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CENTER FOR THE STUDY
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OUR DRESSES HIT TOGETHER AS WE DANCE AND
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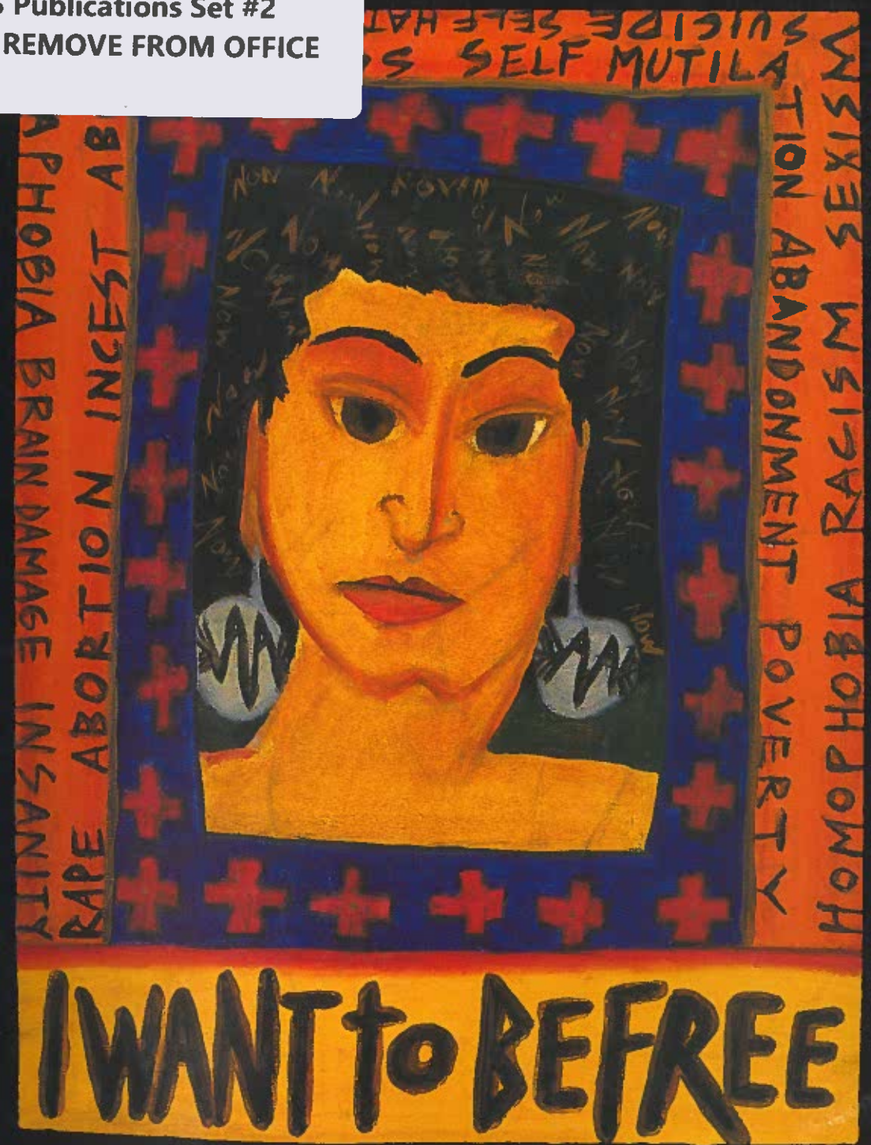
CSWS REVIEW

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY • UNIVERSITY OF OREGON • 1993



LESBIAN ISSUES IN OREGON

MEREDITH MYLLENBECK

Chris Gonzales (right) with Wendy.

Artist's Statement

I am a Eugene-based visual artist, Mexican American, also a lesbian. I have a jewelry biz that serves, like my paintings, as a vehicle for my propaganda, that goes something like this: Creativity is the source and power of all being. Every act is an act of creativity—eating, sleeping, parenting, working, dreaming, walking, being. We can channel our creativity by making conscious, open-hearted choices. By changing our attitudes, focusing on everyday actions, and deeply expressing our feelings, we actively and creatively form changes in our lives and, ultimately, the world. Our lives are reflections of the world. Create balance in your life and it will support a planetary shift toward balance. The pure act of being is making a difference in the world. It is profound and we touch it in our dreams and we paint on our paper (of all kinds) and we move human beings onto the next level.

