



Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion

Ryan Conrad (Editor)

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When “rights” go wrong.

Does gay marriage support the right-wing goal of linking access to basic human rights like health care and economic security to an inherently conservative tradition?

Will the ability of queers to fight in wars of imperialism help liberate and empower LGBT people around the world?

Does hate-crime legislation affirm and strengthen historically anti-queer institutions like the police and prisons rather than dismantling them?

The Against Equality collective asks some hard questions. These queer thinkers, writers, and artists are committed to undermining a stunted conception of “equality.” In this powerful book, they challenge mainstream gay and lesbian struggles for inclusion in elitist and inhumane institutions. More than a critique, Against Equality seeks to reinvigorate the queer political imagination with fantastic possibility!

Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion Details

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From Reader Review Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion for online ebook

Quinn Arruda says

I thought the arguments against hate crimes legislation were quite compelling, but I thought the arguments against marriage equality and military service were weak and put undue pressure on marginalized people to solve societal problems that already affect them disproportionately. Like, right now the US military is the largest employer of trans people in the US. To say that we shouldn't fight for their continued ability to serve because no one should participate in that violent imperialistic institution ignores the reality that trans people disproportionately struggle to find work and frequently end up doing dangerous, criminalized sex work - work that doesn't offer educational opportunities or pensions or health care.

I want a revolution. I want a world where we don't have to get married to access certain rights; a world where we focus on restorative justice and rehabilitation and creating conditions where people don't feel a need to behave in ways we have deemed criminal. But I don't want that revolution to come at the expense of queer people.

Beyond the basic premise, some essays are better than others. While the introduction admits that not a lot of real solutions are being offered and says that the critique itself is an essential part of the solution, some essays don't even offer much in the way of substantive critique. Matilda Bernstein Sycamore opened an essay with "I don't know about you, but have you noticed that freshly mined, blood-drenched South African diamonds are the new accessory for the gay elite, or they might as well be with how much the gaysbian 'LGBT' agenda has become nothing but marriage marriage marriage - oh, and maybe a little bit of that marriage with that marriage, thank you! Many of us grew up experiencing the lovely embrace of marriage or its aftermath, so we, and most queers, certainly know a lot about how marriage is, and always has been a central place for beating up, raping and abusing women, children, queers, and transpeople. And, even better - getting away with it! What are the other problems with marriage, and the gay marriage agenda in particular?" Is that...meant to be persuasive? Because it's just a tirade and I'm not persuaded.

Overall, I found this disappointing.

Chris says

I won't say I enjoyed this collection. It's not meant to be enjoyed. It's meant to provoke thought, challenge mainstream "revolutionary" tactics, and elucidate what it means to have a truly queer revolution. It definitely did that. The thought pieces collected by Against Equality were fantastic and the framing of the arguments helpful. I especially found the readings on hate crime legislation illuminating, really making me question HCL. Overall, what I had at times questioned about the queer movement was solidified and I learned to think differently about several issues.

I do have a problem with the organization of this book. The readings were fantastic, yes, but at times they were repetitive. I can't help but feel an original book by the AE which cited and brought the articles together to a more cohesive stream of thought would have served their purposes better. The articles on marriage especially covered a lot of the same ground as backdrop, which became unnecessary. I also found several errors in copy-editing which actually disrupted my reading. Finally, a couple of the readings were

unproductive, moving from topic to topic with quick rants which did not forward clear lines of argument. They would have been better removed or incorporated as a source in an original book, mentioned above.

An excellence collection, well-worth a read for any queer person but with acknowledgement of its formatting limitations.

I says

I saw this book in an anarchist bookshop and was intrigued by the provocative title. I really enjoyed the breadth of perspectives and articles, they challenged me to think about the opinions I held about queer inclusion, especially around the military and the prison system. Based around three subjects, gay marriage, queers in the military and queers and prison-including hate crime legislation, gay panic and ideas around queer criminality.

