



Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation

Sherry Wolf

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation

Sherry Wolf

Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation Sherry Wolf

Sexuality and Socialism is a remarkably accessible analysis of many of the most challenging questions for those concerned with full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

Inside are essays on the roots of LGBT oppression, the construction of sexual and gender identities, the history of the gay movement, and how to unite the oppressed and exploited to win sexual liberation for all. Sherry Wolf analyzes different theories about oppression—including those of Marxism, postmodernism, identity politics, and queer theory—and challenges myths about genes, gender, and sexuality.

“**Sexuality and Socialism** is the most intelligent and enlightened discussion on sexuality to come from the Left in a long time. No other work that comes to my mind explains the history of sexuality and sexual repression in the United States as comprehensively and compellingly.”—**Ron Jacobs**, *Dissident Voice*

“Sherry Wolf: Lesbian, Activist, Communist & Badass-ist... spoke to a pre-National Equality March rally. She. Blew. It. Up.”—*Austin Chronicle*

“Sherry speaks with such eloquence and plain common sense that I can't help but want to know more about her ideas and convictions.”—**Derek Washington**, “In the LV” radio host, Director of LGBT Outreach, Clark County Democratic Black Caucus

“The icons of the new generation of activists are people like Lady Gaga, Dustin Lance Black, Judy Shephard, Lt. Daniel Choi (ret.) and Sherry Wolf (author of **Sexuality and Socialism**).”—**Don Gorton**, Join the Impact Board Member

“Surprisingly funny, very readable and a fitting tome for a new movement in these troubled times.”—**Dave Zirin** for *Progressive's* Best Books of 2009

“‘What humans have constructed they can tear down.’ This is the powerful insight of this rare book that is at once politically important, theoretically and historically sophisticated, and clearly written. **Sexuality and Socialism** is enlivened in its engagement with a number of controversies, including those over the alleged biological determination of homosexuality, the myth of Black homophobia, and the consequences of postmodernist theories for the politics of gay liberation. Above all else, Wolf puts forward a cogent defense of the Marxist tradition—long and wrongly reviled as homophobic in itself—as a way to explain how LGBT oppression arose and what we can do to put it to bed.”—**Dana Cloud**, University of Texas at Austin

Sherry Wolf is the associate editor of the International Socialist Review. She was on the executive committee of the National Equality March Oct. 11, 2009 and has written for publications including the *Nation*, *MRZine*, *Counterpunch*, *Dissident Voice*, and *Socialist Worker* and speaks frequently across the country on the struggle for LGBT liberation as well as a wide range of social and economic justice issue.

Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation Details

Date : Published June 1st 2009 by Haymarket Books

ISBN : 9781931859790

Author : Sherry Wolf

Format : Paperback 278 pages

Genre : Lgbt, History, Politics, Nonfiction, Glbt, Queer



[**Download Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory ...pdf**](#)



[**Read Online Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theor ...pdf**](#)

Download and Read Free Online Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation Sherry Wolf

From Reader Review Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation for online ebook

Willow says

I'm a few chapters in and I LOVE it so far. It's really appealing to my geeky history and queer theory loving activist heart.

Alexis Charitos says

I recommend this book to anyone interested in sexuality and socialism, and how the two may be connected. The argument is clear and the book is well referenced.

Benjamin Solah says

Sexuality and Socialism by Sherry Wolf is described as the 'History, Politics and Theory of LGBT Liberation.' A book like this that covers the issues of sexuality and homophobia under capitalism is a long overdue contribution to socialist politics, but especially timely given the struggles all over the world for same-sex marriage rights.

The book covers such a broad scope of different issues within the issues of LGBT oppression and liberation that I cannot possibly cover all of it in one review. It begins with the theoretical and historical origins of sexual oppression under capitalism and makes the argument that the repression of sexuality and things like homophobia are the product of the material conditions and the economic needs of capitalism. This is in stark contrast to explanations that homophobia is in our human nature or just from the religion and the bad ideas in our heads.