My two favorite words, challenges, prayers are FEARLESS! and ECSTASY!

—Chris Gonzales
Eugene, Oregon

Editor's note: Chris Gonzales' paintings appear on the front cover (*I Always Listen to My Hair*) and back cover (*Dancing Together*) as well as on page 34 (*Home*). The artist's statement was originally printed in *Bluestocking*, Volume 1, Number 3, 1993.

CSWS REVIEW

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MEREDITH MYLLENBECK

From the CSWS Director

CSWS celebrates its tenth anniversary in the fall of 1993, and we are using this opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments and the challenges of the previous decade and the decades ahead. Our celebration is October 15–16, highlighted by the conference, "At the Epicenter: Women, Research, and Communities." This theme emphasizes two important center goals: building a body of scholars doing research on women, and connecting this scholarly community with other communities locally, regionally, and internationally.

At CSWS, we do not remain sheltered from the questions gripping our larger communities. Our commitment entails understanding the forces that constrain and divide, as well as creating opportunities for meaningful relationships across race, ethnicity, class, gender, and cultural difference. At this moment, two issues directly threaten the social fabric of the state: the economic devastation of Oregon's Measure 5 property tax limitation, and the pain and division wrought by the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) initiatives to deny lesbians and gay men equal and basic human rights.

As the OCA campaign of misinformation and community polarization continues, so too does the work of feminist scholars and activists. In this issue of the *CSWS Review*, researchers, writers, and advocates define their own terrain, freed from having to frame their arguments simply in reaction to homophobia. The result is diverse perspectives that humanize and deepen our understanding of the life experiences of lesbians, while examining the dangers of the so-called "family values" campaign and the intolerance manifested in our state and the nation.

The other pivotal issue, the fallout from Measure 5, confronts us as citizens and as public educators. We are all witnesses to a challenge the state must face if we are to thrive and ensure a decent life for all the residents of Oregon. We must create a fair tax structure and a climate of broad support for public education and state programs designed to foster equity and justice. CSWS is not in jeopardy of losing state funds; we receive none. However, the budget cuts that endanger the standards and diversity of the university faculty, staff, and students directly affect CSWS. Funding losses at the library, for example, have an impact on the quality of research throughout the community. And, of course, we must also cope with the local and statewide economic consequences of this measure.

In the context of this difficult situation, we will continue to provide programmatic and financial support for research and other activities that bring new ideas and perspectives about women to campus. Our new research

Sandra Morgen, CSWS director.

initiative, "Women in the Northwest," is bringing together researchers, advocates, and policy-makers to demonstrate the value of research on women, and to create and nurture alliances that strengthen our abilities to resolve difficult issues facing women and their families in the state.

Last spring, CSWS cosponsored a Women's Legislative Forum with the Labor Education and Research Center, and, in July, we completed work on *Women In Oregon: A Profile from the 1990 Census*. This publication will be valuable to researchers, advocates, community and state agencies, and legislators, as it provides the most current data available on the demographic, social, and economic conditions of women in Oregon. Beyond the practical usefulness of this document, we see it as a part of a long-term endeavor to make strong connections between the university and the people of the state—necessary to increase public understanding and support of the university's research mission.

In this climate, CSWS must raise additional money. Measure 5 has decimated budgets for other women's programs on campus that were formerly state-funded, and we are now providing support for many who would otherwise be unable to continue important work. Our new program priorities have created a greater demand on our resources, and ten years of inflation have increased our operating expenses. We cannot continue our current level of research and program support without additional funds.

For the first time, you will find an envelope asking for donations stapled into this issue of the *Review*. We are initiating a campaign to seek individual donations to build our endowment in order to better meet the expansive goals of the center. We hope you will send us a donation as we begin to rely more on those we serve to financially support CSWS-sponsored activities. Your contribution WILL make a difference.

