

LESBIANNEWS

Victoria's Monthly Lesbian
Feminist Newsletter

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April, 1990

\$2.00



LANGUAGE OF LOVE

by Florence Brown

For more than 6000 years, patriarchy - in order to control women - has imposed its male language upon us. We are forever being bombarded by men, who use their vile disparaging language to threaten and undermine us. At best, even their language of "love" towards women is coupled with innuendos, and at worst, they abuse and violate us by using names of parts of our body - which they themselves had given us - to reinforce their rage against women: "you bloody stinking cunt", "you dirty ass-hole", "you flabby boobs", etc. They blaspheme against our beautiful breasts, "boobs", which is equated with "fools, dupes and losers" in the Roget's thesaurus.

This is my point: there is a movement of feminists who believe that, if they took words which were pejoratively attributed to women and used them repeatedly with pride and defiance, they would eventually diffuse their negative connotations. Since these words, however, were initially created by men to manipulate women, why not just cast them out of our vocabulary?

A year ago, I was given a love poem written by a woman, and asked to read it. Initially her imagery was lovely; her references to nature brought to mind warm and stimulating thoughts. However, inconsistent with her first three verses, she launched into a description of two women making love: "sucked her cunt and licked her ass." Perhaps this very graphic scene was interwoven with more poetic words, I don't remember. Nevertheless, written precisely as I quoted, it hardly moved me poetically nor aesthetically. Artistically, it definitely failed when she mixed her style and metaphors. Like a painting of badly mixed colours, it became muddy and murky.

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Display Ads are \$5/month for business card size and \$5/month each for additional chunk of business card-size space. Send camera-ready copy with your cheque to our PO Box address. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month.

Classified Ads are \$5/month for up to 10 words and 50¢ for each word thereafter. If you want us to hold and forward replies to Personals, add \$2. We reserve the right to refuse any ad that might create legal difficulties or that offends our highly developed sensibilities (see note below). Ads and payment must be received by the 15th of each month for inclusion the following month.

Submissions are welcome. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, grocery lists and doodle-pads to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible disk. We edit for space and clarity. We'll print it as long as it's not sexist-racist-homophobic-antisemitic-ageist-classist-ablebodyist-personal attackist or boringist.

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Editor & Maker of Typos: *Debby Gregory*

Layout & Paste-Up Artistes:
Lisette Cook, Nancy Isenman & Wynke,
PMTS by Patrice

Data Entry Whiz & Official Accordionist:
Wynke

Emergency Proofreader & Computer Technician:
DJM

Distribution Assistance:
Marti Carr-Harris

Portrait of Panic Artist:
Alisa Gordaneer

Contributors This Issue:
M.A.
Shirley Avril
Florence Brown
Heather Gibson
Reva Hutkin

HAPPY BIRTHDAY LAURIKINS AND BIG AL!
and Nancy !

I am not a prude, and in another context I may have appreciated her verbal description, although I doubt it. These words only bring to mind negative visions, apparitions of men pinning down women and forcefully using and abusing them. I don't think that women can ever eliminate the detrimental emotions, brought to the fore, by a perpetual repetition of these words. Our only way to wipe out these negative images, is to root these very same man-made words out of our repertoire, and create new feminine ones to describe our lovely varied bodies.

In reaction to that woman's poem, I went home and wrote my own.

IN PRAISE OF WOMEN

Must I diffuse and deign to use
The word cunt?

So blunt a vision,
Conjured up derision
By woman's assailant,
Man.

Would I could,
I'd rather incubate
And create a lexicon of words
That more aptly relate,
To beautifully sate
My appetite for love.

