

The

HERLAND VOICE

August, 1995

LONG AWAITED CHILD CUSTODY DECISION RULES IN FAVOR OF LESBIAN MOM

On July 18, 1995 the Oklahoma Supreme Court in a 5-3 decision reversed a lower court ruling against a lesbian mother. The decision comes three years after a Cleveland County district judge found the mother unfit and granted custody of the children to the father. The children are expected to return to their mother's home.

In the opinion authored by Chief Justice Alma Wilson, the Supreme Court said it found neither an allegation of unfitness nor any evidence establishing the mother's unfitness. The ruling by the district judge is "wholly without evidentiary support and clearly erroneous", the Supreme Court said and that the district court's order changing custody from the mother to the father "is an abuse of discretion."

In their decision, the Supreme Court said that the father failed to show that the mother's behavior had any adverse effect on the children. "We have carefully examined all the evidence to determine whether such proof was presented. We find that it was not," the Supreme Court said.

The Supreme Court disagreed with an earlier ruling from the Court of Appeals which upheld the change of custody based on the trauma that may result in the future because of disapproval from community members. "We do not agree," the Supreme Court said stating further that the evidence presented in the case did not prove a change of circumstance that directly and adversely affected the children.

What does this ruling mean for the lesbian and gay community of Oklahoma? Besides giving us all something to celebrate, the decision makes the law in Oklahoma very clear:

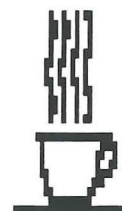
- 1) being a lesbian/gay parent by itself does not make you unfit
- 2) evidence must be presented that clearly shows that the parent's behavior is directly harming the children in the present
- 3) arguments based on some future harm to children because of the parent's behavior are without merit.

This ruling will give lesbian/gay parents a stronger legal footing should they find themselves in an unfortunate child custody proceeding. Hopefully, the decision will give adequate guidance to district courts so that future cases will not suffer the consequences of the Cleveland County case. YES! ☆

Yet another...

COFFEEHOUSE!

featuring... Talent from Tulsa!



WHEN: AUGUST 19

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

WHERE: HERLAND

We will be having another **cookout!** Herland will provide the **hotdogs** and you are invited to bring a **side dish** sufficient enough to feed several. Soda pop will be available for sale at 50 cents per can.

**COME JOIN US FOR AN
EVENING OF FUN AND
RELAXATION!**

HERLAND HOMECOMING

In October Herland will begin its second decade of retreats! Hundreds of wonderful women have created good times and outstanding memories at previous retreats, and the next retreat will be a **HOMECOMING** celebration with old friends and new activities.

If you have been to many retreats, **DO NOT MISS THIS ONE**, and if you have never attended a Herland retreat, **NOW IS THE TIME TO COME** and help us start our second decade.

So come to the **HOMECOMING RETREAT** this Fall and bring your memories of the past, enthusiasm for the present, and vision for the future. ☆

St. Sybil

Dear St. Sybil:

I'm sorry, and I know you told me not to, but I've been reading the Daily Disappointment editorial page again, and as usual it's got me confused. Listen to what I read on July 11, written by a columnist called Linda Bowles, talking about the effects of affirmative action: "This obsession with race has infiltrated and contorted every aspect of our public and private lives. We have rigged voting districts, test scores, hiring standards, college admissions, juries, educational standards, scholarships and contract awards."

Sybil, every instinct tells me that affirmative action is a good and necessary thing, but what about what she says here? And what about Clarence Thomas' argument that minorities and women are stigmatized by affirmative action, so that when they do get ahead they fear that people won't believe that it is due to merit and hard work. And what about all the people I know who say they know somebody who lost a job or a promotion to a black or a woman just because of their race or sex? Surely that is not right. Talk to me, Sybil, and help me figure it out. Thanking you in advance; I am your friend and fan.

Eliza Domuch.

Dear Eliza,

Affirmative action? Sure, right; like before affirmative action there was no gerrymandering, no race-based or gender-based jury selection, no race-based scholarships selection, no "whites only need apply"... Give me a break! Affirmative action? Jim Crow is more like it. I tell you, Eliza, the sanctimonious griping of those people opposed to affirmative action would be easier to tolerate if every once in a while they would acknowledge, however briefly and begrudgingly, the centuries of hard-core discrimination and total denial of access that women and racial minorities have borne. Does that writer really not know that what she describes is exactly what occurred with Jim Crow? There has always been affirmative action; it is just that until twenty years or so ago it was an affirmative elitism used to benefit white men only.