In planning the celebration of our tenth anniversary, I am acutely aware of how much the past and future accomplishments of CSWS depend on the hard work, creativity, and dedication of so many of you. To the many people over the years—Joan Acker, Cheris Kramarae, and Miriam Johnson, the past directors; April Minnich, Lyn Cogswell, and Marcia DeCaro, the past staff; Diana Sheridan, Agnes Curland, Elizabeth Archers, and Louise Osterman, the current staff; all of you who have served on our committees or have been involved with our programs; those of you doing excellent research on women; and the many administrators and support staff across campus—thank you for sharing these past ten years. We look forward to working together over the next decade and into the new century to build an even stronger, more diverse, and powerful research center.

From the Editor

In the year since Oregonians first found themselves at center stage of one of the most politicized dramas of the decade, the images and lives of lesbians continue to be largely defined by the religious right through a rhetoric of intolerance, distortion, misinformation, and fear. In this issue of the *CSWS Review*, we have sought to move beyond the ballot box and media hyperbole to a deeper understanding of the authentic struggle that frames lesbians and their lived experiences. Our decision to take this theme was made a year ago as lesbians and their allies gained a Pyrrhic victory in the narrow defeat of Ballot Measure 9. We felt the election indicated a need for new meanings and contexts for lesbians' lives to counter the homophobic paradigm zealously embraced by the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA).

No longer can our critical reflections focus solely on feminism's conviction that the *personal is political*. Ballot Measure 9 has taught us that, as Representative Gail Shibley articulates, the *political is personal*. With a measure that sought to amend Oregon's constitution to declare homosexuality abnormal and perverse and to ban anti-discrimination protections for homosexuals as a group, the site of political authority has shifted to the personal rights of a targeted group. Buoyed by their 43 percent vote (the measure carried twenty-one of Oregon's thirty-six counties, and several others defeated it by only a narrow margin), the OCA launched new campaigns to legalize discrimination in numerous municipalities around the state. Our research, consequently, must provide a vehicle not only for deflating the spurious myths perpetrated by the leaders of this homophobic siege as described by Marion Goldman and Linda Kintz, but also for resisting their reconstruction of personal reality—a reality that has become accessible to Barbara May through decades of encounter inside and outside the academy.

The lesbian and feminist critiques serve to remind us that this research constitutes not only individual responses to oppression but also accounts for the coalescing of a discourse defining a vigorous community of considerable transformative power. As in any strong community, there is not one critical voice but a diversity of perspectives, each challenging the heterogeneous representation of gender that the religious right uses to justify its legal partition of the social landscape. Mary Wood's examination of the "scientific" sources of the religious right's perspective on homosexuality and discussion of the "biology or choice" issue raises pertinent questions for researchers currently working in genetic science. Robin Holmes dismantles the Christian fundamentalist certainty about *who* lesbians are by showing that for African-American lesbians, sexuality, race, gender, and class are not discrete subdivisions of their experience, but rather a complete identity that problematizes unilateral interpretations of homosexuality.

Diana Sheridan, editor and CSWS associate director, Elizabeth Archers, assistant editor.

The analysis by Dianne Dugaw of centuries-old ballads reveals the security *and* vulnerability women have found through seeking hidden asylum by cross-dressing. Marilyn Farwell, in turn, persuasively turns our attention to the validity of lesbian discourse. Replacing male, heterosexual literary paradigms with lesbian-centric ones, she establishes new territories for reorganizing the conceptual grounds of lesbian narrative.

By acting *with* theory, rather than *after* theory has been formulated, several writers lucidly contextualize strategies for resisting oppressive policies and structures. Harriet Merrick's successful lawsuit proved a courageous step in correcting the injustices of a lethal history of neglect in our state. With Anne Laskaya, Merrick dovetails her own individual case and the social, historical, and ideological events of her experience, reversing the reproduction of heterosexism buried within our legal system. This system, as Marsha Ritzdorf argues, is perpetuated in zoning patterns across America—patterns that have attempted to marginalize lesbians and gays while guaranteeing "safe" boundaries for the preservation of heterosexual family arrangements. Ann Bunnenberg describes the building of alliances for proactive change, and the unprecedented grassroots organizing and coalition building in opposition to Ballot Measure 9 that provided the catalyst for current activism by lesbians and gays in Oregon.

