BREAKTHROUGH

SPRING 1993

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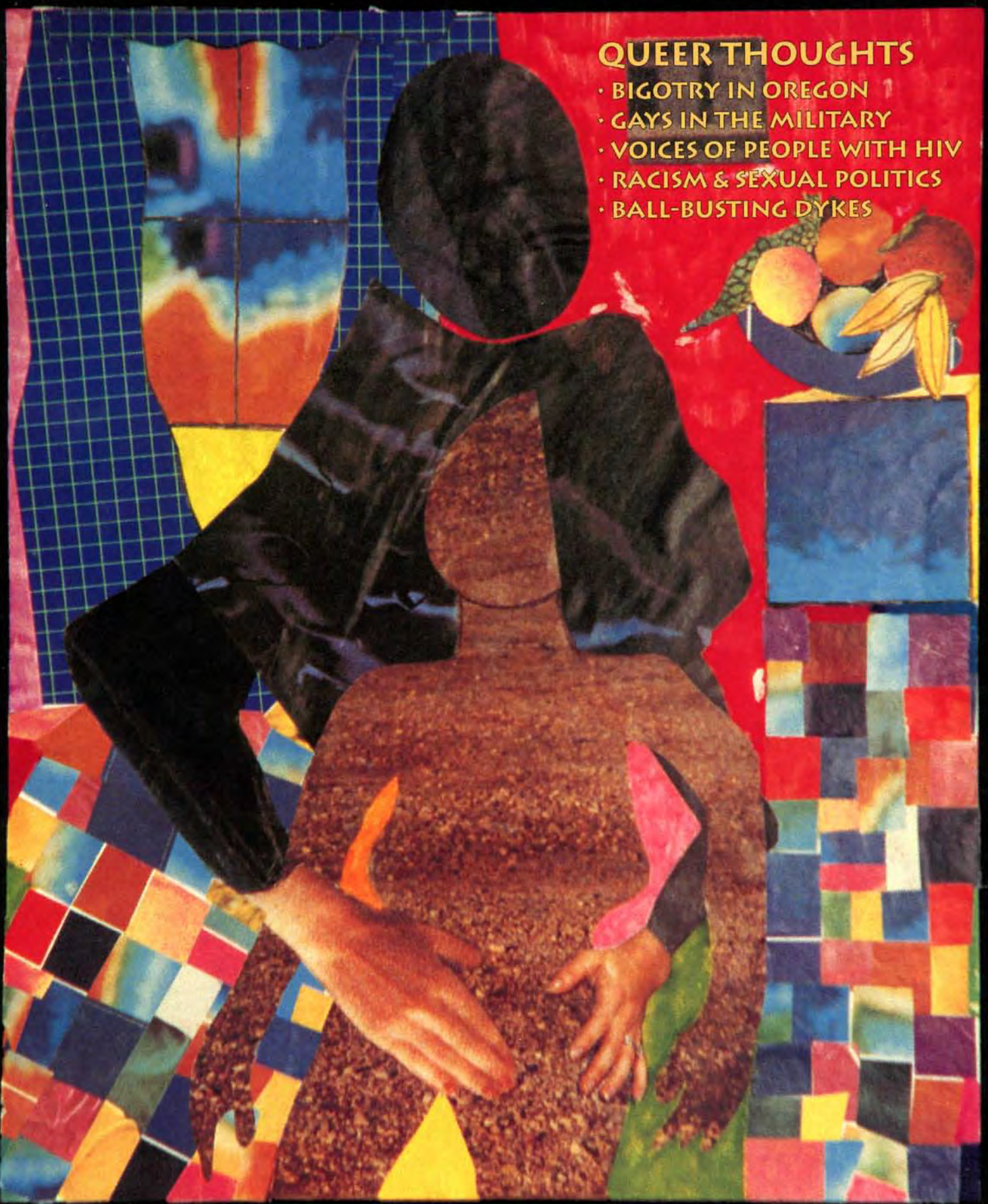

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Photo by Scott Braley/Fireworks.

Queer Rights Are Human Rights Are Queer Rights

We're Everywhere. It's a slogan taking on new meaning these days. You'd have to be completely untouched by popular culture to miss the fascination with lesbian and gay lives that's exploded onto newsstands, television sets and movie screens. Wanna know what it's like to be in an interracial lesbian relationship? Tune into *Maury Povich.* What if you're a gay priest with AIDS? Or a lesbian stripper? *Donahue* is interested. And Barbara Walters wants to interview all you upwardly-mobile lesbians who earn $50,000 a year, live in Northampton, and drive a Rolls. The Red AIDS ribbon is considered *de rigeur* for all public personalities. Why, even *The New York Times* — bastion of journalistic propriety — now uses the word "gay," and has run editorials in support of the Colorado boycott and against the segregation of gay troops.

It's been almost six years since the last March on Washington in 1987, and a lot has changed. Think about it. In 1987, Reagan was president and the Supreme Court had just upheld the Hardwick decision that made sodomy illegal in the state of Georgia. The devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic was sinking in. Things not only looked bleak — they were!

But something else was going on. All across the country lesbians and gay men were forming new groups, struggling to develop political strategies, and experimenting with new tactics. ACT UP had just formed in New York and was beginning to spread to other cities. Groups like DAGMARR* in Chicago, and Citizens for Medical Justice and the AIDS Action Pledge in San Francisco used civil disobedience to organize against racism and rightwing violence against queers,** and to demand health care and human rights for people with AIDS. We practiced in-your-face-activism; we weren't going to let America forget about us or the AIDS epidemic. And you know what? It worked!

So when we look at where we are today, we have to be clear that our own hard work, activism and commitment got us here.

Now, instead of Reagan, we've got *Bill and Hillary's Excellent Adventure.* For many of us, it's the first time in our political lives that there have been democrats in the White House, and that has given a lot of us cause for hope. But it's not a reason to stop our organizing and activism. In fact, just watching Clinton over the last couple of months shows how important it will be to maintain pressure and build a bigger movement. The guy has gone back on practically all of his campaign promises. He said he'd lift the ban on gays in the military and now he's waffling and "entertaining" the notion that there should be segregated gay units. He said he cared about the AIDS epidemic, but so far he hasn't appointed an AIDS czar. He even flip-flopped on issuing an executive order to lift the ban on HIV+ people entering the country. He promised that he'd reverse the Bush Administration's policy on Haitian refugees, and then he reneged on that.

Some of these "reversals" have deadly consequences. Millions are still dying of AIDS. HIV+ Haitians are being left to die in Guantanamo, and those being sent back to Haiti face repression and death.

Yet while many are willing to cut Clinton a lot of slack, it's become quite fashionable to bash the activism of groups like ACT UP and Queer Nation. People are afraid we'll alienate a few influential folks. But subjects like sexuality do alienate people. In fact, they freak people out. To break free, we need to be bold and take risks. Only then can these issues be talked about and confronted.

To quote former San Francisco supervisor Harry Britt (no flaming radical himself):

"The generosity and good will of liberals is not what makes us free. Our successes in the 90s will not depend on Bill Clinton, but on how assertive we are....If we decide [Clinton's] the messiah and he's going to take care of us, we're going to get fucked big time." *[S.F. Sentinel]*

Yeah, a lot's changed. But a lot hasn't. We're now *the* focus of the right wing. Resolutions like the one passed in Colorado are now being planned for at least seven other states. The chancellor of the New York public schools was fired because he refused to back down in his support of including lesbian and gay families in the Rainbow Curriculum. Gay bashing is on the rise. Lesbians and gay men, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals are being beaten, tortured, and killed all over the world just for *existing.* Mexico is only one of many examples. In the last 18 months, 31 gay men and transvestites have been brutally murdered. The Mexican government has refused to do anything, saying it will investigate when men stop dressing like women.

The failure of governments to protect our lives should make it abundantly clear that ours is more than a struggle for civil rights. It is, and in fact has to be, one for human rights.

Well that sounds good, but what does it really mean?

*Dykes and Gay Men Against Racism and the Right Wing

** *Queer* is used throughout to be inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered. However, a simple pronouncement that we are all *queer* does not erase the differences among us created by sex, race and economic class. Labels are, after all, only labels. We hope everyone will find something here—queer, lesbian, gay, even homosexuals.

By linking gay and lesbian liberation to the question of human rights, we are saying that our identity, our sexuality — our very being — is at its core a question of our humanity and must be respected and defended in the same way that societies look upon other questions of human rights. If we talk about our liberation this way, we also tie our futures to all those others who are fighting against social injustice and working for a more livable society. The essence of our liberation must be about life — not oppression and killing.

That doesn't put serving openly in the U.S. military at the top of the list. Certainly on the basis of each person's basic civil rights, there is no legal or moral grounds for excluding us. Every time we hear some colonel talk about how gay men pose a threat in the shower, we want to storm the barricades (in this case, the bathrooms). And now there's talk of segregating us! *This* is progress? Notice how they never talk about the sexual threat to women in the military. What about Tailhook? Or what about the fact that the rape of women is standard military practice. Remember Vietnam?

We can't limit the debate to a simple question of equal rights for queers. The job of every soldier, sailor, pilot, and marine — even the queer ones — is to enforce continued U.S. domination around the world. During the Gulf War over 100,000 Iraqis were killed. For what? A lavender battalion would have resulted in just as many dead. So what are we doing putting so much time and energy into furthering the killing machine? Is making a campaign about gays in the military really where we want to focus our energy?

If we are indeed *everywhere*, then the concerns of our movement must reflect that. There's been an explosion of organizations and publications of and by gays and lesbians of color. They're providing much needed leadership for the most important debates in our movement. Supporting these groups and making sure that they survive is a priority for all of us. It's true the demands for the March on Washington include opposition to racism, but that didn't happen without a fight.

Unfortunately, those who have empowered themselves to speak most loudly and authoritatively for us have most often been white men. Would it really be so bad if *no* white men spoke publicly for our movement for, oh, say, the next ten or twenty years?

Our goal of achieving full human rights for all lesbians and gay men must embrace the demands for justice, equality, and dignity of women and all communities of color. In doing so we can begin to understand the connections better and help others to see our demands as complementary rather than competitive.

Look at the strategy of the right wing. We've always been their target, but after their near success in Oregon and their victory in Colorado, the rightwing homophobes are organizing like crazy. They're getting people on local school boards and in every legislature. But we have to understand that we're not their only target — even if we might be the most vulnerable right now. The same ideology that led Amendment 2 to victory formulated and passed the English Only law in Colorado — a measure that received little opposition in Colorado's lesbian and gay community. Lesbian and gay organizers admit that the failure to build a solid coalition with Latino and other communities of color was one of the reasons Amendment 2 passed.

Then there's the question of male supremacy. Supposedly we are a *lesbian* and gay movement, but despite this fact, many gay men persist in refusing to address lesbian issues. "Lesbian" and "invisibility" are in danger of being forever merged. Not only do too many gay men refuse to acknowledge the real power they obtain from being men and fail to promote lesbian issues, they even attack lesbians for supporting gay men and the AIDS movement! Check this out: In January, some HIV+ gay men attending a national ACT UP meeting felt emboldened to say that lesbians "...devalued, disempowered and insulted those men present living with HIV and AIDS, while pushing a women's only derived strategy." They signed this written statement "PISD-off Men of ACT UP," and distributed it nationally in an ACT UP Network mailing. And, although this doesn't represent all gay men, this wasn't just an isolated incident; similar events have taken place all over the country. (In case you're curious, this evil *women's only derived strategy* was an appeal to broaden the theme "AIDS Cure Now" to ensure the inclusion of such concerns as access to treatments and drug trials and improved care of prisoners with AIDS!)

The fact is we *are* everywhere. We're homeless. We're teachers. We're teenagers. We're prisoners. We're hustlers and whores. We're parents. We're drag queens and transgendered. We're survivors. *We are everywhere* can't simply be a slogan to sanitize our existence — to make us more acceptable to mainstream America. It must be our call to arms. It must sound our commitment to *every* lesbian, gay man, bisexual, transsexual —and, by extension, all people. *We are everywhere* must inform our demand for full human rights and liberation. ▼

Since the last March on Washington our movement has suffered many losses. Thousands have died from AIDS, and countless women have been diagnosed with other immune disorders and cancer. Many have died.

We hold our government responsible for many of these tragedies, because it has failed to commit enough resources for research and treatment.

We dedicate this issue of *Breakthrough* to all of those who marched six years ago, but who can't be with us this year. Your voices are not forgotten, and your spirits are not lost.

We especially want to remember Audre Lorde, a courageous African American, lesbian feminist, and fighter, whose words and actions continue to lead and inspire us all.

credit: Jessica Tanzer

TELLING THE WORLD

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I'VE BEEN ON MY share of marches. The first I remember was in the late 1960s in Boston. I was just starting college and it was a Civil Rights march called by Black leaders and endorsed by Martin Luther King, Jr....

It was a phenomenal event to suddenly feel powerful in my hometown, not a common experience for African-Americans in Boston, or just about any other town in this country. Walking with all the people, singing and chanting, we never forgot that on the evening news we'd see other Black people doing the same thing in small southern towns and they'd be risking their lives to participate in this same simple act. Even in Boston we knew there was a risk of being smashed by the water from bone-breaking fire hoses. But it didn't deter us, just as it didn't stop those people we watched on the evening news throughout the 1950s and sixties.

My first lesbian and gay pride march in the 70s was not quite as inspiring. I actually watched it from the roof of the apartment building where I lived in Greenwich Village, too shy to go down and join, certain there'd be no other Black people, certain that white lesbians and gays would ignore me or worse. And even when I got myself to the first Lesbian and Gay March on Washington, I went alone. I stayed up half the night to board a bus leaving Greenwich Village at some pre-dawn hour. Some of the women were very friendly, playing loud music, telling stories; and I heard a tape of the comedian Robin Tyler for the first time.

What I remember most about the ride was that the bus driver was a middle aged Black man and I wondered what he thought about those women, about me. He maintained a non-commital expression all the way down and back. But I did glimpse him laughing a couple of times at Robin's jokes. Having my two worlds — Black and lesbian — come together was an enormous leap for me. One I've never regretted.

Two wonderful things happened on that march that confirmed, for me, how important it was to be able to make the type of public statement a march represents. And when I march it is not just for myself but for all those who still feel they cannot. The first incident happened as I walked through the crowd trying to find a banner I might want to march under. I was running and scanning the thousands of possibilities when I practically ran over the parents of one of my students. I taught, then, in an arts center in a very upper-middle class, very white New York suburb. We were each stunned. I stared at this husband and wife (whom I'd last seen sitting in the audience of a play I'd directed one of their children in) and blurted out, "What are you doing here?' In my mind I tried to imagine all the configurations that might bring them to such an event. (Not an easy task in the old days.) They then pointed proudly up at their placard which read "Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays." I was thrilled. It meant my world was not so far away and that I was not out here completely on my own. But then they embraced me and asked what I was doing there! I was stunned. It was one thing for their child to be gay and quite another for his teacher to be a lesbian! But almost as soon as the words were out they realized the answer and they both laughed as they pulled me back into their arms. I cried and laughed as if I'd bumped into my own mother. In that moment I understood the power of coalition and of unselfish love.

Later in the day I reclined on the grass among the sea of faces. We were all smiling but many of them were trying to spot people they knew, while I, again, felt alone. I knew that few of them could really understand how isolating and threatening it is for a person of color to be so surrounded. But by now I was full of the adrenaline that was shooting through us all and the joy that filled the air.

I relaxed, listening to speeches, scanning the crowd simply taking everyone in. I saw Black faces scattered in the crowd, but no one I knew. Until I saw Audre Lorde. She was standing several yards away from me, tall above those seated on the ground. I'd been reading her work since the 1960s but had only seen her from a distance at readings. But she was unmistakeable—the brightly colored African *gele* wrapped on her head, her twinkling eyes. I stared as if I really knew her and continued to watch as she talked to someone sitting below her. Then she looked over and caught my gaze. She winked conspiratorially as if she knew I needed to make that connection with another Black lesbian. The wink was both flirtatious and sisterly, it opened up a dialogue between us that lasted for over a decade.

I often thought of the power of Audre's stance among that sea of people, and her ability to engage me across the crowd. That was Audre. In 1983, when the 20th anniversary march was held to commemorate the original March on Washington in which Martin Luther King Jr. gave the "I Have a Dream" speech, the organizers had to be forced to include Audre as one of the speakers. Thanks to the pressures of a number of people she was finally granted a place on the platform. Which was only fitting in view of the fact that one of the organizers of the original march, Bayard Rustin, was not only a close associate of Dr. King's but also an out, gay Black man.

When I received the news of Audre's death this past November the image that came to me was of Audre in that crowd, looking tall and mischievous, fierce and flirtatious. It had helped me to define what I meant to be a lesbian. She was a woman who insisted that all her worlds come together, in herself and in public.

In a way that is what a march is about. Whatever the cause, a march says that a group of people, no matter how disparate the composition, can pull together all of its facets long enough to tell the world what it wants and needs. At the commemorative March on Washington I walked with my lover, another Black woman, and I know we both were contemplating what it meant to be two Black lesbians in this particular crowd of people. The ability to bring our full selves to such an event exists because of all the marches that have gone before — labor, civil rights, anti-war, women's liberation, anti-apartheid, pro-choice. Each one of those movements

has built on the expertise and political knowledge of the one before it. And each one has helped me define myself as a political being. Without those movements and those marches I would not be able to be who I am, on a Pride march, at all.

I think many of us would like to ignore the other marches, ignore the other issues, many of us are even too young to remember them at all. Some of us don't see the connections between pro-choice, anti-war and lesbian/gay liberation. That has been a point of contention in each of the movements since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Every movement wants to be the center. But the reality is that no one movement knows enough to be the center of change. But each together has enough knowledge to be a successful partner in change. Feminism has given us much important information about how we can look at the world differently, the most important for me has been the value of looking at how all of our struggles are linked. Because just as I cannot leave part of myself — Black, female, raised poor, or lesbian — at home on any march; no one of us should feel we can leave someone behind in the struggle for liberation. Just as Audre brought her full self to the public eye, our marches bring together the full range of what our movement really is. And it is never just the interests of one segment of the group, even if mass media would like us to think so.

After 30 years of marches there is a sameness about them. I've perfected what to wear: wool blend or thin cotton socks, depending on the weather, rubber sole shoes with ventilation, nothing that rubs the skin, layers and always a hat or scarf, mostly so my friends can find me!

Sometimes it seems banal — walking with banners, hoping the media doesn't lie about the numbers, hoping that the numbers mean something to those who are afraid of us. I used to think that we, the marchers, were trying to make bigots change their minds and make legislators take notice of our power. More and more that is not what I think of as my focus.

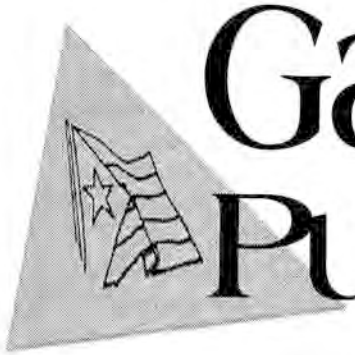
What I really hope as I'm marching, as I'm greeting the many people I now know, is that somewhere in the U.S. a lone person, who's lesbian or gay or bisexual, flips through all the channels to watch the news like I used to do and sees me, or the thousands like me, and understands that none of us are ever really alone.

The person I'm imagining is not the one living in a gentrified brownstone, or sitting at the local gay bar, or just returning from the lesbian cruise. The one I have in mind doesn't live anywhere near a women's bookstore, isn't really sure there are gay bars, and lives in fear of losing her children. Although it's easy for me to forget about these people since I spend most of my time in New York City and San Francisco, they are out there and they are probably the majority of us. I know they need me to be on that march as much as I need to be there and be renewed by all the energy and hope. And the energy is most important because the march is only a moment in time. What is really significant, beyond the isolated person who's inspired by our appearance for 15 seconds on national news, is the political work we do in the months and years between each march.

Each year brings more questions, more differences to struggle with, less clarity about what the center of our movement should be about. And this is a good thing. The more we are willing to struggle with the issues within our movement the stronger we are in battling for liberation. The more we acknowledge the many selves that each of us carry to that march, the more we are able to really see and appreciate others. And when we catch someone's eye, we'll feel full of fierceness and flirtation. And for just a moment we are the center of change.▼

Jewelle Gomez is originally from Boston and has lived in New York City since 1971. She's the author of The Gilda Stories, *a black, lesbian, vampire novel.*

Photo: Donna Binder/Impact Visuals



Gay and Puertorriqueño

an Interview with Carlos Ortíz

Breakthrough: Can you tell us what it was like for you to come out in a small town in Puerto Rico?

Carlos Ortíz: Well, I never think of myself as having been in the closet. Not really. I think I've been out all my life. But the first time that I thought about myself as a homosexual was maybe at the age of ten. That was when I started getting a reaction from people, especially parents of my friends, telling them not to play with me because something was wrong with me. People would make different gestures, remarks, call me names, you know, treating me like — like dirt. When I used the washroom in the school, I would wait until I was sure that nobody was there, because sometimes they used to make little remarks and try to grab me. The students in the classroom used to start touching me with their knees and their hands, and some of them wanted me to grab them and stuff, and it was hard. It was hard dealing with, especially because in a small town everyone knows who your family is. My father was the only gym teacher in my home town for years, and everybody knew us.

I think that the worst part of being gay in a small town for me was when I finished high school and I wanted to continue my education. My geometry teacher told my mother that I shouldn't apply for college because faggots — they don't have the right to have an education. When I became a teacher and started teaching in my home town, after a year the superintendent of education told my father that the only way I could get a job was if I changed the way I behaved. And, of course, I never changed, so I never got my job back. Now that I sit down and look back, sometimes I wonder how I survived all that. I'm glad that I'm a strong person, because a weak person would never have survived those experiences. I mean, coming into the house after people use you sexually and then beat the shit out of you. And then you have to to explain what happened to you.

When my father died, I went back and I had people tell me that I was responsible for my father's death because of my sexuality. They asked me to leave the funeral because they didn't want me there. After twenty years of being away from my home town, some people still see me the same way. It's sad.

But I realize that it's their problem, not mine. Because I'm happy the way I am. And those experiences made me stronger, and gave me the opportunity to help others who are starting to deal with the reality that I dealt with from age ten to age twenty-two.

So you lost your job as a teacher in your home town. Is that when you decided to come to the United States?

Yes, on May 17, 1974, I came to the United States.

Can you describe your experience as a gay Puerto Rican man when you came to the United States?

Oh, geez. When I was given the opportunity to come here, I said to myself, "Carlos Ortíz, now you're going to have the chance to go the United States, where you can be the way you want to be and act the way you want to act. You are gay, and in the U.S. there is some kind of freedom related with gay and lesbian issues, then you're gonna be happy."

But in the U.S. I started dealing with a different reality — as a Puerto Rican. All my life I was happy with being Puerto Rican and here right away it was a problem. I remember when I started looking for a job. At one interview the woman started asking me where was my green card, and if I was here legally. When I mentioned to them that I graduated from college from Puerto Rico, she started making jokes about Puerto Rican colleges. She said, "Well, for Puerto Ricans with a college degree

the only thing that I can offer you is to be a bus boy in a hotel or in a restaurant." And because I refused that, she got very upset.

Another issue was being black. I realized that when I started going to the bars they would card me, and I asked, "Why? I'm old enough. Why do I have to show a lot of I.D.s?" And one of my friends told me, "You know, you're black." And I said, "No, I'm not. I'm Puerto Rican." And she said, "Well, you're black." "Well," I said, "thank you for letting me know. I never thought of myself being black." I only thought about being Puerto Rican.

It's sad, even now, to realize that, as a member of the Latino community, I don't have the gay and lesbian community. Because the gay and lesbian community that I deal with is dominated by white people, who, in a sense, are dealing with the same problems of racism that society in general deals with.

I stopped going to bars. I used to live in the so-called gay and lesbian community, and I moved away from there because it wasn't my reality. It was very painful to realize that I left Puerto Rico to get away from discrimination, only to find that I was still being treated the same way in some respects.

It hurt. Very deep. Because at that point I wasn't that political. It was more an emotional process, trying to find answers. But what I got instead were more problems, more questions, and more pressure. For the first time it hit me that more than my sexuality was a problem. In my community, we had to deal with racism, with oppression and with the reality of being part of a nation who are maybe third-class, fourth-, fifth-, sixth-, maybe tenth-class citizens.

My alternative to those problems was that I drank a lot. I used a lot of drugs. I found the wrong alternatives to that situation. I used to be high most of the time, even at work. I went through that for a long period of time, close to ten years.

Were you involved at all in political activity when you were younger? What was it like being an out gay man in the Puerto Rican independence movement?

My experience goes back to when I was around 17 or 18 years old. I knew a lot about independence. I think that all my life I believed in national liberation and self-determination. Being gay probably gave me a subjective understanding of oppression.

