

The Lavender Scare: Persecution of Lesbianism During the Cold War

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The Cold War era of the 1950s is often connected with the “Red Scare” and the idea that the spread of communism must be stopped no matter the cost. People remember the persecution that those who were suspected of being affiliated with the Communist Party faced. What is often forgotten within textbooks is something that many refer to as the “Lavender Scare,” which was the fear that homosexuals had infiltrated the government and that they were spreading their influence throughout the United States. Persecution of female homosexuals was pervasive during this time. The Lavender Scare had detrimental effects on lesbians, such as the loss of jobs, military status, social status, and isolation from society. However, the attempts to rid American society of the “disease” of lesbianism, especially in the government, military, and entertainment industries, actually led to the establishment of a lesbian subculture, which was much stronger than it had ever been, and which would eventually be instrumental in the later movement for equal rights for homosexuals. That being said, the social isolation and discrimination experienced by all lesbian women often had severely detrimental effects on their mental and emotional health, so even if they were not directly persecuted by the Lavender Scare, they all suffered from its prejudice.

In order to understand the perception of lesbianism in the fifties and its effect on lesbian women, it is important to understand opinions about lesbianism from earlier decades and how they evolved. In the late nineteenth century, the term “lesbian” did not even exist. Homosexuality was a concept that was rarely discussed in the United States, especially in reference to women.

Sodomy was illegal; however, it was considered to be such a terrible and evil act that it was never connected with the loving relationships that were sometimes fostered between two men or two women.¹ Women were considered “passionless,” so a sexual relationship between two women was not even considered possible. Relationships between women were often referred to as romantic friendships. Romantic friendships between women were often loving unions that lasted a lifetime.² These friendships did not have the negative connotation attached to them that later relationships between women would have. Women had grown up with the notion that love between female friends was to be expected.³

Romantic friendships were helped along by the fact that women in the nineteenth century were becoming increasingly involved in activism like the suffrage and feminist movements, which offered more interaction time with other women. These relationships were most common in middle-class women, which meant if they were not going to get married, they would need to get an education in order to be financially stable without a husband.⁴ Education came to play an essential role in the spread of romantic relationships between females, and as more romantic friendships came along, sexual relationships between women became more common as well.

As romantic friendships became more prevalent, ideas about relationships between women came under scrutiny. Sexologists began to look at these relationships as homosexuality and believed that it was a condition that a woman was born with. A lesbian woman was considered an invert – a female who had been born with a male soul.⁵ In the early twentieth century, this idea that had been mostly circulated between professionals in the medical field became popular throughout American society via fiction. In most instances, lesbians in fiction

¹ Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 4.

² *Ibid.*, 55.

³ Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991), 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵ Miller, *Out of the Past*, 14.

works were depicted as violent and immoral women.⁶ In colleges, women were being warned to avoid other women who were “too affectionate.”⁷ These were examples of the negative attitude society had toward lesbians.

For lesbians of the early twentieth century, there was a positive side to this theory that women were born lesbians. Discussion of the issue allowed women to know that there were others like them. Acknowledging their homosexuality as an inborn trait also meant that women did not necessarily have to eventually marry heterosexually.⁸ This awareness of lesbianism in addition to the sexual revolution of the 1920s would lead to the lesbian culture in certain enclaves that accepted lesbianism – as long as there were at least some bisexual tendencies.⁹ These enclaves allowed lesbians to express themselves freely in a society that even during a so-called sexual revolution was not willing to accept homosexuality and frowned upon the actions of these women.

Hateful and fearful attitudes toward homosexuality were common in the 1920s, but they were very important to the lesbian subculture that would continue to grow. During the 1930s, the economic disaster made it impractical for women to live a lesbian lifestyle because it was almost economically necessary for them to be married. The negative view of homosexuality continued to grow in the thirties, as lesbian women were often considered sick and or sinful.¹⁰ Along with the awareness and hatred of homosexuality though, lesbians were coming together, and the growth of the lesbian subculture was continuing. During World War Two in the 1940s, lesbians found that it was much easier for them to meet each other and love one another with the men off at war and women being put into the workforce. Lesbians’ relative inability to live independently during the Great Depression was alleviated in during the war. A limited level of tolerance existed toward

⁶ Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 54.

