



HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES

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HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES, INC.
1630 NW 19, OKC, OK 73106

making a feminist film: **RATE IT X**

***RATE IT X** was produced by Lynn Campbell, Claudette Charbonneau, Paula de Koenigsberg, and Lucy Winer and directed by de Koenigsberg and Winer, based on a concept by Charbonneau. In the following article, Charbonneau writes about the making of the film.*

Based on interviews with men across America who discuss their attitudes toward women, **RATE IT X** compiles more than a dozen substantive interviews and many shorter ones. Although begun on a much smaller scale -- as a thirty-minute organizing film -- **RATE IT X** is a ninety-five minute, feature-length film, geared to a general audience.

It took six years to raise the money to complete **RATE IT X**. That time lag turned out to be useful, for it permitted the film's concept to develop. In the beginning, the film focused on the feminist movement that was organizing around the issue of pornography. We got wonderful footage: a march on Times Square and rally in New York by Women Against Pornography (October 1979); a woman-led tour of the pornography district in Manhattan that included some of the women on the tour being physically barred from entering a bookstore, while others on the tour were locked inside.

Dramatic as these scenes were, would they necessarily provide the consciousness-raising result we were after? We were not for censorship, but we certainly wanted to ask a lot of questions the supporters of pornography gloss over. We saw pornography as one end of a continuum and not separate from the values of the mainstream culture. It was important that connections be made in the film and that the sexist attitudes underlying pornography be re-

vealed -- as well as the way in which misogyny works with and incorporates other biases based on race, class, sexual preference, and age. Was footage of feminists the best way to expose those values and interconnections?

What we should do in **RATE IT X** was interview men who produced and profited from the sexual depiction of women. The men themselves might make the points we were trying to raise. They could make the case against pornography for us. It was worth a try.

We hear from a flourishing family baker in Long Island who makes headless female bikini cakes because "the head is superfluous to the general idea"; from the president of a major lingerie corporation who explains marketing strategies for women's underwear; from a funeral director in the mid-West who is convinced sex-roles extend to the grave.

We talked to the makers of "Custer's Revenge," a video game that featured General Custer raping an Indian woman. The makers took pains to show us how to play the game and explained its rationale. At the time of the filming, they had been picketed by groups of Native Americans and feminists. Still they responded, "Racism? I don't know about racism." In fact, "Custer's Revenge" led the American Anthropological Association -- which does not do such things lightly -- to vote on a petition expressing disapproval of the game at the annual meetings in 1983.

We filmed inside Show World, which bills itself as the largest sex emporium in the world and was one of the main stops on Women Against Pornography's tours of the pornography district in New York.

One of the most harrowing aspects of making **RATE IT X** was seeing

the readiness and eagerness of so many men to express their views unabashedly -- about women, about Blacks, Hispanics, Jews, workers, a about success and money, the "American Dream," and "making it in America." It became clear that the men were willing to be interviewed because most saw nothing wrong with what they did or said, and that was staggering. Their self-confidence and assurance in themselves made a point about male power and male prerogative in our society.

Perhaps the figure who had drawn the most attention of feminists was the chief cartoonist for Larry Flynt Publications and creator of "Chester the Molester," a cartoon series about a child molester that had been shown in hundreds of feminist anti-pornography slide shows throughout the country. One of his cartoons has Chester with a swastika armband luring a little Jewish girl into an alley, using a dollar bill as bait. In another, Chester appears as a violent Santa Claus who has bludgeoned a little girl to carry her off in his sled. The caption reads, "Ho, ho, ho."

Yet we avoided putting into the film the most violent material -- on the theory that the audience would pull back. Aside from "Chester the Molester," for example, he created a group of cartoons depicting physically impaired and retarded women as objects of easy sexual attack. He sees himself as a family man and is clearly devoted to his infant daughter, with whom we see him playing in California. He insists that Chester is just "a goofy kind of guy." In its ironies and complexities, this interview with the **Hustler** cartoonist sums up the many contradictions **RATE IT X** explores; it seemed right to end the film with him.

