

ONE Magazine and Its Readers

The publication of *ONE* magazine's first issue in January 1953 was a watershed moment in the history of American sexuality. Though not the first American publication to cater to homosexual readers (male physique magazines had been coyly cultivating gay male readers for years), *ONE* was the first American publication openly and brazenly to declare itself a "homosexual magazine." Many of its early readers doubted the magazine would last long. A reader, Ned, explained to *ONE* in a 1961 letter, "When the fifties were young I bought my first copies of *ONE* at a bookstore a few blocks from my studio on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. As I remember, those first copies were not very professional looking; and perhaps the contents were not impressive. But the mere fact that a bit of a magazine dared present *the* subject in writing by those who *were* [homosexual] was impressive. If anyone had predicted, however, that the mag. would live into the sixties, I'd have expressed doubts. One did look doubtful in those days."¹ *ONE*'s survival also seemed unlikely given the widespread antigay sentiment circulating throughout American society in the 1950s. Was *ONE* even legal? Could it be considered obscene for merely discussing homosexuality in affirmative tones? No one was sure in 1953. Yet *ONE* survived until 1967, by which time the country's political, social, and cultural mood had shifted so dramatically that *ONE* seemed quaint and old-fashioned compared to the dozens of other gay publications populating newsstands and bookstores.

ONE emerged from the Los Angeles-based "homophile movement," the term gay and lesbian activists used to describe their movement (and frequently themselves, as "homophiles,") in the 1950s and early 1960s. *ONE* tapped into the anger, outrage, and frustration gay people across the

country felt. Thousands of gay people regularly read the magazine. They appreciated the opportunity to be part of an unprecedented national dialogue about the status of gay people. A man from Williamsburg, Virginia, for example, wrote to *ONE* in 1956, "*ONE* is more than a magazine to me. It's a vehicle through which communion is made with thousands of brothers whose outlook, ideals, problems, etc. are my own. It is one of several important links with the world of our minority without which I would feel very parochial, not to say isolated."² Many readers who wrote letters to the magazine echoed this sentiment. For example:

"I realize that 'One' is probably better informed about the bars and other conditions than any other group in the country—aside from the grapevine yours is almost the only news."³

"I know of no other person near or far that I could speak frankly to or that I feel that I could promote a friendship with and have homosexuality as a common understanding."⁴

"Thank you for your voice in the darkness."⁵

"You have given me courage and strength over the years far more than you can ever know."⁶

This book focuses on this nationwide community of *ONE* magazine readers. Before analyzing their letters, however, examining the magazine that generated their letters is necessary. This chapter describes the magazine's character and contents, describes key individuals behind the magazine, and contextualizes *ONE* within the broader homophile movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Despite its somewhat amateurish quality and rancorous behind-the-scenes disputes, it was a remarkable magazine. Publishing an openly gay magazine in 1953 was no simple task, especially a magazine that so pointedly challenged society's hostile treatment of gay people. In an acutely repressive moment, when gay people were being entrapped by police, rooted out of jobs, and demonized as political subversives, *ONE* challenged its readers to believe that homosexuals had a fundamental right to exist in American society. They had the same rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as anyone else—not to mention rights to associate with one another, to be gainfully employed, to be treated fairly in the justice system, and to engage in private sexual behavior between consenting adults. Despite the hostile society surrounding *ONE* in 1953, the magazine's survival testifies to the growing civil rights impulse of ordinary gays and lesbians throughout the country throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Creating a Homosexual Magazine

The American homophile movement of the 1950s consisted of three primary organizations, each founded and based in California. The first group, formed in 1950, was the Mattachine Society. According to Mattachine founder Harry Hay, McCarthyism spurred the group's formation. Hay feared that McCarthy and his followers might precipitate an all-out, fascist-style purge against homosexuals:

The anti-Communist witch-hunts were very much in operation [in 1950]; the House Un-American Activities Committee had investigated Communist "subversion" in Hollywood. The purge of homosexuals from the State Department took place. The country, it seemed to me, was beginning to move toward fascism and McCarthyism; the Jews wouldn't be used as a scapegoat this time—the painful example of Germany was still too clear to us. The Black organizations were already pretty successfully looking out for their interests. It was obvious McCarthy was setting up the pattern for a new scapegoat, and it was going to be us—Gays. We had to organize, we had to move, we had to get started.⁷

At first, the Mattachine Society was a secretive organization consisting of small discussion group "cells" scattered throughout Southern California. After gaining publicity because of its efforts fighting the entrapment arrest of one of its members, the Mattachine Society assumed national dimensions and new chapters emerged in New York, San Francisco, Denver, Chicago, and a handful of other major cities throughout the 1950s. Mattachine leaders hoped to build a coordinated, national coalition of homophile activist groups, but the Mattachine Society never performed as effectively at the national level as it did within local contexts. The national Mattachine movement thus never quite cohered, and in 1961 leader Hal Call severed ties with all regional chapters, effectively ending any ambitions of becoming an effective, national gay rights organization.⁸