⁷ Ellen Skinner, *Women and the National Experience: Sources in Women’s History* (Boston, MA: Prentice Hall, 1996), 267.

⁸ Faderman, *Odd Girls* 57.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

lesbianism in the female military auxiliaries.¹¹ The situation was looking relatively better for homosexual women during the war. That would end dramatically with the conclusion of war and the goal of a return to “normalcy.” Lesbians were once again considered sick and in need of psychiatric help in order to cure their illness.¹² This atmosphere set the stage for the persecution that lesbians would face during the Cold War Era of the 1950s.

The Cold War Era was a time of fear and suspicion. The fear of the spread of communism throughout the world and especially to the United States led many to become highly suspicious of anything or anyone outside of the norm. In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed that 205 Communists were working within the State Department.¹³ However, what is less frequently remembered is that McCarthy also claimed 91 homosexuals were working within the State Department and were also considered “security risks.” These 91 people had been asked to step down from their jobs.¹⁴ This statement brought into the light for the government and the public that homosexuals were everywhere and that they should be considered a threat to national security because of their deviant status. It was also believed that gays and lesbians would be security risks because they were susceptible to blackmail and because they were already morally debased.¹⁵ Ironically, the only reason lesbians were considered a security risk was because their homosexuality was a secret they were forced to hide from society. About 12,600,000 people, twenty percent of the American workforce, faced “loyalty security investigations.”¹⁶ These investigations included not only investigating the loyalty of workers, but also their morality. An investigation that found a worker to be a homosexual would normally lead to the conclusion that that worker was immoral and could lead to the loss of his or her job.

¹¹ Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 125.

¹² *Ibid.*, 130.

¹³ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 34.

¹⁶ John D’emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 46.

Persecution of lesbians was common throughout this time. The loss of jobs, social status, economic status, and psychological stability were some of the major effects on lesbian women. Being suspected of being a homosexual during this era was just as serious as being suspected of being a Communist, as it was believed that homosexuality was equally as dangerous as Communism.¹⁷ The extreme negativity toward lesbians in politics would also carry over to society, where lesbians were constantly harassed and berated. In addition, people were so afraid to be associated with homosexuals that lesbians became isolated from society. Ironically, the efforts to stamp out lesbianism would cause lesbians to band together for a means of support and would eventually lead to further growth of the lesbian subculture and a homosexual movement for equality.

Because of the focus on Communist and sexual invert infiltration of government, government workers who were lesbian women were heavily persecuted. Lesbians who worked for the government were considered security risks who were dangerous to national security. One article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, titled "Senators Learn of Immorality in Washington," from May of 1950 addressed the perceived problem of lesbians within the government and why they were considered so dangerous.¹⁸ The head of the District of Columbia police vice squad, Lt. Roy Blick, informed senators that *female* homosexuals were holding government positions. According to the article, this "added a new chapter to the record of perversion among government payrollers."¹⁹ The article described an example of 40-50 lesbians with government jobs who took part in sex orgies, which were filmed by foreign communists who blackmailed the women into giving them secret documents.²⁰ There was no indication that this was a legitimate example; rather it seemed to be a hypothetical example. Either way, the example served its purpose and

¹⁷ D'emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 41.

¹⁸ Willard Edwards, "Senators Learn of Immorality in Washington," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), March 30, 1950.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

scared members of Senate who agreed, "These unmentionables must be fired from their jobs."²¹ This article exemplified how dangerous it was for a lesbian who worked in a government position to be open about her sexual orientation, for there were consequences. Because of those consequences, even a whisper that a woman was a homosexual meant she would almost certainly lose her job.²² The process involved an interrogation in which investigators asked questions about the woman's private life and homosexual tendencies. The interrogators often dropped names of other women who were known to be lesbians with whom the woman interacted.²³ By the end of the interrogation it was clear to the lesbian that she was expected to resign from her position. This was a huge blow to a woman who needed a job in order to support herself without a husband. Madeline Tress, a civil servant in 1958, was a woman who went through the interrogation process and lost her job because she was a lesbian.²⁴ During her interrogation she admitted that she had been to a lesbian bar and that she had taken part in lesbian actions as a young woman, thinking she could not get into any trouble for this because it was not illegal.²⁵ However, Tress was forced to resign from her job and considered the process that led her to resignation extremely demeaning and even associated it with something that would happen in Nazi Germany.²⁶ As can be seen by Tress's experience, the persecution of lesbians in government jobs was extreme and embarrassing for those persecuted. This meant that the atmosphere surrounding the subject of homosexuality in the workplace was extremely tense. No one wanted to be associated with anyone who was a lesbian, and lesbians constantly feared that they would be discovered because of their actions in their personal lives. The effect on the lesbian psyche was extremely negative and would motivate lesbians to band together for support in spite of the dangers such an action presented.