The film could only work if the audience saw the genuineness of the responses. If the point of the film was to show how deeply imbedded sexist bias still is in America, the

cont. next page

Iceland: feminists gain power

camera had to capture that bias in the act of revealing itself. It also had to capture gradations in consciousness, sensitivity and awareness. Occasionally, some men do catch themselves at moments in RATE IT X and realize the implications of what they are saying, and how they deal with that realization becomes a further part of the point. A few are confused and less adamant, suggesting the possibility of changing their minds.

The attention the film received proves that feminist issues still matter and that the Women's Movement has succeeded in more profound ways than its detractors wish to acknowledge. Great changes have occurred. Twenty years ago RATE IT X could not have been made -- it would not have been understood. Before feminism, audiences would not necessarily have grasped what was wrong with the sexist comments the men make throughout the course of the film. Today they do. Even the reviews which were unfavorable showed an awareness of sexism that just simply would not have existed in the past.

It is too easy to relegate pornography safely to a far-out corner, to view it as a fringe phenomenon and not recognize its kinship with mainstream values. It is too easy to be against "smut peddling" on the one hand, but to approve of traditional sex roles on the other. It is too easy to forget or ignore their interrelationship. We needed to re-emphasize the broad continuum. We needed to talk to more men, in different parts of the country, in different occupations. Through networking we broadened the focus of our interviews. Whether it be advertising executives or retired legionnaires, the mindset that sexist values creates is all too similar. It is up to audiences now to judge: but it seems to me that we have managed to make a film that in its own way is not a love story.

For more information on RATE IT X, contact the film's distributor, Interama, at 301 West 53rd St., New York, NY 10019.

june 1987/off our backs

XXXXXXXXXX

TIENTSIN--In Tientsin, in northern China, a forty-year-old lesbian has been put in a re-education camp for having a sexual relationship with another woman, according to the West German feminist magazine Emma.

--info from gay community news

Off our backs

REYKJAVIK--On April 26, a feminist political party, the Women's Alliance, won 10% of the vote in Iceland's parliamentary elections. The party will have six seats in the country's parliaments, double its previous three seats.

Moreover, the Women's Alliance victory is seen as shifting the balance of power. A center-right coalition government headed by the Progressive Party's Prime Minister Steingrímur Hermannsson resigned.

Reportedly, a government will be formed that will be either a coalition of the Progressive and Independence parties and the Women's Alliance or of the Independence and Social Democratic parties and the Women's Alliance. "We will consider every offer, but it is too early to tell what kind of government will be formed," said alliance member Kristín Halldórsdóttir. She said the party will enter a government only if the coalition promises to raise women's wages and improve

child care and increase maternity leave.

The Women's Alliance does not believe in hierarchy. It has no leader, and says that its members of parliament will rotate out of office after six years. Men can become members, but they can't become candidates for office.

Iceland, the first country in the world to have members of a feminist party in its parliament, thus seems about to become the first nation to have members of a feminist party in its governing coalition. Iceland already has the world's first democratically elected woman head of state, President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. (India, Israel and Sri Lanka have had women heads of government, or prime ministers, but not heads of state.)

Iceland has had an equal rights amendment since 1976. Women always have kept their own names after marriage.

off our backs

--info from new york times, 4/27/87
and ellen goodman's column



announces

Collective Meeting
Sunday, July 19, 3:30 p.m.
at Herland

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FALL RETREAT FOR WOMEN

This year's Fall Retreat will be held October 23-25 at Robbers Cave State Park Group Camp #2. The group camp has cabins with bunks (you provide your own sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow), a dining hall and fully equipped kitchen facility.

Saturday morning there are workshops; Saturday afternoon features open mic for anyone wishing to sing, play, or read poetry. Opening our Saturday evening concert will be Donna DeSalvo, followed by our very special guest, Nancy Day.

Herland will again provide coffee and tea for the weekend. Bring your own food for Friday night through Sunday breakfast, plus something for the traditional Saturday night pot luck/pigout. Also bring toilet articles, musical instruments, games, flashlights, campfire goodies, and sports equipment.

