

Herland

VOICE

December, 1999

DEAR SANTA,

I have been very good all year, and am writing to ask you for just one present this Christmas: the same rights and privileges for me, a lesbian, that heterosexuals enjoy. And what is heterosexual privilege, you ask? I'll tell you.

▼ **Marrying.....** which includes the following privileges:

Public recognition and support for an intimate relationship (e.g. receiving cards or phone calls celebrating your commitment to another person; supporting activities and social expectations of longevity and stability for your committed relationships.

Paid leave from employment and condolences when grieving the death of your partner/lover .

Inheriting from your partner/lover/companion automatically under probate laws.

Sharing health, auto, and homeowners' insurance policies at reduced, "family" rates

Immediate access to your loved ones in cases of accident or emergency.

▼ **Kissing/hugging/dancing/being affectionate** in public without threat or punishment.

▼ **Talking about your relationship and what projects, vacations, family planing** you and your lover/partner are creating.

▼ **Not questioning your normalcy, sexually or culturally.**

▼ **Expressing pain** when a relationship ends and having other people notice and attend to your pain.

▼ **Adopting children, foster-parenting children.**

▼ **Being employed as a teacher** in pre-school through high school without fear of being fired any day because you are assumed to corrupt children.

▼ **Raising children** without threats of state intervention, without children having to be worried which of their friends might reject them because of their mother/s sexuality and culture.

▼ **Dating the person of your choice** in your teen years.

▼ **Living with your partner and doing so openly** to all - i.e., putting her picture on your desk at work.

▼ **Receiving validation** from your religious community.

▼ **Receiving social acceptance** from neighbors, colleagues, new friends.

▼ **Not having to hide and lie** about women-only social activities.

▼ **Working without always being identified** by your sexuality/culture - e.g., you get to be a farmer, brick layer, artist, Realtor, etc. with being labeled the heterosexual farmer, the heterosexual Realtor, etc.

I thank you in advance, Santa, and look forward to tripping the light fantastic - without causing a sensation - with my sweetie to the strains of Miss Brown to You at Opening Night.

Yours, Maggie Mae

□

HELP WANTED

Are you looking for a place to contribute to the Oklahoma women's community? Would you like to be more involved in Herland? Volunteers are needed for all areas of Herland's work - staffing the center on weekends, planning and helping to host social events, writing for the newsletter, maintaining the building, coordinating cultural and educational events and serving on the Board of Directors.

Give us a call at 521-9696, drop by on the weekend and talk with the volunteer on duty or send us a note with your name, address, phone number and email and let us know what you'd like to do. Remember Herland is an all volunteer organization so if it takes a while for someone to get back with you, just take that as a sign of how much you are needed!

Board meetings are always open to the public so just stop by Herland at 4:30 P.M. on the 3rd Sunday of any month. The next meeting will be on December 19. □



Happy New Year!

Whether you think it's the first day of a new millennium, the first day of the last year of the millennium or the first day of the rest of your life.....

Celebrate the day at the

Herland Open House
January 1, 2000
2 P.M. - 4 P.M.

We'll have traditional black-eyed peas and cabbage. You can bring your own special New Year's dish to share.

See you there!

ST. SYBIL

Sybil Ludington, Matron Saint of the Forgotten Woman, (she did everything Paul Revere did, earlier and better, and got how much recognition for it???) is an occasional contributor to this space.

Dear St. Sybil:

How about a brief lesson in feminism and related topics? I missed out on the "consciousness raising" gatherings of the 70's and 80's, for the most part because I didn't really understand what they were for. As a kid I remember looking at newspapers and other print media and thinking it odd that so many men got their pictures in for all sorts of reasons while female images were mostly restricted to the "Society" and "Home and Garden" pages. Yet, in my real world wimmin were the shakers and movers.

I've been around feminists for many years, some more radical than others. There were times when I could not hear their message because the messenger violated/challenged some of my "core beliefs" and at the time I was unwilling or unable to go or look "in there".

So, Sybil, now I'm ready, but where do I start looking? Can you help me? Is there any feminist instruction in my future?

Yours,

Hope Phull

Dear Hope,

Herland had a "consciousness raising" group many years ago; and if you could get a number of friends to commit to one night a week for four months (yep, it's a lot) it's possible they would do it again. Heaven knows, my new friend Bella, Matron Saint of Exuberant Integrity and Big Hats, is quite disturbed by the apathy of American wimmin these days. As am I.

Bella has helped me create a very basic reading list for you, almost all of which is doubtless available in the Herland lending library. These will not only introduce you to feminism, they will give you a good idea of what it was like in America before the Second Wave of feminism. (Today's "post-feminist" era is really a giant step backwards to pure sexism, and will, Goddess willing, be followed by a Third Wave that will last longer than - good grief! - one short generation.)

