

The Church Mid-Decade and the Negro

Written in Summer 1963, this essay was published in *The Torch*, Volume XLVIII, Number 1, February 1965.

I-A. Author's Eyewitness Historical Context written
October 21, 2001

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written March 19, 1994

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Drummer Was Not Created from Nothing
Drummer and the DNA of Religious Iconography
Homosexuality Is a Religion

If I don't count the years (1949-1953) when I was a newspaper carrier for the *Peoria Journal Star*, for whom my father also worked as a branch manager, my career in publishing began in the Catholic press in 1957 under the direction of my mentor, the Reverend Leonard J. Fick, the editor of the long-running bi-weekly, *The Josephinum Review*. The *TJR* paid nothing to its volunteer staff—which was good training for writing for gay publishers who fail to pay. Starting as a proof reader and re-write editor on freelancers' submitted articles and stories, I also began writing book and film reviews.

In 1957-1958 when I was a seventeen-year-old high-school senior turning eighteen, I won a Quaker Oats writing contest, edited one book, sold two book reviews and three short stories and hauled in for the year an astonishing \$90.50 which in today's dollars would be \$2,443.50.

I moved on to social-justice feature articles such as the migrant worker article, "The Bitter Harvest," with Alice Ogle (*The Josephinum Review*, May 24, 1961) and my own "Objectives of the Second Vatican Council" (*TJR*, October 10, 1962). As a companion feature pre-dating my

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solo article, “The Church, Mid-Century and the Negro,” my longtime straight friend, Frank E. Fortkamp, and I wrote about our civil rights experiences working together on the Chicago South Side in “Bringing Christ to Woodlawn: The Story of Last Summer’s Most Ambitious, Large-Scale, Parish Census Project in the United States” (*TJR*, October 23, 1963). [This was the same neighborhood worked in the same way by Barack Obama in his own youth twenty-five years later: we shared the same mentor in the social organizer Saul Alinsky. — JF, 2008]

In a lighter entertainment vein, my short fiction published in *The Josephinum Review*, beginning when I was a teenager, was only nominally Catholic, and rather cynical—even mocking as one could be in those innocent days, verging on camp—in holiday stories such as “Timothy and the Shamrocks” (3/12/58), “Juicy Fruit Was Down That Day” (11/12/58), the anti-Valentine’s story, “The Good-Timing Pinkhams of Chowder Lane” (2/13/63), and “It Came upon a Midnight, Dear” (ironically published 12/25/63, ten days after my final exit from the Josephinum).

Because *The Josephinum Review* paid \$5 per story and article, I much preferred other Catholic rags such as *The Torch* that paid \$18 per story for my tales spun out of my torrid Catholic vision of social justice: the closeted “The Odyssey of Bobby Joad” (08/61), the filial “Father and Son” (08/63), the Latino “The Untimely Death of J. Cristobal” (02/64), and the racial “Nobody Knows What Sorrow” (12/64).

As early as 1958, Leonard Fick connected me professionally to the publisher of his books, the Newman Press, in Westminster, MD. I loved the work, pretended I was in a Greenwich Village garret, and refused to consider that Newman Press was a sweat shop. For \$50 per volume, I proofed, copy edited, rewrote, and re-translated several books written by German theologians such as the three-volume, 1500-page, *The Law of Christ* by Bernard Haring. I took my reward indirectly. When W. C. Fields was asked if he read the Bible, he responded he did—looking for loopholes. In a similar way, during the liberationist climate of Vatican II, I felt free in my editing and translating for Newman to loosen up some of the stringent German texts of moral theology to make life easier for real-life American Catholics.

The Catholic press has always been as provocative a niche as any other subculture’s including the GLBT press.

My career as a Catholic writer reached toward worldly glamour with my very closeted features, “James Dean: Magnificent Failure,” in *Catholic Preview of Entertainment* (06/62), and “Darling! What to Do at a Dirty Movie,” *Today* magazine (05/66).

A Letter from the Some-Things-Never-Change Department

Catholic Preview of Entertainment Magazine
Catholic Periodicals, Inc.
Seminary Hill
Carmel, New York

July 23, 1962

Dear Mr. Fritscher,

Please excuse this delay in answering your letter of July 12 regarding copies and payment for your article, "James Dean: Magnificent Failure." But, I was on a one week vacation and upon returning I was struck with, of all the things, the mumps!

Nevertheless, I am sending, under separate cover, six copies of the June issue of "Catholic Preview" to your Willow Lane address.

