

Herland

VOICE

March, 2001

HERLAND LEGAL DEFENSE FUND PROFESSIONAL REFERRAL REGISTER

The Herland Legal Defense Fund has had a rash of calls recently from people needing information and assistance, and in response we are developing an information packet to furnish to callers and to make available throughout the community. We also are preparing, for committee use and referral, a list of professionals interested in offering legal and other assistance.

In addition to information about Herland in general and the HLDF in particular, the information packet will provide guidelines and forms for applying to HLDF for financial assistance; a brochure on parental rights and a layman's guide to the rights won through the Fox v. Fox and Hall v. Maldonado cases.

Often people fighting for custody of their children need emotional bolstering as well as legal help; therefore we are compiling a list of counselors and mental health providers as well, of course, as attorneys. We ask that our referral professionals be willing to work with their clients financially, including liberal use of payment plans rather than large down payments, and possibly reduced fees, especially for initial consulting.

If you are interested in being on the HLDF confidential professional referral list, please call Herland at 405/521-9696 or email Herland@mailroom.com. Thank you. □

GLSEN COMING OUT PARTY

The Oklahoma chapter of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network will host a Coming Out Party on Saturday, March 24, 2001, from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM at The Center, 2135 NW 39th Street to introduce Oklahoma GLSEN to the people of Oklahoma. All those interested in the OKC GLSEN chapter and its work are invited to drop by and get to know the members of Oklahoma GLSEN and their hopes and plans for the community.

Kevin Barker has been invited to share his experience of starting a Gay-Straight Alliance at Jenks High School. Kristen White, GLSEN's Midwest Regional Director, will discuss developments on the national level and pass along information regarding the victories that other chapters have experienced around the nation. Drop in anytime between 6:30 PM and 8:30 PM. Refreshments will be provided. □

AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST LESLIE FEINBERG TO SPEAK AT OU

Renowned author and activist Leslie Feinberg will speak at the University of Oklahoma on Thursday, March 8, 2001 at 7:00 PM. Her speech, "Trans Liberation: The Basis For Unity," explains how transgender oppression confines all people and explores the deep connections between sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. The event in Meacham Auditorium of the Oklahoma Memorial Union is free and open to the public.

Feinberg is the author of the novel *Stone Butch Blues* (Firebrand, 1993), and several nonfiction works. *Stone Butch Blues* quickly became wildly popular the United States and has been translated into Chinese, German and Dutch. The novel won the prestigious American Library Association Award for Gay and Lesbian Literature and a LAMBDA Literary Award in 1994. Her nonfiction work, *Transgender Warriors: Making History From Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Beacon), is the first analysis of the historical roots of transgender oppression. (continued inside)

**Herland Spring
Retreat**
April 13-15
Roman Nose State
Park

 *Finish your taxes early
and come celebrate
Spring in a community of
Women* 

 **Herland Supper Club**
Saturday, March 10th, 5:30 p.m. Meet
at Herland and go out to eat.

SAINT SYBIL

Dear Fellow Saints and Sinners,

The *Herland Voice* and I received a long letter recently, reproaching me for my apparent opposition to Wanda Jean Allen's execution. The letter was signed "Disappointed". Disappointed makes several points, including:

"The case involving convicted murder Wanda Jean Allen has been through every Oklahoma court available, denied clemency by the Pardon and Parole, and the United State Supreme Court refused her appeal"

"I wonder how you'd feel if the murdered girl were YOUR sister, YOUR girlfriend, YOUR mother?"

A low IQ doesn't necessarily mean you can't tell the difference between right and wrong. Especially when it comes to murder."

"It embarrasses me to be an upstanding, decent, hard-working, out-of-the-closet lesbian when I see our kind defending someone whom so deservedly doesn't deserve it."

"Disappointed" is saying what she and a great many other people feel about capital punishment. What I want to tell her, and the others, is, that it doesn't matter. Feelings don't matter in issues of this magnitude. Actually, if feelings and opinion did matter, anti-death penalty people would win the debate hands down; but *it doesn't matter.*

All the details are beside the point. The IQ of the person put to death, whether 60 or 160, - doesn't matter. Whether the person put to death is guilty or innocent - doesn't matter. Whether the crime involved premeditation or was in the heat of passion - doesn't matter. Whether \$800 or \$800,000 was spent on the accused's defense - doesn't matter. Whether the accused has a "dream team" on defense, or whether the defense attorney naps through the trial - doesn't matter. Whether racism is rampant in the system, - doesn't matter. Whether the Pope thinks the death penalty is wrong - or Governor Keating thinks it is just - doesn't matter. Whether the executed is winsome with a smile as big as all outdoors or is ugly as sin - doesn't matter. Whether the executed is 61 or 16 at the time of the crime - doesn't matter.

