

HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES:
A LESBIAN FEMINIST COLLECTIVE'S
CHANGES TO OKLAHOMA HERSTORY

By

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Abstract: Herland Sister Resources, a feminist and primarily lesbian collective, comprised a strong component of the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma queer community since 1982. Began as a feminist bookstore, first known as La Salle des Femmes, then Herland Bookstore persisted as a rarity. Herland stood as the only store of its typed in Oklahoma, one of less than a dozen in Bible Belt states, and part of a movement of no more than one hundred fifty stores nationwide. Within two years the store developed into a community center that hosted safe spaces for lesbians and other members of the 2SLGBTQUIA+ community, participated in activism to defend the rights of women, children, and the queer community, created a hub of communication, and left a legacy that bettered their community, state, and nation. Herland's historical significance stems from the expansion of queer history. This expansion further includes rural activism, emphasizes the importance of the communities outside of the prevailing urban-coastal narrative in queer history, and layers the discussion with the centering of Oklahoma's queer community as influential and contemporary in their actions.

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Figure 1.1) This mosaic features pictures from Herland’s *The Voice*, photos from their retreats, and the logo designed for an exhibit featuring the archive created by Herland Sister Resources.

hinesley, b, curator and designer, “50 States: Herland Sister Resources,” exhibit, April 12 – June 29, 2019, Oklahoma State University Museum of Art, Stillwater, Oklahoma, <https://museum.okstate.edu/art/past-exhibitions/2019/50-states-herland-sway.pdf>. Physical and digital exhibit.

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION—HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES

“If you come here to take our mountain,
Well, we ain’t come here to give it.
I have dreamed on this mountain, since first I was my mother’s daughter,
And you can’t just take my dreams away,
Not with me watching.
No, you can’t just take my dreams away,
Without me fighting.
No, you can’t just take our dreams away.”¹

On Friday, August 23, 1991, Peggy Johnson, a feminist activist, sang these lyrics in front of the Women's Health Care Services, a complete abortion services clinic in Wichita, Kansas that anti-choice groups frequently targeted to protest.² The Oklahoma City lesbian-feminist activist collective, Herland Sister Resources, sent approximately a dozen of its members, whom they

¹ Guardian Witness, “Oklahoma City Stands with Orlando,” Peggy Johnson sings “The Mountain Song,” (lyrics by Holly Near and Meg Christian), YouTube, June 21, 2016, video, 1:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR1r3W9LDA8>;

Holly Near, “Mountain Song/Kentucky Woman,” additional lyrics by Meg Christian, recorded 1978, Redwood Records, track 7 on *Imagine My Surprise*, 1978, vinyl LP.

² Herland group interview, interview of Herland Sisters: Margaret Cox, Peggy Johnson, Jean Kelsey, Ginger McGovern, and Pat Reaves by b hinesley, October 1, 2020, interview 1, as part of the Oklahoma State University’s Oklahoma Oral History Research Program’s *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, non-recorded;

Lindsey Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland and Herland Sister Resources,” in *This Land is Herland: Gendered Activism in Oklahoma from the 1870s to the 2010s*, edited by Sarah Eppler Janda and Patricia Loughlin, 246-261, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 251.

“Sisters, as group members called themselves.”

termed Sisters, to a Pro-Choice rally and protest in Wichita, Kansas.³ Here, Johnson, one of the Sisters, stood and sang surrounded by screaming anti-choice zealots. She sang to give voice to and represent women's rights. She sang to overcome the hate directed at herself and her chosen Sisters. She sang to empower her fellow protesters to push through their fear and frustration.⁴

Pat Reaves, who attended the demonstration as a long-time member of Herland and stood with Johnson, reflected on the day in the group's monthly newspaper, *The Voice*.⁵

I've struggled unsuccessfully to find words to adequately describe my experience... The battle now may be over abortion rights, but the war is about much more...Wichita intensified my belief that risks are necessary to protect the rights we have and to secure equal rights under the law for all women... We won't win this battle or the war by being "nice girls." I believe we can win by being willing to take the risks necessary to stand for our beliefs. ...I was sure that it was true – I was here because I will not give up my right to control by body without fighting, and with the power I felt singing together, we could win.⁶

Years later, Johnson chronicled the story in an oral history interview, describing the environment of the event, noting the anti-choice people plastered the area with:

pictures of live babies being killed...just gross propaganda about what abortion is...little white crosses strewn out on the clinic lawn...of all the rallies I've been to...I felt like that was the most important thing I have ever done. ...

We were, in some ways the bravest, that we ever were. ...

That was a slice out of time. ... I've never experienced anything like that. We were singing the song. ...we were surrounded by these Anti-Choice people, who ha[d] not been challenged by a group like us. ... everybody was singing. And I felt like we were in what I would call a spiritual bubble, like nothing could harm us. I felt

³ Pat Reaves, "Reflections on My Trip to Wichita," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8 no. 10, (October 1991): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52207>.

⁴ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

⁵ *Herland Voice Newsletter Archive*, University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) Archives and Special Collections. Chambers Library, UCO, Edmond, Oklahoma, <https://shareok.org/handle/11244/324286>. *The Voice* began as a simple, single-page flyer titled *Herland Bookstore Newsletter* and developed into an international independent newspaper (by the definition established in later discussion). Throughout its publication, as the group evolved into a collective the name of the paper changed. The members most frequently refer to all of the newsletters, regardless of the actual title, as "*The Voice*," and so, this thesis also uses this moniker for consistency.

⁶ Reaves, "Reflections on My Trip to Wichita," *The Voice*, (October 1991), 4.

peaceful and calm. I've never felt like I've been in the right place at the right time, quite as much as that.⁷

This group in Kansas represented and exemplified the larger group, Herland Sister Resources, a lesbian-feminist collective (the Collective) from Oklahoma City and their work through grassroots activism. The power to confront greater societal injustices and bravely advocate for change through activism formed the basis of how the women of Herland came to know one another, Herland's guiding principles, and their significance in herstory.

Herland began in 1982 as several feminist, mostly lesbian, women activists joined together to open a bookstore that offered feminist, lesbian, and other queer authors' works, which other places in Oklahoma failed to offer at that time. The women also intended for the store to serve as a place for gathering, education, and sharing of their lives.⁸ The women involved each took part in various activist organizations, so they wanted the store to further serve as a way to bring these together and find further support for each cause. This reciprocal support spurred the bookstore's quick evolution beyond simply providing difficult to access feminist and queer text. The group developed into a progressively liberal collective that worked for the betterment of life for all women and children within the largely rural and conservative state of Oklahoma.⁹ They

⁷ Peggy Johnson, interview by b hinesley, October 20, 2020, interview 4, as part of the Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program's *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, recording not yet published.

⁸ Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland quoted by Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 248.

⁹ Chloe O. Davis, *The Queens' English: The LGBTQIA+ Dictionary of Lingo and Colloquial Phrases*, (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2021), 8 and 256.

"Queer" was once a derogatory slur for homosexuals. By the 1980s, HIV/AIDS activists were determined to reclaim the term as a badge of honor for the LGBTQIA+ community. ... the younger LGBTQIA+ generations have adopted 'queer' as an umbrella term for anyone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, nonbinary, gender nonconforming or nonheteronormative.

There are many identities within the LGBTQIA+ community and each person's label preference and interpretation of that identity should be respected. Only use the term(s) with which a person identifies. ... Please be aware that not *all* members of the LGBTQIA+ community feel comfortable using the word 'queer' in this way. While it has largely been reclaimed as an inclusive term for those of us who have been marginalized due to sexuality, gender identity, and/or gender expression, the term still holds negative

sought the protection of basic human rights for those relegated to the bottom of the social stratification. They stood against their own marginalization as lesbians, feminists, and women, but also for other marginalized groups' concerns. In standing for these, the women of Herland went to Kansas in August of 1991 to support the national Pro-Choice efforts' event and stand for the rights of all women. This led to the further demonstration when they went to the epicenter of the anti-choice group's protest, the Women's Health Care Services clinic.

As one of three clinics in Wichita to offer abortions and one of the only three in the nation to offer late-term procedures (post-viability of the fetus estimated as 20 weeks in utero) in 1991, the Women's Health Care Services clinic served as a key provider of women's bodily autonomy rights.¹⁰ Dr. George Tiller ran The Women's Health Care Services from approximately 1975 to 2009. The clinic withstood extreme and ongoing protests that included a bombing in 1986, the attempted assassination of Dr. Tiller in 1993, and finally his assassination of Dr. Tiller at his church in 2009.¹¹ The summer of 1991 saw the largest and longest protest led by an anti-abortion organization called Operation Rescue, which chose Wichita as its first major target on their "Summer of Mercy" campaign.

The Operation Rescue movement organized in 1986 under Elim Bible Institute graduate, Randall A. Terry, a relatively unknown, militant, Christian activist. He warped the principles of peaceful protest methods to form non-peaceful blockades at abortion clinics for approximately

connotations for some."

To those who this holds negative connotations for, I apologize. I utilize this term in this thesis for simplification and readability and use this term in my life to describe myself and my community. Please know it is meant with the utmost respect and love.

"Queer—adjective—An umbrella term describing anyone who identifies as something other than heterosexual and/or cisgender." Also used as a noun and verb, however, not in this thesis.

¹⁰ Jay M. Price, "Assembling a Buckle of the Bible Belt: From Enclave to Powerhouse," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 42-61, https://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2018spring_price.pdf.

¹¹ Angie Young, "Abortion, Ideology, and the Murder of George Tiller," *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 417, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40607975>.

five years before abandoning the organization soon after the Wichita campaign.¹² With Wichita seated firmly in the Bible Belt, Operation Rescue garnered a tremendous amount of local support through their claims of Biblical foundations. Originally planned as a week-long protest, they chose to remain in Wichita and specifically target Dr. Tiller's clinic.¹³ Beginning on July 15, the protest developed into forty-two days of a hyper-religious, male-led, volatile, and threatening campaign that ended on August 24, 1991 with a rally of 25,000 anti-choice supporters at the "Hope for the Heartland" rally in Cessna Stadium at Wichita State University.¹⁴ A Kansas journalist reported that "Before the protests ended, police arrested 2,700 demonstrators, including some who forced their way past police and federal marshals and entered" the clinic.¹⁵ To counter this attack "Ellie Smeal, founder of the Fund for a Feminist Majority and former president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), called for action to stop Operation Rescue."¹⁶ Many of the women of Herland also belonged to NOW, so when Smeal publicly called for a counter-demonstration only a short drive from Oklahoma City, the Sisters answered.¹⁷ They attended the

¹² Charles E. Shepard and Lucy Shackelford (researcher), "Operation Rescue's Mission to Save Itself," *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1991, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/11/24/operation-rescues-mission-to-save-itself/1e85a059-e51b-494d-94fe-1ac4a2b5ea45/>.

¹³ The term Bible Belt is fully defined and discussed as to how it applies to this thesis on page 12, it is both geographic and sociologically significant. However, this component needs more space than allotted here in the opening vignette. For this point of the discussion, know that the definition includes both Oklahoma and Kansas.

¹⁴ David Maraniss, "Lessons of a Summer of Abortion Protests: 2 Sides in Wichita See Hard Time Ahead," *The Washington Post*, August 26, 1991, A1, https://okstate-stillwater.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OKSTATESTILL_OKSTAT/2920vv/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_140462958.

¹⁵ William Claiborne, "A Decade Later, Abortion Foes Again Gather in Wichita: City Has Changed Since Protests of '91," *The Washington Post*, July 16, 2001: A3, https://okstate-stillwater.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OKSTATESTILL_OKSTAT/2920vv/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_1962356809.

¹⁶ Herland Newsletter Committee (HNC), "Wichita Pro-Choice Rally," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8 no. 10, (October 1991): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52207>.

¹⁷ Patricia "Pat" Colognesi, interview by b hinesley, October 19 and 23, 2020, interview 3a and 3b, as part of the Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program's *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, non-recorded; Pat Reaves, interview by b hinesley. February 5, 2021, interview 7, as part of the Oklahoma State

Pro-Choice rally on August 23, 1991 at the A. Price Woodward Park amongst the 5,000 to 6,000 fellow activists.¹⁸ While the Pro-Choice rally paled in comparison to the anti-choice's ongoing campaign in numbers and length, the Pro-Choice campaign's national outcry garnered enough support to finally see federal marshals act against the anti-choice demonstrators, bringing an end to the six-week long action against women's rights that weekend.¹⁹

On that final weekend, the women of Herland joined in chorus behind Peggy Johnson and the opposition stood silent, if only for a moment. That day, that moment, counted as a small victory when the Herland Sisters pushed back against the hostility and control of an entrenched hegemonic patriarchy.²⁰ The women of Herland fought that day and continued throughout the existence of Herland Sister Resources to fight to protect women of all walks from continued dominance, abuse, objectification, violence, and dehumanization.²¹ The courage displayed in Wichita in 1991 exemplified the strength that carried the Sisters through years of advocating and advancing the rights of the oppressed in Oklahoma City, their state, and the nation.

University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program's *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, recording not yet published;
Reaves, "Reflections on My Trip to Wichita," *The Voice*, (October 1991), 4.

¹⁸ Price, "Assembling a Buckle of the Bible Belt: From Enclave to Powerhouse," *Kansas History*, 43.

¹⁹ Price, "Assembling a Buckle of the Bible Belt: From Enclave to Powerhouse," *Kansas History*, 42.

²⁰ Lexico, *Oxford Dictionary—Oxford University Press*, s.v. "hegemonic,"

<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/hegemonic>.

"Hegemonic—*adjective*—Ruling or dominant in a political or social context."

Sam Diener, "Pro-Feminism and Nonviolence," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 4, no. 10 [sic], (January 1987): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51992>.

"Patriarchy is a system where males are given sexual, cultural, social, religious, and political power over females" for no other reason than that they are biologically assigned male at birth.

²¹ HNC, "Herland Is ... ," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 10, (October 1987): 12, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52092>;

Pat Reaves, "Women Under Attack," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 7 (July 1991): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52204>.

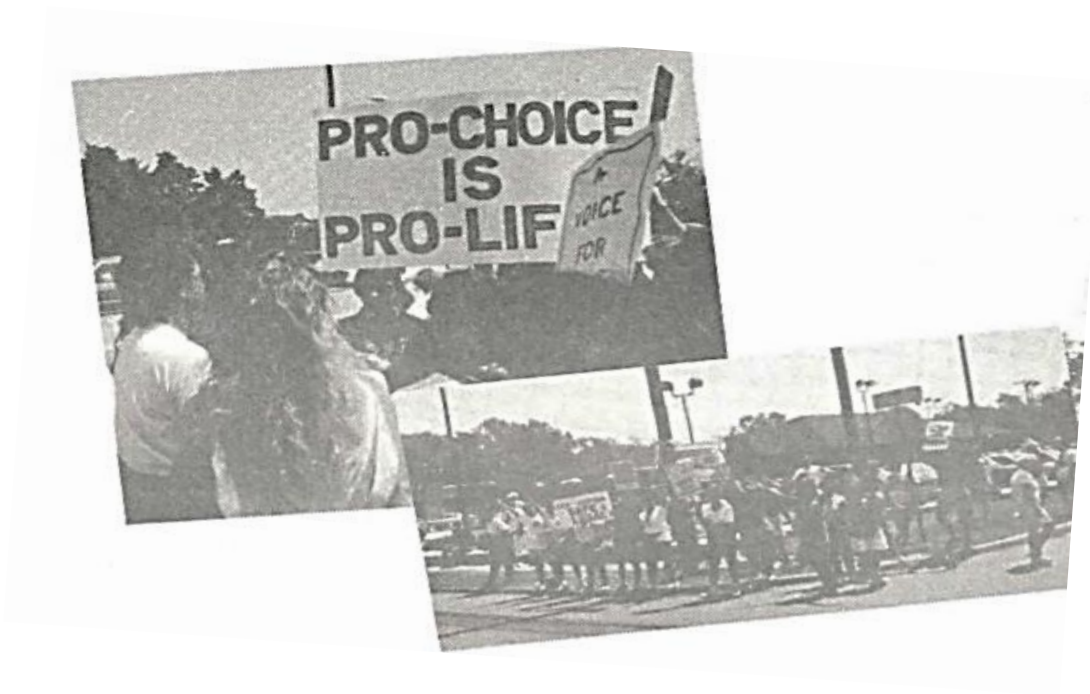


Figure I.2) Pro-Choice Protestors. Photograph by unknown member of Herland, August 23, 1991. This photo appeared with Pat Reaves' reflection article written about the Herland Sisters' experience at the Wichita clinic. This shows the small number of Pro-Choice supporters that stood to face a much larger opponent in defense of a woman's right to choose what occurred within her body.

The Herland Voice (The Voice) 8 no. 10 (October 1991): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52204>.

HERLAND'S IMPORTANCE

This thesis argues that Herland's work paralleled and therefore included Oklahoma in national queer and feminist movements in multiple ways. First, Herland's creation of a feminist bookstore made them a part of a radical print movement and organization, the Feminist Bookstore Network. Their existence in Oklahoma made Herland even more radical as one of no more than 150 feminist bookstores nationally and one of less than a dozen in the Bible Belt and non-urban-coastal locations. Second, Herland created safe spaces for lesbian women as part of the national Women's Music activist movement and lesbian retreats trend of the times.²² Third, this thesis looks at Herland's publication of a queer newspaper as the epitome of queer community communication and building in the 1970s through the 1990s. Fourth, this thesis also discusses Herland's activism through fundraising and support of one of the member's legal battles and how, by extension, this support changed history by removing significant barriers to lesbian and other queer parents' rights. Fifth, this thesis highlights the many ways Herland expanded the queer historical knowledge available. Finally, this thesis shows the ways that Herland supported and expanded the queer community in Oklahoma. Therefore, this thesis contends that Herland's participation in movements, the spaces they created, and their activism expanded the queer community and thus queer history to further include Oklahoma.

Throughout this thesis the evidence proves that important components of queer history took place because of or in connection to Herland Sister Resources, thus shifting the national discussion to be more inclusive of Oklahoma and broader in its examination. This thesis also widens the scope of queer history to further examine the intersectionality of queer history and

²² Lexico, *Oxford Dictionary—Oxford University Press*, s.v. "safe space," https://www.lexico.com/definition/safe_space.

"Safe space—noun—A place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm."

how it combines with literary, music, and activism history; as well as expanding the conversation of queer history with an examination of queer parental rights.²³

Through the entirety of the research examined, this thesis poses new questions. This work asks how did Herland's work affected Oklahoma's broader social norms? This thesis shows the many ways in which Herland helped to expand the rights of, the space allotted for, and in connection to these, the acceptance of the queer community in Oklahoma. It further examines how Herland created a local iteration of national movements? This thesis provides multiple examples of Herland's starting and supporting these in the feminist bookstores, Women's Music, and Pride parades. This thesis also looks at how did Herland provide historical documentation offered into public record to expand the larger conversation on their own? Their documentation and insurance of its inclusion in sustainable open sources shows throughout this work. By answering these questions, this thesis looks to more broadly discuss the power of queer collectives, especially women-led groups, against the toxic components of a hegemonic patriarchal society. To provide this discussion, this thesis posits that in Herland's existence in the cultural environment of the Bible Belt, the lesbian feminist collective countered these components in all that they said, their actions, their protests, their writings, the causes they supported, and their activism.²⁴

This thesis offers the important layering of the historic discussion of queer rights and visibility with the stories of the individual lives and the activism of Herland Sister Resources in Oklahoma. In this vein, this thesis builds the conversation held in the works of Carol Mason and

²³ Davis, *The Queens' English*, 174.

“Intersectionality—*noun*—The complex way in which varied forms of discrimination overlap or intersect; the importance of focusing on the presence of all marginalized communities within the larger framework of society.

‘[Kimberlé] Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality [in or around 1989], the idea that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.’ › Adia Harvey Wingfield.”

²⁴ Mary Jo Osterman and Phyllis Jean Athey, "A Lesbian is Always a Feminist," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 8, (August 1986): 1-2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52231>.

Lindsey Churchill that “situate Oklahoma within the larger reform efforts at regional and national levels,” as well as examining it “through the lens of women.”²⁵ Furthermore, works that center Oklahoma’s queer history begin to deconstruct the dominating urban-coastal queer historical narrative, which tend to leave “rural” queer communities in the background or not seen at all. These works situate Oklahoma activism as propelling the work of national movements, even as a key-player, and as a “microcosm of formative politics and shifts,” which Herland contributed to in part.²⁶ This thesis layers the discussion with a greater, detailed look at the work of Herland through their edification of women, creation of inviolable spaces, amplification of the lesbian-feminist voice, and advocacy for the queer community. This thesis layers this expansion of the historical conversation to include the intersectionality of second-wave feminism, women’s movements, Oklahoma as a national influencer, and social activism.²⁷ This thesis examines the importance of Herland as a haven for the lesbian community and as a connection and growth point for the queer community at large. Finally, this thesis demonstrates how Herland’s creation and support of these communities allowed for the small lesbian collective to effect change over time in a conservative Bible Belt state.

This thesis expands queer history to include movements taking place within the Bible Belt in a broad national story of queer community activism. The bulk of the existing academic historical conversation regarding this region consists of primarily personal lived experiences—often autoethnographically—not through the lens centering the groups affecting change from the bottom-up in this region. The historiography of this thesis reviews works that discuss partial elements related to Herland, but only one exists that looks at Herland as a group and little else is

²⁵ Renée M. Legreid, forward to *This Land is Herland: Gendered Activism in Oklahoma from the 1870s to the 2010s*, ix-xi, edited by Sarah Eppler Janda and Patricia Loughlin, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), x.

²⁶ Carol Mason, *Oklahoma: Lessons in Unqueering America*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 8.

²⁷ See Appendix 1 for a full definition and discussion of second-wave feminism.

published that discusses grassroots level queer activism in the Bible Belt. With the scarcity of such work, tens of thousands of individuals, their organizations, and the changes produced by their activism goes without record.²⁸ This work offers the documentation in part and openings for more.

This introduction chapter introduces Herland, then analyzes the most relevant historiography pertaining to the importance of rural queer history, lesbian herstory, feminist bookstores, women's folk-activist music, and queer newspapers and zines. The first chapter discusses the formation of Herland Bookstore and its evolution. It also looks at the important effects of the freely and readily available information in a time of limited access, especially stringent within the anti-LGBTQ+, conservative, Christian-controlled society of Oklahoma.²⁹ The second chapter looks at the lesbian spaces created by Herland outside of the bookstore through semi-annual retreats and Women's Music events. This work looks at the retreats as important because they allowed for an isolated respite away from the oppressive greater society that surrounded the Herland Sisters and their alignment with the lesbian retreats hosted by other lesbian collectives throughout the nation at that time.³⁰ This thesis posits that Herland's events

²⁸ See Appendix 2 for a population breakdown of the Bible Belt and Oklahoma City.

²⁹ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 246-261.

³⁰ HNC, "Herland Fall Festival Takes to Woods," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 1, no. 9 (September 1985): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334429>; HNC;

"Herland Retreat Trivia," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 9 (September 2005): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52102>;

HNC, "Twenty Year Anniversary of Herland Retreats: October 28th-30th, Eufaula State Park." *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 9 (September 2005): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52102>.

Multiple retreat events found nationally and even internationally:

HNC, "Arkansas Lesbian Retreat in May," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 4, (April 1985): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334424>;

HNC, "Campfest [sic] '84," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, March 1984, 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>;

HNC, "Connection Retreat for Women," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, October 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334418>;

HNC, "Local News: **The Chautauqua Center offers opportunities for personal growth and transformation," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 2, (February 1986): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52165>;

HNC, "Retreats and Conferences," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 6, (June 1988): 6,

connected them to the national Women's Music movement that gave a voice to the otherwise largely marginalized and silenced groups: feminist and lesbians.

The third chapter examines *The Herland Voice*, a monthly newsletter that spanned the globe, created a communications hub, and served as a 'virtual community' before the internet for lesbian, feminists, women, and their allies. The fourth chapter looks at the legacies of Herland, which include changes to custodial law, the Oklahoma City Pride celebration, and the preserved archive of feminist-lesbian works for future scholars and others. This chapter, especially, opens the door to suggest avenues for further scholarship to examine these legacies in detail. Finally, the conclusion chapter once again shows how each of the components of Herland combine into queer history as a whole and extend the existing national discussions.

Understanding the importance of Herland requires understanding the cultural environment in which the organization began, developed, and thrived, throughout their existence. In Oklahoma, women faced overt disregard for their rights, exemplified by the fight to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) being formally defeated in Oklahoma's state government in 1982. The failure to ratify the ERA epitomizes the continual decline into Oklahoma's neo-conservative political state that repeatedly fortifies the hegemonic patriarchy by limiting and removing rights of women.³¹ The underpinning of Herland comes from the women taking part in the Pro-ERA campaign and its defeat in-part inspiring the group's coming together for more effective women's rights' activism. This thesis utilizes the importance of place as an overarching theme, while the work discusses Herland Sister Resources, the Oklahoma social norms remain as an underlying contrast to their work.

<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52167>;

HNC, "Texas Hosts Rebirthing Workshops," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 4, (April 1985): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334424>;

HNC, "Women & Creativity at Abiquiu, New Mexico," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 6, (June 1985): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334426>.

³¹ Chelsea Ball, "From Red Dirt to Red State: Oklahoma and the Equal Rights Amendment, 1972-1982," (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 2016), <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/34677>;

Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 246 and 252.

These social norms of Oklahoma stem from the systematic church-based society seen through the lens of feminist sociologist Bernadette Barton's analysis of the Bible Belt panopticon in relationship to the queer community. Barton's work best defines the social norms surrounding and opposing Herland.³² Barton defines the Bible Belt as the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama.³³ Within these states' Barton proves the existence of a compulsory Christianity, which stems from a pervasive, overshadowing "Protestant Christian fundamentalism," and how it creates abnormal duress for members of the queer community due to the social panopticon.³⁴ This framework consists of the "regional social mores" created from the "concentrated institutional presences and influence" ... [that] enable the widespread articulation of fundamentalist Christian attitudes."³⁵ These attitudes also appear in policy and law as the Christians form a "majority of the population" who then elect like-minded fundamentalists into governing positions from the local to national level that allow for the creation and enforcement of "homophobic institutional policies and practices [that] affect how families and communities perceive and treat gay people, as well as how comfortable

³² Bernadette Barton, "1CROSS + 3NAILS = 4GVN: Compulsory Christianity and Homosexuality in the Bible Belt Panopticon," *Feminist Formations* 23, no. 1 (2011): 70-93, <http://www.jstor.org/argo.library.okstate.edu/stable/41301639>; Bernadette Barton, *Pray the Gay Away: The Extraordinary Lives of Bible Belt Gays*, (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

This terminology, definition, and analysis is seen in Barton's article then restates and utilizes in her book as well, which expands on her article but holds the same overall discussions, arguments, and conclusions. For the purposes of this thesis, the more in-depth book is utilized.

³³ Barton, *Pray the Gay Away*, 9.

³⁴ Barton, *Pray the Gay Away*, 4, 19-21, and 24.

Barton uses the term panopticon to mean under constant observation or to feel like it "even when they are not" of the powers that be, which are the hegemonic and compulsory fundamentalist Christians and that this "perpetuates both passive and active homophobia." This creates a constant effect of "regulat[ing] their own behavior according to an imagined, external authority." Overall, this cultural environment creates an effective "closet" that queer individuals in the Bible Belt must remain in to be safe and accepted, in order to live.

³⁵ Barton, *Pray the Gay Away*, 171; Barton, "1CROSS + 3NAILS = 4GVN," *Feminist Formations*, (2011): 71.

an individual lesbian or gay man feels being openly gay.”³⁶ Barton confirms the pressures faced by individuals living amongst those who openly discuss their bigotry and disgust for anyone in the queer community, camouflaged as Christian values. The confrontation between Herland’s work and the similar bigotry of their location deepens the impact and importance of place.

The research for this thesis includes private interviews and recorded oral history interviews with members of Herland. The recorded interviews now form the *Feminist Lesbians of Oklahoma* collection, a part of the Oklahoma State University Oklahoma Oral History Research Program’s (OOHRP) *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project*. This thesis also draws on several primary source collections, including the University of Central Oklahoma’s undergraduate project documentary *Herland: Creating a Radical Lesbian Feminist Community*, and *The Herland Voice* monthly newsletter archive, which contains the issues from 1984-2016.³⁷ This thesis also uses the biographical chapter of “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland and Herland Sister Resources” by Lindsey Churchill from the 2021 anthology *This Land is Herland: Gendered Activism in Oklahoma from the 1870s to the 2010s*.³⁸ These pieces begin to open space for Herland’s story that this work expands into an encompassing examination of the organization as a whole in relation to the broader queer community of Oklahoma and national organizations and movements.

³⁶ Barton, *Pray the Gay Away*, 14.

³⁷ *Herland: Creating a Radical Lesbian Feminist Community*, directed by Jake Crystal and Mickayla Fisher, 2019; Edmond, OK: University of Central Oklahoma Women’s Research Center and BLGTQ+ Student Center; July 1, 2021, YouTube video, posted by The Center at UCO, “The Herland Sister’s Documentary,” 52:29, <https://youtube/lk33dumxbBk>; *Herland Voice Newsletter Archive*, UCO Archives and Special Collections.

³⁸ Dr. Lindsey Churchill served as the author of this thesis’s intern supervisor, helped to facilitate interviews, and supported the work about Herland. While her work serves as a foundation to this thesis, her work focuses primarily on the life of Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland—the woman credited with beginning Herland and who interviewed for both of works—including before, during, and after Wahru’s work with Herland. This thesis looks at the entire organization, goes beyond Wahru’s departure to Ohio, and utilizes similar but expanded sources.

This work provides space for the individuals discussed to speak for themselves, which follows the precedents and tradition of many queer oral history researchers, especially the pioneer of queer history documentation, journalist Eric Marcus and Martin Duberman.³⁹ In utilizing this approach, this thesis centers the voice of those who lived and made the history rather than historians' voices. To further add authenticity to their story, this thesis uses the intervention of using authentic to the subjects terminology repeatedly found within *The Voice* and from the women of Herland's interviews. Such terms alter standard English terms to move outside of its patriarchal framework and either better include women or remove the male domination. These words include, but are not limited to, shero, herstory, wommin/womyn in quotes, and the use of they when the gender of a subject is unknown.⁴⁰ Note that while this work still uses the term history when discussing the field of queer history or the larger historical conversation, the term herstory applies to and come directly from those who wrote it and created it. Herstory is the feminist inclusion in the larger historical narrative of, for, and about women, specifically

³⁹ Eric Marcus, *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights 1945-1990—An Oral History*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993); Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*, (New York: HarperCollins-Perennial, 2002); Martin Duberman, *Stonewall: The Definitive Story of the LGBTQ Rights Uprising that Change America*, (New York: Penguin Publishing House, 1993 and 2019).

⁴⁰ Davis, *The Queens' English*, 321.

“**Womxn/Womyn**—*noun*—Said to fuel the idea that women can exist without “man” or “men.” ...a symbol of woman's liberation from man. The term “womyn” became popular in the 1970s with the rise of second-wave feminism. In 1975, the term first showed up in an issue of Lesbian Connection, describing a local womyn's festival. ... Many womyn's music festivals became notorious for discriminating against and excluding trans women—claiming they weren't “born womyn”—so many feminists and trans allies began to move away from the spelling of womyn, replacing the Y with a more inclusive X.”

Herland Voice Newsletter Archive, UCO Archives and Special Collections.

The Sisters of Herland during the 1980s and 1990s, this thesis's primary scope of time, used the term and spelling “womyn” and “wommin” to signify a separation from men, so these both remain in this thesis when citing articles from *The Herland Voice* when it is a direct quote or from another primary source. However, in the late 2010s, as their knowledge of transgender individuals grew, the women of Herland stopped using this term.

Jennifer Saul and Esa Diaz-Leon, “Feminist Philosophy of Language,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, September 3, 2004, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-language/>.

lesbians.⁴¹ Beyond this, the majority of the body chapters come from *The Voice*. While standards require summation and not a body built entirely from direct quotes, this thesis uses the articles from the women rather than the author's interpretation to tell the women's story.

The Voice began as a simple, single-page flyer in 1982 and developed into an international independent newspaper. Each month *The Voice* united the group, informed interested parties across the globe, and connected Herland to groups of similar interests. Throughout its thirty-four years of publication, the name changed. Regardless of the actual title, the members gave it the moniker of *The Voice*, which serves as the only title utilized in this thesis. *The Voice* served as the key hub of communication for the Herland members. It also served as a connecting center point for the Oklahoma City queer community, the extended readership, other lesbian and feminist activist organizations, and other queer organizations. The majority of the original articles in *The Voice* came from the Newsletter Committee. Those chosen for this committee held the responsibility of speaking for the group as one collective, yet with a protective qualifier in the paper beginning in the October 1991 issue stating the thoughts in articles with separate authors listed came from the author alone, not the group.⁴² Through this vital source of communication, the Sisters also often documented the historically significant events occurring, as well their voice through reflective or analytical pieces about their activities, especially those dealing with activism.⁴³ The ability to access and center the direct voices of the

⁴¹ HNC, Herstory book listings, *herland newsletter (The Voice)* April 1984, 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334413>; Vicki P. McConnell, "Dear Sisters of Herland," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 3, (March 1989): 7, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52177>.

⁴² HNC, [Publication Information], *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 10, (October 1991): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52207>.
"Signed articles reflect the opinion of the author and not necessarily those of Herland Sister Resources."

⁴³ The documentation of Herland's recognition of historical significance can be found throughout issues of *The Voice*, as many members spoke of it directly and in various ways the group encouraged participation with history documentation activities such as the Lesbian History Group and the University of Central Oklahoma's student film.

women of Herland through *The Voice* archive forms the most important primary source for this thesis.

Some outside components restricted the diversity of Herland and thus this research. Oklahoma's historical and continued systematic cultural racial segregation often limit the existence of racially diverse populations in Oklahoma City and Oklahoma. The founder and one of few Black members in the 1980s, Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland provided insight into the added concerns women of color faced at the time that limited their participation in movements seen as primarily white.⁴⁴ Because of this, Herland focused on intersectionality before the widespread use as an academic framework. While the Herland Sisters did not coin the term, they began looking at the special situations affecting Indigenous women and Black women especially. All of the women interviewed, as well as several articles found in *The Herland Voice*, spoke as to the importance of inclusivity within the group of all backgrounds, ethnicities, and races.⁴⁵ While the main body of Herland consisted of white women, they openly sought ways to connect outside of this racial

⁴⁴ Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland, interview by b hinesley, October 16, 2020, interview 2, as part of the Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program's *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, non-recorded.