Here within the academy, the work of dismantling entrenched heterosexist and masculinist standards continues as well. Marlene Drescher and Jackie Balzer discuss current issues for lesbian students on the University of Oregon campus, identifying heart-wrenching problems and available resources. The historic formation of the President's Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Concerns and resulting campus-wide study is revealed in Sarah Douglas' intimate narration.

With this issue of the *CSWS Review*, we attempt to present the authentic voices of lesbian experience in these rancorous, dangerous, and confusing times. As we go to press, hip images of lesbians in pop culture have suddenly appeared in print and on television. kd lang flirts outrageously with Cindy Crawford, "lesbian chic" has become trendy, and talk shows exploit lesbian themes in competition for ratings; yet the military's "don't tell, don't ask" rule is clearly no gain for lesbians or gays in uniform, and the OCA continues to bully and intimidate state legislators opposed to their hateful politics. It is our hope to widen the lesbian, feminist discourse here at the University of Oregon, and (to use artist Chris Gonzales' word) be FEARLESS.

Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom

By Sarah Douglas

"Nothing I accept about myself can be used against me to diminish me." Audre Lorde, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger," *Sister Outsider.*

On the morning of November 29, 1990, a front-page story headline in the local Eugene newspaper, the *Register-Guard*, read "Gay prof, others press for dean's resignation." I was shocked to discover that I was the "gay prof" in the headline. As the co-chair of the President's Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Concerns at the University of Oregon, I knew that someday I might be publicly "out." However, this was the first time that I had ever appeared in the media as an identified lesbian, and the twin demons, fear and shame, immediately followed my shock. I am not a very public person and this event was to become a test of my inner strength and belief in myself, not only because I had really come out, but because of the controversial nature of the position I had taken asking for the resignation of a dean.

After the newspaper appeared that morning, Eugene and Portland media deluged me with interviews. Here was a "real live" lesbian, a professor of computer science, who was jumping into a media bonanza that later became national. Earlier, the law school had forced an instructor to apologize to his classes for coming out as a gay man. Very upset law students had contacted me. I talked to the instructor, Greg Johnson, and received from him the following statement that he read to his Legal Research and Writing (LRW) classes on November 16, 1990:

On October 11, National Coming Out Day, we discussed the Bowers v. Hardwick *case. In the last fifteen minutes of class I came out to you as a gay man and as a fairy. Since then, many students have told me that this was a very worthwhile experience. The administration has informed me, however, that several students felt I "held them captive" for the class period with my own "agenda." This was certainly not my intent. In no way did I mean to stifle debate. My desire was to make the basic principles of LRW come alive by using a very controversial case. If my tone was too strident, it is only because the subject matter is one I have great interest in. I can honestly say I apologize and I am sorry if any of you felt intimidated by the course or tenor of the discussion. The administration has discussed the students' complaints with me. [The associate dean and the legal writing director] have expressed their disapproval of this use of class time. I would be the first to admit that the final fifteen minutes of class had nothing to do with LRW. I suppose I stepped over the line regarding what is appropriate for class time. But I sincerely believe that you are all better off knowing I am gay.*

After talking to Johnson, and on the basis of numerous corroborations, I wrote to the University of Oregon president protesting the actions of the law school dean. A newspaper reporter who was writing the story later called and asked about my political position. He said that he had talked to some other faculty who also were writing to the university president. He asked if he could label me a lesbian. I immediately wanted to protect myself, when suddenly I realized that the whole case was about freedom of identity. He gave me the impression that a story would appear in a week. I was never informed that it would appear the next day, or that I would be featured as a "gay prof" in the headline.

