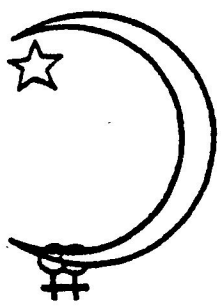


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WOMONSPACE NEWS



APRIL 1984 VOL. 2 NO. 4

Editorial

Lesbian Pride-Let It Shine!

Visibility: 1) the relative possibility of being seen under the prevailing conditions of distance, light and atmosphere.
2) range of vision.

Invisibility: 1) imperceptible.
2) that which cannot be seen.

The average dictionary gave the above definitions for the terms visibility and invisibility; the average lesbian, I'm sure, has a very different definition of the same terms. Being visible or 'being out' as opposed to remaining in the closet is a choice we all have faced or still have yet to face in our lives. Do we tell our non-lesbian friends and risk losing them? And what about parents and other family members-do we risk with them as well or is it easier to not take friends and lovers home and simply avoid the issue? Employers and co-workers are another story altogether. Who can afford to be out of work these days, and being fired because of one's sexuality can be particularly dangerous to even the most secure self-image and identity. There are times when it is relatively safe to risk disclosure and yet there are times when it's just as smart to keep quiet. But these are decisions that each of us must make after we have accessed our own personal situations. There are no definitive answers to any of these questions. Coming out is a very difficult, but at the same time, an equally rewarding and satisfying process. But it is just that, a process; a series of changes by which something develops.

The first of these 'series of changes' occurs when one names their sexual preference. Learning

to distinguish between the 'sickness' society imagined lesbianism to be, and the positive warm feeling you experience with womyn is one of the most difficult stages in the process. It can also be one of the most confusing and isolating. It was a connection that I personally didn't make for a very long time. I felt very sensual and excited with womyn and never associated that with what was commonly known as lesbianism. And when I finally did, it took me quite a while to sort out the lies and hateful misconceptions that terrified me and yet angered me at the same time. Three months and a bottle of wine later, I walked into a meeting of the local gay and lesbian organization and haven't looked back since.

I feel one of the most important steps occurs here, and that is the involvement in an organized lesbian (or gay and lesbian) group. Making contact with other lesbians whether it be social, political, or cultural, is similar to finding a long lost relative or returning to a childhood playground. Discovering you are not the only womyn in the world who likes other womyn tends to fill you with such unrestrained, unmitigated excitement that it takes every ounce of self-control you have to not shout it from every rooftop in the city.

Lesbian pride, like coming out develops and changes over time. And taking an active role in the lesbian community helps to strengthen both of them. It is a very productive way to meet other womyn, to explore and develop your own organizing or creative skills, and to discover talents you never knew existed. Volunteering at dances, attending drop-ins or workshops, sharing books and information, or simply listening over coffee to the coming out stories instills a positive sense of commonality amongst us and further, helps us to develop a strong sense of

Identity and community: Isolating gay men and lesbians from each other is an old technique (divide and conquer!) used over many centuries to weaken and eventually eventually destroy our spirit and strength. And many of us are still guilty of that, by being afraid to make contact with each other or by not being visible or vocal within the lesbian community itself; fearing rejection or ridicule. Patterns of deception, mistrust, and fear (in non-lesbian circles) can be very difficult to break, and perhaps that is why the potential for growth within the community itself is often overlooked.

An article in the January issue of WOMONSPACE NEWS articulated this fear; "I believe we are really scared of the power of our love as lesbians." ("Thanks, But I Think I'll Pass", WOMONSPACE NEWS, Vol. 2, No. 1) To take that thought one step farther, I believe we are still ignorant of and afraid of our power as lesbians. But then isn't that what coming out is all about? Isn't coming out (as an individual or as an organization) a series of steps whereby we take power back into our lives, and face those who say we don't have the right to exist and state, "we are here and we do have the right to live and work and love whom we choose without being harrassed"! And is that not why coming out (struggling to acquire a responsibility that we've never had before) is so difficult and frightening? It is not an easy struggle and those who do have the power now are fighting even harder to hang on to it. But every time a lesbian comes out, and every time Womonspace (or any other lesbian organization) makes itself visible within the womyns community, we are gaining in that power struggle. Womonspace's appearance within the womyns community (re: International Women's Day parade and celebration) and within Edmonton itself has advanced the political struggle

for lesbian equality simply by making us visible.