I submitted a bill for \$60, on April 9, to Mr. Saunders, the publisher. Although I have absolutely no authority in the financial end of this magazine—only Mr. Saunders has—I am more than embarrassed over the neglect shown you. I will inform him, most strongly, of this oversight, since I still feel that your piece was one of the best examples of writing ever carried by this publication. He is on vacation at the moment but will return on July 30.

Sincerely,
Robert Papierowicz
Executive Editor

Oh, and then there was that huge two-page—accidentally "beef-cake-glamour"—photo-spread I wrote and photographed about a chaste seminarian's last days before ordination which seemed much like a groom's before his wedding. As I would for *Drummer* fifteen years later, I produced, wrote, and photographed "The Long Last Days Before the Priesthood: A Story for School's End."

It was a nostalgic piece for *The Josephinum Review* (05/22/63) published the week the pope's apostolic delegate arrived to conduct ordinations.

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Naturally, as if I were producing a USMC recruiting layout, I picked the hottest and manliest of the twenty-five-year-olds being ordained. He was a southern blond, built and hairy. My camera gave me authority over him. He took my direction and he photographed handsomely, posing in priestly vestments, swathed in clouds of incense, and holding bell, book, and candle, as well as in a woods petting an adoring dog, and, of course, in a plaid bathrobe, and in Speedos sunk neck-deep in a rippling swimming pool that rendered his body surreal. I made the shoot so like a manly recruiting commercial for the priesthood, everyone involved let me get away with everything. The photos illustrated the long poem I wrote for the text. It was gay Catholic soft-core pornography. I can't imagine they didn't know what I was doing. The interaction was so eye-opening to me that seven months later I left the seminary to dedicate myself to turning such subliminals into overt homosexual text and photographs.

In 1969 and 1970, the Roman Catholic priest James Kane, who was also my longtime sex partner known as the leather priest Jim Kane, began publishing my socially progressive feature column in his monthly newspaper, *Dateline Colorado*. Also, in 1970, I noticed that Kevin Axe, one of my schoolmates from our eleven years at the Pontifical College Josephinum, had become editor of *Today* magazine that had published my Julie Christie and Dirk Bogarde "*Darling*" feature in 1966. I pitched him the idea of my writing solo an entire issue aimed at high-school kids needing to know how to interpret TV images and archetypes critically in a media-saturated age. He paid me \$500 for the book-length *Television Today*, Volume 26, No. 2, February 1971. My source for my article on the literary interpretation of soap operas was Frank Olson, the New York lighting director who took me onto the set of *The Secret Storm* where he had a long and distinguished career. In the zero degrees of separation, I had known Olson for years because he was the longtime domestic lover of my longtime sex partner, Don Morrison, and together they were partners in the Anvil leather bar and were longstanding friends of my other Manhattan sex pal, Lou Thomas, the co-founder of Colt Studio and the founder of Target Studio.

This was the leather salon, and how it worked, long before I brought these guys into my *Drummer* salon.

While all my writing in *Drummer* and in my novels and short fiction is "Catholic" in the way that Woody Allen's films are "Jewish," my career as a Catholic author peaked with my 1965 novel, *What They Did to the Kid: Confessions of an Altar Boy*, which on its reprint in 2002 won an Indie Publishing Award as best novel of the year, and CNN named it "One of the 100 Novels You Are Reading."

It is my eyewitness observation, based on internal evidence, that *Drummer* was a kind of “Catholic” magazine in its strict observance of S&M borne out of western civilization’s ingestion of the S&M of the Old and New Testaments, of *The Roman Martyrology*, and of the history of sculpture and painting representing great themes of Greek and Roman mythology that morphed into Christian theology, especially in the depictions of Christianity’s dramatic moments of the passion and death of Christ. The Crucifixion is one of the main images, if not the chief image, of western art through the twentieth century, and it, and other images of heroic and saintly suffering at the top-hands of SPQR fascist authority, appeared variously in *Drummer* in writing, photographs, and drawings transmogrified into BDSM play. A literal example is the story, “Crucifixion Derby,” written by Allen Eagles, illustrated by the Hun, and published in *Drummer*’s brother magazine, *Mach* 13 (November 1987).

As a gay man aware of my own unspoken civil rights in 1963, I wrote this essay, “The Church Mid-Decade and the Negro,” to document my identity and feelings insofar as Black culture upended my bourgeois view of my self and opened up my queer view of my self. I might never have become a gay activist in the late 60s if I had not been a progressive Catholic activist for civil rights in the early 1960s. When I was twenty-four, I wrote this essay about my experiences when I was twenty-two and twenty-three in 1962 and 1963.

