

The

HERLAND VOICE

January, 1995



HAPPY NEW
YEAR TO YOU
AND YOURS!

Women: the vulnerable sex

by Judith Mariasy and Marty Radlett
Reprinted from *AIDS Watch* Number 10, 1990

The first woman diagnosed with AIDS in Mexico was a 52-year-old housewife. Her only known 'risk' behaviour was having unprotected sexual intercourse with her husband.

Many women in her position would not consider themselves at risk for HIV - nor would many AIDS educators or policy makers. However, worldwide, women make up an increasing proportion of those infected with this virus. Two million of the estimated six million people now infected with HIV are women.

In New York AIDS is the leading cause of death among women aged 25 to 40. In Brazil, the male-to-female ratio of HIV infection was 116:1 in 1984. It had fallen to 8:1 by 1988. In the Caribbean, the ratio of male-to-female infection was 6:1 three years ago. Now it is 2.5:1.

Equal numbers of men and women are infected in many African countries. But small studies from some Central African countries suggest that more than twice as many women are infected as men. In Uganda, the first country in Africa to have carried out a nationwide survey of seropositivity, the male-to-female ratio of infection is 1.4:1.

Why is this? Undoubtedly some women have been infected through blood transfusions given because of complications in childbirth. Childbirth remains one of the great life hazards for women; half a million women die each year from pregnancy-related causes, 99 per cent of them in developing countries. In Uganda in May 1988 three-quarters of all adult blood transfusions were given to women, in most cases because of

delivery complications.

Some contraception can also put women at risk: the World Health Organization recommends that intrauterine devices (IUDs) should not be used by women who for some reason are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, because the IUD can cause inflammation which might facilitate the entry of HIV into the bloodstream. Several studies suggest that HIV might be more easily transmitted from men to women than vice versa.

Some hazards can be avoided: by screening blood supplies, by ensuring that women receive adequate antenatal care and nutrition during pregnancy, and by increasing access to condoms.

But there are other factors - economic, social and psychological - which influence sexual attitudes and behaviours and which put women at risk. They are less tangible and harder to change.

The first international conference to look at the implications of AIDS for mothers and children took place in November 1989 - right at the end of the first decade of the AIDS pandemic.

Dr. Jonathan Mann, Director of the Global Programme on AIDS, opened the conference by saying that its timing was highly significant. "Does this reflect the relatively lower priority which AIDS in mothers and children has thus far received?" he asked.

AIDS forces societies, he said, "to ask if the status quo is good enough ... In order to prevent HIV infection and reduce the personal and social impact of HIV and AIDS among mothers and children, it will be necessary to examine and to change the status and role of women and children in our societies."

(continued on page 4)

ST. SYBIL

Dear St. Sybil,

Recently I have noticed that very few people seem to call themselves "Liberal" anymore. In fact when I hear it used these days it usually sounds like a cuss word. What's going on? I have always been proud to be a liberal: I think we are good people. Am I the only one left? Please explain.

Fearfully,
Dizzy N. Dazed

Dear Dizzy,

"Liberal" Americans, reared on the Declaration of Independence and hopelessly devoted to the Golden Rule, tend to think that the world is on a steady course toward enlightenment, which in turn will lead to peace, equality and justice for all. They know that supposedly civilized humans are capable of terrible things; holy wars galore, the Inquisition, slavery, genocide, the Holocaust; but they believe that once the world recognizes abhorrent behavior and disclaims it we can and will eradicate it. The world of tomorrow will never be capable of such evils, they think. Never again, they say. Step by step, injustice by injustice, with reason and good will, the world is moving away from cruelty and wickedness. The scouting motto is truly theirs; they wish to leave the earth a better place than they found it. They're sweet people.

And there are still a great many Americans of the liberal persuasion. The thing is, the word "liberal" has become tainted; it has been given such a negative connotation that lots of people won't admit to it.