In 1955 a lesbian homophile organization called the Daughters of Bilitis began conducting meetings in San Francisco. A year later, the Daughters started publishing a monthly magazine called *The Ladder*. Although considerably smaller than the Mattachine Society and its branches, the Daughters of Bilitis was an important source of lesbian political mobilization in the late 1950s. In the 1960s, *The Ladder* embraced viewpoints that would be labeled "lesbian-feminist" during the 1970s. The Daughters of Bilitis was the only major homophile

organization devoted to lesbians. The Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc., welcomed lesbians, but men dominated both organizations.⁹

ONE, Inc. (the official corporate name of the organization that published *ONE* magazine), emerged in late 1952. The movement's "middle child," it has received the least scholarly attention. Yet because of the organization's national orientation, its stability, and its visibility (through the magazine), ONE, Inc., was arguably the most prominent homophile organization during the mid- to late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁰

ONE, Inc., was founded in October 1952 by a small group of Mattachine activists in Los Angeles who were frustrated with the Mattachine Society's obsessive secrecy and explosive internal disputes. They quit Mattachine because they believed that a gay magazine could more effectively unite a national gay and lesbian minority than the Mattachine's secretive "cell" structure. *ONE's* first editor, Martin Block, explained in an oral history, "We weren't going to go out and say you should be gay, but we said, 'You can be proud of being gay.' You could be proud of being yourself. You could look in the mirror and say, 'I'm me, and isn't that nice?' That in itself was radical."¹¹ At first *ONE* was only available by subscription, but by May 1953 newsstands in Los Angeles and New York were selling it openly. By the late 1950s newsstands in dozens of cities sold it.¹²

ONE's founders had no experience publishing a magazine, and they had modest goals for success. *ONE's* circulation averaged 3,000 to 5,000 issues per month during the 1950s and early 1960s, but its impact on postwar gay consciousness was greater than these circulation figures suggest. Between 1953 and 1965, ONE, Inc., distributed more than 500,000 copies of the magazine, copies that were often shared among gay social networks and between friends. In 1955 the Mattachine Society began publishing its bimonthly *Mattachine Review*, modeled after *ONE*, but with less than half the readers. *The Ladder's* circulation peaked at 1,000 per month.¹³ For most of the 1950s, *ONE* was the most visible, widely read gay and lesbian publication in the United States. It provided the blueprint for *Mattachine Review*, *The Ladder*, and many other subsequent gay publications.

A civil rights impulse infused the essays, reviews, fiction, poetry, letters, and illustrations found in *ONE's* densely filled pages each month. Condemnations of McCarthyism were common in the early years, evidenced in article titles such as, "To Be Accused Is to Be Guilty," "Are You Now or Have You Ever Been a Homosexual?" "You Are a Public Enemy," "And a Red Too," "Are Homosexuals Security Risks?" "Miami's New Type of Witch Hunt," and "Inquisition."¹⁴ These explicit rebukes of antigay discrimination mingled with essays describing homosexuality in other parts of the world, scientific research on sexuality, famous gay people

throughout history (such as Plato, Michelangelo, and Tchaikovsky), as well as reviews of books, plays, and movies with gay themes. Many of *ONE's* contributors argued that homosexuals comprised a distinct minority with a rich history and culture. *ONE's* editors believed that knowledge of this history and culture was an essential building block for creating a gay civil rights movement because it freed gay people from internalizing the negative characterizations of homosexuality routinely found in mainstream psychology, organized religion, popular culture, and the criminal justice system. Instilling gay pride was a key aspect of the magazine's civil rights impulse. Thus, an essay chronicling the male lovers of Alexander the Great was just as politically relevant as an article decrying antigay police raids or political persecution.

As a nonprofit organization, ONE, Inc., relied heavily on volunteers. While dozens of volunteers worked to create each issue, a small group of core activists performed the bulk of work and established the editorial tone of the magazine over the years. One of the most important individuals was Dorr Legg, who served as *ONE's* business manager (under the name William Lambert) and a frequent editorialist. Born in 1904, Legg worked primarily as a landscape design architect until 1948 when he was arrested in an antigay police sweep in Detroit with an African-American boyfriend. In his words, "my life was wrecked."¹⁵ Legg relocated to Los Angeles and joined the Mattachine Society in the early 1950s, but disliked the organization's secrecy. When a small group of activists discussed starting a magazine independently of Mattachine, Legg jumped aboard and devoted the rest of his life to ONE, Inc. Legg was the first gay activist in the United States to receive a regular salary for his efforts. During the magazine's heyday he spent most of his waking hours at the *ONE* office tending to *ONE's* business affairs, writing stories and editorials, and replying to correspondence from readers. When curious subscribers visited *ONE's* office, Legg usually greeted them. After *ONE* magazine folded in 1967 and ONE, Inc., reinvented itself as an educational institution, Legg remained the organization's undisputed leader until his death in 1994.¹⁶

