

# the HERLAND VOICE

MAY, 1991

## THE TWELVE RETREATS OF HERLAND

*Retreat (n.) — preserve; refuge; resort; sanctuary; shelter; escape; evacuation; flight; withdrawal*

The retreats of Herland have been all these things and more. We have come together twice a year for the past six years and built a special community. We've kept coming back to that special place we create again and again. Each of the retreats of Herland has special memories for the women who attended.

The herstory of Herland retreats begins in May, 1985 when several members of the Herland collective went to Arkansas to a lesbian retreat sponsored by the Women's Project. We had a great time and came away convinced that Herland could sponsor a similar event in Oklahoma. The recipe seemed simple—a camp with cabins and a kitchen to share and women to fill it.

The first Herland retreat, billed as a Fall Festival/Women's Retreat, was held October 25-27, 1985 at Osage Hills State Park near Bartlesville. The women who attended were treated to music by Mary Reynolds and Peggy Johnson; workshops in juggling, homophobia, and the law; and the ever popular potluck supper.

After the success of the first retreat, the Herland collective planned a second retreat, the Spring Festival/Women's Retreat for May 2-4, 1986 at Robber's Cave State Park. Featured performers were Hawkins and DeLear of St. Louis, Missouri. Tabby, the only kitten to attend a Herland retreat, was at Robber's Cave.

October, 1986 brought the 2nd annual fall retreat. Women from around Oklahoma gathered at Sequoyah State Park near Tallequah. The tradition of an open-mic for musical performers, comedians, and poets began at this retreat. Featured performers were Rosy's Bar and Grill from Kansas City.

Roman Nose State Park was the site for the Spring Retreat of May, 1987. Oklahoma City's own Mary Black, Mary Reynolds, and Peggy Johnson provided musical entertainment. Rainbow Productions was born of a vision of several women at the Roman Nose Retreat.

We returned to Robber's Cave State Park for the Fall Retreat in October, 1987. Nancy Day delighted us with her music and her touch football skills. Donna DeSalvo provided her own special brand of musical and comic entertainment. Early risers on Sunday were treated to the famous *D Y K E eroticakes*.

The Spring, 1988 retreat was held at Boiling Springs State Park near Woodward. Over seventy women made the warm sunny drive north-

west but the weather changes quickly in the Oklahoma spring. Before the night was over, snow fell on the retreaters. When Saturday dawned, a lavender bra flying from the flagpole claimed the camp as women's space. The Sisters of Swing and their infamous alter ego's, the Shartels, highlighted retreat entertainment activities.

Sequoyah State Park was the place to be for the Herland Fall, 1988 retreat. For the first time Herland cooks, Mary Reynolds and Chris C., made food available to participants who preferred not to cook for themselves. Entertainment was provided by comedian Karen Williams and singer-songwriter, Nancy Scott.

The Spring 1989 retreat returned to Boiling Springs State Park. Judy Fjell headlined the retreat with a workshop on empowerment through music and a memorable evening performance under the stars.

In the Fall of 1989, the Retreat was held at Lake Wister State Park on Labor Day weekend. This was the first four-day retreat and introduced Oklahoma to the Therapy Sisters from Austin, Texas and Ann Reed from Minneapolis, Minnesota. May flies dancing over the open field were the special treat for this retreat (in the bathroom and in our beds they weren't quite so special).

Spring of 1990 took us back to Robbers Cave State Park May 18-20. The retreat opened Friday night with a reading of the play *A Late Snow*—Herland's first venture into drama. Tuffy came back to Oklahoma and along with Mary Reynolds and Elyse Angelo rocked us into the night (and made Jean happy). Janis Galloway opened the night's entertainment with her unique blend of music. Saturday night/Sunday morning produced the "4:30 Version—You had to be there" and the famous spoons.

Arrowhead State Park was the location for the Fall Retreat of 1990. Held on Labor Day weekend, this retreat was the second four-day event. Women from Arkansas and Texas joined Oklahoma women for the Regional Lesbian Conference. Arrowhead saw the debut of Herland's own Kazoo Band and the now famous "Live Band" featuring Elyse Angelo, Cuchla Fuller, Peggy Johnson, and Mary Reynolds. Any piece of cloth not tied down was tie-dyed. And who could forget Cruz Devon?

What firsts will the Spring Retreat of 1991 bring? You'll have to be there to see and make them happen. Meet you at Robber's Cave May 17th through the 19th! ■



## LOST WAX TRAINS — A Review

*Lost Wax Trains*, Peggy Johnson's latest cassette release, is a splendid display of her musical craft. In the mostly original selections, Peggy plays guitar and harmonica as well as performing vocals.

The "Cereal Blues," "Rich Girl Blues" and "The Gas Company Blues" showcase Peggy's guitar skills. In the haunting "The Road Up Which Ye Came," the melody hints of traditional southern music while the lyrics speak eloquently of family and the promise of personal freedom. "Your Own Front Door" provides a powerful commentary on war and peace. "Creedy" invites us to share an intimate moment with Peggy and her feline companion of eight years. Mary Reynolds joins Peggy for a very special rendition of Jackson Browne's "For Everyman."

