

RON GOLD

b. April 22, 1930

d. May 1, 2017

GAY PIONEER

He played an important role in the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness.

“Stop it, you’re making me sick!”

Ron Gold played an important role in the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA’s) declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. A member of the Gay Activists Alliance and, later, a cofounder of the National Gay Task Force, he fought for positive representation of gays and lesbians in the media.

Gold was born in Brooklyn, New York. When he turned 13, his parents began shuffling him to psychiatrists to address his homosexuality. He eventually developed a heroin addiction. At age 24, he approached a psychiatric hospital for treatment and was turned away. He spent several years at a Kansas clinic, where they helped him get clean, but failed to “cure” his homosexuality. His experiences with conversion therapy fueled his commitment to “eliminate the ‘sickness’ label branded upon gays and lesbians.”

Gold spent his early career as a magazine writer and a reporter for *Variety*, before dedicating himself to activism. In 1970 he created the seminal, later-expanded booklet “20 Questions About Homosexuality,” which, at the time, was one of only two publications that spoke positively about gay identity.

As the media director of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), Gold played a pivotal role in the pressure campaign to remove homosexuality from the APA’s index of mental disorders. In the fall of 1972 — after a disguised gay psychiatrist, John Fryer, appeared at the APA Annual Meeting in May and provided historic testimony on the issue — Gold and GAA protesters infiltrated a behavioral therapy conference in New York. Railing against the speakers, Gold broke up the meeting. As the conferees disassembled, Gold talked to a psychiatrist there who helped give him a forum for debate at the next APA convention.

At the 1973 APA Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Gold delivered his now-famous “Stop It, You’re Making Me Sick” speech, asserting, “Your profession of psychiatry — dedicated to making sick people well — is the cornerstone of oppression that makes people sick.” The same year, the APA removed homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders.

In 1986 Gold wrote the first media guide for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. He persuaded producers of major television networks to edit episodes of shows that presented negative gay and lesbian stereotypes.

Gold appears in the award-winning documentary, “Cured” (2020), about the crusade to delist homosexuality from the DSM. He died at age 87, shortly after filming. He is survived by his husband, Ali Akbar. They were together for 17 years.

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