I thought that the section on marriage was the weakest, not because of the ideas, but through the repetition of the same idea. It became a bit of a slog to get through the articles towards the end of the section. The section on the prison system was the strongest for me, especially when discussing hate crime legislation. I am trying to learn more about ideas around prison abolition and this section forced me to rethink my ideas around who hate crime legislation actually protects, who it harms and the institutions that gain from it, especially Jack Aponte and Yasmin Nair's articles. The military section also provided new insights, especially Meiners and Quinn's short article on the inherently anti-queer and discriminatory school to military pipeline.

I think *Against Equality* is well-worth a read, many of the arguments will be familiar, but there are many voices contained within that may make you think a bit more critically.

carmen! says

this book took me forever to read! it is very intense and i don't necessarily agree with everything they're saying. but i'm glad to have seen these people's viewpoints and having them in my brain makes me better.

Hadrian says

Against Equality is a collection of essays which critique the American LGBT rights movement's move towards assimilation.

The first set of essays, dating from the early 2000s, is a critique of the marriage movement as a whole, saying that it is unpopular and will never really gain steam, and that activist efforts should be focused on alternatives. I might go so far as to say that this first point is moot, but the idea of marriage is further entrenched than the idea of LGBT acceptance, and will necessarily require a different strategy.

Secondly, there is the question of fighting the Don't Ask/Don't Tell Repeal and whether it is morally just to gain rights if it involves fighting in an unjustified war. The contrast is between the activism of Dan Choi on one hand, and Chelsea Manning on the other. There's also the exceedingly complicated issue of whether

LGBT rights are used as a scapegoat for intervention or isolationism.

The third question is the intersection of race and the imposition of legal protections of LGBT rights. Their arguments are a bit more muddled here, but many of them point to criticisms of the prison-industrial complex, which is already something worth fighting against anyway.

The main theme here is that LGBT rights are not so much an isolated issue, and will necessarily involve issues of race, income, and gender, among many others. On one hand, we have appeals to progress made by appeals to the 1950s ideals of lawns, houses, and smiling families. On the other hand, there is the perpetual status of the LGBT person as an 'outsider' to other norms, and the opportunity to challenge them.

Marina says

Fantastic book I'd recommend to all my friends! It's a little hard to find a hard copy of the book itself (although Boston Public Library has one), but the materials are all free online if you don't mind reading online --> look under tabs like Marriage, Prison, and Military under 'Themes' here: <http://www.againstequality.org/about/...>

It's really nice to find an anti-profit organization that seems to really just want to amplify voices, expose (not muddy or alter) history, and reach anyone and everyone they can. So yeah - I really like this organization :)

As for the content, I thought most of it was clear, well-argued, and rightfully angry (it's also nice to see politics that aren't theoretical or muted for the sake of wider acceptance). The authors give multiple perspectives on an issue, but don't compromise on their values in their arguments.

It's changed some of my opinions and made me more angry! That's the sign of a great book, in my opinion

Anthony says

This made me super happy.

Most of the content here is reprinted from the Against Equality online archive, save the introductions to each section and the opening to the book. I didn't read all the pieces in the 2nd and 3rd sections, but read the section on marriage, the introductions, and some on DADT and everything was top notch. Yasmin Nair's introduction to the section on gay marriage is brilliant.

As a person who has been taught, implicitly and explicitly, that it would do a service to my queer and straight forebearers to get a 9 to 5 and a mild-mannered husband and a couple of kids (who may have been orphaned by Western imperialism and state violence), maybe do a little hand-wringing over mass media representation and suicide without going into systemic analysis of why we kill ourselves and why TV represents us shittily, and stopping there, finding this counter-information has been absolutely enthralling. Great intro to queer politics outside the limited view of "rights" and radical politics generally.

edit 06/11/15: I finished the book after I wrote this. five stars

Gabriel says

Against equality: Queer Revolution not mere inclusion

An interesting and very accessible book entailing negative critiques about the mainstream gay and lesbian movement and their demand for equal marriage, 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' campaign for military inclusion, and more pervasive hate-crime legislation compiled in a very persuasive collection of essays, emails and articles critiquing these institutions and pointing out how queer folks are excluded, made vulnerable and criminalised. What is most admirable in the text is how they address key issues of communication too, because it reflects a clear language, devoid of academic jargon which tends to use unnecessary complicated wording to suggest how cool and institutionalised they are, directed to a handful of 10 expert geeks in a conference room: perhaps room 245 or LB4 or wherever it is held. So it is a great move forward from the impenetrable language of queer theory.