*Lost Wax Trains* demonstrates that this "rich girl" can sing and play the blues. If you are not already familiar with the music of Peggy Johnson, *Lost Wax Trains* provides an excellent opportunity to get acquainted. *Lost Wax Trains* is available at Herland, the Benedictine Peace House and at all Peggy Johnson performances. ■

## ST. SYBIL

*St. Sybil, Matron Saint of the Invisible Woman, is an occasional contributor to this space.*

Dear St. Sybil,

I heard the damdest thing the other day. I heard that as a country the U.S. ranks 23rd in infant mortality; in other words, that 22 other countries take better care of their babies than we do. Can this be true? I also heard that many other countries have a longer life span than we do, and that 37 million Americans have no health insurance!

And is it really true that the United States and South Africa are the only two industrialized countries in the world without some kind of a national health plan? That's pretty poor company to be in!

Sincerely,

Confused

Dear Confused,

You have good sources. You heard absolutely right; and I don't blame you for being confused. Decent health care for all is the kind of thing most Americans expect the U.S. to be the leader in; unfortunately, the phrase "socialized medicine" has been made such a bugaboo that tossing it into a discussion on medical services is enough to bring the conversation to a screeching halt. There are as many myths about the evils of socialized medicine as there were about the dangers of vaccinating people with smallpox serum, or in "giving" women the vote.

I'd like to tell you a true story about a good friend of mine living in Virginia some years ago. This woman, Annie, had a really, really bad year; during this year Annie's husband was hospitalized twice, her oldest daughter was hospitalized just once, with strep, but she also was thrown from a horse and broke her arm. The younger daughter was hospitalized twice with pneumonia and once to have her appendix out; and she broke her collarbone falling out of a tree; that girl was a mess. Annie's oldest son was in the hospital for a week having an operation of a delicate nature which he hopes I won't share with the world; and Annie herself gave birth prematurely to her second son, who couldn't come home from the hospital for a month. And the family dog had puppies and was subsequently spayed.

The medical expense that year for Annie and her family was exactly \$20, for neutering poor old Daisy the Dog. You see, Annie's husband was in the Army, and their medical care was 100 percent free. So for all the worry, and all the trips to the doctor and the hospital and all the sleepless nights, Annie's "bad, bad" year was positively carefree compared to what it would have been without good old free Army medical care; a real piece of cake.

Of course, it was not "free" free; it was paid for by taxes, that's certainly true. But what's the big difference, I ask you, in paying for medical care through insurance or through taxes? Are the military the only Americans who deserve the kind of freedom from worry and freedom from potential financial ruin that a full health care plan provides? I don't think so.

Personally, I think that it is about time that the rest of the country got to have what the military has been enjoying for all of these years; and if I were you I think I would send my next letter about this problem to a Senator rather than a Saint.

Take care, take power, and for Pete's sake, stay well.

Fondly,

Sybil

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## DISEASE OR NOT DISEASE?

"Breast disease." A term that can strike terror into the hearts of women. After examining a woman's breasts or reading a mammogram, a doctor may well announce that the patient has "fibrocystic disease" or "benign breast disease." This is a nonspecific diagnosis and a true misnomer. Sometimes a doctor uses it to describe chronically lumpy breasts that may be painful and tender before menstruation. Or, "fibrocystic disease" simply refers to the natural overall lumpiness that usually occurs in breast tissue as a woman ages. It's normal and predictable and is no more a disease than gray hair or age lines.

Every woman needs to see a doctor for diagnosis of any self-discovered lump (although the majority of lumps are not cancerous), and for a professional examination on a regular schedule. A woman with very lumpy breasts may have trouble doing a self exam and may want to forgo self-exam and be checked professionally. At age 35, women should have a base-line mammogram and get a mammogram every two years from then on. Then starting at 50 we should get one annually.

But if you are checked or have a mammogram, watch what your doctor writes on the report. If "fibrocystic disease" or "benign breast disease" is written, you may be in for some difficulty in the future if you need to purchase health insurance, get a new policy, or purchase life insurance.

The physiological phenomena mentioned above are not diseases, and should not impact women as such in their financial lives. ■

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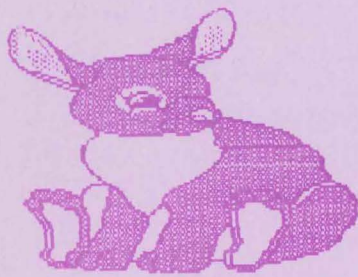
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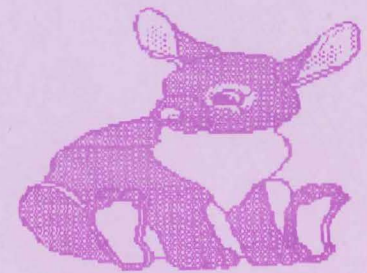
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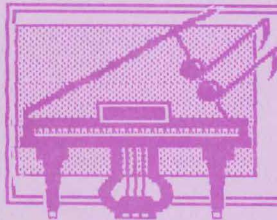
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# May, 1991



Sunday      Monday      Tuesday      Wednesday      Thursday      Friday      Saturday




Women's Music,  
Every Sunday  
Evening at the  
Coyote Club; no  
cover; 7-11 pm.

