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**The Newsletter of the *Naturist Action Committee* and the *Naturist Education Foundation***

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## We Hear You!

"Information on naturist philosophy and the history of naturism."

"Local, national & international (educational + activism). I want it ALL!"

"Legal cases, history stories."

"I'm a fan of NEFRL and hope to see it grow."

"History of nudist magazines, index of publications."

"Information on the naturist lifestyle."

"Current projects."

"Essays on historical topics."

- See page 2!

"Information on how nudists can be engaged in expanding nudist friendly locations and business. What is legal and illegal in different states with regard to nudity, especially on your own property."

"Legal actions taken / required and what I can do."

"History of naturism/nudism."

For those who signed up to this newsletter on or before January 2021 using the online form, it had an extra question: **"What content are you interested in seeing in the newsletter?"** This question wasn't just wishful thinking. In fact, it has been the answer to another question we often ask ourselves: "What should we put in the newsletter this month?"

While the content does rely on what we have available at the time, we hope that we've been meeting what you, the avid reader and supporter, signed up for.

Finding a balance between NAC content, NEF content, and NEFRL content has been difficult. While the NEF and NEFRL things are pretty easy, NAC has proven to be more challenging. It was never our intent to churn the same content as the news cycles; everything published in this newsletter is original content. Even though the NAC board members get status updates daily or weekly from numerous active projects, we can't publish a vast majority of that. We wish we could -- it's exciting stuff! But NAC's best work in naturist activism goes on behind-the-scenes and publishing incremental updates could put the work itself at risk. If there's any big announcements or requests from NAC, you'll see them both here and on our social media!

If you have content that you'd like to see here, get in touch. We welcome articles contributed by readers too. See our publication policy in the December 2020 newsletter.

"Everything that NAC & NEF are up to!"

"Legal defenses, new laws."

"Government and legal actions and successes."

"Updates. Opportunities. Useful information. Directions for online browsing of available materials."

"New collections, ways to search, ways to borrow, fair use, etc."

"Something funny."

- See page 6!

"I am particularly interested in efforts to re-establish more nude beaches in the northeast (Lighthouse Beach, etc.) and maintain Gunnison's status. That said, it is always nice to hear about what else is going on in Florida and other parts of the country."

"Available nudist venues within the USA on public lands."

"History of Florida nudism resorts and beaches."

"Everything. Health benefits and enjoyment."



# Louis Abolafia, The Nudist Party Candidate

By Shannon Lewis

Louis Abolafia is best known for his 1968 candidacy for president of the United States on the Nudist Party ticket. His campaign posters, which featured a completely nude portrait of the candidate with a strategically placed hat, along with the slogan, "What have I got to hide?" drew international media attention. But the 1968 presidential campaign is just one chapter of a short but fascinating life, one that included encounters with Andy Warhol, Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Johnny Cason, Margaret Trudeau, Bob Dylan and even Lee Baxandall. Dismissed as a narcissistic showman by some, and admired as an enigmatic activist and artist by others, it's fair to say that Abolafia is an underappreciated figure of the 1960s counterculture, a man who remained engaged in politics, art and protest well into the 90s.

Born February 23, 1941, Abolafia was the son of a New York City florist and possibly the great-great-great-great-grandson of one of the writers of the Kabbala. He took an early interest in art, becoming a painter and opening a studio in a cramped East Village storefront while still in his early twenties. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Free Press*, Abolafia asserted, "I am an artist. I began to study painting at the age of ten in the school of the Museum of Modern Art. I graduated from intermediate art school, then from college" (Vostochnyi, 1967).