Also, what is remarkable from this book is, contrary to academics' main worries, that queer trans gender non-conforming folks do write in this book their own opinions, struggles and ways to move forward from the impasse laid down by self-defeatist performance theory. That is, contrary to the idea of negative critique honoured by most queer academics, there are some ideas in this book that do determine a normative framework in accordance to their battles: Amongst them we find the Hegelian inspired idea of recognition (that is from some institution or from Others – via the government? Judicial system? the Media? the Others?), Social and Economic justice (however one might ask what would constitute this idea of social justice and for whom; if they determine someone, a given subject and not a denormalised idea of subjectivity, don't they fall in their own critique trap? Is this what Foucault would have been so eager to formulate if he had not died at such a young age: A normative framework to act upon and resist, and constitute parameters for actions constituted by alternative discourses vis-a-vis homonationalism, homonormative and heteronormative tropes thus denormalising the hegemonic discourse by short-circuiting the bio-governmental powers) Questions, of course, still remain unanswered in regards to the type of theory that is being done by academics who think that negative critique suffices and those who have an immense veneration for St. Foucault, while most activists who write in this book require affirmative theory which is demonstrated by their use of normative statements.

If queer criticism is to survive it needs affirmative theory and not merely negative critique which falls easily into utmost pessimism, poor affection to attract people to understand, engage with, and support queers' struggles and thus disallow the death-machine from running. If so, Queer theory would have to address what revolution is and what it means, how it would be like (or at least a certain normative statement, however impossible that might be for queers- at least in terms of distribution for 'economic justice' and recognition- certain queer groups fight for-) and address the issues about coalitional struggles, especially when dealing with the issues about variegated capitalism that is well under-theorised by queer activists and scholars, if not neglected -exceptions go to Yasmin Nair and their anti-capitalist rhetoric-.

Another problem that is pervasive throughout the book is its concentrated efforts to point out the queer folk as a whole, while neglecting bordered migrant queer folks, queers of colours throughout the globe and the resistances that many groups have built. Where I live, which happens to be Spain, the Silvia Rivera Project in Andalusia has managed to legislate against any form of gender discrimination in health care, employment and other public spaces across this autonomous region; furthermore, they have also created a support network for parents with trans children who are now allowed by law to change their sex with health care specialists

and support by the age of 6 which is publicly funded (given the massive social struggle and the supportive studies built on by doctors and researchers from Holland, Denmark and Spain. And here we can ask a very uncomfortable question about whether science is just techne -domination as described by Nazi philosopher Heidegger who greatly inspired Foucault and which grounds most of Queer Theory- or can be a helpful ally to be dealt with at all times to prevent such shameful acts as gendered names, treatment and pathologization of these bodies), comics, cartoons and educational materials for health practitioners, teachers and public institutions.

However, problems still remain present and the execution of laws is undergoing a very slow process, the level of awareness is very low too, but catching up and an extreme process of medical awareness about what they used to call disease or pathology is being opened up by the movement, education is needed and a new charter and programmes about what queer/trans means in today's society.

I am not sorry if queer folks decide this is not the correct framework (who are they too judge from a police order position) but I would say to at least read, inform, come and meet them and judge by yourself. More than one person will probably ignite a fight with them about how un-radical they are and probably coin a new academic concept like transnormative or some bullshit like that – and build a career with that-. Ridiculous really taking in consideration how much work the Silvia Rivera project trans group has put to pass this new legislation to obtain health care and economic security, allowing trans children to undergo a publicly funded operation, and fight for a non-discriminatory legislation. If anything they should be pointing out who else might be excluded to ignite a deepening of democracy-- Radical Democracy (ups normative again...)