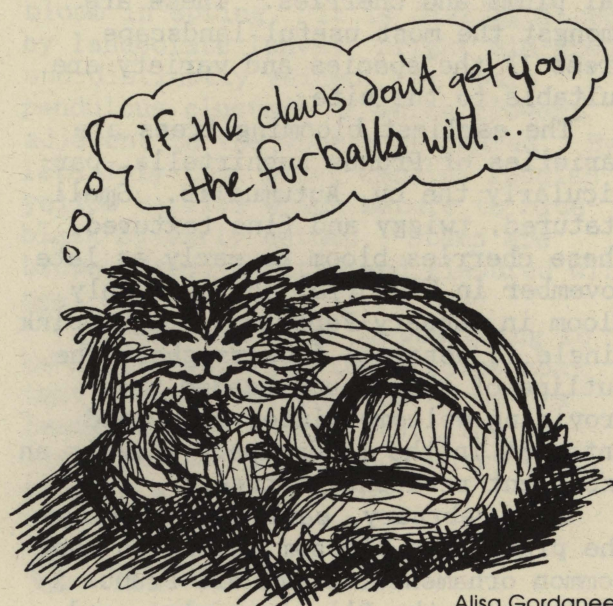
"With eagerness and pleasure
When drinking at her fount,
I attribute names of flowers,
A dedication to her mount,
Water lily, Azalea,
Lotus and Tulip,
So fresh and fragrant,
I find her lovely plant."

Should I offend my sensibility,
Acknowledge male words
Of sterility,
Because of their inability
To cherish Women?
Rather, I weed out their turd,
Supplant my word
And sing the praises of Women.

COMPUTER PHOBIA

By M.A.

For days I'd been sitting in front of the black screen with lime green characters dancing across its face, disappearing into computer heaven whenever I hit an unintentional command. My not so nimble fingers were about to turn into ably pounding fists, when my neck began to melt under her softly digging fingertips. My head bobbed. The screen blurred. "Keep typing," she said. My shoulders drooped. Green words kept appearing before my eyes. My fingers tried to match the cadence of hers, as they slid beneath my shirt collar, down the valley between my breasts, tracing lines around my hardening nipples. I gave the computer a command it couldn't compute. A row of green stars appeared before me. Were they on the screen? My back ached. For her touch. The stars turned into plus signs. She added her tongue. Beeping. The screen was beeping. The chair was squeaking. Command. give it a command. Stop. No, not you! The screen, the green, the scream. Her juicy smile laughed up at me. Green screens of qwertyuiopkjhgf dsazxcvbn were printing off a mystery file. I love computer games.



Alisa Gordaneer



Beyond Sissinghurst

by Heather Gibson, Dipl.T.

The brief moments of sunny weather we've had occasionally in late February - early March have ushered in the blossoms on our flowering trees and shrubs. More trees will bloom through the late spring so now is a good time to talk about at least one genus of flowering trees, particularly if you're considering a purchase for your own garden.

Two of the most prominent flowering trees in our city are both in the *Prunus* genus and comprise the ornamental plums and cherries. These are amongst the most useful landscape trees IF the species and variety are suitable to the site.

The earliest blooming trees are varieties of *Prunus subhirtella*, particularly the cv. *Autumnalis*. Small statured, twiggy and fine textured, these cherries bloom as early as late November in Victoria, and certainly bloom in January-February. Light pink single (5 petaled) flowers ghost the outline of this round headed tree providing welcome winter color and interest in the landscape. This is an excellent residential tree.

Late February, early March brings the plums into blossom. The two most common ornamental plums are *Prunus x blieriana* - the Blieriana plum, and

Prunus cerasifera cv. *nigra* - the Pissardi plum. It's quite easy to differentiate between these trees. Blierianas have rough, fissured black bark and brittle, irregular branches. Due to the myriad of diseases *Prunus* species are heir to, the trees may be full of deadwood or black "lumps" indicative of blackknot, a fungal disease. They produce a moderately good show of bright pink flowers. Pissardi plums are better trees. Distinguished from Blierianas by their smooth grey-black bark, upright branching habit and light pink flowers, a well trained Pissardi can be a useful residential tree for a larger property.