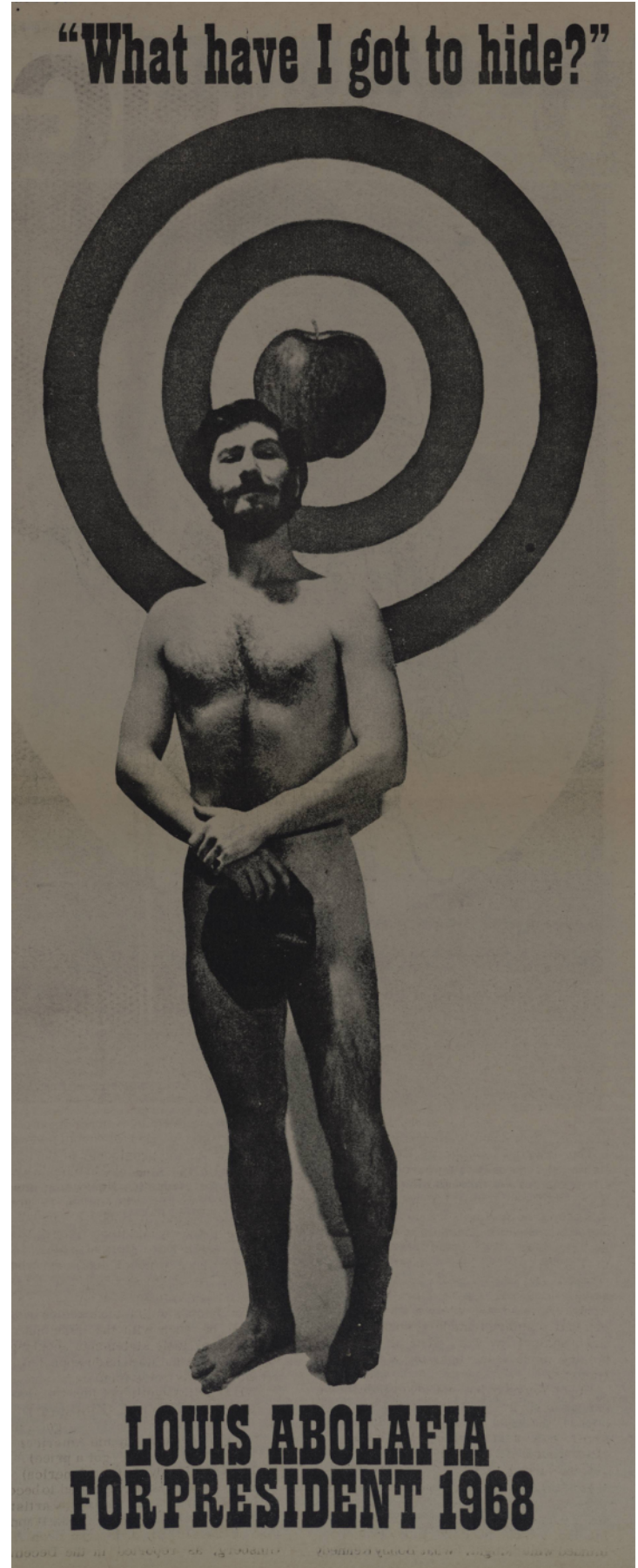
"My campaign poster is a picture of myself nude and vulnerable as the youth of America stands right now. Should I have fear to expose myself to the face of the plastic Americans?"

- Louis Abolafia, 1967

Abolafia first made headlines in 1964, when he picketed the Metropolitan Museum of Art in protest of what he perceived to be the elitism of the art world, which he felt was discouraging new artistic expressions and alienating the average citizen from enjoying art. To illustrate his point, he snuck one of his own paintings inside the Metropolitan Museum and placed it next to a Rodin. Both he and the painting were quickly removed by security guards. "I had gotten the Met off its ass," he boasted, "after I smuggled my painting into the Museum and hung it there in protest" ("Hide", 1967). He picketed the Met again in 1965, where he was arrested for what he described as his "symbolic portrayal of what the creative man feels in this country" ("Hide", 1967). He was infuriated by the art world's dismissal of his work. "They keep telling me 'You don't have a name,'" he complained to *The New York Times*. "The Met told me my work is too modern for them" ("Artist", 1965). An eighteen-day hunger strike followed in January 1966, while picketing the Dali exhibition at the Huntington Hartford Gallery. According to Abolafia, Dali came out of the gallery and hugged him, while Hartford himself cursed him. "Just goes to show you the difference between artists and arthogs," he raged ("Hide", 1967).