What happened to me living full time inside the African-American community at 63rd and Cottage Grove streets in Chicago, and what happened to me tutored by the Reverend Martin O’Farrell and the peerless Saul Alinsky, changed me forever. On philosophical reasons that had nothing to do with sexuality, the experience woke me up enough to justify my abandoning my eleven-year investment in the priesthood. The very act of exiting the Roman Catholic seminary in December 1963, uncloseted me sexually as recounted in *What They Did to the Kid*. I saw, and see, little difference between Black freedom’s cultural expression and gay freedom’s expression. I was born shameless; and without guilt, I exited the Catholic sex closet full of wonder.

In terms of iconography and worship, I have never experienced an existential disconnect between Catholicism and homosexuality. At that level, whatever the pope says has no effect because—unless the pope is speaking *ex cathedra* (formally) on matters of faith and morals—he is simply one of many theologians debating faith and morals. This is especially true as the glacial Church progresses in slow retreat from the medieval to the modern, changing its canon laws and theological understanding of eating fish on Friday, the who’s who of saints, Limbo, cremation, condoms to prevent HIV, and even abortion which is permitted—progressive

theologians insist—when the child is an unjust aggressor in the woman's body because of rape or incest. With all its absolutes and its condemnation of relativism, the Church evolves relatively, for instance, in condemning modern capital punishment which was once the main tool of the Inquisition run by the Church to punish progressive thinkers branded as heretics. Galileo, the heliocentrist, was lucky to have escaped alive. If these changes signify anything, they mean that Rome's vision of homosexuality was, is, and will be changing in the modernization of sexuality that will inevitably occur in Church teaching. If the priest molestation and child abuse scandals are anything, they are a wake-up call for the Church to update its understanding of sexuality and to bring it into the 21st century.

Politically, esthetically and erotically, I know that without Catholicism I could never have lived some of the rich rituals of S&M published both in *Drummer* and in some of the more sublime sex scenes, particularly the “crucifixion” of the bodybuilder, in *Some Dance to Remember*, Reel 3, Scene 7. Catholicism proved also to be a key to understanding the reactionary infrastructure of American witchcraft and Satanism in my research for *Popular Witchcraft* (1972; new edition 2005).

This essay written when I was twenty-three and completed when I was twenty-four, is Exhibit A of the kind of participatory journalism that always interested me, and that I specialized in at *Drummer*. When I was fourteen, I figured a writer had to live it up to write it down. I also knew that if anything interesting was going to happen to me, I had to make it happen. I exited the seminary twenty-three days after the assassination of my idealized lover, my dear Jack, in Dallas. November 22 ruined everything way more fundamentally than either Pearl Harbor or 9/11. By the time this essay was published in 1965, I was well on my way out of the closet and into the leather culture of Chicago, New York, and San Francisco.

In 1964, fresh out of the Josephinum and beginning graduate work at Loyola University in Chicago, my mentor, the Very Reverend Monsignor Leonard J. Fick continued to stand by me as he had since we first met in 1953. In a letter dated September 6, 1964, he who always typed sent me a handwritten note:

Dear John, Here in the uplands of Missouri [where he visited his family in the summer], without benefit of typewriter, I shall only—by way of an interim reply to your recent communication—say that I have forwarded my appraisal to Loyola, and that I am sure the fellowship will be yours. I know nobody [underscored] more qualified. Best wishes, Leonard J. Fick.

Recalling him makes me well up with a deep and abiding human love. He was my Mr. Chips. This celibate and pure intellectual who had no children fathered me as writer from 1953 at age fourteen when he took me under his chaste wing and nurtured me as a student and assistant editor for eleven years. Only twice did he scold me. The first time was in an English class when I turned in a short story and he said in front of all the boys, “This is an excellent story; but because it does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment, it earns only a 92.” The second time was when I split an infinitive, something no one did in the 1950s! I was mortified, and, even today, with grammar so changed and styles so relaxed, I find it a hard thing “to really do.”

In 1975, and in 1977, while I was editing *Drummer*, Leonard J. Fick, twice requested me to consider returning to the Pontifical College Josephinum to teach writing and literature.

I could not travel back in time.

But I was carrying the past into the present.

