



# HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES

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HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES, INC.  
1630 NW 19, Oklahoma City, OK 73106

## BOARDS BATTER SHELTER FOUNDERS

by Suzanne Messing

For eight years Sandra Ramos sheltered battered women without pay and without funding. This year, when the annual budget for Shelter Our Sisters (S.O.S.), the program she founded in Teaneck, New Jersey, is \$345,000, the board fired her from her job as director.

Pat Reeves worked for a year as a volunteer with a battered women's program in Oklahoma. When the program was formally organized into a shelter she was hired as its first director. At the end of the first year the state Board of Mental Health was so satisfied that they doubled their appropriation. "The budget grew by 90 percent in the first year," Reeves said. But at the end of that year, Reeves, like Ramos, was fired by the board of directors.

Those stories are not unique. Kerry Lobel, acting director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence in Washington, D.C. said, "I can't think of a single state where this is not happening."

The pattern is alarming. Community women who struggled to provide sanctuary for wives, and who were finally considered good enough to run the shelters by local and state governments who gave them hundreds of thousands of dollars, are suddenly being judged not good enough by their own boards.

### Who is Sandra Ramos?

The Ramos story is the most dramatic because she founded one of the first shelters in the nation. In 1970, as a newly divorced mother of three, Ramos looked for

another young mother with children to share her house. The mother of one of Ramos' Sunday school students was the first person to respond. She told Ramos that her husband was beating her and that she had to get out of the house. When she moved out, and Ramos advertized for another roommate other battered women in need of immediate shelter called. Ramos it seemed, had found her mission.

Between 1971 and 1978 a hundred women and their children found refuge in Ramos' small three-bedroom house. Thousands more called. At one time in 1975, 23 people were packed into the one-story residence.

During this time Ramos was working as a waitress. Sometimes the women who came had funds and shared expenses. As word spread in the community about the activity in the purple house in Hackensack, New Jersey churches and individuals brought food and made contributions.

By 1973 Ramos was speaking to the public, asking others to take women into their homes. A few people, mostly formerly battered women, did. But it was becoming obvious that voluntary sheltering would never meet the need that existed for a refuge for abused women.

In 1975 Ramos began to appear before the county government asking for funds for a shelter. Nothing happened for two years. "People were still not talking about abused women. It was something that happened in the ghetto," Ramos recalled.

Then a series of events caused a turn-about. The city of Hackensack threatened to evict Ramos and the women she sheltered for overcrowding and violating the zoning code. Ramos said she would ask the women to leave only when they had another safe place to go. The press went to bat for Ramos.

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Simultaneously, Ann Klein, became head of the Department of Human Services in New Jersey. the press reported that Klein was "distressed by the delay in setting up shelters for abused women and their children." She appointed a special co-ordinator to facilitate the flow of federal funds. Soon \$100,000 was available in Ramos' area.

But her fight was not over. The freeholders considered giving money to a county-run agency. Again the press favored Ramos and at the beginning of 1978 she finally received funds and opened a shelter.

### Boardification

S.O.S. now owns a house with room for 35 people and supervises three half-way houses for women who are ready to leave the shelter but still have no permanent job or residence of their own.

To all appearances Ramos has built a highly successful agency. So why did the board fire her? The problem, Ramos says, is "boardification." Boardification is a word coined by her daughter Maria, now a law student at the University of Pennsylvania. Kerry Lobel agrees. This is how boardification works.

The shelter movement was very much a grass roots movement. When community women succeeded in getting funds from various governments one of the requirements was that they form boards. They usually chose women who had volunteered in shelters, formerly battered women, and other community people

for board membership. The first board was a balanced board," said Ramos. "It had working people, minority people and battered women." Lobel explained that as shelters need more funds to expand, boards often feel they need more people with clout in the community. "At first no one really wanted to serve on the board," Ramos remembered. "There was no prestige in working for battered women." But, said Lobel, as the budgets of shelters rise, "It is now a status symbol to serve on this board. It becomes a power board." Ramos says that a couple of people who recently served on the board of S.O.S. asked her to endorse them when they ran for office.

### Different visions emerge

Former legislators, as well as the lawyers and bankers who now dominate the boards have a very different vision of what shelters and their directors should be. Shelter founders, for example, view shelters as sanctuaries. They consider domestic violence to be an issue of power and control, reflecting women's unequal role in society, as well as of the violence of society. "The women who started the shelters cared about the empowerment of women and about women's rights," says Ramos. "They wanted to reform society according to women's ways."