College admission? Colleges have always looked at race and gender, but prior to affirmative action it was usually to exclude. Jobs? You know the famous glass ceiling, the invisible barrier of sexism in the old-boys club which keeps women from advancing into higher echelons of power and prestige? Well, honey, a very few years ago, before the feminist and civil rights movements, and before affirmative action, that ceiling was about knee high. Those were the days when women routinely had to train men to become their supervisors - it makes my stomach hurt just thinking about it. For far too long race and gender were the primary consideration for admission anywhere, to jobs, colleges, restaurants, swimming pools, schools, even hospitals. Even cemeteries. The fact is that America is nowhere near advanced enough in its embrace of diversity that it should do away with a positive effort to include all of its people, everywhere and always.

As far as feeling stigmatized as a possible recipient of affirmative action, just because the policy exists, balderdash. ⇨

Sandra Day O'Connor, Paula Ginsberg and that idiot Clarence Thomas himself should spend exactly as much time worrying about being the beneficiaries of affirmative action - and of course they all three were, don't doubt that for a minute - as the six white guys with them on the Supreme Court should worry about benefiting from affirmative elitism and the old boys club; as they all six did.

And as for that dastardly old canard about people losing promotions or jobs to unqualified blacks and women, remember that people naturally look for excuses when they don't get jobs or promotions; and keep in mind also the self-serving bigotry that assumes that only white males are fully qualified for the jobs they seek.

I am reminded of a cautionary little tale people here like to tell, having to do with the white man's heaven. It seems three recently departed Oklahomans arrived at the pearly gates, where St. Peter greeted them with a warm smile and an entrance exam. He turned to the first, an elderly white man, and commanded him: Spell "dog" and define it. The old gentleman smiled, spelled d-o-g, defined it as a wolf-like critter, and was ushered proudly through the Pearlies. St. Peter then turned to the second person, another, younger white man, and commanded him: Spell "cat" and define it. The young man spelled c-a-t, defined it as a tiny tiger, and he too was ushered through the gates. Finally Peter turned to the third candidate for heaven, a cute little butch-looking black lesbian, and commanded: Spell "eleemosynary non-hierarchical sororal society", and define it.

And that, my dear, is the kind of "affirmative action" that the country will revert to in a heartbeat if positive affirmative action for women and minorities is eliminated. I hope you don't allow it to happen.

Yours with my fingers crossed, and stay away from that odious newspaper.

Sybil

Does your best friend miss out at HALLOWEEN?

The **Dog Costume Contest** at the Fall Retreat is your chance to let your dog's fantasies come true.

So bring your dog and creativity along with a small entrance fee to this year's Fall Retreat!



MUSIC REVIEW

by Jill Garner

Kim Richey

I just heard a new CD that I really like a lot. I first heard Kim Richey when I saw a video of hers on Country Music Television. However, there are only a couple of songs on the CD that I would describe as being country. Richey resides more in that realm reserved for singer/songwriters who don't fit into a nice neat category (Mary Chapin Carpenter and k.d. lang immediately come to mind). They're put into country at the record store, and played on country music radio if they're lucky enough to be played on the radio at all, although most aren't. But enough of my soapbox.

Richey has a great voice and I keep trying to figure out who she reminds me of. At times she reminds me so much of Karla Bonoff that it's uncanny. At other times I think Linda Ronstadt, no, Trisha Yearwood, no, that's not quite it either. But it doesn't really matter. She has a smooth, slightly deep voice that's strong, and it makes me think of other women singers who have that quality. She co-wrote or wrote every song on the album, and while her songs are somewhat simple snapshots of life, love, relationships and heartbreak, I like them a lot. She doesn't delve deeply into human emotions and experiences typical of Mary Chapin or the Indigo Girls' songs, but her songs reach me because they describe such universal feelings. Trying to outdrive heartache in **Those Words We Said**, Richey sings, "*No matter how I try I can't get far enough away, Every sad song on my radio sounds like it's custom made, By some devil on my shoulder that keeps whisperin' in my ear, And I still hear the echoes of those bitter words we said, And I could drive a million miles and never drive them from my head.*" I love heartbroken driving songs for some reason. I also love the line in **Here I Go Again**, as she endures yet another heartbreak; "*Sure it's for the best, And someday I'll laugh the whole thing off, But I'm not quite there yet.*" **Just Like the Moon** has some of the prettiest lyrics on the album. "*I sat outside one afternoon in an old lawn chair, And I watched the sun set off for business west somewhere, And the sky turned water color pink and gold and blue, And the stars all showed up one by one and we waited for the moon.*" It's a great album and every time I hear it I wish I were driving across the desert with the top down and this music on the tape deck really loud. It's driving music. Check it out.

Cheryl Wheeler - Circles and Arrows

For you Cheryl Wheeler fans (or those who would like to hear her), her album **Circles and Arrows** has been rereleased. It's some of her best work and is as good as her most recent album, **Driving Home**. ☆

IMPORTANT IMPORTANT IMPORTANT!!!!

Due to the rise in postage and other costs, it has become necessary for us to update our newsletter mailing list. If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter, please mail the following form to the Herland Voice in the enclosed envelope.

