

The HERLAND VOICE

March, 1994

IN MEMORY OF THE VOICES WE HAVE LOST

Herland Sister Resources will present Amy Beth of the Lesbian Herstory Archives with "In Memory of the Voices We Have Lost" on Friday, March 4 at 7:00 P.M. at Testing the Limits, 2136 N.W. 39th St., OKC. The slideshow presentation features materials from the Lesbian Herstory Archives and lesbian herstory.

Since its founding in 1974, the Lesbian Herstory Archives has collected and catalogued thousands of photographs, diaries, books, tapes of music, artwork and myriad artifacts of both famous and "unsung" lesbians. The Archives is the world's largest collection of materials by and about lesbians.

Amy Beth has been a coordinating member of the Lesbian Herstory Archives since 1988. She is actively involved in providing research guidance, fund-raising, collection of materials, and public speaking on behalf of the Archives. □

PLANNING BEGINS FOR FIRST STATE L/G/B/T CONFERENCE

Planning for the first statewide conference of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender groups and other organizations working to help the cause of lesbian/gay rights got under way Saturday, February 5. Representatives of Herland, OU Gay Lesbian Bisexual Association, Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, OKC chapter of Affirmation and the Oklahoma City and Norman chapters of Affirmation gathered to begin discussing the event. Nance Osburn, a Board member for Equality Colorado and a native Oklahoman, facilitated the initial planning meeting.

Once the group affirmed the idea of holding a statewide summit, the primary topic of discussion was the goal of the summit. There was general consensus that some objectives would be to facilitate planning and cooperation among organizations to form a united front for a better state wide impact. Other goals included promoting tolerance and unity within the various factions of our community, mechanisms for assisting and/or starting new organizations, and make the participants better able to serve their respective groups with what they have learned from the others.

Planning will continue with a meeting scheduled to be held in Tulsa on Saturday, February 26. For information about how your organization can take part, call OGLPC at (405)524-2131 or Simply Equal-OKC at (405)842-2922. □

RUTHANN ROBSON: LESBIANS IN LIFE, LAW AND LITERATURE

by Peggy Johnson

Editors note: Ruth Ann Robson, an attorney on the faculty of the CUNY Law School in New York and author of Lesbian (Out)law, spoke at OU on February 17 in a lecture sponsored by the OU Gay, Lesbian, and Bi Student Association and the OU Speakers Bureau. This article is drawn from a paper written for a law class reflecting on that presentation.

In Professor Robson's lecture at Dale Hall, she identified two interrelated problems that she sees facing lesbian survival. These are first, the survival of individual lesbians (material needs such as food, shelter, love, relaxation and safety) and, second, the "amorphous" survival of lesbians collectively. The latter problem involves the "barter of the collective" to maintain individual survival. For example, within the legal context, a lesbian might only retain custody of her children if she has no participation with lesbians collectively (such as a political event or rally).

Professor Robson separated out four specific problem areas within the two facets of survival and gave an overview of how these problems materialize in literature and law. These areas included identity, narration and particularized descriptions, relationships, and domestication (indoctrination by the system).

The problem of identity begins basically with a definitional concept. Who is a lesbian? Who decides who is a lesbian? She identified clues in literature, some subtle ones picked up and discussed by lesbians and others more plotted to imply that the character (or the writer) is, indeed, a lesbian. (Another debate, not specifically addressed in the talk, is whether the word lesbian is a noun or a verb.) In law, Professor Robson has found that gender stereotypes are typically introduced through testimony and evidence to establish whether the person in question is a lesbian. Also, a defendant may deny being a lesbian if that is part of the case itself and could relieve her of liability.

The definitional problem leads right into another subcategory of the problem of identity, the boundary aspect. Can a lesbian also sleep with men? Can men be lesbians? What about transgendered females who identify as lesbians? Some of these ideas are perpetuated through literature (books in which the one lesbian lover always goes back to the man) and in law (if a woman can prove she has slept with one man, perhaps the court will not believe she is a lesbian. Or the absence of heterosexual activity may convince the court she is a lesbian). (continued page3)

ST. SYBIL

Dear St. Sybil,

In my innocent childhood dreams and fantasies of fame, glory, and heroism, I more than once threw my thin but wondrously brave body on a dastardly Nazi's hand grenade. How fortunate were my friends: not only were they favored by the company of such a selfless, courageous comrade: I survived to fight another day with them, as it turned out that the grenade was, happily (!) a dud.