All of those things may make it harder, or easier, to deal with execution, but - they don't matter. What does matter, the only thing that matters, is that no matter what, it is dead wrong and a horrible offense against life and the Universe, to kill a helpless human being in cold blood. It absolutely does not matter what they have done or might do in the future. It is wrong, no matter how legal the killing is.

A few of the many adjunct wrongs inflicted by capital punishment are the extreme harm it does to the family and loved ones of the executed; the false hope for peace and closure it gives to the families of the original victims; the brutalizing effect executions have on all of society; the pain and scars it inflicts on those involved in the death scene itself - the guards, wardens, chaplains, and other inmates.

That old slogan, cliché, bumpersticker, is absolutely true: It is *wrong* to kill people to show that killing people is wrong - or for any other reason. Wrong Wrong. Wrong. And that's the truth.

St. Sybil

□

IN OKLAHOMA, THE QUALITY OF MERCY IS STRAINED...

by MOC

The Constitution of the State of Oklahoma requires our Pardon and Parole Board to make an impartial investigation and study of applications for commutations, pardons or paroles. (Art. 6, ec.10). This obligation clearly implies openness to the possibility that good reasons might exist to commute a death sentence to life without parole. Yet this Board has not once seen fit, since our state began executions again in 1990, to recommend clemency in capital cases.

At one time or another it has rejected:

- evidence of possible innocence;
- developmental disability;
- sincere repentance;
- religious conversion;
- exemplary conduct in prison;
- contributions to the quality of prison life;
- family needs;
- inadequate or incompetent defense counsel;
- unfair prosecutorial conduct;
- lack of jury understanding about the meaning of life without parole;
- proof that the person before the board received a death sentence when the actual killer was given life;
- recognition by federal judges that executive clemency was in order;
- requests for clemency by *victims'* family members; and
- appeals for mercy by prison chaplains, state religious leaders, and other ministers.

On March 1, the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole board recommended clemency for Phillip Dewitt Smith. The recommendation now goes to Gov. Keating who must make the final decision. The last time the Board approved a request for clemency was in 1966.

Apparently no change for the good, however dramatic or enduring, in the life of a prisoner; and no problem, however serious, in that person's trial, can convince the Board to recommend clemency in death penalty cases. □

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The Voice is published by: Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 N.W. 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112. 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 although a donation is requested to meet publication and distribution costs.

I have a bunch of law school stuff, review materials and the like, that would be great for either a first year student or someone getting ready for the bar. Contact Nancy at njnesser@aol.com or 942-1425

Individual, couples or family counseling. Accessible rates. Call for a Wednesday evening appointment. Jo L. Soske, Phd, LPC, CADC 879-2226

FEINBERG AT OU (continued from pg 1)

Feinberg is a national leader of Workers World Party, and a Managing Editor of Workers World newspaper. S/he is well-known in the U.S. and many other parts of the world as an activist who works to help forge a strong bond between the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities. As a trade unionist, anti-racist and socialist, Feinberg also organizes to build strong bonds of unity between these struggles and those of movements in defense of oppressed nationalities, women, the disabled, and the working class movement as a whole. Feinberg has worked for more than 25 years in defense of the sovereignty, self-determination and treaty rights of Native nations and for freedom of political prisoners in the U.S. S/he is an internationalist and has been part of the anti-Pentagon movement since the U.S. war against Vietnam.

The event is sponsored by the Society for Women Students and Supporters; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Friends; Speakers Bureau; Student Affairs; Union Programming Board; and the Human Diversity Committee of the Graduate Student Senate (administrative and student groups at the University of Oklahoma). □

HERLAND SPRING RETREAT

APRIL 13-15, ROMAN NOSE STATE PARK

Please choose the registration amount most appropriate for you. On-site registration will be \$65. The deadline for pre-registration is April 10 and registration is non-refundable

Single Person's Annual Income	Pre-registration per person	Household Annual Income
under \$6,500	\$15	under \$13,300
\$6,500 - \$13,250	\$25	\$13,300 - \$18,000
\$13,250 - \$19,500	\$35	\$18,000 - \$26,000
\$19,500 - \$30,000	\$45	\$26,000 - \$50,000
over \$30,000	\$60	over \$50,000

Registration fee enclosed (payable to Herland): \$15 \$25 \$35 \$45 \$60
 Saturday only Registration \$25

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I need a scholarship to attend.

I'm enclosing an additional \$_____ to help provide scholarships.

I'm bringing _____ children (girls of all ages and boys under 10 are welcome)

Herland Sister Resources
2312 N.W. 39
Oklahoma City, OK 73112

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*Herland Spring
Retreat
April 13-15*

*Support our
Supporters*

Thanks, Chas, for the great new Herland t-shirt design!

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