It goes on to cover the gay liberation movement of the 60s and 70s and the theory surrounding much of LGBT politics. It then goes on to cover contemporary struggles and debates today.

Sherry Wolf links in all of the arguments within the context of class society and the nature of capitalism. Homophobia and other forms of sexual repression are not divorced from other forms of oppression and the needs of exploiting workers to make a profit.

This is used to argue against the prevalence of 'identity politics,' the idea that all LGBT people have a common experience of oppression and a common interest in fighting it. In fact, LGBT workers need to organise separately from LGBT business owners who are tied to the existence of capitalism.

She argues that straight workers have more in common with LGBT workers because they both have a common interest in defending their conditions as workers and fighting their exploiters. Despite homophobia within the working class, Wolf argues that straight workers don't benefit or gain an advantage by partaking in homophobia as it weakens the working class, divides and distracts workers from the class struggle.

Another aspect of the book that needs to be touched on is the fact that she covers issues of transgender and intersex. This is something that hasn't really been touched on before in other Marxist literature about sexuality and it's covered in quite an extensive way.

One point though that wasn't touched that is sometimes controversial even within the socialist movement is that I think transgender can sometimes be seen as a product of capitalism and the gender norms that come in it. This isn't to take away from the fact that trans people have the right to have sex changes of identify as another gender but the fact the capitalist society assigns ways of behaving to particular genders, such as women being feminine and men being masculine means that if you don't fit into these norms then you can feel like you don't fit into your body.

I would argue that under a socialist society that this feeling would be less prevalent because you wouldn't need to conform to the gender norms and there wouldn't be such a connection between gender biology and your behaviour.

Sexuality and Socialism covers a lot and does it clearly. It mixes theoretical and historical explanations with concrete and often emotive contemporary examples that make these issues feel real and connect with the reader. This book is also something that can be re-read in parts as a kind of reference book on Marxists' attitudes to various issues of LGBT oppression and liberation.

I heartily recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the topics of sexuality, homophobia and LGBT politics.

Originally published @ <http://www.benjaminsolah.com/blog/?p=...>

Dave says

Oh boy I finished this months ago.

ak says

I mean it's certainly not the most FUN book I've ever read but I think it was worth a read for queer people and leftists fighting for liberation from oppressive systems.

Janet Mason says

This commentary will air on This Way Out, the LGBT radio syndicate, and also appears on <http://amusejanetmason.com>

Sexuality and Socialism:
History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation
Sherry Wolf
Haymarket Books (2009)

It is said that the personal is political and I find that the opposite – that the political is personal – is true also, perhaps more so. Consider, for example, the epithet Commie Pinko Queer. When the term originated and was hurled at artists and Progressives of all stripes during the McCarthy era, it certainly was personal. The Hollywood blacklisting by the House Un-American Activities Committee led to the ruin of legions.

More than half a century later, the connotations of the word “Pink” – now associated with post (haste) feminist stardom – are being hurled again in the term “socialist.”

Many decades removed from the McCarthy witch hunt for Commie Pinko Queers – I’ve joked that two out of three isn’t bad. Now, many of us are thinking, “What’s so bad about socialism?”

Let’s claim it.

I came to this thought after reading Sherry Wolf’s *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation*.

As Wolf points out, several early champions of the LGBT Liberation movement were involved in the struggle of workplace organizing as well as LGBT rights. “Harry Hay, the founder of the first U.S. gay organization, the Mattachine Society, got his start as a union organizer in the 1930s and 1940s in New York Department Store Workers Union with the International Workers of the World.”

And Harvey Milk, elected San Francisco supervisor in 1977, built a coalition of labor and gay activism by working with the labor unions in organizing a boycott of Coors Beer in the gay bars. In return, the labor unions supported activism against the 1978 Briggs Initiative that threatened to ban gays and lesbians and anyone who supported gay rights from working in California’s public schools.