Also more than once did I give a rousing Nathan Hale-esque speech with a rope around my neck, or better yet and more often, in front of a firing squad, with a cigarette dangling from my lips and a scomed blindfold dangling from the hand of my admiring, reluctant executioner; only to be saved in the nick of time by my faithful friends and followers...who thanks to my derringdo were wildly successful not only in my rescue but in their cause. Life can be awfully sweet in dreams. I wish I could be a hero today, but I guess there aren't that many opportunities anymore, are there?

Regretfully,

Jess A. Wannabee

Dear Jess,

Sure, you've always wanted to be brave and resourceful and unheeding of your own wellbeing - without suffering the consequences. Who hasn't? Oh to be Rosa Parks, to take a stand, spark a movement and live to reap her just honors. Or Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier in WWII, who lived to write a book and be a movie star. Or Nelson Mandela.

But the fact is, Nathan Hale was hanged, and people who throw themselves on grenades *die*. For every Rosa Parks there was a multitude of poor tired nameless black women who in ways large and small fought the constrictions of American apartheid - and suffered in ways large and small for it. For every Audie Murphy, there were hordes who received their medals posthumously. For Mandela there was Steven Biko and countless unnamed others; for Jesse Jackson there was Medgar Evers, Martin and Malcolm.

There are always those who go before, who suffer, who lose, who die, to pave the way for a better world. All honor to Anita Hill, who has kindled an awareness and resistance to sexual harassment; she has made this country better for women, and herself owes a debt to the little girls who walked up the school house steps in Mississippi and Arkansas. The small cadre of white civil rights workers in the sixties who participated in the voter registration drives will always remember and honor Viola Gregg Liuzzo; but how many others remember or even recognize the name of the white mother of five from Detroit who was murdered on a dark Alabama road in 1965.

The forty-hour work week we take for granted - people died to make it a reality. The right to vote was won with lives - and deaths - dedicated to that struggle.

Today we often see extreme personal sacrifice by those who lend themselves to lawsuits - class action or personal ones which will change law, set new precedent, or in other ways alter interpretation of current laws; and increasingly it is lesbians and gay men who are in the forefront, who are sacrificing, suffering, fighting; who are the ones disrupting their lives, losing their privacy, their careers, their children. Army Sgt Jose Zuniga and Naval Academy Midshipman Joseph Steffan came out publicly, and were ousted from their military careers as a result, because they felt that

continuing to be closeted was intolerable - and because they were brought up to believe that America stands for equality, fairness, decency, and justice for all, including them; and that consequently their cause would prevail. The sodomy law was overturned in Kentucky recently thanks to the hard work and legal expertise of a couple of attorneys (including Shirley Wiegand, now professor at OU Law School) and the personal courage of Jeffrey Wasson.

The local women who have fought for their children in court, rather than by running to another state, or by lying about their lives and their relationships, are heroes of the ongoing struggle for peace and justice. Honor them, keep the faith, and keep your eyes open; opportunities for heroism abound. □

SIMPLY EQUAL - OKC LAUNCHES MEDIA PROJECT

Members of the lesbian and gay rights organization, Simply Equal - OKC, are preparing a campaign to monitor the media in Central Oklahoma. The organization's Communications Committee will coordinate the project but committee Co-chair Pat Reaves said the ultimate success of the endeavor really depends on individuals within the community. "The Media Project's goal is to educate the local media about gay and lesbian issues. Most of the education will come when individuals within our community, and Simply Equal - OKC (SE-OKC) in particular, respond to the media's treatment of lesbian and gay people and issues. Our community must begin to make itself more vocal to the print and electronic media," Reaves said.

SE-OKC officials say the effort has two main components. Communications Committee Co-chair Alan Nyitray says the first component of the Media Project will rely on individuals to alert SE-OKC when newspapers, radio, or TV cover a gay and lesbian issue. "If people notice something in the media that they think the community should respond to, then they should call us at our business line at 848-2922 and leave a message for the Media Project. People need to leave their phone numbers so a Simply Equal member can contact them and get more information."

Nyitray says the second component involves responding to the newspaper or other media outlet with letters, phone calls, press releases or other means. "Our goal to educate the media will be accomplished when we tell them what they did right and what they did wrong.

