



Homophobia: A History

Byrne Fone

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The first comprehensive history of homophobia—from ancient Athens to the halls of Congress—this bold, original work is certain to become a classic.

It is the last acceptable prejudice. In an age when racial and ethnic name-calling are viewed with distaste, and physical epithets are frowned upon, hatred of homosexuals remains rife. Now, in a tour de force of historical and literary research, Byrne Fone chronicles the evolution of homophobia through the centuries. Delving into literary sources as diverse as Greek philosophy, the Bible, Elizabethan poetry, and the Victorian novel, as well as historical texts and propaganda from the French Revolution to the Moral Majority, Fone finds that same-sex desire has always been the object of legal, social, and religious persecution. Fone shows how the biblical story of Sodom became the primary source for later prohibitions against homosexuality. He charts the subtle shifts in public attitudes and law, from Anglo-Saxon edicts that imposed death by burning upon "confess'd sodomytes," to Victorian decrees that punished sodomy with "forfeiture of all rights, including procreation" (i.e., castration). Sifting the evidence of our own times, including Reader's Digest articles and TV talk-show transcripts, Fone demonstrates that homophobia remains one of the central tenets of law, science, faith, and literature, and defines the very essence of what it means to be male or female. Written by an acclaimed expert in gay and lesbian history, *Homophobia* is the best sort of history: lively, accessible, and enlightening.

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