

We Need Your Support

Community and public support of the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund are crucial to its success. There are many ways individuals and groups can help the LMDF —

- Become a sponsor by making a contribution:

- Individual \$10
- Group \$25
- Sustaining \$50 or more

Or make a monthly pledge.

Make cheques or money orders payable to the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund or 'LMDF' (address inside)

- Help publicize the existence of the LMDF by inviting us to speak to your class or organization
- Help organize fund-raising events such as dances, raffles, rummage sales, benefit concerts, lotteries, etc. Or if your organization holds such events, contribute part of the proceeds to the LMDF
- Put us in touch with lawyers and mental health professionals who are sympathetic and interested in helping lesbian mothers
- You don't have to be a mother to volunteer time with the LMDF!

Some Recent Custody Cases

1975 — Mrs. K., an Alberta lesbian mother, was awarded unconditional custody of her six-year-old daughter. The trial judge said his decision was influenced by the fact that Mrs. K. belonged to no lesbian organization.

1974 — Mrs. C., in Saskatchewan, lost custody of her two children, because of her lesbianism. Even though her ex-husband was leaving them in the care of his sister when they were not in school, the judge decided he would be the 'better parent.'

1977 — A Denver woman won permanent custody of the seven-year-old daughter of her now-deceased lover. Because of their close relationship and stable supportive environment, she was thought to be able to provide the best home, even though the girl had been living with an aunt for six months.

And in related news:

In the spring of 1981 CUPE Local 3012 in Saskatoon changed its contract to include 'parental' instead of 'paternity' leave, so that Charlotte Rochon could take time off to share in the care of her partner Maxine's new son. SORWUC Local 3 (Oxfam) is following suit.

THE LESBIAN MOTHERS' DEFENCE FUND

**A RESOURCE FOR WOMEN
FIGHTING FOR CHILD
CUSTODY**



Cover woodcut by Ann Quigley, Toronto, for the LMDF

The Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund is a resource for women facing child custody battles. It was founded in 1978 by gay women from the Wages for Housework campaign in Toronto.

The Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund Provides:

- Pre-legal advice, and information on successful battles in Canada, the United States and England
 - Referrals to sympathetic lawyers and other professionals
 - Financial assistance in building a strong court case
 - Personal and emotional support
 - Monthly pot-luck get-togethers for mothers, lovers, children and volunteers
- *These services are free and confidential* —
- Literature, including **Grapevine**, the newsletter of the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund (\$5/year)
 - Speakers for schools, conferences and special events

The Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund's Aims Are:

To help gay women keep or win custody of their children

To promote the rights of lesbian mothers and all gay women through media interviews, political lobbying and regular contact with women's and community groups

To mobilize public support for all lesbian mothers' struggle against discrimination and economic hardship

To speak out about how many thousands of lesbian mothers there are, while putting no pressure on any individual woman to make her name public

Fighting Against Odds . . .

Lesbian mothers wage an uphill fight against serious disadvantages when they set out to keep their children:

— Constructing solid court cases may cost money and time that many lesbians do not have.

— The courts tend to want to 'save' their children from an 'unnatural' home and penalize gay women for not wanting to live with men.

— Even if they are not automatically labelled 'unfit' because they are lesbian, the courts can award the children to the father on the basis of his ability to provide a secure home and a promising future. How many women can measure up to financial criteria in court when we earn half men's wages in our jobs, and nothing at all for the work we do in the home?

— If a woman hides her lesbianism to improve her chances of winning, she faces years of anxiety, since a custody decision can always be reopened if new evidence comes to light.



And Winning!

In spite of these problems, more and more gay women are refusing to leave their children behind when they leave marriages. There have been a score of important court victories in the United States, Canada and England in the last few years. And hundreds of gay women have won custody out of court.

Each success helps many more women to win. It becomes better known every day how many lesbian mothers there are, and how determined they are to have both their sexual freedom and the children they love. The more visible they are, the harder it is for the courts to deem them 'immoral,' 'unnatural' and 'different' from other women. What is in 'the best interests of the children' must be decided by those women and children themselves.

For information and assistance:

Call —

The Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund
(416)465-6822

Or write to —

The Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund
P.O. Box 38, Station E
Toronto, Ontario M6H 4E1