1  
Silent Vigil  
for Peace  
Noon  
4th &  
N. Robinson

2

3  
CoDA,  
6:45 - 8:00  
at Herland

4  
OKC area NOW  
Noon, Belle  
Isle Library  
#  
"Miss Brown  
To You"  
at the  
Coyote Club

5  
  
Board  
Meeting  
4:30 p.m.  
Visitors  
Welcome

6

7

8  
Silent Vigil  
for Peace  
Noon  
4th &  
N. Robinson

9  
  
John Brown  
1800-1859

10  
MOTHER'S  
DAY TREK  
TO PANTEX  
#  
CoDA,  
6:45 - 8:00  
at Herland

11  
Peace Camp  
at Pantex  
#  
OK NOW  
meets at  
State Capitol  
Room 511  
10:00 a.m.

12  
MOTHER'S  
DAY  
\*  
Mother's  
Day  
Peace Camp  
at Pantex

13

14

15  
Silent Vigil  
for Peace  
Noon  
4th &  
N. Robinson

16  
TAKE BACK  
THE NIGHT  
Rally and  
Candlelight  
Vigil  
8:00 p.m.  
South Steps  
State Capitol

17  
  
HERLAND  
SPRING  
RETREAT  
at  
ROBBER'S  
CAVE

18  
  
HERLAND  
SPRING  
RETREAT

19  
  
HERLAND  
SPRING  
RETREAT

20

21  
  
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22  
Silent Vigil  
for Peace  
Noon  
4th &  
N. Robinson

23  
  
Margaret  
Fuller  
1810-1850

24  
CoDA,  
6:45 - 8:00  
at Herland

25

26  
  
"Miss Brown  
To You"  
at the  
Coyote Club

27  
  
Memorial  
Day

28

29  
Silent Vigil  
for Peace  
Noon  
4th &  
N. Robinson

30

31  
CoDA,  
6:45 - 8:00  
at Herland

Mark your calendar now: Erica Wheeler will be appearing in OKC June 8!

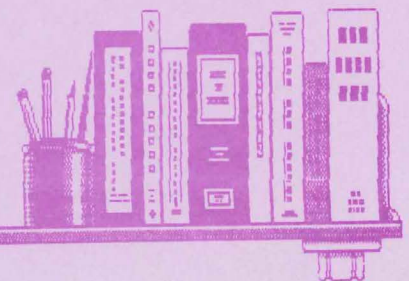
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## Letters to the Editor

Dear Herland Sisters

**\*\*\*Right on Rhonda, and the biggest scam lasts the longest\*\*\***

A heartfelt thanks to Rhonda Smith is in order for her brave and vital review of *Silence of the Lambs*. After two courses in film study at the University of Oklahoma, and staffing of the Film Studies office in the English Department for one of those semesters, I too have learned that film viewers are generally desensitized to violence to the point of nonrecognition. Before buying my ticket to this bloody work, I cautiously asked a graduate film instructor on campus about the violence in the film, and she personally assured me that there was none in the film, save some depicted in mere photographs! I keep wondering what is wrong with this nice, intelligent, educated woman that she cannot recognize brutal violence when seen on film.

We were unable to sit through the scene Rhonda analyzed, and left the theatre in too much shock and disbelief to discuss the situation. When we broke our sad silence, it was only to make a pact to go to some other distraction as quickly as possible, as at least one of us would have episodes of panic, anger and nightmares if we continued thinking and feeling about the film.

Rhonda's review was direct and focused on the significant misogynistic nature of the film; I won't attempt to reiterate her critique, but it should be required reading for the season. We must stand against sexualized violence against women. Those who keep making one more "stab" at women while calling it art have not only succeeded in passing it off as entertainment, but more surprisingly, have managed to do so with very few objections from educated, seemingly progressive women, as well as large numbers of the other gender.

Violence is doubtless the most serious problem on the planet; when directed toward women it is, like the brutal aggressions perpetrated against other groups, frequently hidden under a huge umbrella of camouflage. That camouflage is the network of institutionalized sexism, violence and heterosexism. The problem with institutionalized sexism and violence is that they are commonly comingled with accepted behaviors, which incorrectly infer they too are acceptable; then they are willingly overlooked and sometimes condoned by social and political institutions of our culture (i.e., the police, the military, elected officials, some psychologists, medical doctors, ministers, politicians, academic "experts," teachers, journalists, and other "experts" of all variety).