⁴⁵ Bonewell, Kayla, "Black Lives Matter," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 3, (August 2016): 4-5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320408>;
Bishop interview, November 3, 2020;
Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020;
Colognesi interview, October 19 and 23, 2020;
Herland group interview, October 1, 2020;
Johnson interview, October 20, 2020;
McGovern interview, November 19, 2021;
Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

HNC, "Native American Women and Children in Shelter [sic]," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, September 1984, 1-2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51958>;

HNC, "Sisters: Voices of Different Color Conference," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, July 1984, 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>;

HNC, "Women of Color," *The Voice*, (February 2002): 1;

HNC, "Standing Rock Showdown—#NODAPL," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 4, (December 2016): 1-3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320409>.

From the first year of the Collective, the writing, editing, and distributing *The Voice*, the Newsletter Committee focused on inclusion of Black, Native American, and all other races of women. Also, throughout the interviews with the women, each spoke of their activism to support the women also marginalized by their race including the group efforts seen in 2016 to support Black Lives Matter and the Standing Rock water defenders.

demographic by partnering with other grassroots collaboratives that focused on issues pertaining to Native Americans, Black, and Islamic women throughout their existence. They also repeatedly offered classes, consciousness raising, and other ways in which to analyze themselves for implicit bias, microaggressions, and working to change any of these within themselves and the group.⁴⁶ Herland focused on accessible programming for women from all class backgrounds and ranges of sexuality.⁴⁷ As their diversity grew slightly in the late 1990s, the Herland Sisters accommodated the further growth by offering monthly meetings specifically for “Native American Two-Spirits” and the “Women of Color.”⁴⁸

In fact, Herland’s only limitation of participation appears during their biannual retreats and potentially a select number of other events (however, not found in this research) by only allowing women to attend. The members interviewed, *The Voice*, and Lindsey Churchill’s research all show that this came from a place of providing respite for the women to safely express themselves and rejuvenate.⁴⁹ Churchill explains that “The Sisters never invited grown men into these spaces as Herland Sisters truly hoped to create a space that larger society would not

⁴⁶ Joie “Jo” Soske, interview by b hinesley, February 5, 2021, interview 8, as part of the Oklahoma State University’s Oklahoma Oral History Research Program’s *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, recording not yet published.

⁴⁷ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 254; Herland Sister Resources, “Herland Sisters,” *Herland OKC*, last modified May 2019, <https://www.herlandokc.com/>; Herland Sister Resources, “Our mission is to promote a world free of prejudice, oppression, and exploitation....,” Facebook: About, no date, <https://www.facebook.com/Herland-Sister-Resources-138897648960>.

⁴⁸ HNC, “Native American Two-Spirits Organizing Support Group” [at Herland], *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 17, no. 11, (November 1999): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52024>; HNC, “Women of Color,” *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 20, no. 2, (February 2002): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52054>.

⁴⁹ Davis, *The Queens’ English*, 196.

“Lesbian separatist—*noun*—A lesbian woman who chooses not to associate with males. See also: Separatism, TERF [(not necessarily a synonym)].”

Davis, *The Queens’ English*, 293.

“TERF—*noun*—An acronym for Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist; a feminist who excludes trans women from their brand of feminism.”

allow.”⁵⁰ Kirsten Hogan’s work, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability* looks at the women-only spaces seen in other similar collectives. Susanna Sturgis offers an analysis of Hogan’s book and the exclusivity of lesbian spaces. Sturgis and Hogan both call out the Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) policies of women-only spaces; however, both also defend the need for women-only spaces, especially during the turbulent times of the 1970s and 80s, when women’s rights held almost little social or political clout. Sturgis explains that

“Small, safe spaces were crucial. Even the more confident among us can get derailed if others keep interrupting, contradicting, distracting, or telling us what we really mean. It’s also hard to keep challenging our own thinking ... Eventually we become ready to take our ideas and insights out in public and even put them before hostile audiences—but letting the potentially hostile audience in too soon makes it hard ... [M]en excluding women from positions of power is not the same as women excluding men from groups aimed at empowering ourselves. This sort of exclusion is crucial to identifying oppression and organizing against it.”⁵¹

Herland’s limited use of the policy seen throughout the contemporary feminist movement simply demonstrates their need for moments of privacy, resetting, and organizing.⁵²

Overall, this thesis seeks to fill gaps in current academic queer history scholarship and ensure that Herland, its members, and the Oklahoma queer community gain a greater place in the historical conversation. Many existing works largely overlook queer activism initiatives within the Midwestern and Southern regions of the US that comprise the Bible Belt. Very little scholarship exists that discusses the significant components of feminist collectives such as

⁵⁰ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 255.

⁵¹ Susanna J. Sturgis, “Women = Books: In Defense of Woman-Only Space,” *Wellesley Centers for Women*, <https://www.wcwoonline.org/Women--Books-Blog/woman-only>, 2016; also, partially quoted by Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 255.

⁵² HNC, “Author and [Transgender] Activist Leslie Feinberg to Speak at OU,” *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 19, no. 3, (March 2001): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52042>; HNC, “St. Sybil,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 6, (June 1993): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52228>; Peggy Johnson, “A Family of Pride: Excerpts from Peggy Johnson's Pride Rally Speech,” edited by the HNC, *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 7, (July 1993): 1 and 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52229>.

Herland. Even less works exist that document “rural” queer history, the creation and upkeep of feminist bookstores, the complicated politics of the Women’s Music movement, or queer centered newspapers and zines. The limited pieces in queer history that look outside of the standard urban-coastal setting tend to only record the lived experiences of individuals without analysis of the impacts of activism in small enclaves of grassroots collectives, such as Herland. These elements with limited historical investigation comprise important components of Herland’s existence that enabled them to change the lives of their members and add to the larger legacy of the queer community in Oklahoma.

HERLAND'S PLACE WITHIN QUEER HISTORY

Academic scholarship surrounding queer histories entered the larger historical conversation approximately fifty years ago, in the late 1970s and early 80s. These original works, mainly created by queer community members themselves, who were historians or scholars from other fields, offered significant contributions to queer history by combining edited works highlighting multiple researchers' articles and essays.⁵³ Often academics outside of the history field, such as scholars from sociology and journalism, further queered this field with the inclusion of non-traditional researchers and methodology. Even as the field of LGBTQ studies developed, the larger field of history remained mired in prejudice based in societal norms of the time.⁵⁴ As queer historian John D'Emilio explains, even years after the emergence of queer history, a complicating factor came from assumptions that "work on gay or lesbian topics [was] commonly treated as a de facto statement of identity."⁵⁵ He indicated parallels between the Gay Movement's progress, societal shifts in acceptance, and academic acknowledgement that trailed this. D'Emilio stated "the cultural denial of our very existence made any kind of history a profound, subversive revelation."⁵⁶ D'Emilio detailed the difficulties he experienced as one of the first queer historians. He spoke of writing with

no context, no literature, no definition of issues, and no sources that had ever been tapped, ... work[ing] under difficult material conditions that the academic historian normally doesn't face—no institutional affiliation, difficulties getting access to

⁵³ John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, introduction to *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II—Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, vii-xiv, authored by Allan Bérubé, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), iv.

John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's retrospective in the forward of Bérubé's third edition show the anthological approach in the 1990s historiography of the queer history field, when Bérubé's first edition was released. All three, Bérubé, D'Emilio, and Freedman are considered "forefathers/mothers" of queer history.

⁵⁴ John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, (London: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁵⁵ D'Emilio, John, "Not a Simple Matter: Gay History and Gay Historians," *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 2 (September 1989): 435-442, <https://www-proquest-com.argo.library.okstate.edu/docview/224936734?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>, 436.

⁵⁶ D'Emilio, "Not a Simple Matter," *JAH*, 439.

libraries and archives, no teacher's salary to support summer research and writing, and virtual exclusion from grants and fellowships.⁵⁷

Similar obstacles continued in queer history well beyond D'Emilio's sharing of his struggles.

Since D'Emilio's article in 1989 up to as recently as this year, 2SLGBTQIA+ scholars face obstacles others outside of queer studies do not. Some examples include agencies cutting research funding due to the scholars topic choice of queer history and schools firing education professionals for their suspected sexuality or even support of the queer community.⁵⁸ In less public ways, this sort of continued difficulty appears as those working in academic studies of marginalized groups' face larger loads of emotional and mental labor justifying their research, validating their own lived experiences, and producing additional antecedent work to explain fundamental components of their groups.⁵⁹ The additional obstacles, fears, and work generally limit the advocacy, research, writing, and presenting of work about these marginalized groups' to a small number of those invested through their lifelong connections and willing to risk ridicule, physical violence, professional stigma, and more. In the case of queer history this often still means the researchers hold close personal ties to their topics and belong to the queer community

⁵⁷ D'Emilio, "Not a Simple Matter," *JAH*, 437 & 439.

⁵⁸ Tat Bellamy-Walker, "Oklahoma University Allegedly Fires Professor Over Gay Guest Speaker," *NBC News*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/oklahoma-university-allegedly-fires-professor-gay-guest-speaker-rcna20174>;
Jeff Keeling, "Forced Resignation of Milligan University Professor Heightens Calls for Change, Dialogue Regarding LGBTQ Community," *New Channel WJHL 11*, October 12, 2021, <https://www.wjhl.com/news/investigations/forced-resignation-of-milligan-university-professor-heightens-calls-for-change-dialogue-regarding-lgbtq-community/>;
Courtney Tanner, "A BYU Professor Says She Was Fired After LGBTQ Advocacy. Are More Faculty At Risk?," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 14, 2020, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2022/02/14/byu-professor-says-she/>.

⁵⁹ Matt Cook, Channing Gerard Joseph, Jen Manion, and Angela Steidele, "What Are the Challenges of Telling LGBTQ History?," interview by Matt Elton, *History Extra—a BBC subsidiary*, April 18, 2021, <https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/lgbt-lgbtq-history-challenges-debate/>;
Bob Cram, "Pride Month: Why Isn't There More Queer History in Archives?," *Patten Free Library*. June 24, 2021, <https://www.patten.lib.me.us/pride-month-why-isnt-there-more-queer-history-in-archives/>;
Connie Mandeville, "Making Public History More Queer," *The Public Historian: National Council on Public History*, March 29, 2017, <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/making-public-history-more-queer/>;
University of Denver's Morgridge College of Education, "What Challenges Do Queer Students Face?," *Morgridge College of Education Online*. 2022, <https://morgridgeonline.du.edu/blog/challenges-queer-students-schools/>.

themselves, which slows the fields' growth and limits its inclusion in the larger historical conversation.

The development of this field aligned with the shifting societal acceptance of the queer community during 1980s and 1990s Gay Liberation Movement period. Queer scholarship placed the beginning of the Gay Rights Movement much earlier than the visible Gay Liberation Movement of the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁰ The widespread notice of the queer community and the gross oppression of its members' rights came about due to the visibility created by the Stonewall Riots in 1969, which the media broadly publicized, and this ignited more protests in large urban-coastal areas across the nation bringing the Movement out of the closet into the streets and onto household televisions.⁶¹

The Black Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s heavily influenced and gave momentum to the Gay Rights Movement. First, the Civil Rights Movement provided a successful example of the utilization and effectiveness of grass roots efforts to affect national policy and law. The Civil Rights Movement also created a societal shift that educated and pushed many white people to better understand the oppression of Black society. This understanding then transferred to those outside of heteronormative, cisgender society.⁶² The connection of the two

⁶⁰ Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States: Revisioning American History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 149-176;
Eric Cervini, *The Deviant's War: The Homosexual Vs. the United States of America*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020);
Daniel Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles: And the Making of Modern Politics*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2011;
Greggor Mattson, "The Stonewall Riots Didn't Start the Gay Rights Movement," *JSTOR Daily*, June 12, 2019, <https://daily.jstor.org/the-stonewall-riots-didnt-start-the-gay-rights-movement/>;
University of Missouri—Kansas City Public History. "The Gay Liberation Movement." Digital exhibit. Making History. 2017 to present. <https://info.umkc.edu/makinghistory/the-gay-liberation-movement/>.
These provide a distinction between the Gay Rights and Gay Liberation movements. Basically, the Gay Rights Movement looked to exist within societal norms and focused on acceptance and equal co-existence within the heteronormative society; whereas, the Gay Liberation Movement looked for radical change allowing for queer existence in and of itself apart from the heteronormative standards and constructs.

⁶¹ Duberman, *Stonewall*.

⁶² Davis, *The Queens' English*, 158.

"Heteronormative"—*noun*—A belief that people are given specific gendered roles within a societal binary

also started a societal understanding of homosexuality as an innate trait, not a lifestyle choice, compared homophobia to racially based oppression, and furthered the equal treatment of humans regardless of innate traits, such as sexuality and race. While limited to open-minded individuals, this shift in societal perspective created safe enclaves within the more urban-coastal areas due to the larger population amounts creating larger groups of those who supported one or both movements. This resulted in concentrated hubs for Gay Liberation organizing. Those more supportive areas with universities then made way for the first focused scholarship on queer identity through journalism and academic research.

Beginning with broader encyclopedias and anthologies, the earliest queer history works promote several queer authors researching various areas of history at once and provided potential subjects of future study as possible rather than thematic works focused on particular people, time periods, events, or even countries. These collective works focus on short pieces covering many topics, people, and events, which stemmed from a lack of access to primary source materials for lesser-known people and events. The lack often comes from historic societal oppression, such as legal and physical ramifications for one's sexuality, which kept many queer individuals in hidden arrangements or forced them to use coded language that shifted over time.⁶³ This compounded secrecy limits the availability of primary sources, especially prior to the Gay Liberation Movement. Despite the obstacles, the works stand as important to increasing queer visibility in the historical narrative and throughout the timeline.

The earliest broad stroke encyclopedia style texts come from Jonathan Ned Katz: *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (1976) and *Gay American Almanac: A*

and that these roles, along with heterosexuality, are automatically assumed as the norm.” This norm pervades throughout society and is accepted as an innate and natural construct to the point that it can cause anything outside of heterosexuality and the gender binary to be viewed as wrong, other, sinful, and/or less than.

⁶³ D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

New Documentary (1983), which provided a multitude of short biographic entries for hundreds of homosexual individuals within history. His work provided the seeds of research for many future texts. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman author the next significant work, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (1988) that formed an anomaly in the early years as a monograph tome from only two authors. This work analyzes constructionism versus essentialism of homosexuality throughout United States history.⁶⁴ It establishes the theoretical framework that combines a feminist and queer studies approach with historical research that posits the existence of queerness as genetic, yet also adaptive, in part, to societal norms. This framework provides the fundamental basis for most works involving the queer community, which assume one standpoint or the other, whether recognized or not.

Another important anthology that offers framework for this thesis comes from journalist and independent historian, Eric Marcus' *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990: an Oral History* (1993). *Making History* stands as the first work forming an anthology of oral histories from a variety of individual activists within multiple eras of the Gay Rights and Liberation Movements. Marcus's work expands the historiography and introduces a scholar other than formally-trained, academic historians, who possess equivalent research skills. In *Making History*, Marcus allows the individuals to speak for themselves, limiting his voice to minimal connecting paragraphs and eliminating scholarly jargon only meant for academics. This approach spotlights the subjects' unique lived experiences and counters the previous erasure of marginalized queer voices, as well as other oppressed groups. His collection also provides the loadstar for other non-historians to offer significant contributions to the historiography. The ease and speed of oral histories allows for amateur historians and community based historical societies to more easily help to fill the gaps of queer history, such as those that emerged in response to enormous number of deaths in the queer community due to the AIDS

⁶⁴ D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 11-21 and the entirety.

epidemic.⁶⁵ The recordings of the oral histories of the members of Herland also help to fill the gaps of an underexamined region and by centering women's voices, which few projects do.

Concurrent to Marcus' work, Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. contribute the anthology, *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past* (1989).⁶⁶ This included a chapter, "Homosexuality and the State in Late Imperial China," by Vivien Ng, who later wrote an article in *The Voice*, showing the depth of their offerings.⁶⁷ The chapters of *Hidden from History* form several of queer history's foundational pieces in their next iterations. The cohort of chapter authors shift away from the more expansive analysis to the smaller timelines, regions, and sets of people. Focusing on clearly defined communities and subsets of queer individuals layers the historiography with detailed analysis and allows for this thesis' focus on a small group in a mostly unexamined area that formed an important community, Herland. Key examples of this come from George Chauncey's chapter, "Christian Fellowship or Sexual

⁶⁵ Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, "Introduction: Close Encounters," In *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*, edited by Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 1-20); Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society, "Digital Collections," *GLBT Historical Society Museum & Archives*, San Francisco, CA, <https://www.glbthistory.org/digital-collections>; GLBT Historical Society, "Our History," *GLBT Historical Society Museum & Archives*, San Francisco, CA, <https://www.glbthistory.org/digital-collections>; HNC, "A History for Herland," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 18, no. 8, (August 2000): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52034>; HNC, "In Memory of the Voices We Have Lost," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10 [sic], no. 3, (March 1994): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52238>; HNC, "Lesbian Herstory," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 11, no. 1, (January 1994): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52236>; Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation Inc., "Our Herstory," *Lesbian Herstory Archives*, Brooklyn, NY, <https://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>; Eric Marcus, *Making History*; The History Project, "Documenting, Preserving, and Sharing New England's LGBTQ History." *The History Project: Documenting LGBTQ Boston*, 2019, Boston, MA, <http://www.historyproject.org/about>.

⁶⁶ *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989).

⁶⁷ Vivien Ng, "Homosexuality and the State in Late Imperial China," *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989), 76-89;

Vivien Ng, "The Meaning of Stonewall," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 6, (June 1993): 1 and 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52228>;

George Chauncey, Jr., *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era” that became the basis for Chauncey’s important work *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940*, which showed coexistence of gay communities within heteronormative society at the turn of the century.⁶⁸ Next, Allan Bérubé’s chapter, “Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay GIs in World War II,” which became the 1990 monograph, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*.⁶⁹ This work shifts the field and understanding of the historical formation of the construction of homosexuality in Western culture to come primarily from the US government’s use of propaganda and policies exploited, enlarged, and embedded this concept into society as part of the othering seen in late and post-World War II and Cold War efforts to establish an ideal American lifestyle of white, cisgender, heterosexuality, Protestant Christianity, and hegemonic patriarchy. Further authors whose seminal works primarily stem from their initial work in *Hidden from History* include Leila Rupp, John D’Emilio, and Martha Vicinus, who each layer queer history with more specific examinations of the small queer community.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ George Chauncey, Jr., “Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989), 294-317;
George Chauncey, Jr., *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

⁶⁹ Allan Bérubé, “Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay GIs in World War II,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989), 383-394;
Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*.

⁷⁰ John D’Emilio, “Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War II,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989), 456-476.
This work evolved into *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge Publishing, 1992).

Leila Rupp, “‘Imagine My Surprise’: Women’s Relationships in Mid-Twentieth Century America,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989), 395-410.
This work evolved into *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

The development of the field and its subgenres expanded dramatically after the appearance of these initial works, but due to limitations in source material and other challenges, the majority focus on white, cis-gender men writing about other white, cis-gender men, such as Chauncey, Duberman, D'Emilio, and B  bur  s. While some early works included women authors, the field of lesbian herstory that centered on women developed much more slowly. This area included Rupp's work, as well as provided a place for the story of the women of Herland. The even further specialized fields, such as the transgender history subgenre, arrive even later in the larger discussion.

Herstory serves as an offshoot of queer history, holding its own causes, events, heroines, and timeline that do not belong lumped under the same umbrella as gay men's history simply because the women found within it also stand outside of the heteronormative. In 1981, Lillian Faderman offers the first works of lesbian herstory, an exhaustive international anthology, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, at the same time as the development of *Hidden from History* in 1981.⁷¹ Then, a decade later, Faderman presents her second piece on US specific herstory, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. *Odd Girls* shifts the field by furthering the importance of the common person and how their interactions within society produce larger cultural impacts over time. Faderman acknowledges that as women's socio-economic status improve, their ability to choose to follow their true passions and identities increase, rather than living a lie in a heteronormative relationship for survival. In doing this, Faderman provides a solid foundation to show the link between feminism and lesbianism, as

Martha Vicinus, "Distance and Desire: English Boarding School Friendships, 1870-1920," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., (New York: New American Library, 1989), 212-232. This work evolved into *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷¹ Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1981).

the rights of women increase, so do their abilities to apply feminist ideology in a multitude of areas, including their sexuality. Thus, second-wave feminist movement's shifting societal acceptance of women as independent and equal, lesbian relationships creates a greater likelihood of public acceptance and further alter history.⁷² The same ideology provides for a partial societal acceptance of the women who formed Herland, frames Herland's activism, and designs their understanding of society, as well as the drive for their push for an entirely equal place within it.

Following Faderman's launch into lesbian herstory, the anthology *Lesbian Culture, An Anthology: The Lives, Work, Ideas, Art, and Visions of Lesbians Past and Present* offers a unique look into lesbian culture within a historical framework. Editors, authors, social scientists, and proud lesbians, Julia Penelope and Susan Wolfe, along with over sixty other academic lesbians, combine their life experiences, discoveries of lesbians in herstory, and other analysis to form this work. *Lesbian Culture* shifts lesbian herstory from mostly secluded individuals to include lesbian communities created in safe spaces outside of general public knowledge.⁷³ The anthology intends to add to Faderman's work, showing the beauty and resourcefulness of the lesbian culture, outside of the patriarchal society.

In accordance with this, Penelope and Wolfe follow in queer community tradition and create a unique herstory anthology by using an independent press. The primary sources form an incomparable collection of rare documentation of lesbian lived experiences. Self-publishing often occurs amongst the queer community, who without a viable, larger, commercial prospect due to prevailing societal bigotry, produce valid intellectual contributions by academics on their own. Herland's historiography includes this book due to its exemplifying Herland's extensive self-publishing of their newspaper that held original works from their members and the bookstore's

⁷² Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 14 and 129-144.

⁷³ *Lesbian Culture, An Anthology: The Lives, Work, Ideas, Art, and Visions of Lesbians Past and Present*, ed. Julia Penelope and Susan Wolfe, (Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1993).

promotion of similar pieces, even some written by their members.⁷⁴ Like *Lesbian Culture*, Herland's works offer pieces equal to the level of writing seen in larger formats, including academic presses.

Then, Leila J. Rupp's *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America* (1999) shifts lesbian herstory by intertwining autoethnography of herself and her inspiration, Aunt Leila, into the research. Rupp further shifts the field by writing for a more general audience and removing gate-keeping language. This allows for the queer community to more easily access their history, and many followed in her footsteps by focusing their writing to the general public. Rupp also widens the discussion within lesbian herstory by including men in a woman-centered examination and more people of color.⁷⁵ This directly relates to Herland and their Collective becoming a chosen family of Sisters, who prioritize the dissemination of educational information, learning opportunities, and communalism as widely as possible. Throughout their existence enabling learning stands paramount in what they do, beginning as a bookstore, developing workshops and trainings over the years, and providing their resources as a rare archive for future research, in queer history, feminism, gender studies, and a multitude of social sciences, upon the dismantling of the group's store and library.⁷⁶

At the same time, the field begins re-examining the premises of the foundational pieces to refine the boundaries, definitions, and frameworks held within them. A key example of this comes from the conversations between David K. Johnson's and Margot Canaday with Alan

⁷⁴ Sigrid Hawkes and Pat Colognesi, *The Patriarchy is Malarky*, (Orange County: Miraprints, 1982).

⁷⁵ Leila Rupp, *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 10.

⁷⁶ HNC, "Herland ...," *The Voice*, March 1984, 3; Herland Sister Resources, "Herland Library & Oral History Project," *Herland OKC*, Last modified May 2019, <https://www.herlandokc.com/>; HNC, "Herland Mission," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 18, no. 1, (January 2000) 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52027>; Gypsy Hogan, "Introducing UCO's the Center," *Old North: Magazine of the University of Central Oklahoma* LIII, no. 2, (Fall 2016): 14, "<https://www.uco.edu/offices/ucomm/files/publications/old-north/fall2016.pdf>.

Bérubé's *Coming Out Under Fire* from 1994. Johnson's 2004 work, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, utilize Chauncey and Bérubé's methodology, while building on Bérubé's premise of governmental othering of homosexual individuals in the Post-World War II Era.⁷⁷ Again, in 2009, Canaday's *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*, utilize Bérubé's work and World War II, itself, as the premise to the government's othering and entrenchment of hegemonic patriarchy, which positions anyone in same-sex, unmarried, non-offspring producing lifestyles as adversaries.⁷⁸ These connections prove especially relevant as the fading of the feminist movement led to queer history mostly reabsorbing lesbian herstory. More importantly to this thesis's premise, these works provide examinations into the definitions that limit and oppress the queer community, which Herland remains a part of and their activism.

While the above-mentioned works expand the queer history narratives, they almost exclusively focus on the experience of urban-coastal queers. While not as prolific, some queer, rural-born social scientists provide a more bottom-up examination of societal changes in regard to acceptance, policy change, and grass-roots activism that include history.⁷⁹ Beginning in 1991, James T. Sears' *Growing Up Gay in the South: Race, Gender, and Journeys of the Spirit* uses a

⁷⁷ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11.

⁷⁸ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 15.

⁷⁹ Gary Atkins, *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003);

Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001);

Arnold Fleischmann and Jason Hardman. "Hitting Below the Bible Belt: The Development of the Gay Rights Movement in Atlanta," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 24, no. 4 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2166.2004.00208.x>;

Jelisa Thompson, "You Make Me Feel: A Study of the Gay Rights Movement in New Orleans," Honors College thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 2011, https://aquila.usm.edu/honors_theses/5/.

The absence of stand-alone non-New York and non-San Francisco based works is evident when researching for books. Individual researchers tend to focus articles, theses, and dissertations on particular geographic locations, but as of yet rarely publish these as academically accepted books. Even still, these pieces tend to focus on urban areas.

sociological framework to compile the stories of 36 queer youths in the U.S. South. Sears overlays historic and geographic definitions to examine both the difficulties and growth of the queer community in the 1960s to the 1980s. The next works to look at the rural, queer community come from the sociologist Mary L. Gray in 1999 with *In Your Face: Stories from the Lives of Queer Youth*, then 2009's *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*, and 2016's *Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies*.⁸⁰ However, these works focus more on the individual's experience versus offering historical context or analysis. Primary sources for research abound within Gray's works, sharing the lives of those within the U.S. rural queer community that future historians can apply larger historical connections to really shift the historiography.

Interspersed in Gray's work, a few notable historical works also focus on the experiences of queer individuals in rural areas, yet still without a connection to their effect on society over time. These works include the 1997 anthology, *Carryin' On—in the Lesbian and Gay South* edited by John Howard. *Carryin' On* offers the first strictly defined academic anthology of historical analysis focused outside of the urban-coastal norm, however he prioritizes the South and its lack of social change, which provides the framework of place for his work.⁸¹ His research places regionality as shared basis for people of all types, rather than from a sexuality and gender standpoint as their primary source of unification. With this focus, Howard shows the importance and impact that geographical location holds in the formation of culture, beliefs, ideology, and other key components that differentiate the people within the real and imagined borders. This

⁸⁰ Mary L. Gray, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Mary L. Gray and John Dececco, *In Your Face: Stories from the Lives of Queer Youth*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013); *Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies*, ed. Mary L. Gray, Colin R. Johnson, and Brian J. Gilley, (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

⁸¹John Howard, introduction to *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, 1-12, ed. John Howard, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 3-6.

framework repeats in the discussion of Herland, yet in this thesis the culture of the South, rather than the larger region of the Bible Belt, serves as a unifying oppositional force.

Soon after Howard, Eric Marcus again offers an expanded anthology of oral histories, *Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*, in 2002. This includes more rural area queer individuals due to the additional time and support for his research of this edition, however, the place serves little purpose in his writing and includes rural areas outside of the Bible Belt.⁸² However, not until 2018, did a book focus solely on the rural queer activism when journalist CJ Janovy documented grassroots efforts in Kansas. Janovy provides important layering to US queer history, further moving it away from the urban-coastal normative. Her book, *No Place Like Home: Lessons in Activism from LGBT Kansas*, identifies the importance for the documentation of the activists' work they try to convert their Bible-Belt conservative state to a more accepting location rather than continuing to flee their homes for more liberally rooted locations.⁸³ Janovy's and this work about the grassroots activism of lesbian feminist in Oklahoma, Herland Sister Resources, layers the conversation geographically and comparatively.

Transgender journalist, sociologist, and oral historian, Samantha Allen focuses on growing queer rural communities in her 2019 book *Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from the Red States*. She explains that "the only way for people on the coasts to understand" the inner states and small communities found in the 'fly-over' states requires those who deliver the stories,

⁸² Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History*, 50, 188, 232, 257, 406.

⁸³ C.J. Janovy, *No Place Like Home: Lessons in Activism from LGBT Kansas*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2018);
R. Richard Wagner, *We've Been Here All Along: Wisconsin's Early Gay History*, (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2019);
Greggor Mattson, "Small-City Gay Bars, Big-City Urbanism," *City & Community*, 19, no. 1 (October 29, 2019): 76-97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12443>.
Again, academically published books covering rural queer history are difficult to find as stand-alone discussions. General research shows that most mention of rural queer history serves as a minor part of other discussions. Even extending into papers and articles, the work simply is not there. In fact, Mary Gray's work stems from sociological studies, not historical research, but offer insight and context worth noting here.

the journalists and academics, to stop flying over and go to the red states, the “conservative middle America,” and tell the stories.⁸⁴ Allen notes statistics that show the slowing of the queer community’s migration to queer-friendly, urban-coastal, and yet vastly more expensive havens.⁸⁵ This methodology continues to be perpetuated by queer scholars who examine the queer histories of their hometowns and states in articles and presentations due to their lived experience providing scholars possess intimate knowledge and access to information. These queer individuals understand that the midwestern, Bible-belt, and flyover queer communities create a combined substantial and vital part of the queer community on a national scale.⁸⁶ Allen credits queer activism for the increase in people choosing to stay and better their hometowns, much like that of Herland.

This branch of queer history continues to develop, with little more than ten states significantly discussed in monographs. Only one book looks specifically at the queer history of Oklahoma. Historian Carol Mason’s book, *Oklahomo: Lessons in Unqueering America* establishes the importance of Oklahoma’s role in influencing the national attitudes and policies. Mason only features one member of the queer community, Bruce Goff, who suffered blatant bigotry during his life in Oklahoma. Rather *Oklahomo* focuses on Sally Kern, Billy James Hargis, and Anita Bryant, nationally known, fear-based, homophobic activists that used religion to unite Oklahoma and other rural areas against the queer community. Mason acknowledges this lack of queer voices as a means to “hold white people accountable for own history and its damaging legacies...[as] racism and colonialism intertwine in antigay campaigns and attitudes.”⁸⁷ This

⁸⁴ Samantha Leigh Allen, *Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from the Red States*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2019), 9.

⁸⁵ Allen, *Real Queer*, 10; see Appendix 2 for details of the queer population shifts.

⁸⁶ The authors with personal connections to the rural locations they research, or at least in part, include Samantha Allen’s *Real Queer America*, *Carryin’ On in the Gay South*, and *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*.

⁸⁷ Mason, *Oklahomo*, 12.

thesis also centers on white individuals, but on those in the queer community, Herland, who actively focused on challenging and repairing such legacies from anti-2SLGBTQIA+ crusades and within “some liberal campaigns for ... gay rights.”⁸⁸ Mason’s book places Oklahoma into the national picture and offers a necessary shift in the historiography by examining history in reverse to better show its continued effects in the present.

The documentation of and scholarship around Herland Sister Resources, follows in the footsteps of Janovy, Allen, and Mason. Here, in Oklahoma, a fly-over, conservative, Bible Belt state, the Herland Sister Resources collective enters the historical conversation via students at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), who created an archive, oral history interviews, and the documentary, *Herland: Creating a Radical Lesbian Feminist Community* (2019).⁸⁹ They along with Dr. Lindsey Churchill, continue to build the relationship between the Herland Sisters and the UCO Women’s Research Center and BLGTQ+ Student Center (the Center), which includes an ever growing queer archive. Churchill also works to fill the gap of Oklahoma queer history with her chapter, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland and Herland Sister Resources,” in *This Land is Herland: Gendered Activism in Oklahoma from the 1870s to the 2010s*.⁹⁰ Further work, an exhibit at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art and now this thesis continues the analysis of this archive and layering Herland’s story into the queer historical narrative.⁹¹

This historiography forms the foundation for the herstory of Herland, its connection to the national queer history, and shows its importance to the queer community at large. As Herland member, Pat Reaves, describes the importance of Herland and its larger reach through *The Voice*,

It gave them a connection to this community. We’re talking about the late 80s here. So, it wasn’t a time when there was an accessible lesbian culture or even an accessible feminist culture. [Herland] was the only connection. ... Ellen hadn’t come out on TV. We didn’t have visible lesbians in any kind of popular media.

⁸⁸ Mason, *Oklahoma*, 12.

⁸⁹ Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019.

⁹⁰ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*.

⁹¹ hinesley, “50 States: Herland Sister Resources,” exhibit, 2019.

[Herland] was their connection...It wasn't like you were going to go down to Barnes & Noble and get *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*. But we had it. We had all the cheesy, pulp novels, that they weren't going to find anywhere else. ... [Herland] was a connection into the broader culture.⁹²

The Herland Sisters made space where none existed. The Sisters created change through education, music, community involvement, and publicizing their voice. Their actions place them firmly in the greater queer history and lesbian herstory.

⁹² Reaves interview, February 5, 2021.

CHAPTER II:

HERLAND: FEMINIST BOOKSTORE TO COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY OF, BY, AND FOR WOMEN

“It was everything. We could be ourselves. ... We could be who we were. We were not only lesbians, we were activists.”¹

Peggy Johnson’s description of Herland echoed through the other members in their writings and interviews. Each Sister interviewed spoke of finding community, safety, and a chosen family. When an issue arose that affected one member of the queer community or women or children that stirred their passions, many jumped to show their support. This support became even greater if they identified closely with that person, and even more so for fellow Sisters in need. Herland Sister Resources started in chaotic, humble beginnings, and created a historically significant space for a lesbian-feminist collective. Over time Herland changed physically, yet their support of the community continued by offering a safe space to other queer organizations and in their continued community.

This chapter examine one of the most significant components of Herland’s existence, their first configuration as a feminist bookstore, especially rare in the Bible Belt, and how this connected them to a national movement. The discussion also shows how, for the members,

¹ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

Herland's significance came from the unmatched, safe space of community and acceptance the store and organization created. This chapter looks at the bookstore, its becoming a community space, and the safety and edification offered there. Finally, this chapter extends the scarce work within both queer and feminist history that focuses on feminist bookstores to include Oklahoma and the Bible Belt.