The boards tend to see battering as an individual family problem. "They tend to see the shelters as hospitals," says Lobel. "They are not that."

In the Ramos case, the board wanted to institute compulsory psychological therapy for all residents of Shelter Our Sisters. Ramos thinks that therapy should be available, but voluntary. "The women who come have been abused enough. I don't want to add to the abuse by telling them what they must do," she said.

Ramos and other shelter founders believe that every abused woman who calls should be housed. The boards on the other hand, want to select which women are allowed to stay. Founders have also reported that boards want to expel some of the more "difficult" women already living in the shelters.

The question of atmosphere is another big issue. Under Ramos' direction there was always a refrigerator filled with snacks the women could give their children at any time. The board wanted the refrigerator locked. "That is taking empowerment away from mothers," she says.

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SEE THE FILM OETA BANNED

### No Bureaucrats Here

Ramos likes to dress informally, in peasants skirts or gauzy harem pants. The boards see directors as people in suits. "Boards think of directors as bureaucrats," Lobel says. "They want them to talk, dress and behave like bureaucrats."

That some of the founders of shelters are lesbians also irritates many of these boards. Reeves believes that was one of the reasons her contract was not renewed, although when she was hired, the board knew she was a lesbian.

"When faced with boardification, founders are often so committed to survival of the program, they are afraid to protest," says Lobel. Reeves and Ramos, however, have hired lawyers. The board settled with Reeves by giving her five months' wages. Ramos' case still hasn't had a hearing. However, a prominent criminal attorney, Frank Lucianna, who agreed to represent her, said, "I'm convinced she has an excellent case. I'm very confident she will prevail."

The results of the Ramos case are being closely watched by shelter workers and their supporters nationwide. According to Kerry Lobel, "the women who founded the shelters had vision. We must see to it that shelters remain safe places that offer women options, that don't lock women in."

New Directions For Women, November/December, 1986. (Contributed by Women's Studies Dept., University of Oklahoma.)

Dear Herland:

"How to Protect a Non-Traditional Relationship" (Vol.4 #10, Jan.'87) was an informative article that addressed a vital subject too often not addressed until it's too late. I strongly agree with its recommendations. However, I am concerned that the fees quoted may scare off many couples. The quoted fees are much too high for this region. There are competent tuned-in attorneys in the OKC area who will prepare the whole package mentioned - two durable powers and two simple wills, for a total cost of about \$250-\$350.

Nancy Kenderdine  
OKC

The Oklahoma premiere of Before Stonewall, a documentary film about lesbians and gays before the 1969 Stonewall riots, will be shown at the South Central Women's Studies Assoc. Conference. The conference is March 26,27,28 on the OU campus. The film was broadcast nationwide on PBS last month - with the exception of four states. Oklahoma, of course, was one of them.

This fascinating film examines the cultural, social, and political influences that led to the formation of a gay community/consciousness and eventually the gay civil rights movement. Rare film footage, candid interviews, and even clips from home movies render an overview of earlier eras when gay life was strictly an outlawed, underworld subculture.

The archivist-researcher for the film, Andrea Weiss, received an M.A. in Women's Studies at OU and will be present for the film's showing. The conference begins at 5:00 p.m. Thursday (the 26th) with a potluck dinner, and the film will follow. Make plans now to attend both.

More information will be given in next month's newsletter about the wonderful workshops and speakers scheduled for the conference.

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A NOTE, SHARED WITH YOU

To the Women of Herland-

I read about you in the Gaias' Guide 1987. I'm from out-of state, Davenport, IA, (Women's Work's, 1506 Harrison, Dav. IA 52803). Sorry I missed you - but at least your listing in the guide is working.

Good Luck!

*She was in the garden, sequestered behind bushes, as night came, just as the other children were called in, and so she stayed quiet, she said, as a mouse, so that she could be out there alone. And when the cries of the others had gone indoors, in this new silence she began to hear the movements of birds. So she stayed still and watched them. Then she felt, she said, the earth beneath her feet coming closer to her. And she began to play with the berries and the plants and finally to whisper to the birds.*

*And the birds, she said afterward, whispered to her. And thus when, hearing her mother's frightened voice, she appeared finally from the dark tangle of trees and shrubs, her face was so radiant that her mother, amazed to see this new joy in her daughter, did not tell her then what she knew she would soon have to say. That those bushes her daughter hid behind can also hide strangers, that for her shadows speak danger, that in such places little girls must be afraid.*

WOMAN AND NATURE

Susan Griffin

(reprinted from *Up & Coming*, January 1987).