²¹ Edwards, "Senators Leam," 1.

²² Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 150.

²³ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Homosexual women were also heavily persecuted throughout the military in the Cold War era – an area in which lesbianism had flourished relatively freely during World War II. The witch-hunt in the military was extreme in its attempt to purge the military of lesbians. Arguably, the discrimination that lesbians in the military dealt with was by far the most extreme. The interrogations faced by lesbians in the military were similar to those of women working in the government. One report of the process of cleansing the military of lesbians at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi stated that women were:

Questioned as to the alleged homosexuality . . . The girls being sick of the worry and strain of being under suspicion and being promised . . . that they would receive General Discharges if they confessed, all proceeded to do so and after confessing were informed that it wasn't enough to incriminate only themselves – they must write down also someone else with whom they had homosexual relations.²⁷

It did not matter how devoted, patriotic, or skilled lesbians of the military were; the fact that they were lesbians was enough to convince military leaders that they were “undesirable.”²⁸ One woman in the Air Force, Loretta Collier, was discharged from the military for being a lesbian and shared her unfortunate experience.²⁹ Collier was an extremely successful and motivated woman who became a squad leader in her unit because of her efforts. She knew to suppress her feelings for other women within the unit because she was aware of the consequences of not doing so; she even referred to this as “survival instincts.”³⁰ She did, however, have a relationship with a civilian woman off base that would eventually be her downfall. An investigation by the Air Force's Office of Special Investigation (OSI) included the OSI searching through her mail and personal belongings and interrogating her regularly. Eventually they deduced that she was indeed a lesbian and she was required to go through a hearing in which she was never read her rights or given a

²⁷ Quoted in D'emilo, *Sexual Politics*, 45.

²⁸ D'emilo, *Sexual Politics*, 46.

²⁹ Loretta Collier, “A Lesbian Recounts Her Korean War Military Experience,” in *Women and the National Experience: Sources in Women's History*, ed. Ellen Skinner (Boston, MA: Prentice Hall, 1993), 317.

³⁰ Collier, “A Lesbian Recounts,” 318.

defense counsel.³¹ Once the hearing was over, Collier received an undesirable discharge, which meant that she could no longer vote, work for a government affiliate, or be involved in any way with a state-run organization.³² These were the extreme consequences that all lesbians who were given undesirable discharges were forced to face as a result of their sexual orientation. Another example of the extremity of the witch-hunt within the military was the case of an Army nurse whose lover was raped by an intelligence officer in order to “teach her how much better a man was than a woman.”³³ In this situation the intelligence officer faced no consequences whatsoever for his actions. Overall, lesbians were purged from the military with little regard for their rights, whether or not they were considered assets to the military.

Another area in which lesbians were persecuted was entertainment. One example of this was Gladys Bentley, an African American performer in gay bars and clubs prior to the McCarthy era. Bentley was a singer and piano player who performed in a tuxedo.³⁴ It was believed that she was married to another woman.³⁵ A 1934 article in *Chicago Defender* titled, “New York War on Café’s Ends,” referred to Bentley as a “masculine-garbed, smut-singing entertainer.”³⁶ Cross-dressing was considered a telltale sign of homosexuality and in this case, that was the truth. The article also explained that a popular café, Kings Terrace, was even closed down because of her “lewd ballads.”³⁷ It was clear that her lesbianism was frowned upon and potentially connected to her obscenity even in the thirties. In the climate of the 1950s, when lesbians were being persecuted more heavily than ever before, it came as no surprise when Bentley came out with a public denunciation of her lesbianism in an article in *Ebony Magazine* that came out in 1952 titled “I Am a Woman Again.” In this article, Bentley said in reference to her experience as a lesbian,

³¹ Collier, “A Lesbian Recounts,” 318.