Another important figure in ONE, Inc., was Jim Kepner, a major gay activist who reportedly wrote more than 2,000 articles on gay history and culture in dozens of publications until he died in 1997.¹⁷ Born in 1923, Kepner was an abandoned baby raised by fundamentalist Christian parents in Galveston, Texas. After a stint in the military, he wandered around the country working at odd jobs. In 1942 he witnessed a brutal police raid on a gay bar in San Francisco, an incident that spurred him to begin collecting documents on homosexuality. Largely self-educated, with no formal academic degrees, Kepner was the first serious historian

and archivist of gay culture in the United States. He wrote about gay history and culture long before the subject was academically acceptable, and his immense volume of published work in the gay press from the 1950s to the 1990s shaped all subsequent writing on American gay history. He also operated the first gay historical archives open to the public out of his apartment in the 1970s. More than anyone else involved with *ONE*, Kepner recognized the importance of homosexuals learning about their shared history as a vehicle for personal understanding and social liberation.¹⁸

Legg and Kepner largely shared a similar vision of gay rights and culture, but they had strikingly different personalities. Intellectually, Legg was thorough and methodical, while Kepner possessed a capricious and creative “grasshopper mind” that jumped quickly from idea to idea. Legg was known to be prickly, stubborn, and authoritarian—historian Martin Duberman noted he was “long rumored to have ice water in his veins.”¹⁹ Kepner, in contrast, is fondly remembered as warm, patient, and self-sacrificing. Legg came from a privileged background and voted Republican, whereas Kepner was working-class, left-wing, and active in labor unions and (briefly) the Communist Party. Like Mattachine founder Harry Hay, Kepner had been expelled from the Communist Party after party members discovered his homosexuality. Whereas Legg lived comfortably and was financially supported by his long-term partner John Nojima, Kepner struggled to balance his passion for writing about gay culture and history with trying to earn a living, working graveyard shifts in a Los Angeles milk carton factory and writing for *ONE* during the day.²⁰

The third member of *ONE*'s inner circle was Don Slater. Slater edited the magazine for most of the 1960s and helped coordinate *ONE*'s distribution. Slater was born in 1923 in Pasadena, California, the son of a YMCA athletic director. He trained for eight months in Colorado as a ski patroller for the U.S. Army during World War II before receiving an honorable discharge due to illness. He then earned a B.A. in literature at the University of Southern California, working in the library and bookstores. He had a confrontational personality and was defiantly libertarian in his worldview. While attending USC, for example, he refused to pay dozens of parking tickets he accumulated on the grounds that “the state had no business telling him where he could park.”²¹ In 1964 *Life* magazine photographed Slater for a feature story called “Homosexuality in America.” In his crisp white dress shirt and fashionable skinny tie, Slater personified the businesslike respectability that the homophile movement sought to convey. The photo (alongside one of Mattachine leader Hal Call) provided millions of Americans with their first glimpse of a “gay activist.”²² During the early 1960s, a rift emerged between Legg and Slater

that exploded into a major conflict in 1965, splitting the organization in two.

In addition to Legg, Kepner, and Slater, a long-term lesbian couple, Joan Corbin and Irma “Corky” Wolf, better known by their pseudonyms Eve Ellore and Ann Carll Reid, shaped the character of *ONE* magazine in important ways. Ellore was the magazine’s primary illustrator. Her striking line drawings gave the magazine visual appeal. Her cover art was the first visual contact that most people had with the magazine. Many of these covers, such as Figure 4, *ONE* Cover, December 1956, were abstract, consisting of a pattern of lines, squares, and other shapes. In other covers, such as in Figure 5, *ONE* cover, July 1955, her illustrations complemented an article or story in the magazine.²³ Inside the magazine, Ellore’s drawings broke up the visual monotony of pages covered in text. Readers frequently praised her clean, minimalist artwork.

Figure 6, Eve Ellore illustration, *ONE* magazine, December 1953, is a typical Ellore illustration, depicting two men from behind carrying bags of groceries. The drawing accompanied a fictional story about a disturbed police officer who spied on a pair of homosexuals only to find they led mundane domestic lives. This story and the illustration have many typical homophile movement characteristics. The men are clean-cut and dressed conservatively. We do not see their faces, reflecting the masked anonymity pervading these years. The groceries symbolize domesticity and suggest that the men’s relationship was serious, not merely a “trick” or one-night stand. The drawing is simple yet endearing. Figure 7, Eve Ellore illustration, *ONE* magazine, March 1955, offers a contrast by depicting the darker side of postwar gay life in the form of a gay arrest victim. The three bare trees and bench suggest the scene is a park. A young man sits on the bench looking toward a path, down which walk a police officer handcuffed to a young man. The young man on the bench has probably been cruising for sex; now he has perked up, attentively watching the cop and arrestee as they walk toward him.²⁴

Corbin/Ellore’s partner, Irma Wolf/Ann Carll Reid, was *ONE*’s chief editor from 1954 to 1957, and a frequent contributor to the recurring column “The Feminine Viewpoint.” Wolf offered the following glimpse her life with Corbin in a letter to a *ONE* contributor:

I live on one of the rare QUIET streets in L.A., in a little house with a little yard. Have two cats, Willow (part Siamese) and Inca (part Burmese). I share the house with One’s art director [Joan Corbin] who keeps it full of books, music, and art—and the magazine which keeps it full of papers, letters, manuscripts, carbon paper and people! Still room for me because I’m quite

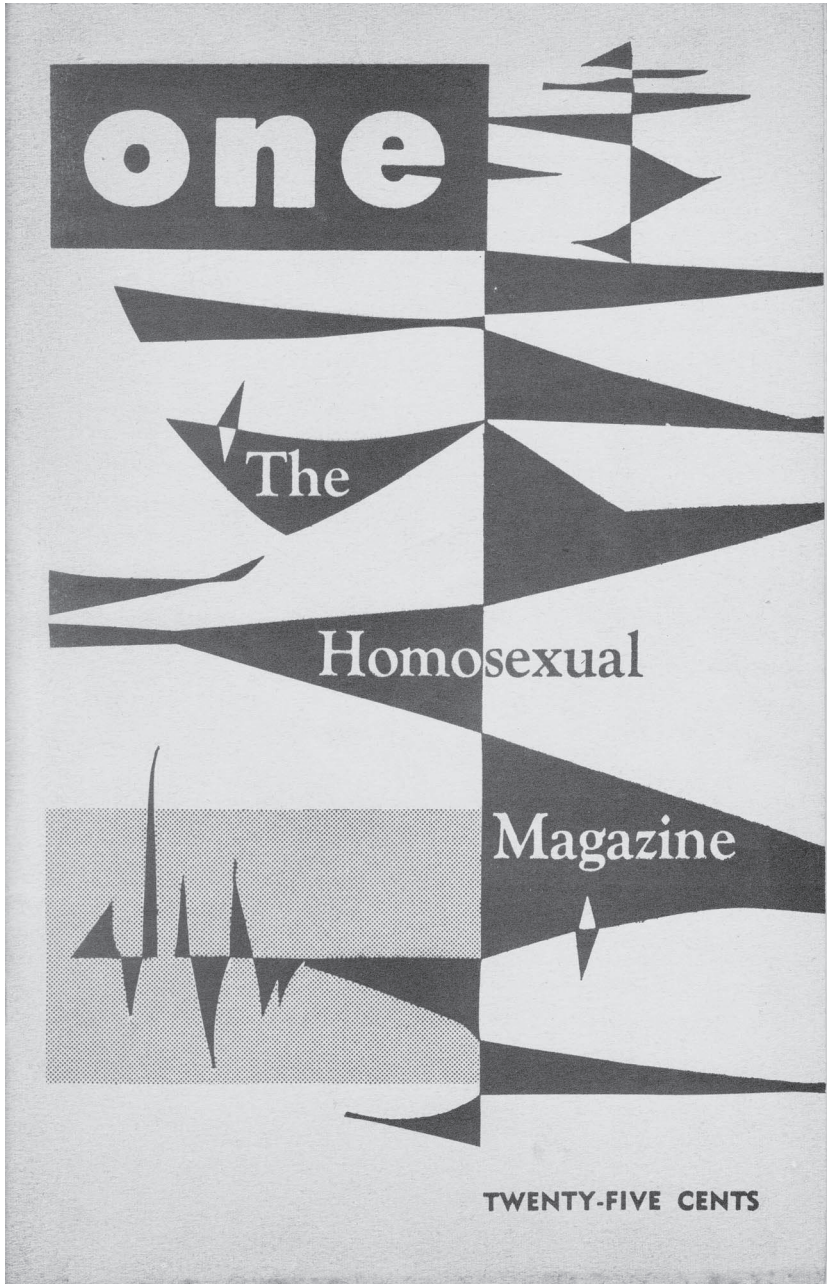


Figure 4. ONE cover, December 1956.



Figure 5. ONE cover, July 1955.



Figure 6. Eve Ellore illustration, *ONE* magazine, December 1953.