### JASMINE AT THE FRET

JASMINE, once a duo, now a trio, is hardly just another music group. These three women become part of every audience they perform to and the audience becomes part of them. Perhaps it's their daring renditions of jazz standards, or their soulful blues tunes, or their perfect harmonies on their own poetic original material. Whatever it is that JASMINE has, it brings every type of audience to its feet and leaves them begging for more.

Michele Isam and Carol Schmidt formed JASMINE in 1978. In 1986 they added Lydia Ruffin, former lead vocalist of the highly acclaimed vocal swing group SPATZ. They are now performing not only JASMINE's original duo tunes, but with the addition of Lydia, have added a new dimension to the group. All three women are also skilled instrumentalists. Carol's piano playing is the backbone, the foundation

of JASMINE. She and Lydia are both accomplished acoustic guitarists. Michele's wizardry at the reeds is truly unbelievable as she plays alto and tenor sax, as well as clarinet. Her scat singing and soulful Motown undertones are joined by Carol's rich, slightly huskier voice, and Lydia's strong melodic harmonies.

JASMINE has performed with such entertainers as Mary Watkins, David Brenner, Joan Rivers, Doc Severinsen, Leon Russell, Buddy Rich, Papa John Creach, Leo Kottke, Judy Collins, and Nicolette Larson.

Their album, titled JASMINE, contains eight original JASMINE pieces as well as classic jazz tunes such as 'Tuxedo Junction' and 'Seafood Mama'.

JASMINE will be in performance at the Second Fret, 3009 N. Classen, OKC, 73106, February 7, 1987, at 9 pm. Tickets are \$5.

For ticket information, call 672-6459 or 528-2371.





Dear friends

I know how hard many of you have been hit in these uncertain economic times. Knowing this, I still must appeal to you, those who benefit from the existence of Herland. We are now in a severe struggle. Our finances are extremely low and our spirits are not much higher. Burnout has taken many of us from the active roster, and those of us who are left need your help.

I ask you to reflect on the time when there was no Herland, no newsletter, no efforts to get you records and books, no workshops, no spring and fall retreats, no listings in national guides, such as Places of Interest to Women, Gaia's Guide, and Gayellow Pages for a women's center such as ours in Oklahoma City, and no Herland library. If you find the time before to be no different than the time now, then this appeal is not for you and you need not read on. BUT, if you are aware of our efforts and find them worthy, please help us with our growth.

Our shelves are bare and we are not individually capable of handling the total financial load of operating Herland. Herland is a non-profit organization and we volunteer because we believe in the cause.

So I ask you. Do you want us to continue, and will you help? I know many of you have donated willingly of your time as well as your money. For this we thank you. Yet there are over 600 persons receiving the newsletter. If everyone on the mailing list would donate \$12, which is only \$1 per month, we would be able to stock shelves, try new things, plan concerts, sponsor workshops, and move to a place that is warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and we could have a place that we all would be truly proud of. Think of it. All we need to do to raise \$7200 is for 600 people to donate \$12. Please take us seriously and send a check or money order today, or drop by on a Saturday or Sunday with your donation, when we are open.

Sincerely,

BC/Herland Collective

**YOUR ANNUAL DONATION HELPS SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF HSR. A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION SERVING THE OKLAHOMA WOMEN'S COMMUNITY**

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Donations may be made via cash\_\_\_ or check\_\_\_. Please indicate if this is a monthly pledge\_\_\_.

Upon receipt of your annual donation, you will receive your Friends of Herland card, to be presented for store and concert discounts, and a receipt for your tax purposes.