## The 1968 Presidential Campaign

Thrilled by the media attention, and inspired by this convergence of art, protest and street activism, Abolafia decided to become involved in politics. With a budget of \$50, he ran for





governor of New York in 1966, even though he was legally too young to hold the office. He announced his candidacy in front of his headquarters at 129 East 4th Street, which also served as his living quarters, art studio and a makeshift community center for runaway youth. He described his vision of a reinvigorated New York as a city with “shade trees, backyard gardens, a clean Hudson River, art schools, free galleries and subsidies for talented students” (“Gubernatorial”, 1966), while a Jamaican musician named Lord Echo performed songs written for the campaign. In spite of the positive reception he received in the neighborhood, Abolafia received just three write-in votes.

Undeterred, Abolafia set his sights on a higher office: president of the United States. Little did he know that his campaign poster, a nude portrait of himself, photographed by his older brother Oscar, would transform him into a legendary figure during the Summer of Love. A charismatic young man with a talent for self-promotion, Abolafia was soon invited to appear on The Merv Griffin Show, The Alan Burke Show and The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson to discuss his political views and show off his infamous nude poster. The mainstream press may have treated Abolafia as something of a curiosity, but his confidence, sunny disposition and infectious optimism won him many fans across the country.

His initial political platform lacked specific policy proposals, and instead broadly focused on improving societal conditions so that individuals might reach their full potential. As he explained in an interview in the *East Village Other*,

“I’m running as an independent because it’s an anonymous ticket; as opposed to say aligning myself with either the Democrats or Republicans. I couldn’t possibly see eye to eye with them, ’cause their eyes just aren’t ready to see what I’m talking about. I’m talking about the elevation of the human spirit through a concerted effort of art. Before man’s life in this robot society can become meaningful we are going to have to teach him via art how to lift up his eyes to look for his inherent nobility of life and the human spirit.” (“Hide”, 1967)

Abolafia held a campaign event called the “Cosmic Love-In” on May 2, 1967 at New York’s Village Theater. “We’ll have poets, bands, cartoons, color slides, Charlotte Moorman, Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary,” he told reporters. It’s the beginning of my campaign for the presidency” (Golden, 1967). There are reports that Abolafia appeared nude at the event. Later that summer, Abolafia held a campaign event at another Greenwich Village theater, which was billed as the “Cosmic Assembly of the Supporters of Universal Love.” Here, Abolafia began to link his candidacy to the anti-war movement.

“Wars are coming one after another – when one is finished another one starts. It is necessary for all persons in the arts – composers, artists, poets – to unite in the struggle for peace. Cultural workers against war. They want to create. How can we struggle against war? By universal love. If everyone loves one another, there won’t be a war.” (Vostochnyi, 1967)

By the summer of 1968, Abolafia seemed somewhat exhausted by the campaign and the unexpected barrage of international media coverage, telling a reporter from the *East Village Other* that, if elected, he’d need “a few weeks just resting” before assuming the office. “I’m pooped.” Still, when probed about his campaign, he remained enthusiastic about his undertaking. “Think of it, love missionaries going all around the world, subverting government right and left with the truth. College kids, going off to other countries and preaching love and breaking down cultural barriers, class barriers” (Latimer, 1968). The reporter took notice of Abolafia’s dramatic attire, a yellow-lined cape and a fanciful hat, and he wondered what his nudist fans might think of this.

Abolafia appeared to be growing increasingly disillusioned with New York life in the year following the Summer of Love. Crime in the Village had worsened, drug use was beginning to take a toll, and a darker mood had set in nationwide following the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. “After King got shot, and then Kennedy, a lot of the real people, my friends, left town, got a place in the country, just closed off entirely from the society. The love thing was great last year, spread it around, act it, show people what it is, they’ll catch on – but it didn’t work.” King, Kennedy, all that hate” (Latimer, 1968). In August, 1968, Abolafia penned an article from Woodstock, New York for the *East Village Other*, which claimed that he had “brought my naked presidential ass up there to – well, split the N.Y. smoke scene and get some pure O2.” He seemed rejuvenated by the experience, away from the distractions of the city, in a place where “there’s nude swimming – if the fuzz don’t bust you! Back to nature, love and camping out” (Abolafia, 1968).

When the November, 1968 presidential election was over, Abolafia received an astonishing two million write-in votes.

### **A Counterculture Newspaper and a Foundation for Runaway Youth**

While campaigning in 1968, Abolafia continued to work on other projects, including publishing an underground newspaper. His paper was initially titled *With Abolafia*, later renamed *Abolafia’s LUV*. Ads appeared in various counterculture publications in late 1968, offering subscriptions starting at \$4.95, which included a nude poster.