Another matter which bothers me is the fact that we have to read something from the US, where the gay and lesbian movement has been so slow to pass legislation or be recognized, and the queer movement so violently withheld. Why do we need to always abstract ourselves from our own communities and reference US authors and their eternal all-encompassing concepts? It is appalling, more so because we need to reference them in order to obtain a job, and use their concepts which may not even be relevant given the variegated capitalism (historical, contextual and varying social forces from capitalism, the state and local correlation of forces from below and in that sense also how it is gendered, sexualised and policed as such) we live in today.

The section about military inclusion of Gays and Lesbians is well-written and very good. When dealing with military jobs for gays and lesbian inclusion, queer critique (Queers for Economic Justice) believes military service is not in any way near economic justice and it is immoral that the military is the nation's de facto jobs program for poor and working-class people. However, one could posit the same question about queer people entering the job market (a violent place, no doubt about it) where homophobic, racism, transphobic tropes run all along and where alienation and exploitation happens given the lack of democratic control over the work place owned by big wealthy men and spiteful managerial bosses.* Queer critique tends to run along the logic of exclusion but they also need to remember the logic of exploitation that occurs in so many ways for a large number of people in their work places. Inclusion in such places would entail a new form of logic which can be regarded as a way forward if we think about it in terms of fostering radical democracy as repeated by some queer anarchist like minded philosophers but without democratic control over it can also be seen as a pro-capitalist choice to just recognise yourself within the sphere of the market... A plausible way forward, and here we have more normative statements, is that circumscribed by Erica Meiners and Therese Quinn, two queer teachers, who critique 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' policy promoted by mainstream LGBT organisations for inclusion into the army, whilst also demanding universal health care, affordable housing, and meaningful living wage employment* that supports flourishing and merely subsisting lives, for all. Note: Bradley Manning identifies as a she, Larry Goldsmith.

The last part of the book is titled 'Prisons will not protect you' which is a condemnation to the gay and lesbian movement demand for increasingly more hate crime legislation fostering more violence to low-income, black and trans people in the US facing large penalties as 'sex offenders', or just for defending themselves, making them feel unsafe and more vulnerable. As a result many more are being incarcerated in what can be called as the prison-industrial complex. Dean Spade, a queer lawyer and academic, has written a pretty impressive book about this enlisting the problems with hate-crime legislation. They point out five realities about violence and criminal punishment which are helpful for analysing the limitations of hate-crime legislation to prevent violence or bring justice and accountability.

Firstly, prisons are institutionally racist. 60% of incarcerated people are people of colour, homeless and people with disabilities (my own research shows that the US incarceration rate spiked since the 1980s due to the break up of the social contract between the capitalist class-state-labour unions produced by the sharp neoliberal attack by capitalist classes. A tremendous class project to disempower the working class and fragment it so as to accelerate the current cycle of capital accumulation).

Secondly, most violence does not happen on the street between strangers, like on TV, but rather between people who know each other, in our homes, schools and familiar spaces (domestic spaces above all).

Thirdly, the most dangerous people are still outside running banks, governments and courtrooms and they are wearing military and police uniforms. (which demands a basic demand from Spade -'we should be focusing on dismantling the structures that give a tiny set of elites decision-making power over most resources, land and people in the world. But, if so, where do we place those and what do we do with them? Let them reintegrate into society, or not, if not then does that not pervade a kind of exclusion to form a community as Agamben points out?).

Fourthly, prisons aren't places to put serial rapists, and murderers, prisons are already serial rapists and murderers. Adding more fire into the prison-industrial complex produces more violence and less healing.

Fifthly, increasing criminalization does not make us safer, it just feeds the voracious law enforcement systems that devour our communities (The US imprisons more people than any other society that has ever existed- US has 5% of the world's population and 25% of the world's prisoners. Our immigration prisons quadrupled in size in the decade after 2001).