To me, homosexuality is the Old Religion predating even the Druids, and certainly predating Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

Gay people need a “text” — something to wave in the air like a Bible, a Koran, a grimoire. Why have we not learned from others? In the 1950s, Magus Gerald Gardiner in Britain dared declare witchcraft a religion and secured government protection. If we simply define and declare that homosexuality is a religion, then we become protected by the U. S. Constitution in the same way that Wiccans and Latter-Day Saints and born-again Protestant store-front fundamentalists and Scientologists are now protected because each declared it was a religion. All revealed religions had to announce their identity. There was a time when humans lived quite happily before there was any Judaism, any Christianity, and any Islam. Sourcing itself from inside human nature, homosexuality is not a revealed religion; it is an intuitive spirituality that grows out of human nature. For further reading, consider again the religious themes in *Some Dance to Remember*, and explicit arguments in *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch’s Mouth*, second edition, 2005.

Editor’s Note: In 2006, Matt and Andrej Koymasky wrote in *The Living Room - Gay Biographies*:

Themes and rituals of Catholicism thread through his [Fritscher’s] fiction and nonfiction from the incarnational *Some Dance to Remember* to the passion and death of *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*. His formal training in philosophy, theology, literature, and criticism is the architecture of his sweeping historical work on witchcraft, the

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drama of Tennessee Williams, the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe, and the popular culture of homosexuality. His photography is a succession of heroic and suffering images from *The Roman Martyrology of the Saints*. www.andrejkoymasky.com, retrieved October 31, 2001

I-B. Author's Eyewitness Historical-Context Introduction written March 19, 1994

Tutored by the legendary father of community organizing, Saul Alinsky (1909-1972), I was among sixteen Catholic seminarians who in the summers of 1962 and 1963 worked with The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) out of Holy Cross Parish on the South Side of Chicago near the El stop at 63rd and Cottage Grove. I was an impressionable age twenty-three and twenty-four those summers I volunteered to help make a census of Blacks newly arrived in Chicago. At that time of the Vatican Council, the Catholic Church under Pope John XXIII was wide open to change, and the ideal—my personal ideal—was that of the French Worker priests who lived among the people, supported themselves, and did not live in a parish house with servants.

Wearing the proper “civil-rights uniform” of the time (black chinos, short-sleeved white shirt, button-down collar and tie), we smiling white boys went door to door in every tenement on every floor of every high-rise and carved-up house through the vast urban blocks of Holy Cross parish. To minimize any possible hostility, we steered politely clear of the Blackstone Rangers who were the indigenous street gang looking out for the good of the neighborhood. By 1968, the Blackstone Rangers worked against the infamous political machine of the “Fascist” Mayor Daley, which, of course, was one more straw that made him so angry that he unleashed his Chicago Police into the famous police riot at the Democratic Convention in 1968. So, in a way, the Blackstone Rangers were one of the many resistance fighters who led to the gay resistance at the Stonewall Riot in 1969, because we all learned something at the Democratic Convention. (From 1964-1967, whenever there was an election in Chicago, I volunteered as a poll watcher to “keep the dead from voting too many times.”)

In the 1960s whirl of those wild days in civil rights, we seminarians literally marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. for a sit-in at the office of Mayor Daley who had us all carried out bodily by cops. I wasn't gay yet, but, ah, those hot cops! Perhaps this first-person feature essay from another time is the best way to illustrate the kind of street credentials I took into 1960s civil rights and 1970s gay liberation.

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness*
Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

Civil rights activism was one of the experiences that I brought to the table at *Drummer*. When John Preston and other leatherfolk told me about their own work in Black civil rights in the 1960s, it proved that the Gay Power crusade for our own civil rights grew out of many GLBT people's experience working for the upside of Black Power within the African-American community.

Of eyewitness note: Around our table one hot summer evening, the fifty-something Saul Alinsky was holding his regular court and welcome sway, beguiling us boys with his stories and philosophy. He was very droll in telling us about his first encounters with Catholics. He said he was shocked when the first convent of nuns he organized gave him a novena card that offered up to God, in Saul's name, "300 Masses, 1,200 rosaries, and 20,000 ejaculations." He laughed remembering the face of the no-nonsense nun who explained that in Catholicism an *ejaculation* means a very short prayer such as "Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy." Into our virgin-pure adolescent ears, he was pouring his glistening subversive humor.

I loved Saul Alinsky as a brain who liberated me from everything I was before I met him.