Keep in mind that plums have reddy-purple foliage. In our climate, a dark leaved, dark barked tree can be quite dour, particularly on cloudy days. The later blooming ornamental cherries provide green foliage and may be a better option.

The Higan cherry - *P. subhirtella* has already been discussed, so let's consider two varieties of *Prunus serulata* - cv. *Kwanzan* and cv. *Shirotae*, the Kwanzan (aka. Kanzan) and Mt. Fuji cherry respectively. Both have been planted as street trees here in town under power lines due to the mistaken notion that they are "small" trees.

Unfortunately many Kwanzans can easily top 50 feet at maturity so B.C. Hydro contracts to have the centers of the trees removed, resulting in the nauseating vee-shaped form familiar to all of us.

Kwanzan cherries are thick limbed, clunky sorts of trees, popular for their fully double bright pink blossoms and overall durability - hence their popularity as a gas station tree - the ultimate insult to any plant. It's unfortunate that there are many really good cherries in cultivation yet Kwanzan is still the biggest seller of the lot.

The Mt. Fuji cherry, *P. serrulata* cv. *Shirotae*, is another story. Blooming white single flowers in late April-May, this tree has a spectacular horizontal branching habit. I've seen 25 year old specimens with a height of 30 feet and spread of over 50 feet. Too large for the average property, this tree is worth dwarfing by planting in a large container.

Cherries are relatively easy to identify even in the dormant season by their brownish-grey birch-like bark which is mottled by horizontal lenticels or pores. Lenticels on cherries are usually orange to yellow in color and 1/4" to 3/4" long, proportional to the trunk caliper.

As a sidebar I should briefly mention the weeping cherries, usually *P. subhirtella* varieties. All ornamental weeping trees are manufactured, that is grafted onto upright stems. In nature, weeping varieties simply grow prostrate on the ground. In the landscape, weeping trees of small stature are designed to draw the eye downward, often to a feature such as water. I urge you not to turn weeping trees into toadstools by hacking at them. Instead, randomly thin the branches to produce a more lacy, natural appearance.

Early flowering shrubs are also beginning to make a good show. One of the earliest shrubs to flower is *Viburnum x bodnantense* or Bodnant *Viburnum*. This shrub produces perfectly round clusters of pink fragrant flowers prior to leafing out. If you

would like a breath of spring as you exit your home in late February-early March, consider this shrub.

Forsythia species should be in full bloom as you read this. An old garden shrub, *Forsythia*'s yellow flowers borne on bumpy hollow stems are truly a harbinger of spring. Prune this plant after the blossoms fade by removing 20 to 30 percent of the oldest canes at ground level. This encourages new growth from the base of the plant and greatly improves the volume of flowers in subsequent years. Resist the temptation to preserve larger wood in this shrub as old wood produces no flowers.

Skimmia japonica, or Japanese *Skimmia*, will begin to flower in early April-May. The dome-shaped clusters of pinkish white flowers lie in the centre of whorls of evergreen leaves which cup the flower. Because it is a dioecious plant (that means bearing male and female flowers on separate plants - a darned good idea I'd say) only female plants will produce the shiny red berries seen in September-November.

Now, I believe I promised a new contest. Plant identification is still the topic, so try this one on for size. I'll accept either the botanical or one of three common names only! This shrub is native to the Victoria area and is the first to bloom in spring. It is distinguished by lanceolate leaves, bright mid-green and distinctly veined. It bears pendulous clusters of white flowers adjacent to the whorls of leaves. By late July this plant carries reddish-yellow berries which mature to blue-black by early autumn. Stems are brownish-grey, brittle and fissured with age.

OK, I never said it was going to be a giveaway like the *Arbutus* contest! Send your entries to me via *LesbiaNews* by April 15th. The earliest postmarked correct entry will receive a book on herbs.