Words are much more important than many people realize. One group who has recognized this and which has lately capitalized on it are the far-right, the ultra conservatives, the - let's face it - the Republicans; the very people who have been remarkably successful in turning "liberal" into a dirty word. These folks just won a landslide victory in the elections, nationally and locally, in large part by the unscrupulous and indiscriminate use against their opponents (liberals just like you, many of them) of a group of words generated by the unSPEAKERable Newt Gingrich: Queer, Traitor, Commie, Weird, Perverted, *Liberal*, etc. Word power: words are the tools we think with, and the words we use inevitably shape our thoughts. As an example, you don't run across the use of the word "homosexual" too much in the gay and lesbian press; and you hardly ever see the word "gay" in homophobic writings; reason: "homosexual" over the years has developed negative overtones, while "gay" has a very positive sound and feel to it. "Lesbian" is iffy, you may have noticed that a lot of "gay" women have embraced it but a lot don't like it at all. Whatever its connotation, whether it is used proudly or pejoratively, "lesbian" is a powerful word. A word to watch for in the coming year, a term the Right is conspiring to use, the great new bugaboo terminology designed to change our perception of what we thought was a glory of democracy, is "government" schools used in place of the

customary term, "public" schools. Righting columnists are using the term matter-of-factly, as if it were a neutral and widely accepted synonym for "public" schools. Of course, "government" schools conjures up images of coercive, Nazi-style indoctrination camps rather than democratic equalizing places of learning usually envisioned by thoughts of good old PS 69 or Classen High. This is one tactic in the extreme right wing's puzzling but manifest effort to do away with public schools. It has already made its appearance in the Daily Oklahoman, which, goddess help us, molds a considerable lot of opinion in Oklahoma, and is quite representative of the press throughout the country, the myth of "Liberal Media" notwithstanding.

Anyway, back to your question. No, you are not alone - but, you certainly might think about getting yourself a new name tag. Whatever you call yourself, keep on being a bleeding heart liberal, and remember the First Rule of the Golden Rule is: It's your turn.

Love and kisses,

Sybil



STOCK THE PANTRY

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Herland is offering a community pantry for lesbians in need. The pantry will include the following:

- ◇ non-perishable food items:
- ◇ pet food
- ◇ household supplies.

The pantry will be open during Herland's regular business hours, Saturdays, 10-5 and Sundays, 1-5 The system is simple -- if you need something take it or if you can, leave something.

STOCK THE PANTRY

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MUSIC REVIEW

by Jill Garner

I haven't been able to buy any new music lately so I decided to write a little about music in Oklahoma City. Someone asked me recently how I know about so many events, concerts, movies, etc. I find out about almost everything in the *Gazette*, so if you're tired of staying home and watching TV, pick up the latest *Gazette* to find something to do.

Speaking of the *Gazette*, I highly recommend Greg Johnson's column. Greg reviews musicians and albums that with the radio wasteland we have here in Oklahoma, you might not hear about otherwise. I've discovered several new artists and albums through Greg's column and he's definitely got an ear for good music.

Greg Johnson also runs the Blue Door Concert Series in Oklahoma City and in my opinion, it's by far the highlight of the music scene here. I've been to some shows there with 30 people or less and others with people packed to the rafters, but I've never seen a bad show there. I've seen a lot of great shows there like Cheryl Wheeler, Steve Forbert, Iain Matthews, Sara Hickman, Jimmy LaFave, and Mary Reynolds and have loved every one of them. I know many people grumble about the price of shows there (generally \$10 or \$15) but to see such great musicians in that intimate of a setting is a rare treat. I haven't been to a show there that wouldn't have been worth twice what I paid. Johnson has done a wonderful job at introducing a lot of singers and some of the best songwriters in the business to the people of Oklahoma City. Check the *Gazette* music listings for upcoming shows there, or call 525-7472 for information.

Many of you may have been to Blockbuster Music by now and know that you can listen to *anything* in the store that you want to. I, for one, think that is just the coolest thing in the world. And the Blockbuster at N.W. 23rd and Penn has one of the best selections of folk and bluegrass that I've ever seen. However, I like to support local businesses over multi-million dollar corporations and Rainbow Records still remains my favorite record store in Oklahoma City in terms of service and price. They have a great selection of used CDs and one of the most varied selections of new ones too. One of their greatest services is their ability to order practically anything for you and generally have it for you within a *week*. Every year, they promise that if you order something by December 22, they can have it for you for Christmas. Who else can beat that? Someone told me recently that if Blockbuster doesn't have a selection in their warehouse, it's a 6-8 week wait to get your order.