I knew where members of the Partido Independentista, a pro-independence legal electoral party in Puerto Rico, and members of the PSP (Puerto Rican Socialist Party) used to meet, but they were private meetings. You needed to be part of the group in order to do the work, and, because of my sexuality, I was never asked to be part of it. I used to talk to the person who was the leader of the independence movement in my home town, but I had to meet him in the plaza late at night. Nobody saw us; it was like hiding. Maybe he felt that it wasn't right for people to see him talking to me — a gay man — because he would be compromised; people would start saying that he was having an affair with me.

When I came to the United States, I met Ricardo Jiménez. We developed a good, good friendship. Then, in 1980, Ricardo was one of the Puerto Ricans who were arrested, and now he's a prisoner of war serving over 90 years. We used to talk a lot. We had a lot of things in common.

After he was arrested, I started visiting him, and I did a little bit of Puerto Rico work for a while. I came to the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in 1980 and 81, a couple of times, but it was, I felt, a little homophobic, and I said to myself, "This is a place I don't want to be. If I'm going to do Puerto Rico work, I don't need this extra burden in my life." And I ran out of there.

But my relationship with Ricardo continued. We used to write, and he used to call me and stuff like that. And he kept that flame there in my heart. Over the next

five years or so, I went to some activities at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. In 1986 or 87, I started reading about the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional's (MLN) position about homosexuality. And I realized that now I had some space, because their position is in support of us, gays and lesbians and bisexuals. I think that, for the first time, I found a political organization that really, really openly supports gays and lesbians and gives us the opportunity to do work in the struggle for national liberation. That was the turning point in my life.

When I think about those earlier years, it's like that part of my life was wasted. I wanted to do something and I wasn't allowed to. In my opinion, the independence movement reflects what society in general is doing to gay and lesbians; people are afraid. In Puerto Rico, it's still the same way. When I visit Puerto Rico and talk to people, they are worried about their sexuality and the role that they are playing in the independence movement.

The summer before last, I went to a Partido Independentista meeting on the island, and they looked at me like, " What's wrong with him? What is he doing here?" So I introduced myself. "I'm the Coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, and I want to see what you're doing around the excarceration of the political prisoners." Everybody almost passed out, thinking, "Oh my god, this gay man is doing this? I can't believe it." And, you know, I talked to them, and after I returned I sent them information about the prisoners and the work that we are doing. I went back this year and some of them approached me. But there's still this label that I have for being gay that will never allow me to really open all the doors that I want to open in the Puerto Rican independence movement. And the level of rejection that still exists is clear.

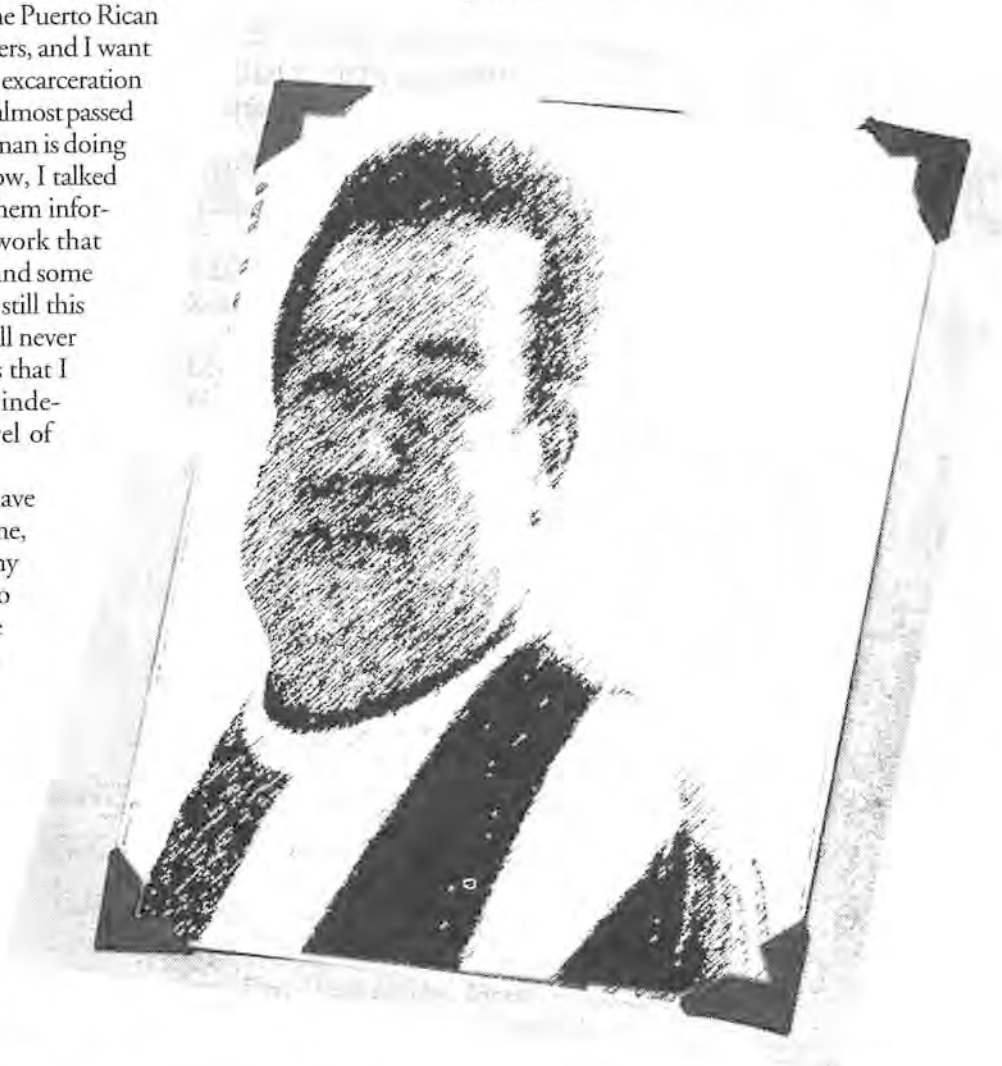
Because of the MLN, because I have this collective 100 percent behind me, I've been able to be open about my sexuality at my job at Roberto Clemente High School and in the community generally. We need that commitment from people who are not gay or lesbian.

It's one of the few organizations in Latin America that has a clear position about homosexuality. Of course, I have to recognize the role of Bartolo Hernández de Jesus, who was a member of this organization who died of AIDS. He played an important role in getting this organization to that level, because he struggled with them; he started that struggle. Because, even though people are political, they bring with them all the phobias that they learned through their lives in the community in general. It's a challenge, especially when you deal with homosexuality. People have to deal with their own sexuality in order for them to really deal with the issue.

The MLN came out in support of lesbian and gay liberation about five or six years ago. Could you talk about how that has been accepted in the community and the independence movement?

The moment that the MLN took the position about homosexuality a lot of people reacted in a negative way. I've met with some of the leadership of those organizations that were upset or opposed to the position taken by the MLN, and some of them have started an open discussion about the issue. Of course, it's a struggle that we have to continue, and it's up to those organizations to take a more serious position related to homosexuality. But it will take more time. It will require people to get involved in those organizations and to really bring the issue to the open and struggle with them.

You work with Vida SIDA, an alternative health clinic for people with AIDS and HIV in



the Puerto Rican community in Chicago. Can you tell us about its work?

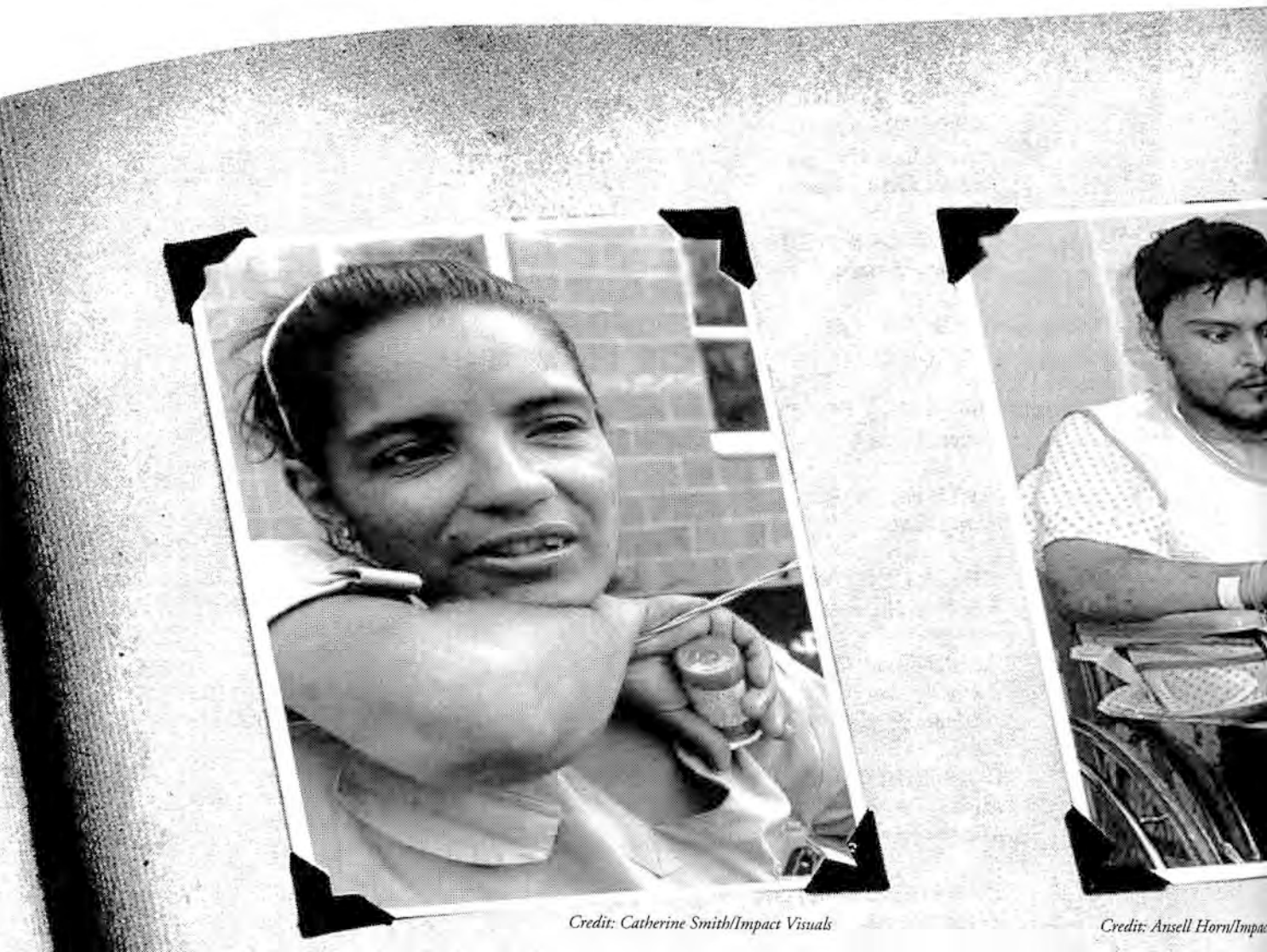
Vida SIDA has been in existence for more than three or four years at this point. We have an acupuncturist, a chiropractor, a person who does massage — all of these services are provided by volunteers. We also have a peer tutor program, where young adults and college students do community outreach. We're going to have a health clinic program at Roberto Clemente High School to educate the students around the issue of AIDS. On a weekly basis, the clinic serves between 20 and 40 people.

My dream is to have a support group, but we don't have the means to do it right now. We also hope to have a resource center, and one of our biggest dreams is to have a hospice. We really need these services because AIDS in our community is becoming very, very serious. We are the only grassroots group in this community dealing with this issue. We don't get any funds from the federal government; it's just our own resources. And I think that makes a difference, because what we're also trying to do is to bring the issue of liberation to the people, but in a different context. To show how you can deal with your illness, control that reality, and change it in a positive way. That's what Vida SIDA is all about: means AIDS still means life.

The Vida SIDA clinic is one avenue we have to real work within the gay and lesbian community, ou community, and to organize people to start dealing wit our sexuality within our own community. We'v reached the point that we need to do it. Not only i Chicago, but at the national level, we need to b organized as Latino gays and lesbians and to bring mo education to our families, to the schools, and to ou community to really understand sexuality on a differe level and to really understand who we are.

The lesbian and gay movement in the United States h tried in different ways to deal with the issue of racism with the movement. One way — for example, in the March o Washington — has been parity. What do you think of th approach?

OK, that's a good one. I like this question. Som people feel that if you allowed equal representation – having a certain amount of women and a certai amount of people of color in the leadership of an activity — that people would be happy. But the thin is it stays at that level. When it comes down to th



Credit: Catherine Smith/Impact Visuals

Credit: Ansell Horn/Impa

community, you don't see people of color involved. Because, then, who's going to organize the community? If we limit everything to the leadership level, then your case is closed.

For example, when we had a demonstration around the AIDS issue here, ACT UP called for a people of color caucus to get together to deal with our issues. I was upset to see that most of the issues were identified or promoted by white people, not people of color. Because, even though people of color were a part of that leadership, the real leadership resided in the white people that were there. They were really the ones who brought up issues and how we dealt with those issues. They're saying, "You're gonna participate, but I'm gonna tell you how you're gonna participate. And this is what you're gonna do."

If I want to do something as a person of color, I want to have full participation and responsibility for everything that I'm going to do. I don't want somebody telling me what to do. I believe that the only ones who understand the issues of the Puerto Rican people are the Puerto Rican people. And they are the ones who can come to my community to organize my people. The African Americans will do the same with their community, and the Mexicans within their community — I think that's the right way to do it. It's not for somebody to tell us what to do, to come to our community and try to organize us. That's racism in a different, more sophisticated form. You become a token. And I don't want to be a token for anybody. My issues are real, and I know how to handle them. How can an individual who has all the benefits of being white in this society understand my reality?

I think that the gay and lesbian movement is an important movement in the United States. It has achieved a lot of good things for all gays and lesbians, no matter what color you are. But at the level of dealing with our reality as people of color, some people — they've lost perspective. Because they want to talk about our experiences without even asking us, without then trying to understand us.

White gays and lesbians need to understand that as a Puerto Rican gay man, for example, I have to deal not just with being gay, but with the reality of racism — how people see me as a black Puerto Rican. When you expect people to support you because you think they understand you, because they are gay and lesbian like you, and they don't — you don't see them trying to understand — then you get upset. That's why I'd rather deal with organizing people within my community.

I think that it's about time for people to come to talk to us about our experience. And not to come with any preconceived notions — no. To say to themselves, "I'm gonna listen to what they have to say, and I will try to understand their reality, and I will try to do my best to work with them and to take some leadership from them." Not for them to go there and say, "Well, you know, I'm here, and say what you have to say, because I have to leave and this is the way I'm going to deal with you. Bam!" That's a really paternalistic approach. Of course, I don't like the missionary approach, either. You know, people saying, "Here. Here's the white people who are gonna save you." I think that's wrong. I think it's time for people to sit down and to listen. Because we don't listen to each other. We don't. Because we already have our own agendas within ourselves.

I think the best example is the AIDS issue. I think that what you see in Chicago, for example, is that the involvement of gay and lesbian Latino people, of people of color, is minimal. You see a lot of white people dealing with the issue. The organizations that are doing the work are almost all in the white community; they are almost all run by white people. And then, when you approach them, it's like, "Oh, I have this person who's doing outreach." Or, "I have this person, who's the person of color, who you can call, and he's on the hotline." I don't want people of color doing outreach only, or answering the phone for the hotline. I want people of color making decisions.

Why? Because most of those people, in order to get their funds, use the statistics of AIDS in our community. But they don't use the people of color to provide the services. And I think that until we get together and demand that they respect us and really deal with the issue the right way, that will happen over and over and over.

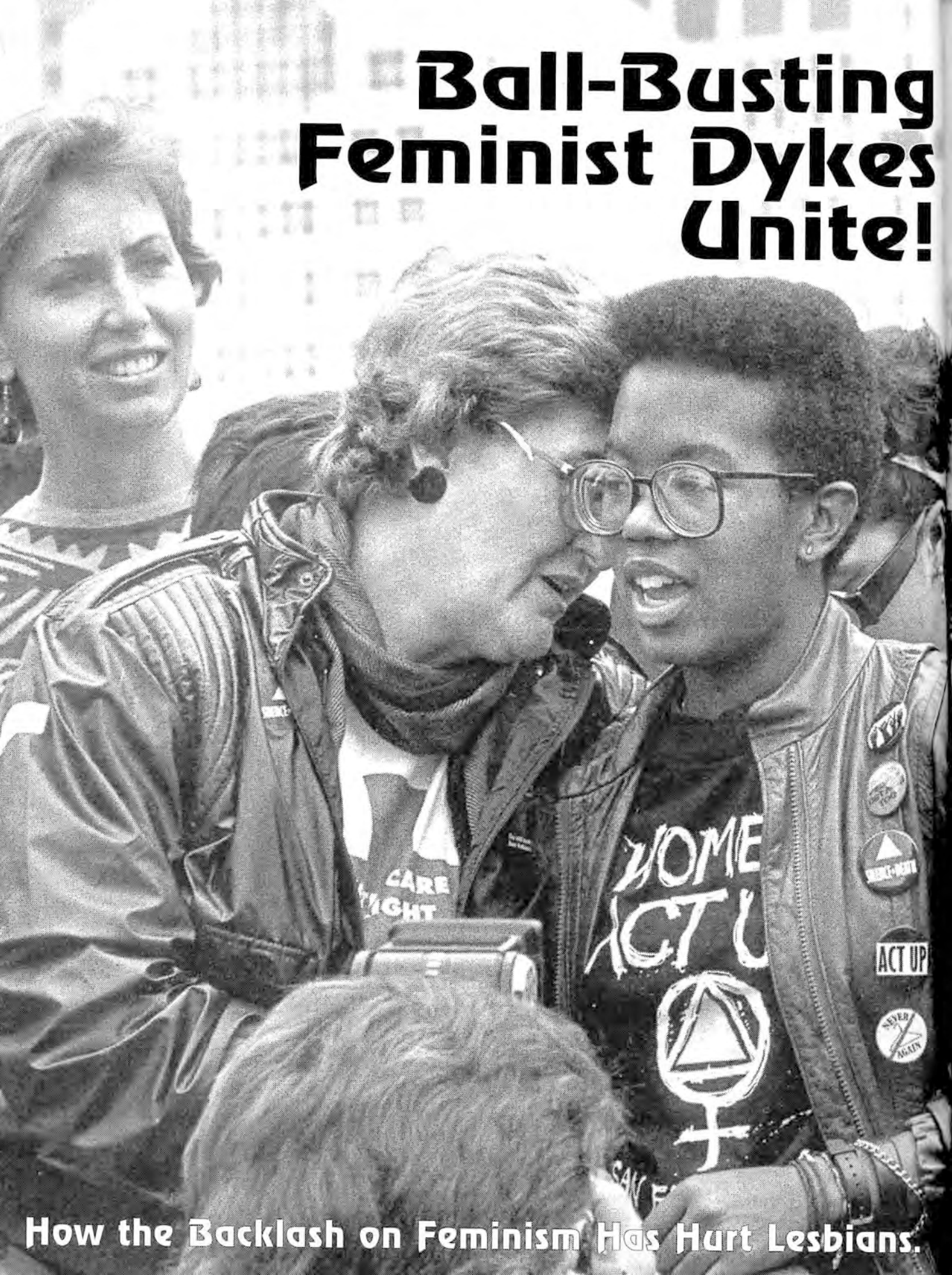
Our people still die. Gay men of color still die. And the level of ignorance in this community about homosexuality is still really low. And then, these white people are getting the benefit, all the money and everything. And they never have the time to sit down with us and talk and ask, "What are your issues?"

I've been to places where people say, "We love you. We love all Puerto Ricans." But it's a funny feeling. Because they are saying that because you are there. And you wonder what they're going to say when you leave. And then you get people saying to you, "We like Puerto Ricans because we have better sex with them." They see the Puerto Ricans, for example, as sex objects, the Blacks as African-American sex objects. And then you are all confused with these ideas in the gay and lesbian movement and how they really see us: as a sex object, or as equal human beings that have feelings, that live a reality that we want to change and improve?

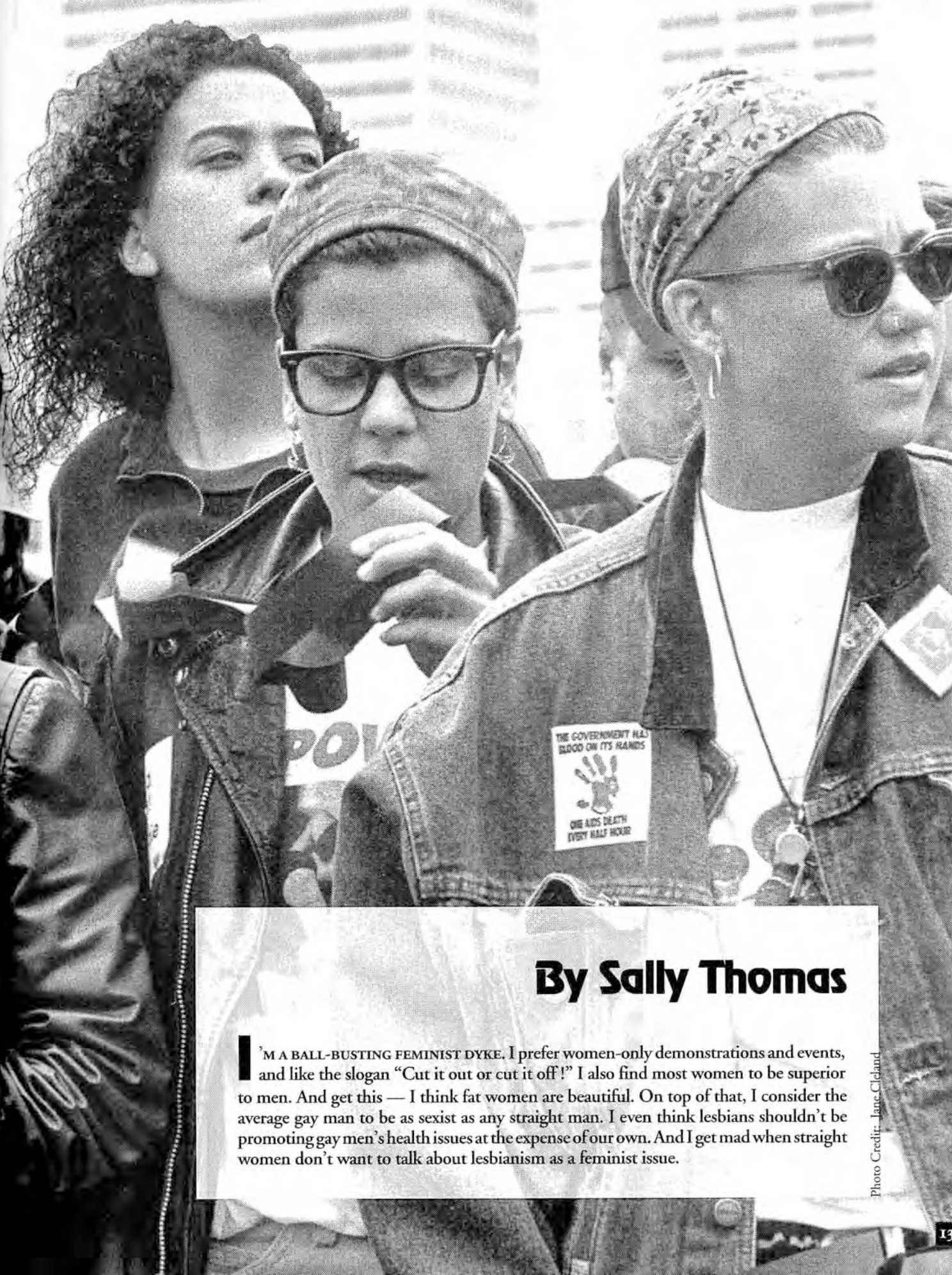
If they really want to deal with issues related to people of color they have to be honest, they have to be open to dealing with our issues, they have to sit down with people of color and to really discuss it and to see how they can — under our leadership, under *our* leadership — change things around. ▼

Carlos Ortiz, a gay Puerto Rican, is Midwest Coordinator of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican POWs and Political Prisoners. He is a member of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, a Puerto Rican independence organization in the United States.

Ball-Busting Feminist Dykes Unite!



How the Backlash on Feminism Has Hurt Lesbians.



By Sally Thomas

I'M A BALL-BUSTING FEMINIST DYKE. I prefer women-only demonstrations and events, and like the slogan "Cut it out or cut it off!" I also find most women to be superior to men. And get this — I think fat women are beautiful. On top of that, I consider the average gay man to be as sexist as any straight man. I even think lesbians shouldn't be promoting gay men's health issues at the expense of our own. And I get mad when straight women don't want to talk about lesbianism as a feminist issue.

Photo Credit: Jane Cleland

For these assorted views on life I've gained the "ball-buster" reputation — and I'm sure I'm not the only one. In response to your pro-woman outlook, have you ever been called a "bitch," "man-hater" or "feminazi"? "Shrill" or "moralistic"? "Divisive" or "separatist"? "Crazy"? Or just plain "stupid"? Then you qualify, too! The backlash on feminism and the war against women have taken their toll on feminist dykes, and I think we had better start speaking up and calling the shots! Whatever the consequences, this is no time to hold back. I say, let's be fearless about lesbian feminism!