The Simply Equal - OKC Media Project can be reached at 405-848-2922. □

Published by: Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 N.W. 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112

Newsletter Committee: Margaret Cox, Deborah Fox, Vivien Ng, Pat Reaves

Circulation: 1200

Advertising Rates: Business card \$15; 1/4 page \$35; 1/2 page \$60; full page \$100

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.

The Voice is printed on recycled paper.

MARCH 1994

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

On March 4, 1917, **Jeannette Rankin** of Montana, pacifist and feminist, became the first woman seated in the US Congress.

		1 SIMPLY EQUAL at Herland 7 pm	2 Cleveland County NOW Norman Public Library 7 pm	3	4 AMY BETH of the Nat'l Lesbian Archives at Triangle 7 pm * CoDA, 7 pm	5
6  Elizabeth Barrett Browning 1808 - 1861	7	8 SIMPLY EQUAL at Herland 7 pm	9 John Brown 1800 - 1859	10 Harriet Tubman, RIP 1913 * Teachers Group 7pm, Herland	11 PEGGY JOHNSON at the Grateful Bean 10th & Walker 9 - 12 * CoDA, 7 pm	12
13	14 Herland Legal Defense Fund Committee Meeting 6:30 pm	15 SIMPLY EQUAL Herland, 7 pm * OKC NOW at the Gaylord YWCA 2460 NW 39th 6:30 pm	16	17	18 CoDA, 7 pm	19
20  Board Meeting 4:30	21	22 SIMPLY EQUAL at Herland 7 pm	23	24	25 Gloria Steinem 1934 & Aretha Franklin 1942 * CoDA, 7 pm	26 PEGGY JOHNSON La Baguette in Norman 9 - 12
27	28	29 SIMPLY EQUAL at Herland 7 pm	30	31  Cesar Chavez 1927 - 1993	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>SAVE THESE DATES:</p> <p>April 17 - Miss Brown To You does a gig in OKC</p> <p>April 30 - The Sweetheart Ball (Bring your Sweetheart or find one there)</p> <p>May 20, 21, 22 - Herland's Spring Retreat at Roman Nose</p> </div>	

HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES, INC.
2312 N.W. 39th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112
(405) 521-9696
Hours: Saturdays 10 - 6; Sundays 1 - 6





2312 N.W. 39th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oklahoma City, Okla.
Permit No. 861

ROBSON (continued from page 1)

Other problems of identity include a heterosexist "accusation of incompleteness" which denies lesbian existence absent a reference to gay men. Professor Robson suggests resisting the "coupling" that this gender parity requires but not to the point of saying there are no alliances between the lesbian and gay communities. Just make sure they are on equal footing. Finally, lack of coherence--how can you say lesbian since all lesbians are not alike?--causes problems with defining what lesbian means, especially in law. For example, if there are "too many different types of you," there is little hope in overcoming the "discrete and insular minority" prong of the test for suspect class status.

The second main problem area in focusing lesbian concerns is that of narration or particularized descriptions. In literature, this descriptive requirement "substitutes for theorizing about what we want to do." In law, the emphasis on telling one's story causes cases to turn on the particularized facts. This, in turn, observes Professor Robson, interferes with the discrimination analysis and addressing the systemic problems inherent in cases involving lesbians. For example, if a lesbian mother loses custody of her children even though she is otherwise a fit mother, the facts of the case cannot belie to the conscious mind (though they often do to the court) that she is losing custody *because* she is a lesbian.

Her third area of discussion involved the problem of relationships where lesbians tends to be "boxed in by the family" in both law and literature. Professor Robson wonders where we are going in our private lives if we continue to have so much focus on relationships. She thinks it a gender problem that lesbian fiction has such a focus and, in law, the problem presents a barrier to any strides in the privacy argument since courts do not like to interfere with relationships (even though through sodomy laws and child custody cases the state does interfere with relationships). Even in feminist legal theory, lesbian tends to be mentioned in chapters on alternative forms of family.

Finally, Professor Robson addressed the fourth problem area which I think is a major focus of her work. That problem is domestication, the ways in which we are indoctrinated by the system so that we believe certain concepts and have no idea why. Marriage is one example. If lesbians get the legal right to marry, the state-sanctioned relationship becomes somehow "better" on the hierarchical scale than other lesbian relationships or the single lesbian's choices. Thus would the heterosexist model be reproduced and lesbians domesticated by the values of a system that otherwise has always denied them. Professor Robson is concerned that lesbians use legal concepts as substitutes for our own theorizing. "It is hard to have a discussion about our own values because we don't even know what they are."