NEXT MONTH: ODDITIES

Waltzing Down Memory Lane With Reva

Continued from last month

This may strike some of you as weird but one year, because there were so many children in our community, we put on a Christmas party. I played Ms Santa, bought a huge bag of toys, wrapped up for each child, had children and dykes sit on my knee (stronger in those days) and tell me what they wanted for being good, and Phyllis took wonderful photos. We had a feast, door prizes, and everyone had a great feed and a great time.

Margaret and I used to like having open house at Christmas, and one year about fifty women and children dropped by for our famous mulled wine. We had a gift for each child, wrapped and with her or his name on it. Wasn't that a time! We were really like a large family. Anyone with a problem had a ready-made support group, children didn't feel as though their mother was the only one, and we knew how to party.

In the days of FLAG women loved getting into costume. Every party/dance was a celebration of our creative spirit. Once we had a garden party out in Metchosen at Connie's place. The garden hats and long white gloves, the long tables of food and the elegant atmosphere were more fun than one could imagine. The children had lots of place to run and roam and everyone there kept an eye out. I have some fantastic slides to prove it. The craziest party I recall was a time-warp gathering. The place was dimly lit, everyone was in full costume, I didn't know who was who most of the evening and ended up feeling rather disoriented. We also had a penchant for zodiac parties, i.e. a Cancer party or an Aries party, and these were largely successful and we wore costumes, of course.

Life being the flowing, moving river that it is, things were bound to change. A catalyst for the demise of FLAG was the need for movement in

peoples' lives. For some reason, within one year, the founding mothers of FLAG all left Victoria for various and sundry reasons. Along with the founding mothers went other strong individuals. The children no longer needed a babysitter on dance nights, people had changed partners once again, new faces came into the community but not with the same level of integration so the closeness began to come undone a bit. It became apparent that FLAG was dead and the women left in Victoria decided to have a wake.

I was living in Vancouver when the wake took place so the details of it are a bit sketchy to me. I know there is a wonderful collection of stories and poems as a result but don't know who has it now.

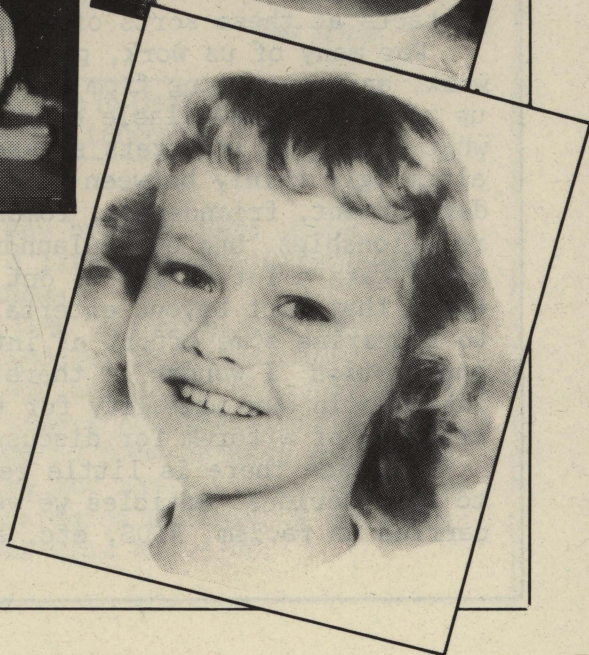
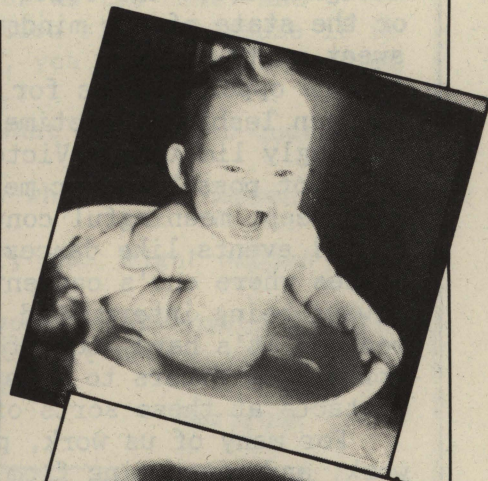
Out of the ashes comes the Phoenix, or in this case, FLAGRANT, a great publication. FLAGRANT was a fantastic monthly affair, replete with incredible art, poetry, stories, information, astrology column, lesbian lore and you name it. It was enormously popular and went on for a long time.

