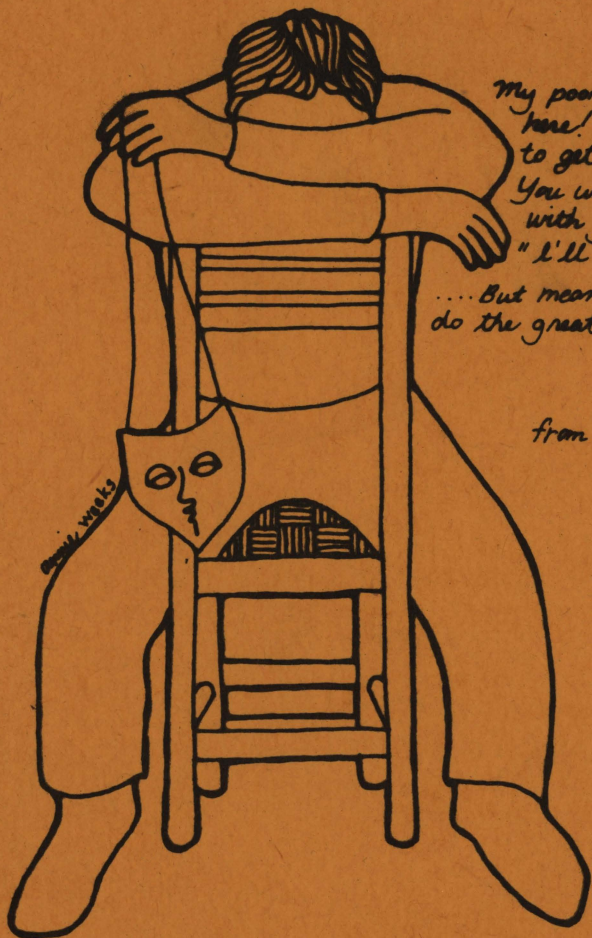


HQ 75.5  
W38



My poor apartment cat... what a life you lead here! What a prison when you'd so much like to get outside, go hunting mice and birds.... You walk along slowly in the morning light with your gun over your shoulder and think, "I'll do great things!"....  
... But meanwhile life goes on and other people do the great things. So you get envious and surly...

from *Nights in the Underground* by  
Marie-Claire Blais

vol. 1 no. 4

a lesbian feminist newsletter

**WAVES**

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WAVES

VOLUME 1: NO. 4

JUNE, 1979

EDITORIAL POLICY -

Content must reflect a lesbian feminist perspective. It will follow BCFW policy as stated; otherwise it will follow the intent of BCFW policy. Where the editorial committee feels submissions may be unacceptable, they will be presented at the next subcommittee meeting for discussion. The primary purpose of WAVES is to inform women about the subcommittee, and to facilitate communication about lesbian feminist issues. We also see the newsletter as an open forum for discussion among women who are forming a concept of what it means to be a lesbian feminist.

CREDITS -

The cover was done by Annie Weeks.

Poets in this issue are Miranda Gemini and Donna.

The lesbians who made up the WAVES collective this issue are Willow, Rachel, Frances, Sharon, Tish.

Graphics done by Frances.

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We welcome submissions from lesbian feminists throughout B.C. mailed to the following address:

WAVES  
c/o Box 237  
Postal Station E  
Victoria, B.C.  
V8W 2N1

MINUTES OF THE RIGHTS OF LESBIANS  
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING Jan. 28/79

Budget: The \$1000 allocation from the 1977 bcfw budget was re-absorbed. We have \$879 from last year, and an allocation of \$400 for this year. It was recommended that we apply soon for this year's money.

Lesbian Information Line: LIL approached the subcommittee for contributions towards their phone bills and/or answering service. It was decided that we could make the phone line a subcommittee project. They will be working on reaching outside Vancouver via the mails and give a report next meeting. They were given \$100 at the meeting, with possibilities of further funds. The line operates from the Women's Bookstore in Vancouver, 804 Richards, from 7:00 to 10:00 pm on Thursdays. The number is 685-4519.

Waves: Editorial Policy - Content must reflect a lesbian feminist perspective. It will follow BCFW policy. Where the editorial committee feels submissions may be unacceptable, they will be presented at the next subcommittee meeting for discussion. The primary purpose of WAVES is to inform women about the subcommittee, and to facilitate communication about lesbian feminist issues. We also see the newsletter as an open forum for discussion among women who are forming a concept of what it means to be a lesbian feminist. ALSO - please bring articles for inclusion in next issue to the meeting in Victoria.

Video Tape: It was moved and passed that we produce the video tape this year. A committee was struck to report next meeting on the potential costs of production and possible subject matter. Also moved and passed that we budget for reimbursement for time and skills in the production of the video tape. It was mentioned that the actual costs of materials is relatively low, and that money will be required for travel.

Booklet: A booklet for use in workshops is still under production and printing costs are as yet unknown. Hopes are for publication before the end of the summer.

Convention: With all the other projects, it was decided a conference this year would take too much time and energy. It was decided therefore to table conference discussion, although there is interest in holding one. The LOOT conference, a national lesbian conference in Toronto, was also brought up and it was decided that we could not afford to send an official delegate.

International Women's Day: Information on lesbians should go out to member groups - women in Vancouver took this on to see about writing up a pamphlet in line with policy and sending it out with other material from BCFW.