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## NAMING

*Behind naming, beneath words, is something else. An existence named unnamed and unnameable. We give the grass a name, and earth a name. We say grass and earth are separate. We know this because we can pull the grass free of the earth and see its separate roots--but when the grass is free, it dies. We say the inarticulate have no souls. We say the cow's eye has no existence outside ourselves, that the red wing of the blackbird has no thought, the roe of the salmon no feeling, because we cannot name these. Yet for our own lives we grieve all that cannot be spoken, that there is no name for repeating for ourselves the names of things which surround what cannot be named. We say Heron and Loon, Coot and Kildeer, Snipe and Sandpiper, Gull and Hawk, Eagle and Osprey, Pigeon and Dove, Oriole, Meadowlark, Sparrow. We say Red Admiral and Painted Lady, Morning Cloak and Question Mark, Baltimore and Checkerspot, Buckeye, Monarch, Viceroy, Mayfly, Stonefly, Cicada, Leafhopper and Earwig, we say Sea Urchin and Sand Dollar, Starfish and Sandworm. We say mucous membrane, uterus, cervix, ligament, vagina and hymen, labia, orifice, artery, vessel, spine and heart. We say skin, blood, breast, nipple, taste, nostril, green, eye, hair, we say vulva, hood, clitoris, belly, foot, knee, elbow, pit, nail, thumb, we say tongue, teeth, toe, ear, we say ear and voice and touch and taste and we say again love, breast and beautiful and vulva, saying clitoris, saying belly, saying toes and soft, saying ear, saying ear, saying ear, ear and hood and hood and green and all that we say we are saying around that which cannot be said, cannot be spoken. But in a moment that which is behind naming makes itself known. Hand and breast know each one to the other. Wood in the table knows clay in the bowl. Air knows grass knows water knows mud knows beetle knows frost knows sunlight knows the shape of the earth knows death knows not dying. And all this knowledge is in the souls of everything, behind naming, before speaking, beneath words.*

WOMAN AND NATURE

Susan Griffin

(reprinted from *Up & Coming*, January 1987).

### OU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HOME GAMES

FEB. 7 Missouri 12:30 p.m.  
FEB. 18 Colorado 5:15 p.m.

### OU WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS

FEB. 20 Nebraska 7:30 p.m.

The OU Women's Gymnastic's Team is hoping for a fourth consecutive Big Eight Championship.

Kelly Garrison-Steves will open her sophomore season. She is a world class athlete and has competed internationally since 1979. She holds the record for most medals won at the U.S. Olympic Festival and finished fourth in Houston last summer.

### VIRGINIA SLIMS TENNIS TOURNAMENT

The tournament will be held at Summerfield Racquet Club Feb. 9-15. For more info, call 755-1130.



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## HOW DOES THE NEW TAX LAW AFFECT ME?

by Loral Reeves

Were you aware that Congress considered the Tax Reform Act of 1986 important enough to rename the 1954 Code? It is now the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and was the greatest major tax overhaul in thirty years. It not only restructured the fifteen-bracket rate tables for individuals down to only two rates; it did away with the "zero bracket amount" and increased the personal exemptions to \$1,900 for 1987 and even higher in later years. The top rate for an individual in 1987 and in later years will be 28% or, in some cases, up to 33%. Previously the top rate was 50%.

Of course, the question we all have is: **How, exactly, does the new tax law affect me?**

Following are fifteen questions the tax practitioner might ask you in response to your question. If your answer is "yes" to any of these, the Tax Reform Act of 1986 does more to you than lower your tax bracket.

### 1. Do you itemize deductions?

About the only category of itemized deductions **not** affected by the law is the deduction for charitable contributions. The highlights of changes in the other categories are:

#### MEDICAL EXPENSES

Old law - Medical expenses such as doctors, hospitals, drugs, insurance premiums and travel were deductible to the extent they exceeded 5% of your adjusted gross income.

New law - The same expenses are deductible, but only to the extent they exceed 7.5% of your adjusted gross income.

#### TAXES

Old law - State and local sales and excise taxes were deductible along with state income taxes and real and personal property taxes.

New law - State and local sales and excise taxes are no longer deductible. All other taxes are deductible as before.

#### INTEREST

Old law - Virtually all interest on indebtedness of the taxpayer was deductible as an itemized deduction, if it was not a business deduction. This included interest on your home mortgage, credit cards and consumer loans.

New law - The only non-business interest deductible under the new law is interest on residential property, which includes your home and one other residence, if you have one.

#### MISCELLANEOUS DEDUCTIONS

"Miscellaneous deductions" is the most affected category of itemized deductions. The items included in this category are expenses such as professional and union dues, lock box rent when used to store investments, tax return preparation fees and various business and investment expenses. In 1987 and after, the items in this category are deductible only to the extent they exceed 2% of your adjusted gross income.

#### STANDARD DEDUCTION

If you don't itemize deductions, you will be entitled to a standard deduction, the amount of which is determined by your filing status:

Married filing jointly	\$5,000
Head of Household	4,400
Single	3,000
Married filing separately	2,500

In other words, if your itemized deductions total less than your allowed standard deduction amount, you are better off taking the standard deduction.

### 2. Do you have employee business expenses?

Employee business expenses are expenses such as travel, meals, lodging and entertainment expenses incurred in the course of performing your job. If your employer reimburses you for this type of expenses they are adjustments to income, but only to the extent they are reimbursed. In other words, any expenses your employer does not reimburse must be included in miscellaneous itemized deductions subject to the 2% floor mentioned earlier. However, only 80% of your expenses for meals and entertainment can be included in miscellaneous itemized deductions.