To this we should also add a sixth point which Spade does not mention: profit-making prisons exploit inmates, forcing poor people, people of colour and disable people to work for as little as \$1 dollar per hour (or day) thus extracting surplus from misery, violence and exclusion from an already outsourced service and security system produced by a capitalist state-.

There are very limited ways forward including 1) include survival support to inmates and modelled around mutual aid that values everyone 2) dismantling work such as trying to stop new jails and immigration prisons from being built, decriminalize sex work and drugs and preventing the expansion of surveillance systems 3) build alternatives such as directly responding to aggressions, building healthy communities that try to prevent violence by looking at what things tend to keep us safe- friendship circles, safe housing, transportation, not being economically dependent for survival on another person and having shared analysis and practices for resisting dangerous systems of meaning and control like racism and the romance myth. To this we need to add the most daunting and most difficult task which none of the above and which no one talked about. That is, the topic about political communication and translation: changing the political culture of society so that it becomes normal to be transgender, sexual, etc in this enraging society. Furthermore, Yasmin Nair reminds us about the class dynamics that are put into play here too: that in reducing deaths to

the result of 'hatred' we tend to forget that vulnerable communities are not vulnerable solely on account of their perceived identity, but because of a host of intersecting factors including economic vulnerability. So these people are attacked because they are made vulnerable by society and not taken care of through either solidarity or mutual aid.

This reminds me that like in colonialism, queer people are sacers, or like Fanon said 'non-beings', who lack recognition from the Other. If so it is mere noise and if, however they enunciate something that power understands it is through recourse from the criminal legal system invoking the language of HCL. This can explain why some gay and lesbian mainstream movements have taken this discourse so uncritically which unfortunately entails the erasure of transgender identities. To remedy this Stanley defends the idea of resituating the ways the very categories of queer and violence are positioned by indicating how a person is deprived of housing, health care and education and thus made vulnerable by a system that refuses him or her resources. So, pointing out how a person that lacks resources and thus vulnerable is made in such a way so as to be killed (the transphobic structures) by attackers rather than by looking at its own identity.

Overall I have to say that the book is well executed and the timing is also very well spot on. What I liked the most were the essays written by Yasmin Nair whom makes Queer movements remember the demands for material goods instead of merely emphasizing sexual liberation, polyamory and the explosion of sexual desires for everyone ('Your sex is not radical' is a great critique towards mainstream Queer theory. And Yes I said mainstream.).

Elly Higgins says

a little bit dated but there's a lot of good information in there.

Carey Hanlin says

This was an extremely thought provoking book with a lot of important points to make in its critique of mainstream gay and lesbian politics, which the authors represented in this anthology see as increasingly conservative in nature. The authors are all radicals, anarchists (although I don't particularly like that word) and revolution seeking queers who are anti-marriage, anti-prison industrial complex, anti-military and anti-assimilation. But don't let that scare you away. The book can be extremely persuasive and enlightening, and it's ok if you don't agree with everything.

The book outlines three primary platforms of contemporary mainstream gay and lesbian politics - same sex marriage, the ability to fight openly in the military, and the expansion of hate crime legislation - that the authors (members of the radical Against Equality collective) believe to miss the mark when it comes to queer liberation.

The central arguments used:

1) Against marriage:

Marriage is an archaic institution with a history of sexism, racism, heterosexist and cissexism that unconstitutionally ties healthcare access, tax breaks, citizenship status and over 1000 other rights to one

particular type of state sponsored relationship. In doing so it forsakes a plethora of different family types to maintain the heteropatriarchal myth that the "nuclear family" is the only "right" type of family. The authors argue that the fight to be included in this institution is merely a form of assimilation where primarily wealthier white queers can gain acceptance by "looking like" their "responsible" heterosexual monogamous monoamorous peers. The authors would rather see a fight for the acceptance of all relationship and lifestyle types so as not to forsake queers who don't wish to get married, and would rather see the abolishment of state sponsored marriage and in its place, the establishment of universal health care, comprehensive immigration reform, and comprehensive tax reform.