Due to an increase in cost for the group camp, it has been necessary to raise the registration fee. Pre-registration will be on a sliding scale of \$17-\$20; please pay in that range based on your ability. On-sight registration will be \$25 (Those wishing to attend the concert only may do so for \$5 at the door.). There are five scholarships currently available for those with financial need. Please let us know if the increase in cost would prevent you from attending and we will work out something with you.

Check-in time is anytime after 4:00 p.m. Friday. Upon arrival you will check in with the Camp Director and select a cabin (there are chemical-free, smoking, and non-smoking available). Check-out is noon on Sunday.

If you are interested in conducting a workshop, please contact Herland as soon as possible. We would like to schedule these before the Retreat.

Also, we have several tasks that require assistance. If you would like to help, please indicate so on the registration form.

Upon receipt of you completed registration form you will be sent a map to the campsite.

FALL RETREAT FOR WOMEN

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PHONE (____) _____

_____ I would like to help at the Retreat.

_____ I can provide _____

_____ I would like to provide a Scholarship.

_____ I would like a scholarship.

Deadline for pre-registration is Oct. 18, 1987. Mail this form and your check to:

Herland Sister Resources
c/o Laura, Camp Director
4924 S. Kathy Dr.

4924 S. Kathy Dr.

Okla. City, OK 73135

For any info phone (405)672-4141.

Loral C. Reeves
C.P.A.

1014 Cedardale Drive
Okla. City, OK 73127

405/495-1094

Fodder forgive our trezpasses against us
like a lean-to /
We no knot whad we due.

The arrows of missiles, lazer beamies
open the eyeball of the urth.
Druzzle in the wigwam.
Wheezing chilerns.

Tutal cumz to tell uz how to read
theze blocks of letters.
Boz. Wheebut. Iz wuz nerd ezy.
We god to laughing.
Hernry ezpecially garfooned on the table.
Here iz ours /
the storehouse, sheds, all the fieldstones
of our taking breath /
incumbent wurdz that make our farms
& iz the animals that urnhabit them.

Az what wurdz iz, Tutal saz, angry at our laf.

Seeze the room!
Sneeze iz ours.
Achoom. Who brings it?
Great Spirid vacoom.

Sounds running oud our mouth & noz.
Meaning out of eyez,
not connected yet to the sounds we make.

Father Jezus dominion bee yurz.
The white bird in the winter tree iz a star.

Whee whee /
yeur wurdz of baffaloing the medicine men.
Scaffoling of language. The squaws. Childern.

Holy wurdz. Manger still gruzzling animals.
Hauze.
Cattle.
Gupe.
Geraf.
Zereba with stripes.
Camuel.

My wicket spirit buzzards yeur wruds / Tutal.
White star in a tree.

DIANE GLANCY

Feminist Studies 13, no. 1 (Spring 1987).



848-5429

SHIRLEY M. HUNTER, M.A.
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

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I HAVE BOWED BEFORE THE SUN

ANNA LEE WALTERS PAWNEE-OTOE

My name is "I am living."
My home is all directions and is everlasting.
Instructed and carried to you by the wind,
I have felt the feathers in pale clouds and bowed before the Sun
who watches me from a blanket of faded blue.
In a gentle whirlwind I was shaken,
made to see on earth in many ways.
And when in awe my mouth fell open,
I tasted a fine red clay.
Its flavor has remained after uncounted days.
This gave me cause to drink from a crystal stream
that only I have seen.
So I listened to all its flowing wisdom
and learned from it a Song—
This song the wind and I
have since sung together.
Unknowing, I was encircled by its water and cleansed.
Naked and damp, I was embraced and dried
by the warmth of your presence.
Dressed forever in the scent of dry cedar,
I am purified and free.
And I will not allow you to ignore me.
I have brought to you a gift.
It is all I have but it is yours.
You may reach out and enfold it.
It is only the strength in the caress of a gentle breeze,
But it will carry you to meet the eagle in the sky.
My name is "I am living." I am here.
My name is "I am living." I am here.