Any woman who has ever raised hell in response to sexism knows she can expect some fall-out. It's one of those coming-of-age experiences — you're not a *real* feminist until you've been slandered. The choice of anti-feminist epithets is testimony to the serious task of disarming women who refuse to take orders from men. And, believe me, it's no coincidence that "dyke" happens to be the first and most popular epithet hurled at uppity women.

Feminist lesbians — whose passion for women includes a burning desire to end a centuries-long tradition of women's oppression — are deemed especially threatening. So it's no surprise that straight white men, as primary keepers of patriarchal customs and typically those who suffer to lose the most from a feminist take-over, are among our principal opponents. They're not the only ones, however. Our activities are also frequently monitored by gay men and straight feminists who either have no interest in including lesbians on their agendas, or are fearful that inclusion of lesbian issues will hinder their chance of winning single-issue battles.

This conflict of interests among our closest allies doesn't rule out the need or the potential to build more productive alliances with gay men, straight feminists, and even straight men. It's just that we have to know which end is up when we negotiate the terms, making sure that lesbianism and feminism are nonnegotiable.

THE BACKLASH

The "backlash" made it into news headlines during an unforgettable period of U.S. history. Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill galvanized day-time T.V. audiences like never before with a real-life battle of the sexes. For the most part, women had no trouble choosing sides. This was a woman's thing, and we knew who represented our interests. Enter Susan Faludi's best-selling book, followed by the "Year of the Woman." The tables were to be turned, and turned they were — a bit. Now, a new man sits in the president's office, with a few more women at the table. But the backlash hasn't disappeared. And neither has the quintessentially anti-feminist right wing, which is proclaiming its invigorated battle on lesbians and gays the "Second Civil War."

Lesbianism represents women's independence run amok, when women meet their own needs without permission from men. When losing parties began to get serious about regaining control from the unwieldy women's movement of the '70s, they focused on hyping up the excitement of women-as-sex-object while extolling the virtues of women-as-mothers. So while lesbian feminists had gained some ground in rejecting these heterosexually-based conventions, in the backlash period we became more ostracized. Anti-feminist and anti-lesbian epithets were being hurled with an ever increasing frequency by then, but this time there was no cohesive women's movement to back up the most outspoken. While the backlash did not signal the end of lesbianism, it did put in motion the retreat of lesbian feminism.

It would be nice if lesbians could find a safe and supportive haven within the gay and lesbian movement. Hatred of women, unfortunately, is shared by gay and straight men alike.

LESBIAN FEMINISM-A RELIC OF THE PAST?

A few months ago I attended the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change conference. I found notable how many women identified themselves as lesbian feminists while addressing "Sexism in the Gay and Lesbian Movement" at one of the workshops. Of course, most of the women, I guessed, were at least 40 years old. Which also made sense. It was more a way of their announcing, "I come from that historical time period," as opposed to "I am a member of that dynamically active lesbian feminist movement."

The younger lesbians sure had lots to say about sexism, but since the dominant movement in their lives has been the AIDS (gay) movement, they tend not to identify as feminists. Face it — there is no "women's movement" that women feel a part of in the same way that many young activists feel connected to the gay (and lesbian) movement. This is no indictment of lesbians working to end the AIDS epidemic, but feminism is not one of that movement's strong suits. This predicament leaves a lot of women working in isolation from one another, who don't feel backed up when they go out on a limb to fight for women's rights.

Young lesbian activists are out there. Even *Mademoiselle*, the fashion magazine for teens, has noted in its recent "Women in Love" spread, "So different is the baby dyke from the previous generation of lesbians that every aspect of her experience — from dating to politics — is different. Her issues are her own, not her older sisters." I suspect it's more a difference of style, than content. Look at the issues, as old as time: reproductive rights, lesbian visibility, sexual harassment, and violence against women, lesbians, and gays.

It's 1993, and women's activism is alive and exciting. Young women, including lots of dykes, are at it again. Organizations are sprouting up, and militant 'zines are rolling off hundreds of small presses and xerox machines all over the country. The Women's Action Coalition (WAC), the Black Women's Health Project, the Women's Health Action Mobilization (WHAM!), ACT UP Women's

Caucus, and Lesbian Avengers are just some of the organizations tackling feminist and lesbian issues with renewed creativity and devotion. Zines such as *Castration Threat, Women Who Masturbate, On Our Rag,* and *Girlgerms* are issuing challenging proclamations like "The revolution will not be fertilized."

What's more, women of color are making sure that white women don't control the market on feminism in the nineties. Look at the emergence of groups like Asian Pacific Sisters, African Ancestral Women United for Social Change, and La Red (an international organization of Latino gays and lesbians). Or pick up any one of the groundbreaking works published by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press that have sparked fundamental debate about the impact of racism in the United States and inspired other important publications, like the black lesbian journal *Aché.* All of these developments reflect the cultural wealth and diversity of our communities, and strengthen our chance of creating fundamental social change.

With so much happening, what could be wrong? The problem is that it's all so fragmented. I doubt I'm the only one who feels a little disoriented. After all, my adult life has been dominated by the backlash on feminism. Racism, class privilege, and a host of other issues have kept women divided in our ability to move forward as a cohesive force. I don't want to be overly nostalgic about the days when feminism was at its height. But I do think that women can accomplish incredible change when we pull together. The best is yet to come. But lest we forget, we have some shit to tend to.

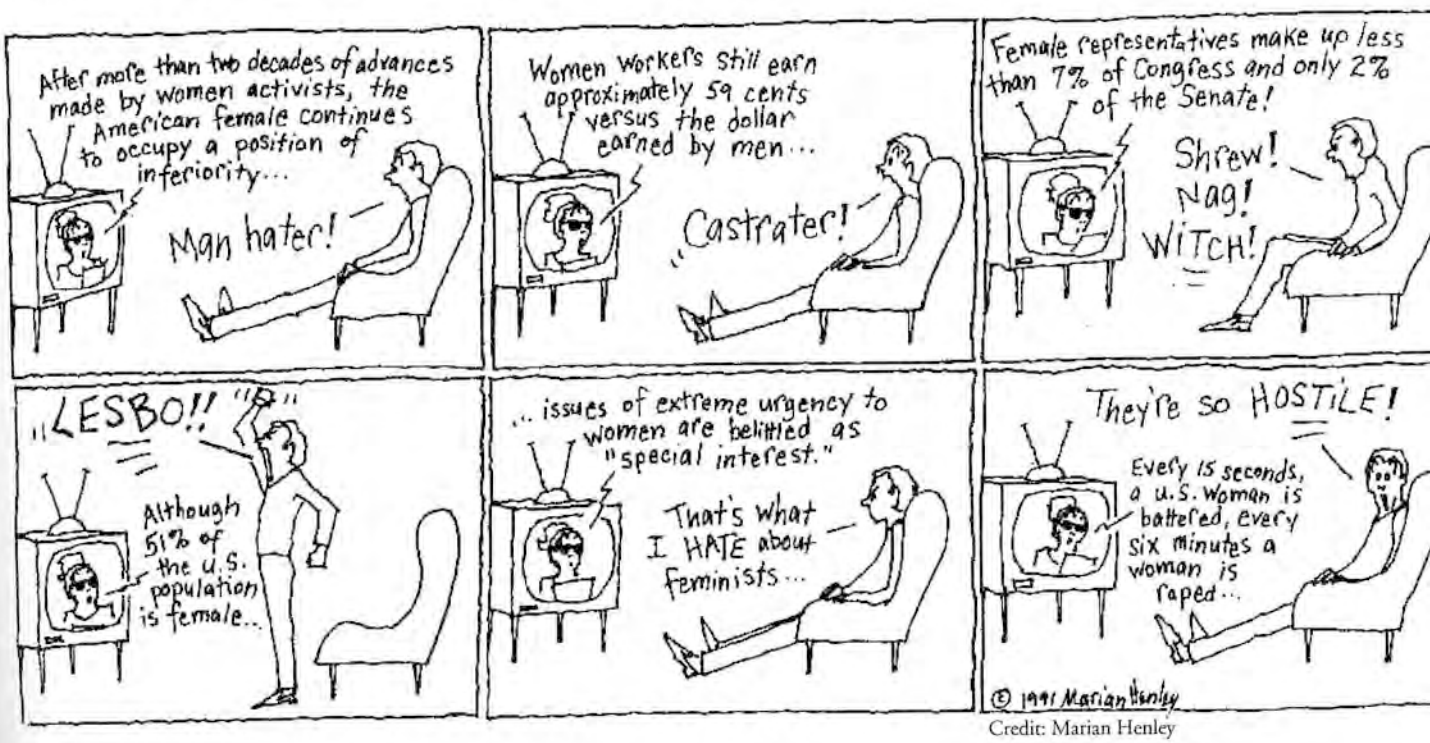
HAS FEMINISM HURT GAY MEN? NOT YET!

"I hate women!" screamed a strange man to my friend as we lingered one day on Castro Street in San Francisco. (Few gay men are so honest!) Had I run into the infamous anti-feminist John Morrison, self-proclaimed gay masculinist?

I had the good fortune to first encounter Morrison when a San Francisco gay rag republished his 1991 *Christopher Street* article, "Is Feminism Hurting Gay Men?" Morrison is one of those "men's rights" activists who is on a rampage against women and lesbians.

In case you couldn't guess, the answer to his question is feminism *has* hurt gay men more than you could possibly imagine. "Clearly," he warns, "the feminist claim that women suffer more than men is very much open to debate." In page after page he explores all the ways men are oppressed by women. Take this for one: "Studies show baby girls are smiled at and held more than baby boys." Part of me can't help but scoff at the ridiculousness of his arguments — but his articles get national distribution, and "gay masculinist" groups are proliferating. Scariest to me were the letters that got published in response to his rant — most of them cheering him on. (His most recent article published in *Christopher Street* targets lesbians — and women — for somehow manipulating the AIDS movement to our advantage.)

Women aren't taking this crap lying down. When Morrison's articles appeared week after week in the San Francisco *Sentinel,* women calling themselves the Media Pirates slapped up posters all over town. They answered his rhetorical question, "Has Feminism Hurt



Credit: Marian Henley

Gay Men?" with the warning, "NOT YET!"

Some might say that Morrison is just an extremist. True, but he's just one end of a longstanding sexist continuum. Take ACT UP for example. Natasha Gray's confessionary "Bored with the Boys: Cracks in the Queer Coalition," published last year in *NYQ*, unmasks the limitations of this hip organization. Gray, a political activist who came of age in "the heyday of Queer New York" beginning in 1989, eventually grew weary of the persistent lack of both lesbian visibility and equality in the ranks of queer nationals.

"In those heady days," she wrote, "it was all too easy for us girls to dismiss older lesbian feminists as flabby ferocious frumps and trot off to join the boys at ACT UP, where the cash was flowing and TV cameras were rolling." What Gray relates here is, again, the perception that lesbian feminists are anathemas, to be avoided at all costs. "Most disturbingly," she noted, "women who, like me, were teenagers when Reagan was elected and came of age during the backlash years, have negative images of feminists that come out of both the right wing and the new lesbian sex radicals, like Susie Bright."

Just think of the possibilities that would open to us if dykes — old, young, and in-between — united. Why not acknowledge our different styles and sexual preferences, and move on?

THE LAVENDER MENACE

Unfortunately, feminism is not automatically free of homophobia. Fear of lesbians in the women's (i.e. predominantly straight) movement goes back a long way — lesbians have always been looked upon as the "lavender menace." It's no comfort seeing it happen all over again. "Lesbian" didn't even merit enough attention to make it in the index of Susan Faludi's popular *Backlash*.

A lot of straight feminists think that making a distinction between straight and lesbian is divisive. "We're all in this together — so why bother talking about lesbian vs. straight?" Sorry, but there are differences. And in a society that makes us completely invisible, lesbians need to talk and be heard. (This kind of discussion is happening right now in the Chicago chapter of WAC, so I'm told by some midwest friends. The outcome? Without the opportunity to be heard by their straight feminist comrades, the dykes are going to organize on their own.)

The trend of minimizing the significance of our lesbian identities can be perpetuated by lesbians, too. For example, did you know that the editor of *Ms.* magazine, Robin Morgan, is a lesbian? You wouldn't from reading *Ms.* As a high profile feminist, Morgan has probably concluded that a high lesbian profile would endanger her ability to represent the needs of all women. That's a conclusion reached by a lot of lesbians who want to build an all-inclusive women's movement. But must lesbians always bear this burden? Some vocal support from our straight sisters would go a long way in bolstering lesbian courage.

I believe that straight feminists have a lot to gain from pro-lesbian feminism. Isn't independence, after all, about having the complete freedom to shape your sexual, economic, and emotional identity — without qualifications? Determining our direction according to notions of what's socially acceptable seems pointless. Lesbians don't want sympathy. We want all women to have a self-interest in lesbian liberation.

Sure, there are times when lesbians try to one-up our straight sisters' feminist credentials with the view that only lesbians are real feminists. And just as feminists are known for debating who is the *real* feminist, lesbians have endless debates about who are *real* lesbians. Lesbians continue to get involved in bitter fights *ad nauseum* over lesbian identity, political strategies, sexuality and style. These fights can get real ugly and destructive.

But when we distance ourselves from feminism, all women lose out. And we'd better get wise to this. We have to put feminism to work to make real changes — changes that will benefit all women, visible dykes included. Setting a common feminist agenda always ends up being more difficult than we think it should be. Nobody has the answers. But somehow we have to stop letting our differences prevent us from building a movement that can make all of our voices heard.

BE ALL YOU CAN BE

I'm not into joining the military, but I do fancy that slogan "Be all you can be." What would it mean if we could overcome all of our problems and build a feminist movement with some bite?

The first step is imagining that anything is possible. Forget about all of the defeats for now. What do you want? Imagine your blood flowing hot and your heart beating fast — you're getting a glimpse of a world where women have power.

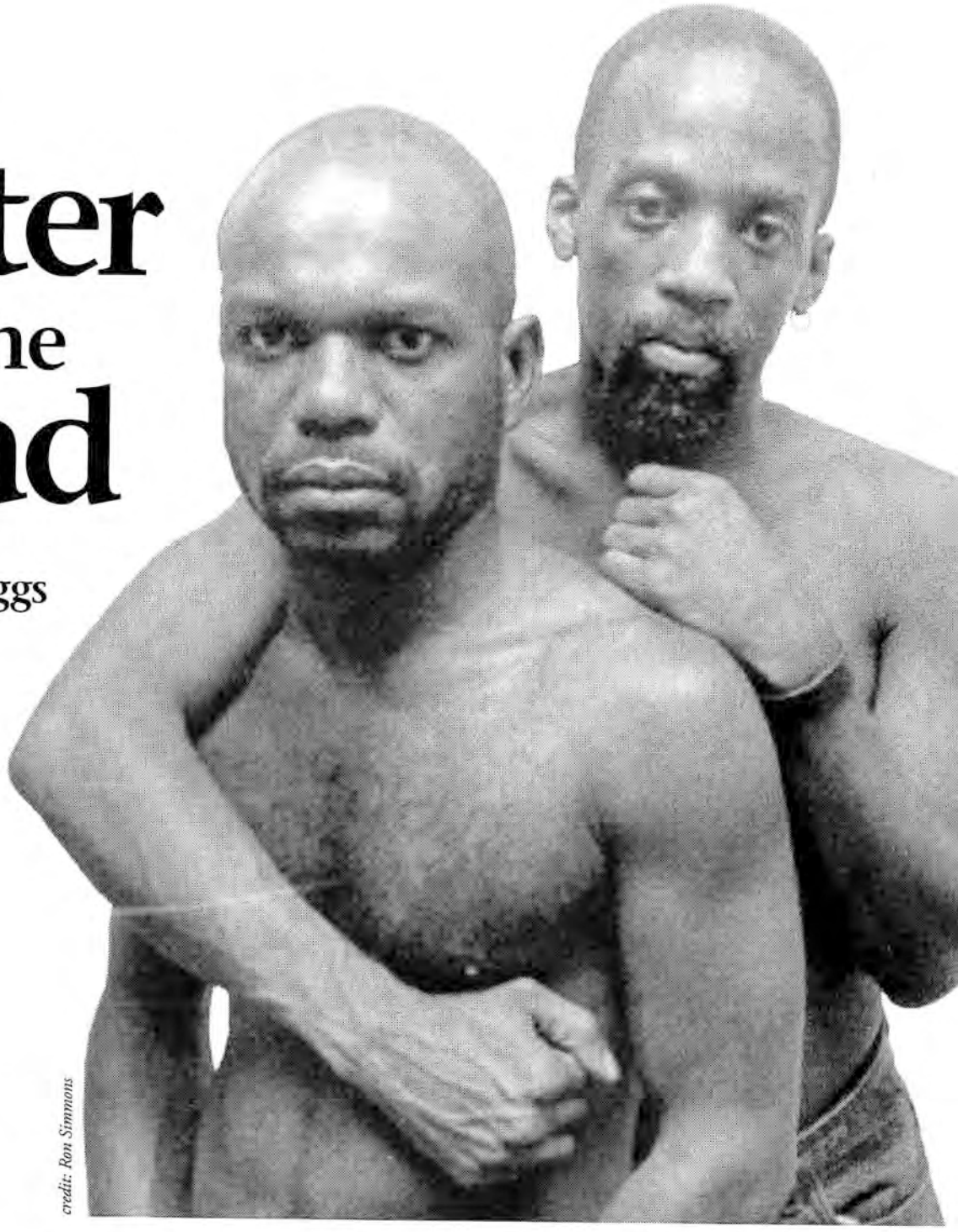
For me, one of those moments was storming a military recruiting station with a dozen other women, and tearing up every piece of pro-war propaganda we could lay our hands on. Or marching down Market Street in San Francisco on International Women's Day with hundreds of rebellious women shouting outrageous slogans like, "We're women, don't touch us, we'll hurt you!" Or watching that fantastic feminist flick, *Born in Flames*, with that memorable scenario: a woman gets onto the city transit and some creepy guy starts hassling her. All of a sudden, from out of nowhere, women converge on the scene in her defense. An instant later, he's off the train.

Go ahead. Let yourself go. Sisterhood is powerful. ▼

Sally Thomas is a member of Breakthrough's *editorial board. She's thankful to have so many fabulous feminist friends, and would like to especially thank Leslie Mullin, Judith Mirkinson, Lisa Rudman, and Christine Calabrese for the brainstorms and advice about this article.*

Letter to the Dead

by Marlon Riggs



credit: Ron Simmons

DEAR COMRADES, LOVERS, GIRLFRIENDS, FAMILY:

For what seemed the thousandth time I watched *Tongues Untied* a few days ago, this time of all places, in Clemson, South Carolina. In a room filled with whites, in a small college town much like that room, I watched the screen and your image flicker by. How strange it was, in so alien an environment, to see you there, larger than life, singing, living, still. I listened close to the music of your voice — how much you remind me of voices centuries past — your raw-edged tenor blending rhythms and inflections descended from slaves into a hymn, a doo-wop declaration of freedom.

I listened and remembered: on the night of the San Francisco premiere less than two years ago, you rested in a public hospital bed, laid low by pneumocystis. Remember? I dedicated the premiere to you and your quick recovery. And when I saw you days later, your pride and glee were immediately self-evident. So clearly you spoke, so confident you seemed. Alone, you raised from the bed, and went to the bathroom. I watched and I thought, I too have been here, though for different reasons, and I know what effort — what will — so simple the task of rising to urinate requires.

I left you that day, both of us radiantly optimistic about your imminent return home. Two weeks later I was shocked by the news that you had returned to intensive care. Relapse. At your bedside I watched you struggle for each, single, irregular breath — each breath a battle between your will and the respirator. A friend lightly clasped your bloated hand. Your eyes flickered, your lips barely moved, I watched your face. Friends bent close to hear you, to decipher your mumbled whisper. But no one understood, and so,

as tactile communication, they continued to hold your hand. I watched your face. "You're hurting him," I said. "Holding his hand hurts." The friend released his grasp, and your face, ashy, drawn, immediately relaxed.

Within your face I saw my own. Odd. I was not afraid. I studied you as I might study a mirror, witnessed the reflection of my own probable future, my not too dissimilar past. How close I, too, had come to being killed, not by the pneumonia, but by the most lethal accomplice: silence.

"Do you think I'm going to make it?" you asked us, eyes closed, barely a whisper. We looked at one another. No one spoke. Then the man who had once been your lover and had struggled to remain your friend, answered: "They're trying a new drug. But you have to rest. You have to stop fighting the respirator. Let it breathe for you. Rest so the drug can start to work."

The drug didn't work. Nor the respirator. You died the next day. And in my mind's eye I continually watch your face, study the slow drain of life from your dark-brown skin, your eyes, your chapped lips. I often see you as some superimposed photograph, you as you lay dying in the hospital that day, and you up on the screen, standing upright, tuxedoed, finger-snapping, smoothly defiant in your harmonizing doo-wop that "we come out tonight."

Tell me, Gene, how is it that you could come through so much — through alcoholism, financial dependency, racial self-hatred, internalized homophobia, neglected hypertension — tell me how you managed to master each of these demons yet would not — could not contend with that most insidious foe: the silence that shields us from the reality that we are at risk, that our bodies might be sites of impending catastrophe. Did you believe, as so many of us still do, that black people "don't get it?"

Girlfriend, I remember when years ago I called one of the city's AIDS hotlines, and asked how KS looked on dark skin. You see I'd suddenly discovered a big blemish on my calf: it was not purple, it was not pink — such were the descriptions in all the information packets of the time — it was flat, round, and pitch-black. Panicked, I nervously awaited an answer to my call: at the other end of the line, a woman told me that she had no information on the color of KS on dark skin, but I wasn't to worry, because — quote — "we don't get it."

I hung up, relieved, suspicious, confused. I went to the dermatologist. Two weeks I waited for the skin test result. The doctor called: "a mole," he said. Relieved I laughed. "But," he added, "moles don't usually grow that fast. This is unusual. Have you taken the test — to be sure?" "No," I curtly answered. That kind of certainty, then, was not what I was seeking.

How many of us have chosen this retreat — choose it still? Didn't you say, dear Chris, that the black community would pay dearly for denial? I heard you, but did I listen? We are sitting, the two of us, alone in your home (your lover Phil, of course, is away on some Task Force trip), and we are talking more honestly th we ever have. Sex, love, death, disease, denial: our fir conversation, remember? "Black gay men," you sai "have fooled themselves into believing they are in mune. The black community will pay a price." Comi from a whiteboy, I thought your words a little harsh. B you explained that AIDS can have a liberating effect the tongue, lets you lash it like a whip, and get away wi it. And I thought to myself: hmmmm, let's store th thought — just in case.

But that "just in case," I now know, was — as far I was concerned — remote, theoretical. I heard yo Chris, but your message, I felt confident, was not mea for me. And the degree to which I embraced it, was o of ideological and political, not personal, necessity.

Oh, don't read me, girlfriend. You know I'm not t only one, though I should have known better. I shou have had some sense knocked into me by the sight of m

reproduced by permis

gym buddy Alfredo — or should I say, gym bunny? — now, girlfriends, don't read me for being "sacrilegious." If you can't dish with the dead, then what's left? (Besides, you ain't gon' tell nobody no way!) Yes, I should have known better when I saw the peculiar rash on Alfredo's brown, muscled back, a light-colored rash which spread to his chest, his arms, his face. Should have realized something was up when his weight went suddenly down. I watched him drop as many pounds as he once pressed. I watched, while like some sick solitary elephant that wanders off from the herd to die, Alfredo quietly disappeared from the clubs, the gym, disappeared into the shadows and silence of his apartment. When did you die, girlfriend? Even now, I don't think anybody knows, you did it so — discreetly.

Yes, Chris, I hear you: and we are paying a devastating price for such "discretion."

Remember? Ed, the first lover of my first and only lover. Melvin, the second lover of my first and only lover. Both Ed and Melvin, dead: why you two didn't awaken me to the possibility that black men do "get it," and that I might be the third in this succession of dying, dead lovers — why your deaths did not end this determined denial on my part is now no mystery to me. Denial runs deep, binds and burdens not just the solitary individual but the herd, the family, the race. Our silence about AIDS was a quintessential "black thang," but we refused to understand.

"Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien," by Marlon Riggs

Funny how crisis has a way of either deepening or disrupting our delusions. Were you watching, Lewayne, when the German doctors told me that both of my kidneys had ceased to function, and that I was HIV positive, to boot? Stunned, inert, silent, yet alert, I lay in that German hospital bed, my inner eyes, at last, beginning to open. Did you see what I see, Lewayne — Lewayne, spitting image of myself, in height, head shape, and complexion, Lewayne, whose mother/father/family declined to visit you during your worsening illness, whose family effectively disowned you and wondered aloud whether you "deserved" to die; Lewayne, the first black man I knew to join this long, solemn procession: did you see, Lewayne, how quickly, quietly, my delusions of immunity disintegrated? Were you watching, girlfriend? Did you nod and sigh, "It's about time!"