Herland Sister Resources came together mostly through contacts made during the battle for Oklahoma's vote to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the US Constitution, which created the group's activist foundation.² All but one interviewed member's activism began in some way with their work to support the passing of the ERA in Oklahoma, a campaign that lasted from 1972 to its defeat in Oklahoma, and nationally.³ The US Congress extended the 1979 ratification deadline, yet once again ratification fell three votes short in 1982. Those involved with creating the bookstore and the Collective continued in the spirit of the ERA by working to further the equality of all women through other laws, policies, programs, events, and statutes.⁴

The Sisters' passion for their activism came from seeing social injustices and seeking for a way to correct them from a bottom-up approach as none of the Sisters held positions of social power to effect change from the top. Susan Bishop, a member of Herland throughout the 1980s, described this sentiment by stating that "Anyone comes to being an activist when something is

² Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 252.

"Cleveland and others who started Herland in the early 1980s also dealt with a political climate in Oklahoma that included the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as well as the rise of the so-called Moral Majority and their million-dollar campaign against what they deemed the "gay peril."

³ Chelsea Ball, abstract for "From Red Dirt to Red State," xi.

"In Oklahoma, the ERA opponents capitalized on the fear that feminists were mostly lesbians or sexual deviants looking to expand their abortion rights. The pro-family's display was so successful in Oklahoma, Phyllis Schlafly had it travel around the country." There is no mention in Ball's work, one of the few pieces available that discusses Oklahoma's ERA battle, of the work done for the ERA by lesbian-feminist only a few mentions of the derogatory ideology of the Anti-ERA about lesbians.

Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 252.

⁴ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 252-253;

Susan Bishop, interview by b hinesley, *Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, November 4, 2020;

Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

happening in the community or around you that affects you viscerally.”⁵ Susan’s story of growing up witnessing injustice with no outlet for the emotional trauma resonated with many activists and especially the Sisters of Herland. Each Sisters’ background contained their own moments of recognizing injustice, determining they could no longer absorb it, and seeking to find an avenue of action. The call of the pro-ERA movement gave them this avenue and that brought seven of the women (all but the youngest two who joined Herland later—Peggy Johnson and Ginger McGovern) interviewed and the majority of the more than thirty participants in the creation and first year of Herland all to points of interacting with one another.⁶

One way of continuing the Women’s Rights movement came from the expression of their voice and organizing seen from a group of like-minded feminist lesbians, which became the short-lived, *The Brazen Hussy Rag*, an independent newspaper. In 1982, just months after its beginning, the two primary editors of *The Brazen Hussy Rag* and partners, Jana Rogers and Tanya “T.J.” Jones, discovered a commercial location, in which they envisioned replicating feminist bookstores they knew of in urban-coastal locations. The building consisted of a front section of that served as storage for antiques and other personal items for the owner and the owner’s living quarters in the back section. The building owner, an elderly woman, could not maintain the upkeep on the building. Weeds and trash overtook the lot, the storefront needed painting, and the rest of the building looked dilapidated, but not beyond repair.⁷ Rogers and Jones immediately started planning how to create a lesbian feminist bookstore. The couple spoke to the

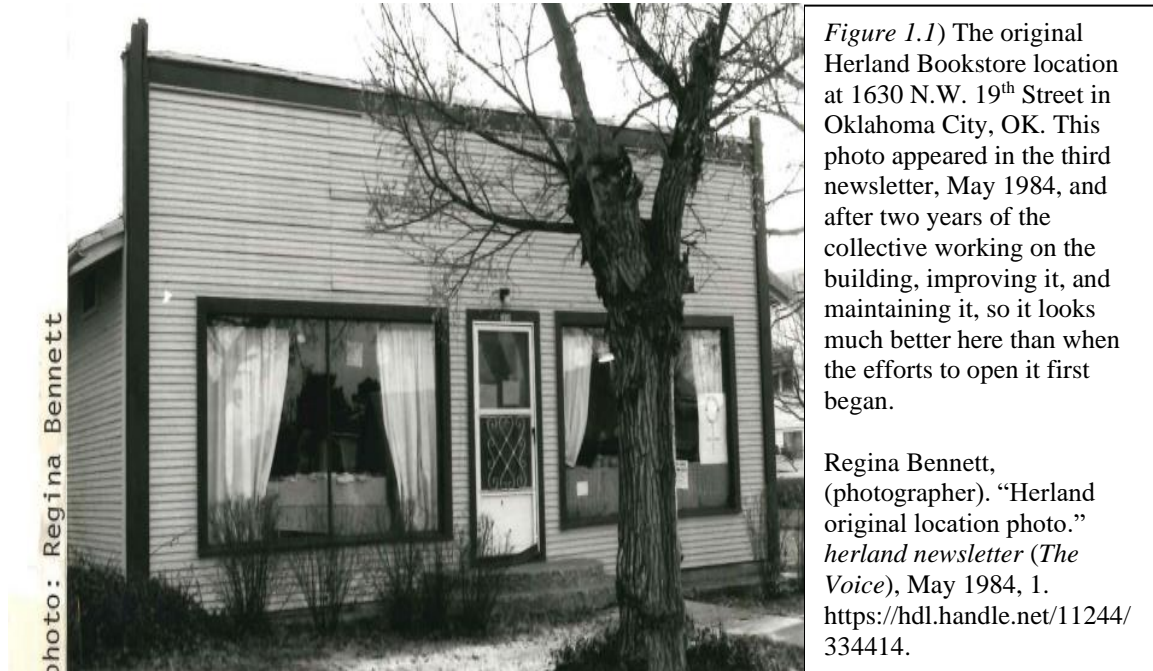
⁵ Bishop interview, November 4, 2020.

Susan’s personal herstory includes witnessing the Civil Rights Movement and the Kent State Massacre on television as a young child and teenager, forced to exist in wildly unequal programs from men’s in college, and working within the Veteran’s Administration’s Hospital for women and non-abled bodied veterans.

⁶ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020;
Johnson interview, October 20, 2020;
McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁷ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020;
Soske interview, February 5, 2021;
Jo Soske, “La Salle Des Femmes,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 8, (August 1992): 1 and 3,
<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52217>.

owner of the building that night, who required \$125 per month for rent. When the couple returned to the group working on the paper, the group excitedly approved the idea and joined in the planning for it.⁸



In the late 70s and early 80s, an estimated five to eight lesbian bars existed in Oklahoma City. However, not much else existed for lesbians to safely meet, commune, date, or even live as themselves without repercussions from the widely, bigoted social and legal policies of the time.⁹ While these places held excitement and entertainment, they excluded those seeking a safe, quiet place to exist fully out that did not revolve around alcohol.¹⁰ Some groups relied on borrowed locations, such as the Artemis House—a coffeehouse offering a safe space welcoming to the queer community—in Norman, located approximately 20 miles from OKC’s city center. These provided temporary, shared spaces, not fully designated for women due to the commercial purposes of their businesses. Outside of these social settings, small groups of friends spent time

⁸ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁹ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

¹⁰ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

together in one another's homes, but this limited size and consistency. None of these options offered a space just for women to gather, organize, educate, and commune together and Rogers and Jones envisioned such a space in the modest building they discovered.¹¹

The Brazen Hussy Rag joined with another "feminist and lesbian publication ... *Sister Advocate* as well as the groups La Salle des Femme[s] and Let's Talk Women ... to create a women's bookstore."¹² The groups combined their efforts to raise funds, repair the location, and build an infrastructure to sustain the bookstore. This collaboration became known collectively as La Salle des Femmes, which translates to mean "The Women's Room." The name held the group's goal within it; a small place, outside of the world for women to meet and be women safely.¹³

Jo Soske, writer for *The Brazen Hussy Rag*, activist, La Salle member, and Herland Sister, shared the story of the first few months of preparing the storefront for opening,

[We] had a series of workdays ... did a lot of work. ... It was in such very bad shape. ... Then we held a series of fundraisers, and we did those at the different [lesbian] clubs. ... We would provide a meal and musical entertainment. [and] the club [kept] the liquor sales ... People would buy a ticket to come to the benefit and that money went to the bookstore. ... That money was in an account and then ... There were problems with the couple. ... At one point it looked like all of the money had been stolen. However, ... Pat Colognesi, (who was very instrumental in both the newspaper and opening La Salle des Femmes) intervened and worked with the bank till all the money was reinstated.¹⁴

Pat Colognesi confirmed her role in two articles in *The Voice* that she served as the accountant for the fundraising, and someone forged her signature, emptying the account when she went on hiatus

¹¹ Soske interview, February 5, 2021; Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

¹² Herland Sisters, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003: Celebrating 20 Years*, (Oklahoma City: self-published, 2003), 5, quoted by Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 248.

¹³ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

¹⁴ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

to write a book.¹⁵ Colognesi returned, sorted out the account issues, and protected the bookstore's funding. However, the couple left Oklahoma City. Soske woefully said that at one point "there was a lock on the door, [and] nobody was showing up for work."¹⁶ The dream almost died.

Then Barbara Cleveland, who learned of and joined the Collective during the workdays, went and talked to the owner of the building and said, "Give me a chance and I'll make this project happen."¹⁷ Cleveland assumed the commitments of the La Salle group for the building. Cleveland then changed the name and expanded the mission to include all women—"those who identify as lesbian, more feminist, womanist, woman-caring, non-lesbian, women who are not willing or ready to declare, and women who don't care what you want to label them"—and hoped to eventually open a women's community center.¹⁸ She sought to create a place to educate, uplift, and edify women through a feminist lens. Cleveland, with the help of the others, established a woman's bookstore and changed its name to Herland, named for the famed feminist book of the same title.¹⁹ As described by current member Ginger McGovern, Herland continued as "one of the longest surviving women's bookstores. ... It's one of the longest existing LGBT organizations in Oklahoma for sure."²⁰ Lasting as a bookstore from 1982 to 2016, when the Herland donated

¹⁵ Pat Colognesi, "Letter to the Editor: Clarification Concerning Article in Last Month's Newsletter," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 1, (January 1989): 9, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52174>; HNC, "Meet Pat C.," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 12, (December 1988): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52173>.

¹⁶ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

¹⁷ Soske interview, February 5, 2021; Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

¹⁸ Cleveland, Barbara "Wahru." "From La Salle De[s] Femmes to Herland: Why Not the Same Name or Same Direction?." *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 22, no. 3, (March 2004): 1-4. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52083>.

¹⁹ HNC, "Herland Book Study," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 29, no. 2, (June 2011): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320410>.

²⁰ Lindsey Churchill, "Herland Oral History Project Update," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 3, (August 2016): 1-3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320408>; HNC, "UCO—Herland History Project," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 2, (April 2016): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320409>; HNC, "UCO Herland Oral History Project," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 4, (December 2016): 4,

the books to UCO, and as the Collective from 1984 until present, Herland's existence alone proved historic.

The Voice shared the full story of the beginning on the tenth anniversary of Herland. Jo Soske wrote one of two articles discussing Herland's herstory and it mirrored what she said in her interview years later. In both instances, Soske focused on the important contributions and vision that came from the first group.²¹ She felt that while the named changed, public recognition of the original visionaries remained important. She held strong to this sentiment and eventually Herland recognized and gave certificates of thanks to the original La Salle members years later. Maintaining harmony persisted as a priority for the group, honoring their feminist ideology, so this moment held a fundamental, ethical importance.²²

The founders of La Salle dreamt of providing that space, and it came into existence as Herland. Regardless of the new name and new leadership, Herland held the same fundamental purpose, to provide a permanent place for women to safely gather, commune without the bar scene, and educate themselves. In the confusion of the disappearing money and the pain of disappointment that came from the original couple leaving without a clear explanation, some La Salle members chose not to participate in Herland. For Soske, it took some time to heal but she still believed in the larger purpose and eventually returned to take part in Herland as a volunteer and counselor. She shared how the rift between the original organizers and Herland eventually healed:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320409>;

Hogan, "Introducing UCO's the Center," *Old North*, (Fall 2016): 14;

Ginger McGovern, interview by b hinesley, November 19, 2020, interview 6, as part of the Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program's *OSU Diverse Sexuality and Gender Oral History Project: Feminist-Lesbians of Oklahoma*, recording not yet published.

²¹ Soske, "La Salle Des Femmes," *The Herland Voice*, 1 and 3.

See Appendix 3 for the complete story and Peggy Johnson's similar account from her experience with Herland that appeared in the same Tenth Anniversary issue of *The Voice*.

²² Cleveland, "From La Salle De[s] Femmes to Herland," *The Voice*, (March 2004): 1-4; Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

Ten years in or sometime in, [Herland] had ... a day of recognition, ... of the original people who worked on La Salle de[s] Femme[s]. ... It was it was a point at which, ... what had been somewhat of a divide, was healed. There was this recognition that really the idea was to create a women's center, a community center, a safe place—as you say—for lesbian and feminists and it didn't matter what the name was or who was the first there but that together we all made it happen.²³

Eventually, for most, the collective energy that drove the women to fight for the ERA, create independent papers, and organize further activist actions, overcame any hard feelings, differences, or discouragement felt from the rough patch that forced the transition from La Salle to Herland. The goal and need for a communal space far exceeded personal feelings because La Salle's vision remained and came to life through Herland.

The vision came into existence under the guidance of Herland founder, Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland, along with many of her friends. Cleveland, who lived by the mantra "forgive yourself for not knowing and start knowing,"²⁴ believed in the capacity for education to change lives and the healing power of music. Cleveland saw the Herland Bookstore as a space to provide those within the marginalized population a place to find authors, musicians, and other women with similar voices and lived experiences. This space offered the opportunity for women to know more about themselves, their rights, bodies, abilities, and feminist ideology.

Herland edified women through courses, books, information, and connection to others in a place that otherwise sought to subdue and even suppress them. "Herland as the meeting space and community the group offered challenged the extremely repressive climate of Oklahoma. ... Court case rulings and laws introduced by the Oklahoma legislature indicated that members of the LGBTQ+ community should not express their identities and should in some cases be eradicated. This repression did not stop the Herland community from growing and expanding."²⁵ Cleveland

²³ HNC, "Herland Celebrates 10 Years," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 9, (September 1992): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52218>; Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

²⁴ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

²⁵ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 246 and 254.

and the women of Herland recognized the importance of Herland and their work, shared it through word-of-mouth, flyers, and soon, their own self-published queer community newspaper. They also frequently documented the events and recounted the herstory of Herland to leave an educational legacy for those who followed after them to know how this lesbian-feminist collective came to be, built, and thrived, such as writing their own herstory, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003: Celebrating 20 Years*.

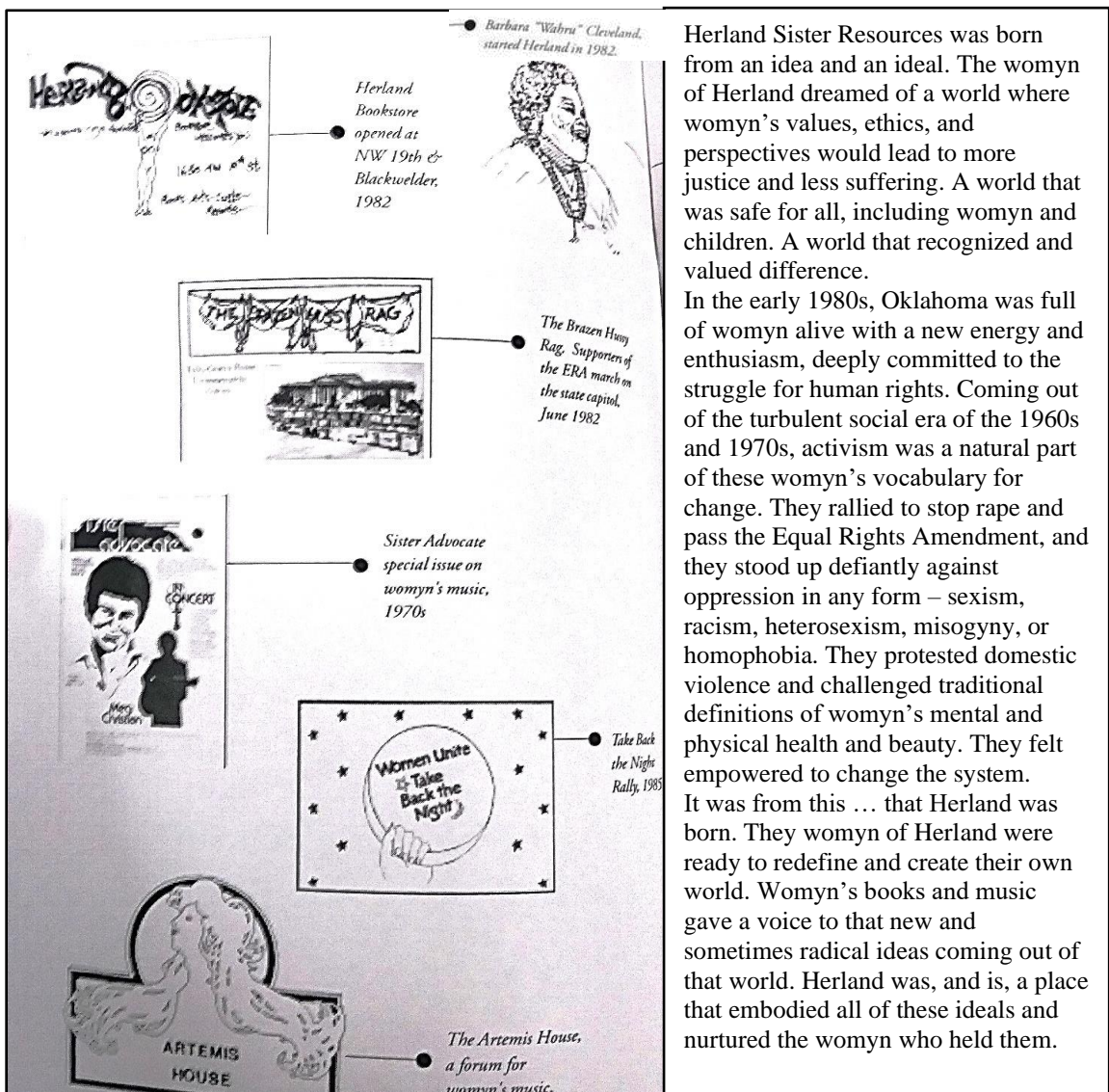


Figure 1.2 and 1.3) Herland documented their own history in 2003 to celebrate their twentieth anniversary as an organization. Only a handful of copies of this book still exist. In fear of the lights damaging the pages, the holder required using only non-flash photography. The organization's interpretation of their timeline and its most significant events holds great importance. The inserted text also comes directly from the book's introduction and shows the Herland Sisters' chosen words about their foundation.

Herland Sisters, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003*, 3-4.

Cleveland held firm to the belief of inclusivity and ensured that Herland held importance well beyond that of an innocuous bookstore. Cleveland opened Herland not as a capitalistic business for profit, and in fact, at no point did profit or sales enter the equation, but as a safe and sober communal space for education. Cleveland continued her work at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Monday through Friday, then spent her weekends at the bookstore.²⁶ The books sold covered the cost of purchasing them and any additional funds earned went immediately back into the store or Herland's other activities. Most typically, if someone could not afford to purchase the books, a duplicate existed in the lending library for them to borrow. Both the bookstore and library offered feminist and/or queer texts and journal that provided "a valuable contribution to the preservation and distribution of our culture and women's community."²⁷ The bookstore began in 1982, the library in 1984, and both continued until 2016 "to provide thousands of women context and education about lesbian lives, Queer community, feminism, and countless other topics not easily found in such a conservative region as Oklahoma."²⁸ The materials and their availability changed the women's lives by increasing their understanding of themselves, feminist ideology, and the queer community and then in 2016 by transforming the materials into an archive.

Founded on the model of feminist bookstores seen in larger, more liberal, urban-coastal areas that overtime moved more inland, but never fully covered the US, Herland stood as the first

²⁶ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

This is evidenced in numerous *Voice* articles that outline the funds at least annually and sometimes more frequently.

²⁷ HNC, "Enthusiastic Response to the Initiation of the Herland Library Club," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, May 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334414>.

²⁸ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 250;

Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020;

HNC, "All New Herland Library Club," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, April 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334413>;

HNC, "Feminist Collections: Herland Lending Library," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, April 1984, 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334413>.

and only feminist bookstore in Oklahoma and one of less than a dozen in the Bible Belt.²⁹ While the foundation of a network of feminist bookstores nationally grew to ninety-nine by 1980, due to their non-profit driven goals in a capitalistic world, the numbers fluctuated, with approximately a mere eighty stores by 1983, when Herland opened their doors. At the apex of feminist bookstore movement, in the late 1980s, no more than an estimated 125-150 stores existed.³⁰ Herland also stood as one of the longest-lasting bookstores, remaining open from 1982 to the early 2010s.³¹

The store component of Herland not only offered on-hand stock but through *The Voice* they offered an impressive array of lists of offerings for ordering of women's, lesbian, and feminist books, music, audiobook cassettes, and periodicals.³² However, *The Voice* went well beyond serving as the store's catalogue. It also offered original Herland articles, articles from the local, state, national, and international news sources, along with research opportunities, festivals,

²⁹ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 248;

Kirsten Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 32, 33, and 37.

Hogan's book looks at the radicalism of feminist bookstores that stood against capitalistic systems, racism, and sexism, which enters into this thesis later in this chapter. Here, Hogan's work provides an overview of the feminist bookstores that Herland was founded in connection with and in following their ideology as a place to disseminate information and offer space for these ideas to change the world through a feminist lens.

³⁰ Kirsten Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 83 and 95.

No more than one hundred were mentioned in Hogan's book at one time.

Feminist Bookstore News Archive, part of JSTOR's *Independent Voices Archive*, via the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. <https://www-jstor-org.argo.library.okstate.edu/site/reveal-digital/independent-voices/feministbookstorenews-27953489/>.

The *Feminist Bookstore News* magazine, began in 1976, lists more than one hundred but as they went out of business and new ones emerged or names changed or the list makers potentially could overlook smaller, unknown stores, this number still remains a well-educated guess and thus the approximation. The feminist bookstores themselves began in 1971 ICI-a woman's place in Oakland, CA and Amazon in Minneapolis, MN.

³¹ Kirsten Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*; McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

³² HNC, "Books by Mail." *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, July 1984, 6. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334415>.

Beginning in the July 1984 issue, *The Voice* lists books available to order as the first of these and such lists continued in every issue through the until the December 1985 issue when the lists stopped appearing consistently in *The Voice* to make room for more articles. Lists reappeared into the late 1980s issues inconsistently as space allowed after this and members could still order items through the store for the extent of its existence.

other groups, and workshops.³³ *The Voice* extended the benefits of the bookstores' materials and the Collectives' other offerings to far beyond Herland's physical walls. The bookstore also allowed a safe space to receive these materials for those who felt they could not otherwise do so by picking the materials up at Herland or Herland receiving the items and then concealing them for the post. Within the first few editions of *The Voice*, the Collective offered resources unavailable in common stores, if at all, within Oklahoma. This further provided connections, education, and community to those living inside of the Bible Belt without ready access to the queer community.

The ideology of Herland as a bookstore and Collective stems from the flourishing feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Lesbian activists and historians Saralyn Chesnut and Amanda C. Gable describe lesbian-feminism of the 1970s and 80s as “an ideology that emphasized female agency and autonomy,” in their work, “‘Women Ran It:’ Charis Books and More and Atlanta’s Lesbian-Feminist Community, 1971-1981,” in Howard’s *Carryin’ On in the Lesbian and Gay South*. Chesnut and Gable discuss how this ideology “found expression in a number of lesbian-feminist texts and gave rise to a proliferation of women’s presses, printing collectives, and bookstores—what has come to be called the ‘women in print movement.’”³⁴ Once a feminist bookstore worker, Kirsten Hogan also recognizes the importance of the feminist-lesbian bookstores as more than retail spaces; rather these “stores” became communities and

³³ HNC, "Chemical Dependency Counselor Available," *herland newsletter (The Voice)* March 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>;
HNC, "Feminist Collections: Herland is Expanding Its Resources," *The Voice*, April 1984, 4;
HNC. "Herland...", *The Voice*, March 1984, 3;
HNC, "Spousal Rape Law Passes OK Senate," *herland newsletter (The Voice)* March 1984, 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>;
HNC, "YWCA Passage Way," *herland newsletter (The Voice)* March 1984, 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>.

³⁴ Saralyn Chesnut and Amanda C. Gable, “‘Women Ran It:’ Charis Books and More and Atlanta’s Lesbian-Feminist Community, 1971-1981,” in *Carryin’ On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, ed. by John Howard, 241-248, (New York City: New York University Press, 1997), 242.

homes to feminists and lesbians.³⁵ Hogan's book, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability* (2016), explores the importance of this space for women like the Herland Sisters, delves into some of the stores included in the movement of the 1970s and 80s, yet she could not include every store considered part of the movement. Examining Herland therefore extends Chestnut, Gable, and Hogan's conversation geographically and socio-culturally by layering Herland, in the Bible Belt, with the stores in more urban-coastal and assumedly more liberal locations.

Herland epitomized the historical importance of "the store-community relationship," embodying the ways it "was reciprocal and dialectical, with each entity both supporting and being supported by the other in an ongoing process of change and growth," as described by Chestnut and Gable.³⁶ Herland and lesbian-feminist bookstores, in general, held a significantly deeper meaning to its patrons beyond that of mere commerce. This relationship stood as the origin point for many of the "political, social, and cultural activities, organizations, and practices" of the lesbian community, especially in areas where "secretive bars provided the only other hub of communication."³⁷ The haven of the bookstore provided "two systems [in] which lesbian-feminist ideas circulated: a textual and a social system."³⁸ Thus, while the bookstores disseminated the written works, they also, and possibly more so, served to support "feminist and lesbian-feminist individuals, organization, and communities, and through them effected social change ... significantly alter[ing] the socio-cultural, and thus the political landscape in the United States."³⁹ These same systems appeared in Herland quickly, including various social change campaigns,

³⁵ Kirsten Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 6-8.

³⁶ Chesnut and Gable, "'Women Ran It:,'" in *Carryin' On*, 242.

³⁷ Chesnut and Gable, "'Women Ran It:,'" in *Carryin' On*, 243.

³⁸ Chesnut and Gable, "'Women Ran It:,'" in *Carryin' On*, 242.

³⁹ Chesnut and Gable, "'Women Ran It:,'" in *Carryin' On*, 242.

awareness classes, aid for lesbians in need, and other movements, eventually reaching beyond the lesbian community to others in the queer community.

Before the end of the first year Herland grew beyond being a simple bookstore and gathering spot. The founder, Cleveland, enjoyed the atmosphere and communion at Herland, but she knew that in order for the focus to move away from her as the “founder” and to continue working towards her personal goals, she needed to leave Herland to the Collective of Sisters.⁴⁰ “In 1988, the same year as the first Gay Pride Parade in Oklahoma City, Cleveland left Oklahoma to pursue her graduate degree in Ohio, though she returned periodically to continue to work with Herland.”⁴¹ Cleveland stepped aside as owner and leader 18 months after Herland opened.

Beyond the books, Herland grew to offer classes, counseling, advocacy, and numerous other support mechanisms, all of which were provided for free or a minimal charge to cover its cost only.⁴² Herland filed for a non-profit status in 1984 and operated as such since its approval in 1985. The group maintained this status and all funds raised went back into operating costs or to support others for the thirty-seven years since then. Cleveland and the Collective, who followed her as the leadership, opened and maintained Herland as a space for the edification, amplification, and advocacy for the queer community with a feminist and activist lens in all things.

As Ginger McGovern explained, “Herland stayed existing as an organization because we weren’t solely ... a retail business. So as all of [the other feminist bookstores] were gradually going under and going out of business, Herland continued.”⁴³ This multi-faceted activist group of women combined their efforts and formed the non-profit organization of Herland Sister

⁴⁰ Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland, "Dear Sisters and Friends of Herland," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, November 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334419>.

⁴¹ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 256.

⁴² HNC, "Herland..." *herland newsletter (The Voice)* March 1984, 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>. “HERLAND sponsors and provides support services for the production of music concerts, poetry readings, coffeehouses, films/video showings, speakers, slide shows. We work with other individuals and organizations to provide our community with cultural and educational programs. We will be happy to talk with you about your ideas and can assist you with development, contacts and publicity.”

⁴³ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

Resources (honoring the bookstore's name), looking to effect change in a real way for their city, state, and eventually nation.⁴⁴ To establish a not-for-profit, the state required the Collective to create a board. Even in this, the Sisters sought to change the norm of the outside world and established the group's board as that of "Four Sisters," who all held equivalent power and operated by consensus.⁴⁵ All actions they took followed a similar feminist ideology of existing equally as women, for women.

Feminism stood central to all Herland activities and activism. Herland Sisters and authors Mary Jo Osterman and Phyllis Jean Athey wrote for *The Voice* in August 1986 that:

A lesbian is always a feminist. Not all lesbians think other lesbians are feminist. Not all lesbians claim to be feminist. Not all lesbians have articulated a political analysis of their oppression as women and as lesbians. Certainly, not all lesbians are overtly active in the broader sense of feminist political action. Yet, stripped of its various political casings, the basic definition of "feminist" is "one who is pro-women." Therefore, any woman who identifies herself as lesbian, as prowoman [sic] in orientation, is a feminist. In a society in which heterosexuality is compulsory, the "simple" act of claiming a lesbian label for oneself is a counter-cultural act--a revolutionary naming of oneself--a feminist act. The personal is political in the everyday life of a lesbian, whether she is openly claiming the identity or known only to herself. In the face of structural societal oppression, to be lesbian is to be feminist is to be political is to be lesbian.⁴⁶

This described not only the opinion of the authors but the reality of living outside of the societal norm, especially during a time of overt, accepted, and legally supported oppression. Lesbians (and all other queer community members) knew that by stepping outside of the heteronormative they faced ramifications in their work, family, and communities. To stand and live out in their own innate identity meant they took a political stance.

⁴⁴ Herland Sisters, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003*, 5-6; Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 250.

⁴⁵ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 256.

Part of moving away from more masculinized spaces and modes of being also included an attempt to use a consensus model to come to an agreement as opposed to more common practices such as voting or having one clear leader making decisions. In fact, the group so eschewed these patriarchal, hierarchical modes of being that they created a rotating board. The group chose to not use positions such as president or vice president. Instead, they created the titles and positions of Sister 1, Sister 2, Sister 3 [and Sister 4] all with equal power.

⁴⁶ Osterman and Athey, "A Lesbian is Always a Feminist," *The Voice*, (August 1986): 1-2.

The authors in *The Voice* aligned with the stance expressed in the modern-day monograph, *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, edited by Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, which reviewed a multitude of academic works that discussed second-wave feminism in history, political science, gender and women's studies, and several other fields.⁴⁷ Based on the extensive range of fields, works, timespan, and recentness of this book, the definition offered for second-wave feminism provided the most accurate for this study of Oklahoma's movement. Second-wave feminism consisted of "radical feminist assertions" beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s "through the 1975–1985 cultural feminist emphasis on female difference and victimization."⁴⁸ The women that created Herland, a space for lesbian feminists in Oklahoma, fit this definition at every point.⁴⁹

At Herland, women and, especially, the members, found strength in numbers to rally against the injustices, but more than that, they found community to connect with, heal from the trauma inflicted by the outside world, and the strength found in finding those who allowed them to be their authentic selves with their chosen family and queer community. More than anything, Soske (and other Sisters also expressed how they) cherished Herland because they "stood for something. We stood for a kind of unity and inclusiveness that Oklahoma did not."⁵⁰ Pat Reaves defined and summarized Herland's importance, saying, "Oklahoma City has a history of having great lesbian bars, great women's bars. But there needed to be community outside of the bars and that ... was really one of the driving forces was to be a place where people could make those

⁴⁷ Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, Introduction to *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 1-18, edited by Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), eBook, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62117-3>.

⁴⁸ Sara M. Evans, "Generations Later, Retelling the Story," in *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 19-38, edited by Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 22, eBook, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62117-3>.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 1 for a complete definition of second-wave feminist according to Maxwell and Shields and how this thesis utilizes it.

⁵⁰ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

connections.”⁵¹ This need stemmed from the issues that came with alcohol, its potential abuse, health issues, and the need for a place outside of the confinement where society relegated the queer community to “undesirable” locations. Soske conveyed this spirit in her interview, sharing her gratefulness for “like-minded people ... [for] community, but also [to be a] service to the community: to be there for the people who didn't have a safe place.”⁵²

Herland also edified women and others in the queer community by providing a place to heal. In this area, Soske found her niche, discussing her counseling practice officed at Herland. In the beginning, she offered her services “one night a week and ... on a sliding scale so that any woman or man who needed counseling, could come.”⁵³ Other counselors offered their services through Herland and in all of their work, Soske said that no one “ever charged more than \$30 an hour. So, it was really aimed at being accessible to all.”⁵⁴ In addition to individual counseling, Soske offered 12-step recovery groups, along with others who provided various forms of emotional and mental health support beyond counseling, which continued for over thirty years, in some manner.⁵⁵ The lasting effects of helping others in their most vulnerable times, especially those within marginalized populations, cannot be measured. While the details must remain confidential, the counseling offered benefitted the individual, the Herland group as a collective, and the queer community of Oklahoma City in untold and immeasurable ways.

Others benefitted from various support received due to their being a part of Herland. Soske shared what Herland meant to her personally, telling of the precious memories of Herland Sisters celebrating her oldest friend and Herland volunteer coordinator, Linda Stone, in life for a

⁵¹ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

⁵² Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁵³ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁵⁴ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁵⁵ Soske interview, February 5, 2021;

HNC, "Chemical Dependency Counselor Available," *The Voice*, March 1984, 1.