³² *Ibid.* 319.

³³ Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 153.

³⁴ Miller, *Out of the Past*, 151.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ “New York Police’s War On Café End,” *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1934.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

“Society shuns us. The unscrupulous exploit us. Very few people can understand us.”³⁸ Later in the article, Bentley referred to her “affliction” as a result of a poor upbringing and her own sins.³⁹ She seemed to agree with the rhetoric of the times considering lesbianism and evil and immoral illness. Clearly the atmosphere of the McCarthy era had an effect on her as a lesbian woman. It is unclear whether Bentley truly aligned herself with the idea of lesbianism as a sinful sickness or if this was her way of stepping back into the closet. Either way, it is clear that Gladys Bentley felt the hatred that society was emanating toward homosexuals and it caused her to take very drastic measures to remove the label of lesbian from herself.

Persecution of lesbians in government agencies, entertainment, and especially the military was common and often harsh, but it is important to note that these were not the only areas touched. The workforce was heavily hit by the impact of both the Red Scare and the Lavender Scare. The “loyalty security investigations” mentioned above often led to homosexuals, who were considered disloyal, being fired. This was made possible by a 1953 executive order by President Eisenhower that listed “sexual perversion” as grounds for firing.⁴⁰ These investigations into the sexual orientation of men and women included those of Madeline Tress and Loretta Collier. Earlier, between 1947 and mid-1950, 1,700 people were denied employment explicitly because of their homosexuality.⁴¹ Lesbians everywhere were under fire and felt the need to hide their homosexuality in order to maintain a job and their social status.

Ironically, all of the work of those who were attempting to rid the United States of the “illness” of homosexuality led lesbians to band together in order to support one another and eventually, fight for equality and acceptance in society. Because it was difficult for lesbians to network with each other and because they were isolated from the rest of society, a lot of the growth of the lesbian subculture happened within gay and lesbian bars, despite the dangers they

³⁸ Gladys Bentley, “I Am a Woman Again,” *Ebony Magazine*, August, 1952, 92.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁰ D'emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 44.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

posed. Many lesbians found the bars to be an escape from their everyday life in which they were forced to suppress their true selves. When they came to the bars they were able to be themselves and act out the relationships that they were forced to hide everywhere else.⁴² Women were also allowed to dress as they wished, which meant slacks for many of them. Through the gay bars, lesbians were able to establish their own subculture, which had its own set of unwritten rules and regulations about societal norms. Butch and femme became the two sexual identities that people had to adhere to within this new subculture.⁴³ Butch lesbians tended to wear what was considered “masculine” clothing, while femmes were lesbians that dressed as women were traditionally “supposed” to dress. The bars offered a location for lesbians to act out these roles. Despite the freeing atmosphere offered by the bars that allowed lesbians to create their own subculture, there were dangers involved when networking with other lesbians in them. Police harassment of lesbians and raids on the bars were common occurrences with which women had to deal.⁴⁴ Because of the fearful and hateful attitude toward homosexuals, being caught in a raid or at a gay bar would more likely than not mean the loss of one’s job. Because of the issue of raids, homosexuals were forced to come up with ways of hiding their sexual orientation even at the gay bars. One example of this was a gay bar called the Canyon Club in which dancing took place upstairs. If the police made an appearance at the bar, a red light would go off and the dancers would switch into heterosexual pairs.⁴⁵ In an article in the *Socialist Review*, Lillian Faderman, author of *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, described in an interview her experiences within the gay bars in the 1950s and some of the dangers they posed. Faderman described the negative experience of being questioned about her homosexuality upon entering her freshman year at

⁴² Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 162.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