Up and coming

Duet

Tall and slender in her long black dress,
a red scar circling her throat
like a delicate necklace,
my sister floats in a white moon
on the stage of the dark auditorium.
The keys gleam against the ebony clarinet
like light through a keyhole
into a room where two girls
play a duet over and over.
We practiced to be perfect—
it was what everyone wanted—
until our lips were numb,
then silent, then sealed.
For she became more perfect,
and I, a forgotten interval.
While she haunted the practice rooms
of musty music halls,
I tried on clothes,
cropped my hair close as a nun's,
dropped acid.
But I still remember the fingering,
and as she plays
I make up a harmony
to the tune of "two sisters, two sisters."

Judith Kirkwood

FRONTIERS Vol. IX, No. 2

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

YES! I want to help Herland with an annual donation of \$12.

YES! I want to help Herland with a 6-month donation of \$6.

Your tax-deductible donation entitles you to use of the lending library as well as discounts on store stock and concert tickets.

Name: _____

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Mail To: Herland Sister Resources, Inc.
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OKC, OK 73106

THANKS! (Herland will send you a receipt for your tax purposes.)

Herland is not able to forward your newsletter unless you send us a change of address (just sending one to the Post Office won't do it).

This form may also be used to add a name to the mailing list.

Name: _____

Old Address: _____

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New Address: _____

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State: _____ Zip: _____

CITIZENS FOR DONNA BECHTEL

521-8176

Two years ago Donna Bechtel was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment for killing her abusive husband in self-defense. On Friday, June 19 the Court of Criminal Appeals handed down it's unanimous opinion granting Donna a new trial. They base their opinion on the denial of the "[appellant's] right of cross-examination and confrontation when the trial court denied a key witness..." The opinion states, "the jury was also entitled to hear the witness' opinion, as they were to determine whether the appellant knowingly and intelligently waived her rights."

As we write, Donna is still incarcerated at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center. The District Attorney may petition the Court of Criminal Appeals for a re-hearing. We feel sure that his petition will be denied and that bond will be set for Donna by the week of July 6th. We have heard rumors that the bond might be set at \$100,000, which means that several thousand dollars must be raised in the next few days in order to gain Donna's release as soon as possible.

Due to her previous trial, unjust imprisonment, and pending civil suits, all Donna's economic resources have been depleted. Without your help she will remain in jail. Your contribution of \$5.00 or more will help to make possible bond, expert witnesses, and the necessary depositions.

Donna is confident that this new trial will be successful. She is excited, eager, and ready to prove herself innocent. She needs your help. Please send your contribution to :

Citizen's for Donna Bechtel
c/o American Bank and Trust
15 E. 15th
Edmond, Oklahoma 73034

You can be certain that you will be a part of making real justice possible for at least one battered woman.

FREE DONNA !

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reception

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Music

8 pm

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HERLAND ANNUAL GARAGE SALE

It's time once again for Herlands annual garage sale. This is another way you can help support Herland's efforts without actually giving money. Thanks to all of our supporters who gave last years garage sale (which brought in over \$500)! This gives you an opportunity to clean out your closets and garage of all the things you've been meaning to "do something with". We'll sell just about anything.

Please bring your "stuff" by the bookstore during regular operating hours: Sat 10 to 6 or Sun 1 to 6 and you will receive a receipt for your tax purposes.

If you choose to sell your own "stuff" we provide space and advertising and request 25% of your sales as a donation. We also need volunteers to help the days of the sale. The sale will be held Saturday, August 1st from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday August 2nd from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information contact Laura at 672-4141.

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FAITH AND PSYCHOLOGY WORKSHOP

"The Impact of Faith on Women's Psychological Development", is the topic of the workshop to be sponsored by the Women's Resource Center, 1-3:30 p.m., July 17, at the Women's Resource Center in Norman. The workshop is free and open to the public, however because of limited seating space, it is necessary to pre-register for the workshop.

For further information, contact the women's Resource Center at: 364-9424, or 226 East Gray Street, Norman, OK.