Counseling offers appear in the first issue of *The Voice* and continue throughout the 2010s.

big birthday celebration and in death by contributing to her funeral expenses. This did not happen in a vacuum, Herland fundraised to help others as well. Soske spoke of the Collective providing “financial assistance for Elaine Barton, one of our early, early members. She was involved with Red Dirt Press, and she did some things for *The Brazen Hussy Rag* too, actually. ...When she got breast cancer, Herland did provide a fund to help support her with that.”⁵⁶ She also served as the editor of *The Voice* for the first several years of its production. Sadly, Elaine Barton eventually succumbed to the cancer and passed away in 2014. In her passing, her family honored her by asking for donations for Herland in lieu of flowers; even in her death, Elaine served the Collective.⁵⁷

As much as the Herland Collective supported their Sisters, the Sisters also supported Herland as a whole. Soske shared one event that benefitted the entire collective, the paying off of the building the Collective moved to and mortgaged in November 1987 at 2312 N.W. 39th in Oklahoma City’s gayborhood.⁵⁸ The Board agreed to a mortgage with a \$30,000 balloon payment due just five years later, in January 1993. The Collective paid off the mortgage in full and on time through Soske’s fundraising ideas of “Christmas for Herland,” along with help from the former founder, Barbara “Wahru” Cleveland.⁵⁹ Soske came up with the idea that pretty much anyone

⁵⁶ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁵⁷ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁵⁸ HNC, "Happy Birthday, Herland, Inc.!: Serving the Women's Community for Over Four Years," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 1, (January 1988): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52125>;
HNC, "Herland to Close," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 1 (January 1988): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52125>;
HNC, "Progress Through Unity," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 1, (January 1988): 1. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52125>;
Davis, *The Queens' English*, 136.
“Gayborhood—*noun*— A neighborhood primarily made up of LGBTQIA+ residences, businesses, and entertainment.”

⁵⁹ HNC, "Let's Celebrate!: Note Burning Party," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 1, (January 1993): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52223>;
HNC, "Mortgage Payoff Scheduled," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 1, (January 1993): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52223>.

could come up with \$200 over the span of a year to donate and if 100 people did so, Herland would raise \$20,000 of the \$30,000 due.⁶⁰ Cleveland pledged her \$200, even as a graduate student living out of state and lent her name to challenge others.⁶¹ Soske, several family members, and her partner each contributed their gift of \$200, then called and asked others to do the same. They contributed, and then called others, as well. Through this ever-growing phone-tree, pleas in *The Voice*, and a few fundraising events, the Sisters, their families, and community members raised almost the entirety of the mortgage. This plus the Board members and a few other larger pledges, specifically Margaret Cox's paying of the remainder at the end of the campaign, raised the money. Soske shared the little-known secret that Cox, a long-time member of the HNC and generally private person who stayed in the supporting roles in Herland, truly was the shero who carried the group through to the end goal.⁶²

From this new building, fully owned by the Collective, the Sisters continued to effect change in several areas, offer experiences to their members, women, and the community, and support activist efforts however they could. The concerts, fundraisers, bookstore, library, classes, and rallies continued until the 2010s. The Collective slowly dissolved many of its physical activities other than the Pride Picnics, holiday celebrations, and occasional social events. Ginger McGovern shared that this came about as the members aged and technology increased, reducing the need for physical books and libraries. This, along with the lesbian and feminist text beginning to be carried by mainstream locations—a triumphant shift in societal norms that the Herland Sisters worked and fought for—further reduced the need for Herland to continue its physical bookstore or library.⁶³

⁶⁰ Jo L. Soske, "Hanukkah and Christmas for Herland--\$200 from 100 People," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 9, (September 1992): 1-2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52218>.

⁶¹ HNC, "Cleveland Issues Challenge," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 9, (September 1991): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52206>.

⁶² Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁶³ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

This effect of the feminist movement rippled throughout the nation, ostensibly ending the feminist bookstore movement. The early independent feminist book authors, presses, and bookstores provided the main source of these materials for most of the 1970s and 1980s. Chesnut posits that the “presses helped provide materials for burgeoning women’s studies programs and the earliest course in lesbian and gay studies.”⁶⁴ Then, the growth from writers to presses to bookstores became activist community hubs, like Herland. As the awareness and broader societal support of the women’s rights and queer rights grew, continued research of the communities and movements grew as well. Overall, these developments created a movement that “engaged rather than evaded the patriarchy, effecting cultural, social, and political change in the process.”⁶⁵ The market for the writings amplified in the general public and general studies absorbed much of the specialized works, causing need for the specialized bookstores to fade and the special qualities they held to disappear into a small section of large chain stores.

In 2016, as the library faded and the activities dwindled, UCO and Dr. Churchill approached the Collective about an oral history project that became the documentary, *Herland: Creating a Radical Lesbian Feminist Community*. The Sisters recognized that they no longer needed the books, but they wanted to donate the library intact to an organization. So, while they met about the project, discussions of donating it to UCO began. Over the next year, Herland gifted over 4,000 books, including many rare titles, along with feminist and queer journal archive, Women’s Music albums, and Herland’s memorabilia to UCO. These all now reside in the UCO Women’s Research Center & BLGTQ+ Student Center for research and further expansion of women’s, feminists’, queer, and Oklahoma studies.⁶⁶

Herland’s physical participation in the feminist bookstore network and movement and as the only one in the state of Oklahoma and one of the few in the Bible Belt constructed their

⁶⁴ Chestnut and Gable, ““Women Ran It,”” *Carryin’ On*, 272.

⁶⁵ Chestnut and Gable, ““Women Ran It,”” *Carryin’ On*, 272.

⁶⁶ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

national historical significance. Their creation and maintaining of community as a collective of lesbian feminists carved out a specific significance by providing a space for the women to exist as lesbians without fear of retribution, to edify the women through education, literature, and emotional supports, and the formation of their chosen family. Herland continues as an organization past the library donation, although hampered greatly by the Covid-19 pandemic and its widespread lockdowns in the United States in 2020. The current Herland members act with the utmost caution and consideration, following the intelligent guidance of experts, and suspending all in-person gatherings for approximately 12 months, but meeting virtually when possible. They now continue virtually, outside, or post-lock-down having the “monthly” supper club, along with an occasional lesbian film showing, book club, small concert, or other special events in order to maintain community. They also maintain hosting the annual Pride picnic for the 39th Street celebration, except for 2020, and a holiday party in December.⁶⁷

Herland no longer operates in the same manner, yet it continues. Herland continues to evolve and still provides a hub of community for future queer generations through allowing other organizations, such as Red Rock, a local mental health organization, and Sisu, a hub for queer youth in Oklahoma City, to meet at the Herland building.⁶⁸ The members from the 1980s and 1990s look to retire and enjoy time with their chosen family, while a younger generation of Sisters look to reorganize in the post-pandemic world, create new activities and pick up the mantle of activism left by their elders.

⁶⁷ Herland Sister Resources, “Herland Concert,” Facebook, event, June 19, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Herland-Sister-Resources-138897648960>, <https://www.facebook.com/events/972982746804972/>; McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁶⁸ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

CHAPTER III:

HERLAND: SACRED SPACES FOR WOMEN

Outside of the bookstore's physical location, Herland created other safe spaces for lesbian women to rejuvenate, connect, and express themselves fully. In Oklahoma, members of the queer community, including lesbians, thus the Herland Sisters, faced a multitude of laws focused on punishing them for their sexuality. According to Lindsey Churchill's work,

Herland offered solace from the unsupportive and often times dangerous cultural and political environment. ... Indeed, to be a lesbian in Oklahoma in the 1980s meant that you had to be afraid to 'lose your family, your job, and often times your life.' ... [T]he meeting space and community the group offered challenged the extremely repressive climate of Oklahoma. ... Court case rulings and laws introduced by the Oklahoma legislature indicated that members of the LGBTQ+ community should not express their identities and should in some cases be eradicated. This repression did not stop the Herland community from growing and expanding.... They demonstrated, time and again, agency and resilience against what often seemed like overwhelming odds.¹

For Herland, the safe space they provided needed to extend beyond the books in the store and library, thus they sought to provide such a space in as many ways as possible.

This chapter looks at the two main forms of external safe space created by Herland through music events and retreats and the ways that these connected to larger national queer history, again layering Oklahoma into the greater historical conversation. This examination layers in the importance of space seen in the quintessential research for 2SLGBTQIA+ place

¹ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 246 and 253-254.

importance: *Preservation and Place: Historic Preservation by and of LGBTQ Communities in the United States*. The anthology provided works that examined several queer places across the nation that gave members of the queer community safe space to live exactly as they wanted away from the larger society's oppression. This chapter adds to that discussion by looking at how Herland provided this not only at their building, but also through music and retreats. This work builds on that of historian Ty Ginter, as they researched a similar timespan to that of Herland and performed oral history interviews to document the importance of their interviewees' gathering place. Ginter posits that "in a time where it was legal to be fired for being gay and being gay in and of itself was a felony under . . . sodomy laws, finding a [safe space] . . . was important."² This chapter also layers the national conversation not only regionally but also by looking at how safe spaces tie to the Women's Music movement, a largely overlooked topic within the national queer historical conversation.

The two most significant forms of safe space created outside of their building by Herland came from the semi-annual retreats and music, especially at their events.³ The safe spaces allowed the Herland Sisters to live openly, completely revealing their identities, and participating overtly in their sexualities without fear of repercussions, consequences, and chastisement from the outside world. These sacred moments within their safe spaces allowed the women the opportunity to let down their guards and feel whole, if only for short periods of time.⁴ These times of freedom allowed the Herland Sisters to bond with one another, rebuild strength to

² Ty Ginter, "Tradition, Community, and Grungy Secretness: What Preservationists Can Learn from the Story of Phase One," in *Preservation and Place: Historic Preservation by and of LGBTQ Communities in the United States*, 285-313, ed. by Katherine Crawford-Lackey and Megan E. Springate, 289, (New York City: Berghahn Books, 2019), eBook, doi:10.2307/j.ctv1850gww.

³ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020;
Johnson interview, October 20, 2020;
Reaves interview, February 3, 2021;
McGovern interview, November 19, 2021;
Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

⁴ Bonnie J. Morris, *The Disappearing L: Erasure of Lesbian Spaces and Culture*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 29.

continue the fight for equal rights, and maintain hope for a future where all spaces provided safety for the queer community to love and exist.

HERLAND'S MUSICAL SAFE SPACE

The love of music abided within Herland founder, Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland throughout her life.⁵ Cleveland knew of and wanted to be a part of the music movement that focused on the female experience, most often the lesbian and/or feminist lived experience.⁶ The Herland Bookstore not only sold the Women's Music that spoke of, for, and about feminist, lesbian, and folk-activism of this era, the Collective also hosted local musical guests and eventually nationally recognized stars in that genre. In *The Voice*, Peggy Johnson described Women's Music as containing "elements of identity, self-awareness, protest, redefining women, their identity and place in society."⁷ Beyond the intangible benefits, the social events offered the tangible opportunity for great fundraisers to further the Collective's work and support various activist organizations and members' needs.

Not only did the music provide connection, as the singers channeled their innermost selves to the women of Herland and served as a radical point of protest in their words and existence, the concerts also gave Herland an opportunity to raise funds and further their activism. The concerts featured throughout issues of *The Voice* provided funds for collaborations with other groups, such as helping to host Austin, Texas' Women's Music artist, Nancy Scott at the

⁵ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

⁶ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 251.

Wahru later produced country music. "While Cleveland helped to create Herland Bookstore, she also worked on another passion—producing music. She worked with female country musicians."

See these sites for further information as to Wahru's lived experience as a musician, performing regularly at the National Women's Music Festival, as well as her use of music as a community organizer, teacher, and activist:

Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland, *Drum Wahru*, 2018, Drumwahru.weebly.com;

National Women's Music Festival (NWMF), "2022 Performers: Drum Chorus Directors, Wahru and Rani Biffle-Quimba," *NWMF 2022 Festival: June 30th-July 3rd*, November 2021,

<https://www.nwmf.info/portfolio/wahru-and-rani-biffle-quimba/>;

National Women's Music Festival (NWMF), "2022 Performers: Sistah Ngoma," *NWMF 2022 Festival: June 30th-July 3rd*, November 2021, <https://www.nwmf.info/portfolio/sistah-ngoma/>.

⁷ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

Women's Resource Center of Norman.⁸ Concerts also served to further Herland's work through contributions to their general fund, support of the Collective's main bonding event—the retreats, and for specific causes, especially the Herland Legal Defense Fund.⁹ So, for the Herland Sisters, the music held a doubly beneficial effect, the personal space and connection plus the ability to support others physically and financially.

However, this chapter looks at the music's meaningfulness to the women in providing them community and a voice that meant more to them than simple monetary gains. The music spoke for and to the women of the lesbian-feminist movement and the women of Herland. During this same time period, for the first time, feminists, especially lesbian-feminist musicians held enough agency to publicly play, record, and share the heart songs of lesbians and feminists.¹⁰ The movement that encompassed these mostly independent production companies and artists fed from the momentum to the second-wave feminists and their desire to claim their own space in a male-led society, including the record industry.¹¹ The women of Herland identified with the artist and the songs. The women heard their heart's desire out loud and knew they found a community amongst the fans. As McGovern stated:

It was all about being women, established their own identity, not derived from their relationship with men. Just an identity that stood on its own. The lesbian part of it was more focused on women's relationship to women. ... There were elements of identity, self-awareness, protest, redefining women, their identity and place in society, it was all about that. So, the women's music was really very important.¹²

⁸ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 251; Nancy Scott, "Nancy Scott: About," *Nancy Scott Music*, 2022, <http://www.nancyscottmusic.com/about.html>.

⁹ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

¹⁰ The terminology "heart song" originated in Disney's film "Happy Feet." It has since come into common use vernacularly and to mean music that expresses the innermost identity, desires, thoughts, emotions, and dreams. While the terminology does not seem to appear in the era discussed, the 1970s or 80s, its use came from the women's interviews and most appropriately applies to the feelings discussed by them and within multiple articles in *The Voice*.

¹¹ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 28, 30, and 43

¹² McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

The lyrics and life force of the music provided strength and assuredness that they were not alone, a feeling not always known in times before the rise of women's music.¹³

While many outside of academia acknowledge the importance of the Women's Music movement, relatively few academic texts examine it, leaving the story to be told almost solely by music historian, Bonnie Morris. In Morris' examination of Women's Music in *The Disappearing L: Erasure of Lesbian Spaces and Culture*. Morris states the most important change brought about by Women's Music came from "Their exhortation from concert stages and festival workshops gave countless women the courage to come out, advancing the tide of political change."¹⁴ Morris' research of the Women's Music scene of the late 1970s through the mid-1990s examines the very music that Herland sponsored for events, attended as individuals or in groups, and shared through their music library to those without other avenues of hearing their own thoughts, emotions, and lives played out in music.

Women's Music came alongside the folk music and Civil Rights spirituals of the 1960s. In the 70s it wove through the second-wave feminist movement and inspired lesbians in the 1980s to fight against the oppression of the queer community during the rise of the "moral majority."¹⁵ A part of the mental and spiritual fuel to continue the fight for women in the queer community came from women's music. "Music ... informed and inspired the activism of Herland."¹⁶ Churchill's emphasis on the importance of this specific music to Herland came from the fuel and voice it provided for the women to persevere in their "activism in a time when many of those who fought for social change felt the pressure of overwhelming odds against them."¹⁷ As Churchill's analysis found, women's folk music of that era gave the women of Herland a voice that aligned

¹³ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

¹⁴ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 24.

¹⁵ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 26, 30-35; Mason, *Oklahomo*, 3-17.

¹⁶ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 252.

¹⁷ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 252.

with their own and a connection to a national movement and even more so a connection to one another. Herland Sister Ginger McGovern described this found voice saying “When I heard Women’s Music and when I got involved with Herland, in many ways it validated my experience in life. It validated who I was and that I was not alone.”¹⁸ Herland provided safe spaces that gave their members, feminist, and lesbians a shared voice and spirit found in the lyrics and surroundings of women’s music.

During the group interview of five of the remaining members of Herland, when they agreed to participate in this work’s oral history interviews, they spoke of moments listening to these musicians, like when one artist “played the piano, the lights off except for the single spotlight,” singing an uncoded love song clearly to a woman, and as Peggy Johnson described it, “it felt as if the singer sang to just me.”¹⁹ The Sisters shared how, for the first time in their lives, they felt music really connected to them, even if just listening in their car to a cassette, they could “sing along and not feel fake.”²⁰ The Sisters discussed the empowerment of hearing feminist songs, as truly powerful women claimed their own space such as Holly Near’s “Singing for Our Lives”. The Sisters spoke of how the women’s love songs held a special power too, allowing for them to “hold your girlfriend tight, and sing the lyrics without changing the words.”²¹ Even the few non-lesbian singers, such as Sweet Honey in the Rock, in Women’s Music spoke to new levels of empowerment not heard before this genre and movement due to the strong feminist themes.²² They told of their excitement upon first hearing a lesbian singer declare her love for another woman. How these songs erased the lack of connection the Sisters felt with heteronormative music that played on the radio. The women stopped having to pretend that the

¹⁸ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

¹⁹ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

²⁰ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

²¹ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

²² Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

boy-girl in the hetero-love songs spoke of girl-girl because the Women's Music singers truly spoke of girl-girl.²³

Outside of the movement, women often provided the talent but did not hold significant positions of power in the music industry, leaving them to follow the commercial demands of the heteronormative society. This void gave birth to the Women's Music movement as women fueled by the feminist movement's ideology decided to not wait for men to make space for them, rather they created their own. Women wrote, produced, sang, distributed, and organized events for this music that cyclically fed and derived energy from the women's and queer community rights activism of the time.²⁴ Because of their grassroots foundation and specialized messages geared to a specific audience, this type of music held little to no space outside of those specifically involved in the movement before, during, and even after the 1970s, 80s, and 90s.²⁵

Many women interviewed by Morris and the women of Herland discussed the importance of the concerts and the audiences for women's music. Morris' autoethnographic experience came from her own following of Women's Music, beginning with her coming out as a lesbian in 1980, during her early college years, Morris shared that "the atmosphere of a women-only event [was] different. It often allows us to experience a new level of support from other women, and it provides a time to relax with each other without needing to explain or defend our ideas to men ... [and] to develop and sustain communication and intimacy."²⁶ While problematic in some areas where industry heads or festival organizers held TERF positions, the complete freedom from the masculine influence empowered the women.²⁷ By strengthening their support systems and finding

²³ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

²⁴ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 24-30.

²⁵ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 26-30.

²⁶ Lucina's Music collective quoted by Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 29.

²⁷ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 101-104; Diane Anderson-Minshall, "Op-ed: Michfest's Founder Chose to Shut Down Rather Than Change With the Times," *The Advocate*, April 24, 2015, <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/04/24/op-ed-michfests-founder-chose-shut-down-rather-change-times>.

women-only community spaces, they felt bolstered in their personal lives to live out as lesbians, empowered in their activism, and inspired to create additional safe spaces of equality and inclusion in the outside world and societal systems. Herland rarely required fully women-only spaces, however, the membership of the group and those interested in the music events generally created naturally occurring, complete audiences of solely women, as Herland's transgender connections appeared later in 1992 as "an umbrella for women in all phases of development," and in 1993 during the celebration of Pride, a specific piece recognizing the need for inclusion, respect, and acknowledgement of the transgender people who the Gay Liberation Movement too often overlooked.²⁸ Beyond Herland's inclusiveness, their events still appeared as women-only due to the simple fact that few men showed interest in events featuring strong, outspoken lesbian feminist artists.

In a broader sense, although some individuals and groups pushed back against the standard women-only settings of Women's Music in general, society's continued oppression against women, especially lesbians, and support of male domination provided the justification for this exclusivity. These artists, and transversely their audience members in large part, performed songs written to represent true lived experiences. Their sharing of their inner-most thoughts and desires, especially those seen as illegal due to the laws against homosexuals, demanded they feel protected before they exposed their souls.²⁹ This unfortunately excluded, whether purposefully or not, an even more marginalized part of the queer community, transgender and non-binary assigned female at birth individuals, a wrong that cannot be erased and must be acknowledged.³⁰

²⁸ Ng, "The Meaning of Stonewall," *The Voice*, (June 1993): 1 and 6;

Peggy Johnson, "My Life with Herland," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 8, (August 1992): 1-2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52217>.

In Peggy's autobiographical article she mentions concern about including material by men and not knowing if Herland was radical (a term used by TERF organizations) or not but then learned of its inclusiveness of those women in transition. The language here appears coded, but this sort of acceptance appears repeatedly.

Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

²⁹ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 29.

³⁰ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 67.

This acknowledgment came from Herland's other inclusive work; plus, the research about them ensured no purposeful ongoing TERF policies existed and included this discussion. Also, as noted in the introduction, outside of the few days for retreats, Herland included everyone in their events, so, again, this particular group stood as non-TERFs seeking privacy in moments of vulnerability.³¹

Furthermore, the artists provided a type of guide for the lesbians within their audience. With few people, especially lesbians feeling safe to live as "out" in the public eye, the openness of the singers and the direct messages of the songs provided a rare role model and guide. As Morris noted, "Since no other leaders were directly addressing lesbians' interest or treating them as an intelligent, worthy demographic, many an isolated woman felt that a sympathetic musician was speaking directly to her."³² The women in the audience, like the Herland Sisters, heard and saw others telling them that they held an important and valid place in society. Moreover, the icons of Women's Music gave legitimacy to the women's desire for equal rights, especially the right to love as they naturally felt. This empowerment placed Women's Music as component of cultural importance, just as heteronormative music commonly received. In fact, it possibly established a larger significance since Women's Music required its fans to seek it out rather than the ease and passivity enjoyed by the typical heteronormative music heard on the radio.³³ Due to this, each of the Herland Sisters' interviewed conveyed similar feelings to Morris' conclusions about the need for recognition of Women's Music on a broader scale due to its contributions to society.

Audiences attending the events felt that "women's music played in personal awakening[s], the permission to feel and to act on romantic longing, to dance in another woman's arms, [it] was a liberation process we cannot deny today."³⁴ The music gave the women agency.

³¹ HNC, "St. Sybil," *The Voice*, (June 1993): 2.

³² Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 33.

³³ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 33.

³⁴ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 61.

The Herland women spoke of this agency as finally experiencing what heteronormative couples took for granted, a connection, the audible translation of their identities, and a place to love in their own terms openly, without fear of judgment or repercussions.³⁵ Within these safe places, the women could also meet people to form non-romantic relationships confidently knowing those there in attendance held similar mindsets, most likely the same sexuality, and generally at Herland's alcohol-free events, not intoxicated. These relationships provided for healthier, more supportive connections and communities.³⁶ Within the protective enclaves offered by Herland, the strength found through consortiums led to the group extending their energies to saturate the society around them and change it for the better.

All of these improvements to their lives played a great role for Herland and the women within it. Herland sponsored many of the same musicians that Morris discussed as national icons, such as Chris Williamson, Holly Near, Odetta, and the duet, Casselberry and DuPree, to play in Oklahoma. While the general public and academics outside of the Women's Music phenomenon do not recognize most of these artists, those in the activist, feminist, and lesbian communities certainly knew and considered them famous in their own right. Some of these artists gained national recognition beyond those "in the know." A few of the women's artist gained mainstream or other recognition. Those who garnered broader attention often chose to come out publicly to fight for societal acceptance and against injustices. One such artist, Odetta, who sang at the March on Washington next to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, for President Kennedy, and on Harry Belafonte's TV special and "has been referred to as the 'voice of the civil rights movement,'"

³⁵ Lucina's Music collective quoted by Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 29; Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 31 and 34.

³⁶ Soske interview, February 5, 2021; Johnson, interview, October 20, 2020; Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

came to Oklahoma in 1983 due to Cleveland and Herland's efforts.³⁷ The Sisters supported other organizations who brought Holly Near to nearby locations and in Oklahoma City. Near, who PBS recognized as an "American Master" in 2019, stands as "an outspoken political activist and singer-songwriter ... who's music and life story illustrate how song can have the power to send a clarion call and influence the course of social justice."³⁸ Outwords, a queer oral history archiving foundation, featured Holly Near and her life story revealing her deep roots in activism. This began with her joining Jane Fonda's 1971 anti-Vietnam War Free the Army tour. She continued her work with Fonda and Tom Hayden in 1971 as a part of the Indochina Peace campaign. During this tour, Near began recording and met the woman who changed her career and life, Meg Christensen. As a Women's Music artist, Meg encouraged Near to write songs for the genre, and as they worked together, they fell in love. This led to Near coming "out at Michigan's Womyn's Festival, then later on in *People Magazine*" in 1976.³⁹ Her coming out was the first in *People* magazine and inspired Elton John to do the same that year.⁴⁰ Near, a trailblazer in national queer and activism history, came to the state of Oklahoma. The same state that stood as the lynchpin in the defeat of the ERA, a leader in legalized oppression of women and the queer community, and

³⁷ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 251; Sasha Frere-Jones, "How Odetta Revolutionized Folk Music," *The New Yorker*. February 24, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/how-odetta-revolutionized-folk-music>; Odetta Gordon, "Odetta Gordon: Biography," interviewed by Shawn Wilson on December 6 and March 17, 2006, *The History Makers*, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/odetta-gordon-41>, https://www.thehistorymakers.org/sites/default/files/A2006_038_EAD.pdf.

³⁸ *American Masters*, season 33, episode 4, "Holly Near: Singing for Our Lives," The WNET Group, March 1, 2019, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/holly-near-singing-for-our-lives-documentary/10961/>.

³⁹ Holly Near, interview by Betsy Kalin, *Outwords: Queer History Lives Here. Our Story. Forever*, October 27, 2020, <https://theoutwordsarchive.org/subjectdetail/holly-near>.

⁴⁰ *San Francisco Bay Times: LGBTQ News & Calendar for the Bay Area*, "Music Legend Holly Near Continues to Inspire and Reveal the Power of Social Change Activism," June 20, 2018, <http://sfbaytimes.com/music-legend-holly-near-continues-inspire-reveal-power-social-change-activism/#:~:text=In%20a%20pioneering%201976%20interview,out%20in%20People%20in%201976.>

where many felt unwelcome or unsafe to even visit.⁴¹ Yet because of Herland and other feminist support, Holly Near braved the hostile environment and performed in the state of Oklahoma.⁴²

While Casselberry and DuPree never achieved the national stature of Near, the duo provided a unique form of Women's Music and highlighted Herland's efforts of inclusivity in all of their events, including concerts. Casselberry and DuPree offered their own blend of reggae, gospel, soul, folk, and jazz music with a social, political and feminist message from the standpoint of being Black women in America. They utilized their music "to emphasize the importance of the individual, and how one person can find strength."⁴³ Beyond these performers, at the height of Herland's activity they saw nationally known performers who also performed at the national festival in their events such as Cris Williamson, Tret Fure, Sisters of Swing, Alix Dobkin, Mimi Baczewska, Elaine Townsend, Carla Skiaky, Cruz Devon, The Therapy Sisters, Hunter Davis, Erica Wheeler, and the Neon Girls.⁴⁴ The Herland Sisters also included their very own women's musician who performed at the national level festivals, Peggy Johnson. Johnson played a significant role in Women's Music mainly through Herland locally, but also performing at the national level, Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (1976-2015) multiple times and the nationally renowned, New South Music Showcase.⁴⁵ The activism of the musicians complimented that of the Sisters. Each looking to change the world by using their voices in song and in protest.

⁴¹ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 246 and 252-254; Carol Mason, *Oklahomo*, 24-27; Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 31-32, 75-76, 132.

⁴² Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

⁴³ HNC, "Casselberry-DuPree Offer More Thans," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 8, (August 1986): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52231>.

⁴⁴ Herland Sister Resources, "TBT [Retreat Performer 1985-2005]," Facebook, Image, July 1, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Herland-Sister-Resources-138897648960>.

⁴⁵ *Michigan Womyn's Music Festival records*. Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections, Michigan State University (MSU) Libraries, MSU, East Lansing, Michigan. <https://findingaids.lib.msu.edu/repositories/4/resources/5983>; Johnson interview, October 20, 2020; HNC, "Peggy Goes to Michigan," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 8, (August 1986): 7, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52231>;

WOMEN'S MUSIC TOP 20

1. Holly Near, "Watch Out"
2. Ferron, "Shadows on a Dime"
3. Meg Christian, "From the Heart"
4. Tret Fure, "Terminal Hold"
5. Chris Williamson, "Portrait"
6. Holly Near & Ronnie Gilbert, "Lifeline"
7. Chris Williamson, "The Changer and the Changed"
8. Alicia Bridges, "Under the Cover of Darkness"
9. Meg Christian & Chris Williamson, "Live at Carnegie Hall"
10. Kate Clinton, "Making Waves"
11. Kay Gardner, "Moods & Rituals"
12. Chris Williamson, "Blue Rider"
13. Kay Gardner, "Mooncircles"
14. Margie Adam, "Here is a Love Song"
15. Alive!, "City Life"
16. Holly Near, "Journeys"
17. Meg Christian, "Turning it Over"
18. Margie Adam, "Naked Keys"
19. Ferron, "Testimony"
20. Holly Near, "Speed of Light"

WOMEN'S MUSIC TOP 20

1. Holly Near/Arlo Guthrie/ Ronnie Gilbert/ Pete Seeger "HARP"
2. Ronnie Gilbert, "The Spirit is Free"
3. Chris Williamson, "Prairie Fire"
4. Ann Reed, "Room and Board"
5. Holly Near & Ronnie Gilbert, "Lifeline"
6. Holly Near, "Watch Out"
7. Kay Gardner, "A Rainbow Path"
8. Ferron, "Shadows on a Dime"
9. Ferron, "Testimony"
10. Teresa Trull & Barbara Higbie, "Unexpected"
11. Chris Williamson, "Portrait"
12. Chris Williamson, "The Changer and the Changed"
13. Deidre McCalla, "Don't Doubt It"
14. Tret Fure, "Terminal Hold"
15. Meg Christian, "From the Heart"
16. Gayle Marie, "Double Talk"
17. Holly Near, Inti-Illimani, "Sing to Me the Dream"
18. Holly Near, "Journeys"
19. Chris Williamson & Meg Christian, "Meg/Chris at Carnegie Hall"
20. Linda Tillery, "Secrets"

Forté's **Top 20** Women's Music Sales for 1986

1. CITY DOWN by Casselberry-DuPre, Icebergg Records
2. SINGING WITH YOU by H. Near and R. Gilbert, Redwood Records
3. SHADOWS ON A DIME by Ferron, Lucy Records
4. MICHIGAN LIVE '85 by various artists, August Night Records, **\$13.00
5. A STEP AWAY by Teresa Trull, Redwood Records
6. LUCIE BLUE TREMBLAY by Lucie Blue, Olivia Records
7. EDGES OF THE HEART by Tret Fure, Second Wave Records
8. A RAINBOW PATH by Kay Gardner, Ladylipper Records
9. HARP by H. Near, A. Guthrie, R. Gilbert and P. Seeger, Redwood Records
10. THE CHANGER AND THE CHANGED by Cris Williamson, Olivia Records
11. SCRAPBOOK by Meg Christian, Olivia Records
12. TESTIMONY by Ferron, Lucy Records
13. LIFELINE by H. Near and R. Gilbert, Redwood Records
14. THE OTHER SIDE by Sweet Honey in the Rock, Flying Fish Records
15. SING TO ME THE DREAM by H. Near and Inti-Illimani, Redwood Records
16. DON'T DOUBT IT by Deidre McCalla, Olivia Records
17. FEEL SOMETHING DRAWING ME ON by Sweet Honey in the Rock, Flying Fish Records.
18. HARMONY by Hunter Davis, Redwood Records
19. PRAIRIE FIRE by Cris Williamson, Olivia Records
20. SECRETS by Linda Tillery, 411 Records

Figure 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) Lists of the Top 20 songs in Women's Music from 1984 through 1987. Many of these performers came to Oklahoma City due in part to the efforts of Herland.

2.1) HNC, "Women's Music Top 20," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, October 1984, 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334418>.

2.2) HNC, "Women's Music Top 20," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 1, no. 9, (September 1985): 9, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334429>.

2.3) HNC, "Forté's Top 20 Women's Music Sales for 1986," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 4, no. 4, (April 1987): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52025>.

The Performers 1985-2005

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>October 1985 – Osage Hills
Mary Reynolds, Peggy Johnson</p> <p>May 1986 – Robbers Cave
Hawkins & DeLear</p> <p>October 1986 – Sequoyah
Rosy's Bar & Grill</p> <p>May 1987 – Roman Nose
Mary B. Mary Reynolds, Peggy Johnson</p> <p>October 1987 – Robbers Cave
Nancy Day, Donna D</p> <p>April 1988 – Boiling Springs
Sisters of Swing</p> <p>September 1988 – Sequoyah
Karen Williams, Nancy Scott</p> <p>May 1989 – Boiling Springs
Judy Fjell</p> <p>September 1989 – Lake Wister
The Therapy Sisters, Ann Reed</p> <p>May 1990 – Robbers Cave
Tuffy, Janis Galloway</p> <p>September 1990 – Arrowhead
Cruz Devon</p> <p>May 1991 – Robbers Cave
The Live Band</p> <p>October 1991 – Red Rock
Nancy Scott</p> <p>May 1992 – Robbers Cave
Erica Wheeler</p> <p>October 1992 – Roman Nose
Judy Fjell</p> <p>May 1993 – Roman Nose
Neon Girls</p> <p>September 1993 – Lake Murray
Alix Dobkin</p> <p>May 1994 – Roman Nose
Miss Brown to You</p> <p>October 1994 – Arrowhead
Mary Reynolds</p> <p>May 1995 – Roman Nose
FreeFall, Cuchla, Marca Cassiev, Donna D</p> | <p>October 1995 – Fountainhead
Mary Reynolds, Peggy Johnson</p> <p>May 1996 – Roman Nose
Erica Wheeler</p> <p>November 1996 – Fountainhead
Circle of Friends</p> <p>May 1997 – Roman Nose
Wende Ailyn, Peggy Johnson</p> <p>October 1997 – Lake Murray
Circle of Friends</p> <p>May 1998 – Red Rock
The Therapy Sisters</p> <p>October 1998 – Osage Hills
Emily Kaitz</p> <p>May 1999 – Roman Nose
Peggy Johnson, Kirsti</p> <p>October 1999 – Lake Murray
Marca Cassiev</p> <p>May 2000 – Roman Nose
Wende Ailyn, Wanda</p> <p>October 2000 – Osage Hills
Wishing Chair</p> <p>April 2001 – Roman Nose
Mel & Marci</p> <p>September 2001 – Roman Nose
Mary Reynolds & the So-Called So and So's</p> <p>May 2002 – Roman Nose
Nancy Scott, Mary Reynolds, Millie Mariow</p> <p>September 2002 – Roman Nose
Tamaras</p> <p>May 2003 – Roman Nose
IRIS</p> <p>September 2003 – Osage Hills
Peggy Johnson, Wende Ailyn</p> <p>May 2004 – Roman Nose
IRIS</p> <p>September 2004 – Robbers Cave
Nancy Scott</p> <p>May 2005 – Roman Nose
IRIS</p> |
|---|--|

Figure 2.4) This lists the numerous (but not all of the) performers to entertain the women of Herland at their semi-annual retreats. Many of these performers recorded under independent labels and performed at Women's Music festivals throughout the nation.

Herland Sister Resources, "TBT [Retreat Performer 1985-2005]," Facebook, Image, July 1, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Herland-Sister-Resources-138897648960>.

