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# THE PINK TRIANGLE

## NAMBLA on Trial

By Nomi Azulay

"Boy returns from Hell" and "Sex club clue in hunt for Soho boy" headline the *New York Post*. With his right hand, publisher Rupert Murdoch sensationalizes; while his left hand (via Howard Smith author of the weekly feature "Scenes" in the *Village Voice*) trivializes the complex issues of sex between adults and minors. The debate which has stirred controversy in the gay community for over two years—is it man-boy love or child molestation—is now rocking the press throughout the country, with all eyes and daggers aimed at the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA).

NAMBLA was founded in December, 1978, as a support organization for men and boys involved in consensual sex. To quote from their statement of purpose: "NAMBLA is strongly opposed to age-of-consent laws and other restrictions which deny adults and youth the full enjoyment of their bodies and control of their lives. NAMBLA's goal is to end the long-standing oppression of men and boys involved in any mutually consensual relationship by: (1) building a support network for such men and boys, (2) educating the public on the benevolent nature of man-boy love, (3) cooperating with the lesbian, gay and other movements for sexual liberation, (4) supporting the liberation of persons of all ages from sexual prejudice and oppression."

Like many of the newer lesbian and gay organizations, NAMBLA was formed in response to the rise of anti-gay organizing on the part of Anita Bryant and other ultra-conservatives in the late 1970's. However, the gay movement, by and large, has been hostile toward NAMBLA. Feminists in the movement have decried the organization's concern for repealing age-of-consent laws, as these laws supposedly provide protection for young girls molested by older men. NAMBLA, however, has never had a strategy, nor have they intended to actually work for the abolition of these laws. Generally, they are an advocacy organization for "cross-generational relationships." Nonetheless, the antics of many lesbian and gay organizations have wreaked havoc in gay community coalitions. In the spring of 1980, after many bitter fights, the Coalition of Lesbian and Gay Rights refused to endorse a gay rights demonstration in Albany, because a NAMBLA spokesperson was scheduled to speak.

It is not surprising that the more established lesbian and gay organizations, concerned as they are with legitimacy, would have denounced NAMBLA. Nor is it surprising that as NAMBLA became more and more isolated from the organized gay community, the FBI started moving in. For over a year now, the FBI has been conducting raids and arresting NAMBLA members, while confiscating membership files and documents of the organization. Most recently, these raids and the information leaked to the press have clearly been an attempt to link NAMBLA with a whole range of illicit activity, such as the kidnapping and sexual molestation of young boys, and the "sale" of youth for prostitution across state lines. Speculation after speculation has been made by anonymous detectives about what they will find

through these investigations; however, there has been absolutely no evidence reported that actually points to NAMBLA members raping or abducting anyone. The only "crimes" uncovered by the arrests are those that NAMBLA members don't take to be crimes at all, that is, consensual sex between adults and minors (the minors involved have all been teenagers, not little boys).

It is particularly shocking to watch the liberal press follow the lead of the FBI to confuse and incite the public. In a recent *New York Times* editorial column by Sydney Schanberg, entitled "Not Getting Involved" (*NYTimes*, 12/28/82), the writer speculates that the 1979 kidnapping of 6 year old Etan Patz of Soho was engineered by NAMBLA. After citing the stated objective of NAMBLA as a support and educational organization, Schanberg asks "Does this support network include kidnapping 6 year olds? In the name of what twisted idea of sexual freedom can anyone justify as 'benevolent' the criminal taking of a first-grade boy from his parents. Since the link of NAMBLA with Etan Patz can only add, unfairly, to the burden of decent homosexuals...it would be helpful if responsible homosexual organizations spoke out loudly against this aberrant group."

This link Schanberg refers to, between homosexuality and child molestation, is nothing new—it has been an association made by the right for ages. Why Schanberg is so insistent upon "decent" homosexuals having to proclaim that they are not child molesters is revealing of his own abdication to the right. The FBI has clearly engineered the trumped-up connection between the Patz kidnapping and NAMBLA, by leaking information on the confiscation of a photograph found in a NAMBLA member's possession, a photo which resembled the child, even before a positive identification could be made (which it wasn't—in fact, it was later proved not to be a photo of Patz at all). The deliberate maneuvers of the FBI have served to foster a growing allegiance among liberals toward right wing "morality." The fanaticism engendered by the sensationalist-type coverage of the *New York Post* and *Daily News* of the heroic actions of the FBI in their save-the-children campaign has brought out the beast in liberal ideology. Schanberg says of one of the NAMBLA indictees (whose "crime" was sex with a 16 year old male): "perhaps someone should lose the key to his cell forever."

Neither the gay movement nor the North American Man-Boy Love Association can define morality as much as both would like to, but the FBI can. And regardless of what may emerge in the courts, the state has reaffirmed its dictatorial control of sexual relations. "Sex should be free," claims a NAMBLA brochure. "The State should get out of private bedrooms. As long as sexual activity is engaged in by mutual consent, it should be no one else's business." What is desirable (what should be) is not always what is possible—apparently the FBI knows this better than NAMBLA. What has been possible is that the federal authorities have been able to fabricate a complex re-emergence of the old homosexuality-child molestation-perversion scheme with the full support of the liberals and the gay liberationists alike. The FBI has no need to protect children, nor to differentiate between good homosexuals and bad homosexuals. Their job is to infiltrate the private lives of our citizens so as to serve the status quo and, to the extent they can get away with it, they will continue to conduct and intensify their maneuvers.

*The Pink Triangle will feature further coverage of these issues. We welcome your responses.*