The existence of a lesbian banner in a public parade acknowledged the lesbian community here in Edmonton, and I doubt if that has ever been done before. I carried one end of that banner, and was proud as a lesbian to do so. I felt as though I had just come out again and did finally make it up to the rooftop!

The process of coming out can be considered completed, when all of us can say, with Andrea Dworkin, "for me, being a lesbian... means that I love, cherish and respect women in my mind, in my heart, and in my soul. This love of women is the soil in which my life is rooted. It is the soil of our common life together. My life grows out of this soil. In any other soil, I would die. In whatever ways I am strong, I am strong because of the power and passion of this nurturant love... There is a pride in the nurturant love which is our common ground, and in the sensual love, and in the memory of the mother-and that pride shines as bright as the summer sun at noon. That pride cannot be degraded. Those who degrade it are in the position of throwing handfuls of mud at the sun. Still it shines, and those who sling mud only dirty their own hands." (Our Blood, pp. 73-74. Harper and Row, Publishers Inc., 1976)

Jean Noble

Jean Noble



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

March 12, 1984

To the Womospace members:

We of Common Woman Books would like to thank Womospace for the help and support that we have received for our dance on March 3rd.

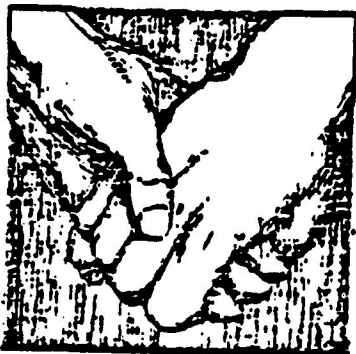
In particular we would like to thank you for including our flyer in your February issue of WOMONSPACE NEWS. Over 250 women came to the dance and we know that a lot of women heard about it through WOMONSPACE NEWS.

We would also like to thank you for sharing your organizational materials such as the food and liquor lists.

In sisterhood,
Pauline Belanger
for the Common
Woman Books
Collective

GATE

GAY ALLIANCE TOWARD EQUALITY



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SEE, I REALLY COULDN'T SING ...

I remember the first time I sang in public; I was four years old and had gone home from kindergarden crying because I hadn't been picked to play the triangle in the rhythm band. My mother put some dried beans in a tin to make a maraca and told me to sing, and to be glad to be original.

Since that day, I have sung. I've gone from being cut from a too-large chorus of altos for the school musical one year to singing the lead the next; from leading sing-songs at summer camps to being told by the church organist that no matter how well I sang, I just didn't fit in to "the choir of gentlemen and boys". And I've gone from years of silence (except for my Streisand in the shower imitation) to the tremendous fun of singing with the Vocal Minority chorus.

The neatest thing about the chorus is that it's a group where you're glad to be original. What makes us unique is that we're the only mixed gay chorus in Canada. What makes us comfortable is that it's of no consequence whether you are gay, gay-supportive, man, woman, amateur or professional, and that the tensions you might expect to exist in such a diverse group are simply not there.

You'll discover a few things quite quickly about the Vocal Minority. The first is that sexuality is not an issue. The second is that you can sing...as well as the person next to you. The third is that we really need womyn members. And after a few weeks you'll discover the collective harmony of a bunch of people who say, individually, "I can't sing."

Hope to see you Monday, 7:30 - 9:30 pm at the Elves Memorial Child Development Centre: 10825-142 St. If you need information, call 482-4957 or 465-6332.

L.J.B.



The Differing Past of Women

Too many people still ask that age old question, "Why is it that women have not made even a fraction of the intellectual, scientific or artistic-cultural contribution which men have made?"

"(This) should be part of every human consciousness, certainly every woman's consciousness (in the way that the 400 years of bondage, colonialism, the slave passage, are the black human)."

Let us not forget... "... the three steps behind; the girl babies drowned in the river; the baby strapped to the back. Buried alive on the funeral pyre, burned as witch at the stake. Stoned to death for adultery. Beaten, raped. Battered. Bartered. Bought and sold. Consubinage, prostitution, white slavery. The hunt, the sexual prey... domestic confinement. Illiterate. Denied vision. Excluded, excluded, excluded from council, ritual activity, learning, language...

Religion, when all believed. In sorrow shalt thou wife bring forth children. May thy wife's womb never cease from bearing. Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man. Let the woman learn in silence and in all subjection. Contrary to biological birth fact: Adam's rib. The Jewish male morning prayer: thank God I was not born a woman. Silence in holy places, seated apart or not permitted entrance at all.