Metzger, Sondra. "Spotlight on Peggy Johnson," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 2, (February 1989): 10-11, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52175>;

HNC, "Peggy Johnson Hits the Road," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 10, (October 1991): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52207>;

HNC, "Peggy Johnson," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 5, (May 1997): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51994>.

Poet, writer, and neuroscientist, Dr. Thea Iberall, discussed her experience with Women's Music in an interview with the *I'm From Driftwood, LGBTQ Story Archive*. In speaking about what this music meant to her and fellow lesbians, Iberall recalled the importance of Chris Williamson and how her album "Changer and the Changed" stood as her community's point of introduction into the genre. Iberall stated emphatically "you [would] just listen to the music and your life has changed."⁴⁶ She went on to discuss how mentioning these artists in passing to others and finding out if someone knew of them served as a coded language and "gaydar" to help lesbians meet one another safely in public spaces.⁴⁷ The artists that served to connect a community across the nation, came to Oklahoma because of Herland's efforts.⁴⁸

Women's Music received a sparse amount of public attention from the media, like many marginalized people's art forms and movements outside of white cisgender, heteronormative males. Morris' research revealed that while men held the majority of positions in the music business at large, "almost no men reported on the women's music movement."⁴⁹ This typically came from an exclusionary perspective, yet sometimes the lack of coverage occasionally derived from a protective standpoint, rather an intentional exclusionary, as some fans and supporters who were in fact journalists avoided writing reviews to protect the location[s] ... from antigay

⁴⁶ Alex Berg and Phil aka Corrine, "Women's Music & the Lesbian Community: Featuring Dr. Thea Iberall," *I'm From Driftwood* (501c3—founded by Nathan Manske), January 14, 2021, 3:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8apBHDiIzxA>.

⁴⁷ Berg and Phil aka Corrine, "Women's Music & the Lesbian Community," January 14, 2021.

Davis, *The Queen's English*, 137.

"Gaydar—noun—The perceived ability to intuitively identify if a person is gay, bisexual, or queer."

⁴⁸ Berg and Phil aka Corrine, "Women's Music & the Lesbian Community," January 14, 2021; Thea Iberall, "About," *TheaIberall.com*, 2021, <https://www.theaiberall.com/about/>.

"Dr. Thea Iberall is an award-winning writer, storyteller, and scientist. She crosses boundaries between science and the arts, history and the present, and knowledge and emotion. The author of three scientific texts, ... she has a Master's Degree [sic] in Writing and ... a Ph.D. in Computational Neuroscience (UMass). As a scientist, Thea realized she was more interested in the stories behind the science than the data itself."

⁴⁹ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 41.

violence.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, the fear of being outed themselves, potential violence, and the hegemonic practices to dismiss the power of these musicians, limited the contemporary publicity. This created a small niche that restrained Women’s Music from becoming a considerable commercial success.

Despite the challenges faced due to the limited marketability, the music gained enough success that many organizations presented large festivals held to highlight the Women’s Music artists, including the National Women’s Music Festival and the more radical Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. Yet, while many independent companies believed in the importance of women’s music, their faith did not sustain the movement as the music industry shifted into more expensive to produce formats and away from small live venues in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As technology shifted how music reached the public, the commercially “non-viable” artist of Women’s Music quickly lost their foothold. As the years passed, political and social progress also allowed for an increase of public safe spaces and decreased the need for women-only spaces. Combining this with the aging artist and fanbase and their not creating a strong online presence, the thriving events for women’s music, especially women-only venues, faded. This furthered the decline of the Women’s Music market, which all but disappeared by the 2000s outside of a remnant of small festivals and the National Women’s Music Festival.⁵¹

Without significant commercial success, many performers produced their own records.⁵² This protest rooted music came from feminists, mainly lesbians, who did not find their stories being told through largely male-dominated music genres. This added a component of resistance, as women owned, operated, and produced their own music through their own labels that they created. In this context, women completely controlled their music at every point.⁵³ For example,

⁵⁰ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 41.

⁵¹ Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 171-175, 195-198.

⁵² McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁵³ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

Holly Near “opened her record company Redwood Records in 1972.”⁵⁴ Others depended upon individual producers, such as Herland’s founder and producer Barbara “Wahru” Cleveland, to produce and promote their music.⁵⁵ Cleveland also played drums at several gatherings and even with some of the more famous singers that came to Oklahoma City due to her arrangement of concerts. Most notably, she played to thousands in attendance at the National Women’s Music Festival numerous times, including the most recent festival in 2022.⁵⁶ What gave her personal pride, both at the retreats and throughout the life of Herland, came mostly from her work with Women Musicians.⁵⁷ Cleveland also helped to find, connect with, hire, and encourage another Herland Sister, Peggy Johnson in her music.

“Singer, songwriter, guitar player” all rolled into one, Peggy Johnson exuded a feisty spirit and captivated with an infectious smile.⁵⁸ Born and raised in Macon, Georgia, Johnson joined the Navy. Her service ended after two and a half years, when an investigation on her ship “to root out the lesbians” led to her discharge. She predetermined that if asked she would not lie, so she admitted her sexuality. Johnson’s girlfriend admitted her sexuality as well. After being

⁵⁴ Holly Near, *Outwards*, October 27, 2020.

⁵⁵ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020; Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 251; Eileen M. Hayes, *Songs in Black and Lavender: Race, Sexual Politics, and Women's Music*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 181.

⁵⁶ NWMF. “2022 Performers: Drum Chorus Directors, Wahru and Rani Biffle-Quimba;” NWMF. “2022 Performers: Sistah Ngoma;” Morris, *The Disappearing L*, 76.

Morris does not list clear attendance numbers for each festival but does state that the National Women’s and the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festivals were the largest, and the largest attendance number to festivals that she found overall were 7,000. It is an educated guess that Peggy played to at least 2,000 or more at the National, thus the use of “thousands.”

HNC, “Michigan Womyn's Music Festival,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 13, no. 4, (April 1995): 8, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51969>.

Beyond this, *The Voice* also offered similar numbers for the Michigan festival of 7,000 to 8,000 in attendance normally.

⁵⁷ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

⁵⁸ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

discharged, Johnson and her girlfriend drove to Oklahoma to visit the girl's family, intending to be on their way to New Orleans or San Francisco. Yet, they ended up staying.⁵⁹

Johnson's then-recent fascination with feminist books led her to believe feminist groups existed everywhere. So, when she saw a flyer at a bar in Oklahoma City, she went to see what Oklahoma City's feminist group offered. Johnson met Barbara Cleveland and Elaine Barton that first night, but her self-described alcoholism took her down a path of partying and bar hopping rather than immediately jumping into activism. After a couple years, the Herland group contacted the relatively "out" lesbian musician and Johnson started singing for Herland's events and continued to do so to this day. Johnson inspired the Sisters in their efforts at rallies, soothed and comforted souls at Herland 'coffeehouses,' amped up the fun at retreats, and toured national venues, which further connected Herland to the Women's Music movement. Johnson's involvement as a member, board member, organizer, occasional *The Voice* author, and singer made her a central part of the safe space music created for Herland Sisters.⁶⁰

Johnson and her music so affected her fellow Herland Sisters that one, Judy Palen, wrote about Peggy Johnson's inspiration and shared it in *The Voice*:

⁵⁹ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

⁶⁰ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

“Chosen Vision”

She keeps her eyes open to see
through illusions’ futility,
through youth’s sheltering fairy
tales,
through blurring of false freedom’s
wails.

She keeps her eyes open to see
Delayed gifts of sincerity,
Of taking time for touching souls,
Of trusting climb to higher goals.
She keeps her eyes open to see
Her watchers’ spontaneity
As they find urge to sing along
Is comfort of tomorrow’s song.⁶¹



Figure 2.5) Peggy Johnson, Herland Sister, Women’s Music musician, and an integral part of the musically formed safe space of Herland.

HNC, "Peggy Johnson and Wende Allen at Herland Fall Retreat," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 21, no. 8, (August 2003): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52075>.

Palen went on to call Johnson a “vital, invigorating source of courage and comfort” and expressed her great appreciation of Johnson giving “so much of herself so freely to perpetuate a healthy sense of identity and purpose for our community (within an often unthinking, unfeeling, dogmatic society).”⁶² Musicians, Johnson included, hold a special ability to soothe a weary soul and invigorate it to yet again hope, dream, and fight. Johnson, while very humble, served as radical opposition to the heteronormative music. She shared in an interview in *The Voice* that

I just sing songs the way they go for me. It's harder for me to sing the songs in a heterosexual context than it is to put up with anybody giving me a hard time because I sing them as a lesbian. To me, it's lying. It's harder to lie than to be prepared if anybody should be upset.⁶³

Because of this willingness to stand and be publicly out on stage, many of the Herland Sisters shared similar accounts to what Judy shared about Johnson and other Women’s Music artists as their music created “group unity, encouragement and pride ... [through] her supportive leadership ... [and] brave commitment...to continue creating and sharing her free gifts of spirit. ... she helps

⁶¹ Judy Palen, "Letters to the Editor: Dear Editor--'Chosen Vision,'" *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 6, (June 1986): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52209>.

⁶² Palen, “Letters to the Editor,” *The Voice*, June 1986, 2.

⁶³ Metzger, "Spotlight on Peggy Johnson," *The Voice*, February 1989, 10-11.

us all see.”⁶⁴ This adoration for Johnson offered a summary of how Women’s Music helped the Herland Sisters to continue their work and feel connected to one another and to the national lesbian community within Women’s Music.

These feelings echoed during the group interview. What began as a formal meeting quickly became a reunion of friends reminiscing about their glory days and the women shared their heart’s fondest memories. Here, Peggy Johnson sang a soulful blues rhythm, sharing her rendition of the spiritual made famous as a protest song during the 1960’s Civil Rights Movement, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.”⁶⁵ The beauty of the notes lingered. Tears filled the remaining women of Herland’s eyes at the intensity of passion behind the words after so many years later as they reminisced about their most passionate days of activism.⁶⁶ All of the Sisters there agreed that Johnson’s songs energized them at each rally she attended from the Oklahoma Capitol Building steps to Pride Marches, fundraisers, and a multitude of gatherings.

The anonymously written poem from a Herland Sister shared the depth in which these musicians touched the women in attendance at the concerts. The poetress introduced her poem by saying to say “she was inspirational’ doesn’t even begin to explain my appreciation. I was deeply moved in more ways than I can remember. ...

⁶⁴ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020;
Reaves interview, February 3, 2021;
Palen, "Letters to the Editor: Dear Editor--'Chosen Vision,'" *The Voice*, (June 1986): 2.

⁶⁵ Stephen Griffith, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around,” *Folk Song Index: Folk Song Index, History, Lyrics, Chords, Video, Audio, Sources, and more*, accessed March 1, 2020, <http://www.stephengriffith.com/folksongindex/aint-gonna-let-nobody-turn-me-around/>.

⁶⁶ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

She reached within
and touched the part
that fills the heart
with love

She bled for us
And as she shared
no scar was spared
the knife
she bled for us
A symphony of lifetimes pain
or surpassing shame of love
she bled for us ...
she bled for
us.⁶⁷

This vulnerability of the author as they describe one of Herland's first performers, Nancy Day's singing showed the extent of how the music moved them. This shared moment of intimacy that came from the music events truly bonded the attendees with the performers and created an atmosphere of love like no other, there in their safe space.

⁶⁷ Herland member, "Readers' Forum," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 4, no. 5, (May 1987): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52036>.

HERLAND CREATED SAFE SPACE RETREATS

Intertwined with the safe space that the music provided for the Herland Sisters, the semi-annual retreats offered many local, regional, and nationally recognized musicians as entertainment over the years.⁶⁸ Herland created a space, twice a year, much like the space of love and acceptance created at the Pride Parades, a space for the just the Sisters, a space of safety, and a space away from the oppression of the Bible Belt. These retreats also offered further sanctuaries of workshops, group counseling, and completely private spaces for the full freedom of expression of their bodies and sexuality.

The retreats, unlike their other outward activism, served the women of Herland internally. They served to create a queer resistance against the norms of the world, where the women fully controlled their space and completely escaped the expectations, social constructs, and even the gaze of the outside world. Each of the women interviewed spoke fondly of the retreats, especially the bonding, the comradery they formed, the making of lifelong friends, which served to strengthen their Collective at each retreat.⁶⁹ This bond grew through the other events in the year and refreshed every six months during this precious time for just their community of lesbian feminist activists. The women of Herland held to feminist ideology even during these fun occasions and took pride in holding all of the roles and refusing the need for men to occupy their space, not allowing even the State Park male workers past the very front space of the group campsite.⁷⁰

Inspired by the experience of Pat Reaves at a retreat for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at the Women's Project in Arkansas, which part of the Collective attended in

⁶⁸ Herland Sister Resources, "TBT [Retreat Performer 1985-2005]," Facebook, Image, July 1, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Herland-Sister-Resources-138897648960>.

⁶⁹ Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019; McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁷⁰ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

May of 1985, the newly formed Herland Collective decided to host their own.⁷¹ With a Sister on the board working for the Oklahoma State Parks Department, the planning went smoothly and by October of the same year, Herland hosted their first retreat.⁷² The retreat's success immediately led to the planning of the Spring Retreat and that began the semi-annual respite. As a member wrote in the following months newsletter, the retreat compared to "a trip 'over the rainbow' where women can relax and share visions, can indulge in a mini-society which we create for a few days, can receive nurturing support we don't always get from the major society."⁷³ This spirit of connection and wonder appeared repeatedly in interviews and in reflective pieces in *The Voice*, such as this one by Ashley Owens, who recalled that:

Never before have I felt the spirit of togetherness and unity until the Women's Spring Retreat. Being able to speak, look and touch freely gave a comfort and relaxation we are all deprived of daily. Listening to women talk about life and love—the way I feel it—gave me the sense of belonging. So often we feel isolated, suffocating our feelings and expressions to survive. ... [Here] we could express our views, morals and love without fear or hesitation. Sisterhood was soothing and exhilarating to our spirits. I feel we all gained strength plus courage to return to our suppressing world.⁷⁴

This safe space allowed for the women to laugh, commune, and revel in one another and proved a valuable part of their Collective that strengthened them emotionally to take on the world around them.

The Collective rented the group campgrounds available in different Oklahoma state parks to claim an entire area without interruptions of non-members. They offered a sliding-scale attendance fee to ensure every Sister, that wanted to, enjoyed the retreats regardless of their means. The group site always included a kitchen that served as the main building with rustic

⁷¹ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021;
HNC, "Arkansas Lesbian Retreat in May," *The Voice*, (April 1985): 1.

⁷² Reaves interview, February 3, 2021;
HNC, "Herland Fall Festival Takes to Woods," *The Voice*, (September 1985): 4.

⁷³ HNC, "Herland Retreat Remembered," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 1, no. 11, (November 1985): 8, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334431>.

⁷⁴ Owen Ashley, "Retreat Afternotes: Fresh Air," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 6, (June 1986): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52209>.

cabins surrounding it. If anyone from the outside world needed to speak to them, they were only allowed to enter that main building. The women prepared potluck meals, sharing food and responsibilities equitably. Herland then hired female entertainers, offered workshops, crafts, fun contests—such as the “Fem-est Pet,”—and games.⁷⁵ To allow for everyone to relax in the manner they needed, the Collective usually offered 12-step meetings and allowed Sisters to bring their own alcohol—not typical of Herland events.⁷⁶ Those who chose to, could even free themselves of all societal requirements, including their clothing if they chose.⁷⁷

As discussed previously, Herland held a “women-only” policy for the retreats, however, the women today realize how that presented as exclusionary and discussed specifically not being TERFS. As Pat Reaves explained in her interview “it’s the closest we’ve ever gotten to being a separatist organization.”⁷⁸ However, she went on to explain further,

everybody was pretty much under threat, all of the time,” from being fired or other social ostracization. [Beyond this] many women are survivors of harassment and violence. The goal of the retreat is to be as safe as possible, to give people a *retreat*. To come away from the kind of trauma and stress that’s a part of everyday life into a place that’s safe. No men at all. ... This space is ours. [It was] REALLY revolutionary ... We [were] isolated into this little space and we [were] making our own little world. And it only lasts for a couple of days. But for this space, this is what we make it, and this is how we make it.⁷⁹

This space further allowed for the nurturing and on some varying level for each Sister, a better understanding of a true feminist ideology. An ideology not focused on retribution and domination, rather one where the women saw themselves as whole, capable, and deserving on their own, without the social constructions that required their self-identification to rely upon their attachment and position to men.

⁷⁵ Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019; Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁷⁶ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

⁷⁷ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

⁷⁸ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

⁷⁹ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021; Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 255-256.

Despite the incredible components of the retreats providing safe space, revolutionary design outside of society, and further benefits offered by the retreats, the retreats also held consequences for members with male children and due to this, for Herland. The lived experience of Susan Bishop and her wife, Barbara Randolph, demonstrated this. They both held active roles in Herland, which led to real-world changes in large part due to Bishop's efforts. Yet these two vital members eventually separated from Herland. They remained friends with a chosen few, continued their activism through other organizations, and returned for Pride to help organize, but eventually chose to only participate on the day of the Pride Parade. This all stemmed from Randolph's son aging beyond the point where he could accompany them to the retreats. Bishop and Randolph understood of the need for safety and privacy, especially for those choosing to participate in the retreats' nudist escapades. However, to the couple, the exclusion of lesbian mothers derived from an exclusionary attitude of the 1980s lesbian culture as a whole. Bishop went as far as to describe the standpoint as a "kind of prejudice, ... that was so unnecessary. We're all women. We all face the same kinds of issues as we are developing into womanhood and into our later years."⁸⁰ This norm left Randolph (and by extension Bishop) and the majority of those lesbian-mothers unable to participate in many of their community's events and lifestyle, not just Herland's retreats, as well as feeling marginalized more than childless lesbians.⁸¹

Herland attempted to balance the exclusion of lesbian-mothers from the retreats by focusing support for them in other ways. Herland offered support to lesbian mothers through support groups, adoption classes, and supporting scholarships for children of queer parents, as well as its work with the Women's Resource Center.⁸² Repeatedly, pieces in *The Voice* showed

⁸⁰ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

⁸¹ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

⁸² Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 257; HNC, "Scholarship for Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 13, no. 4, (April 1995): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51969>; HNC, "Scholarship for Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 14, no. 3,

how Herland welcomed lesbian, non-lesbian women, and men of all sexualities and races alike to the bookstore, events, and all other trips taken. As this increased through the years, it reinforced the broadly inclusive ideology for the group. This retreat policy represented an issue seen throughout queer history: whether to protect those in a group in a way that led to exclusion or to remain open and hold inclusivity as a priority—a queer community desire for themselves with society at large. In the case of the Herland retreats, despite the negative ramifications, the overall sentiment about the retreats held mostly positive memories and improved the lives and community of the Sisters.

At the same time, that the need for the bookstore declined, the biannual retreats, also declined. Ginger McGovern described how the retreats “became less important because people were ‘out’ more.”⁸³ Again, people feeling free to publicly live as part of the queer community stood as a success of many years of activism for Herland and other queer activists. Yet this success shifted the societal norm and people more easily and openly met, which removed the need for private group gatherings such as when Herland first began the retreats, in the 1980s and 90s. This along with the increase in costs that reduced the offerings at the retreats and age keeping many from wanting to “rough-it” in a cabin reduced the number of attendees, which caused the retreats to become cost prohibitive.⁸⁴

The music events of Herland connected the group to the national Women’s Music movement through visiting singers and groups, members’ support of them and the music festivals, and members who participated as artists within the movements. The Herland semi-annual retreats offered the similar opportunities as those from other lesbian collectives across the

(March 1996): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51982>;
HNC, “Support and Socialization for Lesbian Moms,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 1, (January 2005): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52094>;
HNC, “Family Pride,” *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 11, (November 2005): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52105>.

⁸³ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁸⁴ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

nation in a unique location for thousands of women over the thirty-plus years. Through the community and gathering together for music events and retreats, the Herland Sisters created safe spaces that offered further opportunity for the women involved to enjoy themselves, connect to others, be entertained, and rejuvenate for their activism. This sort of designated space remained extremely rare outside of a few select bars within the Bible Belt state of Oklahoma. Within the safety of these spaces, the Sisters of Herland connected on much deeper levels and found the comradery needed to continue their community building and activist work.

CHAPTER IV:

HERLAND: VOICES OF WOMEN

Throughout Herland Sister Resources' existence, the group put a primary focus on communication, collectiveness, and information. From the beginning of Herland Bookstore, "for others to learn about the new store, Cleveland wrote a one-page newsletter that promoted the Women's Music and books that would be available in Herland Bookstore" and NOW, the largest and foremost influential national feminist organization, shared this in their newsletter.¹ The importance of the publications supported, created, and shared by Herland formed a historical foundation for the organization and built their significance as an archive for the future.

This chapter posits that one of the most important contributions from Herland came from its historic queer community newspaper, *The Voice*. The examination looks at the safe and clandestine method Herland provided for its members to receive national and international lesbian publications through the store without fear of the retribution if others saw such publications coming to their homes. Also, this chapter shows how Herland supported the voices of its member authors by offering publication of their original articles and creative pieces in *The Voice*, and by publicizing opportunities to write for other various professional, academic, or lesbian organizations. This chapter connects Herland directly to lesbian herstory as the organization

¹ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 249-250.

provided numerous opportunities for their members to use their own voices to tell, record, and provide documentation of their lived experience in and outside of Herland. Finally, this chapter places *The Voice* in context with the larger urban-coastal narrative that holds little space for Bible Belt queer community newspapers. Such an examination further expands the larger queer history narrative to include Oklahoma, its ties to the national queer community movements and illuminates how Herland's newspaper served as historically longer running than most.

The Voice's roots stemmed from the one-page flyers Cleveland first offered but its approaches and discussions of topics greatly benefitted from the journalistic experience of many of its members. Most of the original Herland Newsletter Committee (HNC) members held experience from producing *The Brazen Hussy Rag*, which came from "a collective of women, lesbian women, lesbian feminist, who decided to do a newspaper ... for several months. It contained ... a multitude of articles about what was going on in the community, [and] about things at large," as described by Jo Soske who wrote for both papers.² *The Brazen Hussy Rag* helped to organize the community and disseminated information about various activist events in its brief run of less than a year during 1982.³ *The Brazen Hussy Rag's* largest, most significant, activist action came in the form of a rally against Reaganomics at the Capitol. Unfortunately, this also stood as the last rally led by the short-lived newspaper organizational efforts.⁴ Soske recounted that "the first organizational meeting for that rally took place in my living room. ... It was a huge conglomerate of organizations. ... The second organizational meeting was held at the building that was to be La Salle de[s] Femme[s], that soon became the first Herland."⁵ The rally served as a lesson for their future activism in the most-likely last edition of *The Brazen Hussy Rag*. Soske wrote an article about "the difficulty of pulling together so many different groups to

² Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

³ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁴ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁵ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

work together on a common purpose [and] the lack of cohesion.”⁶ While the rally efforts held many difficulties, the possibilities of combining forces and having a place to organize multiple organizations excited many, which inspired the need and push to form La Salle des Femme[s].

Cleveland embedded this excitement and need for a central point for the organizations members to meet into the heart of Herland. To do this, Cleveland continued offering important information in print with a self-produced single page flyer almost immediately after *The Brazen Hussy Rag* ceased publication. This small flyer developed into *The Voice* as a bookstore, then the Collective’s newsletter.⁷ The queer community newspapers, like *The Voice*, served as the circulatory system for the readership and members’ activist actions and organizations. With the bookstore as the center point, or heart, the newspaper then carried out information and returned support that allowed their continuation to the center.

Within months of opening the bookstore, Cleveland solicited volunteers to help maintain a newsletter and this grew as the bookstore evolved into the community collective that served as a non-profit organization (NPO). As an NPO, the Collective’s board created supporting committees and gave each one different responsibilities. Of these committees, the HNC served as a voice of the consensus amongst the Collective. In order to disseminate Herland’s ideology and general information, the HNC self-published a monthly newsletter at the bookstore and mailed it to the Herland members, bookstore patrons, and other interested parties that signed up for the mailing list. To continue Herland’s ideology of inclusiveness, the HNC also left space for pieces from those not on the committee to voice their thoughts.⁸ The newsletter ran under different titles over the three plus decades of its existence. First it was known as the *herland newsletter*, then *Herland Sister resources: a publication of HSR Collective*, *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES*, and finally

⁶ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁷ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 248.

⁸ HNC, “Editorial Policy!,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 6, no. 8, (August 1989): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52182>.

interchanging between *The Herland Voice* and *Herland Voice* beginning in September 1989. The Sisters most commonly referred to it as *The Voice* from this point forward.⁹ The name itself speaks to the Sisters' intention of the newsletter, to give agency to the Collective and speak their truths. In 1987, the Collective agreed upon a mission statement, which evolved slightly overtime, although not drastically.

Herland is a non-profit corporation composed of a collective of wimmin - open to any womyn who wants (sic) to be a part of it - which works to maintain a feminist library and bookstore, sponsors workshops, retreats, concerts and other events for YOU.

Herland's reason for being is to provide a framework for a variety of projects for the support and enjoyment of the area wimmin's community. It is a place to learn and grow, to meet other wimmin, develop lasting friendships, receive support and nurture the positive self-image that societal attitudes sometimes make illusive to us. Herland exists to serve YOU.¹⁰

This statement summarized Herland's voice.

Ginger McGovern, who joined the HNC in 1986 and remained involved on the committee for most of the next thirty years, discussed the inner workings of *The Voice*.¹¹ She stated *The Voice* "was really important [its goal and intent was] to give all of the readers a broad picture of what was going on. Those were the times when a lot of changes were happening. There were a lot of struggles, a lot of activism, a lot of protests. People were fighting for their rights."¹²

⁹ *Herland Voice Newsletter Archive*, UCO Archives and Special Collections; HNC, *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, March 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>; HNC, *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)*, December 1984, 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334420>; HNC, *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 1, no. 9, (September 1985): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334429>; HNC, *The Herland Voice* 6, no. 8, (August 1989):1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52182>; HNC, *Herland Voice* 17, no. 4, (April 1999): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52017>; HNC, *The Herland Voice* 21, no. 12, (December 2003): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52079>; HNC, *Herland Voice* 23, no. 11, (November 2005): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52105>; HNC, *Herland Voice* 26, no. 12, (December 2008): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52140>. Throughout its publication, as the group evolved into a collective the name of the paper changed. No articles appear to explain the name changes.

¹⁰ HNC, "Herland Is ... ," *The Voice*, (October 1987): 12.

¹¹ HNC, "HSR Newsletter Gets New Editors," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 9, (September 1986): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51959>.

¹² McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

This summarized the theme of thirty-two years of *The Voice*—advocating for the rights of women, especially feminist lesbians, those in the queer community, children, and others in oppressed groups. The secondary theme of *The Voice* stood as a central source of information to sustain, support, and build the lesbian and queer community of Oklahoma. Finally, *The Voice* held the theme of education about human rights, lesbian culture, and the queer community, which aligned with Herland’s primary purpose for its bookstore.

The Voice served as an independent newspaper in its own right and aligned with those researched in Tracy Baim’s *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*. Baim looked at the “gay media ... both local and national” that others overlooked due to their focus on a marginalized community and often fell outside of normal researchers’ parameters.¹³ Baim specified that these papers, like *The Voice*, were almost always

based in cities, their focus ... primarily regional ... [and that] when printing and publishing technologies were more expensive, mimeograph was sometimes the only way to get the gay news out—so we wouldn’t call them ‘newspapers’ by today’s standard, but they fulfilled the role ... [with the use of] a wider definition of newspaper ... [taking] into account what was in the pages of publication, not just what it was printed on.¹⁴

McGovern shared how *The Voice*’s production compared to Baim’s assessment. The HNC “had to type out their articles on a typewriter, [and] literally cut and pasted” in order to put them into the format needed for the mimeograph machine.¹⁵ Not only did the HNC type their own original works and the articles and letters from others, but they also retyped paraphrased or edited summaries of articles from more liberal national news sources that concerned women, children, feminists, lesbians, and the queer community.¹⁶

¹³ Tracy Baim, Introduction to *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, ed. Tracy Baim, (Chicago: Prairie Avenue Productions and Windy City Media Group, 2012), 11.

¹⁴ Tracy Baim, Introduction to *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 11.

¹⁵ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021; Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

¹⁶ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021; Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

After collecting, cutting out, and pasting the articles onto pages, the editor and maybe another volunteer would mimeograph—and with later technologies, copy or print—the papers, sort, fold, stuff the brown envelopes without any identifiers, and address each one individually.¹⁷ The rough look of taped on articles and even hand-written edits improved by 1985 and 86, with Herland’s development of the means to typeset most of the articles directly onto the original pages.¹⁸ Since the publication relied on volunteers, donations, and limited ad revenue, Herland could not afford professional printing from an outside printer. When Cleveland began the newsletter in 1982, she provided most of the operational funding from her own personal paycheck and even once the Collective took over leadership of Herland in 1984, the bookstore often barely broke even or operated at a loss. With these other costs, even though the Herland members saw the newspaper as a priority, it required the cheapest publication methods possible.¹⁹ As they moved forward with the volunteer workforce and ad revenue grew to cover most of the printing supplies and Herland reported any monies received and how the Collective spent the funds, offering transparency to its supporters.²⁰ The Collective opted to continue the same methods and saved the Collective’s money for other needs during the thirty-two years of printing *The Voice*, even when it reached over 1,200 subscribers at its maximum distribution in the late 1980s.²¹

John D’Emilio, one of queer history’s forefathers, reinforces the importance of queer community newspapers and in support of Tracy Baim’s *Gay Press*, *Gay Power*, by writing the introduction to her anthology. D’Emilio spoke of the newspapers as being “labors of love and

¹⁷ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

¹⁸ *Herland Voice Newsletter Archive*, UCO Archives and Special Collections.

¹⁹ Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland, "From La Salle De[s] Femmes to Herland," *The Voice*, (March 2004): 1-4; HNC, "Newsletter Cost," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 4, (April 1985): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334424>.

²⁰ HNC, "This Space for Rent," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 8, (August 1985): 7, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334428>.

²¹ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

sacrifice [that] depended on volunteer labor and on contributions to stay afloat,”²² just as *The Voice* depended on Herland volunteers. D’Emilio also clarified that unlike traditional newspapers that provide their costs and even profit from ad revenues, few businesses risked “publicly identifying themselves because of fears of police harassment.”²³ On this point, *The Voice* proved the exception to the rule because several businesses—mainly those owned by members—donated enough funding in exchange for small ads in the newspaper for the majority of the publication’s run. The commercial sponsors consisted of female owned businesses ranging from counseling to attorneys to dentistry to massage. Many of those that appeared on the first ad page in the December 1984 issue, continued for several years as commercial sponsors.²⁴ Repeatedly, *The Voice* offered ad spaces for sale at minimal cost—beginning at ten dollars—giving back to business-owning members by safely broadcasting their queer-owned businesses to the entire community. Throughout its publication, sponsors supported *The Voice*.²⁵

The Voice’s long-running publication from 1984 to 2016 and outside sponsorship of a queer newspaper, especially a lesbian focused paper, stands as a rarity. Baim and D’Emilio note the short span of time that most of the queer newspapers were published. D’Emilio specifically looks at two from Chicago, one with a gay male orientation and one with a lesbian focus, respectively, *The Chicago Gay Crusader* (1973-76) and the *Lavender Woman* (1971-1976). He also discusses the reality that lesbian focused papers faced greater difficulties in finding and

²² John D’Emilio, “Foreword: The Leading Edge of Change: The LGBT Press in the 1970s,” foreword to *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, ed. Tracy Baim, (Chicago: Prairie Avenue Productions and Windy City Media Group, 2012), 9-10.

²³ D’Emilio, “Foreword,” to *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 9-10.

²⁴ HNC, [Ad page], *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)*, December 1984, 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334420>;
HNC, [Ad page], *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 4, no. 1, (February 1987): 9, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52003>.

²⁵ HNC, [Ad page], *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 4, (December 2016): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320409>.

keeping advertisers “because there were fewer lesbian bars and other businesses.”²⁶ Even with a larger queer community than Oklahoma City and more accepting cultures, most of the urban-coastal papers ceased to exist before ten years of publication, a reality which makes clear that *The Voice* and Herland stand exceptions, with historic and national significance.²⁷

Throughout the majority of its publication, *The Voice*, focused on Herland, issues that affected women, the queer community events and concerns, and ensured their readership remained informed. In the earliest edition, Herland shared their voice and beginning purposes by saying,

HERLAND sponsors and provides support services ... We work with other individuals and organizations to provide our community with cultural and educational programs. We will be happy to talk with you about your ideas and can assist you with development, contacts and publicity.

HERLAND relies on volunteer energy and we always need folks ...

HERLAND is a women's space, a place to make contact with the women ' s community.²⁸

Herland centered women and sharing that they could with the community. Mostly, *The Voice* served to counter the society surrounding them, as “living in a place like Oklahoma, it’s easy to feel silenced.”²⁹ *The Voice* served to give the women radical agency.

This spirit came through in the newsletter and the topics that continually appeared within *The Voice*. The topics that *The Voice* spanned anything that impacted women and children’s fundamental human rights across the globe, and social injustice. *The Voice* also served to help improve the lives of women by promoting workshops, classes, entertainment, and organizations offering support for their needs. The HNC further edified its readership by reaching beyond the biased mainstream media that generally failed to discuss anything related to homosexuality

²⁶ D’Emilio, “Foreword,” to *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 9-10.

²⁷ Baim, *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 104-107.

²⁸ HNC, “Herland...” *The Voice*, March 1984, 3.

²⁹ Pat Reaves, “Disarm Hate,” *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 3, (August 2016): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320408>.

during the 1980s and 1990s, and especially the slanted media found within the Bible Belt.³⁰ From the earliest dated issue in the archives, March 1984, *The Voice* included pieces discussing local events, presidential elections, state rape laws, book reviews, and “Black Heritage Month.”³¹ This wide variety of women and activism focused articles remained until the last issue in December 2016 with its pieces on the Standing Rock protest, UCO’s oral history project, and a queer youth organization—*The Voice* served as a full coverage newspaper.³² *The Voice* provided invaluable information as to the events that affected the women of Herland and their interest in advocating for marginalized groups.

