

Reviving the Tribe: Friendship and Social Relations in the Work and Play of Eric Rofes

Benjamin Shepard¹

As a journalist, executive director, organizer, and educator, Eric Rofes worked to support a Gay Liberation movement originally dedicated to sexual freedom and self determination. While Rofes' skills as a writer, educator and cultural critic have long been recognized, this essay addresses Rofes' use of friendship to realize movement goals. For Rofes, friendship involved the nexus between individual and larger social forces, linking ideas, bodies, and networks into Gay Liberation politics. Here, individuals and groups helped realize the image of convivial social relations, in which human care, freedom of the body, sexuality and imagination found support. Rofes died in 2006. The concept is discussed and explored through the review of Rofes' life and story. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2010 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS: Friendship, Play, Sexual Self Determination, Social Networks, HIV Prevention.

¹ **Benjamin Shepard**, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor City Tech/City University of New York. He is the author/editor of six books including *White Nights and Ascending Shadows: An Oral History of the San Francisco AIDS Epidemic*, *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization* (edited with Ron Hayduck), and *Queer Political Performance and Protest*. Forthcoming works include: *Play, Creativity, and the Social Movements* (Routledge), *Community Projects as Social Activism*, and *The Beach beneath the Streets: Exclusion, Control, and Play in Public Space* (with Greg Smithsimon). His writings can be found at <http://benjaminheimshepard.com/>. **Acknowledgments:** The author would like to thank Erika Biddle, Jay Blotcher, Chris Bartlett, Liz Highleyman, Peter Nardi, and Nadia Raza for feedback and editorial assistance with this essay. Address correspondence to: Benjamin Shepard, City Tech / City University Of New York, 300 Jay Street, Nam 401, Brooklyn, NY 11201; e-mail: bshepard@citytech.cuny.edu.