### 3. Did you relocate because of a job change?

Expenses incurred to change your residence at least thirty-five miles farther away from your old place of employment for the purpose of changing jobs are still deductible. However, they must be included in miscellaneous itemized deductions subject to the 2% floor instead

of adjustments to income as in the past.

#### **4. Do you have an IRA?**

In the past, contributions to an IRA (individual retirement account) were deductible as an adjustment to income, limited for the single person to the lesser of \$2,000 or 100% of earned income. Income earned on an IRA is not subject to income tax until it is withdrawn. Beginning in 1987, you must meet certain requirements to deduct your contribution to your IRA.

Your contribution is fully deductible if you are not an active participant in an employer-sponsored qualified plan. If you do participate in a qualified plan, you may still deduct all or part of your contribution to your IRA. For the single person, if your adjusted gross income is less than \$25,000, you may deduct all of your contribution. If your adjusted gross income is between \$25,000 and \$35,000, a prorata portion of your contribution is deductible. Even though you might not be able to deduct the amount of your contribution to your IRA, as when you are a participant in a qualified plan and your adjusted gross income is more than \$35,000, you may still defer the income tax on earnings of your IRA provided you don't contribute more than \$2,000 or 100% of your earned income in any one year.

#### **5. Are you married?**

The deduction for two-earner married couples filing a joint return is no longer available.

#### **6. Do you receive or pay alimony?**

Alimony payments are deductible by the payor and taxable to the payee provided they are not to continue beyond the payee's death. Under old law, this provision had to be specified in the divorce instrument to be deductible/taxable. Now, effective retroactively to instruments executed or modified after January 1, 1985, the requirement that it be written in the divorce instrument no longer applies. Therefore, some payors of alimony could amend previous returns and apply for a refund. Recipients should be aware that this could generate taxable income for them for previous years.

#### **8. Do you own a business?**

Business deductions for depreciation are now subject to tighter rules. You are no longer entitled to accelerated depreciation on real property, and the rules for cost recovery on personal property have been tightened. Also, the business investment tax credit for tangible personal property has been repealed.

Keep in mind, too, that only 80% of business meals and entertainment will be deductible.

A sole proprietor is now entitled to a deduction of 25% of the cost of medical insurance premiums as a business deduction if she is not covered by another group policy. The remaining 75% is included in medical expenses.

#### **9. Do you participate in investing or business activities which generate capital gains or losses?**

Effective this year the 60% capital gain exclusion is no longer available on net long-term capital gains. The effective tax rate on capital gains, then, will be the same as on ordinary income. If you're receiving collections on installment sales which are capital gains, the new law applies to proceeds received after 1986. In other words, you cannot take the 60% exclusion just because the sale was made before 1987.

#### **10. Do you have interests in business ventures aside from your regular occupation or profession?**

If you do not "materially participate" in the activity (the IRS is to define "material participation" later) it will be considered a "passive activity." Congress has written a whole new set of rules concerning passive activities which basically provide that any losses from activities of this type cannot be used to reduce taxable income from "non-passive" activities or portfolio income (interest, dividends, capital gains, etc.) Disallowed losses can be carried forward to future years indefinitely.

#### **11. Do you have rental real estate?**

Losses from rental real estate are

considered passive losses under the new law. However, an individual will be allowed to offset up to \$25,000 of other types of income with losses from real estate rental activities if she actively participates in the rental activity and owns at least 10% of the property during the entire year. This allowed loss decreases when the individual's adjusted gross income exceeds \$100,000.

Remember, too, that only straight-line depreciation is available for real property placed in service after 1986.

**12. Do you expect to receive unemployment compensation this year?**

Unemployment compensation is now fully taxable.

**13. Are you 65 years old or older?**

You no longer can take an additional personal exemption for being 65 years old or older. However, if you take the standard deduction, your deduction is increased by \$750.

**14. Are you blind?**

The personal exemption for blindness is repealed, too. Again, the standard deduction is increased, instead.

**15. Can you be claimed as a dependant on your parent's return?**

You no longer can claim your personal exemption on your return if you are claimed on your parent's return. Also, your standard deduction is limited.

We're having to rearrange our way of thinking in terms of income taxation. Take caution in filling in your new form W-4 for your employer, and keep good records!

**Beverly K. Evans, M.S.W.**  
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