The Sisters interviewed discussed *The Voice* as a form of outreach to the queer and feminist community across the state and beyond. They told several stories of readers in small towns with no other means to obtain the information that *The Voice* provided. Even if too far removed to physically attend from the events listed in *The Voice*, the readers still found community through the sharing of political and queer cultural pieces.³³ Many readers counted *The Voice* as their first queer community, where, even if closeted in their day-to-day lives, they could connect and enjoy a life lived out loud and proud in their minds.³⁴

The Voice only worked to serve this purpose because the HNC also held their readers’ identity in the utmost confidence and kept *The Voice*’s distribution list entirely private. In the prevailing oppressive political and societal environment of Oklahoma and many other areas that *The Voice* reached, those in the queer community faced job loss, family abandonment, removal of parental rights, and societal ostracizing for simply being themselves.³⁵ To protect their readership,

³⁰ Tracy Baim, *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 15, 38-51.

³¹ HNC, *The Voice*, March 1984, 1, 2, 6-8.

³² HNC, *The Voice*, December 2016, 1-5.

³³ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020;
Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

³⁴ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

³⁵ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 246.

Churchill pointed out that “the newsletter always came in paper bags in order to ensure subscribers’ privacy.”³⁶ If the newsletters returned to Herland due to a new address or other mailing issues, Herland ceased mailing them to that person until they received direct instructions from the receiver, a policy announced in January 1986’s issue of *The Voice*.³⁷ After consulting the person affected, the Sisters shared the reasoning behind this change in the next issue. In a call to Herland, one reader discussed a frightening incident in which a homophobic person discovered their issue of *The Voice* and assumed their reading of it equated to their being a lesbian. The homophobic person then called the reader and left a threatening message.³⁸ Herland already held the policy that “not even the members of the Collective know all the names on the list.”³⁹ However, after this incident in which “her and our civil rights have been violated,” the HNC members pledged to “document these violations and, when sufficiently armed and courageous, will possibly confront that ‘venerable institution,’ the U.S. Post Office,” to determine who shared the subscribers’ personal information.⁴⁰ While further issues continued and no resolution came about from the Postal Service, the Sisters reaffirmed and continually evolved the mailing policies to best protect their readership.⁴¹

The Voice offered the opportunity for their readership to submit their own articles, letters, and creative pieces to appear in *The Voice*. While the bulk of the articles published came from writers on the Newsletter Committee, most issues since February 1985 also included outside

³⁶ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 254.

³⁷ HNC, “Local News: *IMPORTANT*IMPORTANT*IMPORTANT*,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 1, (January 1986): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52069>.

³⁸ HNC, “Letters to the Editor: Dear Readers,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 2, no. 2, (February 1986): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52165>.

³⁹ HNC, “Letters to the Editor,” *The Voice*, February 1986, 2.

⁴⁰ HNC, “Letters to the Editor: Dear Readers,” *The Voice*, (February 1986): 2.

⁴¹ HNC, “Change of Address,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 11, (November 1987): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52103>.

authors at least in the editorial section.⁴² This allowed for a more balanced and inclusive point-of-view, a goal upheld in all of Herland's efforts. One key example of this inclusion and centering of the women's voices came from including poetry about lesbian and feminist life experiences. These developed into an annual poetry edition that occurred several times through the years of *The Voice's* publication. Here, women revealed their innermost thoughts to an accepting audience, a rare opportunity especially for lesbians.⁴³ Here the heart of Herland and *The Voice* appear most beautifully expressed in pieces such as C. Johnson's "Hopes and Dreams" verse:

I dream of peace and justice for all. Each of us has the same wants and needs.
I hope we can do away with labels, look underneath the wealth or poverty, realize
it doesn't matter what color someone is, what church they go to, who they voted
for or even who they love. These things do not define that individual.
When we can do all of that we will have realized there is no us and them. just us.

Just us. Just us for all.

Justice for all.

Mohandas K Gandhi once said, " You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

So, this woman is working on her hopes and dreams one day at a time.
I hope others will see that I am and share my dreams with me.⁴⁴

The original pieces seen in the paper most often came from the educated and experienced activist women of Herland. Pieces such as tax help from member accountants, discussions of legal decisions from member attorneys, and counseling advice from licensed therapists. One such piece came from Jo Soske, "Justice—Thomas: Contradictory Terms" that lamented the appointment of Supreme Court Justice and sexual harasser, Clarence Thomas in November 1991 exemplified this high level of writing. This along with Soske's recommendations as a therapist (holding a Master of Education, Master of Human Resources, and Certified Addiction Counselor Graduate Certificate) in the adjoining article, "Dealing with Feelings," helped the community of

⁴² HNC, "Letters Column Added," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 3, (February 1985): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334422>.

⁴³ See Appendix 4 for samples of the women's poetry, from the first poem to the last poetry issue.

⁴⁴ C. Johnson, "Hopes and Dreams," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 4, (April 2005): 11. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52097>.

women that *The Voice* connected deal with their own feelings of betrayal, erasure, and grief at the appointment of a sexually harassing, female-victimizing man to the U.S. Supreme Court.⁴⁵

Soske's concern for women in general showed through her intelligent analysis what this meant for women.⁴⁶ She discussed the ramifications for all women by the Senate dismissing Anita Hill, a woman "of the greatest integrity, [with] impeccable corroborating witnesses, ... willing to jeopardize [her] career, ... [and] face national humiliation."⁴⁷ Through these actions, the powers that be told women "we want you to remain silent and we will use all of the tools of our system against you."⁴⁸ Such pieces with educated analysis and centering on the experience of women appeared throughout *The Voice*.

Other important articles displayed the history of Oklahoma City's Pride, as each year, discussions of events to come appeared in various spring issues and the July issues shared wonderful photos and accounts of the Sisters' and Oklahoma City's queer community's revelries. Beginning in 1988, the first Oklahoma City's Pride Parade spanned two-and-one-half pages of *The Voice*'s seven-page issue, including an article highlighting the organizations and VIPs participating, Herland's mobile bookstore, and the excitement of being featured on the evening television news.⁴⁹ The follow-up coverage of Pride and Herland's part in it ended in the 2000s as the issues became more sporadic. Yet until the final year, *The Voice* promoted Pride and the adjoining Herland picnic/concert, which showed their continued support of the Parade.

⁴⁵ Jo Soske, "Dealing with Feelings," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 11, (November 1991): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52208>.

⁴⁶ Jo Soske, "Justice—Thomas: Contradictory Terms," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 11, (November 1991): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52208>.

⁴⁷ Soske, "Justice—Thomas," *The Voice*, November 1991, 1.

⁴⁸ Soske, "Justice—Thomas," *The Voice*, November 1991, 1.

⁴⁹ HNC and Sondra Metzger, "Pride Brings Oklahoma Gays Out of the Closet" and "Rightfully Proud in '88," Photos, *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 7, (July 1988): 1, 2, 4, and 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52168>.

See Appendix 5 for the photo spread of the first Oklahoma City Pride Parade.

Similarly to the papers examined in *Gay Press*, *Gay Power*, *The Voice* offered information about meetings and events to come and reports on previous events, as well as gatherings for sub-groups of the queer community.⁵⁰ D’Emilio stated that in doing so, queer papers, “played a vital role in giving these new efforts visibility and making it possible for their potential constituencies to coalesce into something organizationally solid.”⁵¹ This especially applied to the formation of “Pride Month activities, ... [which] were previewed in the months before, as a way of recruiting participants, and described in great detail afterward.”⁵² This trend held true in *The Voice*, especially the Pride parade and the Herland parade picnic, which the Sisters hosted annually from the tenth parade until the present.

The Voice also served to benefit the lending library through publicizing the books available and soliciting support for it. Herland member, Jo Soske, utilized the paper to build the library by writing literary reviews of feminist scholars’ works in exchange for copies of their books. Some of the authors came from lesser-known self-supported publishers, and some such as Susan Copleman, provided significant academic works as “this country’s leading expert on the 19th century women’s short stories.”⁵³ Even when the Collective directly purchased the library’s books, the members often reviewed the incoming additions.⁵⁴ These reviews informed *The Voice*’s readership of the expanding offerings and their content, which in turn increased the interest and support of the library.

⁵⁰ D’Emilio, “Foreword,” to *Gay Press*, *Gay Power*, 9-10.

⁵¹ D’Emilio, “Foreword,” to *Gay Press*, *Gay Power*, 9-10.

⁵² D’Emilio, “Foreword,” to *Gay Press*, *Gay Power*, 9-10.

⁵³ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

Copleman collated and edited “collections of women’s short stories topically,” covering “battery ... women’s friendships ... motherhood ... lesbians,” and even one on Christmas.

⁵⁴ Carol Sternhell and HNC, “Reviews,” *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, May 1984, 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334414>.

The Voice stands as one of the longest running papers seen in existence and thus marks Herland as historically significant nationally. Herland's newspaper, *The Voice* serves to help create a significant component of the Oklahoma queer community organizing and building through applying D'Emilio's connection of queer community newspapers to the growth of the queer community itself and their activism. Herland's distribution of notifications from other organizations and larger national movements seeking participants provides the evidence of such community building. D'Emilio outlines further support of this position by saying:

Many things changed in the 1970s. LGBT organizations multiplied faster than anyone could count. In larger cities, police raids of gay and lesbian bars became much less common. Annual Pride marches brought thousands—sometimes tens of thousands—of queer folks out into the open together. Many people stopped leading double lives and came out to their friends and family. And, for the first time, thriving print media appeared, produced by and for the community. ...

[Since] Mainstream journalism had been one of the bastions of homophobia. ...

A *good* argument can be made that these community-based newspapers played a decisive role in building LGBT organizations and communities and in fostering political mobilization.

With a hostile mainstream media, and before the technological revolution that has brought us the Internet, this infant press provided the information and reported the news that was nowhere else to be found. ... The community press was, really, the only resource other than word of mouth for letting people know that a new world, a new outlook, and a new community were in formation.⁵⁵

This argument provides the reasoning to recognize Herland and *The Voice* for connecting people to one another and to the queer community, which became especially important if where they lived excluded access to a physical community.⁵⁶ This examination of *The Voice* further layers the national discussion with Bible Belt regional inclusion.

⁵⁵ D'Emilio, "Foreword," to *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 9-10.

⁵⁶ HNC, "Herland..." *The Voice*, March 1984, 3;
HNC, [Publication Information], *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 3, (February 1985): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334422>;
HNC, [Publication information], *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 13, no. 11, (November 1995): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51977>;
HNC, "Herland Sister Resources," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 19, no. 4, (April 2001): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52043>;
HNC, "Your Message Here," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 2, (February 2005): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52095>;

Due to timing, access, and funding, but still wanting to include as many queer community newspapers as possible, Baim's *Gay Press, Gay Power* holds no mention of *The Voice*. This chapter layers the conversation of the importance of the queer community papers by including it and provided the ways in which *The Voice* met the criteria of a central hub of communication. Baim utilizes online archives to select the papers researched for *Gay Press, Gay Power* (2012). *The Herland Voice* digital archive begins in 2017, five years beyond the publication of *Gay Press, Gay Power*. Even Herland's transition to digital copies of *The Voice* through the organization's website or email does not occur until after Baim's research ended in 2012. In fact, *The Voice's* digital presence still requires further development since the digital archive contains issues that Dr. Churchill recently acquired a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to address.⁵⁷ The primary focus of this part of the grant funding focuses on better scanning of the originals and several additional categories of tagging, which will allow for greater ease for future researchers. Until this point, dates of publication served as the only labeling of the archive. *The Voice Archives* offer just one example of the hundreds of queer community newspapers that digitized their archives in the last ten years and does not include those still remaining in boxes waiting for organizations to find funding and time to scan each page into an accessible format. This shows that relying solely on digitization leaves large gaps in the research, analysis, and

HNC, "Your Help Is Needed Now!," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 29, no. 4, (December 2011): 4.

<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320412>:

HNC, "Thank You for Your Support!," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 30, no. 2, (April 2012): 4,

<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52157>.

The first newsletter of the archive states "we inform over 250 women." The circulation numbers began to appear consistently in issues of *The Voice* beginning in the February 1985 issue that listed 398 readers as its circulation until the November 1995, which showed 1,200. These numbers decrease to 1,000, which is shown in the April 2001 issue and remained until February 2005. Seen in December 2011, the number of readers decreased to 800, but Herland also shifted to electronic newsletters during this time and this number may not include the digital readers as the piece discussed the mailing cost. The circulation number of 800 readers appears again in April 2012 but then no further numbers appear in the remaining seventeen issues (as the production slowed to three or four issues per year in 2011).

⁵⁷ Kyla Carter, "UCO Receives \$360,029 Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities," *UCO—University of Central Oklahoma—University Communications*, December 8, 2021,

https://www3.uco.edu/press/prdetail.asp?NewsID=29794&fbclid=IwAR2g1gNPYgaOLGRC_EBEoQSbd-9bNOpPEgnBzhIWFvk8Ok69Zk9ElxEznH8#.

published discussion of queer newspapers and zines. Other than the digitization, *The Voice* falls directly in line with Baim's work and its conclusion of the importance of these newspapers, what they meant to the queer community, and the radical bottom-up change they promoted and facilitated.

Gay Press, Gay Power offers an overview of various newspapers that offered a lifeline to the queer community and building a world of freedom and acceptance. The majority of research for this book looks at the typical urban-coastal narrative prevalent in queer history due to the availability of sources by focusing primarily on Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, and New York. Generally, the book only mentions other less urban locations in the index or appendix, including one mention of the *Oklahoma Gayly* and its contact information. By layering the conversation of *Gay Press, Gay Power* with *The Voice*, the similarities in the issues of concern for urban and rural queer communities and between the urban-coastal locations and Oklahoma, begin to appear. *The Voice* includes national stories from other sources and often editorials that further connect the larger locations' papers directly to Oklahoma. *The Voice* also counters the urban-coastal narrative with other more local-to-Oklahoma concerns including Native American rights, continuation of bigoted laws already overturned in more urban areas, and unique local events.

Beyond publication in *The Voice* and by using *The Voice*'s broad dissemination of information, Herland also served the queer community through other written texts and provided the community the opportunity to hear the voices of their contemporaries. As Pat Reaves noted, "You couldn't buy those books, those things... You didn't have a local place to go... You certainly didn't have Amazon or all those resources."⁵⁸ Herland offered a connection to other lesbian feminists outside of their organization through "important magazines and periodicals" not otherwise available to most in the Bible Belt "by being involved in Herland," as Herland Sister,

⁵⁸ Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019.

Ginger McGovern shared.⁵⁹ Specifically, McGovern spoke of being exposed to the magazine “*Lesbian Connection*. It had articles and things from all over the world. Another important thing it had was in the back, there were lists of women in every state and sometimes in multiple cities in different states.”⁶⁰ McGovern shared how these lists offered “critically important” means to safely “make contact with other likeminded women” when traveling, moving, or when lesbians came to Oklahoma, it brought people to the safety of Herland.⁶¹ Overall, whether those involved with Herland went to another location or whether others found Herland when they arrived in Oklahoma, McGovern stated the invaluable importance of the publications and information came from the “very validating type of experience to feel like I wasn’t completely alone. It was very helpful in letting go of shame that goes along with being gay. You know at that time, being raised in Oklahoma, having to deal with Bible Belt influence and all of that. That was really important to me to come into contact with all of that.”⁶² Herland provided validation to these women and subsequently to their readers by offering them different avenues of connection to others with similar thoughts, desires, and lives, no matter how remote physically.

Herland not only offered *Lesbian Connection*, but a host of other magazines, newspapers, periodicals, and journals. Beginning in 1984 a list of new books arriving at the bookstore appeared at the back of *The Voice*. By 1985 this list occasionally included the subscriptions Herland maintained or that members gifted to the organization, which then allowed members to obtain and read without concerns of these arriving at their home. Furthermore, Herland offered a continual list of other periodicals available but not yet subscribed to by the Collective. These offerings held great importance since, in this era before online availability, magazines and newspapers held the most up-to-date information. Herland maintained a subscription to the

⁵⁹ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁶⁰ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁶¹ McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

⁶² McGovern interview, November 19, 2021.

Oklahoma Gayly, the longstanding queer community newspaper published in Oklahoma City, to provide connection to the immediate and physically close community for its members. Herland also focused on offering key periodicals for the areas of interest to the group, such as *I Know You Know: Lesbian Views and News*, a national, lesbian monthly magazine, *Bridges*, a quarterly magazine for professional and career-oriented gay women, and *Forte*, a quarterly about women's music.⁶³ By providing these from other organizations and areas, Herland allowed for their members to educate themselves, remain informed, expand their own worldviews, and connect to the queer community and lesbian feminists across the nation.

Herland also utilized *The Voice* to provide opportunities to the women of Herland and its readership to express their voice through other avenues throughout the organization's existence. These avenues included "Calls for Materials" for academic journal articles, other periodicals discussing life experiences of women, and requests for creative pieces from other organizations⁶⁴ Several members held degrees and substantial lived experience that qualified them to write in academic journals and other non-fiction periodicals. In addition to the calls for written pieces, *The Voice* included calls for others' research that needed the input of lesbian women and feminist, for those that wanted their voice heard without authoring their own work.⁶⁵ *The Voice* also included listings for the women to share their talents and potentially write in larger forums as freelance journalists or contributing authors.⁶⁶ While *The Voice* offered the women of Herland the opportunity to publicly publish their works, these additional listings granted them routes to reach other audiences and potentially greater acclaim.

⁶³ HNC, "From the Mailbox," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 3, (March 1985): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334423>.

⁶⁴ HNC, "Call for Materials," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, July 1984, 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334415>.

⁶⁵ HNC, "Lesbians Subject of Research," *The Voice*, April 1984, 2.

⁶⁶ HNC, "Hot Wire Premiere Issue,," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, October 1984, 7, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334418>;
HNC, "Writing by Women About Their Mothers," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, October 1984, 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334418>.

Another key component of how Herland promoted the voices of its members came from their work to record the lived experiences of their members as lesbian women, feminist, and Herland Sisters. From the time the Collective began to form, prior to Cleveland's leaving, *The Voice* recognized herstory as a feminist inclusion in the larger historical narrative of, for, and about women, specifically lesbians.⁶⁷ In seeing their existence and activism as important to this narrative, Herland utilized *The Voice* as a register on important anniversaries, to maintain a continual timeline of the organization.⁶⁸ Beyond their own sources, Herland announced and collaborated with partners to form multiple projects that connected its members with the opportunity to record their personal oral history. Seen in several issues of *The Voice*, Herland posted contact information for those wanting to individually work with the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) and in 1994 hosted an event with LHA's Coordinator Amy Beth to present their work.⁶⁹ In 2000, Herland coordinated their own herstories recordings with LHA.⁷⁰ The recordings with LHA occurred in Oklahoma and then LHA archived these and copies of *The Voice* physically in New York, yet without digital access.⁷¹ Then in 2005, Herland combined efforts with several other organizations to try to form the Metro OKC Gay and Lesbian Community Center that would include a history project and archive, unfortunately these plans never came to

⁶⁷ HNC, Herstory book listings, *herland newsletter (The Voice)* April 1984, 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334413>; McConnell, Vicki P. "Dear Sisters of Herland." *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 3, (March 1989): 7. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52177>.

⁶⁸ HNC, "Voices of the Past," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 8, (August 1992): 4-6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52217>.

⁶⁹ HNC, "Lesbian Herstory," *The Voice*, (January 1994): 2.

⁷⁰ HNC, "In Memory of the Voices We Have Lost," *The Voice*, (March 1994): 1; HNC, "A History for Herland," *The Voice*, (August 2000): 1.

⁷¹ *Herland Voice—Lesbian Herstory Archive* (LHA). "Holdings." LHA Periodicals—Record View. Hosted by *Airtable*, November 29, 2015, <https://airtable.com/shriLhTtfrOvA4lQ/tbl7QXJH3hdWqBI4h/viwlo3MovLftGifcu/recNyzPaRHh3bq2vQ>

fruition.⁷² Again, in 2011, Herland worked with the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Library to create “Oklahoma Voices Oral History Collection,” which recorded several members of the Oklahoma queer community’s lived experiences.⁷³ During the group interview, the Sisters discussed recording these interviews, but believed the interviewer lost them and that no copies existed; however, very recently, one of the Sisters found the archive that included up to five Herland members, yet without recognizing the organization. Next, Herland worked with UCO’s Center to create video-taped oral history interviews that produced a student documentary capstone project.⁷⁴ Finally, the members allowed further video recordings for the oral history interviews connected to this thesis. Throughout all of this, Herland recognized the importance of leaving their stories for future generations to know this piece of queer history.

Another way in which Herland proved documenting their voices as herstory came in the form of a self-published small book, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003: Celebrating 20 Years*. In this book they again utilized their collective voice to declare Herland’s vision:

*Herland Sister Resources was born from an idea and an ideal. The womyn of Herland dreamed of a world where womyn’s values, ethics, and perspectives would lead to more justice and less suffering. A world that was safe for all, including womyn and children. A world that recognized and valued difference.*⁷⁵

For these reasons and many more, not just the activism that sprang from this space, Herland Bookstore itself stood as a radical opposition to the place it existed within, Oklahoma City, the state of Oklahoma, the US government and hegemonic patriarchal society, and the oppressive and

⁷² HNC, "New Metro OKC Gay and Lesbian Community Center Forming," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 23, no. 2, (February 2005): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52095>.

⁷³ Archive, “LGBT,” *Metropolitan Library System*, https://www.metrolibrary.org/archive?combine=lgbt&field_archive_year_value%5Bmin%5D=&field_archive_year_value%5Bmax%5D=&field_archive_tags_target_id=&field_archive_neighborhood_target_id=&sort_by=field_archive_year_value&sort_order=DESC.

⁷⁴ Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019; HNC, "UCO Herland Oral History Project," *The Voice*, (December 2016): 4.

⁷⁵ Herland Sisters, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003*, 3.

abusive Westernized, colonialized, Christianized heteronormative-male-led world at large. As the book stated

They stood up defiantly against oppression in any form—sexism, racism, heterosexism, misogyny, or homophobia. They protested...and challenged traditional definitions of womyn...They felt empowered to change the system. ... The womyn of Herland were ready to redefine and create their own world. Womyn's books and music gave a voice to the new and sometimes radical ideas ... Herland was, and is, a place that embodied all of these ideals and nurtured the womyn who held them.⁷⁶

Through this book, the members documented the development of Herland and its main priorities, key developments of the organization such as the purchasing, moving, and paying off of their own building from the first rented location, and the major events for the group.

Herland utilized its power as a collective to speak. Through *The Voice* and other mediums, they spoke out against the wrongs they saw in the society around them, they found connections to other queer communities in other periodicals and magazines, supported the publications of its members' individual voices, and documented queer herstory to provide missing pieces within the larger national story. The central hub provided by *The Voice*, especially, helped to grow the community, solidified Herland and its readerships' connections to other individuals and organizations, and helped to empower the queer community's activism. This work utilized all of these to then layer Herland's existence and Oklahoma's queer community into the larger academic conversation. Most importantly all of the ways in which Herland voiced the various areas of women's lives and work provided further foundation and roots for the queer community in the Bible Belt.

⁷⁶ Herland Sisters, *Herland Sister Resources 1983-2003*, 3.

CHAPTER V:

HERLAND: CHANGES FOR THE QUEER COMMUNITY

“Acting on the belief that we have the right to be has changed us—as individuals, communities, and society. With courage, we have claimed our power,”¹ Pat Reaves proclaimed this when speaking of the Herland Sisters and their work in *The Voice* in April 1993. However, this applied to Herland’s work throughout their existence. Herland Sister Resources created change through multiple avenues, especially during the 1980s and 1990s. Through their activism, volunteerism, Pride participation, and support for legal battles, Herland created legacies of change that improved the lives of the queer community of Oklahoma City, the state of Oklahoma, and the nation.

This chapter discusses Herland’s activism that created change for the queer community at large. Key areas discussed include “Take Back the Night” rallies, supporting outside organizations, the YWCA Women’s Shelter: Rape Crisis Center and battered women’s shelter, statewide rape advocacy, the Oklahoma City Pride Parade, and the Herland Legal Defense Fund. Each of these provides further layering of the historical conversation and includes Oklahoma and Herland as part of national movements and results. This chapter shows how Herland’s efforts created change from the bottom up and expanded well beyond those directly involved as

¹ Pat Reaves, “Talking About a Revolution,” *The Herland Voice*, May 1993, Vol 10, No 5, p 2, https://library4.uco.edu/archives/digital_collections/herland/pdf/HerlandVoice-1993-05-v10-no05_ocr.pdf

members or readers of *The Voice*. Also, this chapter examines the other vehicles that used the physical energy and presence of the Herland Sisters that left a tangible legacy in the queer community outside of their organization. In looking at these legacies, this thesis again connects Herland to the larger national conversation through the direct setting of legal precedents that without Herland's support may not exist, at least not in the time in which they occurred. Furthermore, Herland's co-sponsoring of the first Oklahoma City Pride Parade in 1988 and all since then helps to align Oklahoma with the national movement of Pride celebrations. Finally, Herland's continued support of other queer organizations provides an ongoing legacy of community building.

This power to effect change outside of Herland, first came through in their activism, but also in their events, Oklahoma City's Pride parade, and even in Oklahoma state law. Herland served the Sisters as a community hub and, just as importantly, an activism hub for multiple interests and in support of various organizations that also supported women, children, and the queer community's rights. As Reaves shared in her oral history interview for this thesis, "We were involved in everything, pretty much."²

Some of the organizations and causes Herland contributed to through activism included "Take Back the Night," NOW, Global Day of Action, water protectors at Standing Rock, battered women's awareness, Pro-Choice rallies, the Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, efforts against Oklahoma's anti-lesbian and gay marriage laws, Black Lives Matter, Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, and many other queer, lesbian, Black, Indigenous, and/or feminist causes.³ This

² Reaves interview, February 3, 2021.

³ Bonewell, "Black Lives Matter," *The Voice*, (August 2016): 4-5;
Reaves interview, February 3, 2021;
HNC, "14th International AIDS Candlelight Memorial & Mobilization," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 2, (February 1997): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51990>;
HNC, "Valentine's Day Marriage Protest," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 2, (February 1997): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51990>;
HNC, "Standing Rock Showdown—#NODAPL," *The Voice*, (December 2016): 1-3;
HNC, "World AIDS Day," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 4, (December 2016): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320409>.

activism took the traditional form of protests, but also in forms of fundraising, volunteering, and organizing.

“Take Back the Night is the earliest worldwide effort to combat sexual violence and violence.”⁴ This organization began with and continued to focus its activism through actions such as marches, protests, and rallies, all with the purpose of increasing awareness of rape, sexual abuse, and countering victim blaming. The very first rally across the nation took place in Florida in the 1970s.⁵ The rallies first came to Oklahoma through the efforts of Mary Long in 1981.⁶ Serving as the emcee for the first rally in Oklahoma, Barbara Cleveland helped women in the Norman area find their agency and to connect with fellow survivors of sexual violence.⁷ As Herland developed into the Collective, they too took part in and supported the organization of these annual rallies.⁸ At every rally, survivors shared stories and symbolically reclaimed their power by marching at night. In her interview, Peggy Johnson shared the experience of the first rally she attended. There she felt a connection to the other victims and a relief from the guilt she felt about her own experiences with sexual abuse and violence. She spoke of the rally as a “eye-opening, [when] I heard the other women’s stories.”⁹ In this moment, she realized the responsibility and guilt lay solely with the attackers, not the victims, nor her. She explained that during this rally she began to understand and accept that her only role in the abuse she endured

⁴ Take Back the Night (TBTN) Foundation, “History of TBTN,” *Take Back the Night*, 2022, <https://takebackthenight.org/history/>;

⁵ Take Back the Night (TBTN) Foundation, “History of TBTN,” *Take Back the Night*, 2022, <https://takebackthenight.org/history/>.

⁶ Ellen Knickmeyer, (edited by HNC), "Violence Against Women Protested," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, November 1984, 1-2. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334419>.

⁷ Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

⁸ Churchill, “Barbara ‘Wahru’ Cleveland,” *This Land is Herland*, 254

⁹ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

came from being in the wrong place at the wrong time and none of her actions or choices contributed nor could her actions or choices have prevented the acts of such despicable men.¹⁰

Other women repeated similar stories to Johnson's through interviews, personal accounts at the rallies, and stories shared from victims in *The Voice* at varying times.¹¹ This extended the work of the rallies throughout Herland by giving agency to and hearing the victims in their time and own comfort. This important work changed the lives of those in attendance and planted a seed of no longer accepting victim blaming as a norm for those in attendance and the members of Herland extended this awareness, education, and advocacy throughout the year. Eventually, the 'Take Back the Night' rallies grew out of the original host location and moved to Oklahoma City as more and more women (and men) attended.¹² These continued on past Cleveland's retirement from Herland and even to the present day—held by Dr. Lindsey Churchill and her students at the University of Central Oklahoma.¹³ These rallies connected Herland and Oklahoma to an international foundation formed with the purpose of “seek[ing] to educate and change policies and cultural norms to create cultures of respect in every space and place around the world.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

¹¹ HNC, "OKC Women to 'Take Back the Night,'" *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 5, (May 1985): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334425>; Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020; Laura Choate, "I Owe My Life to a Gun," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 4, (April 1992): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52214>; R.B., "Letter to the Editor," [C. Sango rape], *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 4, (April 1985): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334424>; "Unadoring Fan," "Open Letter to a Rapist," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 8, no. 7, (July 1991): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52204>.

¹² Cleveland interview, October 16, 2020.

¹³ Lindsay Thomas, "UCO to Observe Sexual Assault Awareness Month Throughout April," *UCO—University of Central Oklahoma—University Communications*, April 1, 2015; UCO Women's Research Center & BLTGQ+ Student Center, "Take Back the Night/Slut Walk," Facebook, event, April 28, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/thecenteratuco>, [https://www.facebook.com/events/1148494288957063/?acontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A\[%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D\]%7D](https://www.facebook.com/events/1148494288957063/?acontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A[%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D]%7D). "Join us for a march and rally to combat sexual assault. There will be an open mic for survivors to tell their stories. Following the open mic there will be a march around campus. This slut walk will encourage people to wear whatever they feel comfortable in in order to combat rape culture/slut shaming."

¹⁴ TBTN Foundation, "History of TBTN," 2022.

Herland's organization of these rallies supported sexual assault survivors and educated others to create a lasting shift in the attendees, the women of Herland, and the perception of rape and rape victims among connected organizations.

By the early 1990s, Herland's direct activism grew to multiple events per month. In 1992, Herland participated in the Million Woman March in Washington D.C. that focused on a renewed push for legislated equality for women and the protection of their rights.¹⁵ This focus continued that year as members of Herland called for a renewal of efforts to ratify the ERA.¹⁶ This renewal of one of the primary causes, the ERA, that brought many of the original members of La Salle Des Femmes, which later became Herland, together drew great interest from the women ten years later. Sadly, the efforts still failed on the state and national levels. This topic continued to draw support from Herland until at least 2003 and provided the underlying motivation in much of their activism for women's rights.¹⁷

In the May 1993 issue of *The Voice*, Pat Reaves wrote an article discussing the overall activism of Herland as part of a nationwide revolution propelling change for the queer community.¹⁸ Reaves focused on the particular actions of April 1993, which exemplified Herland's heavy participation in activist protest, their desire to support their community—especially women, and their strength to act on their beliefs and claim their power.¹⁹ That month alone, Herland members participated in The March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi

¹⁵ HNC, "On the Road to Washington: The Rolling Retreat," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 5, (May 1992): 1 and 4-5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52215>;

Brenda Sandburg, "A Million Women March," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 5, (May 1992): 1 and 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52215>.

¹⁶ HNC, "Countdown Campaign," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 6, (June 1992): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52216>;

MOC, "Working for the ERA," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 6, (June 1992): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52216>.

¹⁷ HNC, "Are You Included in the U.S. Constitution?..... Not If You Are a Woman!," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 21, no. 3, (March 2003): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52068>.

¹⁸ Pat Reaves, "Talking About a Revolution," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, (May 1993): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52227>.

¹⁹ Pat Reaves, "Talking About a Revolution," *The Voice*, (May 1993): 2.

Equal Rights and Liberation, the parallel event at the Oklahoma state capitol, and demonstrations at the Lower Deck Bar in Norman, Oklahoma.

Over 1 million people attended the March on Washington, D.C., along with some of the Herland Sisters in order to “demand passage of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights bill and an end to discrimination” along with five other demands for legislation and support of these rights and the lives of those in the queer community.²⁰ Those who could not go to D.C. also protested on the same day at the Capitol in Oklahoma City. While federal and state governments failed to comply with the demands of the primary organizers, The Task Force, the march and state rallies raised public awareness and those involved, including Herland Sisters, feel that this enormous demonstration greatly moved social justice for the queer community forward by showing the dedication, political capital, and clout of the community.

SNAPSHOT MEMORIES FROM THE OK CONTINGENT:



Figure 4.1) One of the unnamed individuals from Oklahoma, who attended the March in Washington D.C.

“HNC, “Memories of the March,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, 1993: 5.



Peggy Johnson



Photo by Pat Colognesi

Figure 4.2) Left—Herland Sister and interviewee, Peggy Johnson speaking and singing at the “Rally Oklahoma” demonstration.

Figure 4.3) Right—A crowd shot of the Oklahoma City simultaneous demonstration. The song held special meaning as those in DC and hundreds of other cities hosting concurrent demonstrations sang it at the same time. Both bottom photos shot by Sister Pat Colognesi.

Both) Patricia “Pat” Colognesi, “Rally Oklahoma,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, (May 1993): 4. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52227>.

²⁰ Deborah Moncrief Bell, “Reflections on the 1993 March on Washington,” edited by StoryCorps, *National LGBTQ Task Force*, April 25, 2013, <https://www.thetaskforce.org/reflections-on-the-1993-march-on-washington/>.

Later that same month, Simply Equal of Norman and KBS organized a “Dyke In” at the Lower Deck Bar, along with 2 more days of picket lines and the Sisters went to show their support.²¹ The Lower Deck Bar became the focus of the queer community’s activism due to blatant prejudice and posted signs of segregation when the bar owner advertised a “Ladies Night” and in yet posted a sign that stated “No Dykes.” When confronted about the inappropriateness of the separation of female-identifying people based upon their gendered construct presentation and assumed sexual identity, the bar owner, a woman herself, only further spewed bigoted, hate-filled, and unapologetic rhetoric of wanting only straight females who would entice men to buy more alcohol in hopes of plying the women for sex.²² The organizers also filed complaints with the City of Norman, which caused the bar to face forced inclusion but the fight and negative publicity caused the bar to close. This also added the conversation amongst the city council that eventually led to more inclusive policies and ordinances in Norman for the queer community.²³ The activism created real change on a citywide basis.

²¹ HNC, “Dyke-In at the Lower Deck,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, (May 1993): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52227>;

Davis, *The Queen’s English*, 101.