2) Against Inclusion in the Military:

The authors view the American military as an imperialistic, colonialist machine that perpetrates some of the most dire forms of human rights infringements in the modern world. They argue that while the fight for the ability to openly serve in the military might make American queers feel more noticed and accepted, the price is the expansion of the American military and the continued expansion of human rights infringements abroad. They argue that this battle is essentially the battle for the "right" of American gays and lesbians to go kill people legally abroad in the name of American imperialism disguised as "defense." Rather than see an expansion of the American military, the authors would rather see the reduction of the American military and of the "defense" budget so to limit the military solely to actual defense, rather than intervention or preemptive strikes that hurt civilians in other countries.

3) Against the Expansion of Hate Crime Legislation:

The authors argue that hate crime legislation, like the death penalty, statistically doesn't lead to a reduction in crime and thus doesn't act as a real deterrent against the crimes it's supposed to stop. Rather, they argue, it only forces more people into the already super overbloated American prison industrial system, which is abused as a free labor system rather than a correctional system. And since poor people, people of color, queer and trans folk, and undocumented immigrants are statistically more likely to be imprisoned than straight cis white people, placing perpetrators of hate crimes against these groups in the same prisons gives them access to the most vulnerable of these already marginalized groups. Plus it fuels the expansion of the prison industrial complex, creating a vicious cycle allowing for the further wrongful imprisonment of people of color, the poor, trans and queer folk for nonviolent and victimless "crimes" like sex work and drug use. The authors would rather see a complete overhaul of the American prison industrial complex (and in some cases the abolishment of it entirely) and would like to see a greater focus on societal and institutional changes that prevent hate crimes in the first place. They also argue that the "stranger danger" fearmongering concept of the individual hate crime perpetrator is not as real of a threat as institutionalized oppression, lack of access to citizenship or health care, etc.

Overall I found the book extremely enlightening yet also challenging. I didn't agree with every author and every essay, but many of the authors, particularly Ryan Conrad and Yasmin Nair, were extremely persuasive. I hope that all of these arguments can see more airtime in mainstream queer politics so that we can see greater queer revolution rather than assimilation that comes at the expense of our most vulnerable.

b bb bbbb bbbbbb says

(more like 2.5, but rounding up)

This is a compilation of three smaller volumes which have a common theme : arguments against repealing the bans on same-sex marriage and on openly queer people serving in the military, and against enacting

sexual orientation/gender identity related hate crime legislation.

The short version : Some of the articles present valid criticisms for the first two topics (marriage, military) but the idea that discrimination should be left in place is unpersuasive. The points brought up for the last topic (hate crimes) were more consistently compellingly.

On the whole I'm not sold by the arguments made "against equality". Instead I fall into a camp of "equality alone is not enough".

There is some good material, but it's offset by a lot of mediocrity. It would have been nice to see higher standards for selecting what was included in the collection. They seem to more often write with their hearts than with their minds. There is a lot of exaggerating logic and ideas to reach unrealistic conclusions and then criticizing the exaggerated outcome. Reading an article where you agree with the general perspective but which is terribly argued is oddly frustrating.

The book is worth a read- it has a number of critiques I'm glad to have been exposed to.

The longer read / various comments :

The authors don't often state it explicitly, but there appears to be an underlying concern about de-radicalization and politics being co-opted. Oppression and punishment for deviating from social norms leads some people to a greater more radical critiques of society. "Identity politics" have their issues, but they do increase the likelihood of people developing political consciousness and radical identity (as a result of non-conforming gender identity, sexual preference, racial/cultural identity, etc). As some ways of being are brought into the fold of normalcy the potential for embracing radical outlooks may decline within previously marginalized groups. This diffuses support and some of the potential for greater, more radical change in society.

