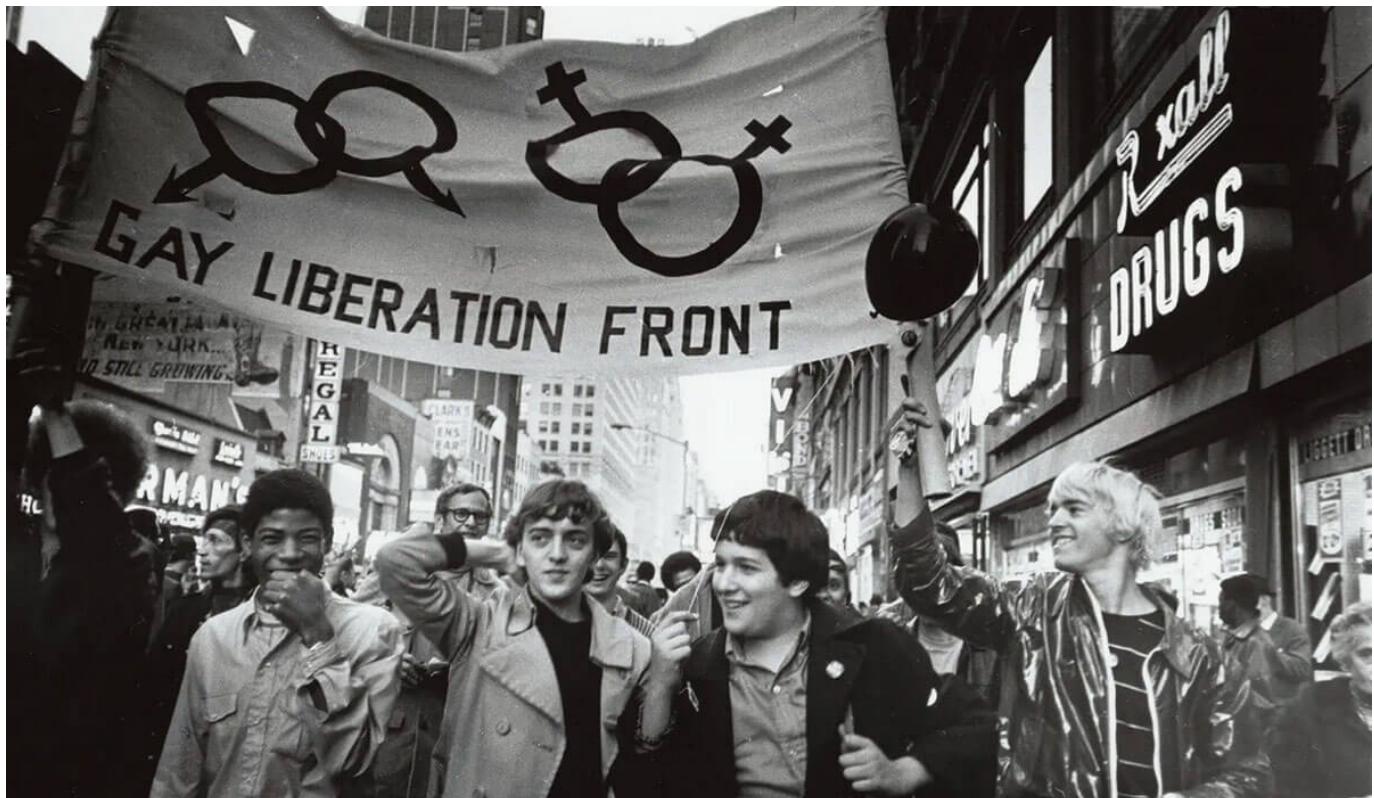


Inside the Bay Area's Gay Liberation Front with Bob McCubbin

written by Gregory E. Williams
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A Gay Liberation Front march in Times Square in the fall of 1969.

Following is part two of an interview with gay communist activist Bob McCubbin, who has organized and written political analysis since the 1960s. He is the author of the 2019 book, [The Social Evolution of Humanity: Marx and Engels were right!](#) For Pride month, Struggle-La Lucha writer Gregory E. Williams sat down with McCubbin to explore the revolutionary history of the LGBTQ+ struggle and what it means for today's fight back.