Recovery and Integrity: The Music of Meg Christian

The development of a feminist consciousness means progress toward integrity—toward wholeness and self-knowledge, toward fairness in our relationships, and toward consistency between principles and actions. Meg Christian's lyric "I Wish You Well" articulates the double nature of the integrated life—the recovery of past selves and the spirit of community:

And all the children that I have been
Need to know where I am now, know what I have seen
And all the children that I have been
Need my arms to go around them, take them back in
And all the women that I have seen
Fighting and falling, can they rise again
And all my sisters, will we ever learn
How to dance out the fires and not to get burned . . . ¹

For Meg Christian, integrity involves not merely an other-directed ethic but an ethical responsibility to the self. Her music and women's culture in general help us validate our struggles for wholeness in a patriarchal system that fragments and alienates women.

Meg Christian has been one of the creators of contemporary women's culture; in fact, without her, contemporary women's music as we know it might not exist. She speaks to us, I think, more directly than any other woman musician about her struggle toward integrity, about the development of her political principles, and about the conflicts between her individual needs and the political needs of her audience.

POLLOCK: Women's music, obviously, has a lot of common themes in the lyrics. Do you see it as different from other contemporary music?

CHRISTIAN: If there's a similarity in most of the women artists I know [it is that] we tend to combine a number of different musical styles. And another thing is a sense of musicians working together on a more mutual basis. Even when there are an artist and an accompanist, there is more of a cooperative spirit. That may be a product of my imagination, but I have experienced it over and over. I think that all the time there are new women artists and new women's groups who are exploring different musical styles, and so I think it's too soon to try to do an analysis of musical theory or structure. But I think it's interesting that finally we have other women artists to influence us, and that we have all-women musical products or albums to influence us. Maybe it will be generations before we know what women's musical structure is. I grew up in an absolutely male musical tradition, and I will never lose those influences—I've learned a lot from them. At the same time, I've always been curious about what women do with art, particularly what women do with music. I can't articulate a theory of women's music yet, but maybe our granddaughters will be able to.

POLLOCK: Which musicians or poets give you strength and influence your music?

CHRISTIAN: The first song I ever performed in public was a Teresa Brewer song. And then I got crazy for people

like Harry Belafonte and Johnny Mathis—I used to learn all his mushy songs, his unrequited-love songs. And I used to love sound tracks and show tunes; I used to act out Broadway plays in my living room with my friends. And then I got crazy about folk music. I really feel I blossomed as a musician. I listened to people like the Limelighters and Joan Baez, Buffy Sainte Marie, Carolyn Hester. Then I moved to North Carolina and got really interested in mountain music—folk lyrics and various Appalachian guitar styles. And then I discovered classical music. I had a double major in music and English.³ The classical guitar became the main focus for a couple of years. Then the singer/song writers like Joni Mitchell and James Taylor and Carole King and Laura Nyro were getting popular, and I just soaked up their music. I adjusted to it naturally and loved to perform it.

It was at that point that I started meeting other women who were working in an alternative musical vein. I remember when I first heard Cris Williamson's music. I thought, "This woman and I are coming from a common place"—I don't know what it is, but her music just absolutely touches a place inside me other musicians haven't reached. And when I met her in late 1972, she had not been very politically involved, and I had been very involved in radical feminism, so I went to her and I said, "So what do you think about women's music"—or something I had sort of made up the week before. She looked at me as if I were probably a very nice person, but a little demented. Not too long after that, we started hanging out together and jamming together. And at that point I realized that I could actually start sharing my music with and learning from other women musicians. Not too long after that, I also met Margie Adam, Kay Gardner, and Alix Dobkin. Around 1973, '74, I realized that a whole lot of women out there were making a conscious effort to speak from their experiences as women through their music. That was when we started influencing one another.⁴

POLLOCK: You really have allowed yourself to be turned around by the audience—responding to what they say they need?