In order to be effective, many of the arguments presented would require readers to share a number of political views and objectives *(1). Due to that, the functional audience is going to be smaller and likely among those who already have radical or progressive views. It's good to articulate the ideas and share knowledge, however most of the articles are not going to find a strong reception among the broader population (which is what they need for some of the stated goals). It's a start, though.

*1: (anti-prison, anti-military, pro-immigrant reform, anti-only traditional families, pro-promiscuity, anti-capitalism, etc)

Sure, in an ideal world we could just immediately dismantle the military, marriage, and other problematic institutions. But in a realistic world they are deeply entrenched and will continue to exist for the present time. Leaving policies and laws intact which allow these institutions to explicitly and legally exclude LGBTQ people will cause them to act as a reservoir for the mentality that discrimination is acceptable, legal and just. If it wasn't acceptable in society then why would it remain formally codified in law and practice?

Some authors want to try and discourage participation on the military by keeping laws/rules which are explicitly discriminatory (DADT) on the books. It's a very "by any means necessary" approach to achieving their vision of a better world. Given that position, would they also support new discriminatory legislation if it furthered their goals? Would it be ok to ban people of color from the police force or from being prison

guards, since prisons and police perpetrate violence and are predatory on minorities? Would it be acceptable to ban women from corporate/financier banking since that industry exploits poor and working class people on a global scale?

Additionally, by this line of reasoning it would have been better to leave all of the racist and sexist laws and rules in the United States unchallenged since the society as a whole was, and remains in many ways, deeply and systemically unjust and exploitive. It's hard to imagine having asked people of color and women to wait for a theoretical, epic revolution that would completely overturn and reshape the society we live in so that they could gain real, complete freedom and equality within society instead of "mere" improvements in their condition. And yes, some people from those groups surely have become complicit and party to injustice. I think most would argue that it is better on the whole to have made the changes. I tend to believe that some improvement in conditions and rights is better than (realistically) none (i.e. "reform" is not mutually exclusive with revolution).

Building new, egalitarian spaces in society where all people can flourish is great. However, planning for a better tomorrow also ignores the present existence of people working within or interacting with those institutions who are currently being oppressed, excluded and marginalized. Their reality isn't going to wait for an alternative utopia to materialize. Nor is it respectful to ask someone to give up their belief in a religion for which marriage is an important tradition.

There are some hints of privilege in saying "don't work for the military or police since they reign down terror and injustice". What about the people already working in those institutions? What about people who (perhaps incorrectly) don't see viable alternatives to making a living, or who were coerced into joining by recruiters or difficult economic situations?

(to repeat above) - On the whole I'm not sold by the arguments made "against equality". Instead I fall into a camp of "equality alone is not enough". Assimilation to a mainstream lifestyle and "tolerance" is also not sufficient. Society should deeply and inherently celebrate and embrace a variety and diversity of ways of being.

Andrew Price says

This one did not really do much for me. It's a collection of essays, and to be honest I really didn't read to the end. There are three standard goals of the mainstream queer rights movement critiqued: same-sex marriage, acceptance of gays in the military, and creation of hate crime legislation.

Some of the critiques are alright, but it almost sounds like whining at times. I also see no contradiction between supporting progressive change within the system, with the long-term goal of completely overhauling the system in mind. This radical distaste for inclusion kind of bothers me at times. It reminds me of black nationalists who admired segregationists like Alabama Governor George Wallace because they both had the same goals in mind: for opposite reasons. In fact, there is one essay in this book that comes right out and says that the right wing is correct, marriage is a conservative, sacred institution and gays have no place in it. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

There are some good essays, like the one regarding Bradley (now Chelsea Manning) and one discussing racism in the gay community in relation to homophobia in the black community. But a lot of the times it feels like repetition.

Martin Nelson says

I disagreed with most of this book, but that is fine, because I picked it up expecting to be challenged. The quality of some of the pieces is variable, but at its best it is a though provoking critique of the equality idea in LGBTQ thought. At its worst, it can be needlessly preachy and insensitive; such as one of the pieces in the first third, that seriously questions why gay men adopt whilst lesbians often give birth, and suggesting that the reason might have something to do with white claiming of black children rather than, say, the absence (for cis men) of a womb.