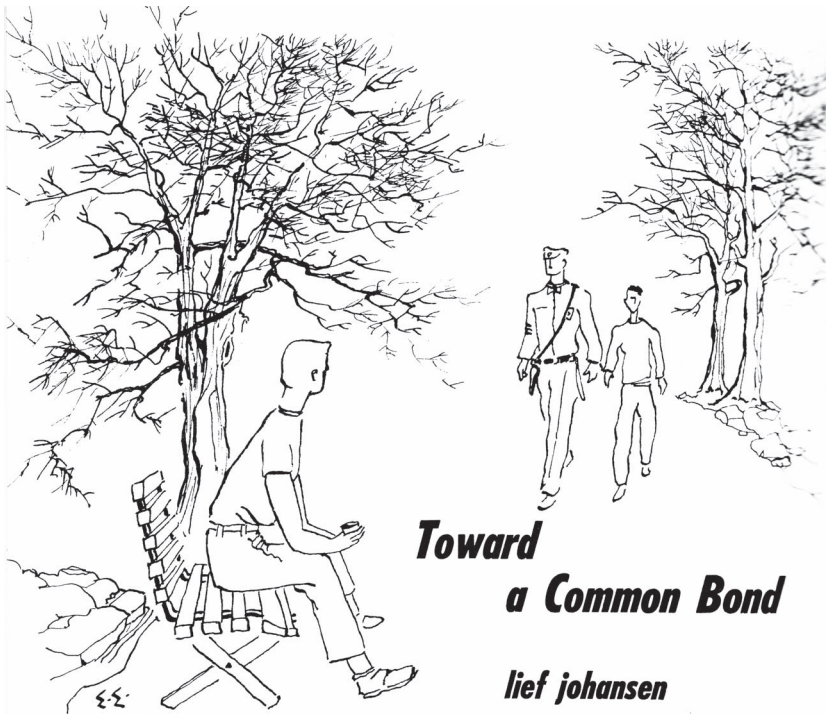


Figure 7. Eve Ellore illustration, *ONE* magazine, March 1955.

small, but still spry at the age of 33. When I'm not typing, bar-b-queing or talking I'm reading—Rabelais, Millay, Charlotte Armstrong, Mathew Head, Francoise Mallet, Colette. . . .²⁵

When Reid quit *ONE* in 1957, she expressed the common frustration that *ONE* was unable to attract more lesbian readers and contributors. After Reid's departure, Ellore continued to draw for *ONE*, although less frequently during the 1960s than during the 1950s.²⁶

Each of these individuals, and dozens of other *ONE* volunteers, worked in cramped office space in the sweatshop district in downtown Los Angeles. The office was in a large building that stretched between two city streets. The bottom floor was occupied by a Goodwill store. The building was so dilapidated that horror movies had been filmed there. *ONE's* first office was a mere ten-by-twelve-foot room, and *ONE* added adjacent rooms as they became available. By 1959, the office had grown to four rooms in addition to a six-by-ten-foot cubicle that served as a reception area and, later, a copy room. A narrow five-by-ten-foot room was later added for the library and storage space. A large fourteen-by-twenty-two-foot room served as meeting space, a classroom, and function room. The growth of *ONE, Inc.'s* office space reflects its steady growth as an organization, reflecting the homophile movement's incremental growth during these years.²⁷

In addition to the volunteers working in *ONE's* Los Angeles office, *ONE* had contributors across the country who sent in their own original essays and short stories. A notable contributor to *ONE* was gay novelist James Barr Fugat . The success of Fugat 's 1950 novel *Quatrefoil* (written under the name James Barr) made him the best-known figure on *ONE's* staff. *Quatrefoil* sold 50,000 copies and is considered a classic postwar gay novel.²⁸ In the mid-1950s, Fugat  corresponded extensively with *ONE's* staff from his home in Holyrood, Kansas, and he contributed several short essays to the magazine. He also let *ONE, Inc.*, publish his dark and depressing play *Game of Fools*, which centered on four college students who were arrested for homosexuality and faced a variety of reactions from their families.

Fugat 's most important contribution to *ONE* was allowing his photograph to be published in *ONE's* April 1954 issue (Figure 8, James Barr photograph, *ONE* magazine, April 1954).²⁹ This marked the first time an openly gay man volunteered his photograph to appear in a nationally distributed publication—no photos of Legg, Kepner, or Slater ever appeared in *ONE* magazine during the 1950s. "We are fully cognizant of the social significance involved here," wrote a member of *ONE's* staff to Fugat  after receiving the photo. "We admire your courage."³⁰ Such

gay visibility in 1954 was unprecedented and remarkable considering Fugaté's personal anxiety about McCarthyism. He warned Dorr Legg in December 1954, "Do you honestly believe the FBI hasn't secured every name and address by the simple means of photographing one of your monthly mailings when you brought it into the Post Office? Or are you naif enough to suppose that there isn't a fat file on each of you (and me) and your activities in spite of your pseudonyms? Remember, we *do* live in a Police State. McCarthy's revelations did much to open our eyes about the methods and disregard for rules of the secret police."³¹ Dorr Legg hoped that the publication of Fugaté's photo would allow the magazine "to have a regular department of photos with a little story, to break down this dreadful phobia we have all partaken of too deeply."³² Volunteers did not rush to *ONE*'s office to be photographed, however, and over the years the magazine published only a handful of photographs of gay-identified individuals. The first photo of Fugaté to appear showed only his face and shoulders—he is well-dressed in his bow tie. His smile has a certain portrait-studio strain about it as he looks directly at the camera. The second version (Figure 9, James Barr photograph, *ONE* magazine, October 1954) of the photo is cropped wider, revealing a medium-large black dog sitting next to him. The dog appears friendly, yet the chain around his neck and Fugaté's glove give the photo a slightly menacing quality. The dog seems to guard Fugaté and protect him from the penalties of his unprecedented visibility.