CHRISTIAN: And to satisfy my own sense of what was appropriate. It's interesting. For years I had been trying to combat a male left idea of what is political. For that group, the political has to do with external issues. There's a lot of leftist criticism of women's culture that says that we talk about the personal too much. Of course, I think that's what makes feminism unique as a political idea. Feminism is an internal as well as an external politic. We're talking about changing inside, changing the way that you and I sit on this sofa and talk, the kind of mutual respect we share, power-sharing, a sense of equality as we talk, a sense of compassion about the world and its inhabitants. All this, I believe, is something intuitively a part of women's essence and something that we incorporate into our politics. We can't change the world until we change ourselves. This idea has always been a part of feminism.

POLLOCK: historically women haven't been perceived as instrumentalists or, really, as musicians.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, and it's exciting to me to be taking myself seriously as a composer. Before, that always sounded a little pretentious to me. I remember in the spring of 1980 I was sitting in a—actually, I was sitting in a cemetery

in Munich. I'd just gone out to lunch with this classical composer, who was talking about doing music every day. Even if the results were only one line or three notes or two chords, then work would have been done that day. The act of composing would have happened. I got excited about that. I ran off and bought the perfect little composition book and the perfect pencil, you know, the perfect little accouterment that you always have to have when you're going to write the perfect thing. Then I sat in the cemetery, and I wrote, "I am an artist." I looked at it, and I got all embarrassed, so I sat there and I looked at it until I could take it in without feeling embarrassed about it. "Artist" doesn't mean this prissy thing; it's a definition of what you are. But it sounded elitist. It had all kinds of old political negative implications. But as I looked at it, I began to say, "You know, guess what, Meg? You're an artist, whether you want to call yourself that or not. You are." So, of course, I had to write, "I am an artist. I am. I *am*." Then I started writing a song. I started writing "Restless." And I've had a whole different attitude towards composing since then. I guess that's what I was talking about earlier—about being in the state of creating. I feel that somehow I gave myself permission to be a songwriter and decided that it was O.K. to go around with my head filled with music.

I remember sitting in an Olivia business meeting once many years ago with Mary Watkins. We were talking about postage rates or something, and I was thinking, "Ho-hum," and everybody was just arguing away about something. And I looked over at Mary and she was writing music. I got so mad at her, and I said, "Mary, you're not paying attention." I envied her because I wanted to be there writing music. Mary's a real composer. She composes twenty-four hours a day. She's amazing. You know, I used to think that maybe I was less of a musician because I didn't do that or because I didn't practice three or four hours a day the way I've heard Julie Homi do. But now I think there's no definition of how much time and energy you need to spend in order to be a legitimate artist. To me, the secret is allowing myself to let out what is in there, in whatever way it needs to come.

POLLOCK: How have you made that transition?

CHRISTIAN: Well, let's just say that a lot of my growth the past few years has been focused on learning what spirituality means in my life. In August of 1977, I stopped drinking after having drunk alcoholically for fourteen years. I finally discovered that I was, in fact, an alcoholic and that if I didn't stop drinking, I was going to die. And I decided that enough of me that wanted to live wanted to stop internalizing all the self-hate, guilt, and inadequacy that women grow up with. There are a lot of good reasons for women to want to get fucked up on drugs, alcohol, food, ulcers, and any other form of self-destruction. There are lots of good reasons. There are even *more* good reasons for lesbians. There are even *more* good reasons for Third World lesbians. But the fact is that alcoholism is a disease, that it's a functional abnormality in the body; the body just doesn't process alcohol. And I could have all the good reasons in the world, but it was me who was dying. So I had to start a recovery process that enabled me to deal with reality, so I didn't feel I had to put alcohol between me and the atrocities going on every second in the world. That meant I had to change my way of seeing things because once I took a drink, it would be all over. I would lose control to the alcohol. So the recovery process is really

a daily one. It involves a massive reorientation of myself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. A lot of the changes that I talk about in my music, in my life, come from that process of finding a healthy way to live. It's really hard to talk about in more detail than that. I know so many women who were doing that same basic thing in so many different ways. We're just coming to understand that it's ridiculous to be making a revolution that is saving other lives and ruining our own.