Next Meeting: Will be held in Victoria, at the James Bay Community Centre, 140 Oswego St., at 11:00 am, Saturday, April 7. There is some billeting available for women who want to stay overnight.

MINUTES OF THE RIGHTS OF LESBIANS  
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING - Sat. April 7/79

Waves: Copy for Volume IV was distributed and approved. Feedback on the last issue was positive. The Age of Consent article for Vol. IV was discussed in the light of BCFW policy and policy elsewhere in Canada. The article was approved, with the hope it would spur discussion amongst readers, and result in written submissions in response.

Videotape: The collective has been meeting weekly, and is preparing a script. The purpose of the videotape, and its audience were clarified as follows: The tape is to inform the uninitiated, and should be aimed towards the women in BCFW member groups. It was felt the same message should be clear to "straight" feminists as well as apolitical lesbians. It was moved and carried that the videotape be premiered at the fall BCFW Convention, and used in workshops and/or discussion groups there. Because it is a one-time event, a synopsis of the script should be mailed to ROLSC members prior to the next ROLSC meeting to be discussed there.

Workshops: Discussion was held on the progress of the booklet and problems involved in giving workshops on lesbian/feminist theory. The basic problem is that a few women who gave workshops previously have much information, but it is not yet available to all. We also need a quick-kit form for resource purposes. Moved and carried that we invite Yvette to conduct a workshop at the next ROLSC meeting. That meeting will have a morning session for business, and 3-4 hours

in the afternoon for a workshop. Theme to be: "What is it to be a feminist, and how lesbianism is a part of that." The purpose is to prepare the rest of the members of ROLSC to give workshops.

Regional Conference: A report on plans for the lower mainland Regional Conference April 28-29, at Actors' Workshop, Cordova St., Vancouver. Workshops in "Herstory of BCFW", "Class Consciousness", "Co-counselling", "Constructive Criticism", and "Burnt-out, Alienated, Harshly Treated Feminist Blues."

Human Rights Commission: An article appearing in the Victoria Colonist in April '79, on the meeting and progress of the Human Rights Commission was read. After discussion, a letter was written to Ted Pearce of the Human Rights Commission, stating our disgust at the appalling comments quoted in the news. We requested information of the next meeting, in order that members of our subcommittee may attend. We also endorsed the leadership of Kathleen Ruff, and said that we did not believe she should be under control of the Commission, based on "their respective track records."

Terrorist Tactics: We discussed the increasing incidence of police interference and brutality where members of our group(s) have been involved. It was felt that we had to develop a wider knowledge of what to do and not to do. Moved and carried that the Convention Planning Committee consider holding workshops on passive resistance, and/or civil disobedience.

Also that we use the network of BCFW groups more, and send letters to them to publicize the incidents. We also should be organizing questions and speakers for all-candidates meetings in the up-coming elections. Another way of protecting ourselves is to organize our own video coverage of events, and include this as part of all preparations for demonstrations.

SEARCH - Victoria: A report was given from a new group recently formed in Victoria, of gay men and lesbians. Its first action is centering around support for Bill Keitch, who is willing to go public and fight a recent job-hiring discrimination action.

BCFW Convention: It was announced that FLAG members would be serving as the core group for the Convention Planning Committee. ROLSC members are asked to actively support this committee, to ensure as wide an input as possible into the plans.

Budget: The bank balance was estimated at \$1279. The need for a regular written treasurer's report was stated, and a member was delegated to contact the current signing officer to ensure a report from her, or from a designated person who would assume that responsibility if necessary and preferred.

Next Meeting: Will be held on Sunday, June 24th, in Vancouver. Business will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Lunch break, then the Workshop on Lesbian/Feminist Theory from 2:00 to 5:30. The place will be announced by letter closer to the meeting date.

The following is a letter sent to the B.C. Human Rights Commission from ROLSC.

Rights of Lesbians Sub-Committee  
B.C. Federation of Women  
P.O. Box 24687, Postal Station C  
Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4E2

B.C. Human Rights Commission  
808 Douglas St.  
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Members,

We are alarmed by the recent reports in the newspapers and radio stations, quoting members' sexist and anti-gay statements. The prejudice and ignorance displayed by these members is appalling. We are angry that some members have not read either the B.C. Human Rights Code, nor the U.N. Charter on Human Rights. We are angry that there are members on the Commission whose participation trivializes the whole concept behind the Commission's purpose (ie. Checov, Jock Smith, Vant, and Pearce). We are tired of attacks on Kathleen Ruff, whose leadership has contributed to significant progress in human rights. Considering the achievements of the Human Rights Branch and the Human Rights Commission, it is ludicrous to suggest that the Branch come under control of the Commission.

We believe that the only graceful way out of your present ignominious situation is to resign as a body. The province of B.C. operated until very recently without a Human Rights Commission. We obviously were further ahead before. Since you have proven to be incapable of performing the task you were assigned to do, resign.

Our own organization represents approximately 150,000 lesbians in B.C. and each of us likely has greater awareness of discrimination than any Commission member. We are discriminated against both as lesbians and as women; understandably, all but a small percentage are closeted. In order to gain the same rights that other groups in B.C. claim, a few of us are willing to work with bureaucracy. Should the Commission be re-constituted with competent members, we wish to meet with them in the future. We have studies and resources that could be used in public education programs, and we are agreeable to starting with Commission members. We hope, and expect, that there are some members of the Commission who do take their task seriously, and who are ashamed at the behavior of those quoted in the press. Should that be, we are open to meeting with such individuals at their request. We would not consider meeting with the Commission with its present complement of members.