Of note, all of these key *ONE* figures were white. Although many people of color played important roles in the magazine, they avoided leadership roles and served in a more low-key manner. An African-American member of *ONE*'s founding group, for example, suggested the name *ONE*, taken from a Thomas Carlyle poem that proclaimed "a mystic bond of brotherhood makes all men one." One of the original signers of incorporation and a frequent art contributor was a Latino dancer named Antonio Reyes (partner of Don Slater) who worked at Los Angeles's Mexican-themed Olvera Street during the 1940s and 1950s.³³ The essay "The Friday Night Quilting Party" noted the diversity of *ONE*'s rank-and-file volunteers: "The most startling thing about these men is their diversity," wrote the author, "One is short and forty, and looks like a Texas dirt farmer. One is early twenty [*sic*] and good looking, and might be off the campus of UCLA. One is white, one is Oriental, one is Mexican, and one is Negro. There are two young men who are obviously married, for they work together with that comfortable air of mutual bitchiness that is peculiar to men who know each other well."³⁴

Unfortunately, this same sense of diversity is not reflected in the pages of *ONE* magazine. *ONE* writers occasionally compared



Figure 8. James Barr photograph, *ONE* magazine, April 1954.



Figure 9. James Barr photograph, *ONE* magazine, October 1954.

discrimination against homosexuals to racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination, but the magazine largely ignored the experiences of non-white gay men and lesbians. Occasionally there was an exception, such as a lengthy letter written by “Miss J” in 1957. She wrote that her experiences as an African-American lesbian did not seem too different than other letter writers:

I faithfully read the issues quite like that hungry fox (or rather, vixen; the world cares about that distinction business so much). And the letters which you print make me feel that my feelings about all of you and the work you are doing is not terribly different from what others have said in their letters, one way or another. Your articles and stories cause me anger, confusion, inspiration, encouragement, and every other emotion I can think of. A thousand different points of criticism, praise, argument and pure discussion occur to me in the course of a single issue, but as I read the letter columns, sooner or later someone else writes about it, or you have an editorial about it, and I am spoken for.³⁵

Only a few dozen letter writers identified themselves as African American, and even fewer self-identified Latinos or Latinas and Asian Americans wrote to *ONE*. Many nonwhite letter writers, however, would have left the issue unstated, so whiteness should not be presumed in every letter that does not mention a race or ethnic identity.

A Typical Issue of *ONE*

The cover of *ONE*'s April 1955 issue posed the provocative question “Are Homosexuals Neurotic? Albert Ellis Ph.D.” Ellis was a major figure in developing cognitive behavioral therapies and the author of more than fifty books by the time of his death in 2007. His Ph.D. status is displayed prominently on *ONE*'s cover in order to bolster the magazine's appearance of professionalism and respectability.³⁶ Eve Ellore's cover art depicted neurosis in its nightmarish collection of hands and faces surrounded by jagged lines, white triangles, and a gold background resembling broken shards of glass (Figure 10: *ONE* cover, April 1954). The same white and yellow motif carries into the article along with two mask illustrations (Figure 11: First page of “Are Homosexuals Necessarily Neurotic?” by Albert Ellis). The message seems to be that wearing the mask of heterosexual conformity, despite its practical benefits, might drive a person crazy.