Even though she finds that lesbian literature and culture is "being diluted" and then we use that diluted product "to identify each other," she is "quite hopeful" for lesbian survival. She recognized that the lesbians who went before took lots of risks "to preserve themselves so we could know them." She ended the prepared portion of her talk on a positive note by offering that "we owe it to the lesbians who come after us to confront our problems so they can come up with their own problems and solve them."

Her audience of about a hundred, mostly lesbian and gay, listened intently to her highly substantive talk. The structure of her presentation assured me that she is a law professor. Her answers to questions from the crowd assured me that she cares deeply about individual and collective lesbian survival. One

major area of discussion between her and the audience concerned the assimilation of lesbian culture. Our visibility, she said, "is being used and sold back to us." More specifically, "our hunger is being directed for us." She suggests not buying into commodification in general and liking one's friends "for who they are and not what they have."

One questioner addressed her role as a constitutional law professor and wondered what she thinks about original intent. She replied, "I don't really care what who wrote it thought about it. They're not around anymore." The audience was pleased with that response.

There were at least two men in the crowd who took issue with the speaker concerning the "moral dilemma" they think that "homosexuality" poses (a classic example of the gender parity problem the professor had addressed in her talk, in that, the questioners could not speak of lesbians without a reference to gay men) and what about some people who find it "disgusting to see same sex couples holding hands."

Finally, the last questioner asked Professor Robson what motivates her work and suggested that perhaps she was not "politically motivated." She said that perhaps different personalities make different choices on how to work politically. In a direct affront to the questioners who had not caused her own tempo to change but who had ruffled me, she ended the wonderful evening by saying, "I've never been very motivated to be very tolerant of people I think are not very bright." □

WOMEN'S STUDIES AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The Women's Studies Program of the University of Oklahoma has announced that applications are being accepted for the Betty Baum Hirschfield Scholarship, the Hillyer Prize, and the Affleck-Carl Award.

The Betty Baum Hirschfield Scholarship is awarded to two single mothers who have returned to school after interruption (at any stage) of their education. At the time of application, they must be a student at OU and have completed the equivalent of two semesters of full-time study within the previous five years with at least a B- average. Applications will be accepted until March 15.

The Hillyer Prize, named in honor of the founding Director of the Women's Studies Program at OU, Dr. Barbara Hillyer, is awarded to an outstanding student in a Women's Studies course. Applicants must have been enrolled in the Women's Studies course at OU during the 1993-94 school year. Applications will be accepted until April 1.

The Affleck-Carroll Award is presented annually to women Ph.D. students graduating who have completed dissertations on a topic related to Women's Studies. The Judith S. Lewis Prize is presented to the most outstanding Women's studies senior. Nominations are received from Women's Studies faculty.

For more information about any of these awards, please contact the OU Women's Studies office at 325-3481. □

Rebecca R. Cohn, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychology

Norman, OK
321-2148

Couples,
Individuals, &
Family Therapy

MUJERES Y MAIZ

I never thought I was rich -- not until I stood in a campesino family's home in Honduras. About a half-mile up a steep path from the closest dirt road, the two room stucco house had neither windows nor doors, just simple openings and none of our "modern conveniences." The daughter-in-law took us to see the small field (about two city lots) she and her husband work together. It's unusual for women to work the fields in Honduras. Shyly, she told us how they had laid out contours and dug terraces by hand on the steeply sloping field. The supper we ate later in a Honduran roadside cafe cost 4 lempiras -- about 1/2 dollar -- and a day's wage for a day laborer. A women's group sold calendars for 15 lempira each to support their work -- my purchase of 10 for about \$20 brought tears of happiness. It was as if someone had walked in to Herland and given us a check for three hundred dollars the day the mortgage was due.

The drawings and writings below are reprinted from that calendar, "Mujeres Y Maiz," which was produced by campesina women who live in the Paris of San Gaspar in Taulabé, Comayagua, Honduras. The drawings were made with materials taken from the earth. We share them in celebration of International Women's Day. --Pat Reaves

"CUANDO
LO DOBLA,
LO DOBLA
ASI..."



"She bends the stalks, the village girl..."
By Marcelina Reyes who is 45 years old and has had 8 children and three grandchildren.

"We've been meeting for six years now to develop ourselves in various ways. We have been discovering and sharing the problems that we live and feel as women and what is more, poor women.