Yours truly,  
W. Anderson, on behalf of the  
Rights of Lesbians Sub-Committee  
B.C. Federation of Women

cc: Dave Barrett  
Alan Williams, Minister of Labour  
Premier Bennett  
Rosemary Brown, MLA  
Charles Barber, MLA  
Vic Stevens, MLA  
Norrie Preston, Prime Time & SWAG  
Member groups of the B.C.F.W.  
Vancouver Express  
Victoria Colonist  
Victoria Times

SOCIAL POLICY DICTATOR OR  
SUPERIOR-SIZED MALE?

Reprinted - Victoria Colonist, Jan/7/79  
Houston - (UPI) A sociologist suggested this week that social policy dating back to the earliest humans - and not inherited characteristics - may be why men generally are larger and stronger than women. Margaret Dobbins, an assistant professor at Auburn University, went one step further and said it was possible that if women were treated the same as males from birth on, females might be as big and strong as their male counterparts.

"I'd love to see someone try to refute my hypothesis by testing it," she said at an American Association for the Advancement of Science Conference, which added to the current debate challenging some long held ideas of anthropology.

"The hypothesis is that social policy can alter secondary sexual characteristics," she said, singling out size and strength because they are "the most heretical notions."

"The assumption that the male is dominate in nature is really an untested assumption."

Ms. Dobbins believes that in the earliest human groups, males were sent out to do the hunting - not because they were the strongest, but because they were the most dispensable. And because of this extra activity, they became stronger and larger than the females.

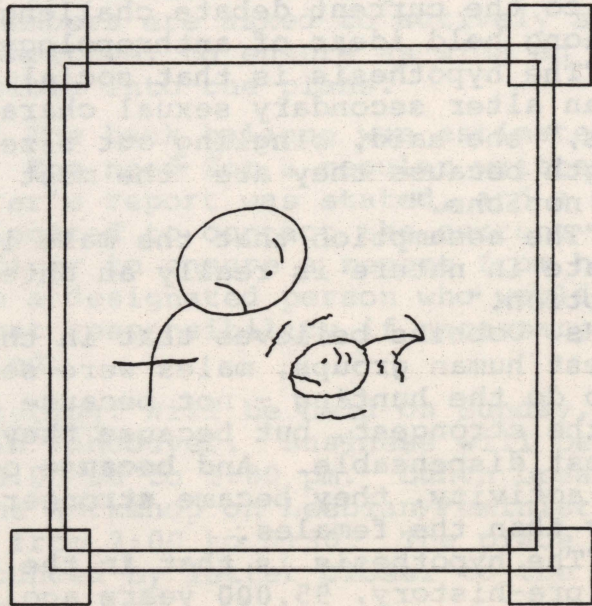
"The hypothesis is that in the very early pre-history, 95,000 years ago, there may not have been any significant differ-

erences in size and strength between men and women," she said.

"But because women produced children and produced milk, which would have been the only reliable source of protein, and because of a survival advantage for a group which did not risk its reproductive milk-producing members, men would have been encouraged and channeled into risk taking activities."

She said there has been some evidence reported that bone size is a function of calcium development and that calcium development is fostered by muscle use.

"And then we would go further and say that muscular use would be fostered by social policy."



TO THE WOMEN OF VICTORIA

You are so close together.  
I feel warmth, love and acceptance.  
I have been frightened to know you  
And you accepted even that  
Until I could feel safe.  
I have grown with knowing you  
And shared myself to you  
And been accepted.  
You open yourselves easily  
To allow others the space to grow.  
You support each other  
And I feel comfort when seeing this.

Oh! You're frightened too  
And you haven't reached all your ideals.  
You aren't always honest one to another  
Though you try to be.  
You get sick and tired and know  
This is a part of life.  
Sometimes some of you stay down  
And can't accept help.  
Some of you can't offer help in quantity.  
You all offer it in quality.

You are becoming an organism - a life -  
a living.

A heart from here, a lung from there,  
A finger from somewhere else.  
Some pieces ill and needing tending,  
Some parts whole and able to care,  
All parts trying together to fit  
To make one healthy, strong, alive  
Life-form.

And you will do it  
Because you love  
Because you live  
Because you mean something to yourself.

Love, Donna



LESBIAN MOTHERS & THE SYSTEM

Who represents "the system" to you?

To a lesbian mother, "the system" means those who have power over her, and more particularly, over her children.

Knowledge is power. This is where lesbian mothers must start, to acquire the knowledge that the system uses against them. Learning the rules of the games, knowing where to begin, learning how to survive (let alone win) is a momentous task when every factor is loaded against them.

Members of F.L.A.G. (Feminist Lesbian Action Group) looked for members of the system to give them the information, and this is who we got: a lawyer, a psychiatrist, a social worker, a Family Court Worker, and an elementary school counsellor. A panel was presented by FLAG in Victoria, Friday, Feb. 9th, 1979. Appearing were Ruth Taylor, former head of Women's Legal Advice Clinic in Vancouver, Rick Arnot, a family psychiatrist who had counselled a number of gay persons and their families in Victoria, Deidre Bartlett, Family Court Worker, Bev Schreiber, elementary school counsellor who had worked with a daughter of open lesbian parents, and Barbara Dane, a social worker.