UCLA as a driving force that led her to turn the lesbian subculture in the bars.⁴⁶ She continued to say that the bars offered a place where lesbians could be themselves and could socialize in a way that they were not able to elsewhere. If a butch lesbian wanted to dress in slacks at the bars it would be considered completely socially acceptable.⁴⁷ Faderman also addressed one of the major dangers posed by the bars – alcoholism. She stated that a woman would not be allowed to stay in the bar unless she was drinking and that this led to a prominent drinking problem for lesbians.⁴⁸ It is important to note that there was racial and gender segregation within the gay bars. For white homosexuals, there were bars specifically for gay men and lesbian women. There were instances in which men and women attended the same bars, but it was more likely to find bars designated for one sex.⁴⁹ In regards to race, black and white lesbians did not attend the same bars. If blacks did ever attend white bars, they were the minority.⁵⁰ In the black bars, male and female homosexuals were not segregated, however. Factors like alcoholism, segregation, and the fear of raids are important to understanding the atmosphere of the gay bars in the 1950s. However, in spite of these issues, the bars still represented a place where homosexuals could go to be themselves.

The Daughters of Bilitis, provided an alternative to this bar scene as a political group comprised of a small number of lesbians in San Francisco, which was founded in 1955.⁵¹ The name Daughters of Bilitis was chosen in reference to the bisexual character in Pierre Louys's

⁴⁶ Rita McLoughlin, "Interview With Lillian Faderman: Chronicles of LGBT Struggles," *Socialist Review*, February, 2009. <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=10710> (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Amber Byers, "Lesbian Role Distinction in the 1950s: Sexuality, Social Life, and Public Image." University of Michigan, http://sitemaker.umich.edu/lesbian.history/the_fifties (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr., *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1990), 460.

poem *Songs of Bilitis* because it was not a well-known name.⁵² The DOB had a monthly magazine called *The Ladder* in which they attempted to spread information about lesbianism, whether positive or negative, in an effort to gain attention for the topic of homosexuality and to take it out from underneath its veil of silence.⁵³ In the first volume of *The Ladder*, its goals were clearly outlined as education of the “variant,” education of the public, participation in research pertaining to lesbianism, and investigation of the legal system in reference to the lesbian.⁵⁴ Because of the negative atmosphere toward homosexuality in the 1950s, *The Ladder* had to repeatedly assure its readers that their names could not and would not be shared with anyone. Although *The Ladder* carried a theme of acceptance toward lesbians, there were definitely undertones of disapproval toward homosexuality. For example, one article titled “Psychiatrist Urges Medical, Legal Understanding of Homosexual,” addressed the fact that homosexuality was not destructive to society. Later on in the article though, it was stated that medical professionals had potentially found a “cure” to homosexuality.⁵⁵ Even with these negative undertones, *The Ladder* was an important start for the DOB. The group grew from its humble beginnings eventually spread to a number of cities all over the United States. Barbara Gittings, founder of the New York Daughters of Bilitis, was interviewed by Jonathan Katz in 1974 about how she came to involved with the DOB and offered interesting insight into how lesbians were reacting to the persecution they faced in the 1950s. In the interview, Gittings talks about her discovery of her homosexuality and how she struggled to see herself as the homosexual defined in the negative terms used during the Cold War era. She did not see herself as sick or evil, but simply as a woman who loved other women. In reference to this issue, Gittings admitted that she found herself looking for a sense of lesbian

⁵² Jonathan Ned Katz, “It Was a Long Hard Journey,” *OutHistory*, 2008. http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Barbara_Gittings:_Founding_New_York_Daughters_of_Bilitis,_1958 (accessed April 1, 2013).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ann Ferguson, “Daughters of Bilitis – Purpose,” *The Ladder*, October, 1956.

⁵⁵ Ann Ferguson, “Psychiatrist Urges Medical, Legal Understanding of Homosexual,” *The Ladder*, November, 1956.

community.⁵⁶ In reference to finding this community in the DOB, Gittings said, “It was very appealing to me; it was something I had been looking for, the chance to be with people of *my own kind* in a setting other than the bars.”⁵⁷ Gittings’s feelings about the DOB were similar to many lesbians during the time. The DOB provided a safe haven from the persecution they faced throughout society and would eventually come to be an important part of the later fight for equal rights for homosexuals.