The worst mistake of many that the Catholic Church ever made was sending us innocent boys off into such worldly, cynical, and saintly company. I think hardly more than one of the sixteen of us seminarians was later ordained a priest. Alinsky and the interracial experience itself taught us there was truth in the then popular song, "Moon River." There was "such a lot of world to see."

Research this same TWO history in Woodlawn as experienced and as written by my friend since boyhood and my colleague those two summers: the straight (Catholic and then Episcopal) priest, Frank E. Fortkamp, "Bringing Christ to Woodlawn: The Story of Last Summer's Most Ambitious, Large-scale, Parish Census Project in the United States," *The Josephinum Review*, October 23, 1963.

These Chicago activist summers were portrayed fictively in my gay "novel of the closet," *What They Did to the Kid: Confessions of an Altar Boy* (1965); *Kid* is a prequel to *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco, 1970-1982*; the protagonist and supporting characters have the same names in *Kid* as they do in *Some Dance*.

When I wrote this feature article while a seminarian at the Pontifical College Josephinum in the summer of 1963, I did not quite know I was six months away from returning to Chicago to begin my career as a graduate student earning my doctorate at Loyola University of Chicago (1967). It took the death of the open-hearted and ecumenical Pope John XXIII on June 3, 1963, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November

22, 1963, to slap me fully awake. The briefly liberal world tilted on its axis; flat-world conservatives took over the Church and the American government, and we young ran into the streets waving James Baldwin's brand-new book, *The Fire Next Time*, and shouting, "Fire!"

"Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?" James Baldwin asked.

As I headed forward to teach on a burning university campus beginning in 1965, I also carried his bipolar novel, *Giovanni's Room*, because Baldwin mixed questions of race and sex in a way that intrigued me personally as the gay liberation of the 1960s sparked into flame, and we homophiles seemed finally, free at last, to call ourselves *gay*.

It was, at that time, correct to use the word *Negro*.

II. The essay as published in *The Torch*, Volume XLVIII, Number 1 (February 1965), The Official Publication of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, Reverend Francis N. Wendell, editor, 141 East 65th Street, New York, 10021

The Church Mid-Decade and the Negro

by Jack Fritscher writing as John J. Fritscher

I am white, twenty-four, the son of a salesman's middle-class family. Despite the Civil Rights Bill I still live in the *de facto* segregated suburbs of a Midwestern city over 125,000 population. I am a student for the priesthood and I have sat on the floor of Chicago Mayor Daley's office. For the heat of the last two summers [1962 and 1963], I have been in Chicago. I have lived with the Negroes on Chicago's South Side. And since my return from the Black Belt many of my parents' friends tolerate me with the cool regard or the heated remarks sacred only to the memory of Benedict Arnold.

I am told by them that if they're prejudiced, then I am just as prejudiced—but the other way. If it seems that way to them, then I am sorry that I have not been clearer, kinder in expressing why I walked alone for the first time through a colored neighborhood. Why I wore a roman collar door to door and talked for hours to people living in unspeakable conditions. Why I marched and why I sat-in.

Like everyone else I've always seen and heard what I wanted to see and hear. But this time I tried to walk with my eyes wide open. I wanted

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Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

to find if really it was true what is said: that by negligence and silence, I and my comfortable neighbors and the Church I intend to serve all my life are somehow accessories before God to the injustices committed against Negroes.

I'd read that Mayor Daley had said ghettos do not exist in Chicago. I thought they did, but figured I could be wrong. And I *was* wrong if a thirty-two per cent male unemployment rate, subhuman housing, and vice and crime (all restricted in one neighborhood tighter than any zoning commission ever dreamed) are not symptoms of a ghetto existence.

One can prove anything by selecting examples, and in my first week in the area I could have verified any of the worst stories anyone has ever heard about slums and sin and other human beings. I could have lined them up: the junkies, the prostitutes, the alcoholics, the deviates, and the good people sunk despairingly deep in the vicious circle of their circumstances.

A walk down any street, a climb up any stairwell proves that we have not abolished slavery. We have perfected it. Before, a master at least had to feed and house his slave to protect his initial investment. Since Emancipation there is no purchasing, no investment to guard, and the master-society has been free to hire and fire, to use and abuse according to its own whim, and the needs of the "slave" be hanged. So what if he gets sick, killed, is ignorant and discriminated against. There's always more where he came from.

And precisely because there are more where he came from, the Negro in 1964 has reached at least a landing lit by outside legal light on his way up the cellar steps. But he started on that climb long before this mid-decade. The Negro has worked for freedom since the very first day of his captivity. Passive resistance is as old as the Plantation.