A first in B.C., the panel attempted to bring together professionals and "victims" in a clarifying process. One of the criticisms of the panel is that there wasn't enough discussion between lesbian mothers and the panelists. A follow-up session would be oriented around an equal

exchange of information, and would likely be more heated and lively. This panel was lengthy, and probably over-ambitious, but was a satisfactory venture. Media coverage in one local newspaper was good (we arranged that one), while the other paper carried a biased article with a "tch tch" tone. It inferred that prejudice and oppression would get worse as people realized that lesbian had their children, and identifying the problem only opened a "can of worms" because at present most teachers and neighbors were unaware. This was taken from comments by Bev Schreiber, the school counsellor. Although she herself saw no problems with children of lesbian parents, she warned that making sexual orientation public would only create problems. Her messages were mixed, telling us there were no problems, but encouraging us to stay closeted. Barbara Dane encouraged us to be open with social workers when it was to the system's advantage, i.e. when you live with your lover who has a job and supports you, but you are on social assistance. Members of the audience quickly picked up on the inequalities of such a set-up, arguing that we had no legal protection anywhere else, so why should we be open there? She countered that we couldn't expect conditions to change if we were going to be open only when it was to our advantage.

Rick Arnot had the unwieldy task of answering some questions that had been submitted by lesbian mothers prior to the event. They were "how best do we..." in regards to helping children handle their parent's sexuality. His responses were

relaxed, and generally accepting, as he placed no importance on the sexual orientation of the parents. He stressed that a home with love and security was all that was important. He emphasized that the answers to our questions were within ourselves, and within our own community. He stated that gay men and lesbians should be their own support group, and that he himself would be happy to meet with such a group, if desired, to participate in discussion and clarification.

Deirdre Bartlett talked about the procedures involved in investigating a home for a family court report in a custody issue. She explained the steps she has taken, and the factors taken into consideration. She stressed the availability of Family Court workers to assist disagreeing parents to reach a mutual agreement without going to court. She also stressed that whichever parent went first to Family Court had the court on her/hes side. Feedback from members of the audience indicated later that they felt Ms. Bartlett was optimistically naive in the climate of Family Court, but they were personally impressed by her warmth and sincerity. She also offered to help any parent who went to her, with willingness to go the extra mile to see they were treated fairly.

The highest interest of the evening was given to Ruth Taylor, who had a dynamic, well-researched presentation on the legal facts of custody, including details of the four cases of custody in which a parent was homosexual. That's four in Canada, ever. The most recent case was one which is too

new to be in the law libraries, as yet, but Ruth had come information on this case. The audience asked a number of questions of Ruth, and she was able to clarify many areas that had been muddled in person's minds.

The information from the tapes is still being transcribed, but following are some quotes from Ruth's talk which gives an indication of the interest and quality of the presentation:

"another thing they look at is the wishes of the child. There is something called the Age of Discretion, which at the moment is 14 for girls and 12 for boys. Don't laugh. At one time it was 16 for girls and 12 for boys. I mean the assumption that -- you know, they missed some biology in there -- in the old common law, they always thought the age of discretion for girls was 16 where they would inquire into the child's wishes at 12 if it was a boy child. Under the new Family Relations Act, incidentally, that age is now reduced to 12 for both sexes."

"I should point out also that the problem with family law is that every case is unique, unlike the rest of the law where you have a precedent, every case that comes up in family law can be distinguished on its facts, because family law is as unique as the people who make up the world, and everything is considered on that point of view."

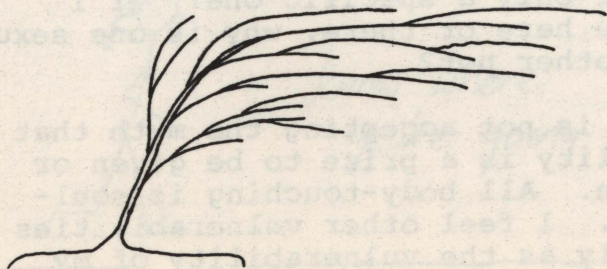
"--cases on homosexuality. There are, in fact, just four. The last two have

been in the last six months. So it's not been a court issue, for a number of reasons, which I promise not to editorialize on. The first case is where the mother lost custody, in the second case she won custody without conditions, the third case was a homosexual father that won custody without conditions, and the fourth case was reported - unfortunately it is not reported in the law journals as yet. It's been reported in the newspapers, which brings up the issue of why people don't go to court.. ...you get reported in the newspapers."

MORE TO COME !!

Order your copy of Lesbian Mothers And The B.C. System from F.L.A.G. Price will be as reasonable as we can make it. Or if you wish to have duplicates made of the 3 hours of cassette tapes, send \$12.50 and your name and address, and we will have copies made for you. Cost to individual women for the tapes is \$12.50, and to organizations it will be \$17.50 to 22.00, depending on our costs and ability to process. This price is subject to review.

In struggle -- willow.



Omnigamy ( omni - all, gamy - marriage or sexual union ) is a symbol of my struggle to love women in a woman's way.

In this article I will make distinctions between what I consider ideals and the reality of my struggle to love in a real world of women with my real self. I hope that opening myself, with my prides and my doubts, will stimulate you to respond to the next WAVES newsletter.