I just heard about a new radio show also. At 10 pm on Sunday evenings on 101.9, there's a new alternative country show called "Country Over the Edge" with musicians such as Nanci Griffith, Lucinda Williams, Jimmy LaFave, Kevin Welch, Kelly Willis, Emmylou Harris, and Lyle Lovett receiving airplay. If

you like good country and folk music but hate most of the drivel on the radio, this may be that oasis in the desert that you've been hoping for. And don't forget about Different Roads on KCSC, 90.1 on Saturday evenings to hear folk and traditional music.

Oklahoma City does have some alternatives to the mainstream, but you have to be a little more persistent in finding them. However, I'm still bitter about the fact that Oklahoma City has at least 15 movie theaters and they all show the same movies. Even there though, Brixton Square is the bright spot on the horizon, showing foreign films, and occasionally gay films and happens to be the only theater in Oklahoma City showing the new Woody Allen movie. Go figure. But if you're tired of the same old movies, check out Brixton Square's schedule. It's worth the drive and if we don't support them, then we deserve nothing but Hollywood fluff movies. ☆

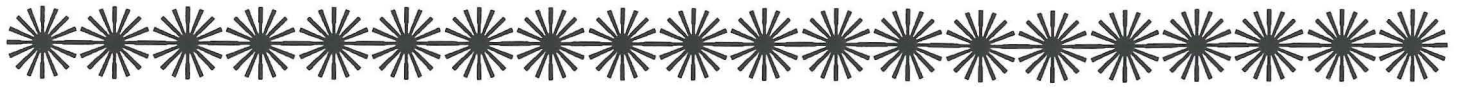
GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL SUPPORT AND EDUCATION PROVIDED BY RED ROCK

Red Rock Mental Health Center in Oklahoma City is currently facilitating support and educational/social groups for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth and adults. Support groups are held weekly at Red Rock (4400 N. Lincoln Boulevard). For more information on these groups, please call Betsy Murphy or Kim Johnson at Red Rock at 425-0399. The groups are free and open to the community, although some screening may be required to ensure compatibility of participants.

In addition, educational/social activities are facilitated weekly for both youth and adults. The youth group meets at OASIS Resource Center (2135 N.W. 39th Street) every Sunday evening. On January 1st, we will watch a movie and have pizza, Dr. Russ Koch answers questions about gay and lesbian concerns on the 8th, an HBO special, "Why Am I Gay?" will be seen on the 15th, on the 22nd we will go to the Omniplex, and on the 29th we will view a lesbian historical documentary of "Forbidden Love." The Adult Educational/Social Group meets Thursday evenings at the Triangle Association (2136 N.W. 39th). Terry Dennison from Planned Parenthood will continue his relationship series on the 5th, Joan Foreman from R.A.I.N. will discuss volunteer opportunities for working with people with HIV, we will watch "The Wedding Banquet" and have pizza on the 19th, and view "Forbidden Love" on the 26th with discussion afterwards.

Red Rock Mental Health Center also offers HIV/AIDS prevention and education for the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community, free referrals for counseling and substance use treatment and individual and group therapy for individuals with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. For more information, call Betsy Murphy or Kim Johnson at 425-0399. ☆





(continued from page 1)

Frequently, women have less power in their private lives and personal relationships - making it less easy for them to protect themselves against risks such as contracting HIV.

One Ugandan sociologist found that 30 per cent of the women she interviewed felt they were at risk of contracting HIV because they could not control the extra-marital affairs of their partners.

In Puerto Rico, AIDS educators say that women grow up being 'protected' from sexual knowledge. Gender segregation begins early and continues until serious dating and marriage. Cultural taboos inhibit a frank discussion of sexuality so that sexual education for women is scanty and overlaid with the expectation of virginity. The man is seen as the educator and facilitator of a woman's sexual knowledge - in the context of a relationship such as marriage.

Women may fear rejection, or even violence, if they ask their husbands to use a condom. Some do not even know what to do to protect themselves from HIV and believe that ineffective methods - such as douching with vinegar after intercourse - will suffice. Alternatively they deny that they are at risk because they do not want to confront the possibility of their husband's infidelity. Using condoms can be a denial of the mutual trust assumed to be at the basis of long-term relationships.

For many women, identity and status are linked with childbearing. In these circumstances, it can be socially and personally difficult to practise abstinence.