1. **Yes!** I wish to continue receiving the Herland Voice. My check of \$12 for an annual subscription is enclosed. _____
2. **Yes!** I wish to continue receiving the Herland Voice. I cannot pay \$12 at this time, but I have enclosed the following amount
_____.
3. **Yes!** I wish to continue receiving the Herland Voice. I cannot contribute at this time, but may do so at a later date _____.
4. **Yes!** I wish to continue receiving the Herland Voice. My check for \$25 to pay for my subscription and that of another sister who wants one is enclosed _____.

My current address is as follows:

Name _____

Address _____

Payments are due October 1995 and your subscription will run from October 1, 1995 to October 31, 1996. Make checks payable to Herland Sister Resources and indicate that it is for your subscription to

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

BULLETIN BOARD

LESBIAN-ONLY COUNSELING - group or individual counseling. For more information contact Jo L. Soske M.E.D./M.H.R./I.C.A.D./L.P.C. at 321-0134.

DOG SHOW! The Fall Retreat will include a Saturday afternoon Dog Show/Contest. Ribbons or certificates will be awarded in several categories. The judges will include veterinarian Debbie Scott. The entry fee will be \$2 per category. So bring your furry friends to the Fall Retreat for the show. Remember that all dogs must be on a lease and kept out of the kitchen and dining room. For further information contact Linda Stone at 329-6610.

CONTRIBUTORS

to THE VOICE



MAAT: *Following the principles of justice,
divine law and truth*

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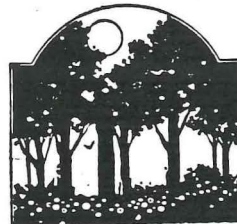
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Published by: Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 N.W.
39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112

Circulation: 1200

The Voice is offered as an open forum for community discourse. Articles reflect the opinions of the author and not necessarily those of Herland Sister Resources. Unsolicited articles and letters to the editor are welcomed and must be signed by the writer with full name and address. Upon request, letters or articles may be printed under a pseudonym or anonymously. Subscriptions to *The Voice* are free upon request. *The Voice* is printed on recycled paper.

Oklahoma Bisexual Network

The Oklahoma Bisexual Network (OBiN) is a new organization which aims to support, educate, and affirm the bisexual community as well as bisexual and bi-friendly individuals in the state of Oklahoma. In addition, we hope to become a reliable source for breaking down social stereotypes concerning the topic of bi-sexuality by creating an educational platform that people of all sexual orientations can call upon.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES FOR AUGUST:

Norman Chapter
Sunday, August 13 at 7 PM
Location: Mystic Forest Treasures

Stillwater Chapter
Friday, August 18 at 7 PM
Location: Call (405) 945-2903 for details

OBiN has two working chapters -- Norman and Stillwater. We hope to reactivate the OKC chapter, which for now is inactive. The Norman chapter meets the second Sunday of every month at 7 PM. Location is Mystic Forest Treasures, 1961 W. Lindsey. Since the business is closed on Sundays, this meeting is confidential and discreet. The Stillwater chapter meets on the third Friday of each month at 7 PM. For information on the Stillwater chapter, please call our 24-hour information line at (405) 945-2903 and leave a message for Hildy Overcash, who heads the Stillwater chapter. If you are interested in joining OBiN or would like more information, please call our 24-hour info line at (405) 945-2903, or Susan Eaton at (405) 524-2507. Send all correspondence to: OBiN, P.O. Box 2714, Norman, OK 73070.

SCHOLARSHIP!

Last spring, the Voice ran an announcement informing readers about the availability of a scholarship for the children of gay or lesbian parents. One of the recipients of this award was an Oklahoma resident.

Jon Dylan Soske, the son of Jo L. Soske received the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International Scholarship in the amount of \$250. The GLPCI wrote, "...We hope that this scholarship will convey to you that the larger community of lesbian, bisexual, and gay parents supports you in your efforts to complete your education. We are proud of the achievements of the young adults raised in our community and recognize that many of you have struggled with the additional burden of homophobia..."

CONGRATULATIONS JON!!

NOT IN OUR TOWN YOU DON'T!

Today's residents of Billings, Montana, appear to have little in common with the citizens of Denmark during World War II; except, it seems, courage, character and a large measure of decency. When Germany occupied Denmark, Hitler ordered all Jews to wear the Star of David at all times. The morning following the decree, the King of Denmark himself appeared publicly wearing the Star of David; great numbers of other Danes followed suit, and the requirement was soon dropped.

Now Montana, along with Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Wyoming, has been designated a "white homeland" by the Aryan Nation and growing numbers of kindred skinheads, Klan members and other white supremacists; and there have been a number of hate crimes in Billings; desecration of a Jewish cemetery, threatening phone calls to Jewish citizens, swastikas painted on the home of an interracial couple. In December 1993, a brick was thrown through the window of a Jewish family, strewn glass over 5-year old Isaac Schnitzer's bed. Someone had evidently taken offence at a menorah and other symbols of Jewish faith stenciled on the glass as part of the family's Hanukkah celebration.