“Dyke—*noun*—A lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman. A masculine, [and/or] aggressive lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman. . . . It may still have negative connotations for some people. . . . [T]raditionally meaning butch lesbian, dates back to as early as the 1920s. It originated as a slur directed toward masculine lesbians but has since been reappropriated by many in the lesbian community as an empowering descriptor for queer women or gender nonconforming people who are typically attracted to women.”

²² Helen Miller, “Discrimination Against Lesbians by the Lower Deck,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, (May 1993): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52227>.

²³ Helen Miller, “Discrimination Against Lesbians by the Lower Deck,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, (May 1993): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52227>;

Robert Medley, “Controversial Bar Closes,” *The Oklahoman*, September 3, 1993,

<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/1993/09/03/controversial-bar-closes/62449429007/>;

Robert Medley, “Reopening of Bar Readied,” *The Oklahoman*, September 10, 1993,

<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/1993/09/10/reopening-of-bar-readied/62448830007/>;

Laura Eastes, “Human Rights Commission Scores for LGBT Equality in Norman, But Questions Rise in OKC,” *Oklahoma Gazette*, December 30, 2015, <https://www.okgazette.com/oklahoma/human-rights-commission-scores-for-lgbt-equality-in-norman-but-questions-rise-in-okc/Content?oid=2960480>;

Kayla Branch, “Norman Includes LGBTQ Community in Non-discrimination Protections,” *The Oklahoman*, September 1, 2019, [https://www.oklahoman.com/article/5639922/norman-extends-non-discrimination-protections-specifically-to-lgbtq-community#:~:text=At%20its%20Tuesday%20meeting%2C%20the,employment%20or%20public%20accommodation%20discrimination](https://www.oklahoman.com/article/5639922/norman-extends-non-discrimination-protections-specifically-to-lgbtq-community#:~:text=At%20its%20Tuesday%20meeting%2C%20the,employment%20or%20public%20accommodation%20discrimination;);

During that revolutionary April, Rev. John Nichols, who served as the keynote speaker at the Oklahoma Rally, summarized why the activists, including Herland, gathered that day by saying “Our rights are ours because we live, because we are human beings.”²⁴ These basic and simple rights stood as the heart of all the protests, actions, and movements that the Herland Sisters supported. These rights of all human beings, regardless of gender, sexuality, or race, formed Herland’s main focus in their efforts not just in that moment but in their past and future as well. Herland members’ participation in national movements such as the March On Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (October 1987), The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s National Mobilization Rally in Washington (August 1988), and NOW’s March for Women’s Equality and Lives (April 1993) provided key examples of their dedication to this focus.²⁵ Further state level examples included the Sisters joining in demonstrations for Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1989, Black Lives Matters in 2016, and the Women’s March in January 2017.²⁶ The women of Herland dedicated their time and energy into supporting movements that sought to improve the existence of and protect the rights of women, children, the queer community, and people marginalized by their race.

City of Norman, OK, “LGBTQ+,” *City of Norman, OK: Building an Inclusive Community*, 2022, <https://www.normanok.gov/your-government/diversity-and-equity/lgbtq>;
Norman, OK, “Chapter 7—Civil Rights,” *Norman, Oklahoma—Code of Ordinances*, March 18, 2022, https://library.municode.com/ok/norman/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_CH7CIRI.

²⁴ HNC, “Rally Oklahoma,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 5, (May 1993): 4. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52227>.

²⁵ HNC, “Eye Witness Account,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 11, (November 1987): 2-3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52103>;
HNC, “Civil Rights March Should Include Gay People,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 7, (July 1988): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52168>;
HNC, “March for Women’s Equality/Women’s Lives,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 3, (March 1989): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52177>.

²⁶ Mary Reynolds, “Martin Luther King Day March,” *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 3, (March 1989): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52177>;
Bonewell, “Black Lives Matter,” *The Voice*, (August 2016): 4-5;
Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019.

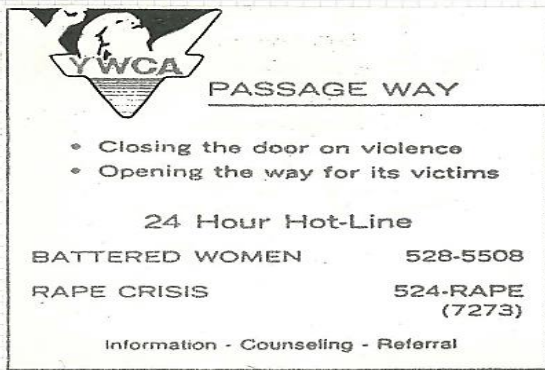


Figure 4.4) The first digitally archived newsletter from March 1984 includes the ad to the left for the YWCA Women’s and Rape Crisis Center. This came from Herland’s desire to support the Center, not as a paid advertisement.

HNC, "YWCA Passage Way," *herland newsletter (The Voice)* March 1984, 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334412>.

The women of Herland took direct action in their activism for change through volunteerism as well. One early example of this hands-on, physical support came from their activities that intertwined with the workings of the YWCA’s Women’s Resource Center (the Women’s Center). Herland member, Susan Bishop, who worked with the Women’s Center for nearly five years, felt the Women’s Center’s advocacy for victims of rape held a great importance. Through Bishop’s work at the center, she met fellow women’s advocates who worked in other crisis centers, Pat Reaves and Margaret Cox. Reaves worked with battered women and Cox with low-income women. Through getting to know one another and through others in the community, they all became important parts of Herland. Here, they each found support of their own lives’ work from the organization. For instance, the Sisters helped in Susan’s work by volunteering and teaching classes for women at the Center on a multitude of subjects from assertiveness training and conflict management to basic auto mechanics, to keep women from being stranded and at the mercy of others.²⁷ The Sisters also aided in supporting the work of Reaves and Cox, through awareness articles in *The Voice*, lectures, volunteering, and supply gathering.²⁸

Even when politics threatened Bishop’s work, the Herland Collective supported her work directly because it benefited women and their rights. For a time, Bishop hosted a small club for

²⁷ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020; HNC, "May Calendar of Events," *herland newsletter (The Voice)*, May 1984, 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334414>.

²⁸ Reaves interview, February 5, 2021.

feminist women at the YWCA outside of standard operating hours, but with permission; however, Bishop kept the participants' sexualities confidential. The YWCA closed the Women's Center momentarily upon discovering group gatherings of lesbians for poetry readings occurred there. In hopes of continuing the very necessary work of rape advocacy and aiding women and children in need, rather than rally against the YWCA (Y), the women of Herland continued their support, let go of the poetry group, moved the lesbian gatherings to Herland or other queer community spaces. However, the Y required Susan to also leave the Women's Center, for the same reason, as the Y considered all lesbianism not "family friendly." While drastically reduced, Herland continued to give some support to the Women's Center throughout their existence.²⁹

With the support of Herland and its members as volunteers, Bishop continued the rape advocacy work began at the Women's Center and Rape Crisis Center. She and other volunteers from Herland utilized their own resources to continue offering a rape crisis phone line that connected to their own home landlines in Oklahoma City. Upon receiving a call, the volunteer advocates aided the victims in the process of reporting and/or seeking help.³⁰ Eventually, this program developed into multiple Rape Crisis Centers across the state. Bishop's work also resulted in programs to train law enforcement in how to work with rape victims, and later, hospital workers, churches, and other community groups.³¹ Further changes stemmed from this work in Oklahoma law. Bishop advocated for and worked with the Oklahoma legislators to ensure that rape which occurred within the confines of marriage finally became against the law in part in

²⁹ HNC, "Saint Sybil," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 20, no. 2, (February 2002): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52054>; HNC, "YWCA Rape Crisis Center," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 22, no. 12, (December 2004): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52093>.

³⁰ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

³¹ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

1984 and amended further in 1993.³² Herland supported her efforts through fundraising, raising awareness, and volunteerism in all of this.

Throughout Herland's existence, the members often utilized volunteerism as activism for many other organizations and individuals like their work with rape advocacy. Churchill discussed Herland's volunteerism through housing volunteer counselors for therapy, groups sessions, and mental health awareness. Due to the limited availability of counseling for the queer community, Herland's support of these services served as a revolutionary act of feminism created by the rarity of such services in Oklahoma and the Bible Belt outside of Christian centered offerings.³³ Churchill went onto discuss the Sisters volunteering to support other organizations, including those focused on serving Black and Indigenous people, such as supporting ally churches' "workshops for adoption for nontraditional families. ... [and] a conference with Langston University titled 'Sisters: Voices of a Different Color.'³⁴ By supporting others' work, Herland's activism stretched well beyond their members and direct interests supporting and providing intersectional change through these other groups.



OKC's second Annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade (1989)

Figure 4.5) By just the second year, 1989, the Oklahoma City Pride Parade more than doubled in participation. This event, which Herland contributed to the funding for continuously, brought the entire queer community together each year to this day, 34 years later.

HNC, "Herland Community Picnic," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 7, (July 1997): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52001>.

³² State of Oklahoma, "21 O.S. § 1111(A) & (B)," *Oklahoma State Statutes Title 21: Crimes and Punishments*, PDF, 330, <https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/os21.pdf>; HNC, "Spousal Rape Law Passes OK Senate," *The Voice*, March 1984, 2.

³³ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 254-255.

³⁴ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 254-255

The volunteerism of the Sisters also included helping to organize, fundraise, and participate in the Oklahoma City Pride Parade, since the very first parade in 1988.³⁵ This parade, as described by one of the organizers, “unfastened the buckle on the Bible Belt.”³⁶ Many of the Herland women interviewed discussed the parades, what they meant to them personally, and for the queer community more broadly, especially in the Bible Belt environment. Soske spoke of the first parade, and how lesbians wore pink triangles covering their faces that simply said “This one represents a teacher” (or other profession) to conceal their identity, due to the danger posed to their livelihood in a state where people living “out” justified their termination.³⁷ Herland set up a booth after the first and second Pride Parades to offer books for sell, as well as providing clown makeup before the parade for those who wanted to participate but remain anonymous during the second year.³⁸ Herland began their annual Pride Picnic during the tenth parade in 1997 and its great success inspired a tradition that continued annually except for the years of the Covid-19 pandemic.³⁹ All of these contributions and more helped to support the important work of celebrating Pride.

Figure 4.6) This shows member interviewee, Ginger McGovern and Sally at the first Herland Pride Picnic.

HNC, "Herland Community Picnic," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 7, (July 1997): 1,



³⁵ Lori Honeycutt (2018 OKC Pride President), “OKC Pride Celebrates Its History and More,” *The Gayly*, May 6, 2018, <https://www.gayly.com/okc-pride-celebrates-its-history-and-more>.”

³⁶ Darlene Burgess quoted by HNC, "Pride Brings Oklahoma Gays Out of the Closet," *The Voice*, (July 1988): 1.

³⁷ Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

³⁸ HNC, "A Matter of Pride," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 6, (June 1989): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52180>.

³⁹ HNC, "Community Pride Picnic at HSR," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 6, (June 1997):1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51995>;

Herland Sister Resources, “Pride Picnic Inside (with option for Outside)” [June 11, 2022], *Facebook*. Event. May 23, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/Herland-Sister-Resources-138897648960>. <https://www.facebook.com/events/375534817873474?ref=newsfeed>.



HERLAND COMMUNITY PICNIC

Over 100 people attended the Herland Community Picnic held on Saturday evening before the Pride Parade. The entertainment, hosted by comedian Jeri James, featured many of the best musical entertainers in our community. Thanks to Donna D, The Banned, Wanda, Donna W, Peggy Johnson, Cutchla, Wendie Allen, and John Barbee for donating your considerable talents to make the evening a great success. Everyone had a great time and Herland raised about \$200 for our general operating expenses.

While the picnic was Herland's first community-wide Pride Week event, it won't be the last. Plans are already underway for next year's community picnic. □

Figure 4.7) Pictures and caption featured in *The Voice* from the first Herland Pride Picnic show the enjoyment of the festivities that raised money for Herland and added another layer to their members' Pride experience.

HNC, "Herland Community Picnic," *The Herland Voice* (*The Voice*) 15, no. 7, (July 1997): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52001>.

By the fifth year of the OKC Pride Parade, 1993, the festivities grew to encompass an entire week, the route began to double that year for twice the space and to allow the walkers to see one another, and Herland expanded its efforts to support the parade by hosting a May Day/Gay Day/Play Day, organized by Susan Bishop and her wife, Barbara Randolph (both of whom also served on the Parade planning committee).⁴⁰ The festivities, organized by Herland and sponsored by Pride Network Incorporated, not only provided part of the Parade cost, it also created another tradition for the entire community: to extend their celebration of their lives and love to another day a month earlier. The delight of the May Day fun came through in Bishop's interview as she exclaimed "people come from all over Oklahoma ... I mean it was really fabulous!"⁴¹ The coming together of the queer community furthered their internal connections with one another and the external awareness of a group of people still marginalized.

More than the excitement felt at the May Day celebration's, Bishop's exuberance flowed out as she described the incredible feeling created by the 1993 Parade itself and what it meant to

⁴⁰ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020; HNC, "May Day Fun," *The Herland Voice* (*The Voice*) 10, no. 4, (April 1993): 2. <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52226>.

⁴¹ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020.

her. She described the Parade as “MASSIVE!” covering three to four lane roads, upon making the U-turn, and then topping the hill to march back into the gayborhood.⁴² Bishop shared how this ever-growing event made her feel:

Here I am, amongst all of my people, this is my culture. I had no idea that there were that many queers in Oklahoma ... because we're such a Red State. We're such a repressive state. We're such a 'Christian' state and I don't use that in a kind way because it's more Old Testament than New Testament. ... So, to see all these people. ... you're ready to dance to the finish line! ... That was a big high! Those were great days!”⁴³

The remarkable celebration brought joy that lasted a lifetime for Bishop.

That same year, Herland member Peggy Johnson, spoke at the Pride Rally. In it she shared her story of accepting her discharge from the Navy based on her sexuality and her work to oppose the ban on gays in the military. She spoke of how her activism took her to places of discussion with those outside of the queer community and their allies, trying to “to educate the ignorant and close-minded that lesbians and gays are people who have a right to be. ... those lost in a small world of hatred and hypocrisy. ... those who would see us dead, impoverished, and institutionalized.”⁴⁴ Instead of speaking to the prejudicial people that day though, Johnson chose to speak to her community members, her chosen “family of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites and heterosexual” allies.⁴⁵ She went on to urge them to not let that day of Pride be a solitary, isolated event, rather to live out loud and proud every day and advocate for themselves beyond the fear. She pleaded for them to no longer be silent, participate in self-hatred or “racism and sexism [that] have the same elements as homophobia and cannot be tolerated.”⁴⁶

⁴² HNC, "Pride '93," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 6, (June 1993): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52228>.

⁴³ Bishop interview, November 3, 2020; HNC, “A Family of Pride,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 7, (July 1993): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52229>.

⁴⁴ Johnson, “A Family of Pride: Excerpts from Peggy Johnson's Pride Rally Speech,” edited by the HNC, *The Voice*, (July 1993): 1 and 6.

⁴⁵ Johnson, “A Family of Pride,” *The Voice*, (July 1993): 1 and 6.

⁴⁶ Johnson, “A Family of Pride,” *The Voice*, (July 1993): 1 and 6.

Johnson admonished the crowd to support one another as they came out and lived proudly and stand up against the “hatemongers.” Most importantly, she exalted them by saying, “Today is our day. This parade is our parade. This is our day to shine, proud to live, proud to love, proud to be. ... We are out in the light of this day. ... This is our day. This is our year. This is our lifetime. ... Grasp it now. We are history in the making. We must not let the time pass us by.”⁴⁷ This day, this speech, encapsulated what Pride meant to Johnson, her chosen family of the Herland collective, and the queer community.

Herland and Oklahoma City’s iteration of Pride celebrated the Stonewall Riots of 1969 and imitated the Pride marches that evolved into celebratory parades every year after in increasing locations. *The Voice* offered an incredible explanation of the historical significance from historian Vivien Ng, specifically written for the women of Herland. Ng explained that “‘Before Stonewall’ and ‘After Stonewall’—these are markers in history that, for lesbians and gays, define precisely when we as a people become politicized. ‘Lesbian’ and ‘gay’ are no longer labels for ‘lifestyles.’ They are political identities. After Stonewall, ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ mean more than merely ‘homosexual.’”⁴⁸ The politics of homosexuality came in large part from the riots at the Stonewall Inn and the many activist movements since in which the queer community sought the full acceptance and equality of their lives, loves, and existence. The same activism that Herland took part in and celebrated during Pride. This celebration began and continued in Oklahoma City due in large part to the support, fundraising, and volunteering of the women of Herland.

Beyond the incredible OKC Pride Parade, an enormous legacy for the state’s entire queer community, the most important change for the queer community at large came from the formation and work of the Herland Legal Defense Fund (HLDF). Begun in 1992 to first support

⁴⁷ Johnson, “A Family of Pride,” *The Voice*, (July 1993): 1 and 6.

⁴⁸ Ng, “The Meaning of Stonewall,” *The Voice*, (June 1993): 1 and 6.

mother Donna “Doni” Fox in a bitter custody battle, the HLDF provided the financial means for challenging and in some cases, such as *Fox v. Fox*, changing legal precedents in the state and nation. The HLDF continued beyond the victory in the Fox case to also support other lesbian mothers including the work of Herland member Peggy Johnson, who served as the appellate attorney for lesbian mothers fighting for custody in more than one case.⁴⁹ These future cases came about, in part, as a result of hope created from the success of the first HLDF supported case, *Fox v. Fox*.

The Fox case presented as a perfect opportunity to reveal the entrenched inequalities of Oklahoma law. The mother, by all accounts from family, friends, the children’s school, and investigators, held no fault other than her sexuality. Other cases went unfavorably for parents within the queer community, especially lesbians, but those generally contained extenuating circumstances that justified the removal of custody outside of their sexuality.⁵⁰ Divorced in 1988, with a joint custody motion denied in 1989, in 1992 the father of the children filed for full custody based solely upon the children’s mother’s sexuality, despite already knowing of her live-in girlfriend and their providing a safe home for well-over two years.⁵¹ He only filed for a change of custody to block Fox and her partner’s move out-of-state.⁵² Despite the innocence of Doni Fox, the conservative lower courts continued to rule in favor of the father.⁵³ With the help of the

⁴⁹ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020; HNC, “Custody Ruling,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 16, no. 2, (March 1998): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52005>.

⁵⁰ Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

⁵¹ *Fox v. Fox*, 904 P.2d 66, 66 OBJ 2411, OK 87, Case Number: 79676, 83590, (Supreme Court of Oklahoma Decided: July 19, 1995), <https://law.justia.com/cases/oklahoma/supreme-court/1995/4201-1.html>.

⁵² HNC, “Support Needed for Custody Battle,” *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 4, (April 1992): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52214>.

⁵³ *Fox v. Fox*, Supreme Court of Oklahoma Decided: July 19, 1995.

“The District Court of Cleveland County, the Honorable Donald E. Powers, presiding, found the mother to be unfit and ordered custody of the parties’ two minor children changed to the father. Mother appealed. Finding no evidence tending to prove appellant to be an unfit mother, the Court of Appeals affirmed the change in custody under the authority of *M.J.P. v. J.G.P.*, 640 P.2d 966 (Okla. 1982). Certiorari was

HLDF Doni Fox filed an appeal and, in the end, the case rested in the hands of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Fortune smiled on that courtroom because Chief Justice Alma Wilson presided over the case, rather than another judge. Unknown to the public at that time, Justice Wilson's daughter was a lesbian and the judge's love for and acceptance of her daughter shifted her prior conservative standpoint to a more liberal one, rarely seen in relationship to the queer community from the judicial system in the Bible Belt or even nationally at that point in time. Long before sitting on the bench for the trial, Wilson saw those in the queer community equal with heterosexuals. Her decision indicated her belief that no matter their sexual identity, they still held the innate capacity to love and care for their children.⁵⁴ Justice Wilson expressed her formidable stance in declaring that "We find neither an allegation that the mother is unfit nor any relevant evidence which establishes the unfitness of the mother as a custodial parent. The trial court's finding that the mother is unfit is wholly without evidentiary support and clearly erroneous."⁵⁵ Beyond the evaluation of Doni Fox, this case established an important precedence, that of a required nexus.⁵⁶

This established a higher-court precedence to protect parents' rights throughout the queer community.⁵⁷ The importance of this case went well beyond this couple. As the follow-up article in *The Voice* stated:

granted. During the pendency of this appeal, the mother sought modification of custody in the District Court of Cleveland County. The Honorable William C. Hetherington, presiding, sustained the father's demurrer to the evidence. Mother sought review in a second appeal, cause No. 83,590, which is considered with this appeal."

⁵⁴ Herland group interview, October 1, 2020.

⁵⁵ *Fox v. Fox*, Supreme Court of Oklahoma Decided: July 19, 1995.

⁵⁶ Doni Fox, interview as part of the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Library System's *Oklahoma Voices Oral History Collection*, May 25, 2011, <https://www.metrolibrary.org/archives/audio/2020/01/oral-history-doni-fox>.

⁵⁷ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 257; Nancy J. Nesser, Attorney, "Justice Alma Wilson," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 17, no. 8 [sic], (September 1999): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52022>;

For millions of gay and lesbian parents and potential parents, the threat of losing their children in custody battles with heterosexual ex-partners is painfully real. In most cases, fear, lack of financial resources, and lack of legal precedent force the parents to either give up the children, give up the partner, or bargain away their personal rights to avoid losses in lengthy court cases. But there is a local lesbian couple who is fighting back, and they need our immediate help and financial support.⁵⁸

From the beginning of the efforts, the Collective knew this case held the potential to change the lives of parents throughout the queer community.

The advocacy and activism of the Herland Collective played a vital role in this case making it to the Oklahoma Supreme Court and Doni Fox retaining custody of her children. Over the three years from the initial filing in the District Court in Cleveland County to the ruling by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, Herland raised \$13,000 through the HLDF Committee efforts specifically for Fox.⁵⁹ Fox and her attorney provided updates to Herland, but the Collective remained hands-off beyond this in order to empower Fox to determine her legal needs on her own.⁶⁰ The HLDRF Committee worked tirelessly on a variety of fundraising events, from having members save pennies to sending Mother's Day cards for donations to hosting dinners and dances to creating and selling a cookbook, *Family Cookin'*.⁶¹ When the Oklahoma Supreme Court

Katja M. Eichinger-Swainston, "Fox v. Fox: Redefining the Best Interest of the Child Standard for Lesbian Mothers and Their Families," *Tulsa Law Review*, 32, no. 1, (Fall 1996): 66-71, <https://digitalcommons.law.utulsa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2066&context=tlr>.

⁵⁸ HNC, "Support Needed for Custody Battle," *The Voice*, (April 1992): 1.

⁵⁹ Churchill, "Barbara 'Wahru' Cleveland," *This Land is Herland*, 257; Margaret Cox, "A Pat on the Back," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 13, no. 9, (September 1995): 1-2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51975>.

⁶⁰ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021; HNC, "Custody Update," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 5, (May 1992): 6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52215>; HNC, "Defense Fund Update," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 10, (October 1992): 8, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52219>; HNC, "Herland Legal Defense Fund Guidelines," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 10, no. 6, (June 1993): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52228>.

⁶¹ Reaves interview, February 3, 2021; HNC, "Family Cookin'," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 12, (December 1992): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52222>.

Introduced here, Herland created and produced the *Family Cookin'* cookbook that they either directly sold as a fundraiser or used as a basis for cooking events through the early 2000s to raise money for the Herland

handed down their decision in Fox's favor, all of Herland celebrated with her and hosted a large party.⁶²

Herland's participation to raise funds over a period of three years made the monumental changes that sprang from the *Fox v. Fox* ruling possible. So much so that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) recognized and awarded their efforts in 1997.⁶³ The success of *Fox v. Fox* inspired Herland to continue raising legal defense funds and support other mothers in their custody battles.⁶⁴ Herland's continued dedication to aiding lesbians in need of a defense due to prejudiced events based on their sexuality, further proved and fortified this precedent. The women of Herland realized just how much of a difference a small group of women with a passion for justice and equality could make. Even after nearly thirty years, the women at the group interview beamed with pride knowing they made Oklahoma safer for the members of their community to love who they chose and to have families with those people.

Through activism, volunteerism, organizing and fundraising, Herland left a remarkable legacy outside of their own organization. They created real-world change legally and in providing

Legal Defense fund. December 1992, Vol 9, No 11, p 1.... November 1994, p 2/Also December 1994, p 1. HNC, "Appeal Filed in Custody Case," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 6, (June 1992): 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52216>;
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HNC, "Herland Sisters Resources, Inc. Financial Statement (1/1/02 to 12/31/02)," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 21, no. 2, (February 2003): 3, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52067>.
Further fundraising efforts for the Legal Defense fund appear over thirty times beginning in June 1992's issue of *The Voice* to the financial statement seen in the April 2002 issue, but no further mentions or accountings appeared after this.

⁶² Soske interview, February 5, 2021.

⁶³ HNC, "Herland Receives ACLU Human Rights Award," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 11, (November 1997): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51999>.

⁶⁴ Margy Dillion, "Struggle for Rights," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 15, no. 8, (August 1997): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/51996>;
HNC, "HLDF Up and Running," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 18, no. 12, (December 2000): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52039>;
HNC, "Herland Legal Defense Fund Professional Referral Register," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 19, no. 3, (March 2001): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52042>;
HNC, "Herland Sister Resources: The Legal Defense Fund," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 19, no. 4, (April 2001): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52043>.

significant support of the first Oklahoma Pride Parade, which offered inspiration and guidance for several other cities to follow their example.⁶⁵ While Herland offered historical significance to its members, this chapter shows the far-reaching effects created throughout the queer community in the state and nation.

Figure 4.8) Herland participated in the first Tulsa Pride Parade in 1999 to further support the entirety of the Oklahoma queer community. Seen here is a part of the Herland contingent in that parade. Herland member,

"Celebrating Pride in Oklahoma," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 17, no. 7, (July 1999): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52020>.



⁶⁵ MOC, "Celebrating Pride in Oklahoma," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 17, no. 7, (July 1999): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52020>.

CHAPTER VI:

CONCLUSION—THE IMPORTANCE OF HERLAND: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Herland ... May she be a beacon to those who have yet to discover the sense of community and the sense of place found only in a group of women dedicated not to personal or material gain but rather to maintaining that place to be, that space to unfold into the women that we could be--ourselves.¹

Peggy Johnson's description of how she saw Herland eloquently described its intangible importance in an article in *The Voice*, which honored the tenth anniversary of forming the organization. A safe space for lesbian feminist to be themselves inside of the walls, in the safe spaces they created, with their voices, and in their places of activism. Through Herland these women created change on every level from personal to national moving forward progressive changes that allowed for protection of human rights and equality.

This thesis examines the ways in which Herland paralleled national queer and feminist activism through the creation of a feminist bookstore, support of women's music, creation of women's retreats, publishing of a queer community newspaper along with other avenues for lesbian women's voices to be heard, collaborating with national organizations, promoting Pride, and funding legal battles for change. This thesis connects Herland to the larger queer history conversation and specifically herstory by interweaving Herland's herstory into the queer historiography that held gaps of rural and Bible Belt locations outside of the urban-coastal

¹ Johnson, "My Life with Herland," *The Voice*, (August 1992): 2.

normative. Oklahoma and the women of Herland offer valuable extensions that broaden the geographical scope and socio-cultural scope of the existing works. The chapters of this thesis layer academic works looking at specific activism movements by including Oklahoma as a contributor to national change for the queer community and not merely an outlying location that the national movements acted upon.

This thesis connects Herland's work to the national feminist bookstore movement examined by Kirsten Hogan, Saralyn Chesnut, and Amanda Gable. Hogan's book, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability*, describes the overall reasoning and experience for all of the approximate one hundred fifty stores considered as part of the movement, which includes Herland. While the book details the specific stores' motivations and effects on the lesbians and feminist that supported these stores, it also draws broader arguments about the feminist bookstores in general. Here, this thesis and Herland layers the conversation to consider the same drives and outcomes occurred in the geographically and socio-culturally isolated location of Oklahoma City within the Bible Belt. Furthermore, Saralyn Chestnut's work on the Atlanta Charis feminist bookstore connects to Herland in that both served as safe spaces for edification and community outside of the limited bar environment for the queer community during that time. Herland, in the same time period, offered the same radical space for the time period and even more so due to their location. Finally, this thesis proves the bookstore and Herland as an organization create a place of education, edification, and discovery for all women. As Herland member, Kathy C. shares,

I think about the people over the years who have been to the store to buy books. They're learning about themselves and about me. I see the walls we've created and the walls we've torn down. In a word, it means 'myself.' She represents so much of me by wanting to reach out to other people, to help somebody come to terms with herself when she's confused, the fun, the laughter. It represents women. I don't know where I'd be without Herland ... I don't want to know where.²

² HNC, "Meet the Board: A New Year, A New Sister #4 Meet Kathy C.," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 3, (March 1989): 5-6, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52177>.

The changes stemming from Herland's existence continue on in the hearts of its members in lasting ways.

This thesis also looks at the importance of women's folk music and the festivals attached to this movement, as well as the Collective's retreats that created additional sacred and separate safe spaces apart from the oppressive society surrounding Herland. Though at times the the problematic issues with women-only policies arose, evidence also demonstrates that Herland's motivation came less from a TERF standpoint and more from a society that required it in that time. These safe spaces for women-only offered a time to commune with one another, live out their identities, and find restoration to continue their work outside of the very limited days Herland held apart from the rest of their open activities. Herland and others who offered venues for Women's Music and lesbian collective retreats faced intersectional oppression as women and part of the queer community. The research includes discussion of the laws supporting women's equality either did not exist, failed to pass, or only existed in short spans of time, which created an overall unsafe environment in many areas of society for women. Understanding the challenges of the restrictive times during which Herland created safe spaces helps to reveal some of the way in which the queer community held even less societal protections. As Herland member, Peggy Johnson explains,

Herland is a gathering place for a whole bunch of different types of women. From the strength gained as a group, we can branch out into the individual things we like to do. We gain strength by coming together. The other things can get done from the strength of our unity. I still see Herland as a central place or attitude for people to get that strength to go out on their own.³

Herland's offering of safe spaces stands as the fundamental and prioritized position of this examination. In those safe spaces, all who entered found a moment of respite and reprieve that many heteronormative, cisgender individuals took for granted as their everyday privilege in their lives.

³ Metzger, "Spotlight on Peggy Johnson," *The Voice*, February 1989, 10-11.

Examining the topic through the lens of women's music inserts Herland into the conversation of the importance of holding a place in the inclusive historical discussion for the work of Women's Music. In doing so, this thesis layers the work of Morris, Mason, and Churchill. This further links Oklahoma to the broader activism history through Cleveland's work by looking at Herland as a whole that continued well-after Cleveland left the organization. By including the whole of Herland's existence, this again layers the conversation with the consideration of the radical existence of lesbians outside of a time and place not welcoming to them.

The importance of Herland's public voice through their own queer community newspaper, *The Voice*, and how it layers regionality and smaller archives into the work of Tracy Baim's *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, as a communication hub and community builder for queer individuals in a time before rapid and readily available communication. This discussion also includes other forms of Herland's providing a voice to its members that includes connection to various lesbian and feminist publications outside of Herland and other minor publications created, supported, or promoted by Herland. Extensive evidence that Herland held the importance of communication and information for its members and readership as a top priority. Furthermore, considering Herland's work to document its own and its members historical significance directly connects them to lesbian herstory and queer history in real and tangible ways. The various mechanisms of providing a voice for its members and readership offers insight into the queer community of the Bible Belt not seen in the general historic conversation in such a real time manner.

The legacy of Herland went beyond the members and into the queer community of Oklahoma. As the HNC said, they worked with their "sisters and brothers who experience a common oppression came together peacefully as a community, to try to educate the ignorant, calm the fears of the unknowing and just survive" in their work for Oklahoma City Pride and in

so many other ways.⁴ The legacies of Herland deserve inclusion in the larger historical conversation. The specific organizations and events that Herland created and/or supported through grassroots activism. To date, only one historical monograph looks at queer activism in the Bible Belt and it only looks at this in Kansas. Here, this thesis further builds Oklahoma's queer activism into the conversation. Herland made several important changes directly to the queer community at large, outside of the organization. Herland, either on its own or in conjunction with other organizations, provided lasting results for the queer community, especially for queer parental rights, that necessitated discussion and inclusion in this thesis and the historical conversation, despite others' oversight of these. Many of these topics need further examination, however, this thesis offers them to at least begin documentation and, more importantly, to highlight the bottom-up changes of rallies, protests, rape advocacy, the first and continued Oklahoma Pride Parade, and the *Fox v. Fox* decision. This examination shows how Herland supported all of these with their time, energy, physical presence, organizational efforts, and funding and how each of these benefitted from Herland in order to further the causes of the queer community.

The herstory of Herland Sister Resources offers important components of queer history directly, aligned with, by proxy, or indirectly. The inclusion of Herland's herstory potentially shifts the national discussion, especially within queer history, by broadening its examination and further widening the scope to include more non-coastal and non-urban locations as home to organizations who are actors of history themselves, not merely following or reacting. In looking at the various movements connected to Herland, this thesis shows how Herland often preceded (in the case of queer parents' rights) or at least acted at the same time (in creating a feminist

⁴ HNC, "A Gay Day in June," *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 6, no. 7, (July 1989): 1, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52181>.

bookstore, some activism, and retreats) or soon after it (in other activism, Pride parades, and women's music) the larger national movements.

The concepts of space and place as actors in the events through the socio-cultural influences and opposing forces faced by Herland further expound the importance of Bible Belt queer activism. This work looks at the need for time and areas that existed apart from the main social and cultural gaze of the Bible Belt, where Herland existed and the Sisters lived their everyday lives. This work layers the sociological concepts of Bernadette Barton's work into the discussion of Herland, which existed within Barton's theoretical panopticon. This thesis highlights similar social norms of the Bible Belt state of Oklahoma and how that homophobia and oppression justified by the prevalent church teachings created a judgmental-at-best and violent-at-worst environment for members of the queer community, including Herland, to live. With this understanding, this work suggests ways to shift the historical conversation to better include the power of grassroots, bottom-up, feminist-lesbians within the Bible Belt of the United States.