The central issue, says Lucy Mugisha of the women's NGO Action for Development in Uganda, "is the low status of women - their lack of rights within marriage, their lack of rights to property, their lack of education and, despite the economic contribution they make, their lack of economic strength".

The low status begins in childhood. "A girl is a wife in the home. She has to help the mother - fetching water, preparing supper, bathing the little ones, if it is the season for weeding and harvesting, she can be withdrawn from school. Despite all she does, parents see girls not as assets but as liabilities. They say "Why educate her when someone else will take her?"

Poverty and a lack of education and skills drive millions of women into prostitution. At a conference held in November 1989 by the Women and AIDS support network in Zimbabwe, six ex-prostitutes described the factors which had influenced their decision to take up prostitution. They included divorce, physical disasters such as drought, economic dependency, lack of alternative job opportunities, the inheritance structure and the existence of a ready market for their services. Prostitution was a solution to poverty and unemployment.

Young girls may be particularly at risk for HIV infection. They have little access to information and in some countries women can only receive contraceptive services when they are married.

But the high rate of teenage pregnancy and abortion in

many countries shows that young women do have sex - often without protection. Groups working with street children in Brazil report that very young girls sometimes have babies without even knowing how it happened.

In Zaire, one study reported that in the age group 15-30 four times as many young women as young men were infected with HIV. Over the age of 35, twice as many men as women were infected. This pattern reflects the fact that young women begin sexual activity at an earlier age than men. Many have partners who are several years older - and therefore more likely to have been exposed to HIV.

In the UK, a survey of 150 16-21 year old women in major cities found that, when having sex for the first time, many were reluctant but did not have the power to resist. A frequent explanation for allowing sex to occur was that "the time was right" for an unavoidable rite of passage into the adult world.

Because they lack the power to control these encounters, the young women also lack control over what happens about protection. The researchers believe the government's AIDS campaign ignores the unequal power relations in sexual encounters between teenage boys and girls. Advertising campaigns imply that protection is a simple matter of learning the risks and making a choice about precautions. Instead, the sex education girls receive should not just focus on mechanistic reproductive approaches, but also talk about relationships.

Research has shown that young women who do receive sex education are not likely to engage in sex any sooner or more frequently than their uninformed peers, but they are more likely to use contraceptives.

Not enough is understood about the course of HIV disease in women, which can lead to delays in diagnosis and treatment. In the United States, statistics show that women die on average about 10 months after diagnosis, compared with 13 months for men.

Amanda Heggs, a British woman with AIDS living in Denmark, had to lie to a hospital, saying that her partner was bisexual, in order to get an HIV test after a long period of illness. "no-one, except myself, had thought it possible that HIV could be the source of my health problems." Gillian, another HIV-positive UK woman, was sent to a psychiatrist for several months after years of illness could not be combated. In the end, she had to raise the possibility of HIV infection herself.

New research is needed to help women protect themselves and to understand the course of HIV infection in women. "AIDS is just the tip of the iceberg - of poverty, lack of access to adequate health care, disenfranchisement and discrimination," says Jonathan Mann. "The time has come not just to say no to unwanted sex, or unprotected sex, or unwanted conception - it is time to say no to inequality, to discrimination and to lack of choices."

Judith Mariasy is editor of WorldAIDS; Marty Radlett is author of the Panos Institute's mini-dossier AIDS and Children: A family disease.

Dykes To Watch Out For



A Letter to Her Honorableness St. Sybil

Dear St. Sybil and sisters,
 While reading the December issue, especially St. Sybil's response to Iwanna Puque, I realized you all missed the ONE great truth...about the recent election. We all know that it was really about backlash...the cry of an "endangered species" - the WHITE, HETEROSEXUAL MALE...and they all voted Republican.

The point is "they" wanted to show us ...the right (sic) wing, liberal, bleeding heart heretical misfits* (*queer, single parent, non-christian, pro-libber, etc., ad paque) that there was still enough testosterone in them ol' balls to stand-up...one last time, me thinks. Otherwise I loved your response - oh yeah...about this Stock the Pantry thing...No offense to needy sisters...But...are you sure that's all it is!...A PANTRY?!?!?