We've realized that we have both intelligence and wisdom, that we are an important part of the people of Honduras, that we're fundamental to life (through reproduction) and not just objects of satisfaction to supply needs. We think that health is not only physical well being, but also emotional and spiritual equilibrium.

We also need good food, as the soil needs a good compost to produce better fruits.

We are learning that it's important to love life, to protect the trees, rivers, the earth and the animals.

Our intention is to continue struggling with great hope that we can find our own space in this very disfigured society of ours."

Translated and adapted from the original by Felipa Zalmerón

Poem About Corn

Campeñinos work the earth
To sow maize
Because in our country the most important thing
Is maize

And like this we live,
all our lives,
Sowing maize for the tortillas
And beans to make our meals complete

The birds of the sky sing and sing
With the heavenly rain
In the fields corn cobs
Begin to bloom

When we gather the harvest
We find a great happiness
Because here in our homes
We have tortillas again

How pretty the time of water,
Pretty the cut maize
How lovely the corn cobs
When they are bent over in the fields!

- Erlinda Argueta Medina

"Nos reunimos hace seis años para capacitarnos en muchos aspectos de la vida. Hemos descubierto los problemas que vivimos y sentimos, desde la perspectiva de ser mujeres y además mujeres pobres.

Conviviendo en un ambiente dominado por el machismo entre mujeres y hombres; comprendimos que tenemos inteligencia y sabiduría, que somos parte importante del pueblo, seres fundamentales de la vida (reproducción) y no objetos de satisfacción de necesidades.

Pensamos que la salud no es solamente estar bien físicamente, sino emocional y espiritualmente porque necesitamos buena alimentación al igual que la tierra necesita el abono para dar mejores frutos.

Estamos aprendiendo lo importante que es proteger los árboles, rios, la tierra y los animales para la vida.

Nuestras ideas son seguir luchando con muchas esperanzas para encontrar el espacio propio que tanto necesitamos, en todos los aspectos, de esta sociedad que tenemos, tan desfigurada."

Adaptado del original escrito por Felipa Zalmerón

Poema Sobre El Maiz

Los campesinos labran la tierra
para sembrar el maíz
porque en nuestro país lo más importante
es el maíz

Y así vivimos toda la vida
sembrando el maíz
para las tortillas
y el frijol para el conque.

Las aves del cielo cantan y cantan
con la lluvia celestial
en los campos los maizales
ya comienzan a florear.

Cuando sacamos la cosecha
nos encontramos con gran alegría
porque allá en nuestras casas
tenemos siempre las tortillas.

¡Que bonito el tiempo de agua,
bonito el maíz gilotando
Que bonito los maizales
cuando ya están doblando!

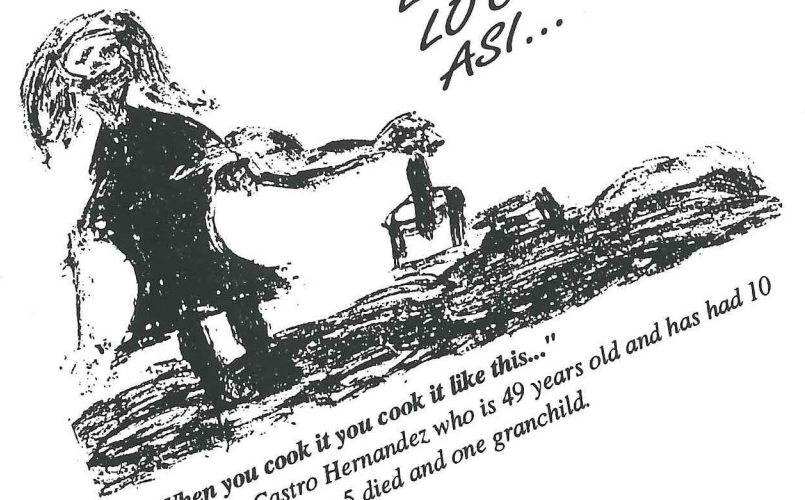
- Erlinda Argueta Medina

"DESCRANA
EL MAIZ
LA NUEVA
ALDEANA..."



"She removes the corn from the cob, the village girl!"
By Teodolinda Pacheco who is 48 years old and has had 10 children of which one died and 10 grandchildren.

"CUANDO
LO CUECE,
LO CUECE
ASI..."