First are the ideals. Ideals are the path on which I walk and the poetry of my life.

I exist in this world. I begin and will return to the beginning. In the beginning all was she and she was me. She is everything and throwing off the sparks of life which is every she. She laughs. She knows every spark will return to she. She is mother of us all.

I return again and again. I turn my face and meet her face every way I turn. When I see you, woman, I reach out as a daughter to a mother. I suck the full tit until the tit is my lips. Enfold me close and I will come to you again as a mother to protect the touch you give me.

If I hide from you I hold a mask to my face. You recognize me even when I turn away from the mirror. When I deny your love I turn against myself.

Omnigamy is a stretching of myself into the unknown and often scary places. Omnigamy is a way of investing power into all my hidden pockets of vulnerability.

Omnigamy is the beginning of my remembering that at the first I loved women and it is only to patriarchy's benefit for me not to know such love. Omnigamy is living the dream of women loving women.

Omnigamy is for my whole life, whether I am celibate, live and love with one partner for years, or move from the arms of one lover to the arms of another lover.

Omnigamy is not promiscuous. Needing to "make it" with every woman in town, without thought or considerations, is as much a crutch as any other emotional or physical dependancy. An "omnigamist" is not sexually possessive nor does she insist on having her way over a lovers need for security and trust.

Omnigamy is being self-reliant in an uncontrolled situation. Omnigamy is approaching a loved one and accepting "no" without assuming "something is wrong with me". I have no call to depend on another woman to meet my needs and cannot hold claim to her love. I have no power to set a loved one free, because she never was mine.

Lesbians, by nature, pull the rug out from under the patriarchal institutions of womans place. We can, and do, deny our threat to the institutions of monogamy and marriage by assuming those very institutions into our lesbian "society". We can say, by implication, "Look, I am not a threat; I am just like you".

It is a myth that we will some how be accepted because we transpose marriage and monogamy into our lives. Refusing

to pretend that these concepts fit into my life, I find myself criticized for threatening the stability of our lesbian structures. I say to this, "I want nothing that is yours, and respect the choices you must make to survive. I, too, am interested in my self respect and in cultivating the trust and friendship which I need as much as any woman".

Omnigamy is frightening because it threatens all the definitions I have assumed over the years - about "falling in love", about sexual attraction of types, about "true love". "Falling in love" means "falling out of love".

I have placed omnigamy on a sexual level. I realize that I gave too much power to the sexual. But I have no easy way of making distinctions between the boundaries of friendship and sexual involvement with a woman friend.

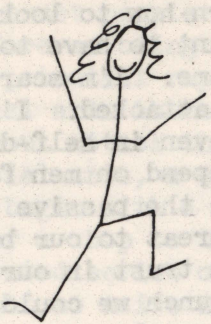
I know, as a woman, I learned early to invest my self respect in being primarily a sexual being. I have been dependant upon using my sexuality to win favors and hold power over the lover-loved one. Being friends and lovers is as new to me as to you. As I learn woman-ways I begin to ask questions. Is there any touch sexual or only a specific one? If I touch you here or there, why is one sexual and the other not?

Omnigamy is not accepting the myth that my sexuality is a prize to be given or withdrawn. All body-touching is soul-touching. I feel other vulnerabilities as clearly as the vulnerability of my naked body.

Sex is play but not to be played with.  
I yearn for a sense of joy and the belly-humor that comes with not taking myself so seriously. Sex is sacred but taken too seriously implies success or failure. I cannot be held by classifications that imply a rightness or wrongness of my sexual prowess.

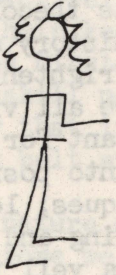
I need to be omnigamous. I need to learn to know myself, my needs and patterns and the many ways of loving tha fill the needs of loved ones. Omnigamy dreams of finding a wild bird and letting her be.

Written by Sunshine Goldstream.

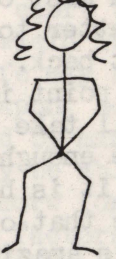


be happy -  
be strong -  
be gay!


stand straight ...  
stand tall ...



feel your center  
... your C of G



use your anger, or your fear  
as your strength



know where  
you're going

READ ON ...

## SELF-DEFENCE FOR WOMEN

Why do women take self-defence courses? I've been teaching workshops and self-defence courses for five years and the most frequent response goes something like this: "I need to learn how to look after myself better. I don't always want to have to rely on someone being there to protect me. I'm scared I will freeze or panic if I'm ever attacked. I'm not sure I could ever hurt someone, even in self-defence!"

None of us want to have to depend on men for protection. We do want to overcome the passive response that too often meets the threat to our bodies or lives. We want to feel enough trust in ourselves that we know if it came to the crunch we could hurt another person in order to save ourselves.

Three principles underly these comments:

1. Women must be free to go anywhere, anytime, anyhow, i.e.; safely.
2. Women must overcome the conditioning that says it is better to put up with pain and humiliation than fight back.
3. This point is much the same as the second one but I will take it a step further: A woman must feel valuable enough to herself as an individual to know that it is her right to put her physical safety above that of an assailant.

