

Against Equality: Don't Ask to Fight Their Wars

Edited by RYAN CONRAD
Against Equality Press

Sequels often suffer from Jan Brady syndrome, being measured against their predecessors. Fortunately, *Against Equality: Don't Ask to Fight Their Wars*, the second anthology from the refreshingly anti-assimilationist queer collective Against Equality, delivers the group's usual incisive resistance, this time applying it to gays in the military.

Against Equality is at its strongest when pointing out the ways in which mainstream gay movements for "equality" actually perpetuate inequality. For example, in response to the oft-touted argument that ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) will provide jobs, Kenyon Farrow writes for Queers for Economic Justice, "Wouldn't more social safety net spending help the millions of queers who can barely make ends meet?" And Tamara K. Nopper thoughtfully connects DADT with the DREAM Act, as both appear progressive but actually expand the military's ability to exploit already vulnerable populations such as immigrants and working-class people—and the many queers among them.

Rather than merely poo-pooing assimilation, this new volume imaginatively suggests goals that might benefit all queers, such as universal health care and affordable housing, not to mention ending imperialism instead of pursuing it.

The series also does best when it remembers that a spoonful of humor makes the dogma go down. "Sure, we think uniforms are hot, but this—permitting out lesbians and gay men to enlist—was never the purpose of gay liberation," write Erica Meiners and Therese Quinn. Gleeful iconoclast Yasmin Nair dismantles the myth of Dan Choi and the gay assimilationism behind the push to end DADT. Bill Andriette's lengthy "Pictures at an Execution," by contrast, is jargony and inaccessible.

This volume makes better use of its pocket-sized physical form than its predecessor did—with a readable font and delightful Mr. Fish cartoons—but even more could be done. Nopper's essay, for example, wastes an entire page quoting and repeating a previous essay in the book. And the visuals are shunted to the end, as if an afterthought; perhaps they can play a larger role as the series progresses.

—Jessica Max Stein