Sweet Lewayne, who lost first sight, then life, to the raging virus, were you nonetheless my witness? Did you see over the ensuing months of my recuperation what happened to my kidneys, my sight, my tongue? How slowly, gradually, my kidneys once again started to work, how slowly, gradually I began to see the consequences of silence, and how as a consequence of this insight, my tongue unhinged from the roof of my mouth, dislodged from the back of my throat, slipped — free. And in the hospital, like some exuberant runaway escaped from slavery, I sang aloud, with all my might:

Oh Freedom!
Oh Freedom!
Oh Freedom over me!
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
and go home, yes! I'd go home
and be free!

Surely, I thought some nurse would have rushed to the door and hushed me, or some less polite fellow patient simply demanded that I shut up all that noise. But no one came and no one protested, so from my hospital bed I continued to sing, with all my might:

I shall not, I shall not be moved
I shall not, I shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water
Oh, I shall not be moved!

Did you hear me, Harriet?

Did you hear my voice drop to a quieter song sung just for you — the song of someone escaped from captivity yet uncertain of his way:

I don't believe you
you brought me this far
just to leave me
Oh, my God!
I don't believe
she brought me this far
just to leave me

Did you hear, Harriet, the trembling trepidation in my voice (trembling which even now in remembering threatens to repossess me)? And didn't you, like the good shepherd that you are/have always been, didn't you come — and take my hand?

Beneath the continuous blare of Geraldo and Joan and Oprah and Donahue, The Young and the Restless and All My oh-so-tedious Children, I heard you, Harriet, paid strict attention to your silent command: stand up and walk! It was then, my dear doo-wopping Gene, that I discovered what effort — what will — it required to rise from my sickbed to urinate. What pleasure to stand and pee!

Remember, Harriet? — remember how while my lover, mother, grandmother, friends, walked me through the hospital hallways with IV in tow, you walked with me, also, lightly holding my hand. And when we had escaped out of the woods, you pressed me on till we reached a river and you said simply, silently, with your eyes: wade in the water, child, if you want to get to the other side.

How many runaways had you so commanded? How many hung back and clung in fear to what they felt they knew, sought refuge in the woods, thick silence, darkest night? How many thought they could escape by becoming invisible? But didn't you know, Harriet, that slavery is never escaped as long as the master controls your mind? And don't you now see — oh I know you do! — the chilling parallel between the means by which we were held captive in your time, and the methods of our enslavement today. Don't you see the chains, my Harriet, sweet Moses, the chains not so much of steel and the law, but more insidious: the invisible chains, linked over centuries, of silence and shame? In this latest crisis, our new master is the virus; his overseer — silence; and his whip — shame.

How deeply were you scarred, dear Gene? Oh I know you sang Harriet's songs of freedom, but when she led you to the water, why didn't you wade? What invisible chains bound your feet, your mind? Were they the same as mine? Was the stigma of this virus so powerful in your mind, as it was in my own, that you, too, sought refuge in pretense, denial? Did you somehow ignore, as did I, how quietly, one by one, your friends and comrades and lovers were stolen away? Did you, too, think that silence and invisibility were adequate cover?

Delusion, my child, Harriet's gaze reminded me The master knows well the woods. Stalks best in darkness. Covets silence. Lays the most deadly trap within the most seductive shadows. Looks like you gotta wade, Harriet's eyes said to me, if you want to get to the other side.

Were you watching, Chris, when I stepped into the deep? I who have never learned to swim and was certain I would drown. Chilly, troubled waters swept over my feet, rose gushingly to my ankles, my hips, waist, chest then my neck. Troubled, angry waters whipped and tore at me, brutally washed away decades of deep-layered shame, washed away the denial, the fear, the stigma cracked and splintered the master's lock and chain.

Before I knew it I was naked and trembling — and free. And that's when I began to sing, from the hospital bed, and I know I sang off-key but the quality of the song didn't matter as much as the affirming act of singing:

I woke up this morning with my mind
staying on freedom.
I woke up this morning with my mind
staying on freedom.
I woke up this morning with my mind
staying on freedom.
Hallelu — hallelu — hallelujah!

And then from somewhere nearby I heard another voice join in the refrain.

Come on and walk, walk!
Come on and walk, walk!
Come on and walk, walk!

I turned and looked and there stood Brother Baldwin, old bug-eyed Jimmy with the biggest smile, and he hugged my shoulder and turned me slightly, nodding at another figure nearby, and my mouth nearly dropped: there was Martin walking alongside Sojourner who held the hand of Ella Baker who walked alongside Langston who held the hand of Joe Beam, and in front of and behind them countless, countless, radiant, singing faces. In the hospital I shouted, with all my might, and nobody hushed me:

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around
turn me around!
turn me around!
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around!
I'm gonna keep on a-walking
Keep on a-talking
Marching up to Freedom Land.

We are wading through waters, deep, angry, cleansing waters, releasing fear and shame and enslaving silence in our wake. And I remember the shock of seeing you, Bayard, in all your naked nobility; wading with the rest of us; shouting us on. Oh what it meant to me to

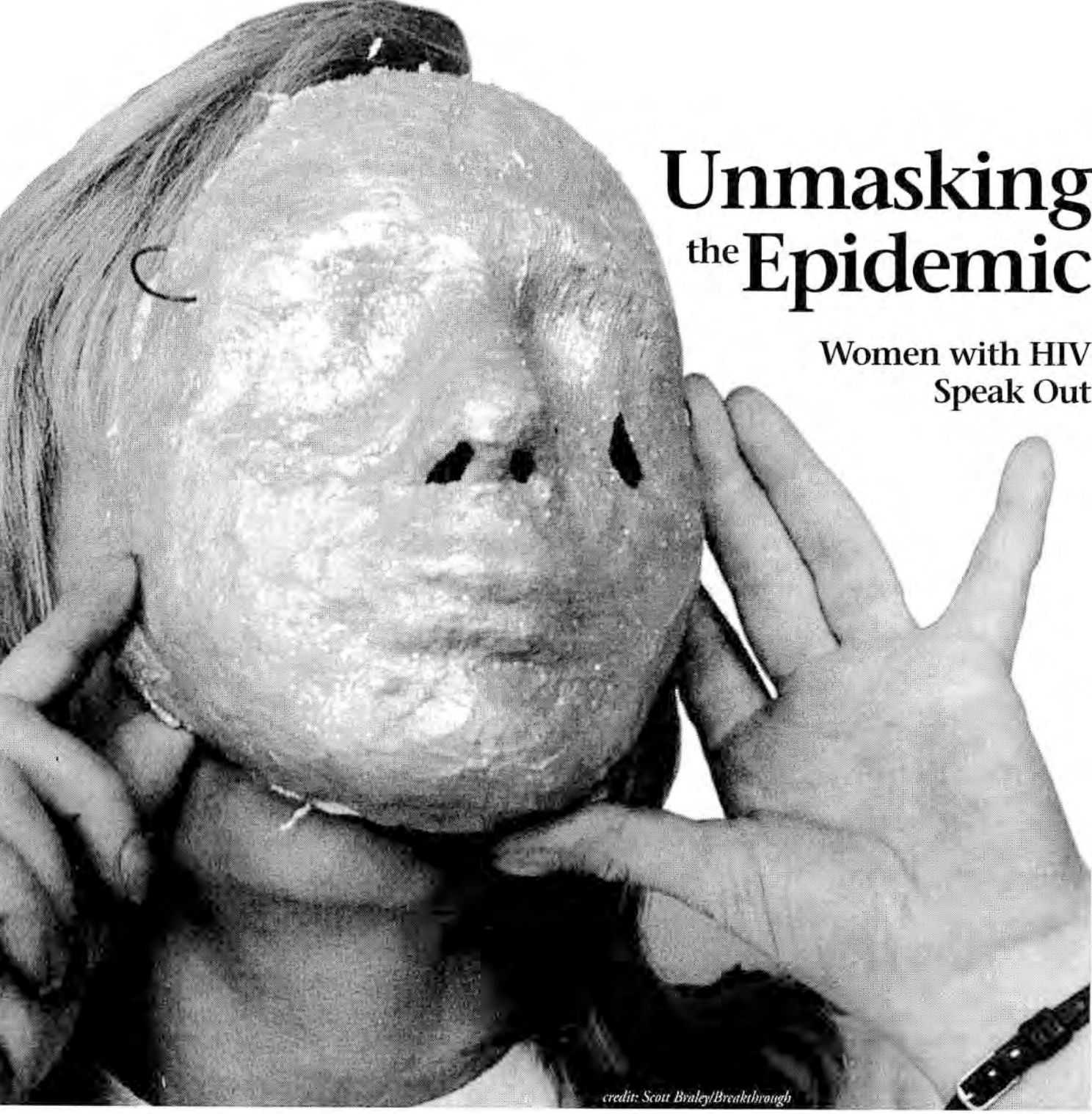
learn the full truth of your life, to see my first shining example of a black gay man like myself so committed to everybody's freedom. How it hurt me, Bayard, to learn how they drummed you out of the movement because of your love, your life; how our most eminent black leaders threatened you, and the movement, by slurring your life, your love. (Adam Clayton Powell, Junior, I'm talking about you — and you should be ashamed. I hope these waters wash some of the dirt caked deep in your hide!)

I thank you, Bayard, for offering me a vision of what it might be like, on the other side. And I thank you, Jimmy, for so courageously claiming and revealing the full expanse of your identity and demanding that all of us do the same. And I thank you...No, girlfriend, I'm not going to go on like some droning starlet at the Academy Awards. But — Joe, I have to acknowledge you, Joseph Beam: for your life, and death, offer telling testament to how even when breaking public silence, private ones remain, and these, too, can kill. Joe, you wrestled with clever demons — shame, rage, invisibility, self-hatred — and you prevailed, except with this one wily beast: silence. You should not have died alone, your illness kept secret. There is no shame to this disease, I have learned, and hence no need for secrets.

To each of you, to Harriet, my sweet Moses, especially, I thank you for having led me from the forest to the river and commanded me to wade. Repayment, my dear dead beloved, to any one of you, to all of you, for this singular act of liberation is impossible. But what I have learned from you I now pass on. As Harriet walked with me, I now walk with others. And as Harriet held my hand, we must hold each other's. As Jimmy, while abandoning the church never left the pulpit, so too each of us must be a witness. I've learned this, Chris, my blunt-speaking prophet, learned it the hard way, at the cutting edge of life, where death and I tangled with each other. And even now, as the virus continues its course through my veins, I know nonetheless I will reach the other side, one way or another.

Dear comrades, lovers, girlfriends, family: bless you for the blessings you've given me. I know but one way to redeem the precious gift of your lives, your deaths, and that is through living testaments, old and new, to all we have been and might become. For I know that through such testaments we are forever fortified: through such testaments we will keep on walking and keep on talking till we get to the other side. ▼

Marlon T. Riggs is an internationally acclaimed producer, director and writer of film documentaries. His film about the experience of African-American gay men, Tongues Untied, *won a blue ribbon in the American Film and Video Festival, "best video" in the New York Documentary Festival and "best experimental video" in the San Francisco International Film & Video Festival. His first major work,* Ethnic Notions, *received a National Emmy Award. This article is reprinted with the author's permission from* Thing, *a Black gay 'zine.*



Unmasking the Epidemic

Women with HIV Speak Out

by W.O.R.L.D. (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Diseases)

MOST OF US BEGAN OUR STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE WITH HIV alone. In one split-second that changed our lives forever, someone gave us the news: "Your test came back positive." Most us knew little (if anything) about HIV. We didn't have a community of knowledgeable or supportive friends to turn to. For many of us, HIV was just one more problem, magnifying all the other problems women face every day: racism, sexism, poverty, domestic violence, addiction, lack of power, and lack of self-esteem to assert what little power we do have. Through WORLD we are learn-ing to form a community of women living with HIV/AIDS. We are regaining some of the power over our futures that HIV has robbed away.

The AIDS epidemic is racing forward at an alarming rate. It took nine years for the first 100,000 people to be diagnosed with AIDS, but only two years for that number to reach 200,000. With recent changes in the way the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines AIDS, this number could double in 1993.

Women are now the fastest growing group of people with AIDS. From 1990 to 1991, AIDS cases increased 15 percent among women compared to 3.6 percent among men. One in every four newly infected Americans is female. The World Health Organization estimates that by the year 2000, more than half of newly infected adults will be women.

Women of color have been affected disproportionately by the epidemic, although any woman who has practiced unsafe sex or

shared needles is at risk. In the United States, African-American women make up 53 percent of female AIDS cases and Latina women represent over 21 percent. Eighteen percent of AIDS cases in Puerto Rico and fourteen percent of Native American AIDS cases are women, while four percent of AIDS cases among whites are women.

It's not easy to create a community of women from every age, class, race and sexual orientation. (Yes, lesbians do get AIDS!) Yet, HIV does not discriminate, so we are learning to cross boundaries to support each other. We have learned to avoid those who would divide us into "innocent victims" and "those who brought it on themselves," because no one deserves this disease. As long as the stigma and societal indifference affects any of us, we will all suffer.

Recently, a group of HIV+ women gathered to discuss the issues that affect our daily lives. While there's not enough room to address them all here, our concerns included cultural sensitivity, access to information and medical care, special concerns for homeless women, drug addicts and prostitutes, access to holistic and alternative health care, and above all, hope for a cure. Surprisingly, "Access to Clinical Trials," (a hot political topic), was far down (but not off) the list. As one woman put it: "Many of us are housewives and mothers with so many other responsibilities that our needs usually come last. How can I participate in a clinical trial if I can't find a place where my child and I can afford to live, can't afford the money or energy to take a bus to a test site, and don't know who to leave my kids with?"

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

How can we decide whether we're even interested in an experimental drug trial if we haven't been informed of our other options? We have always been taught not to question or criticize authority, especially doctors. We've been taught to do what we're told. With HIV, this has to change. Theoretically there's a lot of information out there, but it's often superficial and written in a way that many people don't understand. We need culturally appropriate information about treatments, social services, housing, insurance, and other issues. We need access to treatment information in an environment where women feel comfortable, safe and where childcare is provided. We need to be encouraged to take care of our health, to be cautious consumers, and not to take our doctor's word for God's.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND CARE

We women need what everyone in this country needs — comprehensive quality health care: primary care treatment facilities that meet the range of needs for women at all stages of HIV infection. These include comprehensive gynecological services; access to clinical trials and experimental treatments; and detox, methadone, and various other options for drug treatment available on-site.

Once a woman finds she has been infected with the HIV virus, whether she is symptomatic or not, her schedule and her energy are also about to be invaded. If she is fortunate enough to be well, she still must become more conscientious, seeing her doctor more regularly to get her blood drawn and having gynecological checkups. She also needs dental care, some form of income, housing, and educational information regarding her disease. She may also need mental health and/or substance abuse support. While these services may all be available in a downtown urban setting, availing oneself of these services becomes a drain in time and energy that can prevent a woman from seeking care that she needs. Running from appointment to appointment (particularly by bus or on foot) will also exact a toll on her energy and health. When possible, we need HIV services to be taken to the women where they are living.

AIDS in women is often a disease of the whole family — but care is usually fragmented for each member. Women need the option of family-based care, where children can be treated at the same site as their mothers. Comprehensive clinical care for women must include housing support and referral, transportation, child care, psychological support services, benefits entitlement counselling, safe sex education, nutritional counselling, and support groups.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

Along with increasing demands for mandatory testing of women of child-bearing age and newborns (which serves only as a test of the mother's status), many doctors and health care providers believe it's their right and duty to direct women to prevent or terminate pregnancies due to the less than 30 percent possibility of bearing an HIV-infected child. We believe such directive counselling to test for HIV, avoid pregnancy, and abort is an abuse of a woman's right to confidentiality, informed consent, and reproductive choice. Likewise, limitations on availability and funding for abortion also

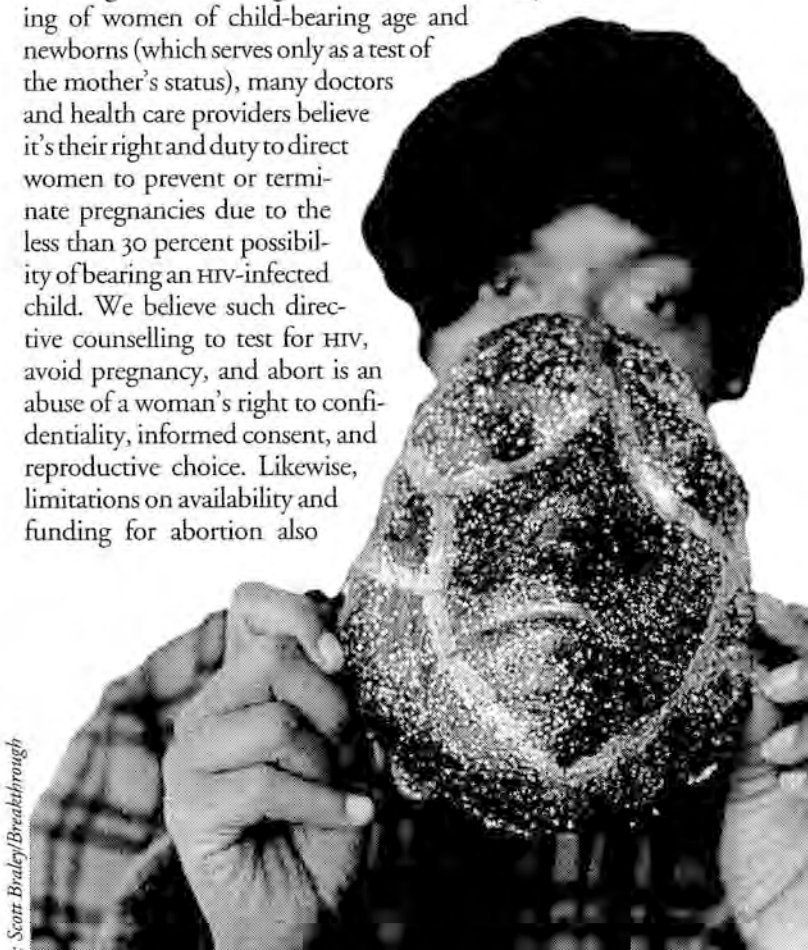


Photo: Scott Braley/Breakthrough

curtail those choices. In this climate, we might further expect to see sterilization abuse in clinics serving the poorest women.

"How can I participate in a clinical trial if I can't find a place where my child and I can afford to live, can't afford the money or energy to take a bus to a test site, and don't know who to leave my kids with?"

OUTREACH TO PROSTITUTES

In our zeal to curtail the spread of AIDS as a sexually transmitted disease, we must be just as zealous in examining and making necessary adjustments in our own attitudes towards prostitution. The prostitute or sex industry worker should not be treated as though she herself were a disease, not to be approached, acknowledged or cared for in the same way as "decent" human beings. On the contrary, this could be an excellent opportunity for that part of society which has used her services, without giving her the dignity of daylight or legal acknowledgement, to reach out and recognize her human needs — just as she has recognized the human needs of others.

As long as prostitution is illegal, admitting to working in the sex industry is obviously foolish. The criminalization of prostitution means that there is no support or counselling tailored to the physical, economic or emotional needs of the street worker even if she should desire change. If we desire to bring both prevention and treatment to the streets, more peer street workers must be out with condoms and a message that sounds like love, not condemnation. Let's replace the video cameras on telephone poles with posters that say: "Hey, girlfriend. Have you tested? We love your body and soul so be safe and stay healthy. Come on in and test." With appropriate information, of course, as to when and where. You get more change with love than with a badge.

IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS

Under the current law, people with HIV are not allowed to travel or immigrate to the United States. Those who have been living here for years are denied the opportunity to legalize our status. Many of us have made the United States our home, worked, paid taxes, raised our children, and built new lives here. For some of us, U.S. policies abroad contributed to conditions that drove us to seek a new life here.

By denying us legal status, undocumented HIV-positive women are driven to live a life in hiding, afraid to seek services and support. Many of us are afraid to return home to see our families until death is imminent, for fear that we will never b able to return to the lives we have built here Needless to say, this is an intolerable situatio and the restrictions should be lifted.

A CURE

The most important and primary con cern for women living with HIV and AIDS i a cure for HIV disease. To this end, a evaluation of the National Institutes o Health (NIH) and the existing AIDS researc efforts needs to take place. Any restructur ing proposal for the NIH should be based o this evaluation. Women living with HI need to be included or consulted in thi evaluation effort. A cure for HIV/AIDS is ou highest priority, and we are fighting for ou lives. Nevertheless, a cure for HIV diseas would not eliminate the need for a healt care delivery system that meets the needs o all women, nor would it eliminate the nee for systemic changes in the way services ar delivered.

Instead of research to develop more pre cise knowledge about how HIV is transmit ted to women, how HIV disease progresse in women, how to treat women and hov barrier methods of HIV prevention (con trolled by women) can be developed, th U.S. under Reagan-Bush has given us cut backs in health care services and staff. A rates of poverty, drug abuse, and home lessness rise, so do rates of sexually transmit ted disease, tuberculosis, hepatitis and AID among women. Instead of allocating the re sources necessary for the prevention an treatment of an epidemic disease, our gov ernment has allowed disease to rage out o control among gay men and the urban poor who are predominantly people of color Neglect of the epidemic is homophobic racist, and an increasing threat to the healt and welfare of women and children.

If the AIDS activists who went before u have taught us anything, it's that we can b victims and hang out waiting to die or w can become actively involved in fighting fo our lives and for the people we care about "Silence=Death" but "Action=Life"! ▼

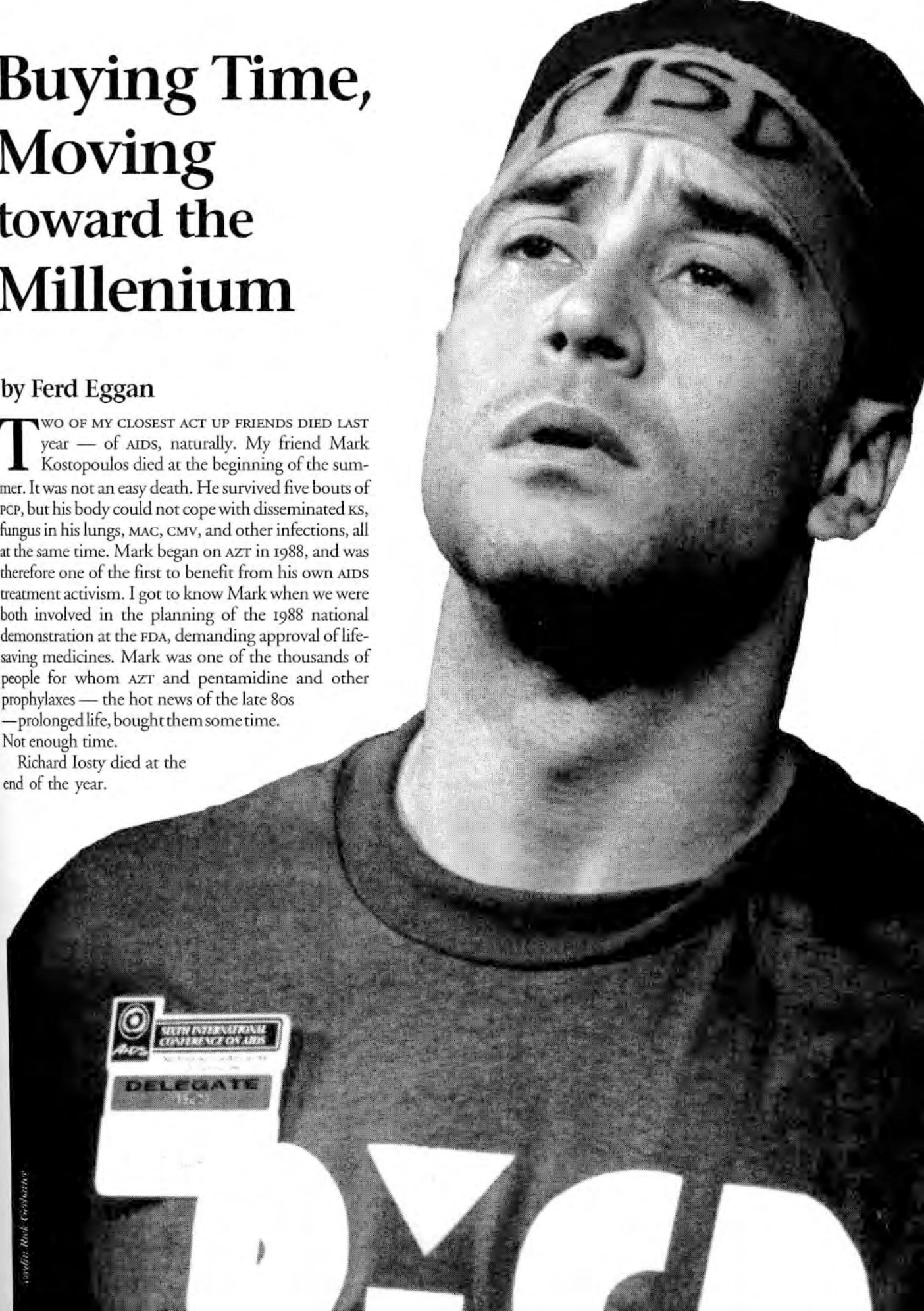
This article is a collaboration by member of WORLD (Women Organized to Respon to Life-threatening Diseases), a self-empower ment organization for HIV+ women. Fo info or a sample copy of our newsletter, contac WORLD, POB 11535, Oakland, CA 9461 Tel: (510) 658-6930.