You ended paragraph 6 of your reply with an interrogatory, and a "maybe" in paragraph 7. Is HERLAND aware of something the rest of us are only beginning to suspect? If the Board decides on a BOOKS for GUNS drive in 1995...the Truth will be known.

G.M. Dix (See Six of One by Rita Mae Brown)

Dear Green Monkey,
 ...if I may call you by your first names... Thank you for your letter. It is unnecessary for me to be addressed as Her Honorableness, but I did like it. We enjoyed your letter too, but I think you mean "left" wing, not "right".

Anyway, let's guard against paranoia here, things are bad enough without that. (I know, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to getcha). We are running a Money for Books drive in '95; you bring the money, we'll trade for books. Actually, in the long run books are a stouter, more potent weapon in a revolution than guns, aren't they?

Keep those cards and letters coming in,
 Love,
 Sybil



BULLETIN BOARD

Lesbian-only counseling, group or individual. Contact Jo L. Soske, MEd/MHR/ICADC/LPC at 321-0134 for more information.

DESIGN CONTEST!!! Pride Network, Inc. has announced a design contest to pick the logo for the 1995 Pride T-Shirts. In addition to the design being used on the shirts, a \$100 cash prize will be awarded to the winning designer. The logo design must reflect 1995's theme, "Pride: From Silence to Celebration", which was selected by the National Pride Committee. Entries should be mailed to PNI at P.O. Box 12415, OKC, OK 73157-2415, prior to January 15, 1995. Contest participants may submit as many design ideas as they like, but each entry must be accompanied by a \$5 entry fee, payable by check or money order to PNI.

ACADYKES! The next acadyke potluck will be on January 21 in Norman at Shari Clifton and Carolyn Mahin's home, 1716 Caddell Lane, Norman. Call for directions at 366-6354. We'll be doing another reading selected by Vivien.

CALLING ALL TOOTERS AND BANGERS!! Wouldn't you like to see OKC have a marching band of its own for the Gay Pride March in June, 1995? We are having our first organizational meeting January 8, 1995 at 2 p.m. Call 794-3035 for address and directions. We are by no means professional (most of us have not played since high school), but we intend to make a big noise and have a lot of fun!

Contributors:

YOU ARE INVITED TO:
Saturday Vigil Mass 5:30pm.
Sunday High Mass 10:30am.
Wednesday Low Mass 7:00pm.



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 Ph./Fax (405) 755-8351

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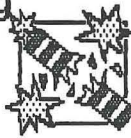



Kathleen Rankin
 Natasha Rice
 (405) 447-5111

Heritage Plaza
 1961 W. Lindsey
 Norman, OK 73069

JANUARY

1995

Doc Herland wishes you a New Year that is Joyous and Peaceful and Glad and Gay

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1  NEW YEAR'S DAY	2  New Year's Day HOLIDAY	3	4 Cleveland County NOW at the Norman Public Library 7pm	5	6	7 Peggy Johnson Concert in the Parlor 8 - 10 pm Clark Memorial UMC 5808 NW 23rd OKC
8 Pride Band Organizing Meeting 2 pm Call 405/794-3035 for directions	9  Joan Baez Born 1941	10	11  ALICE PAUL 1885 - 1977	12  TEACHERS MEETING 7 pm at Herland	13	14
15 Martin Luther King 1929 - 1968 * Board Meeting 4:30 pm	16 M. L. King Holiday Parade & March	17 OKC NOW at the Harvey House 6:30 p.m.	18	19  JANIS JOPLIN 1943 - 1970	20 PEGGY JOHNSON at Medina's in the Paseo 9:30-Midnight	21 Academic Dykes: Call 405/366-6354 for meeting details. In Norman
22 Roe v. Wade 1973	23  Elizabeth Blackwell 1821 - 1910	24	25	26  Angela Davis Born 1944	27	28
29	30	31  Jackie Robinson 1919 - 1972	<p>From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, as reported by Ms. Magazine: The S & L bailout alone could finance Aid to Families with Dependent Children in all 50 states for five years.</p> <p>Ms. Healthnote: Going for a mammogram? Avoid wearing antiperspirant that day. Aluminum, the active ingredient in most antiperspirants, may interfere with breast imaging.</p>			

HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES, INC.
2312 N.W. 39th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112
405/ 521-9696

Winter Hours: Saturdays 10 - 5; Sundays 1 - 5





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