“Be WITH ABOLAFIA along every step of his extraordinary explosion upon the pop sexual psyche... as he does his thing at demonstrations around the world... during his secret night missions... as he straddles the generation gap tracing lost hippies in New York City.”

*Abolafia’s LUV* was stylistically similar to Al Goldstein’s tabloid magazine *Screw*, with a similar focus on progressive politics, art and sexuality. “Foremost in the Field He Began” announced a line in the *LUV* masthead, which borrowed generously from the “First and Best in the Field it Created” banner of Goldstein’s publication.

Abolafia also increased his efforts to help the growing number of young people running away to New York City, through his Foundation for Runaway Children, which operated



out of the East Village storefront that served as his gallery and campaign headquarters.

"The kids trust me. They know I won't turn them in to the police. I find them a safe place to sleep where there aren't any drugs, get volunteer social workers to talk with them, and, when they feel ready, arrange for a reunion with their parents." (Reice, 1968)

Parents began to place ads in the New York underground papers, pleading with their children to contact Abolafia so that he might help reunite them. The entire front door of his East Village headquarters contained a handwritten message for runaways.

"Parents and runaways, contact here, leave name and number. Communications must be restored between old and young! We will speak to your parents for you if you are afraid. We'll tell them where it's at and what they're doing wrong. See Mr. Abolafia for interview and info. Bundles and clothes for kids – leave at pizza place."

### New York's Mayor in '69

Abolafia wasn't finished with politics, and he launched a campaign for mayor of New York in late 1968, with an ambitious nine-point platform outlined in an ad placed in the December 27<sup>th</sup> *East Village Other*.

- ▶ 1. Love – Peace – Brotherhood.
- ▶ 2. Reduction of present rents and complete rent control.
- ▶ 3. Complete modernization of archaic educational system.
- ▶ 4. Volunteer brigades of builders, carpenters, electricians to rehabilitate every slum area without profit. Fewer high rise structures and less city property sold to monstrous non-taxpaying structures.
- ▶ 5. A more COLORFUL, OPEN N.Y. City. A emphasis on the arts, parks, trees, painted buildings, cultural centers for talented young children.
- ▶ 6. A beginning of breakdown of the city complex as a contested and prime military target area. E.G. encourage Wall Street and business factions to move to Conn, or other neighboring cities, to begin trend toward decentralization of major cities. Encourage production of high speed rail systems to other cities at speeds of 250 mi. an hour we can begin to break down the 'city complex' structures, production of protective domes to cover main areas of present city complexes.
- ▶ 7. Bicycle paths – for traffic control and joy to life. Electric operated buses for air pollution control.
- ▶ 8. Love in '69! The magic word.
- ▶ 9. Youth must become part of tomorrow's political force. Abolafia's campaigns have given heart to the youth of the country and has caused many of them to take political science. He is the Leonardo Da Vinci and Marco Polo of our day (Abolafia, 1968).

Ever the publicity hound, Abolafia promoted his candidacy by staging a "happening" with painter Yayoi Kusama in the Sheep Meadow of Central Park on Easter Sunday, 1969. Billed as the wedding of the two artists, Kusama and Abolafia had planned to climb into the fountain

nude but were discouraged from doing so by the larger-than-expected police presence. Abolafia used the event to announce that he would "convert Gracie Mansion into a crashpad for the young runaways who call regularly at his door while he and his bride live in a gold and red tent mounted on a platform floated in the boating lake in the park" (Enzer, 1969).

Louis Abolafia and Yayoi Kusama coordinated another wedding "happening" on July 21, 1969, with Abolafia officiating the nuptials of Warhol Superstars Jackie Curtis (referenced in Lou Reed's "Take A Walk on the Wild Side") and Eric Emerson. The event was scheduled to "to coincide spiritually and metaphysically with the Apollo 11 landing on the moon," according to a press release. Attendees included Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey, Penny Arcade, and Stefan Brecht, the son of Bertolt Brecht, whose works were translated for English audiences by Lee Baxandall. When Eric Emerson failed to show, Stewart Eaglespeed stood in as groom. *The Village Voice* reported that Abolafia "was dressed in Roman Catholic vestments plus a large 'Louis Abolafia – New York's Mayor in '69' button" (Rader, 1969).