It is amazing and yet not surprising, when we understand the social pressures that keep women passive and the internalized pressures that we use to deny ourselves freedom or autonomy - that so many women are afraid of immobilization or their own passivity. It is also a desperate situation. So many women are concerned about rape and sexual assault and are working to prevent it or deal with it more humanely. But what long-term changes can be made if we are not prepared to bring about the necessary internal changes that must occur if we are to protect ourselves? I'm not arguing that men are not responsible. Ultimately, it is men who must stop raping, but until that happens - and don't hold your breath - we must take responsibilities for ourselves.

Self-defence is no more the final answer to this question than religion, therapy or The Movement. However, it is one way that women can begin to strengthen their bodies and prepare their minds to face the possibility of sexual assault calmly and realistically. Some people ask me if a self-defence course doesn't make people paranoid, because one must be thinking about being attacked all the time. I usually respond that sometimes you have to feel worse before you feel better. Unfortunately, parents and schools don't prepare young women to deal with sexual assault. The media reinforce paranoia and seldom offer solutions. In a self-defence course a woman often remembers all the gory and terrifying stories she has read or heard told, not to mention her own personal experiences (and nearly every woman has experienced a male attempting or succeeding to violate her physical privacy). The recollection of experiences brings home the reality of sexual assault. However, since so many women share these experiences they can finally be seen not as something the woman brought on herself - as is too often thought to be the case - but rather as the collective experience of all women through our history and culture.

This too can be a frightening realization: so it's not just me, we're all victims together. At this point it is important for the individual woman to channel her energy into positive action: learning self-defence techniques; learning her own strength through wrestling and ki-ai (the expression of inner power through a yell that comes from one's centre); discussing how she can protect herself in life and death situations and in less than life-threatening situations - at the office, passing construction sites, at bars, etc. These and other exercises help her to realize that she doesn't have to be a victim. She sees that she can fight and that other women whom she earlier thought to be as weak or weaker than her can fight too.

When a woman feels how much power she really has it is important for her to channel the ensuing energy, positive feelings about herself and perhaps angry ones,

productively. But many people are skeptical about self-defence courses because they offer a woman some knowledge, which is seen to be more dangerous than none.

This is a valid criticism. I have seen women take a short course, get very angry and land up in a fight where they get hurt. This really saddens and angers me but I don't think it denies the validity of self-defence courses. Rather, I think we must be aware that our anger at discovering ourselves to have been both willing and unwilling victims for so long is a source of tremendous energy.

However, if when facing an attack, we allow ourselves to get angry without being able to centre ourselves, we may place ourselves in great danger.

Anger without centering is like a racing car without a steering wheel. Some form of centering exercise, be it meditation, the discipline of many exercises repeated many times over, ki-ai or breathing is essential as an accompaniment to the techniques that are learned and the collective discoveries that are made.

A woman may have a black belt in a martial art, but without centering to help keep her mind organized so that her survival comes first when she is in grave danger, she may find her skill useless. (However, I might add paranthetically that it is unlikely that a woman could achieve black belt status without learning to be centred.)

Many myths about the nature of male-female attack have to be broken down before we can deal with attack realistically.

I know a police-officer who used to begin his discussions on self-defence with the statement: "Every man is a potential rapist and there is one standing in front of you right of you right now." Yes, that includes your father, husband, boyfriend, and brother.

The audience may giggle, embarrassed, or whisper nervously. It is a very unpleasant possibility to face, but until we do, we shall continue to think of rape as something that occurs between strangers. In fact the minority of rapes reported to rape centres

are between strangers. Usually the victim and the assailant are known to each other. Women who work at rape centres are constantly hearing victims say: "I thought I could trust him. He was a friend of a friend of mine." It is not because we are stupid that we trust people we shouldn't trust, but because we are forever being fed the idea that only "strange" men are potential rapists.

Martial arts themselves also serve to perpetuate myths about attack that are misleading. From studying martial arts, a woman might think that all attacks begin with a well-placed punch to the solar plexus or a chop to the temple, following a carefully orchestrated series of moves. Fortunately, most of us are not so naive as to believe this. Nevertheless martial arts have grown out of the samurai fighting tradition where warriors faced each other in physical confrontation before they entered a fight. How many men challenge a woman to grapple with them before attempting rape? Rapists are cowards who exert their power where they think they can safely wield it without danger to themselves. A woman's life may be threatened by a visible or invisible weapon; her physical integrity is already threatened by man's traditional weapon - his penis. She may be able to laugh at the latter, but the former is more formidable.

Self-defence courses must take these factors into account. Women need to learn about all the techniques at their disposal - jabbing to the eyes, fingertips thrust into the armpits, as well as the "clean" fighting techniques. And sometimes it isn't a physical response that is called for. It might even be dangerous - especially where a weapon is visibly involved. At this point, a woman's own ki - her determination to survive - and her ingenuity are vital.

I'm not slamming martial arts. I myself am a student of Aikido, a modern Japanese art that teaches how to neutralize attack through fluid, harmonious movements, the extension of energy and a calm spirit. The continuing discipline of a martial art does provide a good extension to a basic self-defence course. Until we have established a system of women's self-

(cont'd. self-defence for women.)  
defence that goes beyond the basic 6 - 10 week course, martial arts will be needed by women who want to develop their skills beyond the bare basics.