In fact, violence in *Silence of the Lambs* has much in common with the violence perpetrated every year against hundreds of thousands of civilians in Central America by their reactionary despotic governments and militia, armed with U.S. weapons. By the time this news reaches us, it is quite intentionally presented to us as entirely divorced from those who conjure it up and carry it out; it is instead presented in such a manner that we painfully let go the truth we cannot face and believe instead it is the natural outcome of generalized social and economic problems. It is ultimately divorced from the individuals who originally create it. And, after seeing too much violence in our own culture, we hear our so-called experts lamenting that it is due to fragmentation of societies and the confusion of sex roles and loss of personal identity.

We must take a different tack: that each act of violence has a traceable perpetrator, even if the deepest mental cause is unknown. The only identifiable source of such violence is the actual perpetrator. No, these persons are not divorced from the acts of incredible pain and unspeakable cruelty they commit! That view has been assumed far too long. They have, once they reach this irreversible point in degradation, become their acts. Once they fall beyond all civil modes of behavior, we must hold them responsible for the acts they have momentarily escaped into.

Asking us to believe these people are not responsible for the incredible violence they perpetrate, and in the case of a film like

*Silence*, which they perpetuate, is the biggest scam of all time, lasting longer and hurting more sisters and more children than any other lie we've been told.

Thank you, for the *Voice*. All these years I needed it to begin developing my own consciousness.

Billie H

Dear Editor:

I've grown weary of reading "goddess" pagan propaganda in every issue.

The Bible scriptures quoted regarding burning of incense were directly related to idol worship.

There are many people whose perception of God is female—that's o.k. as we were made in the image of God. (Gen 1:27); so Goddess would be certainly appropriate. However the quote, "...let's burn incense to all the goddesses..." perpetuates idol, pagan worship.

The article began, "Without women there would be no civilization." This is entirely true, as is the fact without men there would be no civilization.

Until we *all* learn to live together; male, female, non-white, white; Gentile, Jew; straight, gay; then our world community will *never* find peace and unity.

The key is love. God is Love, or Goddess is Love (if you prefer).

The love God has for us is so vast that His/Her child was sacrificed so that we could have eternal life. (John 3:16).

Read John 3:17 too, you'll be glad to know Jesus did not come to condemn the world, as many people would have you believe, but instead to *SAVE* the world!

Perhaps what Herland *Voice* needs is another perspective on spiritual issues. Think about it. I'd be honored and privileged to contribute a monthly article on spiritual issues pertaining to women; designed to *uplift, strengthen* and *encourage*.

Let's have some positive, hopeful information instead of negativity.

Most women realize we have been oppressed throughout the course of history and time. How about changing the broken record and learning to live in and change our society?

Ask your readers what they think—from the group of folks I've talked to we are in agreement on this issue.

Please consider my offer.

Sincerely,

Palmira C.

Hi!

Sorry it has taken so long for me to write and tell you how much I enjoyed the picture in the *Voice* a few months ago. I know there were letters complaining about the "nudity" and I'm sorry I didn't write then.

I thought the picture tastefully done and very sensitive. If there is a print available, I would like to know where to purchase it.

Keep up the fine work you are doing in the *Herland Voice*. It is one of the most informative papers my lover and I receive and keeps us in touch with what is happening in the community there. Thank you for "keeping on—keeping on."

Together with you,

Mary H.

# CLEMENCY DRIVES STEPPED UP FOR BATTERED WOMEN WHO STRIKE BACK

Women's groups and some criminal justice organizations, encouraged by recent developments in Ohio and Maryland, are undertaking efforts in other states to obtain what they see as a greater measure of justice for women who kill or assault abusive husbands or boyfriends.

The organizations are petitioning legislators for changes in the rules of evidence in such cases, and are petitioning governors for clemency or other action to release women already serving prison terms for crimes of violence against abusive partners.

In December, outgoing Ohio Gov. Richard F. Celeste granted clemency to 25 women convicted of killing or assaulting their abusive husbands or companions. And on February 19, Maryland Gov. William Donald Schaefer commuted the sentences to time already served of eight women convicted of violence against their husbands or boyfriends. Six of the eight Maryland prisoners had been convicted of murder; one of manslaughter; and one of battery.

Both governors said they had decided to reduce the sentences because the women had been prevented at their trials from offering evidence of their abuse as well as expert testimony about "battered woman syndrome." Often, a claim of self-defense in a seriously violent case requires the defendant to show she was in imminent danger of being hurt. Thus, a woman who has suffered years of abuse and strikes out against her abuser may not be allowed to offer evidence of how the abuse affected her psychologically, if the court finds that the attack against her partner was too remote from or otherwise irrelevant to the history of abuse, experts said.

Battered woman syndrome is described as a situation in which physical and psychological abuse can cause the victim to lose self-confidence, feel trapped and isolated, and eventually strike back in either a spontaneous or calculated way.

In Ohio, a law took effect last November allowing such testimony to be presented in court; and in Maryland, Governor Schaefer announced his support for similar legislation.