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Gregory Williams: We're getting into what the beginning of the gay movement was like. Nowadays we say LGBTQ+, because we're constantly trying to be more expansive, with a bigger and bigger vision of liberation, including more and more people. But what was it like? You're describing how the youth in the late 1960s and early '70s were taking inspiration from the Vietnamese and other anti-colonial struggles. Was there a strong sense in the emerging movement that it needed to be anti-capitalist? Was that a common sentiment?

Bob McCubbin: Good question. In Sam Marcy's party, the guideline that he presented to the youth was Marxism is as Marxism does, meaning the focus needs to be on the struggle. The struggle is what educates our class and our understanding of oppressed nations' struggles.

Let me try to describe the San Francisco Gay Liberation Front. We met once a week to discuss activities. One of the Gay Liberation Front organization's tasks was to join the struggle - struggle for their own rights and the struggle for the rights of their siblings, while also struggling for other members of their class. And we did.

I remember making a banner to free Angela Davis and Ruchell McGee, and we took it, as the Gay Liberation Front, to the following rally. And we're talking the Bay Area, San Francisco Bay Area. So we were activists, no question about it.

Another very important example I remember was a young man who was shot trying to escape a bar raid by the San Francisco police. He managed to get out of the bar, but while running toward his car, the police shot him. And we met with him in the hospital, and his request to us as an organization was, please see if you can do a fundraiser for me. I have legal expenses and medical expenses.

So, who came to our aid to organize a fundraiser? It was the San Francisco local of the West Coast Longshore Union. They had a union hall in San Francisco and turned it over to us to have a fundraiser. It was very successful, hundreds of young people of all genders and sexualities, definitely. We just loved it.

As chaperones for our event, four of the union officers attended the fundraiser, and they found seats along the wall and smiled a lot, but they didn't join our circle dances. But my point is how wonderful it was to have the support of a workers' organization. And they were into it. I mean, they weren't there to make sure we weren't smoking marijuana. They were there to show their support for us, and they were very friendly.

I've given us a flavor of our activism, but there was another very important role for the LGBTQ+ movement back then. And it was to find personal strength, to help us find personal strength to accept ourselves. Certainly, I was an example of it.

There wasn't much consciousness of gender oppression and what it signified and how important it was. But on the other hand, I don't know how prevalent this was around the country, but in our group, we had what was called "gender fuck." And it would involve, well, whatever you wanted to do, but people would show up with full beards, wearing a skirt, or any kinds of interesting variations on gender expressions and sexuality expressions.

And getting support for that, not being ridiculed, not being laughed at, but being loved. And that was a very important part of it, too. You know, if, say, a heterosexual revolutionary came to one of our meetings and said, "you're wasting all this time." No, it wasn't a waste at all. It was finding personal strength.

But maybe here is a good point to throw in a lesson about the struggle under capitalism. We never win until the final battle. That is to say, we're talking about Stonewall, we're talking about 1969. It was a long, long time ago. We won our rights back then. Oh, did we?

GW: Look at everything happening now.

BM: Now, it's like the past never happened. And the focus, of course, is on our trans folk. And it's horrible what's going on. That's part of fascism.

GW: It's important to understand that. There were big victories in the past, and a lot of advances were made, but until the foundations of the society are changed, until capitalism is overthrown and we start to create a new society - socialism - those gains can be taken away in one fell swoop. That's the job of fascism: to come in like a wrecking ball and destroy all these gains.

Look at the way the Supreme Court overthrew Roe v. Wade, and now women are dying of sepsis. And trans people who get pregnant are dying of sepsis because the doctor's afraid to treat them. This is just going totally backwards. The struggle is not

over. We're in an intensified period of fighting.

I think it's important for the young people, especially right now, to get an infusion of hope and revolutionary optimism. Because every struggle that's happened - you can probably testify to this throughout your life - the people needed to have revolutionary optimism in order to keep on fighting. And that's so needed right now. We need to have a vision of an alternative kind of society.

BM: It doesn't have to be this way.