Everywomans Books graduated to downtown, to a bigger place with a larger collective, FLAGRANT folded and passed on her typewriter to A Web of Crones, so our community continues to grow and change. We have our Friday of the month coffee house, the bookstore, SWAG, the occasional dance collective that forms and then melts away, and a large vibrant community. LesbiansNews has sprung forth like a burst of fire-crackers and I hope it, along with our other treasures, continues to flourish.

by Reva Hutkin



**THE WAY WE WERE ... Some of us in our Dykette Days.
Any guesses as to who's who?**



Some Thoughts on Community

By Debby Gregory

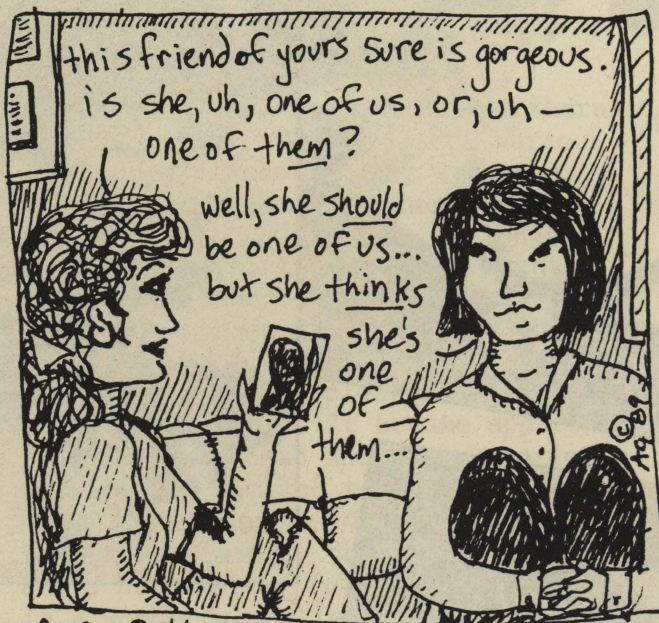
Is our lesbian community less cohesive now than formerly, and if so, why? Is it because we are larger, more diverse, and consequently less able to form close ties amongst more than a few? Is it that we no longer have a need to band together? Are some of us too complacent, and others too new in town or new to lesbianism? Are we intimidated by the fact it's such a small town and 'everybody' knows what goes on between us? Or is it a combination of these and other mystery ingredients?

I know that I would like more public interaction between lesbians, but not particularly for social events. I'd like a chance to discuss ideas with other lesbians in which we didn't focus on lesbianism, just assumed it and went on to share philosophical insights about the state of the world, or the state of our minds, hearts and sweet parts.

The opportunities for interaction between lesbians sometimes feel frustratingly limited in Victoria. It's just not possible, for me at least, to have deep, meaningful conversations at social events like dances and coffee houses where one's concentration is always being interrupted and fragmented. It's hard, too, for women who don't know others to make satisfying contacts at these sorts of events.

For many of us work, preparing for work, and recovering from work, takes up most of our available energy, and what little is left gets spread out alarmingly thinly between personal development, friendships, romantic relationships, and doing laundry. It would take a lot to get us out to an event that went beyond entertainment to requiring some effort of intellect and emotion. I wonder if there is any interest in our community for the creation of a forum for discussion?

I notice there is little response to the 'serious' articles we've carried on racism, AIDS, etc, and



One of those...

Portrait of Panic

wonder if it's just a reluctance to write, or a reluctance to commit ourselves to 'serious' thinking. I wonder if many of us who have been active feminists for a long time think back with a shudder to the great ideological battles of the 70's and fear that the only model of serious discussion around feminist topics is warfare.