But sometimes one's worst nightmares become a true source of growth. I was not sure how I could face my students and colleagues (I was the only tenured woman in my department), much less my parents. They had always given me the message that it was okay if I was a lesbian, just don't let anyone, including them, know. So, how did I change from a team-player into a troublemaker? Why was coming out—visibility—so critical to my political activism? And how did I, a lesbian-feminist and at times a separatist, find myself allied with gay men in a political movement?

The answer to these questions involves a subtle personal transformation that occurred when I had agreed one year earlier to co-chair the President's Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Concerns. A series of anti-gay incidents, some involving violence, occurring during and after the student elections in spring 1989 prompted the university's decision to create a special task force. Members of the university community had subjected the first openly gay male candidate for Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) president to verbal and physical harassment, including repeated death threats.

It is important to note that three previously elected ASUO presidents were lesbians, and were subjected to both sexual harassment and sexual-orientation harassment. For example, the 1984 April Fool's edition of the *Commentator* (a right-wing student newspaper) pictured ASUO president Mary Hotchkiss through a gun sight, referred to her as Hairy Crotchkiss and quoted her as saying, "I've had my finger in a lot of dikes lately."

This use of political satire to attack a woman on the basis of lesbianism typified the increasing harassment directed against lesbians and gay men on the campus. However, the university administration took no action until the violence of spring 1989. President Paul Olum vowed to establish an investigative task force. In November 1989, President Olum's successor, Myles Brand, appointed Cheyney Ryan and me to serve as co-chairs and by January 1990 the group consisted of twenty-one members. To create diversity among the students,

staff, and faculty, we attempted to balance the membership by gender, sexual orientation, and race. In addition to the officially appointed members, we had seventeen volunteers working on subcommittees.

The charge given the task force was to "investigate and document instances of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation against individuals in our university community" and to recommend policy changes and educational measures that would "improve conditions on campus for members of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community." (See Sidebar 1.) The task force was to publish its findings in a report.

Who was I in fall 1989? I had spent the prior six years getting tenure and being politely and inconspicuously lesbian. I lived in two worlds—a private personal one composed entirely of lesbians and a public sexless one composed mostly of men. I found myself in that situation because of the danger I sensed in really being out—danger communicated to me not only by the medieval misogynist institution of my academic department but also by feminists (both straight and lesbian) who did not want to undermine the credibility of their politics as "just a bunch of man-hating lesbians." I also felt no community with gay men in whom I had frequently observed unabashed sexism.

In 1989, I had come to the realization that I had to deal with the devastating effect of this self-erasure. For me, the opportunity to work with the task force was an opportunity to publicly face myself as a lesbian, hopefully maintaining all the sensitivities that I had learned from being a feminist, especially the hard lesson of accepting diversity.

Visibility and voice became a liberation from the self-hatred, erasure, shame, anger, and fear of being lesbian. I was no longer the secret warrior of Audre Lorde's *The Black Unicorn*:

I do not come like a secret warrior
with an unsheathed sword in my mouth
hidden behind my tongue slicing my
throat to ribbons
of service with a smile
while the blood runs
down and out
through holes in the two sacred mounds
on my chest.

Visibility and voice became major political strategies for me. The very presence of the task force attested to the *visibility* of lesbians and gay men on the campus and the final report and educational events attested to our *voice*. The task force became a medium through which I was able to investigate and understand my own silence and fear, and to reflect on differences between the ways heterosexual members and lesbian/gay/bisexual members of the campus see and experience prejudice and discrimination.

During its initial meetings, the task force identified central areas for investigation and formulated ways to explore them. Subcommittees began investigating the curriculum, diversity, employment, student services, and violence and harassment. To clarify the problems, each subcommittee met with individuals—including deans, department heads, supervisors, staff, and others—to determine what policies existed, if any. They also tried to determine current problems and discussed the prospects for change. Along with these efforts, the task force as a whole conducted three campus-wide surveys to assess the current experiences of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, as well as the current attitudes of the heterosexual population.

For me, the most important insight from the nine months of investigation was how overt harassment and covert denigration result in the invisibility of victims. Invisibility in turn allows the oppressors, and sometimes the victims themselves, to assert either that victims do not exist or that they do not experience discrimination and harassment. In short, I began to understand why "coming out" is critical for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals both in terms of the development of self and as a wider political strategy.