"When you cook it you cook it like this..."
By Paula Castro Hernandez who is 49 years old and has had 10 children of whom 5 died and one grandchild.

"TAPISCA
EL MAIZ,
LA NUEVA
ALDEANA..."



"She cuts the corn, the village girl..."
By Marina Lorenzo Gomez who is 40 years old and has 10 children of whom 3 died.

"We are awake when we were asleep."

HERLAND HERSTORY

Women working on projects, women singing or reading, women sharing ideas..... The story began over twelve years ago. It was in the summer of 1982 that sisters and friends opened a WOMMIN'S BOOKSTORE from the idea of La Salle des Femmes. In an open letter, Barbara Cleveland outlined the plans for this peaceful, tranquil "woman's place." From pictures of getting the bookstore ready to open, there appeared to be plenty of fun, frolic, and frustration (one can only guess what was not pictured). With about fifty volumes of inventory, a plea was made for writers, artists, and browsers to share in the excitement of "a dream come true."

In November of 1984, the newsletter reported that the bookstore had become HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES and the following January (1985) was to be turned over to a feminist collective to develop this "primary center supporting women in times of creativity and stress." Educational and entertainment events nourished the expanding community and continued to be successful; poetry readings, workshops, and music concerts dotted the calendar. A now longstanding tradition began in the fall of 1985—the first HSR RETREAT at Osage Hills State Park on October 25-27.

A three year PLAN was developed in September of 1986 with one priority being to find a building to purchase. Through much hard work and commitment, a move to the current location resulted in January 1988. During over six months of moving and setting up time, the more than 150 volumes of book inventory with music and some jewelry was available by mail order in a catalog. Another project of that summer was the Pride Parade in June. Most of these endeavors had been documented in the newsletter which became THE HERLAND VOICE in September of 1989.

In 1990 a new three year PLAN was developed as well as the current MISSION STATEMENT. Retreats both spring and fall have continued to offer many possibilities to the wommin's community—a preserve, a refuge, a resort, a sanctuary, a shelter, an escape, an evacuation, a flight, a withdrawal. At Red Rock Canyon (fall 1991), pictures show women in contemplation and excitation. In fall of 1992 at Roman Nose, much the same is shown in snapshots but with the addition of many of our four-legged friends sharing the moments. Besides the on-going retreats twice a year, an accomplishment for 1991 was that HSR opened a CRAFTROOM in December. A PAYOFF THE MORTGAGE celebration concluded the anticipated event by board members, volunteers, and friends in January of 1993.

Women working on projects, women singing or reading, women sharing ideas.... This is a story that continues in 1994 and beyond. There have been many contributors to HSR herstory and this article is a meager outline (leaving out all the unpleasantness of fundraising and tempers flaring) taken from available material. All pictures, momentos, cards, invitations, anecdotes, flyers, ideas are needed; contact a board member, leave a message at Herland (521-9696, or ask for Diane (524-3495). This is a story that must be told. □

A wommin's CODEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS group meets at HSR at 7 P.M. on Fridays. CODA is an anonymous fellowship of sharing experience, strength, and hope and using a twelve step plan to develop healthy relationships. Any woman interested in a twelve step meeting is welcome to attend. For information call 524-3495.

POWER FEMINISM

by Vivien Ng

I guess we have come a long way, baby. I still remember the old days when the only time of the year that the media paid any attention to us was the month of March, and we might find a serious article or two about women's history in some magazines. Come April, all would be forgotten and news about women would once again be relegated to the "Style" or "Living" section of the local paper. If the past year could be used as an index of change, I would have to say that times have really changed for us. How many magazine and newspaper stories have we read about "new" feminism or "power" feminism? How many times have we seen the faces of latter-day feminists such as Naomi Wolf or Katie Roiphe, all made-up, smiling alluringly at the camera—and, presumably, at us? If the medium is the message, the message is: "Move over, dumpy, flannel-shirted, bra-burning, humorless, sexless, old-time feminists. Make room for the 'new' generation of pleasure-seeking, men-loving, self-affirming, designer-clothed, I'm-responsible-for-my-life-and-therefore-never-a-victim 'power' feminists."

