



# How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism (Social Movements, Protest and Contention)

*Tina Fetner*

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While gay rights are on the national agenda now, activists have spent decades fighting for their platform, seeing themselves as David against the religious right's Goliath. At the same time, the religious right has continuously and effectively countered the endeavors of lesbian and gay activists, working to repeal many of the laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and to progress a constitutional amendment "protecting" marriage.

In this accessible and grounded work, Tina Fetner uncovers a remarkably complex relationship between the two movements—one that transcends political rivalry. Fetner shows how gay activists and the religious right have established in effect a symbiotic relationship in which each side very much affects the development of its counterpart. As lesbian and gay activists demand an end to prejudice, inclusion in marriage, the right to serve in the military, and full citizenship regardless of sexual orientation, the religious right has responded with antigay planks in Republican party platforms and the blocking of social and political change efforts. Fetner examines how the lesbian and gay movement reacts to opposition by changing rhetoric, tone, and tactics and reveals how this connection has influenced—and made more successful—the evolution of gay activism in the United States.

Fetner addresses debates that lie at the center of the culture wars and, ultimately, she demonstrates how the contentious relationship between gay and lesbian rights activists and the religious right—a dynamic that is surprisingly necessary to both—challenges assumptions about how social movements are significantly shaped by their rivals.

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