The majority of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, faculty, and staff who responded to our surveys had concerns for their safety on campus (77 percent, faculty/staff; 61 percent, students). Lesbians were more likely to fear for their safety (69 percent) than gay men (53 percent) or bisexuals (44 percent). This result no doubt reflects the increased vulnerability of all women to acts of violence in American society. Among heterosexuals, on the other hand, only 28 percent believed that anti-lesbian or anti-gay harassment on campus was prevalent enough to cause lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals to fear for their safety.

LINDA KLEMER

Escalating violence: Salem, Oregon's state capital, saw the initiation of Measure 9 on the ballot and the murders of Hattie Mae Cohen, a black lesbian, and Brian Mock, a disabled, gay, white man.

Nearly one-third of the gay and lesbian faculty and staff respondents and slightly more than one-half of the same student respondents had been harassed or threatened on campus because of their sexual orientation. One-quarter of the students reported they had been physically confronted or assaulted (Table 1), yet only 20 percent reported these incidents.

The task force also found that several incidents of severe physical assault had occurred within a year of the survey. A student commented, "I was sexually assaulted by two men on campus who knew I was a lesbian. I

SIDEBAR 1

In 1988, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education amended its equal opportunity and nondiscrimination regulations to expressly prohibit discrimination in educational facilities on the grounds of sexual orientation (Oregon Administrative Rules, Section 580-15-010; 580-15-065; 580-22-050). The University of Oregon's Statement of Purpose found in the *General Bulletin* states this policy: "to serve the educational, cultural, and economic needs of all Oregonians . . . does not tolerate sexual harassment . . . affirms the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, handicap, veteran status, and sexual orientation."

SIDEBAR 2

"These people are very sick . . . mentally ill, in fact."

"I'm not convinced that a problem exists to a large degree."

"The whole issue of homosexuality is disgusting. They are a group of people set on self-destruction (suicide, AIDS, etc.), similar to drug addicts and alcoholics."

"I am not very concerned about this issue."

"If this [changing the institution in some way] starts, are we going to provide these services for any minority that requests a task force? When does it end? Why can't people conform to the mores that are prevalent in society today? Do we [have to] redesign the system all the time?"

—*Creating Safety, Valuing Diversity: Lesbians and Gay Men in the University;* final report of the Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Concerns, University of Oregon.

was afraid to report it because I am not out to my folks. But the campus police didn't even believe me, so I dropped it." A faculty member reported being threatened by a series of written notes left under the professor's office door and in the professor's mailbox, "I was untenured at the time and felt I could not risk reporting it, but of course felt very vulnerable and intimidated."

These accounts represent only a small sample of the overt harassment described in student, staff, and faculty responses. Clearly, lesbians and gays have ample cause to feel unsafe at the University of Oregon, not an uncommon problem on college campuses. For example, the 1988 New York State Governor's Task Force on Bias-Related Violence reported that "while evidence shows serious problems for many groups [on New York State campuses], the most severe hostilities are directed at lesbians and gay men." The majority of individuals surveyed by the New York task force perceived of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, "as legitimate targets which can be openly attacked."

As one student put it, "Hearing and seeing verbal, physical, written harassment is very emotionally scarring, causing fear, stress, hatred just because you are living in this world." The threat or fear of violence may well account for the high percentage (69 percent) of student, staff, and faculty respondents who feel pressured into silence about their sexual orientation (Table 2). Overt harassment emotionally intimidates many members of the lesbian and gay community and their supporters into silence and coerces them into invisibility.

Another powerful tactic of silencing, covert denigration, works by the more subtle means of anti-gay/lesbian graffiti, jokes, indifference, and other gays, lesbians, and bisexuals pretending that they are heterosexual. Covert denigration can be seen in comments from a task force questionnaire survey of deans, department heads, and supervisors—many, who under the protection of anonymity, felt free to reveal their hostility toward lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (Sidebar 2).