### San Francisco and the Exotic Erotic Ball

Having grown weary of New York City and the changing atmosphere of Greenwich Village, Louis Abolafia moved to San Francisco in 1974, and again campaigned for president in 1976. Together with friend Perry Mann, he organized a fundraiser and masquerade event called The Nudist Ball in 1978. The first Ball was held in Mann's San Francisco apartment and attended by a few hundred guests. The event moved to California Hall in 1979 and was renamed the Exotic Erotic Ball, and it helped raise campaign funds for Abolafia's 1979-1980 presidential run. "It was black-tie optional, so people showed up with black ties and that was it," an attendee recalled (Yollin, 2004). The final Ball was held at the Cow Palace in Daly City in 2010.

Abolafia's latest run for president once again used nudity to draw attention to his cause. He told reporters, "It bares the fact that I have nothing to hide. It is also a way to run and not spend too much money" ("This Candidate", 1979). Following a few appearances on the east coast, Abolafia returned to San Francisco, where he spoke at the first National Nude Beach Conference. "The issue of my campaign is a symbolic one," he explained to the attendees. "Nakedness reveals the vulnerability of man" (Kepp, 1980). Coincidentally, this meeting was attended by Lee Baxandall, and it was here that The Naturist Society was chosen as the name for the membership of Baxandall's new organization. Baxandall may have made an impact on Abolafia, for a few months later a flyer for the October, 1980 Exotic Erotic Ball referred to Abolafia as a naturist rather than a nudist.


"Join Louis Abolafia, star of Johnny Carson, Merv Griffin and Tom Snyder, artist, naturist, renaissance man and candidate for president and governor of California this evening to help the arts, naturism, Channel 25 and gay liberal freedom movements."

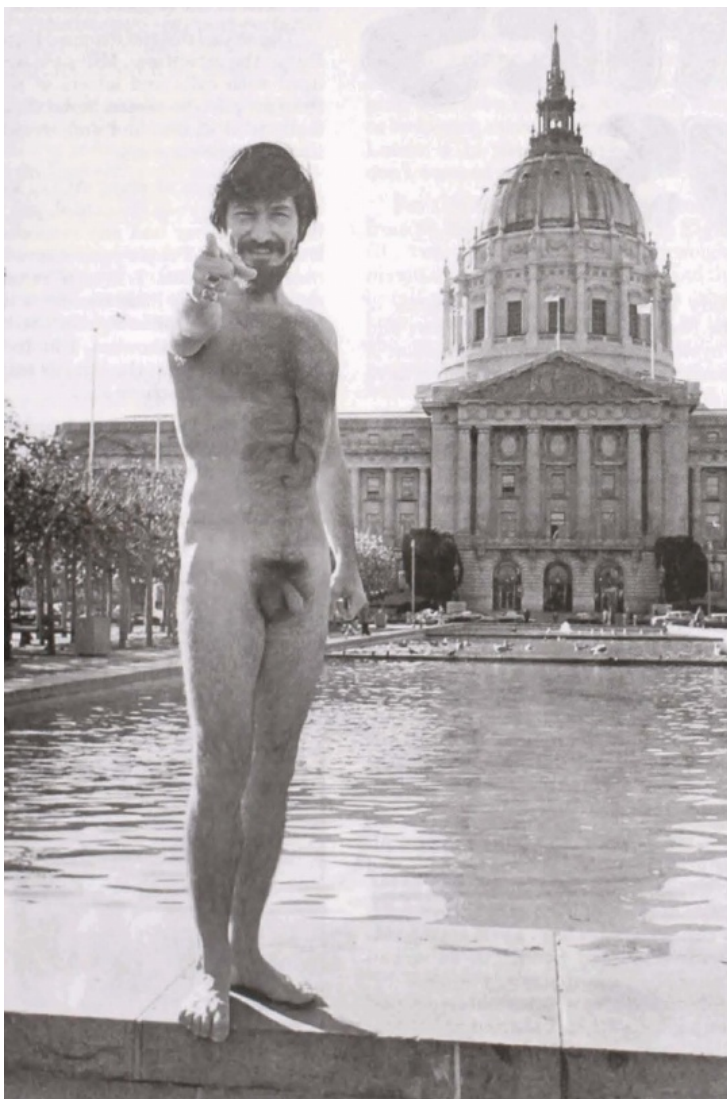
After running for governor of California in 1982, Abolafia made a final run for president in 1984, twenty years after first making the news for his Metropolitan Museum of Art protest. True to form, The forty-three year-old