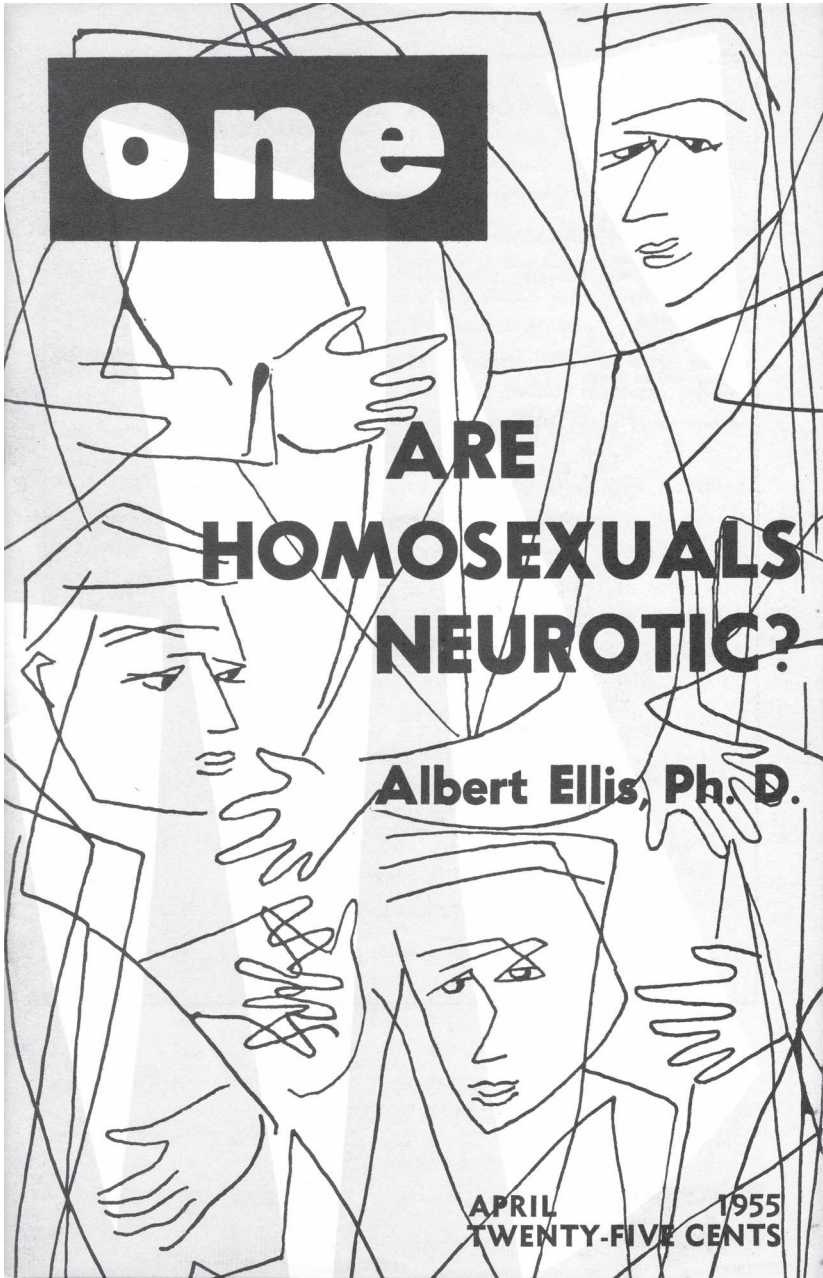


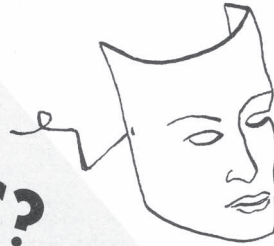
Figure 10. ONE cover, April 1955.

ARE HOMOSEXUALS



NECESSARILY

NEUROTIC?



In the January 1955 issue of ONE, The Homosexual Magazine, there are two articles whose writers contend that homosexuality is not necessarily neurotic, and who imply that homosexuals can be just as "normal" as, and in some ways perhaps more "normal" than, non-homosexuals. Thus, in "Literature and Homosexuality," David L. Freeman writes: "But there is a way out of the morass of degenerate mediocrity. Ideals of the original Mattachine, concepts eloquently set forth by Cory, and principles adopted by ONE magazine (all indirectly reinforced by Kinsey's researches) embrace an altogether new approach: Homosexuals are not necessarily neurotic and, when they are, their neuroses generally spring from their homosexuality in a heterosexual world. This approach provides an entirely new, optimistic rallying point for America's five to fifteen million homosexuals and should be a clarion call to all of them aspiring to do creative writing in the interest of their minority."

one

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Figure 11. First page of "Are Homosexuals Necessarily Neurotic?" by Albert Ellis.

Opening the magazine, the reader first encounters a list of places where *ONE* could be purchased. This issue listed newsstands and bookstores in New York City; Buffalo; Paterson, N.J.; Atlanta; New Orleans; Cleveland; Minneapolis; Salt Lake City; Los Angeles; Berkeley; and San Francisco; as well as in Mexico City, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Hamburg. Opposite these listings is a donation solicitation. *ONE* operated as a nonprofit corporation, included little paid advertising, and was usually on the verge of financial ruin. To raise money, *ONE* offered its readers a basic annual membership for \$10, entitling subscribers to receive the corporation's annual report in addition to a magazine subscription. A "sustaining" membership for \$50 allowed members to attend corporation meetings. Following the solicitation was *ONE*, Inc.'s official mission statement, "A non-profit corporation formed to publish a magazine dealing primarily with homosexuality from the scientific, historical, and critical point of view . . . to sponsor educational programs, lectures and concerts for the aid and benefit of social variants, and to promote among the general public an interest, knowledge, and understanding of the problems of variation . . . to sponsor research and promote the integration into society of such persons whose behavior and inclinations vary from current moral and social standards."³⁷ While use of the terms "variants" and "variation" would be offensive today, their use in the mission statement reflected the Kinsey Report's influence on *ONE*'s writers and editors. Dr. Alfred Kinsey was a saint to the homophiles because of his radical view that homosexuality was merely a benign *variation* of human sexuality and not some horrible genetic mistake. The mission statement also conveyed the hope that heterosexuals might find *ONE* interesting and useful. Judging from the correspondence, however, few heterosexuals, aside from psychologists, sex researchers, and clergy, showed much interest in the magazine. In a few cases, heterosexual family members of homosexuals wrote letters asking for information, but it was generally a gay magazine reaching a gay audience.