Buying Time, Moving toward the Millenium

by Ferd Eggan

TWO OF MY CLOSEST ACT UP FRIENDS DIED LAST year — of AIDS, naturally. My friend Mark Kostopoulos died at the beginning of the summer. It was not an easy death. He survived five bouts of PCP, but his body could not cope with disseminated KS, fungus in his lungs, MAC, CMV, and other infections, all at the same time. Mark began on AZT in 1988, and was therefore one of the first to benefit from his own AIDS treatment activism. I got to know Mark when we were both involved in the planning of the 1988 national demonstration at the FDA, demanding approval of life-saving medicines. Mark was one of the thousands of people for whom AZT and pentamidine and other prophylaxes — the hot news of the late 80s — prolonged life, bought them some time. Not enough time.

Richard Iosty died at the end of the year.



I believe that PWAs should be the leaders in the struggle for societal responses to the AIDS epidemic.

He was almost a textbook case in the destruction of the medically indigent: dropped from a private hospital because his insurance reached its cap just as he was beginning chemotherapy for lymphoma, shuffled from ward to ward to LA County Hospital. Richard and I worked to start up the PISD Caucus in ACT UP/LA (That's People with Immune System Disorders to you). He was also a founder of Queer Nation, filled with anger at the suffering in his own and other gay men and lesbians' lives, and he was a graduate student in art history at UCLA. Richard and Mark were always in conflict over how the movement should be developed.

I loved both of these guys, and I am left with sadness and a cold anger. Eleven years, three antivirals, hundreds of promising treatments "in the pipeline." Because much Federal money for AIDS is now funneled into the Ryan White CARE Act, it is easy to see that already inadequate appropriations are being divided among more people, making the expenditure per patient significantly smaller. Almost no one is spending any money on AIDS prevention. And we are on the eve of destruction: the Harvard AIDS Institute estimates that 100 million people worldwide will be infected by the year 2000. In my more despairing moments, I think it is the end of the world.

Yes, there is reason to hope. There is an explosion of scientific investigation and practical medicine for opportunistic infections and possible antivirals with real power. There are more agencies and organizations to deal with the legal, psychological, social, economic suffering of people with HIV/AIDS. Some governments have made a genuine effort to combat AIDS. But all the millions of Ryan White dollars, all the AZT/ddI/ddC in the world, all the WHO coordination cannot erase the sad fact that AIDS is still not a "manageable chronic disease," as we hopefully said, spitting into the wind, in 1989.

Instead, AIDS has become normalized. We are all too numb to grieve as each of us accumulates a hundred dead friends. We are all too busy managing our own health. Richard said it best: "AIDS demonstrations are part of the spectacle of AIDS: we die, we protest; they do nothing." I, for one, never wanted compassion from Bush or anyone else; I wanted a signature on an appropriations bill. But I don't want just the appropriations either. I see some disturbing trends that seem to characterize the AIDS effort and the AIDS movement nationwide.

The first trend is that people with AIDS are playing a diminishing role in their own healthcare and are being displaced by professionals and experts. Reluctance to listen to PWAs has been evident throughout the history of AIDS, but is now accelerating, as medicine and case management become more complex. Few of us want to be doctors or social workers, but we do wish to be in charge of our own lives. Organized groups of people with HIV/AIDS continue to believe that most of us can cope with a complex medical regimen and a bewildering array of financial challenges, given the support and information. The assumption that expertise is superior to personal experience is not exclusive to medical doctors and bureaucrats. Even militant organizations like ACT UP often fail to notice that they are not the motor force of reform — they are instead the vehicle for the demands of people actually living with HIV/AIDS.

The second dismaying trend is that AIDS planning has come to mean AIDS agencies, not PWAs. For years we have demanded care and services for people with AIDS. Now most cities, and even rural areas, have agencies to offer organization, expertise and truly committed helpers to us who have HIV disease. AIDS is big business now, and both agency revenues and individual career growth are attractive prospects that draw more and more professionals. HIV-negative social workers, case managers, medical experts have gravitated to work in AIDS as the epidemic grows more respectable. Increasingly, professionals conclude that the issues of AIDS medicine and AIDS services are so complex that they are compelled to speak for PWAs.

But AIDS agencies and AIDS policy experts originated because *we* were sick. It is not enough to say we are not AIDS victims; we are also not AIDS patients and not AIDS clients. We are the subjects of the epidemic; we are the reason AIDS agencies exist and raise money, the reason those compassionate professionals have jobs.

However, the comparatively large AIDS expenditures that developed nations can muster have spawned the same kind of pimping off human suffering that we witnessed in the anti-racist and anti-poverty programs of the 70s in the U.S. One example should suffice: several competing applications for funding for psychiatric services, all with immense budgets to pay the MDs, were submitted to the body that oversees LA County AIDS expenditures. However, agencies rejected suggestions to combine their efforts and distribute psychiatric resources in common. Virtually no applications were made for support groups, programs of medical information for patients, or any services that would help individual PWAs cope with their own problems. Sadly, the bodies that regulate and dis-

tribute the resources often spawn pork-barrel competitions as corrupt as Pentagon defense contract bidding.

Who is to blame? I have concluded that it is not just because of governments' indifference and incompetence — although those factors are very real — and it is not just because of some AIDS agencies' greed and cupidity — although agencies increasingly lie about numbers to win contracts.

More fundamental is the stark fact that the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. is subject to the same inequalities of power that pervade every institution in this country. Therefore, the array of services we have struggled to build for the fight against AIDS suffers the same problems. The Ryan White CARE Act is now the source of most of the funds that pay for AIDS healthcare and social services in this country. CARE Act money goes to large urban areas and to states. In designing the CARE Act, the Congress acceded to justifiable demands that priority funding go to communities of color and women. However, the Congressional mandate did not take responsibility for the centuries-long inequalities of medical care and access to economic support. Because of the priority mandates, large agencies developed almost-colonial strategies of "outposts" in communities of color, and smaller, indigenous agencies struggled to build the infrastructure that would allow them to serve their own.

Of course, emergency funds seem to go nowhere in communities of color where people experience healthcare as another of the oppressive structures of control. Ask an undocumented Latino/a in Los Angeles if he/she has adequate regular healthcare. Ask if he/she wishes to risk opprobrium and discrimination, including deportation, by testing for HIV antibodies. Ask if his or her life affords opportunities for sober reflection on transmission risk and condoms or injection drug hygiene. Ask historians if any epidemic in human history has been ended by the social engineering of behavior. No, no, no.

In developed countries — except for the U.S. and South Africa — a system of national healthcare has avoided some of these problems. In the U.S., there is also a system of free healthcare, but it is the second-rate, punitive system of healthcare inflicted on the poor, usually the people of color, women and children who are disproportionately represented in statistics of new AIDS cases. In developing countries, the question is closed: there is simply no money to provide healthcare. In all countries, people with AIDS have had to fight with government or private doctors to make them treat us as we want to be treated. Even where good healthcare is the right of all, as in Canada, medical experts have refused the requests of PWAs for approval of new treatments. In every case, innovation has come only when PWAs themselves have turned their requests into powerful demands.

The fundamental principles of a movement to support people with HIV/AIDS should be self-empowerment and mutual aid. This process of mutual aid appears to be applicable to a wide variety of diverse economic strata and cultures. On the individual, personal level, this means we stay healthier if we actively supervise our own healthcare and help each other through the problems of life. By now, most experts will have read studies showing that people who attend support groups enjoy not just an improved subjective feeling of "quality of life," but are indeed measurably healthier for a measurably longer time. It is still debatable whether Burroughs Wellcome [the manufactuerer of AZT-*Ed.*] can match that claim. It is indisputable that bureaucrats and social workers are reluctant to heed that claim.

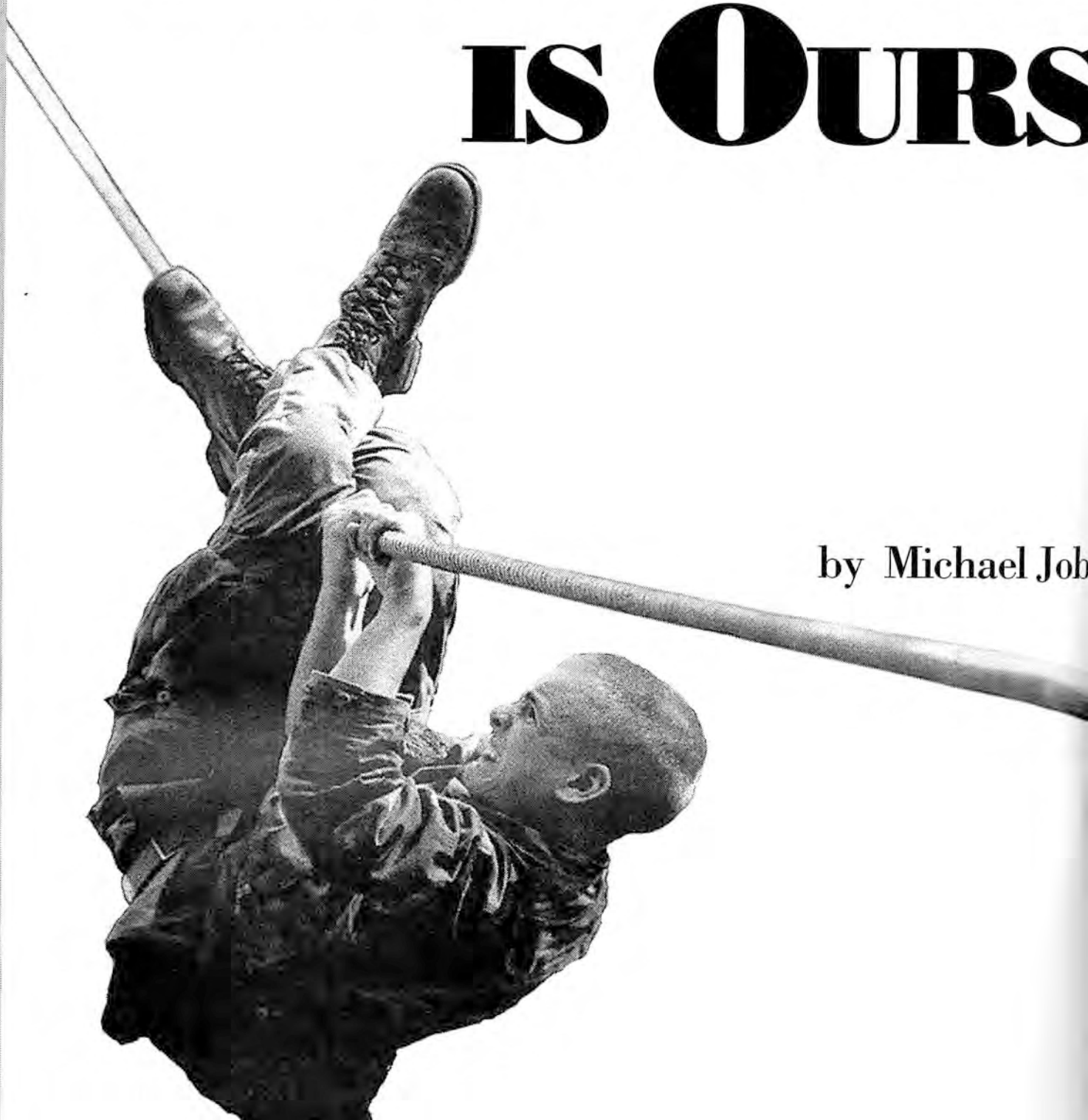
I believe that PWAs should be the leaders in the struggle for societal responses to the AIDS epidemic. I realize the limitations of this model, which is based largely on the experience of upwardly-mobile gay white men in a large city in the developed world. For PWAs to join together, in communities of color here or in other nations, they must also overcome the more intense stigmatization that accompanies disclosure of HIV serostatus. However, I am convinced that mutual aid through organizations of PWAs is possible and useful to the developing world and to the disenfranchised in the developed world. At the 1992 International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, PWAs from the Americas, Africa and Asia shared the common experience that if we are active on our own behalf, we maintain better health and maintain our ability to contribute to our own fellow citizens. An international network of women living with HIV/AIDS dramatically turned the attention of the conference toward the issues of women. Sharing our experiences and extending a network of mutual support across cultural, racial, economic and gender boundaries will be an essential task of the international fight against AIDS in this second decade. The professional medical systems and government-sponsored planning bodies will need our accumulated knowledge. We must make certain that those professional bodies are kept honest and committed to serving the diverse needs of the people with HIV/AIDS that they are mandated to serve.

I know that active advocacy — with my doctor, with my community organizations, with my government — gives meaning to my life as it did to my friends Mark and Richard. For many, it has kept us healthy just as much as medical treatment. There is healing power in our anger and in the love and support we offer each other. I wish it were enough. If it were, then Mark and Richard would be alive, as well as the 50,000 people with AIDS who died along with them last year. ▼

Ferd Eggan, a gay man living with HIV disease, is AIDS Coordinator for the City of Los Angeles. A political activist in the anti-racist, anti-war and gay liberation movements, he was a founder of ACT UP/Chicago and of the ACT UP Network, and is a former member of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee. He is also a poet and author of Your LIFE Story by someone else *and* Pornography.

Gays in the Military

THE CHOICE IS OURS



by Michael Job

IF YOU TAKE THE TIME TO READ THIS ARTICLE YOU will soon discover: The choice is ours.

Please think carefully. I didn't. Consequently my choice turned out not to be in my best interest nor in the best interest of the gay and lesbian community.

What choice am I talking about? I am talking about the choice between whether or not individual gay men and lesbians should sign up for the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or any of their respective reserve units. I am talking about the choice between whether or not the gay and lesbian community and their friends should support President Bill Clinton's campaign promise to allow gay men and lesbians into the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

I say "No! Don't go! Don't change the law!" You are probably saying, "Gay men and lesbians are being discriminated against as people and the military policy needs to change. Who are you?"

I am an openly gay veteran who served with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. I wasn't openly gay in 1968 I was in denial about my gayness. Four out of my thirteen months in Vietnam were served on the front lines as an assistant machine gunner. My job was to help kill other human beings whom I didn't know. When I wasn't on the front lines, I was helping to resupply my friends who were.

Who am I? I am an openly gay veteran who now wants his gay and lesbian community to wake up. I want us to wake up to the fact that we have offered up enough of our gay and lesbian children's lives throughout history serving in the U.S. military. We did this even when we weren't legally admitted into the ranks of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. I want us to wake up to the fact that it's time for us to change. We need to stop believing that if we are legally accepted into the U.S. military as gays and lesbians that this country's homophobic society will accept us more willingly in the future. This type of thinking hasn't worked for other minority communities and it is not going to work for us. All that will happen is that we will just continue offering up the very valuable and creative lives of our gay and lesbian people. This is why I say "Don't change the military policy." It does discriminate against us. I don't deny that fact, but by not changing the policy, it will keep more of us alive to work on the discriminatory issues that need to be changed first.

Who am I? I am an openly gay veteran who wants all minority communities to wake up and realize that all of us have been duped throughout history. I get confused by the way my community and every minority community thinks about the United States military. All of us have been duped into killing for a dominant, white, male, heterosexual society which reaps benefits only for its wealthiest and most powerful members. We all have been duped by a society that has never recognized (and which still shows no signs of ever recognizing) the human worth of any of us, except the wealthiest and most powerful. Where are women's rights in this country? Where are Native American rights? Where are African American rights? Where are Latin American rights? Where are Asian American rights? Where are gay and lesbian rights? Each of our communities has offered up its children's lives as part of the United States military. Why?

The questions I have for my gay community 23 years after returning home from Vietnam are: Did my helping to kill other human beings for the United States of America gain our community any respect or any rights? Have gay and lesbian veterans up to Vietnam and since Vietnam gained our community anything? Several years after I returned home from Vietnam the United States Supreme Court stated in its ruling about Georgia's sodomy laws that the U.S. constitution was never intended for homosexuals. What does this say to every gay male and lesbian veteran who has ever served in any U.S. war or conflict throughout our country's history? Not very much!

We have all been sold the same bill of goods and have actually come to believe that if our minority communities are allowed first to be a part of the Armed Forces, that this will then open doors and be a shining example for other doors to open for us in this country. Where has this happened? I still see a racist society even though "people of color" have been integrated into our military forces. I still see sexism in

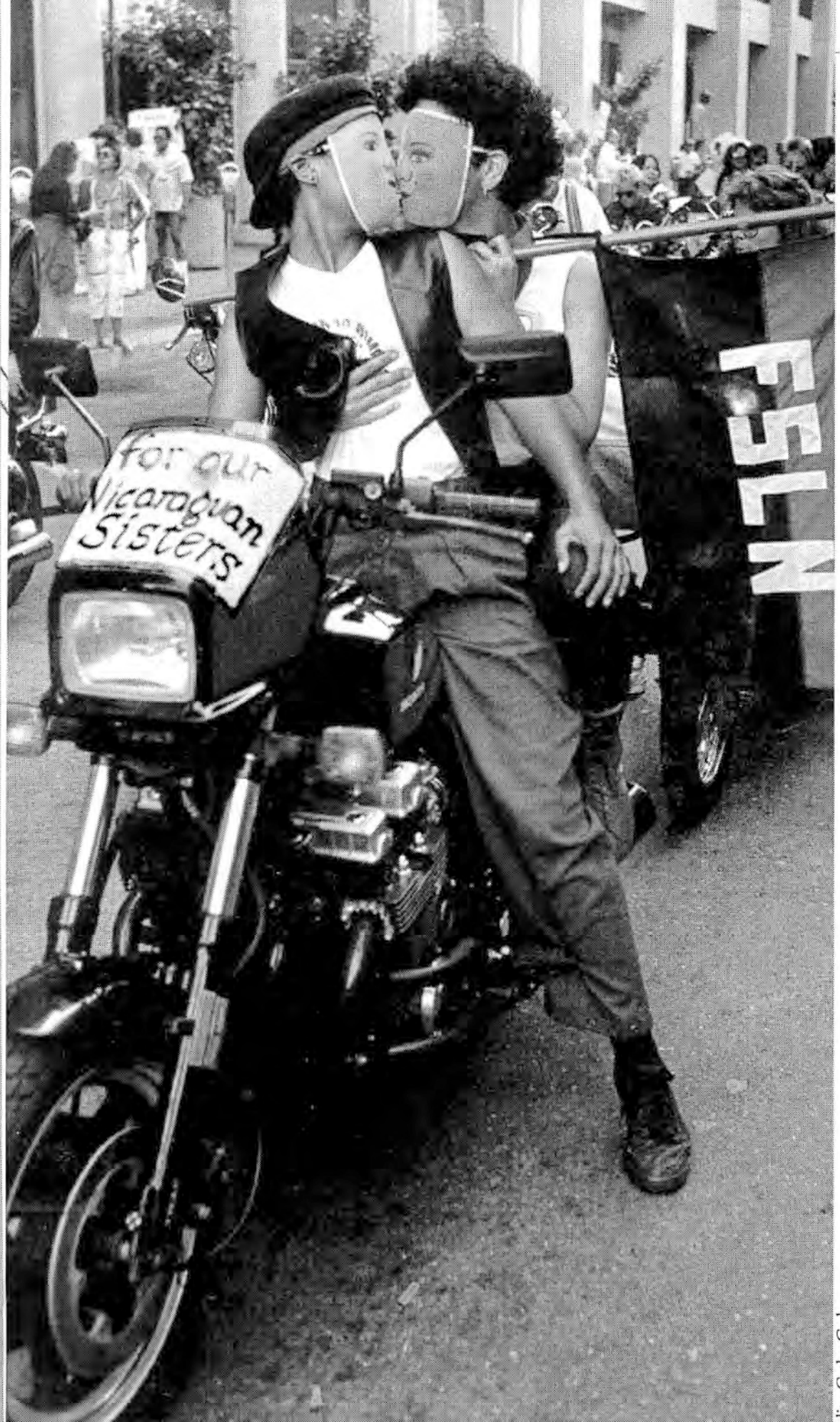


Photo: Cathy Cade

our society even though women now serve in our military. What makes the gay and lesbian community think that homophobia will stop just because President Clinton legally allows us to serve in the U.S. military and to assist it in its killing of other human beings?

Yes, there are many reasons why young men and women and gay men and lesbians volunteer to be a part of the U.S. military. Many simply need work to live. Others see no other way to finance an education. Some need to get away from bad home lives. Some say they want to be able to serve their country. There are those who truly want to kill other human beings to keep America safe and strong. Many see it as a rite of passage into manhood. The list goes on; all of the reasons have some validity to them. But the bottom line remains the same. Young men and women volunteer with their lives for some future benefits or promises of glory and honor in a system that has never respected them prior to their military service and that respects them and their families and communities even less after their military services and/or careers.

As gays and lesbians in the United States, we grow up learning that it is better for society to openly kill other human beings than it is to have a society where people of the same sex can openly love, cherish, honor and respect each other. Now, in 1993, if President Clinton does change the military policy to allow gays and lesbians into the Armed Forces, it won't change the deep-rooted homophobia in this country. This is not where gay men and lesbians should begin seeking equality. Instead, I

would hope that our eyes would read; that our ears would hear; and that our hearts would learn to protect our community and to teach it nonviolent, peacemaking strategies rather than sending off our people to be the killers for the future. I would hope our community and all minority communities would prefer to become the peacemakers for the future. If the rich and powerful want to kill and die for their wealthy, elitist, sexist, racist, and homophobic ideas, that is their right. Leave me and my people out of it. We will start educating ourselves to become the peacemakers and teachers of peace with justice. We will educate ourselves and future generations of gay men and lesbians that the military-industrial complex that exists in the United States of America never sees minority people as people. We are mere pawns to them.

The main reason I agreed to write this article was to try to reach as many members of my gay and lesbian community as possible. It really is major decision time for us. We need to be honest with ourselves and to answer two basic questions regarding our community and the military. First, what is the purpose of the military? The fact is in its most basic form, a military is used to decide issues by killing other human beings. It is that plain and simple. Knowing this, then, the choice does become ours — whether we are legally a part of the military or not, do we want members of our community settling national and world problems by killing other human beings? We should think about it. Is protecting the privileges of some rich and powerful families who control governments reason enough for us to offer up our lives or to take the lives of other human beings? People live or die because of the choice we make.

The second question our community needs to ask is: What's in it for us? Will society stop being homophobic if the military is the first to welcome us into its ranks? It hasn't worked for other minority communities. It won't change things for us, either. What will continue to happen is that the bigots will be able to continue getting us to do their killing for them.

I suggest to my gay and lesbian community that it is time for us to abandon having President Clinton change the military policy to include us. Let's make this the last civil right that gets changed rather than the first. I would rather see a federal law passed stating that gay men and lesbians will not be discriminated against in any employment or in any other manner before we are given weapons and told to go to places around the world to kill people we don't even know. I would rather see an equal rights amendment passed for women before we tell lesbians they are cleared for combat duty

A Personal Note

I feel there is a myth that non-gay men and non-lesbian women need to realize. The myth is that sexual orientation is a choice. I firmly believe that we are born with our gay and lesbian spirits intact. A homophobic world is constantly working to kill that spirit in us.

We do get to choose at what point in our lives we will come out to our true selves in this very hostile world, but until we make that choice, we are forced to live in closets and to conform to a world that is not natural for us.

Prior to my entering the U.S. Army in 1968 and for several years beyond that time, not only was I in my closet, but I remained in denial about my gayness. I volunteered for the draft thinking that this would prove I was a heterosexual male; after all, gays were not legally allowed in the military. It took less than a month of Army basic training for me to realize that if the men who were my company commanders were examples of the kind of man society wanted me to be, my birthright maleness was perfectly fine just as it was.

However, my bed was made. I would have to live through two years of sleeping in it. I would be living two more years of hiding from myself. I would have to convince myself and everyone around me that I was a heterosexual male. I wasn't and I'm not.

The following examples are certain things I went through and possibly what other closeted gay male military personnel endure even today in our all-volunteer military forces. I feel it is only fair for lesbian military personnel to speak separately of their personal experiences, which will be different.

From the first moment of being sworn in, heterosexual maleness gets stressed through sexist and homophobic language and behavior. There were reasons why we had to become strong men. We had to become strong because Jody (the military's term) was home fucking not only our girlfriends but also our mothers. Before the men in my Advanced Infantry Training company could sit down when we were in a classroom situation, all of us had to yell, and I mean yell: "Rat shit, bat shit, pussy doesn't smell. Cocksucker, motherfucker, ECHO (meaning E company) give 'em hell!" We would then have to roar like tigers. If we did all of this to the satisfaction of our leaders, we could then sit down.