campaigning nude in front San Francisco city hall. His hair was shorter, but he was still lean and vibrant, smiling broadly for the press while holding an updated version of his infamous nude campaign poster, with a new slogan: "The candidate of the future."

Tragically, Abolafia passed away of a heart attack on October 30, 1995, three days after his final Exotic Erotic Ball. He was survived by his mother, a sister and two brothers, one of which was famed photographer Oscar Abolafia. The following year, he was memorialized in *Nude & Natural* with two nude photos taken at San Francisco City Hall by Dave Patrick in 1984.

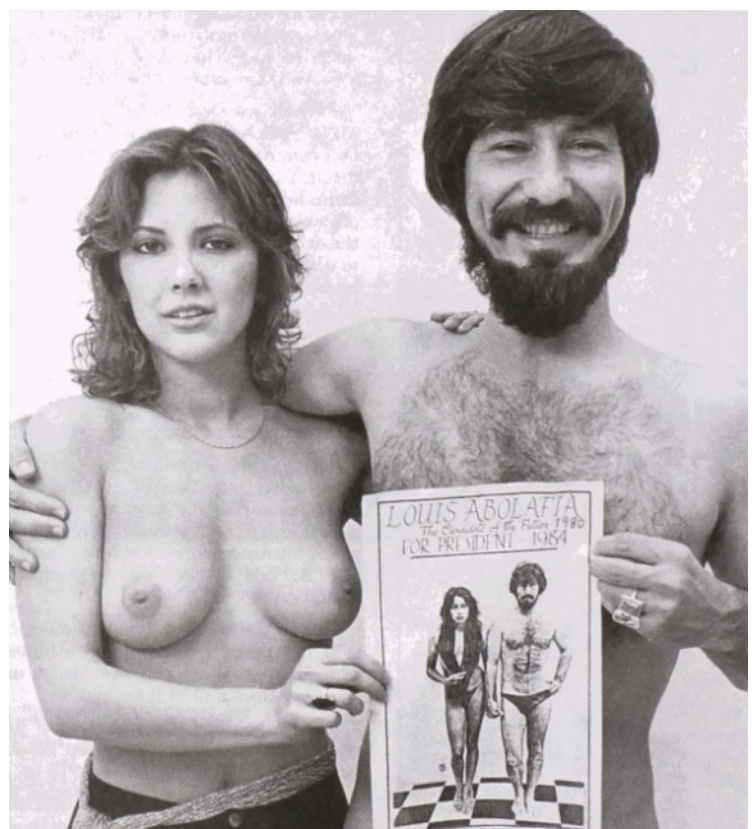
The article noted that Abolafia returned to his artistic roots in his final years, organizing "what may well have been the first nudity-permitted art gallery openings, with shows of his work at the Penthouse and Patrick's art galleries" ("Louis Abolafia", 1996). For a man that had mocked and protested the stodgy elitism of the art world in his youth, and who spent much of his life campaigning as a nude candidate for various political offices, it seems fitting that one of Louis Abolafia's final achievements would be to introduce the concept of clothing-optional art events. 



Abolafia campaigning in front of San Francisco City Hall, and with his 1984 campaign poster and partner. Photos by Dave Patrick via TNS, digitized by ANRL.