And for the comparative handful of women born into the privileged class; being, not doing, man does, woman is; to you the world says work, to us it says seem. God is thy law, thou mine. Isolated. Cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd; the private sphere; bound feet; corseted, corseted, bedecked; denied one's body. Powerlessness. Fear of rape, male strength. Fear of expressing capacities. Soft attractive graces; the mirror to magnify man. Marriage as property arrangement. The vices of slaves; dissembling, flattering, manipulating, appeasing.

Bolstering. Vicarious living, infantilization, trivialization. Parasitism. Shut up, you're only a

girl. Oh Elizabeth, why couldn't you have born a boy? For twentieth-century women; roles, discontinuities, part-self, part-time, conflict; imposed 'guilt', 'a man can give full energy to his profession, a woman cannot'.

"How is it that women have not made a fraction of the intellectual, scientific or artistic-cultural contributions that men have made?"

Tillie Olsen
"Silences" pp 45-46
Dell Publishing Co., Inc. 1978.

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HOW DID WE GET THIS WAY?

So, how did it start, how did it all begin
I'm trying, yes, I'm trying hard to find
My lesbian ... origin

Now what's the problem, sisters?
I'll tell you what I say
It's quite straightforward, the reason why I'm gay:
Way back in the embryo I was formed that way.

'Please tell me expert therapist
Why've I grown up a freak?
I hate being gay
And I'm going up the creek'
'Your mummy was too dominant,
your daddy frail and weak.
But don't despair, for help is here:
your future's not too bleak.
That's ten pounds fifty please, and
I'll see you Tuesday week'

'Why do you want to make things
so very black or white?
I'm not an actual lesbian,
so don't label, all right?
I just met my girlfriend at
a party one night.
It's not her sex that matters.
It just feels right.

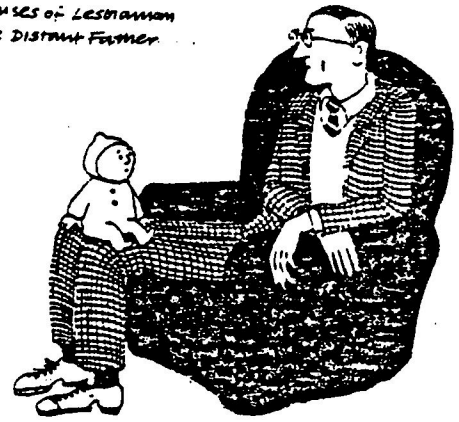
We came home from the meeting
feeling utterly depressed
Why can't 'Ronald Reagan'* see that
women are oppressed?
Linda stayed all night: in the
morning we carressed,
And I realized all the loving
feelings I'd suppressed...

So how did it start, how did it all begin?
We're trying, yes, we're trying hard to
find our lesbian origin.
If only we could find it, it would
be just great -
Then the straights could tell us
how they got so straight.
So let's think about it sisters - but
where should we begin...

Is it sociological,
Biological,
Psychological,
Astrological, or
Phenomenological
Lesbian origin?

Susan Hemmings, 'Lesbian Origin'
Spare Rib Reader: Penguin, 1982
*Editor's addition.

CAUSES OF LESBIANISM
The Distant Father



Jo Nesbitt

CAUSES OF LESBIANISM
Disappointed wife transfers
affection to daughter



Jo Nesbitt

It's a
lesbian!



Jo Nesbitt

Southern Discomfort

Rita Mae Brown, Bantam Books Inc. '82

"If you don't like my books, write your own...if you don't think you can write a novel, that ought to tell you something...if you like my novels, I commend your good taste."

I picked up a copy of Southern Discomfort at the book store, read the above paragraph on the 3rd page and remembered why at the age of 15 and after reading Ruby Fruit Jungle, I wanted to marry Rita Mae Brown. But of course that's another story; how about Southern Discomfort? Oh yes, it's a delightful story of two "first-class whores", Blue Rhonda and Banana Mae, one puritonical methodist preacher - Rev. Linton Ray, one elegant and very wealthy matriarch, Hontensia Bavastie, who "lived from the neck up", one young black and very poor prizefighter named Hercules and several others living in Montgomery, Alabama in the early 1900's. The escapades of Rev. Linton Ray in his pursuits of "saving" Blue Rhonda and Banana Mae are worthy of a novel in themselves!