And by your mint julep if you don't think breakin' massa's new plow, forgettin' how to ruin massa's cotton gin, and havin' some ol' kind of mysterious misery every time massa needed something pronto wasn't passive resistance in its most primitive form, then think again.

But this resistance historically got bad publicity. It birthed, nursed, and weaned the full blown Negro stereotype that today is thankfully being laid to rest. My whole time on the South Side I did not hear one single wide-eyed chorus of "Summertime" or see one tap dancing boot-black or eat any Aunt Jemima pancakes. Instead, I saw individuals, people who basically were no different from the white society in which I had always lived. People who would have been the same were it not for discrimination and its ugly brood of children.

If I say Negroes are like this or like that, someone will always say, "Well I know one that isn't." Then let me say that Americans are like this

or Catholics are like that and everyone knows I don't mean each and every American or Catholic, but rather the majority.

In the course of our work in Chicago's Woodlawn, we sixteen seminarians met and talked to more than a great majority of the forty thousand people in the neighborhood. We found the sensational all right: the characters right out of the novels of Richard Wright and James Baldwin. But more importantly, we found the people called *Negro*.

We found the good ordinary people trying to live ordinary family lives in a circle of appalling circumstances. We went door to door in hundreds of six-family dwellings inhabited by up to fourteen families. And we talked. And *how* we talked. If nothing else, we established communication with some of those people locked behind their tenement doors. We were Catholic priests to them, but we were also the first social contact many of them had made in the community. Since the area's entire population shifts about every three years, the neighborhood is a constant flux of new addresses. Many are Southern Negroes new to the city. Their adjustment from their former rural or small-town way-of-life is not easily made. Many of them do not know their neighbor across the hall, much less where the local church is, who the doctor is, whom to see for social help. And for as many who sit bitterly in their one-room walk-ups because the North is not the Promised Land, there are more who are attending night classes at local schools, more who recognize the difficulties in their neighborhood, more are worried to death over their children's future.

And here with the children is the impelling force driving the Negro to seek his rights. He wants education for his children so that applications for decent jobs can be made by qualified Negro applicants, so that life can be lived with some dignity of profession. He doesn't want his children to slide back into the morass that has stalled the Negro for centuries. Up to this past summer he was finding it more and more difficult to tell nine-year-old Suzie she couldn't go to this or that movie theater because she is Black; and more and more easy to explain to her why she must go with her father to a freedom march ("Because you're a human being, honey, and you have a right to live like one."), knowing full well that her participation in the demonstration would be awakening in her the social consciousness of a whole new generation.

The Civil Rights Bill has boosted the Negro's hopes and responsibilities enormously.

The Negro puts a different value on children than does our white "control-conscious" society. Perhaps because he has fewer other distractions his focus is electrically on the worth and future of his children as social entities. Even the names common among Negroes, outlines of the most famous heroes of American history from Washington to Lincoln to

Roosevelt and now John Kennedy, are clues to the aspirations American Negro parents dream for their children.

But why were we in Woodlawn? Negroes asked us that and we asked ourselves and each other. Monsignor John J. Egan, director of the Chicago Archdiocesan Conservation Council, answered us quite succinctly one July evening: "The religious institution which remains aloof from its neighborhood and whose administrators do not involve themselves with the aspirations, causes, and organizations of the neighborhood, is, by virtue of its symbolic role, denying God in that neighborhood."

With those fighting words no one wants to quarrel, least of all the pastor of Woodlawn's Holy Cross Parish, Father Martin Farrell. He it was who invited us to the South Side. He needed a large force to canvass his shifting parish population quickly. And he thought seminarians might jump at the chance to people the somewhat dry pages of their theology textbooks with real experience.

So we set out, frankly frightened at first, to teach and to learn. Ultimately we were there for a spiritual reason, to bring souls to Christ in the Church. But we quickly found that is done in a very concrete way.

The culture of many large northern cities has been largely shaped by Roman Catholics and their institutions. And Chicago is no exception. (Woodlawn itself had been Irish Catholic.) Thus with a basically Catholic spirit somewhat dominant in the city's social consciousness, one judges there can be little serious tackling of the still existing problems of segregation and discrimination if Catholics and Catholic parishes do not earnestly tackle them.

That was our place to begin, or rather to enter what Father Farrell had long before begun. That was how we came to sit on the Mayor's floor with four hundred Negro demonstrators, how we came to march in the NAACP's July 4th parade to Grant Park. This we could understand having heard often that you can't preach the gospel to an empty stomach.