Media hype notwithstanding, the self-styled "new" feminists did not invent power feminism. Consider one early feminist, Virginia Woolf, for example. In her work, *Three Guineas*, she characterized the feminism of her time as "obsolete," not because she did not see herself as a feminist, but because she believed that the women's movement of her time (late 1930s) was too timid in their aims, seeking only to obtain equality with men. She wanted a more radical approach, one that would directly challenge not just the status quo but the values that inform it. In the same vein, but almost 40 years later, Audre Lorde challenged feminists to forsake acquiring the master's tools, for "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Had the "power" feminists done their homework, they would not be so smug about their place in the history of the women's movement. They would have recognized how anemic their agendas are compared to those of Woolf and Lorde.

Only those who have not done their homework could write off an entire generation of feminists as "anti-sex." They ridicule the anti-pornography campaigns of Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, but ignore the works of Audre Lorde and Carter Heyward. Had they read Lorde's powerful essay, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," or Heyward's provocative *Toughing Our Strength: The Erotic As Power And The Love Of God*, they would (should) have been more modest in their claims of erotic breakthrough.

Only those who have not done their homework could dismiss an entire generation of feminists for perpetuating the victim mentality in women. How else could they have missed the power of Audre Lorde's "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"? Or Cheryl Clarke's "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance"? Or Rosario Morales' "I Am What I Am"? The list goes on.

How could Naomi Wolf (*Fire With Fire*) and Katie Roiphe (*The Morning After: Sex, Fear And Feminism On Campus*), both intelligent and highly educated, make such mistakes? What can explain the gaps in their knowledge? Racism, maybe? Classism, maybe? Heterosexism, maybe?

To those who consider themselves "new" feminists, I have one advice: enroll in a Women's Studies class and read your assignments. Then, and only then, celebrate your new-found identity. □

WOMEN OF THE WEST

by Deborah Fox

While cowboys are a national icon, cowgirls are a well-kept secret. We have been taught that women were only reluctant pioneers, self-affacing Prairie Madonnas, "bad girls" (i.e. dance hall prostitutes or women as civilizers.) Truth be known there were (and are) thousands of cowgirls, pioneers and homesteaders who came for the adventure, opportunity and a new way of life.

"Women came West as independent entrepreneurs, to take up land and build futures for themselves. From 1862-1934, under the auspices of the Homestead Act and related legislation, thousands of widows and single women proved up on homesteads. Women made up a significant proportion of those who took out claims -- in some areas, close to twenty percent. One study indicates that women proved up more often than men." (Teresa Jordan, *Cowgirls*)

Oklahoman Elinore Pruitt Stewart, widow and single parent who took employment as a house keeper for a well-to-do Scotch cattleman, filed a claim on land in Wyoming adjoining her employers in May, 1909. She believed homesteading was a way for women to be independent and she made certain that she earned every cent that went into her land and did the improvements herself. "...any woman who can stand her own company, can see the beauty of the sunset, loves growing things, and is willing to put in as much time at careful labor as she does over the washtub, will certainly succeed; will have independence, plenty to eat all the time, and a home of her own in the end." (Elinore Pruitt Stewart, *Letters of A Woman Homesteader*)

Agnes Morley Cleveland, whose widowed mother kept the New Mexico ranch her husband bought rather than sell it and move back to town, recounts her adventures growing up on and working a cattle ranch on the open range in the late 1800's. She worked roundups, rode the range, hunted grizzly bears, and went after the mail; "With icicles six inches long hanging from my pony's nostrils, and with frost bitten feet, I have made the trip [15 miles one-way] in sub-zero weather, or, in midsummer, I have ridden it with the sun blasting down with all the force of a glass furnace. I have ridden it on easy-gaited horses, on rough-gaited horses, horses that were gentle and horses that were not; I have ridden it when I wanted to and when I didn't, when my excited imagination had Indians following me, and when I knew coyotes were."

"I have spent the first half of my life explaining. I'm going to start the second half without explanation."

Margaret Duncan Brown and her husband bought 160 acres on Elk River in Northwest Colorado in 1915. When her husband died 3 years later she decided to stay on the ranch. She was 36 years old. She paid it out and expanded. "I suppose living here alone is what other people call queer. No one can know the relief this quiet has been to me. I have spent the first half of my life explaining. I'm going to start the second half without explanation."

"Although women worked outside in virtually every capacity, they seldom had the bedrock right to the land their male counterparts enjoyed. If they were daughters, they had less chance of inheriting the ranch; if they were hired hands, they had fewer

chances for paid employment; if they were spouses, estate taxes were biased against them; if they were owners, they needed the cooperation of male colleagues. They were, after all, working outside the more accepted role, and neither tradition nor law gave them vested interest in the territory. They had good reason not to draw attention to themselves." (T. Jordan)

"I have tried every kind of work this ranch affords, and I can do any of it."

