



The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture

John D'Emilio

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Something happened in the 1990s, something dramatic and irreversible. A group of people long considered a moral menace and an issue previously deemed unmentionable in public discourse were transformed into a matter of human rights, discussed in every institution of American society. Marriage, the military, parenting, media and the arts, hate violence, electoral politics, public school curricula, human genetics, religion: Name the issue, and the role of gays and lesbians was a subject of debate. During the 1990s, the world seemed finally to turn and take notice of the gay people in its midst. In *The World Turned*, distinguished historian and leading gay-rights activist John D'Emilio shows how gay issues moved from the margins to the center of national consciousness during the critical decade of the 1990s.

In this collection of essays, D'Emilio brings his historian's eye to bear on these profound changes in American society, culture, and politics. He explores the career of Bayard Rustin, a civil rights leader and pacifist who was openly gay a generation before almost everyone else; the legacy of radical gay and lesbian liberation; the influence of AIDS activist and writer Larry Kramer; the scapegoating of gays and lesbians by the Christian Right; the gay-gene controversy and the debate over whether people are "born gay"; and the explosion of attention focused on queer families. He illuminates the historical roots of contemporary debates over identity politics and explains why the gay community has become, over the last decade, such a visible part of American life.

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