Father Farrell's instrument for community improvement is the non-sectarian group, The Woodlawn Organization, in whose circle he has been a leader since its beginning. TWO has been called by sociologist advisor to Cardinal Montini (now Pope Paul VI), Saul Alinsky, "the most effective community organization of Negroes in America."

But besides TWO which pressures slum landlords, fights for neighborhood urban renewal on a local level, and crusades for all the justice lacking in everything from job discrimination to unequal education, Father Farrell has thrown his own parochial resources into the fray. In answer to the parents' concern for their children's education, he has opened his school to all area children, Catholic or not. And here our task took specific form: to flood the teeming neighborhood with literature

about the “Sisters’ School”; to spread information about the adult instruction classes; to awaken in the neighborhood conscience the fact that the Church is there, doing more than watching, actually caring what happens to their bodies and minds as well as their souls.

It is evident the Church simply cannot afford to miss the boat in the current social revolution and so lose the American Negro. The Church cannot afford to repeat the maneuvers made during the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution when her slowness lost her the European working class. The Church either opens to the Negro now or never.

It’s all very well and good to have one of the neighborhood status symbols be the children’s attendance at the Sisters’ School. (A status symbol and more because the children receive, besides the regular curriculum, a highly valued “training in goodness”—as the character formation is popularly called.) And it’s also well and good that the Church draw in converts through its classes and its civic and social prominence in the community; that it help the mothers and fathers of families obtain all the rights owed to them and their children; that buses chartered for demonstrations leave from the Church door. It is well and good that this clamor after Rights is preached from the pulpit of the Catholic Church; but more than this, the Negro sitting in the pews hears that with every right comes a corresponding duty. Duty too he must discover. Duty too he must seek and fulfill to become an integral member of society.

The honor given by Negroes this summer to John Kennedy can compare only with the love given last summer to another John, the Twenty-third, whose picture, cut from magazines and torn from newspapers, was conspicuous in apartment after apartment, Catholic and non-Catholic. The Pontiff’s name, in those first months after his death, was spoken with boundless admiration. And rightly so. For only the April before the summer he died had he said in *Pacem in Terris*: “...The conviction that all men are equal by reason of their natural dignity has been generally accepted. Hence racial discrimination can in no way be justified at least doctrinally or in theory. And this is of fundamental importance and significance for the formation of human society...For, if a man becomes conscious of his rights, he must become equally aware of his duties. Thus *he who possesses certain rights has likewise the duty to claim those rights as marks of his dignity, while all others have the obligation to acknowledge those rights and respect them.*” (Italics added)

The American Negro has heard the late head of the Catholic Church, the Vicar of Christ, saying such things on radio and television, in newspapers and in some Catholic pulpits. The ground is plowed for the Church. The seed is there. It must be nurtured carefully in the next months and coming years. For the Catholic Church, as a body already present in

society, can help through education and social action the implementation of the Civil Rights Bill and thus hasten the day when rats and hate and hunger no longer distract men from the care of their souls.

Because this social revolution will continue until justice is righted, I want my parents' friends to understand what is happening. I want everyone to know that every time a Negro minister is dragged down courthouse steps, Christ is dragged again; that every time a Negro girl is killed in a senseless Sunday School bombing, Christ is killed again; that subhuman housing, substandard education, all the devices and implements of racial hatred and prejudice have as their victim not a race or a mere cultural minority. They have as their victim Christ.

I want them all to know that my generation of Chaney's and Goodman's and Schwerner's is in a state of revolution, and certain values once held can no longer be supported by antiquated law or outdated custom, by private agreement or public indifference. Already the barber in the shopping center near my home can no longer insist to me after a casual question that he will never cut a Negro's hair. Discrimination has always been immoral. Now it is illegal as well.

I want my good Catholic friends, even the ones who attend study clubs and Holy Name and Altar-Rosary, to know something that I found out about them, about the ones who say they have nothing against Negroes but don't want any next door. They say they know they are prejudiced, but they can't help it. But when they talk about it, it's clear they're not anti-Negro because Negroes have dark skins. Their prejudice is against filth and poverty and laziness and vice. These are what they hate. Not Negroes. And when these otherwise good people finally make this distinction, they see that discrimination in jobs and education has bred the poverty all must war against. They see that poverty breeds defeat and dirt and hopelessness and sin in whatever group it enters. It is then they see that it is not the victim, the Negro, that they hate. But rather it is the cause and the cancer itself, the denial of human dignity and rights implicit in discrimination, that they despise. And this practicing Catholics need to know for a right conscience; for prejudice, no matter how it is sliced, is sinful.