Easy reading, (invigorating, animating, infuriating, mind expanding, epiphanizing, consciousness raising, the great "aha! creating):

The Women's Room, a novel by Marilyn French

From Housewife to Heretic; autobiography of Sonia Johnson
Sisterhood is Powerful, An Anthology Edited by Robin

Morgan

Masculine/Feminine, Readings in Sexual Mythology and the Liberation of Women, edited by Betty Roszak and Theodore Roszak

The Descent of Woman, by Elaine Morgan (will forever change the way you look at evolution and "pop" anthropology)

Herland, a utopian novel by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (from the first wave of feminism)

Lesbian Woman, by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon

Harder work, but worth it: good core feminist theory

The Second Sex, by Simone de Beauvoir

Feminine Mystique, by Betty Friedan

Home Girls, A Black Feminist Anthology edited by Barbara Smith

The Female Eunuch, by Germaine Greer

Ain't I a Woman: black women and feminism by bell hooks

Lesbian Nation by Jill Johnston

Sexual Politics, by Kate Millett

Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, by Suzanne Pharr

Other writers to explore: Andrea Dworkin, Adrienne Rich, Jewelle Gomez, Audre Lorde, Mary Daly, Vivian Gornick, Susan Brownmiller, Gloria Steinem, Susan Griffin, Phyllis Chesler, Marge Piercy...

Poetry: Adrienne Rich, Marge Piercy, Ntosake Shange, Chrystos (ok, Chrystos isn't that purely feminist, but you won't regret it, she is divinely erotic. Whew. Makes me sorry I'm purely spirit these days!).

So, Hope: Have fun! I envy you, discovering these wonderful books for the first time.

In radical sisterhood,

Sybil

□

WOMEN'S TWO SPIRITS SUPPORT GROUP

Are you a lesbian woman of Native American or First Nations descent? Are you the friend, family or spouse of someone who is? Then come and join our new group developed just for you!

At our first organizing meeting the group decided to make this support group a women's only safe space. (I feel it is important for you to know that there is also another local two-spirits group that has been formed for all genders to attend. You can find out more about that group by contacting the Ahalaya Native Health Center.)

Our women's group will be meeting each month on the 1st Saturday of the month at 7:00 P.M. Meetings will be held at Herland Sister's Resources, 2312 N.W. 39th St.

At the December 4th meeting we are making Medicine Bags and talking about their role in the Native American culture. Laura Choate (Choctaw) will be leading this session and sharing her wisdom on this subject. Megweech to Laura for her work!

The month of January (on Jan. 1st) we will also have an exciting meeting. Arrangements have been made to show the film "Honored By The Moon". This is a film made about the very first Annual National Two-Spirits Gathering ever held. Please come and enjoy this special opportunity to learn about a unique time in the history and development of the Native American/First Nations Two-Spirit community!

Many blessings to Herland Sisters Resources for the use of their facility and to the Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force for the use of their film.

In the Spirit of the Circle,

Denise Smith

□

DUSTBOWL LULLABY

by Nancy Nesser

Almost two years after the project was approved by the Board, *Dust Bowl Lullaby*, the CD produced to benefit Herland, will be available by mid-December. Combining the time and talent of over 30 individuals and the generous sponsorship of 46 donors, the project includes 12 original songs and 1 reworked traditional song. The original works represent some of the best songwriters who are "under the radar" of the popular culture.

Songwriters on the project include Wende Allyn, Wanda Jean, Tony Jacob, Nancy Scott, Donna DeSalvo, Peggy Johnson, Cuchla, Louise Goldberg, Dr. Jan Rosenberg, Diane Fashing and Donna Henschell. Performances by Wende, Wanda, Darena, Mary C. Reynolds, Donna, Peggy, Cuchla, Freefall, Louise Goldberg, Dr. Jan and Julia Robinson are featured. Special guest performers include Elyse, Nancy Scott, Emily Kaitz, Terri Hoersch and Kristall Bright.

Musical styles of all stripes are represented. Jan Rosenberg's composition "Wagon Wheel" showcases her intricate acoustic guitar technique. Although it was recorded in one take, it sounds much too big and complicated to be played all at one time.

Next on the continuum of complexity is Louise Goldberg's song, "A Love Gone By." By a stroke of luck and good timing, her grand piano was recorded live in the sanctuary at Mayflower Church. Her vocals were added later.

Peggy Johnson's contribution, "Dust Bowl Lullaby" features parts performed entirely by Peggy. She plays guitar, bass guitar and sings. There is a surprise at the end of her song courtesy of Elyse.

Julia Robinson belts a song written by her friend Diane Fashing and arranged by Louise Goldberg. Louise, playing piano and bass, is joined by her Miss Brown to You bandmate, Elyse, for a classy three piece jazz ensemble sound.

Before Wende Allyn took off for the East coast (then the West coast), she recorded a couple of songs and left them with me. I took advantage of her absence and added parts by Mary C. Reynolds, Emily Kaitz, Elyse, and Kristall Bright. When Wende passed through on her way somewhere else, I had her fix her guitar tracks so that we could use it on the project.

Wanda Jean's raucous Tex-Mex blues style comes out loud and clear on her theme song, "Livin' in a Man's World." Wanda gets help from some good women, Terri Hoersch, Elyse, Donna D. and Wende Allyn.

Mary C. Reynolds interpreted "Poco," written by our Austin friend Nancy Scott. Mary plays lead, rhythm and bass guitars and sings the lead. She got rhythmic assistance from Elyse and harmonic assistance from Nancy Scott and Louise Goldberg.