Not surprisingly, lack of safety has its effects. Although the majority of the heterosexual population of students, faculty and staff perceive the campus environment as accepting of lesbians and gay men, only 30 percent of the lesbian and gay population rated it as accepting (Table 3). It is important to recognize that the gay and lesbian student, faculty and staff responses closely corroborate each other on lack of acceptance. The surveys suggest that heterosexuals tend to seriously underestimate the severity of harassment and discrimination for lesbians and gays.

My work with the task force did not leave me unscathed. After I was identified on campus as the co-chair of the task force, for three months I was obscenely harassed in public material placed on a campus computer by a student. Despite university policy against sexual orientation harassment, despite my complaints, and despite the identification of the student who did this, the university refused to protect me. Later, after the task force circulated its questionnaire survey to all faculty and staff, I received anonymous letters and phone calls telling me I was immoral and sick. I was shunned by colleagues who were embarrassed by my uncloseted self and were worried it would jeopardize their contacts with Portland industry.

My controversial defense of Greg Johnson's coming out resulted in other negative reactions. A law school administrator harangued the other task force co-chair to shut me up. Several colleagues told me privately they wanted to support Johnson, but felt it might jeopardize their reputations. Even the faculty professional association, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), supported the actions of the law school administration and stated in the media that Johnson was at fault because he introduced controversial personal materials not germane to his class topic. Finally, the university president's investigation of the case found the actions of the law school administration without "any discriminatory intent" and Greg Johnson's use of class time "went beyond the usefulness of pedagogical techniques." The December 18, 1990, Eugene *Register-Guard* editorial under a headline of "Law School Cleared," said that Brand's statements were, ". . . too mild. Johnson hijacked an hour's time in three classes to advance a personal cause."

I was, however, prepared for all these reactions and in the long run they were eclipsed by the courageous support of real friends. Looking back I see the beginnings of a turbulent education for the university community and the people of Oregon through public discussion of forbidden topics of hidden personal pain.

The final report of the Task Force, *Creating Safety, Valuing Diversity: Lesbians and Gay Men in the University*, made over one hundred detailed recommendations to President Brand and the campus community, many of which have been implemented and others which have not. While it is difficult to prove, I myself am convinced that the success of the task force in creating a visible group identity stimulated the hateful actions of the Oregon Citizens Alliance. (At every public meeting held in the law school to discuss the Greg Johnson case cited above, members of the OCA were present.) The language of Oregon's 1992 Measure 9 exercised a familiar mechanism of control by attempting to place into law the language that homosexuality is "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse and that these behaviors are to be discouraged and avoided." Who wants to be identified either to oneself or others with such words? I now understand that being able to embrace publicly and make fun of that very definition is the key to my own identity and liberation.

In closing, I want to return to my motivation for this essay: as Greg Johnson said, "I sincerely believe that you are all better off knowing I am gay." I want to reflect more abstractly on the relationship between feminist politics and gay politics.

Suzanne Pharr and Adrienne Rich have clearly articulated that feminists must address how sexism constricts choices and coerces gender identities and roles through compulsory heterosexuality. Judith Butler warns that feminism must critique the "naturalness" of gender and look closely at the relationship between gender and sexual identity in order to reap *any* liberatory benefits. Gender is the *effect* of heterosexuality. Butler, as a social constructivist, proposes that through social interaction and culture, a simplistic binary system of heterosexual female and male identity derived from the biological fact of sexual reproduction becomes "natural" and "normal." The subversive existence of multiple sexual and gender identities—bisexual, butch/femme, lesbian, transgendered, transvestite—that defy neat classification, reveals this artificial system.

For Butler, no identity, including a "gay" identity, is "natural" or unproblematic. Lesbians who come out experience a contradiction in that the very act of becoming visible creates oppression based on a discourse of pathology and deviance, and yet not coming out perpetuates oppression by erasure and exclusion. For myself, I would rather take my chances and adopt Butler's strategy of tearing down the very neatness of identity itself. And, in that very act of destruction, I hope to find my own uniqueness.