Finally, this research also reveals many of the paths of research needed for a fully inclusive historical conversation to occur. Many potential avenues for future research exist, especially within *The Voice's* archives, including Oklahoma's lesbians and the queer community's interactions with the military, AIDS epidemic, the legal system, interactions with churches, and deeper analysis of the many components included in this thesis. Gaps also exist in the present works such as a comparative study of heterosexual and lesbian feminists within the Oklahoma ERA movement, the purposefully sidelined lesbians within the national ERA movement, and an expanded discussion of the herstory of Herland Sister Resources. Furthermore, historiography of queer history offers little on feminist-lesbian bookstores, the Women's Music movement, queer rural activism, inter-disciplinary examinations that allow for a larger scope of research, and even less about the individuals gendered or with sexual-identifications outside of the hetero-homosexual binary. Overall, this thesis only begins to address the gaps in queer history by layering Oklahoma into the larger national conversation and in the conversation of lived-

experience, microsocial histories of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Oklahoma's queer community holds a rich deposit of many more historically significant areas of research.

For final consideration, *The Voice* of Herland offers the Herland Mission:

Herland Sister Resources envisions and strives toward a world in which all women live free from oppression. Herland supports and includes all women who experience oppression. Lesbians as a group have a deep experience of the general oppressive climate of this world. Although Herland is not restricted to lesbians, we have a strong lesbian focus. We are a womanist organization, supporting women in their journey toward self-definition and self-determination, and recognizing that each woman has her own pace of growth and enlightenment.

Herland is a non-profit volunteer organization. We publish a newsletter, operate a bookstore and lending library, and provide musical and cultural events for education and entertainment. We offer a safe place for women to meet and exchange ideas, feelings, hopes and fears and to learn about themselves and each other.

The only requirement for involvement in Herland is a desire for women to be free of the restraints of oppression.⁵

The women of Herland created a rarely seen, unexpected, and thriving organization in an unlikely place and worked to change it for the better. They succeeded in creating long-lasting resources, legal precedents, and a community that offered security amidst a hostile environment. Their activism changed the greater historical timeline first for themselves, then their community, their state, region, and over-time nationally as the effects of their work spread to provide a basis for other changes. These women, Barbara "Wahru" Cleveland, Susan Bishop, Pat Colognesi, Jo Soske, Margaret Cox, Peggy Johnson, Jean Kelsey, Ginger McGovern, and Pat Reaves, indeed created the foundation for the more accepting culture found especially in the gayborhood of Oklahoma City, and throughout the state. Their passion and bravery inspired one another, strengthened their community, and this radiated into a greater state of equality for women, women and the Queer community.

⁵ HNC, "Herland Mission," *The Voice*, January 2000, 3.



Figure C.1) This photo was taken at the debut showing of the *Herland*: documentary. This event celebrated the documentary’s premier, and the opening of the Herland Sister Resources’ archives exhibit at the Oklahoma State University Art Museum. The exhibit connected the use of small queer archives generally held by individuals or organizations to the creation of queer historically based art as seen in the larger exhibit, “50 States: Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas, and Wyoming.” The connections made through UCO’s work, the creation of the documentary and exhibit, and comradery of queer individuals led to the creation of this thesis, its body of research, and potentially future works.

Top left to right: b hinesley (thesis author/intern exhibit curator and designer), Jake Crystal (documentary director), Makayla Fisher (documentary director), and Jean Kelsey (Herland Sister).
 Bottom left to right: Pat Reaves (Herland Sister), Ginger McGovern (Herland Sister), and Dr. Lindsey Churchill (UCO professor, The Center director, grant manager, and internship supervisor).

Crystal and Fisher, *Herland*, 2019;
 hinesley, “50 States: Herland Sister Resources,” exhibit, 2019;
 Margolin, Jake and Nick Vaughan, artists and curators, “50 State: Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas, and Wyoming,” Exhibit, February 12 – June 29, 2019, Oklahoma State Museum of Art, Stillwater, OK, <https://museum.okstate.edu/art/past-exhibitions/2019/50-states.html>.

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics, edited by Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, review a multitude of academic works that discuss second-wave feminism in history, political science, gender and women's studies, and several other fields.¹ Based on the extensive range of fields, works, timespan, and recentness of this book, the definition offered for second-wave feminism provides the most accurate for this study of Oklahoma's movement. Second-wave feminism consists of "radical feminist assertions" beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s "through the 1975–1985 cultural feminist emphasis on female difference and victimization."² This thesis shows that the women that created Herland, a space for lesbian feminists in Oklahoma, fit this definition in every point.

¹ Maxwell and Shields, "Introduction," *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 1-18.

² Sara M. Evans, "Generations Later, Retelling the Story," in *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 24.

The academic examination of the movement typically included "Victories [that] can be traced in the legislative and court battles of the sixties and early seventies: The Equal Pay Act (1963), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), Congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA, 1972), the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA, 1972), Title IX (1972), *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (1974).

In addition to the above, key events in this narrative include the 1970 "strike" when thousands of women demonstrated across the country, the massive Houston Conference in 1977, and the ultimately losing battle for the ERA in state legislatures." Source: Sara M. Evans, "Generations Later, Retelling the Story," in *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 25.

Important caveats to the definition exist throughout the anthology. The anthology also attempts to remove the divisions of “waves” in feminism and proves this is a need for large scope examinations. Yes, larger examinations of feminism that move outside of segmented and thus obscuring points of view, could offer critical discussion not yet seen. However, for the purposes understanding the women of Herland, the segmentation of eras or “waves” proves necessary to indicate the uniqueness of the time period. Therefore, the definition used as the boundary to remove, also proved necessary as a signpost to their discussion and this. Segmenting into “waves” allowed for better understanding of the temporal influences of the 1970s and 80s. is Thus this thesis continues the use of a distinct time period, socio-cultural environment, and broad ideology of second-wave feminism. This definition offers important framing of the examination in this thesis, as well as the support for the need to expand the body of historical writings about second-wave feminism.

The anthology’s conclusion stated that upon reviewing the scholarship that discussed “Second-wave feminist activism, it is clear that academics are nowhere near close to producing comprehensive histories of feminist herstory, politics, activism, or artistic production.”³ The importance of continued work also provided a fundamental theme to the anthology. Summarily, the authors agreed that the feminism of this era comprised a multi-faceted front that changed both United States and international history, as well as sociological views.⁴ This work also acknowledged that “each generation of women activists leaves an unfinished agenda for the next generation.’ Whatever the criticisms may be in retrospect ... the legacy of the movement warrants

³ Lisa Corrigan, “Conclusion: Assessing Second-Wave Historiography,” *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, ed. Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, 231-240, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62117-3>, 234.

⁴ Sara M. Evans, “Generations Later, Retelling the Story,” *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 29.

“There is definitely something to understand about the apparently sudden upsurge of women’s rights activism in the 1960s and its evolution through the 1970s. By the 1980s, the dynamics were clearly different, though parts of the movement, such as the programs against domestic violence and sexual harassment and the intellectual ferment in and around the academic enterprise of women’s studies, continued to grow despite an increasingly hostile political context.”

recovery and understanding.”⁵ To further academic understanding, the authors provided their own exploration and challenged future scholars “to explore the movement through a variety of lenses that can, together, enable a multifaceted narrative to emerge.”⁶ The Sisters of Herland provide one example of this kind of exploration and expand the discussion into an area not typically seen as a positive component of the feminist movement: Oklahoma. The Herland women do so through the lens of the lesbian activists found there.⁷

⁵ Ruth Rosen, quoted by A. Maxwell and T. Shields, *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 10.

⁶ Evans, “Generations Later, Retelling the Story,” *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 26.

⁷ In the entirety of the anthology, *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, mentioned Oklahoma twice, once as a major defeat during the ERA battle and the second only in reference as a “southern state” not as a component of the feminist movement.

APPENDIX 2: POPULATION STATISTICS

1980s Oklahoma City Population

According to recent studies, the general percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in the population at the time of this study, 2020, vary by state (see below). To avoid presentism, knowing that the time in which this study was completed held more social acceptance for the queer community, the figures applied to the 1980 population use the average percentage of the Bible Belt states minus 1.0%, as the trends seen in the study show more “accepting” states averaging approximately this much more in their percentages. Since the queer community holds strong historically documents roots in the United States, the assumption comes from a greater social disapproval during the 1980s would hold approximately the same effect. The same deduction was used for the estimate in Oklahoma in 1980 as well.

Percentage by state: Texas (4.1%), Oklahoma (3.8%), Arkansas (3.3%), Louisiana (3.9%), West Virginia (4.0%), Virginia (3.9%), Maryland (4.2%), Delaware (4.5%), North Carolina (4.0%), South Carolina (3.5%), Georgia (4.5%), Florida (4.6%), Kentucky (3.4%), Tennessee (3.5%), Mississippi (3.5%), and Alabama (3.1%). These average to 3.8625%.⁸

Population of Texas (7,230,468), Oklahoma (1,548,585), Arkansas (1,181,747), Louisiana (2,166,006), West Virginia (1,004,236), Virginia (2,728,508), Maryland (2,174,165), Delaware (307,739), North Carolina (3,026,381), South Carolina (1,603,807), Georgia (2,822,660), Florida (5,070,698), Kentucky (1,871,738), Tennessee (2,374,520), Mississippi (1,306,760), and Alabama (2,022,354) in 1980, totaling: 38,440,372; which would mean that 1,100,356 LGBTQ+ individuals lived in the Bible Belt at this time.

Total population of white/Caucasian in Oklahoma City metropolitan area in 1980: 834,088 and 403,213 in Oklahoma City by itself. This provides the approximation of 23,

⁸ Kerith J. Conron and Shoshana K. Goldberg, *Adult LGBT Population in the United States*, PDF, (Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles School of Law Williams Institute, July 2020), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Adult-US-Pop-Jul-2020.pdf>.

876/11,542 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Also, for the later discussion of the lack of significant racial diversity in Herland, know that the Black/African American population only constituted 9% (75,067/36,289) and those with “Spanish origin” only 2.2% (18,350/8,871).⁹

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population, Volume 1: General Population Characteristics—United States Summary*, May 1983, 1-16 to 1-17; 1-127; 1-186, https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980/1980censusofpopu8011u_bw.pdf; Kerith J. Conron and Shoshana K. Goldberg, *Adult LGBT Population in the United States*, PDF, Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles School of Law Williams Institute, July 2020. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Adult-US-Pop-Jul-2020.pdf>.

Recent Queer Population Statistics

A 2016 ConsumerAffairs.com analysis looked at U.S. census and Gallup polling data and found that costly, queer-friendly cities are starting to lose some of their luster among LGBT people, whereas cities such as Louisville, Norfolk, and Indianapolis are rising in stature. Blue-state LGBT hot spots like New York and Seattle still saw increases in the percent of the population that identifies as LGBT, but many red-state cities saw much larger increases. A ConsumerAffairs.com representative told me that the trend “lines up with people—especially young people—choosing less to live in huge, expensive cities, which were traditionally friendlier toward LGBTQ individuals, and choosing instead to make lives for themselves in small and mid-tier cities in the middle and southern states.”¹⁰ The fact that many of these smaller and mid-tier cities have been passing non-discrimination protections for LGBT people makes it easier to live there, even if there is no legal recourse to be found at the state level.

“According to the Movement Advancement Project, which ranks states on their LGBT policies on a scale from ‘negative’ to ‘high,’ 47 percent of the LGBT population now lives in states ranked ‘low’ or below. That means almost half of queer people in this country are spread across the South and the Midwest, Texas and the Dakotas, and other red regions.”¹¹

¹⁰ Samantha Allen, *Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from the Red States*, 10.

¹¹ Samantha Allen, *Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from the Red States*, 10.

The HERLAND VOICE

August, 1992

TEN YEARS OF HERLAND

In August, 1982, a small women's bookstore opened at the corner of 19th and Blackwelder in Oklahoma City. That bookstore was the direct ancestor of Herland Sister Resources. With this issue of *The Voice* we celebrate those early years and the journey to today's Herland. To all those who have shared the journey, we express our sincere appreciation.

LA SALLE DES FEMMES

Jo L. Soske

In 1981 and 1982, I was associated with a radical group of Lesbian Feminists who formed the editorial collective of *The Brazen Hussy Rag*. Together, we put out a few issues of a newspaper and envisioned vast changes for lesbians in the Oklahoma City area. Unfortunately, our politics and our hopes were stronger than our ability to stay together during difficult times. Looking back a decade later, I am able to have some perspective. I realize that our dreams were not fruitless. The roots of today's Herland lie in that eighties collective.

The majority of the woman who worked on and wrote for *The Brazen Hussy Rag* no longer reside in Oklahoma. Therefore, I have decided that I can tell the story since I can. We all have a right to our herstory.

There were many woman who put long hours into *The Brazen Hussy*; I personally was involved in some unlikely fund-raising which allowed us to put out a new edition when we thought we were completely broke. Primary among these woman, though, were Jana B., the editor, and her partner, T.J. Nearly all of the work on the newspaper was done at their home.

It was Jana and T.J. who first envisioned a woman's bookstore. I remember the evening. They were out walking together when they came across an old unused store at 19th and Blackwelder. They began talking to each other about how wonderful it would be to have a feminist bookstore in the city. They were so excited by the idea that they knocked on the door of the adjoining house to discuss it with the owner. That is when they met Murray and the idea of La Salle des Femmes was born.

The excitement spread quickly throughout our collective and we got to work. We held organizational meetings at Jana and T.J.'s home. We began weekend work days lasting on Saturday from 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Originally, we could not even enter the building due to trees which blocked the door. My partner at the time, Cathie, and I were involved in the clean-up days. She did some sheet-rock work. Before long, we were able to use the building as a meeting place for the organizational rally when Reagan visited Oklahoma in 1982.

Barbara Cleveland was around during these times, but she was not yet directly involved with the bookstore. She was however, always interested and supportive. In March of 1982, she wrote in an article for *The Brazen Hussy*, "...Another note. Have you heard of the new women's bookstore? Well, Sharon is going to autograph pictures that will be sold to raise money to help the bookstore..." She was promoting the Sharon Riddell concert and did not neglect to help the bookstore in her efforts.

(Continued on page 3)

MY LIFE WITH HERLAND

Peggy Johnson

I had just hit Oklahoma City in October of 1982, fresh from the Navy's boot and all ready to become active politically. On my way to New Orleans or San Francisco, I was here visiting my girlfriend's family. The only thing I knew about Oklahoma was the song.

We must have seen a sign for a meeting at Herland (over on N.W. 19th) at D.J.'s or K.A.'s, so we went. There was a handful of woman, the most memorable being Barbara Cleveland, of course. I think Elaine was the new secretary and I don't remember the others very well.

I signed the mailing list and put down a friend's address in New Orleans because it was the only one I had at the time and I was happening-city bound.

On that October night, the little group seemed to be reorganizing with the help of some new members. Little did I know (until much later) that they were organizing as Herland and this was one of the first Herland meetings. I had been overseas and before that, stranded in a small south Georgia city and I thought big cities had well-established woman's and lesbian organizations. I had been to San Francisco, after all.

By the end of October, my life started undergoing some reorganization itself and I wound up getting an apartment in OKC. I lay low from the social scene for a while, trying to get a grasp on my personal one.

I became reconnected with Herland after the Second Fret -- that wonderful folk music club which lived at 30th and Classen from 1984 to 1987 -- opened. It was such a great safe place for folkies, lesbians, and acoustic music lovers to go and I started playing music there and even hanging out a bit. Somehow the woman started hearing about my music and someone, probably Marian, asked me to do a coffeehouse at Herland. That was Friday, March 29, 1985. I sent out a light green flyer to my small mailing list, calling myself "a renderer of woman-identified blues and folk music." (I always loved that flyer.) I didn't know if they were radicals but assumed they were. I wasn't sure if I should sing songs written by men or not. (I've since realized that Herland is an umbrella for women in all phases of development.)

Pretty soon my audience at the Second Fret became more and more woman-oriented. Besides the Second Fret mailing list, I think it was mostly word of mouth and word spread by the Herland folk and the Herland newsletter.

Because of their diligent following of my music, Cindy, Rhonda, Jean, Pat and Pat became my friends. I mean, they were always there and carried me through the rough spots (still do). Kathy, Ginger, Margaret, and Karen have been the same way and later Michelle and Charlotte. These are all past and present Herland Board members.

(Continued on page 2)

Figure A.1) The special 10th anniversary edition of *The Voice* shared the story and memory of Herland as told by Jo Soske and Peggy Johnson.

The Voice, (August 1992): 1.

La Salle Des Femmes *(continued from Page 1)*

Hours of hard work went into La Salle des Femmes. In addition to the work days, we held fundraisers. We held a buffet/concert at both D.J.'s and The Rose. The efforts were beginning to show. It was possible to enter the building and event to hold meetings. The April, 1982 issue of *The Brzen Husky* stated "...Work on "La Salle des Femmes" bookstore is progressing well, but it is housed in an old building that needs a lot of work. If you have skillsx, tools, time or energy--We Want You!"

Suddenly, things went bad. Jana and T.J. broke up. T.J. left town and we found that our bookstore account was empty. We were all terribly disillusioned. we had worked so hard and we didn't have a cent to continue. The newspaper folded. Murray lost patience with the stand-still in our plans. She pad-locked the door shut.

That is when Barbara Cleveland arrived on the scene with her gift for organization, planning, and leadership. She was able to convince Murray to give the bookstore dream one more chance. The rest is Herland herstory. Barbara actualized the dream.

When Herland opened, some wommin from the original collective refused to go there. They felt that their vision of a feminist-lesbian bookstore had been changed and that the new name did not reflect the radical roots of the dream. I was not one of those wommin. I frequented Herland from the day it opened. I have nothing but admiration and gratitude for Barbara Cleveland. She is a woman who makes things happen and we owe her a great deal.

I do believe, however, that we must not forget the wommin who came before and their efforts no matter how unsuccessful their end. Five years ago, my former partner, Cathie, came up from Dallas and we attended Herland's five-year anniversary party. We looked at the photos and spoke to wommin. Late in the evening, Cathie looked at me and said, "They don't even know that we existed. I spent all of my spare time working on La Salle de Femmes, and nobody knows that we were even part of it." I am writing this for Cathie and all of the other wommin of *The Brzen Husky* collective. I know that you were there. I know that you are part of our herstory and I love and appreciate you as I do Barbara Cleveland. Thank you for giving us Herland -- a place of our own. □

Figure A.2) Originally from Los Angeles, California, Soske came to Oklahoma in her early twenties, stayed for decades, and now enjoys retirement from her career as a counselor on the Gulf. She discussed her introduction to journalism in the beginning of the 1970s, *the 51%*, a small independent paper produced by her junior high school English teacher but distributed throughout their area and local community college campus. Jo wrote occasionally and worked primarily with the layout and typesetting. She joined the convent in California, where the nuns "were activists and who marched with Cesar Chavez and who were very much in favor of women's rights." Soske moved to Oklahoma in 1974 and experience a culture shock. She said, "the extent of my activism at that point was probably trying to convince those sisters that they were not against the ERA." Soske hoped "to become a nun with hopes of going to Guatemala to work with the poor. I didn't get to Guatemala, and I didn't become a nun." As time went by, Jo became more involved in supporting the ERA. As this work neared its end, Jo became involved with the founding of La Salle des Femmes.

Soske shared her story in *The Voice* in 1992 for Herland's tenth anniversary, seen in the figures on the previous page and to the left.

Soske, "La Salle Des Femmes," *The Voice*, (August 1992): 3; Soske interview. February 5, 2021.

My Life With Herland (continued from page 1)

I must mention Elaine and Marian and Kris who were always there in the early days. There are so many to mention. I can't begin to name all those who have a general Herland association who have crossed my path.

Not until 1989 when Jean asked me if I wanted to be on the board was I active for Herland in other than a musical capacity. I said yes and got voted in. It's been a blast -- from the board meetings (they may be a bit long but we laugh and work and listen and talk and make decisions which sometimes even get carried out!) to painting inside and outside, to remodeling the inside, to digging in the yard. The retreats are fun and, I think, very important to this community.

We have a mailing list of over 900, staff the bookstore most every weekend and it's all volunteer. Nobody gets paid a dime. We've brought in women's circuit musicians, comedians and activists. The turnout hasn't always been great but over the long haul, Herland's efforts have touched thousands of women, most in this very area. Whether they knew it or not, the women in this community have been affected by the Herland spirit.

Lately, several of the friends I've mentioned here and I have become more active politically. That activist circle I was hoping to find when I first got here is evolving and has been for the last ten years. Who would've thought I'd be right in the middle of it?

"A womyn's place to be." "We're here for you." "This land is your land, this land is Herland." "The Herland Voice." "Herland Sister Resources". These ideas have stood the test of time for ten years now. Thanks especially to Barbara Cleveland and the early ones, Herland was started. Thanks to the current activists, Herland still lives. May she be a beacon to those who have yet to discover the sense of community and the sense of place found only in a group of women dedicated not to personal or material gain but rather to maintaining that place to be, that space to unfold into the women that we could be--ourselves. □

Figure A.3) Originally from Georgia, Johnson joined the Navy but faced great discrimination when discharged for being a lesbian.

Intended as a quick stop on her way to the west coast, Johnson found herself in Oklahoma City. She saw a flyer for the feminist group starting a bookstore at a lesbian bar, one of her first nights in town. Johnson expressed interest, but she took a detour of the bar scene for a year or so. Then, Herland hired Johnson to sing at an event and Johnson really like the group and all they stood for, so she started attending other events. Over the years Johnson sang over a hundred times at various gatherings, concerts, protests, and retreats in her time with Herland. Johnson also served on the board, wrote multiple articles for *The Voice*, served in various roles for the Pride parade, and numerous other roles as a Herland Sister. To this day, Johnson shares her love of music and the women of Herland.

Johnson shared her story in *The Voice* in 1992 for Herland's tenth anniversary, seen in the figure on the first page of this appendix and to the right.

Peggy Johnson, "My Life with Herland," *The Herland Voice (The Voice)* 9, no. 8, (August 1992): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52217>; Johnson interview, October 20, 2020.

APPENDIX 4: POEMS FROM *THE VOICE*

On Viewing My First Drag Show
by Caring Woman

No one made me stay,
I could have walked out
But, deciding to remain,
I tried to understand what was happening.

Now, I've been put down by the best of 'em
So I know that feeling, unlike no other,
But, why was I feeling it now?

I was in a room full of women
In what was usually a safe place,
the few men there seem harmless,
Yet I and all those of the female persuasion
Were being put down in a deadly manner.

The scary thing was that
I seemed to be the only one concerned.
Why do mature, intelligent women
Carry on so over men in drag?

The contrasting Friday night scene
Of sister artists performing their own works
At HSR haunts me,
For our crowds have been smaller
And not as generous as this one,
With dollar bills flashing every man
Who rode on the musical and physical coattails
of some woman.

This does not speak well of our culture,
With what we choose to do in leisure time,
For it is placing emotional and financial
Rewards on other-than-real-objects and ideas,
Sanctioning once more the patriarchy's
wont to take advantage of us.

No more first Fridays will find me there,
Nor, I hope, you, if you understand this plea,
For, surely, we can take our presence and
cash somewhere it will benefit
Those of our ilk.

SONG OF SAPPHO

They caressed each other
with their creation.

The chords were born
easily
no labor
only gentle
expulsion.

Patti Weaver
Cushing, Oklahoma

HERESY

I think the Christian God
is 17 years old
Scared shitless of women and
Ignoring His Mother
as much as He is able.

And the Hebrew God is around 22
Macho and contemptuous
Of the women He considers
Weaker than Himself
even as He uses them.

And Jesus is perhaps 19,
Finished with school
The whole world before Him,
He thinks He knows it all.

We wait for Them to grow up.

Allison Coad
San Francisco, California

GET WELL SOON!

SISTERS

I never had one
So I didn't know,
although friends with told me
how lucky I was.

Now I have many and
What I don't know now
is why we who choose to align
still feel we have to squabble.

It's such a waste of
Time and energy and
I don't have enough of either
to squander in such shit.

Just as I don't always like
My children and other relatives,
so, we other-sisters don't have
to like or love each other

To work together for the good
Of our group, our cause, our endeavor,
which has to become more important
than any one of our personalities.

Only by defining that goal and
Keeping it in focus
can we hope to overcome the stigma
of "just another women's group!"

I'll try--
Will you?

Antigua Soeur



Figure A.4 and A.5) Poetry showcased the inner most thoughts of the Herland Sisters throughout the years. Seen in the figures above are the first poem to appear in *The Voice* in the June 1985 issue and the page of poetry published only two months later in August.

A.4) "Caring Woman," "On Viewing My First Drag Show," *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 4, (June 1985): 2, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334426>.

A.5) Herland Members: Various Authors, Page of poetry, *HERLAND SISTER resources (The Voice)* 1, no. 8, (August 1985): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/334428>.

special poetry issue

This month we are pleased to present a sampling of the poetry submitted by you, our readers. There were many more submissions than we could fit into one newsletter. So, to enjoy more of the writings of our poets, please visit our website at www.herlandisters.org.

Also, join us at Herland for Poetry Night on Saturday, November 11, at 7:30 pm. All poets in our community, even those who did not submit for this issue, are invited to come and read their poetry to an appreciative audience. Light snacks and beverages will be served.

There's a Hole in the Clouds

There's a hole in the clouds,
The full moon shines through.
The light makes me feel all will be well, soon.

The black clouds sweep by the light is gone.
Covered once again in blackness.

There's a hole in the clouds,
Light shines through.
Moonlight, clouds, light, dark
All through the night.

I feel life is like that, light, dark.
A person walks in darkness then,
There is a hole in the clouds
And the moonlight shows through.

Tex

Mortal Love

to Cindy Lou

Glancing through this purple haze
this confused mix of pleasure and pain
you see a class clown with mysterious eyes
a wanna be bubba with the cutest smile
and though your mind is not sure
and your heart is a little insecure
you step through this crack in reality
and fall onto a bed of trust
in this deception you find a confidante
as you allow me to taste your soul
which saturates me with blinded friction
as I feel your very cold hands
quickly you see the not so innocence in my face
and question my funky emotions
wishing for a shooting star
to show you all the right answers
because I can't relate to your immortal love
which pretty boy floyd has corrupted
this sexual goddess has stole your devotion
and now you can't reclaim cupid's arrow
and I don't feel special anymore
we're both feeling burned down
because of some cold hands
because we both do care
about you immortal love turned mortal
by me this sexual goddess
this wanna be bubba with the cutest smile
this class clown hiding in a purple haze
with mysterious eyes and a not so innocent face

Rebecca Harlow

The Herland Voice is a publication of Herland Sister Resources, 2312 NAV 37th, OMC, OK 73112. Our bookstore/lending library is open Saturdays from 1-5 pm. Call us at (405) 521-9696 or email us at herland@herlandisters.org. Visit us on the web at www.herlandisters.org.

Figure A.6 and A.7: The November 2004 and April 2005 issues held mostly poetry, but an official and fully dedicated "Poetry Issue" did not appear until November 2006 (cover page shown above).

This became an annual tradition that Herland carried through until the final year of publication, 2016. A special poem showing a voice of inclusion and trans folx support from the 2016 issue is seen here at the right.

A.6) HNC, Special Poetry Issue, *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 24, no. 11, (November 2006): 1-4.

<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52117>.

A.7) Margy D., "Trans-Formed," *Herland Voice (The Voice)* 34, no. 1 (February 2016): 5,

<https://hdl.handle.net/11244/320406>.

Trans-Formed

He was just a little four year old boy,
Happy and playing,
With his older sisters dolls,
In a pink cardigan,
With white daisies on the lapel.
His mom thought it was cute,
His Dad said we've got to do something about this,
My son was formed a boy!
So they signed him up for Little League,
He tried hard to please his Dad,
And wacked the softball hard,
They said he was quite a boy!
Years went by,
Never feeling he could be himself,
Always trying to be tough enough,
He ran the ball in for a touchdown at Homecoming,
And stood beside the Queen,
They said he was quite a young man!
So he joined the military,
And served two terms,
They said he was quite a man!
He joined the local police department,
And was brave when he needed to be,
They said he was quite a man!
He couldn't stand it any longer,
Hard as he tried he never felt like a man,
He longed to be a woman!
Glad his father had passed on,
He decided to make a change!
He changed his name,
His manner of dress,
And started taking hormones.
People made fun of him, taunted him,
threatened him,
He was give lousy work assignments, bad schedules, poor evaluations,
Finally fired!



Nothing left to lose, He vowed to be who he truly was!
SHE decided to share her experience with others,
She had been scared, closeted, hated, scorned, shunned,
She shared that she had come to love herself and knew God did too!
She talked in front of hundreds and at the end, She could hear the murmurs,
She felt the heat in her ears, fog in her head, not able to move, to think, to function,
She told herself to hold on, hold on,
She grabbed the lectern,
Slowly her head cleared, and she heard the murmurs again!
And she heard distinctly, uniquely, and for the first time,
SHE's quite a woman, She's QUITE a woman,
She's quite a WOMAN,
And she smiled,
Trans-Formed!

-Margy D.-

APPENDIX 5: THE FIRST OKLAHOMA CITY PRIDE PARADE

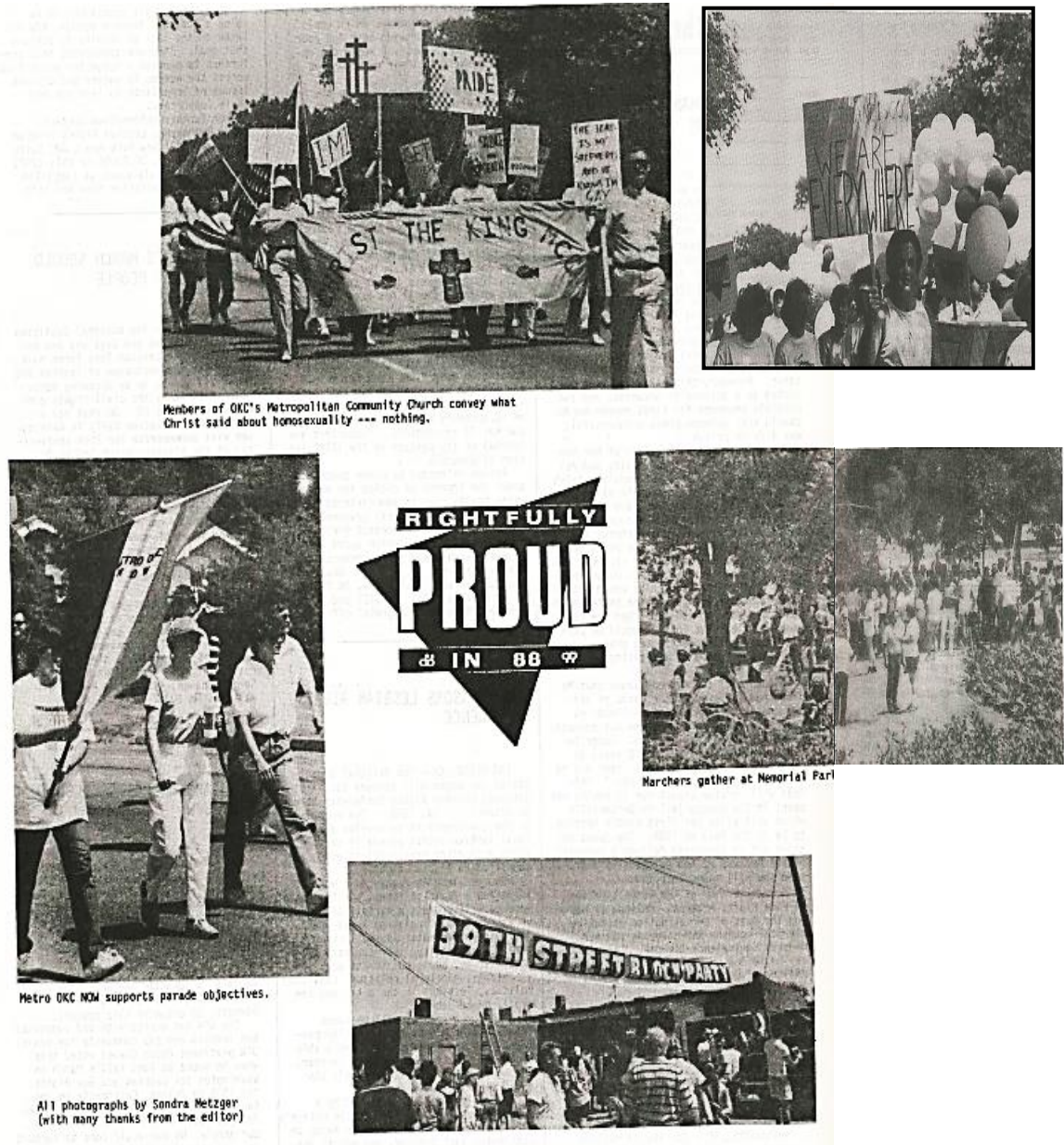


Figure A.8: Photos from *The Voice* showing the first Oklahoma City Pride Parade in the gayborhood of 39th Street, where Herland's permanent location exists. The women of Herland participated in the parade here and annually, however, in their coverage of Pride, they focus on the community at large, not just their organization.

Sondra Metzger, "Rightfully Proud in '88," photos, *HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES (The Voice)* 5, no. 7, (July 1988): 1, 4, and 5, <https://hdl.handle.net/11244/52168>.

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APPENDIX 7: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) RESEARCH INFORMATION.

The interviews conducted for this thesis were created under the supervision of the Oklahoma State University Oklahoma Oral History Research Program's *Diverse Sexuality and Gender in Oklahoma* project. This project began with the Research Assistant, Angus Henderson, and upon his graduation, continued with Arlowe Clementine and myself performing the interviews. As the page inserted below shows, the IRB determined this project did not require its approval.



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 07/12/2019
Application Number: GU-19-41
Proposal Title: Diverse Sexuality and Gender in Oklahoma

Principal Investigator: Sarah Milligan
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser:
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s): Angus Henderson

Processed as: Not Human Subjects Research

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Closed

Based on the information provided in this application, the OSU-Stillwater IRB has determined that your project does not qualify as human subject research as defined in 45 CFR 46.102 (d) and (f) and is not subject to oversight by the OSU IRB. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the IRB office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

B Hinesley

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES: A LESBIAN FEMINIST COLLECTIVE'S
CHANGES TO OKLAHOMA HERSTORY

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Biographical:

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2018-2019, served as Graduate Liaison for the University of
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Student Center
2018-2019, served as Northern Oklahoma College Grants
Coordinator
2017-2018, served as Northern Oklahoma College Grants
Coordinator Assistant
2017-2022, served as the Oklahoma State University History
Department Representative to the Graduate and Professional
Student Government Association

Professional Memberships: Western History Association, National Council on
Public History, Phi Alpha Theta, Midwest Art History Society,
Oklahoma Historical Society, Phi Theta Kappa, Graduate and
Professional Student Government Association