Ideally, I think, our lesbian community would have a balance of 'work' and play. Our status in the larger community is still tenuous, and there are many political issues requiring our attention. Differences in the needs of older and younger lesbians, as well as other differences between the women in our community, still need addressing. I have only a vague notion of who "we" are, and would like a means of finding out more about the amazingly diverse groups of women who turn out for dances. What would YOU like?

And while we're at it, how do we know who "we" are? What does it take to be one of "us"? It is clear from talking to other lesbians that we have many different ways of coming to call

Dear Gertrude

Dear Gertrude:

My lover refuses to cut her hair. When we first met, she had an AMAZING butchy mop which set my thighs a tingling and caused my breath to melt right away. Now she looks like a shaggy ragamuffin. I've volunteered to shear her locks, but the more I offer, the more she says no. She admits she prefers her hair short, but is now so pissed off with me she's growing a mane for spite. What can we do?

Signed
Sheepish



Dear Gertrude:

My lover keeps nagging me about my appearance - especially my hair length...She says I look too 'femmy'. I had just felt like a change. Now I don't want to cut it because I don't think it's appropriate for her to be telling me how to look. How do I tell her to stop bothering me!!?

Signed
Ragamuffin



Dear Sheep and Muffie:

Have you each reached the point where backing off would cause you to "lose face"? Repartee can mask our serious feelings. Nagging can do the same. And sometimes we just get caught continuing to defend a position simply because it is our. If your relationship is more important than winning, you must each let go of being right. (Because, of course, each of you is 'right'.)

Can you begin to explore, on your own and together, what the deeper questions and fears might be?

Sheep, as you explore possibilities, can you identify what might happen if muffie continues to let her hair grow?

Muffie, as you explore possibilities, can you identify what might happen if you cut your hair, even just to please your love?

And, are you willing to face the big question? "Is your relationship drawing to a close and this issue has become the means to the end?" If the answer is a resounding "NO!", then tell each other so and get on with it.

Gertrude

Send YOUR query on the fine points of lesbian life and love to **Dear Gertrude**.
No problem is too big or too small for our Gert's concern.

ourselves lesbians, many different ways of living out that part of our life. In fact the phrase "lesbian lifestyle" totally mystifies me. Is there such a thing? If so, what does it encompass? It seems completely un-descriptive and meaningless to me.

I have a sense that the issues of lesbian identity and lesbian community are somehow related, but I haven't yet thought about how or why. Do any of

you have any bright ideas about this that you'd like to share with readers of **LesbiaNews**?

Don't feel you have to write a fully worked-out position paper - if we share our tentative thoughts and gropings toward an understanding, we're bound to come up with something interesting and useful. Disagreements can be considered generative and helpful, rather than divisive.

NOTICES AND ADS

VICTORY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

Founded for and by lesbians
gays and allies

Sunday service 2:15pm
James Bay Community School
140 Oswego

Worship coordinator Steph Ozard
Information 386-5078

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 4: ISLAND GAY SOCIETY
MONTHLY POTLUCK/MEETING.** All inter-
ested people welcome, lesbians espe-
cially encouraged to attend. 6pm,
Apt. 110 - 1180 Fort Street, phone
385-8215 (host) or 381-4035 (co-host).

**FRIDAY APRIL 13 - SUNDAY APRIL 15:
SPRING CONFERENCE FOR LESBIANS AND
GAYS,** sponsored by IGS and the UVic
Lambda Club. Workshops, discussions,
presentations on a variety of topics,
wine and cheese party. Please come
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might even learn something and have
some fun! For info and registration
phone Sam Archer 389-1964, or write to
"Conference", IGS, POB 695, Station E,
Victoria V8W 2P9.