Now the good citizens of Billings had had enough. One of them, an imaginative woman named Margaret McDonald, phoned her pastor and suggested that they have Sunday school children make paper cut-out menorahs for their own windows. The following week menorahs appeared in the windows of hundreds of Christian homes. Five days later, the local paper published a full-page drawing of a menorah, along with a general invitation for people to put it up. By the end of the week from six to ten thousand homes were decorated with menorahs.

There were many incidents of hate violence against the Christian population who displayed the menorah or other visible signs of support. When asked about the danger the town was incurring by its demonstration of solidarity with its Jewish citizens, police chief Wayne Inman said, "There's greater risk in not doing it."

The ugly incidents eventually waned, and people continue in their efforts to support one another against hate crimes. New friendships have formed, new traditions started, and greater mutual understanding and respect have been achieved. During the Passover holiday the following spring, 250 Christians joined their Jewish sisters and brothers in a traditional Seder meal; and last winter families all over Billings took out their menorahs to reaffirm their commitment to peace and religious tolerance.

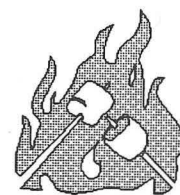
And that is what the King of Denmark, or one concerned woman, can do; if they have courage and a fierce commitment to justice.



Information from Fellowship, Jan/Feb 1995.

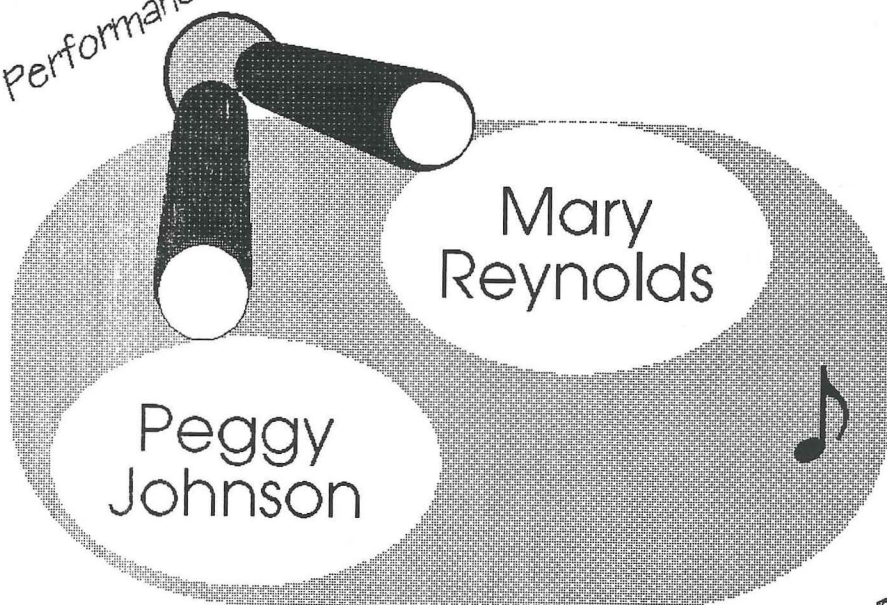
Don't Miss Herland's Homecoming!

Fall Retreat
October 27-29
Fountainhead State Park



Fabulous
Potluck
Dinner

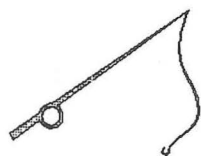
Performances By



Fun!!!

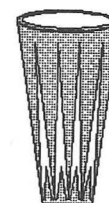
Old Friends

Fun!!!



Open Mic

New Friends

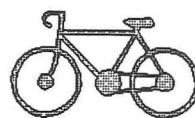


MORE!!!

Campfire
Sing-a-longs

Fun!!!

Workshops



Something For Everyone! Plan to Be There!

August 1995

Herland Sister Resources
 2312 N.W. 39th Street
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112
 (405)521-9696
 Hours: Saturdays 10 - 5, Sundays 1 - 5

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2 PFLAG founded, 1981	3	4	5
6 50th Anniv. of Hiroshima, 6pm, Mayflower Church	7	8	9	10 Norman PFLAG, St. Stephen's, 7pm	11	12 Radclyffe Hall, born 1880
13	14 O.G.L.P.C., 7pm, Oasis	15	16	17	18 Women's Suffrage, ratified 1920	19 Coffee House, 7pm
20 Herland Board Meeting, 4:30pm	21	22	23	24	25	26 Nat. Am. Women's Suffrage Assn. becomes League of Women Voters, 1920
27	28	29	30	31		



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