An important work, *Homophobia: A History* successfully records a portion of the often elusive past of a largely invisible and highly vilified minority." ?*David Massengill, Seattle Weekly*

"How did sex between men start out as an admired act of masculinity and end up as a shameful badge of

effeminacy? How did homosexual love and sex, which were seen as important to the development of virtue, nobility, and the foundation of a strong society, become an enemy of the state? Fone answers these questions in exquisite detail with a masterful command of history, a balanced interpretation of contradictory documents, and an explosive set of assertions that fly against the conventional view of not just homophobes but of gay people themselves.” ?*Michael Alvear, Salon*

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#### **Melissa Peterson:**

This Homophobia: A History book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is definitely information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This kind of Homophobia: A History without we understand teach the one who looking at it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't always be worry Homophobia: A History can bring once you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even phone. This Homophobia: A History having fine arrangement in word and layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

#### **Louise Suttle:**

Homophobia: A History can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that can increase your knowledge in words, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing Homophobia: A History but doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource details that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information could drawn you into completely new stage of crucial considering.

#### **Jeff Keenan:**

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