The effects of the Lavender Scare were much larger than what was visible for lesbians as homophobia and heterosexism were prejudices that no lesbian woman could escape. Homophobia and heterosexism caused emotional and mental health issues for many women. It is important to note that the emotional and mental health issues faced by lesbians did not come inherently from being a lesbian, but rather from the stressors and pressures of being a lesbian in a society where it was not considered socially acceptable or moral. Lesbian women The Lesbian Services Advocacy Initiative (LASI) defines heterosexism as “the belief that heterosexuality is naturally superior to homosexuality or bisexuality.”⁵⁸ Homophobia and heterosexism were both concepts that lesbians grew up surrounded by and persecution during the Lavender Scare highlighted the existence of these in a way that the lesbian community could not miss. A LASI review pamphlet cited a United States study that showed evidence that gay and lesbian people who have been exposed to homophobia and/or heterosexism often internalize these negative feelings. This internalization often leads to “low self esteem, self destructive behavior such as alcohol use, depression and even suicide.” Gladys Bently’s denunciation of her own homosexuality was a good example of a potential result of the internalization of heterosexism and homophobia. The same pamphlet clarified that the potentially “poor mental health” of lesbian and gay people should not be attributed to the internalization of homophobia or heterosexuality – as that would be victim

⁵⁶ Katz, “It Was a Long Hard Journey.”

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Marie Quierly, “Invisible Women: A Review of the Impact of Discrimination and Social Exclusion on Lesbian and Bisexual Women’s Health In Northern Ireland,” *LASI* (October, 2007): 16.

blaming – but rather to being surrounded by a society that looks at homosexuality as inferior to heterosexuality. It is not surprising that lesbian women in the 1950s might internalize the homophobia and heterosexism they were exposed to when they saw women losing their jobs and their military status in addition to hearing constant rhetoric about finding a “cure” to lesbianism.

According to multiple sources, thoughts of suicide in lesbian women are more common than those of heterosexual women.⁵⁹ Of course, sources on lesbian suicide rates during the 1950s are difficult to come by, but many of these studies include adults who were living during the 1950s. The U.S. Surgeon General’s 2012 report on suicide prevention claimed that twelve to nineteen percent of adult homosexuals had considered suicide as compared with less than five percent of all adults.⁶⁰ Women who suffer from “minority stress,” which is stress that comes from dealing with the prejudice that is faced by minorities in society, are more likely to consider or commit suicide as compared with women who do not suffer from minority stress.⁶¹ It is clear from the previous examples what prejudice was faced by lesbian women during the McCarthy Era. Even those who did not directly suffer from discrimination were under the stress of attempting to hide their homosexuality while also maintaining a secretive social life in gay and lesbian circles. Of course, hiding their sexuality also meant that they were living in constant fear of being found out, which added additional stress.

A large number of titles have been attached to the 1950s throughout history including the Cold War Era, the McCarthy Era, and the Red Scare. The extreme persecution that homosexuals of this time faced makes it clear that the Lavender Scare is a worthy title to be attached to the

⁵⁹ Quierly, “Invisible Women,” 17; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Surgeon General and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, “2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action,” Washington, DC: HHS (September 2012); and Susan D. Cochran, “Emerging Issues in Research on Lesbians’ and Gay Men’s Mental Health: Does Sexual Orientation Really Matter?” *American Psychologist* (November 2011): 943, <http://www.stat.ucla.edu/~cochran/PDF/EmergingIssuesLGMentalOrientationMatter.pdf> (Accessed April 1, 2013).

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, “2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action,” Washington, DC: HHS (September 2012), 121.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

fifties along with the others. Homosexual women were faced with a time in which they were hated and feared by almost everyone. Many lesbians lost their jobs, were discharged from the military, and were isolated from society because of their sexual orientation. The discrimination and fear that lesbians faced often resulted in serious and pervasive emotional and mental health issues. In spite of all of the dangers of being a lesbian during the 1950s, it was also a time of massive growth of the lesbian subculture. Women networked within gay bars and began groups like the Daughters of Bilitis that would become an important voice of the lesbian movement for equality. Overall, the lesbians of the 1950s persevered in a time in which they had few allies and faced ruthless discrimination on all fronts.

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