Christ was the world's greatest rebel. Christianity is the religion of revolution. And the Church in these days of ecumenical renewal is out to establish beachheads. Revolutions are not new to the Church and she knows how to handle them. The Church, founded in upheaval, has seen too much growth come from upheaval to cast any movement off lightly.

Every nation that ever rose and fell, collapsed because people who forgot how to suffer and sacrifice themselves for justice weakened its moral

fiber. Today the American Negro character stands purified by centuries of patient suffering. Full integration has legally come. The racially incestuous barriers of cultures and ideas and blood will be melted away. And as the Negro is accepted into the society of American business and politics and religion and art, the very strength he brings to the transfusion, especially if guided by the social-moral doctrines of solid Christianity, will be for our country and our world the bringing in of a new hope.

III. Eyewitness Illustrations

© Jack Fritscher

Sequencing the genome of the gay press: How the early marginal gay press of *Drummer* grew out of the specific underground press of the Catholic press. Three short stories by Jack Fritscher, beginning as a teenager, published in the national biweekly *The Josephinum Review* between 1958 and 1963 when Fritscher left the closet of the Catholic priesthood for a life in Chicago.

Opposite page. “63rd and Cottage Grove, Chicago, 1963,” three photographs. How “gay rights” evolved as “civil rights.” In summers 1962 and 1963, Jack Fritscher, like many other gay people, was active in civil rights, marching with Martin Luther King, Jr., schooled by Saul Alinsky, and being carried bodily out of Mayor Richard Daley’s office, while living and working in the ghetto at 63rd and Cottage Grove, Chicago. Pictured at the El stop corner that Black Muslims claimed as their own until a *detente cordiale* is Fritscher’s fellow seminarian and longtime straight friend (since 1953), Frank E. Fortkamp, Episcopal vicar of Brunswick, MD (2007). Fritscher detailed this experience in his article “Church Mid-Decade” 1965.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

©Jack Fritscher

As a prelude to the kind of photography layouts Jack Fritscher created for *Drummer*, the two photographs pictured are part of his photo feature “The Long, Last Days Before the Priesthood: A Story of School’s End” which Fritscher wrote and photographed for *The Josephinum Review* (May 22, 1963). When he cast a real seminarian in his photographs, Fritscher chose a straight man who was as masculine, blond, and bear-like as the men who would later surface in his homomasculine photography in *Drummer*. Photographs by Jack Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

“Jack Fritscher and Roger Radloff,” 1961. Fritscher and Radloff were longtime nonsexual friends and roommates at the Pontifical College Josephinum where Fritscher was the editor of the college paper, *Pulse*, as well as writer and editor for *The Josephinum Review*. In 1991, the Reverend Roger Radloff, a Jungian psychiatrist and priest in Miami, died of [Catholic obituary quote] “the dread disease of cancer” [unquote], after being—in the wider salon—a client of Fritscher’s friend, David Hurles, whose Old Reliable studio specialized in photos and videos of rough trade. Photograph taken with Jack Fritscher’s camera handed to a friend. ©Jack Fritscher.



Captions: Eyewitness documentation of the existence of graphics providing internal evidence supporting Jack Fritscher’s text are located in the Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry GLBT History collection. Out of respect for issues of copyright, model releases, permissions, and privacy, some graphics are not available for publication at this time, but can be shown by appointment.

Eyewitness
Illustration

Photograph. “Jack Fritscher and Robert Mapplethorpe Entwined,” Stompers Gallery, New York, 1979. Photographer as yet unknown.

© Jack Fritscher

“Down at the River,” 1959. Photograph by Jack Fritscher. ©1959, 2008 Jack Fritscher. “At age 20, in summer 1959, living in an innocent pre-verbal and pre-gay dream of the Platonic Ideal of homomascularity, I composed and photographed my best straight friend since childhood in a blond-muscle shot that Chuck Renslow, Etienne, and Bob Mizer could have immediately published on the covers of *Mars*, *Triumph*, and *Physique Pictorial*, and that I could have published on the cover of the “Gay Jock Sports” issue *Drummer* 20 (January 1978). My quintessential 50-year-old photograph pegs me for what I am and for what my writing and photography are all about.” —Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008