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THE ONE EXHIBITION THE ROOTS OF THE LGBT EQUALITY MOVEMENT ONE MAGAZINE & THE FIRST GAY SUPREME COURT CASE IN U.S. HISTORY 1943-1958

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The ONE Exhibition

The Roots of the LGBT Equality Movement

ONE Magazine

&

The First Gay Supreme Court Case In U.S. History

1943–1958

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University, San Bernardino

By

Joshua Robb Edmundson

June 18, 2016

Approved by:

Thomas Long, Committee Chair, History

Jeremy Murray, Committee Member, History

Arianna Huhn, Committee Member, Anthropology

ABSTRACT

The *ONE* Exhibition explores an era in American history marked by intense government sponsored anti-gay persecution and the genesis of the LGBT equality movement. The study begins during World War II, continues through the McCarthy era and the founding of the nation's first gay magazine, and ends in 1958 with the first gay Supreme Court case in U.S. history.

Central to the story is *ONE The Homosexual Magazine*, and its founders, as they embarked on a quest for LGBT equality by establishing the first ongoing nationwide forum for gay people in the U.S., and challenged the government's right to engage in and encourage hateful and discriminatory practices against the LGBT community. Then, when the magazine was banned by the Post Office, the editors and staff took the federal government to court. As such, *ONE, Incorporated v. Olesen* became the first Supreme Court case in U.S. history that featured the taboo subject of homosexuality, and secured the 1st Amendment right to freedom of speech for the gay press. Thus, *ONE* magazine and its founders were an integral part of a small group of activists who established the foundations of the modern LGBT equality movement.

SUMMARY

This project tells the story of *ONE The Homosexual Magazine* through an online, virtual exhibition. As such, I have created an exhibition that seeks to be enlightening, interesting, and interactive for the public.

ONE magazine was founded as a tool for survival for LGBT people during the McCarthy era. The story explores how the founders of *ONE* magazine were motivated to create the first gay magazine in the United States, and begins with the institutionalized persecution of LGBT people during World War II. It continues through postwar American politics during the McCarthy era, when gay people became unwitting pawns in a power play on the part of the nation's conservative elite. It was during this complex era that the founders established *ONE* magazine to help gay people understand how to protect themselves against widespread witch-hunts, and to give them a sense of community and hope for the first time.

Further, the project documents the important place the magazine came to occupy for gay people in an era long before contemporary notions of social and legal equality arose in our nation, and how the magazine spoke to their readers through extraordinary art and design. Finally, the project shows how the magazine's staff stood up to the government in defiance of their discriminatory practices, and won.

Visitor's to The *ONE* Exhibition will find a website with eight chapters following a linear chronology ranging from World War II to 1958. There are dozens of original photographs, propaganda posters, and other documents included, many of which were generously provided by the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California. Viewers may also read the complete narrative, which is embedded in the website as well.

Please visit The *ONE* Exhibition at:

www.joshuarobb.com