There are three segments to the book; one on marriage, one on the armed forces, and one on criminal justice. The criminal justice one is relatively easy to agree with, especially as it focuses mostly on the US criminal justice system, which is so out of whack with European systems (and even the British one) that kicking it is pretty easy.

It took me a while to figure out why I disagreed so fundamentally with the critiques on marriage equality and inclusion in the armed forces, but I eventually realised it was because some of the authors simply hate freedom. It is, to my mind, deeply troubling to suggest that, because the writer does not like marriage or the military, non-heterosexuals should be prevented from accessing those institutions at the same time that heterosexuals can, especially when those institutions do contain practical benefits. This is stated expressly several times in different passages in the book, and is most obvious when a writer says that they are similarly in favour of a no-women, no-trans or no-black rule for the armed forces, on the basis that removing people from the armed forces removes the armed forces.

Even if the critiques of marriage and armed force work (and for myself I could not see why the answer was abolition rather than reform of these allegedly patriarchal institutions), removing the choice from individual LGBTQ people is to forcibly dress them in the vestments of a priestly class in a religion they may not share. It seems to me that, if one is against marriage, one should still support having the choice to marry, and then seek to persuade folk not to, rather than curtail that choice on the sole criteria that has been used to oppress, marginalise and kill LGBTQ people for a thousand years.

John Ferreira says

Although some of the points of the essays are dated, they still have a point.

Most of the book, I nodded my head in agreement. There were a few "I never thought of that", or "I've never seen it from in that way." I never found that gay marriage was something I wanted or needed. The authors of that section pointed out that rights should be for everyone, not just for those who get married. The military section is mostly against war. Therefore gays, or anyone, should not want to join the service. The final section was about prisons, laws, and crime. It was pointed out that the only outcome was the overpopulation of prisons and jails. But, never have the crimes lessened due to crime. Case in point, hate crimes have not caused the violence against gays, women, and children have not gone down. In fact, they seem to increase. Also pointed out, the people most out of the loop for the rights, are the poor and people of color. Also, laws that target the homeless.

Rights for everyone should have the time, energy, and money thrown at it. The focus of gay marriage, and gays in the military have been to make gays more "respectable" in the eyes of others. Hasn't changed anything. Also pointed out that not too long ago, being a homosexual was considered a crime.

There is also the reason for every change is for the sake of "the kids". These are the same children that go to sleep hungry, have sub-par education, and go without health care. Mostly poor and people of color.

Simon Copland says

I have for a long time loved the work of 'Against Equality'. I believe they present a sound analysis of the LGBTIQ movement that needs to be discussed more. For this reason I was really excited to get my hands on this book.

In large the book didn't disappoint and I powered through the readings. A collection of essays and articles, Against Equality critiques the mainstream LGBTIQ movement's focus on marriage, DADT and hate-crimes legislation in an effective and convincing manner. They bring together high quality writers who are not only able to provide a genuine critique but also offer alternative approaches to these sorts of campaigns.

My one critique of the book however is that it is at times a bit repetitive. Through focusing solely on these three issues the editors have brought together authors who at times have very similar arguments to one another. Their critiques are sound, but it can seem a little narrow focused. A good example is in the section on hate-crimes legislation. Numerous essays discussed how queer people have been the subjects to violence by police and prisons, but there was little discussing the broader prison-abolition movement, the violence people suffer in prisons, nor the alternatives to a prison-based justice system. In turn the book becomes quite narrow - focusing on particular (convincing arguments), but leaving out potential other avenues that could be explored. This goes beyond the internal chapters too - the book could have been expanded to focus on other equality campaigns - access to discrimination laws, health, education and into the workplace, to see whether the equality paradigm has worked. By focusing on these three issues however we missed this opportunity.

A great book and one worth reading! But unfortunately one I think could have been better.
