

Who is Dr. Charles Silverstein?

NARTH has recently been attacked by gay activists for denying membership to psychologist Charles Silverstein.

Activists writing on the American Psychoanalytic Association's Internet site and in issues of *The American Psychoanalyst* (30/3 and 30/4) have made this issue a *cause celebre*. We therefore believe we must respond.

These writers' conclusion is that NARTH "actively discriminates against homosexuals," is closed to divergent opinions, and is--yes of course--homophobic. In actuality, NARTH members include homosexuals and former homosexuals; some of those former homosexuals are now psychotherapists treating homosexual patients.

Why might NARTH not be receptive to the work of Dr. Silverstein? Let us examine the professional contributions of this man whom gay activists insist should be a member of our organization.

Who, in fact, is Charles Silverstein?

An Update on the Professional Contributions of Dr. Charles Silverstein

Charles Silverstein was one of the major expert witnesses at the American Psychiatric Association in 1973, arguing persuasively that homosexuality was not an illness. Silverstein reviewed the literature for the committee making the decision, and his observations were given respectful credence. He outlined the work of Evelyn Hooker, Alfred Kinsey, and Ford and Beach, and testified to the APA that homosexuality must be considered *normal and healthy*.

"Since none of the committee members was an expert on homosexuality, there was considerable interest in the data...much of which was new to those who would have to evaluate the issues," said one observer (1).

After he had successfully made his argument to that committee, Dr. Silverstein went on to make his next professional contribution: he wrote *The Joy of Gay Sex* and most recently, *The New Joy of Gay Sex* (1992, Harper), both of which are carried widely in public libraries.

The following are some section headings from the lavishly illustrated *New Joy*:

Bondage	Sadomasochism
Bottoms Up	Scat [gay slang for sex play with feces]
Daddy-Son Fantasies	Sex with Animals
Dangerous Sex	Sit on My Face
Doggy Style	Tearooms and Backrooms
Fisting	Three Ways
F--k Buddies	Tricking
Orgies	Water Sports [sex play with urine]
Rimming	

How to Throw an Orgy According to Dr. Silverstein:

"Over the years three-ways have become, if not common, then at least not unheard of -- especially in some long-term gay relationships.

Like the best movies, the best orgies are carefully orchestrated in advance...

"More than one gay youth has been astounded to discover that his presence (in a state of excitation if not undress) was all that was needed to begin an orgy among a group of men...There are several ways to bring the participants together. ... Or, you can go out and round up likely candidates.

"These days, in larger cities, one finds semiprivate or pay-as-you-go clublike orgies staged every week (same time, same place) at someone's loft in the city or house in the hills.

"Once everyone (or a quorum, at least) is assembled, the biggest problem is getting the orgy started. One way to break the ice is to greet your guests at the door naked, or in a jockstrap, or in underwear (torn, of course).

"Practical hints:... Lock up your valuables, and place towels, lubricants, and condoms in conspicuous places.

"...Appropriate music can help an orgy succeed. Pop music shouldn't be too soft or sentimental. Quiet jazz (though not blues) and disco with its insistent, repetitive rhythms are good bets for sustaining a hot, pounding, sexual mood."

Dr. Charles Socarides has a different interpretation of the appeal of such orgies: (2)

"It gives them psychic pleasure, a kind of relief. When Silverstein and White, in *The Joy of Gay Sex*, talk about the after-feeling of 'great tranquility,' I have to think of it as some kind of fix."

Dr. Silverstein further offers explicit advice to the uninitiated (with the help of graphic illustrations) on how to relax in order to achieve deeper penetration in anal sex and fisting, advocating a sex practice that is causing sickness and death at epidemic levels.

In light of this cursory review of Dr. Silverstein's "credentials," I hereby publicly challenge his supporters to defend his contribution to either psychoanalysis, or the advancement of the physical or mental health of our young people.

(1) Bayer, Ronald, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry*, Basic Books, 1991.

(2) Socarides, Charles, *A Freedom Too Far*, Adam Margrave Books, 1996.