

What constitutes a refugee? This editorial comment is reprinted by permission from the New York Post, July 12, 1994.

Granting Gays Refugee Status

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Last month the Clinton administration quietly announced plans to open yet another path for mass migration into the United States: political asylum for homosexuals. In a Justice Department directive, Attorney General Janet Reno ordered U.S. immigration officials to consider applicants who claim to have been persecuted because they're homosexual eligible for entry under the asylum laws. Gay magazines report that hundreds have already applied.

In the meantime, word is sure to go out to impoverished folks throughout the world who dream of ways to come here that homosexuality has been rendered a legitimate asylum category — along with race, creed, political orientation and ethnicity.

We've long expected that immigration and asylum would be major issues in the 1996 national campaign. Thus, it will be interesting to see how Americans at large react to the Clinton administration's decision to create a designated entry path for homosexuals seeking to migrate here.

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Popular sentiment aside, the Justice Department directive strikes us as astonishingly ill-advised. Only a handful of countries — Fidel Castro's Cuba and a few Islamic states — openly discriminate against practicing gays. The demise of communism radically reduced the number of regimes avowedly hostile to homosexuality.

But gay activists have now stretched the definition of oppression to include anything short of full endorsement of homosexuality — in the schools and from the pulpits. Using such standards, ample grounds will exist for gays around the world to employ the asylum vehicle. And insofar as the U.S. remains the world's most tolerant society vis-a-vis homosexuality, it's safe to assume that many will endeavor to do so. Certainly, the multivariied events that took place in New York in late June secured America's status as the international gay mecca.

It has not been established whether there are 600 million homosexuals in the world (a number arrived at by extrapolating from the fabled and dubious ten

percent figure claimed by gay activists) or 60 million; nor can anyone know how many heterosexuals are likely to feign homosexuality in order to jump to the front of the U.S. immigration line.

But the new policy — an unsubtle capitulation to the growing gay lobby — represents an invitation to fraud, one that's certain to make the effort to bring a measure of order to the U.S. immigration process all the more difficult. America's notoriously lax asylum system is already subject to wide abuse. Smugglers are well-versed in teaching would-be claimants how to pretend they've either experienced or fear persecution. Declaring an entirely new class of people — "persecuted homosexuals" — eligible for asylum will render it harder than ever to distinguish between individuals who genuinely face persecution and those who are simply anxious to jump to the head of a very long line. ■

Sign of the Times

Hand-lettered sign spotted by Arthur Witkin of Hartsdale, N.Y., taped to the information window of the office of the State Department of Motor Vehicles in White Plains:

THE PERSON WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH
WILL NOT BE IN TODAY

— *The New York Times*, August 17, 1994