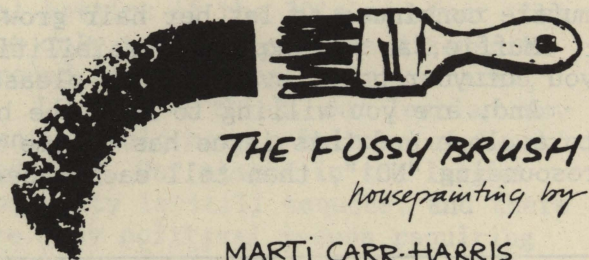
ADVANCE NOTICE: COMING IN MAY

SATURDAY MAY 5: SPRING BALL

Crystal Gardens. Music, entertainment
and dancing. All women welcome. Info
and tickets from SWAG, 381-1012

NB: SWAG operating funds for next
year are in jeopardy, and every
event must raise some money if they
are to survive beyond the summer.
They ask each woman who can, to buy
a 'shadow ticket' to the dance, as a
donation. From the 'shadow tickets'
will be drawn a winner of two free
tickets to their smash summer dance,
July 7. Phone SWAG for information.

SUNDAY MAY 6: Island Women's Picnic
1pm, location TBA. Details from SWAG.

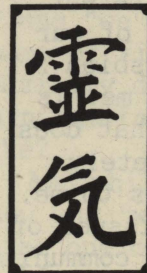


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Classifieds

Two women and a friendly, discreet cat seek one or two rooms in a lesbian household, in or near victoria. Farm-house (with or without mice) preferred. Willing to sign 6-month lease; longer if agreeable to all. Please contact Hazel Hipkins, BOX 85, Lake Louise, Alta, TOL 1E0 or phone 403: 522-3656, collect.

LESBIANS OF COLOUR ANTHOLOGY
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autobiographical sketches * oral
histories * diaries * photographs *
journals * recipes * comics * book
reviews * film reviews * inter-
views * illustrations *

Send submissions to:
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Toronto, Ontario
M6H 4E2

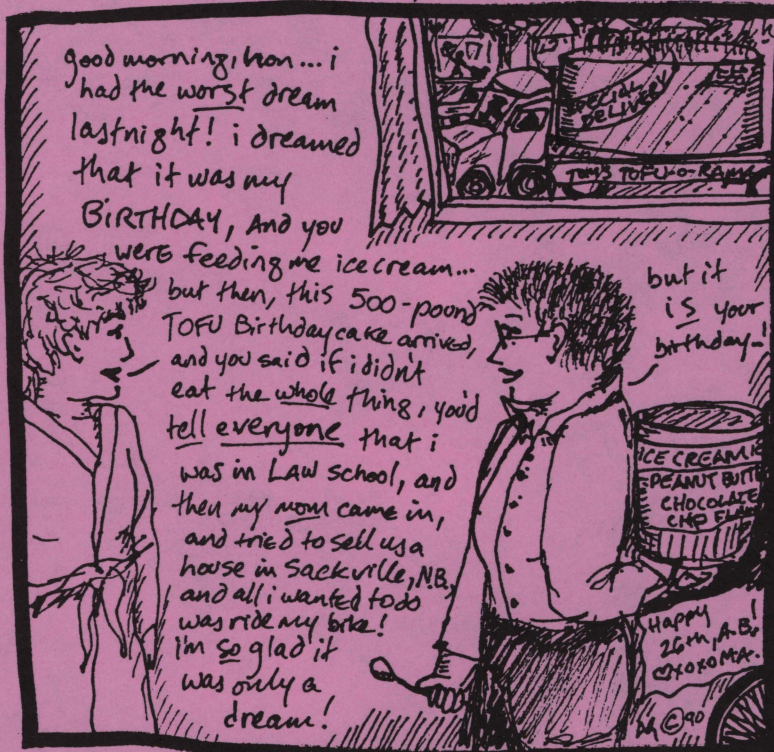
Anonymous contributions are
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portrait of panic



one day, she decided she wanted to have her cake, and
eat it tofu...

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