Letters to the editor appear on pages 6 and 7, discussing a wide range of issues. In one letter, a reader from Syracuse, New York, praised *ONE*'s discussion of "morals and ethics," while a San Francisco reader complained about an article's "swishy" tone. A letter from Sacramento questioned the morality of heterosexual breeding in an overpopulated world. A Dallas correspondent shared an anecdote from a book he read claiming that all famous spies were homosexual. A reader from Boston was stung by *ONE*'s rejection of his short story for publication, "At what type of reader is *ONE* aimed? What social, economic and education level is this type of reader? Is *ONE* aimed at an heterosexual [*sic*] group mainly to neutralize present antagonisms towards the homosexual, or do your

editors really believe they are compiling a magazine FOR homosexuals? If the first is true, much fictional work in *ONE* is vague; if the second is true, your stories are downright and naively insipid!"³⁸ Indeed, *ONE's* audience was highly opinionated and not shy about severely critiquing the magazine's contents. Usually *ONE's* fiction and poetry were singled out as especially amateurish. *ONE's* editors struggled to find competent writers, and when submissions were low, the overworked editors wrote short stories themselves under pseudonyms. As a result, quality varied widely.

The last letter praised a column Norman Mailer had written for *ONE* several months earlier. Mailer was probably the highest profile writer to write for *ONE*. His article, "The Homosexual Villain," explained how he had routinely disparaged homosexuals in his books until receiving an unsolicited copy of *ONE* magazine in the mail; he then found himself "not unsympathetic" about gay people for the first time. Mailer stated that as a consequence of reading *ONE* and Donald Webster Cory's 1951 *The Homosexual in America*, he was rewriting portions of his current project, *The Deer Park*.³⁹ The letter writer explained that Mailer's "journey from bigotry to something approaching understanding" had caused him to rethink his own homosexuality. The Mailer piece "has given me courage to undertake the most important task of all. This is to approach a few of my best and truest heterosexual friends and explain, as gently and understandingly as possible, something of myself to them. For how else are those who labor with an imaginary homosexual stereotype to see through its illusion unless they see a contradiction in the flesh?"⁴⁰ As this letter demonstrates, *ONE* inspired this reader to rethink his own visibility in a manner that foresaw the "coming out" strategy of gay liberation organizations in the late 1960s and 1970s. By publishing the letter, *ONE* circulated the idea of gay visibility as a political strategy for thousands of other gay men and lesbians to ponder.

Pages 8 through 12 contain Albert Ellis's cover story, "Are Homosexuals Neurotic?" Dr. Ellis's essay argued that "exclusive homosexuals" are neurotic, but so are "exclusive heterosexuals" because human sexuality is inherently polymorphous and diverse (echoing the conclusions of the Kinsey Reports).⁴¹ Many *ONE* readers strongly disagreed with Dr. Ellis on this point. "I have never in my life, read such a mixed up idea on neurosis," wrote a man from Indianapolis in a letter published in *ONE's* July 1955 issue. A woman from Denver added, "Are we to assume that the major part of our society today is composed mainly of neurotic individuals because they are 'fetishistically attached to one particular mode of sex activity?' or, to put it another way, not promiscuous? Oh—come, come, my dear doctor, what of the societal golden wedding anniversaries?"⁴²

Ellis was one of several heterosexual medical professionals to regularly contribute to the homophile movement, along with UCLA researcher Evelyn Hooker and *ONE's* in-house psychologist and advice columnist, Blanche Baker. Despite his sincere engagement with the movement, however, Ellis's theories did not always sit well with *ONE's* readers.

ONE's most popular recurring column, "Tangents," which appears on pages 15 through 17, was a potpourri of information mailed in from readers across the country concerning "gay news, censorship, conformity, civil rights, gender oddities, and other subjects that seemed to relate to our field of interest," according to its creator, Jim Kepner.⁴³ The April 1955 installment of "Tangents" reports, "Miami's year and a half homo-hunt may provide blueprint for nation. . . . Kinsey again calls sex laws useless." Police crackdowns were described in New York City (forty-two arrests one night in Times Square and the Village), Baltimore (leading to the arrest of two college professors and a teacher), London, and Buenos Aires. Gay bars in Los Angeles and San Francisco were suffering from legal harassment, and Minneapolis police were threatening to shut down a female impersonation show at the "Gay Nineties" bar.⁴⁴ Each month, "Tangents" offered *ONE's* readers an invaluable broad social perspective by documenting gay and lesbian persecution across the country and even throughout the world. It was the first time gay people had access to such information in the United States.

Following "Tangents" was the short story "Passing Stranger" by Clarkson Crane. *ONE's* fiction often described lonely figures shuffling through urban environments looking for signs of gay life, meeting danger, excitement, hesitation, and apprehension along the way. "Passing Stranger" reflects a general gloominess present in much of *ONE's* fiction. In the story, spectators gather to watch a man paint a picture onto a bar window. A handsome young man joined the crowd, and the painter's concentration was shaken. The young man became enraptured with the man's painting, and the painter could not keep his eyes off his attractive observer. As the painter finishes his picture, the crowd begins to disperse but the handsome young man remained. Then it started to rain. The story concludes, "The painter watched him go—his red shirt and his blond hair. He saw him reach the corner and linger, again undecided. He watched him cross the street and drift on. Then he lost sight of him and did not see him again until he was so far away (just a red splotch in the rainy dullness) that seeing him was hardly worth the trouble. The melancholy of the rain filled the bar window."⁴⁵ Unconsummated affairs were common in *ONE's* fiction. Any sexual contacts had to be implied because of censorship concerns.