In order to maintain a heterosexual facade, it was important to get letters and mail from girlfriends or wives back home or at least potential wives or girlfriends. The most difficult time for me to maintain my heterosexual facade was in Vietnam when it came time for me to go on my R & R (rest and relaxation). R & R is a one-week time period away from war, usually not in

in our military service. I would rather see a federal civil rights act passed before another minority young person volunteers to die for a society that in 500 years has never gotten its elected officials to build a nation without killing as its way of achieving liberty and justice for all.

Please, my gay and lesbian community, let's not be duped into thinking that we will be gaining some huge human right if President Clinton does reverse the military policy of allowing gay men and lesbians to serve within its ranks. And if President Clinton is able to keep his campaign promise to our community, then please, my gay and lesbian community members who really want to be a part of the U.S. military, think a bit more. Yes, you will do a good job just like so many from our community before you have done and have proven by their excellent service records. Yes, you will gain rank and income. Yes, you will feel big and powerful and that you are making a difference in keeping America safe and strong. Yes, you will be serving your country. And yes, you will be continuing the killing and maiming of people around the world so that the world's arms dealers can keep their profits and keep the world from ever being a peaceful place. But, you need to know that you are not and will not gain respect or equality for our gay and lesbian community. You will not be making the world a better place.

All of us need to decide if we want true equality justice for our community. We need to decide i want the world to know that gay men and lesb changed in 1993 to become the teachers for peace ra than uniformed robots for a military-industrial c plex.

The choice is ours!

Michael Job came out as an openly gay veteran in 1 In 1987 he traveled to Nicaragua with a veteran's p delegation as an openly gay veteran. He was the found Lavender Veterans for Peace, which marched in the 1 National Gay and Lesbian March in Washington, He traveled again to Nicaragua in 1988 as part of a week construction brigade in the northern region of N ragua. He became the board chairperson for Veterans I Action Teams from 1988 to 1990. In 1989 he travel El Salvador, where he was in solidarity and a witn FMLN wounded combatants seeking safe medical ev ation from El Salvador as guaranteed by the Ge Conventions. He is an associate board member for the El Salvador Institute for Democratic Developmen 1990 he traveled to Baghdad, Iraq, as a veteran w delegation sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconcilia Currently, he is an openly gay middle-school teacher in Francisco.

continued from page 33

the warring country itself. It was important to return from R & R with stories of sexual intimacy with women and to bring back photos of the beautiful women one spent time with during the week. I made sure I sought out women with whom I could have my picture taken. I knew I could make up stories to go along with the photos. As I look back now, I realize how this entire system was unfair to me and to the women I used to cover my tracks. Please remember, homosexuals are not legally allowed in the military and even a hint of such activity could land a person in the brig according the Military Code of Justice.

For me, the most vivid example of the U.S. military trying to guarantee that heterosexual standards were to be maintained was the providing for heterosexual sexual release to the male troops by actually bringing Vietnamese women out to us. I remember the time we were in the lowlands of Vietnam and three Vietnamese women were brought to us and placed in three separate locations behind bushes. Men line up one after the other seeking sexual release. For those of us who didn't line up, we were left not to say that our choice wasn't heterosexual activity, but rather to make jokes that the women were either too ugly and wouldn't be fucked even with someone else's dick; or that we weren't going to catch some disease that would cause our dicks to drop off. This same activity was repeated in our base camp are bringing women in and placing them in our barr area for "servicing" the men.

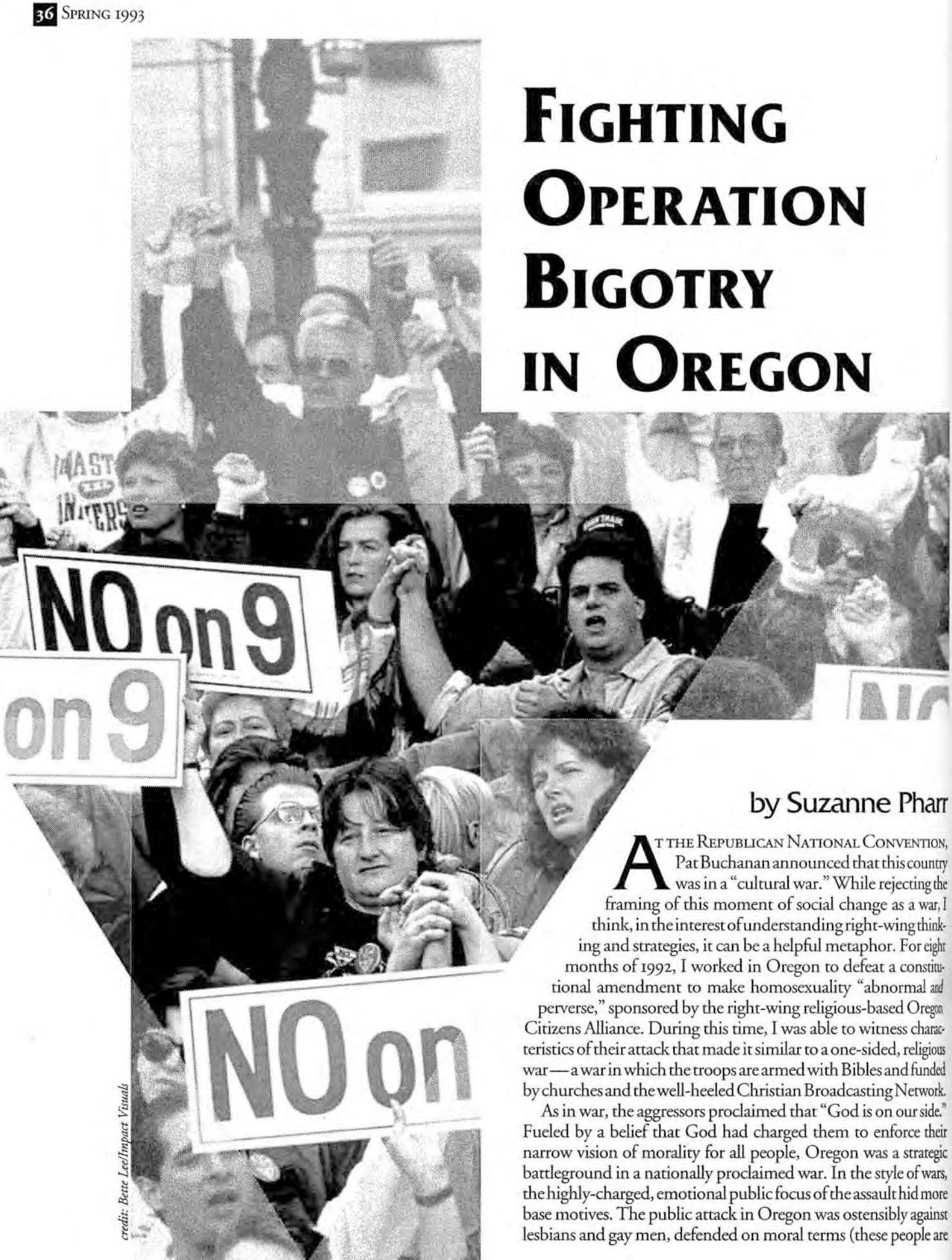
I survived my military experience. I survived Vietnam experience. I have survived years of b closeted. Finally, in 1977 I made the choice to sw open my closet door and to remove it from its hin Now I am surviving the continued struggles of livin a very homophobic country and world as an openly man. I will never return to the closet even if it sho mean my own death. I have served my time. I have p a price to my gay spirit that I should have realized mine since birth.

We as gay men and lesbians can create a better wo and society if we stop buying into a system that tells might makes right. We don't have to believe that biggest killers among us are the most righteous. We the gay and lesbian communities deserve better r models. We can be the peace and justice makers organizing ourselves rather than buying into an i that if we are accepted into the U.S. military legally, will have achieved a victory for our communities. won't. I hope my personal experiences help each g man and lesbian realize this.

The choice is ours!

M.J.

FIGHTING OPERATION BIGOTRY IN OREGON



credit: Bette Lee/Impact Visuals

by Suzanne Pharr

AT THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION, Pat Buchanan announced that this country was in a "cultural war." While rejecting the framing of this moment of social change as a war, I think, in the interest of understanding right-wing thinking and strategies, it can be a helpful metaphor. For eight months of 1992, I worked in Oregon to defeat a constitutional amendment to make homosexuality "abnormal and perverse," sponsored by the right-wing religious-based Oregon Citizens Alliance. During this time, I was able to witness characteristics of their attack that made it similar to a one-sided, religious war — a war in which the troops are armed with Bibles and funded by churches and the well-heeled Christian Broadcasting Network.

As in war, the aggressors proclaimed that "God is on our side." Fueled by a belief that God had charged them to enforce their narrow vision of morality for all people, Oregon was a strategic battleground in a nationally proclaimed war. In the style of wars, the highly-charged, emotional public focus of the assault hid more base motives. The public attack in Oregon was ostensibly against lesbians and gay men, defended on moral terms (these people are

the "abomination of God" and threaten families and children). The larger design was to gain control of the public agenda by the religious right — to gain "territory" in a war that seeks domination over women, people of color, lesbians and gay men, all who are different from dominant groups yet desire autonomy and freedom.

As in war, the violence was both physical and psychological. The terrain of physical violence was scattered with the firebombing deaths of a lesbian and gay man, random attacks by racist skinheads, desecrated churches, vandalism of gay and lesbian organizations, sabotaged cars, and assaults. The psychological violence sought terror through name-calling, hate graffiti, and countless hate phone calls and death threats. The OCA even more effectively used a propaganda of lies and distortion to attack core values and self-worth among lesbians and gay men and to undermine their standing within the larger community. This was done using the classic fascistic tactics of scapegoating and dehumanizing. In this assault, lesbians and gay men were described as "animals," "abnormal and perverse," "unnatural," "an abomination of God," people who "eat feces," "spread disease," and "prey upon innocent children."

Despite a phenomenal expenditure of resources, on November 4th, lesbians and gay men awakened in Oregon with not one additional civil right than they had prior to the election: the victory was that justice-loving people had stayed an effort to divide the state and to dehumanize and disenfranchise a people. Though extraordinary organizing had led almost every person in the state who had a public forum to speak out against the initiative, in a state with a population of only 2-1/2 million, there were still more than a half-million people who voted in favor of eliminating rights and protections. Further, Lon Mabon, the head of the OCA, when conceding defeat, said that they would be back in January seeking signatures for a new constitutional amendment fashioned after the successful Colorado amendment. In this one, they would employ what they had learned from this campaign and omit words like "abnormal and perverse" and "pedophilia," and it would be on the ballot in 1994.

Thinking themselves in a war of "family values" and "no special rights," the OCA, as part of the religious right, no doubt viewed the Oregon campaign as just one skirmish in a major war for which they have bountiful resources and people. And, as fundamentalist Christians, they feel they have plenty of time — until the end of the world.

THE STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

While the Oregon campaign, through the manipulation of the OCA, had some of the hallmarks of a war, for those of us who participated in any way in the effort to protect rights, it was not a battleground of good and evil, but a very intense and dramatic time to sort through values: Who are we as responsible humans? How do we want to relate to one another? What kind of community do we want to live in? Who gets included, who excluded? It was a fierce moment in an ongoing debate about this country's ability to be fully democratic and the meaning of democracy. Because the OCA forced this debate to take place in a cauldron of hatred they had created, many people were hurt; but many found themselves made stronger and clearer in their individual lives and in the life of their community.

The lessons we learned are critically important for shaping the response to the religious right, proactively advancing our rights, and developing our vision for a more fully inclusive, democratic society. In many ways, I left the Oregon campaign with a reaffirmation of what I knew when I went there in January 1992, now tested:

- that the issue was larger than the lesbian and gay community, larger than Oregon; that this was a national test site of a strategy to further the religious right's goal of merging church and state, destroying civil rights and, ultimately, the Bill of Rights.
- that the campaign could not be managed like the campaign of a candidate or like a typical referenda; that the expediency of the ends justifying the means could not be employed; that traditional polling methods alone would not be helpful; that a numerical victory would not necessarily mean an overall victory for the lesbian and gay community.
- that, as well as acting defensively to protect rights, we had to work during the campaign to create relationships and strengthen organizations, so that after the vote, no matter which way it went, the community would have gained from the attack against it.
- that this unwarranted attack by the religious right was both a crisis and a remarkable opportunity; that this was an unparalleled chance to educate an entire state as the OCA forced it to consider lesbian and gay issues; that there was a perfect moment to forge deeper alliances with other oppressed groups, all of which are under attack by the religious right.

Many of my hopes for the campaign were not met. Expediency often won over movement building. Decisions were made to keep a lesbian and gay presence and issues away from the forefront of the campaign, using polls to substantiate that victory could not be reached if there was too much visibility. The process of inclusion of people of color in all stages of the campaign was sacrificed to the strategy of expediency which called for the more comfortable use of white people in leadership roles. Rural areas were ignored or treated shabbily, because they were not seen as vital to the victory, since they held so few votes compared to urban areas. The end seemed to justify falling back on the most entrenched forms of hierarchical decision-making and uses of backroom power.

The campaign drained off community resources,

both human and financial. This is a goal in all of the right-wing attacks against our communities: to spend us to death. For a year and a half, the lesbian and gay community and most of the progressive community were forced to give scant attention to other compelling social issues such as homelessness, hunger, violence against women, HIV infection, neo-Nazi hate crimes, breast cancer, joblessness, the welfare of children and teenagers.

However, there were successes that went beyond my greatest hopes. Never have I seen so many people who were not natural allies come together to support a single issue on a state-wide basis. Thousands of people donated time, talent, money, food, equipment, flowers, and emotional support to the No on 9 Campaign — all the things, large and small, that make people able to work beyond their usual limits. Consequently, there were people on the staff who worked under tremendous stress and difficult working conditions to create daily miracles.

I learned that a campaign cannot control a people who are under attack; they will not be prevented from fighting for their lives and for their quality of life. In Oregon, the campaign was strengthened by people and organizations all over the state who were not directly affiliated with the No on 9 Campaign but were determined to do the difficult and loving work of trying to educate ordinary people about a group of ordinary citizens within their midst, those who call themselves lesbian and gay.

There are a few in particular that stand out as shining examples of hope:

- The Walk for Love and Justice was a week-long walk by lesbians, gay men, and their allies from Eugene to Portland. They were housed by churches, synagogues, a farm workers' organization, and fed by other groups and individuals along the way. Each night there was a community meeting filled with music, poetry and conversations about justice.

- Over 100 people in Speak Out Oregon received training on all the ballot measure issues and then covered the state, speaking to organizations, doing radio talk shows, participating in debates, writing letters to the editor, and assisting local groups in getting the information they needed.

- The statewide newspaper, *The Oregonian,* under an absolute commitment to making sure the public understood the immense danger of ballot measure 9, printed over a dozen editorials (entitled "Inquisition I," "Inquisition II," etc.) that taught us about the history of injustice and scapegoating. Never has the lesbian and gay community had more eloquent representation from the non-gay press.

- People of Faith Against Bigotry, representing people of all faiths, organized people all over the state to reach "those in the pews." They led discussion groups of social principles, invited lesbians and gay men to speak in their churches and synagogues, held days of reconciliation, distributed packets of materials targeted for specific faith groups, held candlelight vigils, and published a full-page ad that read "The OCA Does Not Speak for Me," signed by hundreds of people of all faiths.

- At great personal risk, countless lesbians and gay men came out to their families, religious leaders, co-workers, neighbors, and talked about their lives. They put a human face on the ballot measure. Because of them, the OCA was deterred in its attempt to demonize and dehu-

credit: Rick Gerharter/ Impact Visuals

manize the lesbian and gay community.

A big lesson of Oregon and Colorado for me was that this is not a series of strategic battles that will be won or lost from ballot initiative to ballot initiative, from lawsuit to lawsuit. Though lesbians and gay men, women, and people of color will be attacked at the ballot box and in the legislatures, those of us under attack cannot spend all of our time and resources simply defending ourselves and being diverted from creating a place of justice for ourselves in our communities. What is important in this post-campaign season is how we use the lessons we learned from these attacks from the religious right to advance our movement.

Until now, the religious right has succeeded in dominating public debate and framing the issues of multiculturalism and democratic process as a conflict between right and wrong, a cultural war that pits what they consider to be the moral against the immoral. They have moved into a vacuum created by our lack of strong leadership, conviction and visibility and filled it with their own definitions of issues and supporting misinformation. I believe we must reject this entire framing of what is going on in our society as being a war, cultural or otherwise. We must be creative, not merely reactive, and therefore name our own reality and morality and our own terms for living.

Rather than accepting the religious right's declaration that we are in the midst of a cultural or religious war, we need to acknowledge that we are in the midst of a civil rights movement that is under such attack that it sometimes feels like the conditions of war, but is instead steadily moving forward, creating fundamental social change. It is an ongoing movement that we create every day. One could say that this civil rights movement has a 500-year history in the U.S., and certainly its many streams began to collect into a river in the 1950s when African Americans initiated a unified struggle for justice. That river, made up of people of color, grew to encompass women and then lesbians and gay men and people with disabilities. It is an ongoing movement, flowing toward justice still, that place of moral being. Seeking control, the religious right wants to dam and divert this river.

While resisting attacks, our task as targeted groups is to find our place in this broad civil rights movement. I do not believe we will succeed as separate groups, if we consider our issues as distinct and different from those of other oppressed peoples. We have to put our lives with each other, understand our connectedness, and act in solidarity. The work is not short-term; it is for the long haul. We will always have immediate crises, but liberation will come from changing the hearts and minds of people, changing institutions, changing laws.

We must remember that most of those more than one-half million who voted for ballot measure 9 were simply people who are afraid, people who have been fed misinformation, and people who are yet to be educated about lesbian and gay issues. Some of the best work of the Oregon and Colorado campaigns occurred when people were educating about civil rights. At the victory party for the Oregon No on 9 Campaign, the campaign manager announced that, for over a year, the state had been told that there was a militant homosexual agenda, and she wanted to affirm that, indeed, this was true. At that moment, No on 9 staff and volunteers unfurled an enormous banner bearing the agenda. It read:

EQUALITY
NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS

We must provide leadership and education in bringing the nation to understand the morality of justice wedded to equality and inclusion.

The religious right will be successful in reaching its long-term goal if we wait for them to control the public agenda and set the timetable for our activities, all centered upon defending ourselves from their attack. Long before there is a direct attack, such as a racist or homophobic or sexist initiative placed on a ballot, we must be working on issues of inclusion and democratic process in our organizations and communities. We must create statewide networks that include rural people and those who experience the extremes of economic injustice. People of color, women, lesbians and gay men, poor people, religious minorities, and people with disabilities must begin standing side by side to counter injustice and create systems of justice. We do not need coalitions and alliances only when under attack; we need them all the time because our issues are interrelated and ongoing.

Our work is now, not some time in the future. Through attacking us, the religious right has put all of our issues smack in the middle of the public debate. It is our work to use this debate to educate the public about justice and injustice and the ways to bring about change that includes the well-being of all people.

For the first time since the 1960s, I sense there are rising expectations among those from whom justice has been withheld. Major movements are built on this kind of hope, not despair. Our historical moment is upon us. If we join with and bring together those who experience injustice, we have the hope for building a mass movement that will achieve the dream of people from biblical times until the present, a world where justice will "flow down like a mighty river." ▼

Suzanne Pharr is a national community organizer, writer, theoretician, strategist, lecturer and trainer. She is the author of several dozen articles and the book, Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, *now in its fourth printing. In 1981, she founded the Women's Project in Arkansas, a statewide community organizing project that works on the central issues of violence against women, economic injustice, and social justice issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.*

I AM *Black Women Organizing* YOUR SISTER *Across Sexualities*

by audre lorde

WHENEVER I COME TO MEDGAR EVERS College I always feel a thrill of anticipation and delight because it feels like coming home, like talking to family, having a chance to speak about things that are very important to me with people who matter the most. And this is particularly true whenever I talk at the Women's Center. But, as with all families, we sometimes find it difficult to deal constructively with the genuine differences between us and to recognize that unity does not require that we be identical to each other. Black women are not one great vat of homogenized chocolate milk. We have many differences, and we do not have to become each other in order to work together.

It is not easy for me to speak here with you as a Black Lesbian feminist, recognizing that some of the ways in which I identify myself make it difficult for you to hear me. But meeting across difference always requires mutual stretching, and until you can hear me as a Black Lesbian feminist, our strengths will not be truly available to each other as Black women.

Because I feel it is urgent that we not waste each other's resources, that we recognize each sister on her own terms so that we may better work together toward our mutual survival, I speak here about heterosexism and homophobia, two grave barriers to organizing among Black women. And so that we have a common language between us, I would like to define some of the terms I use: Heterosexism — a belief in the inherent superiority of one form of loving over all others and thereby the right to dominance; Homophobia — a terror surrounding feelings of love for members of the same sex and thereby a hatred of those feelings in others.

In the 1960s, when liberal white people decided that they didn't want to appear racist, they wore dashikis, and danced Black, and ate Black, and even married Black, but they did not want to feel Black or think Black, so they never even questioned the textures of their daily living (why should flesh-colored bandaids always be pink?) and then they wondered, "Why are those Black folks always taking offense so easily at the least little thing? Some of our best friends are Black ..."

Well, it is not necessary for some of your best friends to be Lesbian, although some of them probably are, no doubt. But it is necessary for you to stop oppressing me through false judgment. I do not want you to ignore my identity, nor do I want you to make it an insurmountable barrier between our sharing of strengths.

When I say I am a Black feminist, I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my Blackness as well as my womanness, and therefore my struggles on both these fronts are inseparable.

Credit: Laura Whitehorn/Breakthrough

When I say I am a Black Lesbian, I mean I am a woman whose primary focus of loving, physical as well as emotional, is directed to women. It does not mean I hate men. Far from it. The harshest attacks I have ever heard against Black men come from those women who are intimately bound to them and cannot free themselves from a subservient and silent position. I would never presume to speak about Black men the way I have heard some of my straight sisters talk about the men they are attached to. And of course that concerns me, because it reflects a situation of noncommunication in the heterosexual Black community that is far more truly threatening than the existence of Black Lesbians.

What does this have to do with Black women organizing?

I have heard it said — usually behind my back — that Black Lesbians are not normal. But what is normal in this deranged society by which we are all trapped? I remember, and so do many of you, when being Black was considered not normal, when they talked about us in whispers, tried to paint us, lynch us, bleach us, ignore us, pretend we did not exist. We called that racism.

I have heard it said that Black Lesbians are a threat to the Black family. But when 50 percent of children born to Black women are born out of wedlock, and 30 percent of all Black families are headed by women without husbands, we need to broaden and redefine what we mean by family.

I have heard it said that Black Lesbians will mean the death of the race. Yet Black Lesbians bear children in exactly the same way other women bear children, and a Lesbian household is simply another kind of family. Ask my son and daughter.

The terror of Black Lesbians is buried in that deep inner place where we have been taught to fear all difference — to kill it or ignore it. Be assured: loving women is not a communicable disease. You don't catch it like the common cold. Yet the one accusation that seems to render even the most vocal straight Black woman totally silent and ineffective is the suggestion that she might be a Black Lesbian.

If someone says you're Russian and you know you're not, you don't collapse into stunned silence. Even if someone calls you a bigamist, or a childbeater, and you know you're not, you don't crumple into bits. You say it's not true and keep on printing the posters. But let anyone, particularly a Black man, accuse a straight Black woman of being a Black Lesbian, and right away that sister becomes immobilized, as if that is the most horrible thing she could be, and must at all costs be proven false. That is homophobia. It is a waste of woman energy, and it puts a terrible weapon into the hands of your enemies to be used against you to silence you, to keep you docile and in line. It also serves to keep us isolated and apart.

I have heard it said that Black Lesbians are not political, that we have not been and are not involved in the struggles of Black people. But when I taught Black and Puerto Rican students writing at City College in the SEEK program in the sixties I was a Black Lesbian. I was a Black Lesbian when I helped organize and fight for the Black Studies Department of John Jay College. And because I was fifteen years younger then and less sure of myself, at one crucial moment I yielded to pressures that said I should step back for a Black man even though I knew him to be a serious error of choice, and I did, and he was. But I was a Black Lesbian then.

When my girlfriends and I went out in the car one July 4th night after fireworks with cans of white spray paint and our kids asleep in the back seat, one of us staying behind to keep the motor running and watch the kids while the other two worked our way down the suburban New Jersey street, spraying white paint over the black jockey statues, and their little red jackets, too, we were Black Lesbians.

When I drove through the Mississippi delta to Jackson in 1968 with a group of Black students from Tougaloo, another car full of redneck kids trying to bump us off the road all the way back into town, I was a Black Lesbian.

When I weaned my daughter in 1963 to go to Washington in August to work in the coffee tents along with Lena Horne, making coffee for the marshals because that was what most Black women did in the 1963 March on Washington, I was a Black Lesbian.

When I taught a poetry workshop at Tougaloo, a small Black college in Mississippi, where white rowdies shot up the edge of campus every night, and I felt the joy of seeing young Black poets find their voices and power through words in our mutual growth, I was a Black Lesbian. And there are strong Black poets today who date their growth and awareness from those workshops.