However, I do believe that self-defence courses for women can lead women to an understanding of the nature of attack that martial arts often don't even set out to provide. Women need to be aware that most men attack by grabbing and pulling them away, by incapacitating and choking them, by getting them down on the ground or on a bed and pinning them and similiar techniques. Consequently it is of less importance to know how to block a punch or kick than it is to know how to release a hold or wrestle effectively and hit to the vulnerable points on the assailant's points on the assailant's body.

It is important that women lead such courses. How can we learn to trust our own strength if our models are always male? A man may throw a good punch but he does not have an experiential understanding of how women are attacked by men.

We tend to think of self-defence as a series of physical techniques we can use if we're attacked. Self-defence is this, but it is also the ability to come back with an effective verbal response when you're hassled by irritating comments from men; it is knowing when it is safe or unsafe to take a short cut home through the park; it is having the wherewithal to talk someone with a gun into putting it away; it is being able to centre yourself when your first feeling is to scream with terror or stare in blind panic. Women's self-defence courses need to include discussion periods, role-playing exercises and centering exercises as well as technique practise to develop these skills.

I see self-defence courses for women as part of a larger strategy for the prevention of rape and sexual assault. Self-education for women should begin in schools with courses for girls, complemented by consciousness-raising about male/female roles for boys and there should be programs for convicted rapists : current jail sentences do more

to encourage rape than to prevent it. Nor should it always be women who undertake all this work. There is enough work for us to do just learning to protect ourselves. The time has long since passed for men with some awareness and concern about violence to women to take responsibility for educating their brothers.

Self-defence for women must be lifted from the aura of macho one-upmanship that too often pervades media presentation of the martial arts. In Aikido self-defence is seen as "the loving protection of all people". If women can exist safely in this society then all people will be much safer. I undertake to teach self-defence not because I wish to have vengeance (although sometimes I am tempted!) but because I know that every woman is too valuable to allow herself to be hurt or violated by another person.

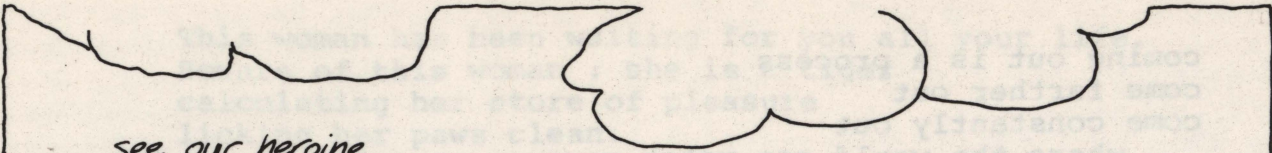
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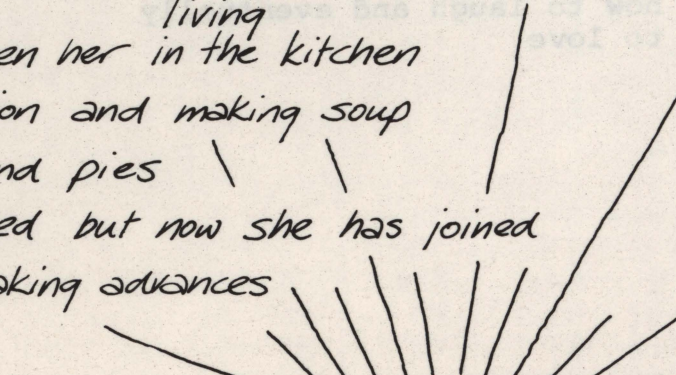
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with gratitude  
and excitement!  
we have some  
submissions from  
Miranda Gemini -  
a Vancouver  
poet.



see our heroine  
she is leaping ledges  
she is the one who makes most of the phone calls  
she is sacrificing her pride.  
hello do you hear me?  
can you hear can you feel me?  
she is passionate  
she is eager  
she is placing herself in the line of another person's affection.  
once she used to be exceedingly scrupulous  
now she is nervously but surely pursuing  
her line of intent.  
once you could have seen her <sup>living</sup> in the kitchen  
dreaming of a revolution and making soup  
and cabbage rolls and pies  
once she was husbanded but now she has joined  
the revolution making advances  
regaining her pride.



coming out is a process  
come farther out  
come constantly out  
    where the world can watch you....

one morning you wake up and the room is a blank stare  
you have turned yourself inside out  
reversed all your previous longings

your blood may flood the city streets  
and your skin will become  
translucent your path  
will begin to glow until  
you begin to attract other strange  
translucent women

and your hearts blood will run  
riot at this time and you will rise up  
among the tree tops  
roll  
amidst the clover  
you will regain your sense  
of humor you will learn  
how to laugh and eventually  
to love

you come into existence  
by naming the parts of your body  
this is me, this is mine

there are chasms and chasms between us  
you, your dream, mine

touch across this chasm  
describe the lines of my face  
define me with your fingers

touching, we are trading secrets  
dreaming, we enter into each other  
crevice deep like a swift mist  
blowing across the landscape of ourselves

I come into existence  
by naming the parts of my body  
this is you, this is yours

This woman has been waiting for you all your life.  
Beware of this woman : she is a tiger  
calculating her store of pleasure  
licking her paws clean.  
She has kissed you both your eyes your ears  
kissed the silent triangle above your brow  
tied a silken cord around your throat

she is the tiger  
she is the trainer  
see how she has a leash on your desire.  
You lie impaled on the stinging crosses of her kisses  
Desire for her turns you any way at all

Speak not of the world's pain  
while you suffer so eloquently  
all the humiliation and denial of death of the heart

the will to change  
must precede  
the changes that are yet  
to come

I follow  
with imprecision the  
drift of my passion  
consort

with freedom  
hunger for you -

what do we know  
that can help us be strong  
to withstand the evolution  
of our race  
through  
the contortions of our time:  
perfection  
grace  
and mud

Utter Yourself  
Spring yourself into being  
Let it not die but draw  
her inside you  
part your legs  
let her be born.