Sexuality and Socialism serves up quite a bit of LGBT history as well as political analysis and theory. Wolf touches on mid 19th Century accounts of women passing as men such as Bill in Missouri, the secretary of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, of whom it was said, “She drank...she swore, she courted girls, she worked hard as her fellows, she fished and camped, she even chewed tobacco.”

Wolf also points out that even though gays and Communist Party members were persecuted alike under McCarthy in the 1950s, that the Communist Party remained steadfast in its hostility toward homosexuality, denouncing it as a “bourgeois deviation.” She also points out that the word “socialism” is often used in vain, used in various contexts – from governments to splinter groups – to describe systems of thinking and ruling that do not, in fact, support liberation.

Ultimately, *Sexuality and Socialism* led this reader to the conclusion that given that theory is almost always separate from practice, then all political systems are flawed.

However, when words are used as epithets – whether it’s Socialist or Commie or Pinko or Queer – they are intended to create a climate of fear. And only when we stand strong and together, will this fear lose its power.

Anna S says

Really clearly makes connections between the needs of capitalism, the family, the material construction of heterosexuality & couple-form. It's stridently materialist, which is a rarity & to be welcomed as a

counterpoint to much present writing on these topics. I found the politics of the passages about gay marriage & queer politics unconvincing, and some of the causal relationships posited needed more fleshing out (just cos something would be good for the ruling class doesn't mean it just is like that). Thought the attack on postmodernism applied mostly to the worst of it & misrepresented Butler but still a fan of the author's vigorous anti-idealism. Wonderful sections on Marxist attitudes to sexuality (though I suspect a little self promoting in parts) & interesting bits on working class organising and alliance building wrt LGBT issues. Definitely worth reading!

Michelle says

It was an interesting read, but it's definitely dated and I personally felt that Sexuality and Marxism would have been a more fitting title. The writer seemed to me (as a fairly socialist person myself) far more left leaning than the more commonly accepted definition of socialism. It often came across as borderline militant in the methods suggested by the author. That said, it would be interesting to read a more updated version of this, since this book was written pre-marriage equality, and prior to many of the other advances the LGBTQ community has made in the Obama era.

Larry-bob Roberts says

Fairly balanced review from Christopher Phelps where he point out a lack of attention to anarchist viewpoints (Free Comrades Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States 1895-1917 might be a good corrective to that) and some inaccuracy as concerns Harry Hay's activities :
<http://www.isreview.org/issues/68/rev...>
(the review appears in the ISR, a publication of the ISO, of which Sherry Wolf is a member.)

6655321 says

Sherry Wolf repeatedly miscites sources to construct a nonexistent history (citing party theorists who were censored for their pro sex views as exemplars of the communist tradition or ignoring information about the reconceptualization of sexuality under the early soviets & etc.) to then retread her misinformed argument against queer theory as anti materialist (while idealistically positing a unitary working class or pretending socially marginal queer folk make sense under the labor theory of value) this book wasn't a very good argument in 1992 and it has aged even worse

Chelsey says

A very important book for all people-- not just LGBT activists-- to read, giving a brief, critical history of the roots of LGBT oppression, the birth of an LGBT identity, a critique of post-modernist de-mobilization which divides rather than unites, and ultimately a history of the triumphs and solidarity which has involved LGBT activism. Many of the issues Sherry brings up I am confronting first-hand in attempting to bring together a viable, grassroots coalition of LGBT activists after the National Equality March. While Sherry makes a few mistakes in her writings, but these are of no consequence to her overarching point. Written in every-day,

accessible language (as always with Haymarket publications), Sexuality and Socialism was a pleasure to read, and it's a pleasure to have Sherry Wolf as a comrade.

Mark says

An absolute must-read for anyone serious about LGBT liberation.

AJ says

3.5 stars