When Yoli and I cooked curried chicken and beans and rice and took our extra blankets and pillows up the hill to the striking students occupying buildings at City College in 1969, demanding open admissions and the right to an education, I was a Black Lesbian. When I walked through the midnight hallways of Lehman College that same year, carrying Midol and Kac pads for the young Black radical women taking part in the action, and we tried to persuade them that their place in the revolution was not ten paces behind Black men, that spreading their legs to the guys on the tables in the cafeteria was not a revolutionary act no matter what the brothers said, I was a Black Lesbian. When I picketed for Welfare Mothers' Rights, and against the enforced sterilization of young Black girls, when I fought institutionalized racism in the New York City schools, I was a Black Lesbian.

But you did not know it because we did not identify ourselves, so now you can say that Black Lesbians and Gay men have nothing to do with the struggles of the Black Nation. And I am not alone.

When you read the words of Langston Hughes you are reading the words of a Black Gay man. When you read the words of Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Angelina

Weld Grimke, poets of the Harlem Renaissance, you are reading the words of Black Lesbians. When you listen to the life-affirming voices of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey, you are hearing Black Lesbian women. When you see the plays and read the words of Lorraine Hansberry, you are reading the words of a woman who loved women deeply.

Today, Lesbians and Gay men are some of the most active and engaged members of Art Against Apartheid, a group which is making visible and immediate our cultural responsibilities against the tragedy of South Africa. We have organizations such as the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, Dykes Against Racism Everywhere, and Men of All Colors Together, all of which are committed to and engaged in antiracist activity.

Homophobia and heterosexism mean you allow yourselves to be robbed of the sisterhood and strength of Black Lesbian women because you are afraid of being called a Lesbian yourself. Yet we share so many concerns as Black women, so much work to be done. The urgency of the destruction of our Black children and the theft of young Black minds are joint urgencies. Black children shot down or doped up on the streets of our cities are priorities for all of us. The fact of Black women's blood flowing with grim regularity in the streets and living rooms of Black communities is not a Black Lesbian rumor. It is sad statistical truth. The fact that there is widening and dangerous lack of communication around our differences between Black women and men is not a Black Lesbian plot. It is a reality that is starkly clarified as we see our young people be coming more and more uncaring of each other. Young Black boys believing that they can define their manhood between a sixth-grade girl's legs, growing up believing that Black women and girls are the fitting target for their justifiable furies rather than the racist structures grinding us all into dust, these are not Black Lesbian myths. These are sad realities of Black communities today and of immediate concern to us all. We cannot afford to waste each other's energies in our common battles. What does homophobia mean? It means that high-powered Black women are told it is not safe to attend a Conference on the Status of Women in Nairobi simply because we are Lesbians. It means that in a political action, you rob yourselves of the vital insight and energies of political women such as Betty Powell and Barbara Smith and Gwendolyn Rogers and Raymina Mays and Robin Christian and Yvonne Flowers. It means another instance of the divide-and-conquer routine.

How do we organize around our differences, neither denying them nor blowing them up out of proportion?

The first step is an effort of will on your part. Try to remember to keep certain facts in mind. Black Lesbians are not apolitical. We have been a part of every freedom struggle within this country. Black Lesbians are not a threat to the Black family. Many of us have families of our own. We are not white, and we are not a disease. We are women who love women. This does not mean we are going to assault your daughters in an alley on Nostrand Avenue. It does not mean we are about to attack you if we pay you a compliment on your dress. It does not mean we only think about sex, any more than you only think about sex.

Black lesbians have been a part of every freedom struggle within this country. We are not a disease. We are women who love women.

Even if you do believe any of these stereotypes about Black Lesbians, begin to practice acting like you don't believe them. Just as racist stereotypes are the problem of the white people who believe them, so also are homophobic stereotypes the problem of the heterosexuals who believe them. In other words, those stereotypes are yours to solve, not mine, and they are a terrible and wasteful barrier to our working together. I am not your enemy. We do not have to become each other's unique experiences and insights in order to share what we have learned through our particular battles for survival as Black women ...

There was a poster in the 1960s that was very popular: *"He's Not Black, He's My Brother!"* It used to infuriate me because it implied that the two were mutually exclusive — he couldn't be both brother and Black. Well, I do not want to be tolerated, nor misnamed. I want to be recognized.

I am a Black Lesbian, and I am your sister. ▼

"I am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities," by Audre Lorde, originally appeared in A Burst of Light, *by Audre Lorde, Firebrand Books, Ithaca, NY 14580.*

Sexual Terror

by Tede Matthews

A long shadow slithers towards me,
leaving its silver trail. Stalked.
The terror freezes me. Hand searching
for pocketed whistle is paralyzed
as the shadow obscures mine.
I lose consciousness, my last defense...

Sexual terror

Rough, blue cuffed hands
push me as the bars slide,
clanging behind me.
My wrists burn from the fresh memory
of cold metal bands.
I've never felt so miserably alone.
My ears burn from the murmuring
of my fellow hostages in the tank.
The evening's hour approaches
as they lay bets. Who first.
How many. How many times.
I crouch, nowhere to run...

Sexual terror

My first encounter with my sex.
The flickering neon, now dark.
The smell of Sunday schoolroom chalk.
Down my back. Bloodlines.
Hear the zipper. Where's the kiss?
Feel the hard, hot flesh. This won't hurt.
Oh god! Slow! No time, bitch.
The gun fires and the troops withdraw.
I withdraw to the wood, an injured animal,
to lick my wounds...

Sexual terror

The long, black caddie curbs me.
Prices set in street jingo. Naive
I go, eager to eat tomorrow.
Between two Southie types.
The driver controls the windows.
The locks. They offer coke. Smack.
I wonder where the bucks are
as the street lights disappear
and the gun appears. They got
their rocks off. Made me kiss the gun.
I get off with my life,
a lucky queer...this time...

Sexual terror

I come home. Candlelight flickers
from our bedroom. And where were you?
Shut up bitch. You said. Shut up.
Who's in there with you? An old friend.
Oh yea? You promised, no tricks home.
The old friend leaves as the drunken
kitchen cleaver goes to work.
Seven hours of emergency room
stitchings later. Battlescars for a lifetime.
Love pats, some say. Homosexuals
are violent, right Mr. Shrink?
They don't give painkillers
to my kind of queer at Mass. General....

Sexual terror

It's not when you ask your lover
to tie you up...

Sexual terror

It's not prefabricated, porno pics
of prison-rape fantasies...

Sexual terror

It's not dreaming, kissing Nazi boots...

Sexual terror

It's not the ad number. Fully equipped
playroom. Top man. Nothing too heavy.
For a price...

Sexual terror

It's not testing your erotic limits...

Sexual terror

It's the real thing, in the back
of your mind. And it doesn't just happen
to Fay Wray and there isn't always
an audience there. To cheer you on.

Sexual terror

In fact, it doesn't just happen to women.
And it can happen anytime.

I can show you the scars.

Tede Matthews is a member of the Modern Times Bookstore collective in San Francisco. He has been an anarcho-gay and anti-imperialist activist for over 20 years. He is presently at work on a novel entitled Mask of Thorns, *the plight of a gay Nicaraguan refugee fighting Somoza and his own personal ghosts.*

Building Bridges

By Lin Elliott

To be queer in prison is to be silenced. Incarcerated Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexuals, and other Queer people receive no positive support for our identities. At the very best, we are ignored; more often we are subject to abuse and violence from other inmates and to harassment and discrimination by staff. We are constantly bombarded by the compulsory heterosexuality of television, novels, religious literature, and mainstream "men's magazines" which are readily available inside, while Queer-oriented material (whether erotic zines or community newspapers) are frequently banned as "a threat to the orderly operation of the institution."

Furthermore, we are left with no outlet at all for our sexuality. Even in states — such as here in Washington — where there are no laws against homosexuality, consensual sex between prisoners is against prison rules and can result in severe punishment — even loss of "good time," thereby extending a person's sentence. (Indeed, prison officials seem to draw no distinction between consensual acts and sexual assault: I have seen men receive the same punishment for making love in the privacy of their cells that other inmates received for forceful rapes.) And where straight prisoners often have access to conjugal visits, especially if they are married, Queer relationships are given no such recognition. A Lesbian or Gay couple who have been together for many years will be denied the comfort available to any straight "marriage of convenience."

Prisoners as a group are among the least considered and most powerless people in our society; a fact which has become increasingly important as the United States has embarked on an orgy of prison construction which is truly unprecedented. The "land of the free" now imprisons a larger percentage of its population than any other country in the world. A black man between the ages of 18 and 30 is four times more likely to be locked up in the U.S. than if he lived in South Africa, according to the government's own statistics. Accurate figures on the number of incarcerated Queers are not available, but my own experience, both as a prisoner and an organizer, suggests we are also represented far out of proportion to our percentage of the general population.

By far the most painful aspect of being a Queer prisoner, though, is that we often find ourselves doubly silenced — not just by society at large, but in our own communities as well.

For instance, several years ago I was in the county jail awaiting sentencing at the time of the Seattle area Pride March. I very much wanted to be involved and to express my solidarity with my siblings on our own special day. So I wrote a short message explaining why I couldn't attend and asking the community to remember Queer prisoners when they marched. I sent my piece to the Pride organizers, hoping that it could be used in the Pride program. Apparently not. I never received any response at all.

Soon after that, I started working, along with several dedicated friends "outside," to create The League of Lesbian and Gay Prisoners (LLGP), a network of people concerned with the special problems of incarcerated Queers. Our goal was to make it possible for prisoners to be more involved in, and contribute to, the community; and to build some bridges across the isolation which prisons inevitably create.

Needless to say, it isn't easy. The nature of "correctional" systems works against us. Despite rhetoric about the value of maintaining ties to the community, I have

never encountered a prison where the rules governing mail, phone calls, and visitation didn't seem deliberately designed to complicate outside relationships to the point of extinction.

Day-to-day life in prison differs radically from the experience of friends on the street, which can create a sense of disconnection even between people who are in close contact. And incarceration creates such an imbalance of power — financially, psychologically, emotionally — that despite everyone's best intentions, it can be nearly impossible to create and sustain positive across-the-wall connections. Positive action on both sides is necessary to restore the balance.

Following a forum on prison issues which LLGP put on for Queer Nation/Seattle — the presentation was a collaboration between a prisoner, an ex-prisoner, and a non-prisoner — an activist friend offered me some advice. "What you need to do," she suggested, "is offer us some concrete example of what we can do. After all, it's not like you're asking me to recruit voters, which is something that has been done before. For most of us, building bridges between inside and out is a new idea."

So, what I would like to do is to briefly sketch what I believe to be the most important areas for collaboration between prisons and the larger Lesbian and Gay community, and try to suggest why I believe this collaboration is not just possible, but urgently necessary.

- Challenging Discrimination. It is no accident that the groups most responsible for the recent backlash against Queers on the outside are also very active in prison. Fundamentalist churches, groups like the Aryan Nations, the racists skinheads, and other hate groups are all willing to reach out to prisoners (and quite often to staff as well). It's ironic that the more liberal political and religious groups, which are supposedly founded on inclusive principles, seem for the most part absent from prisons. This represents a tremendous loss for progressive causes. America's prisons are a vast untapped reservoir of talent, commitment, and experience — the waste of human potential which they represent is terrifying. Certainly, in this day and age we can't afford to let ourselves be divided.

  I would like to see groups and coalitions working against hate groups and neo-fascists on the streets make a positive effort to link up with progressive prisoners, to help us resist the brainwashing and recruiting which goes on in the prisons, and which often serves the administration's goal of keeping prisoners separated from each other and preventing organized resistance. Outside groups would benefit from increased knowledge of how hate groups function, and prisoners would gain support and positive connections with the community.

- AIDS Education/Prevention. Statistics show that prisoners with AIDS live, on average, half as long as PWAS on the streets. In New York State, AIDS is already the leading cause of death among prisoners, and estimates on the percentage of the population which might be HIV+ are horrifying. When you consider the large proportion of prisoners who are, or have been IV drug users, that in itself is reason for serious concern.

And yet, prison administrators continue to favor a speak no evil/see no evil policy (reminiscent of the Catholic church). Since consensual sex, drug use, tattooing, etc. are universally against prison rules, administrators refuse to allow — with some rare exceptions — any open discussion of safe sex, needle exchanges, or other proven methods for controlling the spread of the virus.

In addition to this, medical care in prisons tends to be very poor, and ignorance and fear among staff often lead to HIV+ inmates being neglected or abused. Nutrition is substandard, and close living conditions make inmates very susceptible to exposure to opportunistic infections. Very few states have any sort of compassionate release program for terminally ill inmates.

A number of groups in various areas have come together to support prison AIDS activists. In Toronto, the Prisoner's AIDS/HIV Survival and Activists Network (PASAN) has created a comprehensive program for dealing with AIDS in prison and presented it to the Canadian government. This brief calls for mandatory education for all inmates and staff, condom distribution and needle exchanges, confidential testing and counseling by outside agencies, access to adequate medical care including experimental treatments and clinical drug tests, and compassionate release procedures. Beyond these specific points, however, the PASAN plan is a total strategy of the sort which the government should have initiated years ago. It should be a starting point for all prison AIDS work.

Coalitions like PASAN (and the ACT UP/CHAIN committee in California) also provide a workable model for prisoner/non-prisoner alliances to deal with other issues of mutual concern. As in any work where the goal is the empowerment of an oppressed group, guidance must come from the prisoners themselves — from our knowledge of the reality of life in America's prisons.

Building bridges between prisoners and the community is a necessary process of challenging the exclusivity of our culture, and building a new kind of community based on acceptance — where hopefully, someday, there will be no need of cages or walls. ▼

Lin Elliott is an incarcerated gay man of Cherokee and Scotch-Irish descent. For the past several years, he has been working to organize the League of Lesbian/Gay Prisoners and to promote prisoner involvement in community groups and activities — including the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender March on Washington. Along with John Fall, he is editing an anthology of writings by incarcerated queers entitled Cold Iron: The Voices of Lesbian and Gay Prisoners, *scheduled for publication in the Fall of 1993.*

Free Norma Jean Croy!

Norma Jean Croy a Shasta Indian and a lesbian, has been serving time since 1979 for "conspiracy to murder," even though she wasn't carrying a gun, never fired a shot, and it has been shown that no murder ever took place!

CASE HERSTORY

In July 1978, Norma, her brother Patrick "Hooty" Croy, and three relatives (ages 17–26) stopped at a convenience store in Yreka, California. The store clerk became verbally and physically abusive. A scuffle broke out. Following this scuffle, a police car rolled into the store parking lot. The clerk yelled "get them." A chase ensued, with the police radio calling for back-up and barking out, "there's a car full of Indians."

Eventually 15 squad cars and 27 officers of the law were involved, including one cop who had been drinking. The police wielded military style semi-automatic weapons, shooting "at anything that moved." The Indians (who had been planning to go deer hunting) had one .22 hunting rifle. Norma Jean, who never even touched the rifle, was shot in the back by police. Her cousin Darren was shot in the groin while trying to surrender.

During a *defacto* cease fire, Hooty was shot by officer Hittson, who had been drinking prior to arriving on the scene. Hittson shot Hooty twice in the back. Hooty turned and fired one shot from the .22 rifle which hit the officer in the heart. The cop died almost instantly. Hooty miraculously survived. Norma and Hooty received sentences of life in prison and the death penalty, respectively.

Due to public pressure, Hooty Croy was retried. and allowed to present a cultural defense which outlined the history of racism and Indian killing for sport in Northern California. Hooty was acquitted on grounds of self-defense in May, 1990. Norma Jean, however remains incarcerated.

UPDATE ON HER CASE

At Norma Jean's fourth parole hearing on July 16, 1992, attorneys submitted over 175 letters of support, including several job offers and places of residence in the Bay Area. The three-member board paid little, if any, attention to these letters. Norma, who has been imprisoned for 14 years, was denied parole for another two years.

"From the beginning of the hearing, it was clear that the panel had already decided to deny Norma parole for another two years. The Board refused to consider evidence of Norma's innocence which had been presented at her brother's 1990 retrial. It ignored Judge Stern's statement, and the declaration of the jury foreman, that had Norma been retried with her brother, she would also have been acquitted of the charges. In short, it was an outrageous abuse of power." ▼

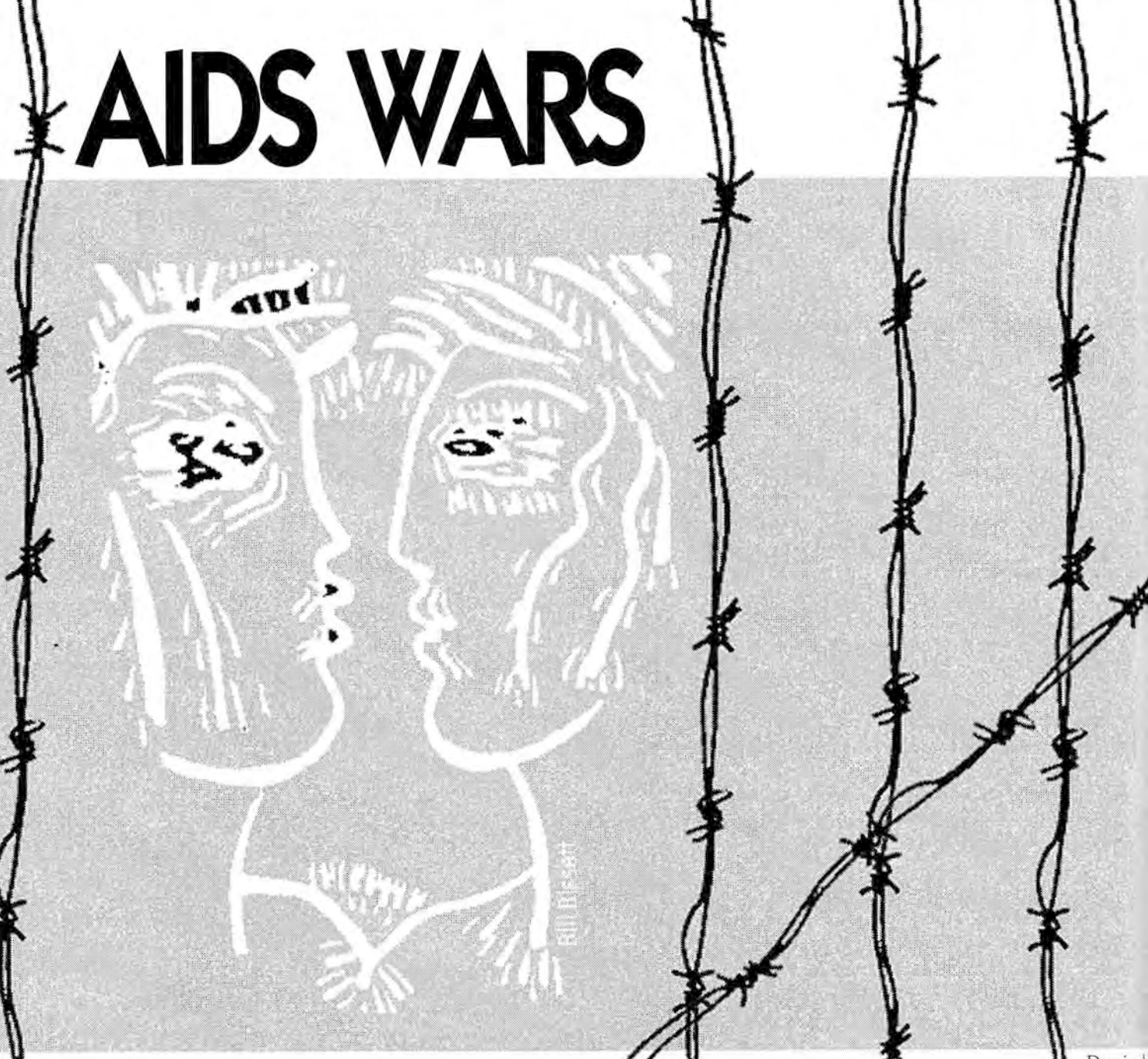
— Diana Samuelson and James S. Thompson, attorneys for Norma.

"Norma Jean Croy" by Laura Whitehor

Two strategies are being pursued to get Norma Jean out of jail. One is to appeal the parole board's decision. There is also a petition for a new trial currently pending before the California Supreme Court.

Persons interested in keeping informed on future developments should send their name and address to the Norma Jean Croy Defense Committee at 473 Jackson Street, 3 floor, San Francisco, CA 94111.

AIDS WARS



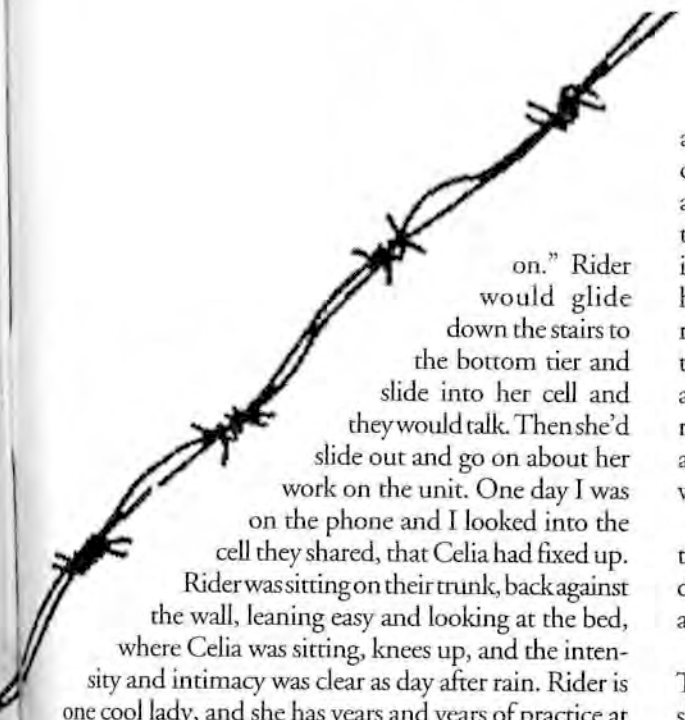
Drawing b
Bill Bissett

D.C. JAIL

By Susan Rosenberg

THERE ARE NO HAPPY ENDINGS IN THIS SKIRMISH. SADNESS, LOSS, WASTE AND NEGLECT fill the encounter. In war there is supposed to be purpose, and consequently meaning. But in the AIDS WAR this story, like many, results from oppression and genocide. The product of the apartheid state of Black peoples' lives in the 90s in America. But there is a twist. A shining bright spot that illuminates this dark story and casts it in a different light. It is a love story. Love that is condemned and feared, love that is against the law, made illegal by the state, love that in its pure subversiveness intensifies suffering but eases the pain. A story of two Black women who loved and shared and made their way — together — if only for a short time.

I keep hearing Celia call out at the top of her voice "Rider, Rider, Where are you? Come here Rider." And then Rider would answer, "Okay, baby, I'm coming. Hang



on." Rider would glide down the stairs to the bottom tier and slide into her cell and they would talk. Then she'd slide out and go on about her work on the unit. One day I was on the phone and I looked into the cell they shared, that Celia had fixed up. Rider was sitting on their trunk, back against the wall, leaning easy and looking at the bed, where Celia was sitting, knees up, and the intensity and intimacy was clear as day after rain. Rider is one cool lady, and she has years and years of practice at showing nothing. She lives behind a mask of nonreaction. She's a pro at it. She never loses at poker or spades, never. She reveals nothing. But this feeling she had, this love for this lady, this lovely lady, her partner, she couldn't hide. The tug around her 45-year-old eyes right at the outer corner began to turn upward, and the squint lines slowly became laugh lines. Their love affair infected anyone who wanted to be let in. They navigated through the jail house rules and prohibitions with practiced grace and ease. The police knew the deal and let them cell together.

One night Rider came to my cell and said "Celia is sick. She is really sick. Do you understand?" "Yes Rider, I think I understand."

For five months Celia hid herself, hoping it would undo her sickness. She wasted in silence. She hid against the rumors, the cruelty at speculation, and the pain of her physical and mental suffering. She never was counseled, the medical care inadequate and the social neglect criminal. Celia lied to keep it secret, to deny the reality. But Rider knew, I knew. And then she was too sick to stay in the cell block.

Celia was dying in the prison ward of DC General Hospital. That her death was inevitable, there was no doubt; that it had to be the way it was, is left to health officials and prison officials to debate and analyze and then they will factor it into their statistical data. For Rider, nothing could take the stricken look of anguish out from behind her eyes. Rider was powerless to stop Celia from dying. Rider, like Celia, was a prisoner. She didn't count. That Rider and Celia were lesbian lovers for nine years, in and out of prison, together and separately, didn't count. Their love went unrecognized. A lesbian lover is not next of kin. That Rider loved Celia more than anything or anyone, that she took care of her in sickness, that she wanted to spend her life with her, or lay down and die with her, didn't count.