Rita Mae Brown's witty ability to confuse and complicate the lives of these and many more otherwise unrelated individuals is practically overshadowed by the outrageousness of the characters themselves. "Sympathy lies between shit and syphilis in the dictionary", Blue Rhonda quips after being asked if she feels "a kind of sympathy" for her customers! Rita Mae Brown deserves a gold star for that one!


It is also a touching story of individual struggles to overcome the barriers of class, sex, and race... and the very rigid expectations that often accompany them. But only Rita Mae Brown could deal with these struggles with such a delicate balance of sensitivity and humour. "Work is the curse of the drinking class" exclaims the young gay struggling actor Payson, whose life and career came to a tragic end with the introduction of sound in the motion picture business.

Tragedy is as common throughout Southern Discomfort as triumph is and

in the end the reader is left puzzled as to which one actually wins. That is, if only you would stop giggling long enough to think seriously about it.

If you enjoyed Rubyfruit Jungle, and Six of One, then Southern Discomfort is a book not to be missed. Available at Common Woman Books.

Jean Noble



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Counselling Centre

ELIZABETH MASSIAH, M.S.W.

986-0263 or 422-3022

Leduc (message)

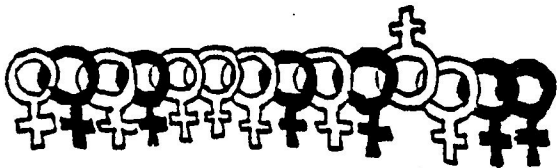
WE WASN'T THE FIRST -- IT WAS LILITH!

Lilith appears in the original Hebrew version of Genesis. Her strong character, sense of self and independence make her an exemplary role model for women today. We are telling her story in an attempt to give her some much needed publicity.

You won't read about Lilith in the Bible. She was Adam's first wife, created as he was, from dust. The two beings were created simultaneously, as equals; some myths say as twins joined back to back.

According to the Alphabet Ben Sika, a 15th century Jewish commentary on the Bible, "Adam and Lilith never found peace together, for when he wished to lie with her, she took offence at the recumbent position he demanded. 'Why must I lie beneath you?' she asked. 'I was also made from dust, and am therefore your equal.' Because Adam tried to compel her obedience by force, Lilith, in a rage, uttered the magic name of God, rose in the air, and left him."

Lilith wanted sexual independence. She was an assertive woman with a mind of her own - no wonder most of us have never heard of her before.



\$100 REWARD!

The WOMONSPACE banner was taken from Hazeldean Hall on the night of March 17. One hundred dollars is offered to anyone providing a lead which results in the return of this banner. It must be retrieved by April 30, 1984, in acceptable condition.

All leads will be kept confidential. Contact Norma at 437-0588, Mary at 469-2143, Linda at 454-0588, or leave a message on the WOMONSPACE line: 488-2918.

EVERY WOMAN'S PLACE

In June of 1981, a small group of women met to discuss their dream of starting a women's centre in Edmonton. In January of 1982, the group became incorporated as a non-profit society, the Edmonton Every Woman's Place Society. In February of 1982, the society rented a wonderful old house in the Oliver area, and on March 7, 1982, Every Woman's Place was officially opened.

Every Woman's Place provides: a drop-in space for women; a meeting place for women's groups; educational activities; social activities; information and referrals concerning women's groups, and activities and services for women in the Edmonton area; a regular newsletter; a wonderful library containing books, periodicals, and some audiovisual materials; and a friendly space for women to meet and exchange information and support, or to plan activities of their choice. Every Women's Place also sponsors workshops, lectures, socials, and other events of general public interest.

E.W.P.'s primary aim is to facilitate greater interaction between women's groups and individual women in the Edmonton area. By doing this, the centre will promote awareness of the rights and status of women. The centre does not have a paid staff. All of the work of maintaining the centre and providing services and activities is done by women who work on a voluntary basis. As a non-profit society, most of the funding comes from membership fees, pledges, and other donations from the women of Edmonton.*

WOMONSPACE, the non-profit social, recreational and educational organization for lesbians in Edmonton, utilizes the facilities at Every Woman's Place for our monthly general meeting (the second Tuesday of every month), our lesbian drop-in (every Thursday in our office upstairs), and for the Lesbian Information Line (488-2918).