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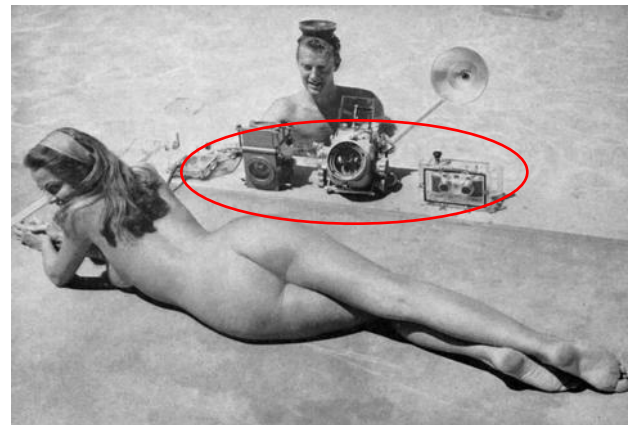


# What's wrong with these pictures?

There once was a time when naturists weren't deathly afraid of cameras. The privacy-busting Internet didn't exist yet, and magazine distribution was limited to like-minded individuals. What's the harm in letting someone take a photo?

Not only were people allowed to brandish a camera in a naturist resort, but other naturists would pose, show off, or just act goofy for a photograph. Browsing old magazines, one can't help but smile at some of these cheesy photos.

In this new "Caption This!" series, we're bringing some of this historic glee back to publication, and having a little more fun with it. We're asking readers to submit their caption ideas. The best one(s) will be published in the next newsletter.



## Caption This!

### About this Photograph

When I found this photo in 2019, I was compelled to snap a picture of it on my cell phone. (Sorry that I didn't capture which magazine it was found in. It's in one of the 16,000 at the NEF Research Library!) This photo, to me, captures an essence that is rarely found at naturist venues now. A genuine and innocent playfulness. Although I've seen numerous funny old naturist photos, this one planted the idea of starting this column.

Now it's your turn to Caption This! ➡

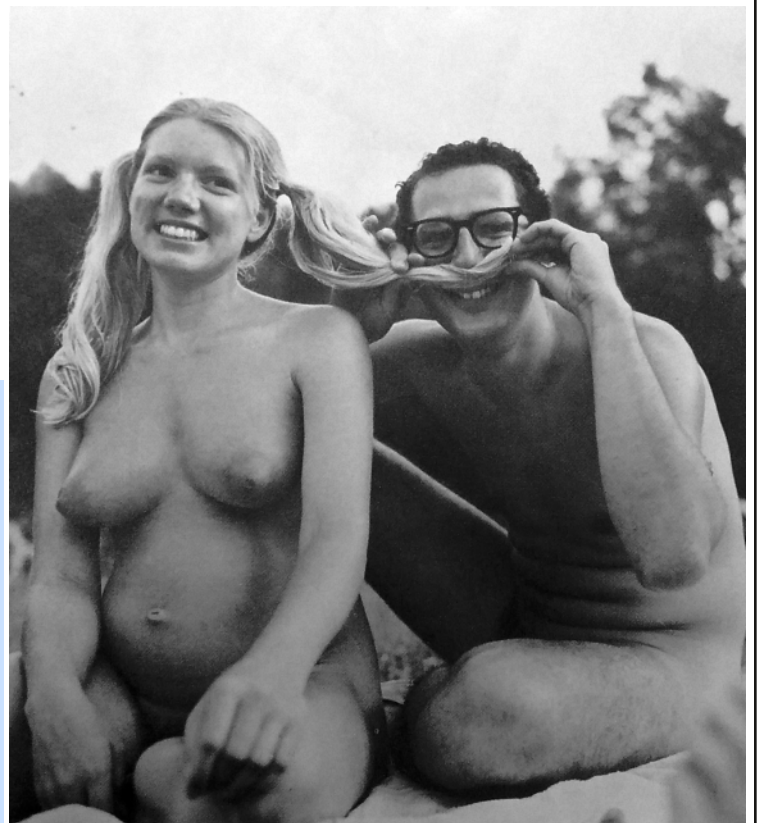
Send your caption ideas to:

Doug.Hickok@NaturistEducation.org

Please include:

- ▶ Your name that we can print if yours is selected. (Full name, or first name, or nickname, or anonymous...whatever you prefer)
- ▶ The type of caption (Title above, Caption below, Speech Bubbles, or a mix of all these).
- ▶ The caption wording, or who said/thought what.

Winners get fame in the next newsletter!





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- ▶ the activist efforts of the Naturist Action Committee,
- ▶ the educational & public outreach efforts of the Naturist Education Foundation, &
- ▶ the preservation of naturist history by the NEF Research Library.

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