Governors Celeste and Schaefer emphasized that they had done thorough research on all of the cases and did not make their decisions lightly. Schaefer met personally with several battered women in prison, and said he was convinced that the eight whom he released had acted in self-defense and posed no threat to public safety.

But the executive clemency actions and the legislation have proved quite controversial. In both Ohio and Maryland, some of the prosecutors who had handled the cases at issue denounced the governors' actions, and expressed fear that abused women generally will get the impression they have a "license to kill" their abusive spouses. Some leaders of the Maryland legislature criticized Schaefer for substituting his judgment for that of judges, and said they would oppose the battered-woman-syndrome legislation.

**Battered-woman campaigns in other states:** Women's groups and other supporters of reforms on behalf of battered spouses said that the actions by the Ohio and Maryland governors have encouraged them to accelerate their efforts in other states. The Correctional Association of New York, an organization that promotes alternatives to incarceration, announced that it would hold a joint press conference with a number of women's groups and other organizations on March 4, urging Gov. Mario M. Cuomo to release many women in prison, including those convicted of violent crimes against abusive mates.

Campaigns on behalf of individual battered women serving prison terms, or more recently, groups of women, have been undertaken in Washington State, Illinois, Louisiana, Florida, and Arizona, according to the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, a Philadelphia-based organization.

And an increasing number of state legislatures, including those of Texas, Vermont, California, Washington, Maryland, Wyoming, and Michigan, are considering bills to allow battered-women-syndrome testimony in court, comparable to changes already approved in Ohio, Missouri and Louisiana.

At the federal level, Rep. Constance A. Morella (R-Md.), who played a key role in convincing Governor Schaefer to commute the eight women's sentences, has sponsored legislation expressing the sense of Congress that state courts should allow such testimony and authorizing \$600,000 to help indigent battered women obtain expert testimony about the effects of domestic violence. ■

**Sam L. Nicolosi, D.V.M.**

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## GAY AND LESBIAN CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

**Activists aim for more support, vow to pass bill this decade**

Washington, D.C. — With 93 lawmakers behind it (plus more signing on regularly) the Federal Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Act was reintroduced into the 102nd Congress. The bill, introduced in the Senate on March 6 and the House on March 13, is a cornerstone piece of lesbian and gay civil rights law that lobbyists have pledged to pass this decade.

Officially known as the Civil Rights Amendments Act of 1991, the bill would ban discrimination on the basis of affection or sexual orientation in housing, employment, federally assisted programs and public accommodations. The bill amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968, which bans discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

The bill now has 93 sponsors (a record number) in the House and 11 in the Senate. Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) and Sen. Alan Cranston (D-CA) are chief sponsors and introduced the bill.

"One of the most fundamental responsibilities of any democratic government is safeguarding the liberties of its citizens," said Weiss.

Said Cranston, "This legislation... would simply extend to gay men and lesbian women basic protections against invidious discrimination because of sexual orientation." ■



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## Chatterbox

**OHIO'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW** applies to lesbian and gay partners who cohabit even though they are not married according to the Ohio 10th District Court of Appeals. In what is apparently the first ruling of its kind, the court reversed the ruling of a trial judge who threw out a misdemeanor domestic violence charge because the two women could not be married under state law.....

Plans are underway for **1991 OKLAHOMA GAY AND LESBIAN PRIDE WEEK**, June 17-23. The Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade and a street fair and arts and crafts show will be held on Sunday, June 23. Watch the *Voice* for more info.....

May 24 - June 3 has been designated **NATIONAL AIDS LOBBY DAYS** by the Human Rights Campaign Fund. The Fund will provide voting records, issue briefing papers, "How to Lobby" materials and other materials for individuals and organizations wishing to visit with Senators and Representatives about the AIDS epidemic.....

**MADWOMAN PRESS IS ACCEPTING MANUSCRIPTS** by, for and about lesbians. They are interested in novels, cartoons, and comics. For guidelines send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Madwoman Press, P.O. Box 690, Northboro, MA01532.....

**CONGRATULATIONS TO CINDY BOOKOUT** who was selected as the 1991 recipient of the Bill Roger's Award by the Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus. Cindy, a past member of the Herland Board, has long been an outspoken political activist in our community. She is the first woman to receive the Bill Roger's Award.....

**MERLIN STONE**, author of *When God Was a Woman* and *Return of the Goddess*, is working on articles about Women's Spirituality publications and groups. She would like to hear from you about any and all of these from where you live and play. She's also very interested in hearing about Goddess plays, films, dance, music and various visual arts. Moon Ritualiers take notice? Write Merlin at Box 266 - 201 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014.....

**Forum: WOMEN AND THE EARTH**; May 20, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. To bring together women from the Greens, American Indian Affairs, EcoFeminists, labor movement, etc., including Gwen Kirk, Beverly Singer, Eve Ensler, Lin Nelson, Jean Gardner, Kate Fox and Merline Stone. Learning Alliance, 494 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.....