Reprinted from Ms. Magazine, Forum:  
Learning from Lesbian Separatism

by Charlotte Bunch  
Vol. V, No. 5, November/76  
Edited by Rachel

(Continued from Issue No. 3 of WAVES)

The first public statement of lesbian-feminist politics can be dated, at least symbolically, from a paper called "The Woman-Identified Woman," issued by Radicalesbians in New York City on May 1, 1970. It begins: "What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society - perhaps then, but certainly later - cares to allow her.... On some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppressions laid on her by the most basic role of her society - the female role."

The paper went on to analyze the nascent political power and consciousness in the political act of being a lesbian in a male-supremacist society; of putting women first in defiance of a culture that has structured the female life around the male. It discussed how the word, the label "lesbian", has been used to keep women divided.

The statement expanded the definition of lesbianism by developing the idea of woman-identification as an act of self-affirmation and love for all women; primarily identification with women that gives energy through a positive sense of self, developed with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men. As Rita Mae Brown, one of the founders of both Radicalesbians and "The Furies", has explained: "Women who love women are lesbians. Men, because they can only think of women in sexual terms, define lesbian as sex between women."

However, lesbians know that it is far more than that; it is a different way of life. It is a life determined by a woman for her own benefit and the benefit of other women. It is a life that draws its strength, support, and direction from women.... "You refuse to limit yourself by the male definitions of women. You free yourself from male concepts of 'feminine' behavior."

Potentially, any woman can become woman-identified. The original paper concluded with a call for woman-identification and suggested that this was the central importance of lesbianism to the Women's Movement.

The heart of the woman-identified-woman statement and of all lesbian-feminist politics is the recognition that, in a male-supremacist society, heterosexuality is a political institution. Both lesbianism and heterosexuality are therefore political forces as well as personal lifestyles.

Recognition of the political significance of lesbianism led us to an analysis of exactly how heterosexuality functions to support male supremacy. In order to effectively challenge our oppression in institutions such as the family organized religion, schools, the media, the workplace, we must also challenge the ideology of heterosexism.

Granted, this challenge must seem initially difficult for women whose sexual life is bound up with men; but less difficult as we understand that heterosexuality is more than sex. In our society, heterosexuality goes hand in hand with the sexist assumption that each woman exists for a man; her body, her children, and her services are his property.

If a woman does not accept that definition of heterosexuality and of herself, she is queer - no matter who she sleeps with. Heterosexism depends on the idea that heterosexuality is both the only natural and the superior form of human sexuality, thus providing ideological support to male supremacy. Heterosexism is basic to women's oppression in the family and to discrimination against single or other women who live outside the nuclear family.

Straight feminists sometimes ask me how they can fight heterosexism if they do not choose to live a lesbian lifestyle. This is a crucial question in bridging the gay-straight gap. Heterosexual women can, for example, challenge the assumptions and privileges of heterosexuality as they encounter them daily, in every area from the denial of spousal benefits for lesbians in various health, life insurance, and pension policies to social attitudes about correct behavior at a party. (For example, why must people come in pairs, or be seated alternately 'boy-girl' no matter what their interests?)

One of the ways to understand better what I am saying - and what anyone can do - is to "think queer", no matter what your sexuality. By 'think queer', I mean imagine life as a lesbian for a week. Announce to everyone - family, roommate, on the job, everywhere you go - that you're a lesbian. Walk in the street and go out only with women, especially at night. Imagine your life, economically and emotionally, with women instead of men. For a whole week, experience life as if you were a lesbian, and you will learn quickly what heterosexual privileges and assumptions are, and how they function to keep male supremacy working.

One week of pretending will show you why the life of a lesbian is not the same as that

of a straight woman. This does not necessarily make lesbians better or worse feminists; but it does make our perspective on male society different. That difference can be the basis of division among women or it can be an opportunity for broader feminist analysis and action. To deny these differences is to deny both our particular oppression and our particular strength. True unity is grounded not on a false notion of sameness, but on understanding and utilizing diversity to gain the greatest possible scope and power.

Separatism is a dynamic strategy to be moved in and out of whenever a minority feels that its interests are being overlooked by the majority, or that its insights need more space to be developed. In the past couple of years, many lesbian-feminist separatists have begun to work again with straight feminists.

Unless lesbian-feminist politics is incorporated into feminist analysis and action we will re-experience the old and destructive gay-straight split. Furthermore, we will ultimately lose the battle against male supremacy, for no woman is truly free to be anything until she is also free to be a lesbian.

Our time as lesbian-feminist separatists, like that of lesbians in other cities, was less a period of being "out" of the Women's Movement than of being profoundly "in" the heart of its matter. It was a time that allowed us to develop both political insights and concrete projects that now aid women's survival and strength. We learned that change is a process, becoming women-identified women may be the only way that women, whatever our sexual identity, can begin to see our potential for change.

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