Cuchla donated her song, "Back Door to Heaven" to the project. The song has enjoyed great popularity in the Oklahoma City women's community. Joining Cuchla in the studio were Kristall Bright, Wanda, and Elyse.

FreeFall recorded "Jazz Dancer," a song written by Donna Henschell of the Fayetteville band, Still on the Hill. Their trademark harmonies counter the jaunty bass and piano accompaniment. Rhonda Smith adds a fabulous concertina (aka "squeezebox") solo, which was recorded in one incredible take.

Darenda assembled an excellent band to back her on "Follow Your Angel." The band included Terri Hoersch on bass and Dana Jo Cox on drums. The song is the composition of Oklahoma City songwriter Tony Jacob. Special thanks to Tony for allowing us to use his song.

Donna DeSalvo has the honor of having the most rock and roll song on the project. "Love You Always" features a drum solo by Elyse, MIDI programming by Louise, guitar and vocals by Donna and back up vocals by Kristall and Nancy.

The last song on the CD, "The Water is Wide" features new verses to a very old tune. The lead vocal is performed by Sharon Doar from Church of the Open Arms. Donna DeSalvo plays guitar. Kristal and Nancy sing harmony and a choir of 10 others join for the last chorus.

Elyse had a vision for the CD covers and took Pat Reaves out with a camera to capture some true Oklahoma scenes. Graphic artist David laid out the photos and credits and designed the artwork on the disc itself.

We hope to have the CDs available at Herland and several area stores before Christmas. Locations that are confirmed are Music Go Round, just south of NW 23rd Street on Meridian and Diversity, just east of Indiana on NW 16th Street. A formal release party will be scheduled after the first of the year.

COALITION POLITICS: THE WORK THAT FUELS PROGRESSIVE CHANGE

By Kerry Lobel, Executive Director, NGLTF

Last month, the folks at the Lambda Book Report asked me to write a short article about a book or books that had informed my life as an organizer. One of my favorite picks was "Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology," edited by Barbara Smith. My copy is well worn and the essay by Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century" is especially dog-eared.

The essay stems from a talk Reagon gave in 1981 at the beginning of that decade and her argument was both simple and profound: our need for each other, our ultimate interdependence, creates a political atmosphere particularly conducive to coalition building. She argues that by building coalitions, we move beyond our own comfortable rooms and into a world where social change is truly possible.

She knows, as most of us do, that the work of coalition building for social change pinches and pulls. She writes, "Coalition work is not work done in your home... And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate the success of the coalition whether or not they feel good when they get there. They're not looking for a coalition, they're looking for a home! They're looking for a bottle with some milk in it and a nipple, which doesn't happen in a coalition. You don't get a lot of food in a coalition. You don't get fed a lot in a coalition. In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home. You can't stay there all the time. You go the coalition for a few hours and then you go back and take your bottle wherever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more."

Reagon challenges us to move beyond our own safety and to unbar the doors of the rooms that divide us from each other, to move freely and intentionally from room to room. To do so, will require some of us to feel uncomfortable, but our discomfort may be a sure sign that something is changing around us.

One of the places needing changing is the leadership of our GLBT movement. Our movement's leadership, to be blunt, lacks diversity. Although many national GLBT groups have closed the gender gap in leadership positions, few have crossed the race line. People of color in leadership positions abound, many running local and national nonprofits in the HIV/AIDS movement, others serving as elected or appointed officials, others still working in non-GLBT social change organizations. But overall, the leadership

ranks of the largest GLBT organizations do not reflect the racial diversity of American society. In fact, only one GLBT organization, LLEGO, is headed by a person of color.

At NGLTF, we are trying to do our part to unbar the doors. We recently convened the National Leadership Roundtable to discuss the barriers to people of color leadership of the GLBT movement. We're looking at ways to strengthen local people of color GLBT groups - and are calling on others to do the same. We also were pleased to recently receive a \$200,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to study the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender elderly, people of color and those who are poor or on limited incomes.

As Reagon argues, by building coalitions, we have moved beyond our own comfortable rooms and into a world where social change is truly possible. That's what progressive movements are all about.

And that is why we who are lucky enough to labor in a progressive movement come to work every day. □

Events Around Town

Saturday, December 11, 5:30 PM -- Herland Supper Club meets at Tommy's in North Park Mall for Italian food.

Saturday, December 11, 9:00 PM -- Peggy Johnson at Diversity Coffee Shop, 1739 NW 16, OKC.

Saturday, December 11, 9 PM -- The Therapy Sisters (with Mary Catherine Reynolds and Elyse) at the Blue Door, 2805 N. McKinley, OKC,

Sunday, December 19, 7 PM -- Partners Christmas Party with a number of local performers, 2805 NW 36, OKC

Friday, December 31 -- Miss Brown To You at Opening Night at the Arena Theater in Stage Center.

Saturday, January 1, 2 - 4 PM -- Herland Open House, 2312 N.W. 39, OKC

Saturday, January 1, 7 P.M. -- Women's Two Spirit Support Group at Herland, 2312 N.W. 39, OKC



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