Every Woman's Place is open from Monday to Friday: 10 am to 3 pm; Monday Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday: 7:30 pm to 10 pm; Sunday: 1 pm to 4 pm. For information, phone: 488-2748 or write: Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 ST. Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1L7

COMES THE DAWN

After a while you learn the subtle
difference
Between holding a hand and chaining
a soul;
And you learn that love doesn't mean
leaning
And company doesn't mean security,
And you begin to learn that kisses
aren't contracts
And presents aren't promises,
And you begin to accept your defeats
With you head up and your eyes open,
With the grace of a woman, not the
grief of a child,
And learn to build all your roads
On today because tomorrows ground
Is too uncertain for plans, and
futures have
A way of falling down in mid-flight.
After a while you learn that even
sunshine
Burns if you get too much.
So plant your garden and decorate
Your own soul, instead of waiting
For someone to bring you flowers.
And you learn that you really can
endure...
That you really are strong
And you really do have worth.
And you learn and learn...
With every good-bye you learn.

Source Unknown

VOLUNTEERS

I would be interested in talking
to or hearing from anyone interested
in assuming the following positions
for the dances; First clean-up --
two people needed, Security Coordi-
nator, Ticket Coordinator, Food Coordi-
nator, Bar Coordinator, Permanent
Dance Coordinator.

Please contact me at 437-5036 or
write c/o E.W.P. 9926-112 St. for
more information.

Norma Collingwood
Activities Director
WOMONSPACE

LESBIAN DROP-IN

The drop-in takes place every
Thursday from 7 - 9 pm, upstairs at
Every Woman's Place.

Special Film Night: On April 5th,
the film "Killing Us Softly: Images of
Women in Advertising" will be shown.

A Lesbian-Feminist workshop will
happen at the drop-in on April 12.
Your participation is invited.

April 19th: If you missed it the
first time, or would like to hear it
again, a tape of the CFRN Dick MacLean
talk show featuring three real live
lesbians (Janice, Karen, and Paula)
will be played at this drop-in.

April 26th: The second show's
tape will be aired on this night.
Listen to the bible thumpers getting
worked up about lesbianism in Edmonton
as well as the support from the public
when Janice, Karen, and Paula return
to CFRN radio.



When you're gay you are your own
history. Each and every one of us
represents a part of gay history. If
you cut any of it off you'll be an
amputee, denial is gangrene, and
silence will always be retreat.

Anonymous

Womonspace Events



FEATURE WORKSHOP

On Sunday, May 6th, psychologist Joy Muller and a lawyer will be talking about the legal and psychological aspects of drawing up contracts between women.

There is no charge for participation, however, the workshop is limited to 20 people on a first come first serve basis. Additional workshops will be offered if the demand is great enough.

Register by writing to Box 2016, Leduc, Alberta T9E 2Z3. The talk will take place at the Muller & Assoc. office (4710-99 Street) at 1:30 pm.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

Changes to the constitution will be voted on at this important meeting. The long-term goals report will also be presented. The special general meeting will be held Tuesday, the 24th of April, 7:00 pm, at Flashback. (10330-104 Street)

DANCE

Next dance will be held on Saturday April 21, 8 pm to 1 am, at Hazeldean Hall. Members \$5.00 (bring your cards) and non-members \$7.00. Volunteers are needed!

PLEASE NOTE: The views expressed in WOMONSPACE NEWS do not necessarily reflect the views of WOMONSPACE.

BOARD MEETING

Next one will be at Liz's in Leduc on April 1, at 2 pm. 986-0263

GENERAL MEETING

Second Tuesday of every month at Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 Street. April's meeting will fall on the 10th; it starts at 7:30 pm. All are welcome, so don't be shy.

LONG-TERM GOALS

The Committee will be meeting on April 1, 12:30 at Liz's in Leduc, (before the board meeting). 986-0263

CAR RALLY

Anyone interested in entering a car rally is asked to talk to Norma at 437-5036. The rally is tentatively planned for the end of May; more news next month.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR INCOME TAX RETURN?


Well, I'm an accountant, a member of your community, and I'd be pleased to help you. My rates are reasonable - cheaper than H & R Block - and I can come to your home if you wish.
SUE BRYDGES - 433-6647

"It is hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head" Anonymous

Credits;

Lindy, Candace, Gwyneth, L.J.B., Jean

WOMONSPACE NEWS is published monthly by Womonspace Social and Recreational Society of Edmonton. Womonspace is a non-profit, social, recreational and educational organization for lesbians in Edmonton. Mailing address: 'Womonspace News', c/o Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1L7



APRIL 21, 1984
HAZELDEAN HALL
9630-66 AVENUE

ADMISSION: \$7.00
MEMBERS: \$5.00
HOT & COLD BUFFET
8:00 P.M. TO 1:00 A.M.

DANCE