**LESBIANS ONLY THERAPY GROUP.** Wednesday evenings. Sliding scale fee available. Call 843-5319 or 364-5708. Jo L. Soske M.Ed./CAC.....

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**DON'T MISS ERICA WHEELER AT HOTEL BOHEMIA** June 8th. Call 528-0020 for reservations.

## GOOD KISS, BAD KISS

*Historic smooch.* In a February episode of *L.A. Law*, C.J. Lamb, after a celebratory dinner, affectionately kisses fellow attorney Abby Perkins. The kiss may be the first lip smooch between two women in television history. When Abby becomes tense, C.J. explains she likes men too, but considers herself "flexible" and hopes the revelation of her bisexuality won't hurt their friendship.

The kiss makes C.J. the only recurring lesbian or bisexual female character on primetime TV. Some news stories have reported there's doubt about whether this storyline will continue. The producers are hearing from the homophobes; they need to hear from you, too. Thank David Kelly, Executive Producer, *L.A. Law*, 20th Century Fox Television, Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213. Reprinted from *GLAD Bulletin* March/April 1991. ■

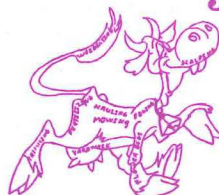
## JAMIE ANDERSON

What a great concert! Jamie Anderson appeared at the Hotel Bohemia on April 5 to a standing-room-only crowd. Jamie has a sweet, strong voice, and her songs, both her own and those borrowed from others, were graceful and pleasing. Jamie is very humorous; she is a great storyteller and interacts easily with her audience. Her songs are political and lusty, frequently funny, occasionally sad, and always skillful and entertaining.

Jamie's concert was a Herland sponsored event, and many thanks are due Mary Reynolds for planning and organizing and really doing all the work, as well as for the use of the charming Hotel Bohemia.

**STAY TUNED FOR ERICA WHEELER ON JUNE 8th at Hotel Bohemia!** Call 528-0020 for reservations. ■

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## OPEN MIC AT THE PORTHOLE HUGE SUCCESS

The Herland Open Mic at the Porthole brought together excellent local talent and was a great success, thanks to the efforts of Cindy Bookout and the hard work and patience of Shatzky Watson and Carol Berry.

For those who were not able to attend, you missed a grand old time—with good music, egg races, and good food, how can you not have fun? I'm already looking forward to next Easter at the Porthole.

Thanks, Shatzky and Carol, for your support of Herland and other community organizations. You're wonderful! ■

### MEET AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMYN WITH A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE!

TIME: 1 - 4 p.m. DATE: 5/11/91

PLACE: James Steward Bldg, 1500 NE 4th

FOR/BY/ABOUT/AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMYN

PUBLISHED BY: Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 NW 39th,  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:  
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GENERAL INFO: (405) 521-9696 (leave message)

SUBSCRIPTIONS to the *Herland Voice* are free upon request.

# CELEBRATING OUR SEXUALITY

by Deborah Fox

This is the time of year when sexual energy is at an all time high. Biologically, warmer weather and lengthening days creates a hormonal acceleration that produces "Spring Fever" in plantlife, animals and people. It is the season of rebirth, birth, renewal and regeneration. Sex is a natural expression of this phenomenon.

However, sex has become a problem for many. First there is the denigration of our bodies and our sexuality by the patriarchal religions, and then, there is rape, incest, sexist society, sexual and physical abuse. All of this has left scars that make it difficult and sometimes impossible to enjoy our sexuality and love our bodies. As Adrienne Rich has pointed out: "I don't know of a woman alive whose body does not pose a problem for her in one way or another."

The patriarchs and their Church are the only ones in all of history and herstory to degrade, deny, and pervert sexuality and sexual preferences. Early cultures and tribal societies never categorized sex as dirty and sinful, indeed, they had no concept of "sin," nor were they homophobic. In the matriarchy, sex was always considered sacred and all sexual preferences were honored. In fact, many tribal and early cultures considered lesbians and homosexuals as "touched by the gods" and highly respected. Many were tribal leaders and shamans. And it is very probable that the divisions between sexual preferences were not pronounced then as they are today under patriarchy and their institution of heterosexuality. (See: *The Sacred Hoop—Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, by Paula Gunn Allen, *Another Mother Tongue—Gay Words, Gay Worlds*, by Judy Grahn, *The Great Cosmic Mother—Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*, by Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor.)

Most of the early cultures and tribes were egalitarian and gynocentric, women who were primary decision makers, leaders, sat on the councils, and created the laws that maintained a harmonious existence. The power of the Mother was primary, they revered Mother Earth, practicing an earth religion that was intrinsic to everyday life. Spirituality was not separated from sexuality and many rituals and ceremonies were sexual. There were sexual rites to induce ecstatic states of consciousness, and sexual rites to ensure fertility of crops. Early cultures believed that all power was fundamentally sexual.

