

'Julie Bindel's writing is always sharp, often entertaining and rarely less than controversial. Even where our views diverge profoundly, I welcome her voice in a world where too few are ready to truly put their beliefs up for public scrutiny.' **STELLA DUFFY**

# STRAIGHT EXPECTATIONS

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GAY TODAY?

**JULIE BINDEL**

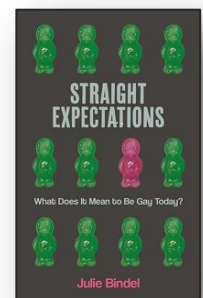
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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LESBIAN OR GAY IN 2014?

In *STRAIGHT EXPECTATIONS*, journalist, campaigner and political activist Julie Bindel looks at all aspects of lesbian and gay life and asks - in the era of same-sex marriage and equal rights - what it really means to be lesbian and gay today.

2014 has seen significant change for the lesbian and gay movement in the UK. Laws have been passed allowing same-sex marriage, and amendments to lesbian and gay adoption rights means that legislatively, nothing now separates lesbians and gays from heterosexuals. In the 40 years since the gay liberation movement was founded, gay men and lesbians have never been on such an equal footing to heterosexuals.

But does this legislative parity translate into real life? There is still anti-gay bullying in schools and the workplace, lack of decent representation in the media and sport, and physical and verbal attacks in the streets. And has the gay and lesbian movement even been fighting the right fights? In *Straight Expectations*, Julie Bindel, an out lesbian since 1977, tracks the changes in the gay community in the last forty years and asks whether fighting for the right to marry has achieved genuine progress, or whether the new legal rights have neutered a once-radical social movement.



Confronting difficult and divisive issues head on, Bindel challenges why gay men and lesbians are always grouped together when in reality she believes they have very little in common. She argues that the right to gay marriage is a hollow victory and that the lesbian and gay movement shouldn't look to imitate heterosexuals. Bindel, controversially, believes that there's no such thing as a gay gene, ergo, that sexual orientation is not innate, questioning why we insist on looking to scientific constructs and labels, when for her, lesbianism is a positive choice.

In the course of researching this book, Bindel carried out one of the most comprehensive surveys on attitudes to lesbian and gay rights and sexuality, numbering nearly 10,000 responses. This body of original research is one of the largest on the subject in recent years. As well as interviewing gay liberation pioneers, scientists, religious figures and key players of all political persuasions, Julie Bindel also experienced 'gay conversion therapy' at first hand by going undercover into a fundamentalist Christian therapy centre in Denver.

*Straight Expectations* is an important and timely work. Highly personal, candid, incisive and thought-provoking, it gets to the heart of the values, politics, hopes and dreams of a minority group that has been increasingly accepted into the mainstream. And asks is now the time to revive the revolution?

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Julie Bindel is a freelance journalist, broadcaster and feminist activist. She is the co-founder of the law reform organisation Justice For Women. In 2013 she was named in the top 100 most influential gay and lesbian people in the world. *Straight Expectations* is her first book.

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### JULIE BINDEL IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

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