Nine days after Celia left the cell block, four days after her 33rd birthday, Celia died of heart failure from complications from pneumocystis pneumonia associated with the final stages of AIDS. She was a prisoner treated in the intensive care unit at DC General. She was initially admitted to the ICU in a code blue state. Her heart had stopped. She was revived and placed on a respirator which she remained on until she died. During the course of those nine days she went into code blue again, almost died, was revived, and finally failed to respond to drug therapy. She thought Rider was there at the end and said "Rider, I love you, my baby." A guard who was there told someone.

She was serving a nine-month bit on a parole violation. She was scheduled for release in two months. She died while shackled to the bed. There is no compassionate release in the District of Columbia.

The day after Celia died Rider was at my door. Telling me that the funeral was Friday. She asked me should she try to go, could she go, would it be possible to go as her husband, or her wife, or anything. After all, she said, she was real family. "If I had been free, I'd have been at that hospital."

In general if you're in prison and a family member dies, you can't go to the funeral. It's a question of security — not humanity. But if a "grief furlough" is approved you go in chains accompanied by armed marshals to the funeral home where you are allowed merely a few moments to view the body alone.

Rider decided not to fight it out, not to go. Then she held out this plastic bag filled with jail issued medications. Creams, pills, suppositories. She asked, "Can you explain what all this stuff is?" The hurt, the search as to what was this thing that took her beautiful girl, snatched her away, will never be answered. But now she had to know. The pills and cream, with their specific instructions made it clear. AZT, acyclovir and steroid cream are the only approved medications for prisoners with AIDS. They had been dispensed irregularly, and with no monitoring. I explained each medication and its use. And she stood at my door with tears streaming down her face. "I knew she was sick, but I didn't know she'd die. Why didn't she tell me?" And the pitch in her voice dropped to a whisper and she said, "You know, I am a very open-minded person, you know, I would never have left someone that is sick, not ever, and never her. She was, well, you know, I love her."

If Celia had lived a little longer Rider would have tried for a hospital visit, to take her in her arms one more time, tell her it was all okay, and say goodbye. Instead she sent roses with a note to the funeral. The card read "To Celia my love, always, Rider." We heard that Celia's pimp wasn't happy. ▼

Susan Rosenberg, revolutionary anti-imperialist political prisoner and lesbian. Marianna, Florida, January 10, 1993.

Thoughts on the March on Washington

"Twins" by Valerie Jacobs

Inside Looking Out

by Laura Whitehorn

This article is dedicated to the memory of Mike Riegle, who might not have agreed with it, but definitely would have let me know.*

I HAD A WONDERFUL LESBIAN FANTASY THE OTHER day. In prison, you tend to fantasize a lot — about food, sex, the ocean, music, everything. But this one was slightly different. It was about the gay and lesbian March on Washington, being planned for this spring. In my fantasy, the organizers of the march are sitting around talking about the huge demos held in Italy, Germany, and France to protest fascism, anti-semitism and racism. They think we need that kind of thing here, given the unending flood of racist attacks in the past year. (Just last week, the local Panama City, Florida, news carried the story of a Black man set on fire by three white men.) So they decide to make the march on DC a gay and lesbian march for human rights and against racism and white supremacy. They contact African American and New Afrikan organizations to invite them to participate; then they put out a unitary call for all progressive organizations to support and join the march.

Thinking about this fantasy, I smiled and felt light and joyful. For a minute — and then I said aloud, "Dream on, girl, it's not going to happen." Which is exactly what a few lesbian friends said on the phone when I told them about my fantasy. In fact, if I could be magically transported to a meeting of the march organizers, I'd probably have the same argument with the

very same people I argued with twenty years ago, over the strategy and direction of the women's liberation movement and lesbian/gay liberation, over what I saw as the critical, primary importance for white people to support national liberation and fight white supremacy.

I've lived in several cities where there have been large lesbian communities, but we anti-imperialist lesbians were always a small minority. For a lot of years, we didn't fight very much for gay and lesbian liberation, so our isolation was exacerbated by justified anger from a number of queers. And, of course, in those times, political differences were treated as battle lines that couldn't be crossed, and we were not very good listeners (to say the least).

But over the years our politics changed, and when some of us in the DC "Resistance Conspiracy Case" made a political point of being "out" lesbians, we received a tremendous amount of support from the lesbian and gay communities — support that extended not only to our co-defendant comrades, but to all political prisoners and Prisoners of War. Support that has continued long after the DC case itself was over.

Similarly, the support those of us inside doing AIDS support and education get from gay and lesbian AIDS activists is nourishing, invigorating, and an absolute necessity to our work. In the best moments, we're able to make the other women prisoners we work with feel that support, that community, too, and it makes the work effective in changing lives and saving lives.

The militant, courageous struggle of gay men and lesbians in the AIDS crisis has politicized the gay and lesbian community and built a movement. It even affected the outcome of the presidential election. At this point, I think it would be a grave mistake to limit our vision to one of acceptance and inclusion in the system. I'm opposed to discrimination against gays in the military, but I'm equally opposed to gays and lesbians struggling to *join* the U.S. military — the fighting arm of imperialism and intervention. We're at a juncture where more revolutionary, liberating goals are needed. I believe the goal of liberation has to start with building alliances with oppressed peoples fighting for justice and survival — fighting racism, colonialism and white supremacy in Amerikkka in 1993.

Why should lesbians and gay men do this? Why should we focus a national march on the demand for justice for "others"? First, some of those "others" — some of those African Americans oppressed by white supremacy — are in fact "us," lesbians and gay men. So if we fail to fight racism head on, then we end up defining gay liberation as a white-centered, white-dominated struggle. I see anti-racism as integral to gay liberation. The freedom I'm fighting for is not the "freedom" to be part of a racist class society. I believe that racism is the essence of the injustice and moral corruption that characterize our society. The oppression of the New Afrikan/Black Nation, from slavery on, is fundamental to the history and present reality of the U.S. So I actually can't picture how this society could stop being homophobic and sexist *without* an end to racism. I don't believe it's possible to have *some* justice, *some* equality. That's what the U.S. has now, and it's nothing but a sham.

Homophobia and vicious attacks on queers are on the rise, and I believe we should continue to protest them. But there are times when the most revolutionary thing to do — the thing that most confronts the system, most threatens to change things at a fundamental level — is to step beyond ourselves, beyond our own situation, and "fight the power" on the broader basis of the cause of human justice for all oppressed people. Right now, because racism has been so blatant and prevalent, and because white progressives and leftists have not managed to raise an effective, lasting anti-racist response, it seems this show of unity would be particularly powerful.

The outrageous LA verdict was nearly a year ago. It exposed the continuing strength of racism in every aspect of U.S. society and law. I agree with Barbara Smith and other Black leaders who argued in the aftermath of the LA rebellions that white progressives should see fighting racism as an urgent priority. No "business as usual." In the time since LA, there hasn't been a sustained, clear anti-racist call or activism from white leftists or progressives. The gay and lesbian movement is one of the most organized, activated radical forces in the U.S. at the moment, and that seems to me to bring both the possibility and the responsibility of leadership — that is, to take up the critical need for anti-racist action.

Finally, I think we should adopt anti-racism as a primary demand because the lesbian and gay movement raises the vision, the potential, for a different concept of power from the white, ruling-class male power wielded at the core of U.S. society. Like the women's liberation movement, the gay and lesbian movement can promote an alternative source of power, in the collective strength and power of the powerless. That's part of why harnessing our rage about AIDS has been so liberating and life-affirming in the midst of sickness and dying. Power is not only an alternative to powerlessness. It also necessitates decisions and choices of value. My vision (it's more than a fantasy) is that this movement should choose *not* to be included in a white, male-defined capitalist power structure, but rather to put our view of life from the bottom to good use, and build on our critique of U.S. society by fighting for real justice and freedom for all oppressed people.▼

Laura Whitehorn, revolutionary anti-imperialist political prisoner and lesbian. Marianna, Florida, January 10, 1993

* *Mike Riegle was a gay activist who worked for years to make GCN (Gay Community News) responsive to gay and lesbian prisoners. He also worked in the Redbook prison book program. He died with AIDS on January 10, 1992.*

REMEMBER YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS

PRISONERS WITH HIV

BY CHARLES W. PERRY
CMF-VACAVILLE

December 5, 1992

WE THE INMATES OF CMF-VACAVILLE WHO ARE infected with the AIDS virus offer up a plea to the public, to help us achieve a workable medical program for the AIDS patients in prison. Although there are many AIDS groups and organizations, the red tape and bureaucracy is insurmountable, and the need for help throughout the prison system for all HIV+ inmates is critical.

In prison there are no HIV specialists, no fully staffed, fully funded, and fully supported AIDS program. What we do have is a hodge-podge of medical staff and lay people who for the most part, have little or no training in the treatment of AIDS. These quasi-professionals are more often than not stymied as to what to do regarding the treatment of opportunistic infections, which are a constant threat and companion to the AIDS patient. They are completely out of their element in the diagnosis and treatment of AIDS or late ARC.

We did have a caring and competent doctor, but he was harassed, stonewalled and thwarted at every turn in his attempt to establish a viable AIDS program, until even he could take the administrative double-talk no longer and resigned in abject frustration.

This was very much the death knell of a workable AIDS program at Vacaville, an AIDS program that could have very well have been a model for other prisons with an AIDS population.

To compound the lack of legislative medical care, when the doctors do diagnose and prescribe needed treatment and/or medication, administration often steps in and negates what the doctor has ordered. This includes but is not limited to antibiotics, anticonvulsants and pain medication. As a result, any inmates who are in pain due to enlarged organs such as liver and spleen (which is not uncommon in an AIDS patient), pulmonary distress, and a myriad of other HIV-related problems, are left to deal with their pain as best they can — and a prison is hardly the place to deal effectively with acute pain.

We in prison are faced every day with the constant discrimination, lack of adequate medical care and the seeming indifference of an increasingly indifferent administration.

In asking for a viable AIDS program we are told "you have nothing coming," or that it is "in the works." This apathy shown the AIDS patients in prison results in apathy by the inmates who are infected with the AIDS virus, and is not only detrimental to this prison population but is detrimental to the public at large when these inmates parole, which some will do.

The need for AIDS education is paramount, as ongoing studies are proving. The citizenry at large is basically uneducated and resistant to the reality of AIDS, imagine then the lack of information and the mind-set of a prison population regarding AIDS.

The medical needs of people with HIV are many, and the prison population is in need no less than those on the outside.

We know we have done wrong, and we are being

punished. This is a penal system, not a redemption system, and to be locked up, to have one's most private functions and all the ordinary day-to-day functions determined by others, believe me, in the best of circumstances is punishment. Then to be denied medications, health care and information that might keep an imprisoned AIDS inmate alive until parole, is unconscionable by any standard.

When dealing with a deadly disease such as AIDS, protocol is an important tool. When a staff member is uncertain about treatment, signs and symptoms, the established medical protocol becomes that staff member's best friend.

It is common practice to ignore pleas for help. In one such instance a young Hispanic AIDS inmate repeatedly asked for help for five days for an excruciating headache, only to be told to go to his cell by the medical staff without being treated or tended to — which he did — and he died alone in his cell of a brain hemorrhage. We have nurse practitioners who respond to pleas of help by telling us to "pray for relief of pain," a pastor who apparently believes AIDS is a visitation from God as punishment, and a CMO who apparently believes the same. What chance do we have when we are completely at the mercy of this thinking?

There is nothing in place to inform and educate the HIV+ inmate regarding their disease, nothing regarding the HIV+ inmate's own responsibility nor psychological as well as medical information regarding AIDS.

We are your sons and daughters, and as exasperated and dispirited as you may become, remember: We do not want to die. We do not want to die in here alone, and possibly under questionable circumstances. Help us, love us, teach us, and pray for us, please. ▼

Charles W. Perry
CMF-Vacaville

UPDATE

Charles Perry is a prisoner at the Correctional Medical Facility (CMF) in Vacaville, California. CMF is the main facility for HIV+ male prisoners in California. In the Fall of 1992, prisoners at CMF went on a medications strike to protest a rash of HIV-related deaths of prisoners directly attributable to the lack of quality health care and compassionate treatment.

In November, prisoners escalated their protest to a hunger strike due to the prison's refusal to take prisoner demands seriously. As a result, public attention was drawn to CMF and prison officials have been forced into making some changes. While conditions are improved, medical care at CMF—as in all prisons—remains inadequate.

For his role in the protest, prison officials have stalled Perry's request for Compassionate Release. Other prisoners who participated have been locked in Administrative Segregation, and threatened with additional prison time.

For more information on the conditions of prisoners with AIDS, contact ACT UP. Or write the prisoners at CMF, Box 2000, Vacaville, CA 95696–2000: Charles W. Perry, C-88177; Laos Schuman, C-70311; Brian Carmichael, C-70246; Peter Yvanovitch, C-70024.

RESOURCE LIST

We need to reclaim prisoners as part of our community. If you're interested in working to support queer prisoners or HIV+ prisoners, to support lesbian & gay political prisoners, contact any of the following groups.

LESBIAN/GAY PRISONERS

League for Lesbian and Gay Prisoners
1202 E. Pike Street, Suite 1044
Seattle, WA 98122-3934

Pasan
c/o 622 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1ZB
Canada

HIV/AIDS

ACT UP/New York
Prison Issues Committee
135 W. 29th St.
New York, NY 10001

ACT UP/San Francisco
Prison Issues Committee
P.O. Box 14844
San Francisco, CA 94114
415.621.0291
415.431.1456 (Fax)

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Out of Control
(Lesbian Committee for the Support of Women Political Prisoners)
3543 18th Street, Box 30
San Francisco, CA 94110

quisp
Queer Women & Men United in Support of Political Prisoners
Ste. 134
380 Bleeker St.
New York, NY 10014
212.969.8598

Chicago Co-Conspirators
c/o Gould
4646 N. Winchester #2
Chicago, IL 60640
312.989.4342

WRITE THROUGH THE WALLS

The U.S. government says there are no political prisoners or POWs in this country. Yet the partial list below shows this claim is a complete lie. We urge you to write them and to send literature. These women and men represent the best of the movement. Make their struggle yours. "The Real Dragon" sponsors a continuing book drive to political prisoners and POWs. For more information or to send contributions write: POB 3294, Berkeley, CA 94703-9901.

Puerto Rican Prisoners of War

Edwin Cortes #92153-024
Ricardo Jimenez #88967-024 A-2
Alberto Rodríguez #92150-024 B-3
FCI Lewisburg
PO Box 1000
Lewisburg PA 17837

Carlos Alberto Torres #88976-024
FCI Oxford
Box 1000
Oxford WI 53952-1000

Alicia Rodríguez #NO7157
Box 5007
Dwight IL 60420

Luis Rosa #NO2743
P.O. Box 711
Menard IL 62259

Oscar López-Rivera #87651-024
USP Marion
PO Box 1000
Marion IL 62959

Elizam Escobar #88969-024
FCI Colorado Unit
PO Box 1500
El Reno OK 73036

Adolfo Matos #88968-024
Lompoc Fedl Penitentiary
3901 Klein Blvd
Lompoc CA 93436

Dylcia Pagán #88971-024
Lucy Rodríguez #88973-024
Alejandrina Torres #92152-024
Carmen Valentín #88974-024
FCI Pleasanton
5701 8th Street
Camp Parks
Dublin CA 94568

Puerto Rican Political Prisoners

Luis Cólon Osorio
c/o Linda Backiel
Calle Myagüez 70
Oficina 2B
Atoto Rey PR 00918

Norman Ramirez Talavera #03171-069
FCI Raybrook
PO Box 905B
Raybrook NY 12977

Antonio Camacho #03587-069
FCI McKean, Unit 2
PO Box 8000
Bradford PA 16701

Juan Segarra-Palmer #15357-077
PO Box PMB
Atlanta GA 30315

Roberto Jose Maldonado #03588-069
Federal Medical Facility
3150 Horton Rd
Fort Worth TX 76119

Hilton Diamante Fernández
FCI Englewood
Littleton CO 80123

Haydeé Beltrán #88462-024
FCI Pleasanton
5701 8th Street
Camp Parks
Dublin CA 94568

Orlando González-Claudio
#03173-069
FCI Sheridan
POB 5000
Sheridan OR 97378

New Afrikan/Black Prisoners of War and Poltical Prisoners

Herman Bell #79-C-262
PO Box 338
Napanoch NY 12458-0338

Teddy (Jah) Heath #75-A-0139
Mohaman Koti #80-A-808
Jalil A. Muntaqin #77-A-4283
s/n Anthony Bottom
Shawangunk Corr Facility
PO Box 700
Wallkill NY 12589

Adbul Majid #83-A-483
s/n Anthony LaBorde
Sullivan Corr Facility
Box A-G
Fallsburg NY 12733

Maliki Shakur Latine #81-A-4469
PO Box B
Dannemora NY 12929

Albert Nuh Washington #77-A-1528
PO Box 2001
Dannemora NY 12929-2001

Abdul Haqq #89-T-1710
s/n Craig Randall
Clinton Corr Facility
Main Box 2081
Dannemora NY 12929-2081

Bashir Hameed #82-A-6313
s/n James York
135 State Street
Auburn NY 13024

Robert Seth Hayes #74-A-2280
Wende Corr Facility
1187 Wende Road
Alden NY 14004

Robert Taylor #10376-054
Attica Corr Facility
PO Box 149
Attica NY 14011

Thomas Warner #M3049
Drawer R
Huntingdon PA 16652

Cecilio Chui Ferguson #04372-054
Drawer K
Dallas PA 18612

Martin Rutrell #042600
FCI Raiford
UCI 68-2018 Box 221
Raiford FL 32083

Richard Mafundi Lake #79972-X
100 Warrior Lane 4-93B
Bessemer AL 35023

Sekou Kambui #113058
s/n William Turk
PO Box 56 7E-2-18
Elmore AL 36025-0056

William Allen #66843
RMSI
7475 Cockrell Bend
Ind. Road
Nashville TN 37243-0471

Ahmad Abdur Rahman #130539
141 First St.
Coldwater MI 49036

Richard Thompson-El #155229
Box 10
Stillwater MN 55082

Sekou Odinga #05228-054
s/n Nathanial Burns
USP Marion
PO Box 1000
Marion IL 62959

Sundiata Acoli #39794-066
Kojo Bomani Sababu #39384-066
s/n Grailing Brown
USP Leavenworth
PO Box 1000
Leavenworth KS 66048

Mondo Langa
s/n David Rice
PO Box 2500
Lincoln NE 68542-2500

Gary Tyler #84156
Louisiana State Penitentiary
84156 — Ash 4
Angola LA 70712

Rickke Green #84244
O.S.P
P.O. Box 97
McAlester OK 74502-0097

Haki Malik Abdullah #C-56123
s/n Michael Green
Corcoran Prison
PO Box 3456
Corcoran CA 93212

Kalima Aswad #B24120
s/n Robert Duren
CMC
PO Box 8108 Cell 1372
San Luis Obispo CA 93409

Mutulu Shakur #83205-012
Lompoc Fedl Penitentiary
3901 Klein Blvd
Lompoc CA 93436

geronimo ji-Jaga (pratt) #B40319
PO Box 1902B 1C-211U
Tehachapi CA 93581

Ruchell Cinque Magee #A92051
Hugo Pinell #A88401
Pelican Bay CF
PO Box 7500 SHU D8-205
Crescent City CA 95531

Mark Cook #20025-148
FCI Sheridan
POB 5000
Sheridan OR 97378

Move Prisoners

Charles Sims Africa #AM-4975
PO Box 99901
Pittsburgh PA 15233

Michael Davis Africa #AM-4973
Mumia Abu Jamal #AM-8335
Drawer R
Huntingdon PA 16652

William Phillips Africa #AM-4984
RFD 3
Bellefonte PA 16823

Edward Goodman Africa #AM-4974
PO Box 200
Camp Hill PA 17001-0200

Debbi Sims Africa #006307
Consusuella Dotson Africa #006434
Janine Phillips Africa #006309
Merle Austin Africa #006306
Janet Holloway Africa #006308
Sue Leon Africa #006325
PO Box 180
Muncy PA 17756

Delbert Orr Africa #AM-4985
Carlos Perez Africa #AM-7400
Drawer K
Dallas PA 18612

Virgin Islands 5

Malik El-Amin #96557-131
s/n Meral Smith
FCI Lewisburg
PO Box 1000
Lewisburg PA 17837

Hanif Shabazz Bey #9654-131
s/n B Gereau
USP Marion
PO Box 1000
Marion IL 62959

Abdul Aziz #96521-131
s/n Warren Ballentine
USP Leavenworth
PO Box 1000
Leavenworth KS 66048

Raphael Kwesi Joseph #96558-131
Lompoc Fedl Penitentiary
3901 Klein Blvd
Lompoc CA 93436

Native American Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners

Eddie Hatcher #DL213
Odom Correctional Center
Rt 1 Box 35
Jackson NC 27845

Leonard Peltier #89637-132
USP Leavenworth
PO Box 1000
Leavenworth KS 66048

Standing Deer #83947
s/n Robert Hugh Wilson
O.S.P
P.O. Box 97
McAlester OK 74502-0097

Norma Jean Croy #14293
CIW Chowchilla
PO Box 1501
Chowchilla CA 93610

Mexican Political Prisoners

Alberto Aranda
Ellis 1 Unit
Huntsville TX 77343

Luis Rodriguez #C 33000
Pelican Bay CF
PO Box 7500 C-12-202
Crescent City CA 95532-7500

Cuban Political Prisoners

Ana Lucia Gelabert #384484
Rt 2, Box 800
Gatesville TX 76528

Irish Political Prisoners

Gerard Hoy #17480-038
Richard Johnson #17422-038
PO Box 900
Raybrook NY 12977-0300

Martin P Quigley #41064-U3A
PO Box 8000
Bradford PA 16701

Brian Fleming #08022-002
PO Box PMB
Atlanta GA 30315

Kevin McKinley #27801
FCI Jesup
Jesup GA 31545

Seamus Moley
MCC Miami
15801 SW 137th Ave
Miami FL 33177

Joseph McColgan #27803-004
FCI Talladega Unit G
565 E Renfroe Road
Talladega AL 35160**

Chuck Malone #48310-097
FMC Rochester
PMB 4600
Rochester MN 55903

Noel O Murchu
FCI Oakdale
Oakdale LA 71463

Chris Reid
FCI Pleasanton
5701 8th Street
Camp Parks
Dublin CA 94568

Japanese Political Prisoners

Yu Kikumura #09008-050
USP Marion
PO Box 1000
Marion IL 62959

North American Political Prisoners

Richard Picariello #05812
Walpole State Prison
PO Box 100
S Walpole MA 02071

Kathy Boudin #84-G-171
Judy Clark #83-G-313
Bedford Hills
Box 1000
Bedford Hills NY 10507

David Gilbert #83-A-6158
Great Meadow Corr Facility
PO Box 51
Comstock NY 12821

Timothy Blunk #09429-050
FCI Lewisburg
PO Box 1000
Lewisburg PA 17837

Roy Bourgeois #01579-017
PMB 1000
Tallhassee FL 32301

Silvia Baraldini #05125-054
Marilyn Buck #00482-285
Susan Rosenberg #03684-016
Laura Whitehorn #22432-037
FCI Marianna
PMB 7006
Shawnee Unit
Marianna FL 32447

Carol Manning #10375-016
FCI Lexington
3301 Leestown Road
Lexington KY 40511

Bill Dunne #10916-086
PO Box 33
Terre Haute IN 47808

Raymond Levasseur #10376-016
Thomas Manning #10373-016
PO Box 1000
Marion IL 62959

Larry Giddings #10917-086
Jaan Laaman #10372-016
USP Leavenworth
PO Box 1000
Leavenworth KS 66048

Richard Williams #10377-106
3901 Klein Blvd
Lompoc CA 93436

Linda Evans #19973-054
FCI Pleasanton
5701 8th Street
Camp Parks
Dublin CA 94568

Ed Mead #251397
Paul Wright #930783
PO Box 777
Monroe WA 98272

Ploughshares/Disarmament Prisoners

Randy Kehler
Keets Road
Deerfield MA 01342

Elizabeth Walters, IHM
Helen LaValley
Arete Community Corr Ctr
709 LaPeer
Sagniaw MI 48607

Fr. Peter Dougherty
Bay County Jail
501 3rd St
Bay City MI 48708

Margaret Millett #32118-008
FPC
37900 North 4th Ave
Dept 1785
Phoenix AZ 85027-7006

Mark Davis #23106-008
FPC
PO Box 1000 MB064
Boron CA 93516

Keith Kjoller
Peter Lumsdaine
c/o Tubman/O'Conner Brigade
Box 11645
Berkeley CA 94701

Military Resisters

Serving Time in Military Brig or Federal Prison

Robert Pete
Drawer A
USDB
Ft. Leavenworth KS 66027-7140

Gerald Kaonohi Keli-Aupuni Karmak
c/o Eric A Seitz, Esq
820 Mililani St, Ste 714
Honolulu, HI 96813

We can use all the help we can ge keeping this list of prisoner addresses up to date. If you are moved, or if you know of any corrections that need to be made, please contact us at Breakthrough, *PO Box 14422, San Francisco, CA 94114.*


NOT
EVERY BOY
WANTS
TO BE A
SOLDIER