Today sex has become fragmented like everything and everyone else. "Whole" sex is a combination of physical pleasure, the mind, the psyche, emotions, the spirit, erotica, caring, lust, respect, etc., unlike the sex we witness today with many women caught in an inner conflict of virgin vs. whore, or cut off from the body; so many men cut off from their emotions, shame and guilt about masturbation; a "sexual liberation" that merely condoned further exploitation of women and sex; the creation of pornography, sadomasochism, etc. Sexuality cannot be repressed without upsetting the healthy balance of body and psyche. Incest, rape, and other perverse sexual behaviors were virtually unheard of in gynocratic societies. One rejoiced in the delights of one's body and physical existence.

To reclaim our sexuality and what it is or is not, we need to reprogram the negative beliefs we hold about sexuality and sex. We can relearn our sexuality with our first love: ourselves. Being our own tender lover is a powerful tool. We can perform Self Blessing rituals, affirming our body, mind and spirit, practice Tantric yoga, creating a romantic setting for ourselves with candles, soft music, a mirror in which to explore and express to ourselves the love we feel or wish to feel. We are each unique and will find our own way back to real sexual freedom. Blessed Be. ■

This article is an opinion expressed by the author. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of Herland as an organization. If you would like to submit articles to the *Voice*, all articles are considered.

Kay Killgore, M.Ed.

Woman to Woman Counseling

1010 N.W. 45th  
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## ACT-UP UNDER FIRE

In response to a complaint brought by the Committee to Re-elect Jesse Helms, a political action committee of the Conservative Campaign Fund (CCF), the Federal Election Commission (FEC) is investigating four organizations in relation to the boycott of Marlboro cigarettes and Miller Beer.

The groups being investigated are ACT UP/San Francisco, ACT UP/Washington, D.C., The Dallas Gay Alliance and the Tarrant County (Texas) Gay Alliance. The CCF complaint says these groups promoted the boycott as part of a "conspiracy" to defeat Jesse Helms' re-election as U.S. Senator from North Carolina.

Consumer boycotts are a form of protected speech. ACT UP believes the FEC investigation serves no purpose other than to harass lesbian, gay and AIDS activists. The FEC has sent each group a list of interrogatories in a discovery request for information documents. While some of the FEC's questions deal with the boycott, others, ACT UP says, are intrusive demands for information that reveal the political nature of the investigation and suggest its actual motive: disruption of an activist, grassroots political organization at the behest of Jesse Helms, a man who promoted obvious racism and homophobia in his last campaign ads in order to preserve a desperately slim margin of victory.

ACT UP is urging anyone who feels this FEC investigation should be stopped to write or send a telegram to John Warren McGarry, Chairman of the Federal Election Commission, 999 E Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20463. The message you send should emphasize: A. Your investigation of ACT UP constitutes harassment of a grassroots political organization fighting the AIDS pandemic; B. I further believe this investigation supports the attack by Jesse Helms and the ultra right wing on gay and AIDS organizations; C. Your investigation infringes upon the constitutional rights to organize consumer boycotts or voice political opposition; D. Stop the harassment; E. Call off the investigation.

To send a personal opinion message by telegram, call 1-800-888-5284 and say you want to send Message #37. You can put the cost of this on your VISA, MasterCard or American Express for \$2.50 or have them bill your home address for \$4.00. ■

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## LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS PLANNING MEETING CALLED

Washington, D.C. - A national planning meeting has been called to discuss the possibility of a future march on Washington for lesbian and gay civil rights. The meeting is scheduled for May 11-12, 1991, at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street N.W. in Washington, D.C. on Saturday May 11 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This meeting is a follow-up to a March 9, 1991 meeting in Washington, called by The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). That day, 100 lesbians and gay men from all over the country met to discuss interest in a national event, which has not occurred since 1987, when a half a million people marched on Washington.

The meeting is free. Individuals or groups are encouraged to register as soon as possible. Discount airline and hotel reservations are available. Make reservations early.

Those unable to attend this meeting are urged to submit an oral or written proposal to NGLTF. Call 1-800-832-2889, or write to 1734 14th Street NW, Washington DC 20009-4309, Attention: March on Washington. FAX: (202) 332-0207. ■



## OKLAHOMA WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS

The Oklahoma chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus is alive and well again, out of hibernation, reorganized, and ready to work the Caucus's Action Agenda for the 90's; which is: Identify and recruit pro-choice women candidates and mobilize pro-choice voters to get them elected.

- Train candidates, campaign staff volunteers, and community activists to organize, raise funds and get out the vote.
- Endorse and elect women candidates who share the REAL PRO-FAMILY agenda: child care... family and medical leave... reproductive freedom... pay equity... expansion of educational opportunities... teen pregnancy prevention... access to quality health care... and safe, affordable housing.
- Use political and professional networks to recruit and assist women seeking appointment to public office.
- Work within the major political parties—locally and nationally—to ensure that women and their concerns are fully represented.
- Provide a strong advocacy voice for women issues in Washington, D.C. and in our state capitol.