POLLOCK: Do you think feeling such an enormous responsibility for other women increased your alcohol dependency?

CHRISTIAN: A lot of people say that alcoholism is inherited. I think that I was an alcoholic from the first drink. I remember that I drank to get drunk on my first drink when I was thirteen. Women have a lot of built-in reasons for wanting to put up some padding between ourselves and reality. We are taught to be passive, self-hating, and guilty. We are taught to take care of everybody but ourselves. That's part of the socialization process for women. Then gay people are taught most of their lives that they are sick and disgusting. How do you learn to reconcile the notion that you're sick and disgusting with what you feel are the most natural, beautiful, and positive feelings [about loving] in your daily experience? That reconciliation requires some internal gymnastics that wreak a lot of destruction inside. Not all of us become alcoholics, not all of us become addicts, but many of us do develop self-destructive behavior.

The alcoholism for me is a disease; it's like diabetes. My body cannot handle alcohol. What I have to learn for myself is how to change so that the realities of my oppression don't send me back to the bottle, so that I can cope with them, so that I can transform them, so that I don't have to walk around with them. As I said in "Turning It Over," that old righteous anger ate *me* to the core. Many of us are beginning to realize that we are dying behind our own political analysis.

POLLOCK: So in a sense there's a stage at which a feminist consciousness can make life much harder?

CHRISTIAN: Certainly for me. I used just to get the hell out in any way I could. But what I'm learning, of course, is that I can look at the atrocities—which I absolutely focused on for ten years—or I can look between the atrocities at the way that we can make positive change, starting inside Meg.

POLLOCK: What do you want your music to communicate?

CHRISTIAN: I want to make other women feel that they're O.K. and to let them know that they're not alone. I think that absolutely the most destructive thing in my life has been the feeling that I was alone, feeling that no one else felt the way I did about one thing or another. For a long time in my life I was too conscious of being different from the world's idea of what a woman should be—how she should feel, who she should love, what work she should pursue.

Then for a long time after I found the women's movement and got that tremendous support, I started feeling alone because I had all this support. I mean, I had more

support than anybody I knew. I would go out there and work, and people would stand up and cheer, and I was dying inside from old self-hate that never got healed. I went straight from political analysis to political action and didn't give myself time to sew up the wounds, and so I stuffed it all [inside] and was drinking and drinking and pretending that I was just fine, just fine, and thinking I was the only one.

Then when I started to get help for my alcoholism, I met thousands of other women who had felt that same isolation. We wondered, "How can I be so miserable? I understand my oppression; I have a support group for making change; I can go out there and be who I want to be." But the parts inside that were not healed were saying, "No, no, I can't take it. I'm no good. I can't do that. If you only saw me as I really was, you would throw eggs instead of cheers." Those are the common elements of the emotional part of alcoholism that I have talked to many, many others about.

So that's a very long-winded way of saying that every woman I've ever met has lived for at least some part of her life with a sense of isolation and a feeling that she's not O.K. And women's music? Well, the function of my music is to explore our commonalities, is for me to say to you, "This is the way that I feel," and for you to say back to me, "Oh, I've felt that way, too." We all know then from that exchange that we're not alone.

NOTES

1. *Turning It Over*, ©1981 Thumbelina Music (BMI).
3. Her college years were spent at the University of North Carolina; she grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia.
4. She was one of the five original members of the Olivia Collective. At the suggestion of Cris Williamson, Meg Christian and four other women established this first, and best known, producer and distributor of women's music in 1973.

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I Know You Know, Olivia (LF 902), 1974.
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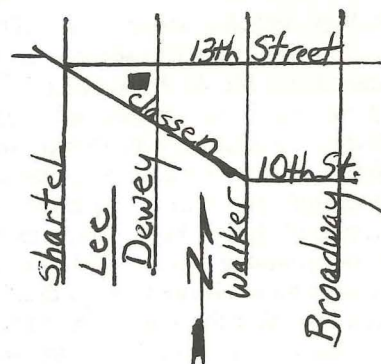
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