So although ranch women did not readily embrace the women's movement, we can see that it is a more complex issue. Perhaps they were a part of women's emancipation for western states more quickly approved women's suffrage than eastern states. "I have tried every kind of work this ranch affords, and I can do any of it. Of course I am extra strong, but those who try know that strength and knowledge come with doing. I just love to experiment, to work, and to prove out things, so that ranching life and 'roughing it' just suit me." (E.P. Stewart)

"Today, all over the country, women serve in leadership roles in stock and woolgrower's associations, on loan boards of banks, and in other policy-making positions to far greater extent than ever before. The number of women who operate farms and ranches has increased by 10,000 since 1979, even though the number of farms has decreased. (T. Jordan)

From women in the West we also gain a different perspective that the one we are most familiar with -- the heroic tales of rugged individualist white men. "The Women's West challenges this picture as racist, sexist, and romantic and rejects the customary emphasis of traditional western history on the nineteenth-century frontier, discovered and defined by Anglo men." (taken from the back cover of *The Women's West*, edited by Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson)

From women's perspective we also gain a different view in regards to the Native Americans. Fredrika Bremer had this to say of Native American women, "With inward wonder I regarded these beings, women like myself, with the spirit and feelings of women, yet so unlike myself in their purpose of life...I thought of hard, gray, domestic life in the civilized world...hedged in by conventional opinion, with social duties...with every prospect of independence, liberty, activity, and joy closed, more rigidly closed by invisible barriers that these wigwams by their buffalo hides...and I thought that the Indian hut and that Indian woman's life was better, happier as earthly life...I thought that the wigwam of an Indian was a better and a happier world than that of the drawing-room. There they sat at their ease, without stays or the anxiety to charm, without constraint or effort, tote daughters of the forest." (Glenda Riley, *Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915*)

As we can see when taking a look at history through women's eyes, the stereotypes and "facts" of men's records of history are only a partial truth. The history we are taught in school is incomplete and would remain so were it not for women's perspectives. □

2109 S. Air Depot
Midwest City, OK 73110

(405)737-0496

Air Depot Animal Hospital

Call for Appointment

JOY HUSKA, D.V.M.

Dykes To Watch Out For



BULLETIN BOARD

Writing wanted: For a Feminist Anthology written by and for Women with Chronic Illness. Currently accepting poetry, essays, fiction, oral histories and autobiographies. Topics may include: religion, race, culture, body image, class, age, healing, sexual orientation, medical establishment, invisible disabilities, feminist identity, relationships, disabled identity and coping mechanisms. submission requirements; Entries should be no longer than 15 pages; all submissions must be typed, double-spaced; multiple submissions and previously published material accepted (must be notated); include a SASE; send brief (1 page) biography; submissions accepted in any language, please provide English translation. The anthology will be edited by Laurel Fain and Pella Schafer, both recently diagnosed with chronic illnesses. Currently accepting submissions until April 1, 1994, to ANTHOLOGY; P. O. Box 492, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

Sixth Gulf Coast Womyn's Festival, March 31 - April 4, 1994, Hattiesburg, MS. Womyn's music and culture with a Southern touch. For information, contact Henson Productions, 1806 Curcor Drive, Gulfport, MS 39507, (601) 344-1411.

Eco-Visions, a Conference about Women, the Animals, the Earth, the Future; March 18-20, 1994, Alexandria, VA. Panels and roundtable discussions on feminism and animal rights; environmentalism and animal rights; women in alternative communities; spirituality, nature, and ritual; women in law - working for animals and the environment; strategies for feminist nonviolence; women's crafts, vegan food, music, dance, ritual, art and more. Wheelchair accessible, sign-language interpreted. For information contact Friends of Animals, 2000 P Street, Suite 415, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 296-2172.

What About Us? Children tell of their lesbian/gay parents' breakup. Seeking first-person stories, thoughts, and drawings from children of all ages for anthology. Deadline: June 30, 1994. Write to Jenn Christiansen, P. O. Box 1841, Champlain, NY 12919.

HERLAND PRESENTS:

IN MEMORY OF THE VOICES WE HAVE LOST

AN EVENT WITH THE LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES

7:00 P.M., MARCH 4, 1993
2136 NW 39TH
TESTING THE LIMITS