Membership is open to all persons, regardless of sex, race, age, or party affiliation who subscribe to the purpose of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus. For more information and a membership form contact Billie Goodin, (405) 321-1475; or Claudean Reynolds, (405) 547-5130. ■

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## SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS WEEK

May 13 - 19, 1991, has been designated Sexual Assault Awareness Week. Violent crimes in general rose by nearly 9% in Oklahoma last year, and rape increased by over 20%. Two events being planned and sponsored by The Rape Crisis Center and the Oklahoma Coalition on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault are a Take Back the Night Rally and Candlelight Vigil and a statewide Conference on Sexual Assault.

The Rally and Vigil will be held on Thursday, May 16, 1991 at 8 p.m. on the south steps of the State Capitol Building in Oklahoma City. There will be speakers and music by Peggy Johnson, Tim Sullivan and Robin Brooks.

The Conference, "Ending the Silence," will be held May 16 and 17, 1991, at Metro-Tech, 1900 Springlake Drive, Oklahoma City. For information on the vigil call (405) 947-4506; and for info on the Conference call (405) 360-7125. ■

## FLORIDA LAW AGAINST LESBIANS AND GAYS ADOPTING DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

In a landmark ruling, a circuit court judge in Florida has struck down a Florida law that prohibited lesbians and gay men from adopting children in that state.

Judge M. Ignatius Lester, of Monroe County, Florida, ruled on March 15 that the law violated the state constitution's right to privacy, equal protection and due process of law. The law, he said, "suffers from the trite notions of homosexuals' unsuitability as fit parents and evidences discrimination through archaic stereotypes associated with homosexuals."

The Florida law was challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida on behalf of Edward Seebol, a gay man. Seebol, whom the court described as a "well respected resident and businessman," had participated in the state's guardianship program. Seebol is the executive director of AIDS Help Inc., the AIDS service organization in Key West.

"I am pleased with the court's decision," Seebol said. "This favorable judgement will allow other qualified gays and lesbians to become adoptive parents in Florida."

"Florida's law prohibiting homosexuals from adopting was an embarrassing anachronism that cruelly and summarily shattered opportunities for family enhancement," said Robyn Blummer, Executive Director of the ACLU of Florida. "By striking it down, the court has made Florida a little more pro-family and a little more humane." ■

# LIZARDS/LOS PADRES - Book Review

lesbian feminist short stories by Bettianne Shoney Sien

(excerpts from a review in Hag Rag, July-August 1989. by Tara Ayres)

I was sorry when I reached the last page of *Lizards/Los Padres*. Closing it was a bit like leaving a town in which I was just beginning to make friends and feel at home. Shoney Sien's characters are like that—real women, real dykes. This beautifully written book is full of tastes and colors and smells. You can actually feel the sun beating down on you, and taste the grit in your mouth on a summer afternoon helping with the harvest. And after the shallow, plastic characterizations of so much lesbian fiction these days, the dykes in this book are a delight. Not just the same character, wearing a different name and plunked down in a slightly different situation, but varied and complex women, doing the best they can with their lives. Some of them I wanted to meet, some of them I could swear I already know, all of them believable.

While the characters in this book are not clones, there are repeating themes among the stories. Some are from the perspective of girls growing up in the country, their connection with their mothers and grandmothers, their growing into adulthood and autonomy. There are young women coming out, dealing with leaving their marriages behind, with raising children, with leaving

their sons. Five of the stories do feature the same actors, a lesbian couple moving from the beginning of a relationship to its end, which contributes an added feeling of continuity to the volume. The stories develop a continuum of Lesbian experience, from childhood, through isolation, into community.

These stories are intensely political, without being polemical or preachy. The girls and women in these stories come from different backgrounds—urban and rural, poor, working and middle class. And the complexity of those differences is an integral part of their interactions, with the world and with each other...

The stories touch on subjects that claim our focus in the real world—economic survival, Lesbian battering, class differences between friends and lovers, our relationships with our biological families and with the straight women who have been important to us, psychiatric abuse. If that list daunts you, bear in mind that these are stories, not sermons, and the overall message is strength, not powerlessness. Sien's characters are us, the dykes in our communities, and she's describing our lives. ■



**Susie Southwell, M. Ed.**

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## REGISTRATION FOR SPRING RETREAT (FOR WOMEN ONLY)

Register now for Herland's Annual Spring Retreat, May 17 - 19 at Robber's Cave State Park. Pre-registration (including 3 meals) is from \$25 to \$35 (non-refundable) based on your ability to pay. Registration after May 10th or on-site is \$35.00. Return this form and your check to: HSR, 2312 N.W. 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112.

The above price includes accommodations and morning and evening meals (3 meals). Bring your own snacks and don't forget the fixin's for the famous Herland Potluck!

(Some scholarships available. Contact Herland for more information. No one will be turned away for lack of money.) Please fill out form below and mail to: HSR, 2312 NW 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112.

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COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_