Readings

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Sarah A. Douglas, CSWS Affiliate, associate professor, Department of Computer and Information Science.

TABLE 1
Harassment and Violence Against Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals at the University of Oregon

	Students	Faculty/Staff
Physically assaulted	24%	3%
Sexually assaulted	18%	11%
Verbally threatened	54%	32%

TABLE 2
How out? Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals at the University of Oregon*

	Students	Faculty/Staff
Out to everyone	17%	10%
Out to majority	32%	37%
Out to half	24%	18%
Out to select few	26%	28%
Out to no one	1%	4%

TABLE 3
View of Campus Environment for Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals at the University of Oregon*

	Unaccepting	Accepting
Gay and lesbian students	57%	29%
Gay and lesbian faculty/staff	54%	30%
Heterosexual faculty/staff	24%	60%

*NOTE: PERCENTAGES DO NOT ADD UP TO 100 PERCENT BECAUSE OF NON-RESPONSE

"The Female Sailor on Shore." Anonymous engraving on a London broadside (c. 1820).

Mary Lacy's Ladies:

being a Consideration of the Divers Adventures with the fair Sex of this Woman Sailor and others like Her, who disguised as Men to Fight, Work, and Romance in Days Gone By; with Discussion of these Heroines in the further Light of Concerns of Lesbian Women of our own Time.

By Dianne Dugaw

"The Female Sailor at Sea." Anonymous engraving on a London broadside (c. 1820).

In the 1790s, a young English woman named Mary Lacy dresses as a man and lives some ten years in masquerade as a sailor and shipbuilder. *Her Life and Extraordinary Adventures* appears in print in 1807. A good part of Lacy's "adventures" are erotic. "I was in general well beloved by the women," she declares. With more detail, she says, "My mistress would stroke me down the face, and call me a clever fellow, which behaviour often put me to the blush."

How are we to read such "adventures"? Can we, late twentieth-century lesbians, find in Mary Lacy a sister, a prototype? Yes, and no. Before we look more closely at the content and meaning of Lacy's "adventures," we should consider the anachronism of the very attempt to imagine "the historical experience of lesbians." Our questions and concepts are bounded by the limits of our time and culture. Certainly our concept "lesbian" is valid and important, but it is ours—growing out of and tied to the preoccupations and circumstances of the twentieth-century world. Here I will cast light on Lacy and cross-dressing heroines like her. At the same time I will keep before us the terms, values, and constraints of our need to explain her.

Throughout Europe and Euro-America in the early modern era—roughly from 1600 to 1850—people entertained an ongoing preoccupation with the figure of the transvestite heroine, the woman who masquerades as a man and goes to war or to sea. This figure, which I have called the Female Warrior, flourished in the popular imagination, her story appearing in plays, poems, life-histories, and popular songs that were known to a wide range of people, especially people of the lower classes. For more than two hundred years, hundreds of such stories flourished in print and continued on in people's oral traditions for generations.

The adventures of women soldiers and sailors were the stuff of hit songs from the 1600s to the 1800s. From penny songsheets, members of society's lower orders—apprentices, milkmaids, servants, farm workers, sailors and soldiers, and young people—learned ballads with such titles as "Mary Ambree," "Polly Oliver," "The Female Drummer," "The Female Sailor Bold." As folks sang the ballads, some women lived out these adventures in disguise and in turn became celebrated in yet more songs and stories.

Rather like television shows today, Female Warrior ballads tell their tales in highly predictable ways. They are success stories, usually framed by a heterosexual romance as the girl ventures to war or to sea to be with her boyfriend. Female Warriors are devoted lovers with

"Mary Anne Talbot otherwise John Taylor Foot Boy, Drummer, Sailor"

an interest in fighting as well. However, the successful disguising of the heroine guarantees homoerotic innuendo. Men are attracted to her, thinking she is a man, and women fall for her as well. As one ballad from the 1700s says: "In soldier cloaths she look'd so smart, / She captur'd many a virgin's heart." Sometimes rife with sexual puns and bawdry, these songs always bend and parody gender categories as they play with the idea that a woman would want to act like a man, could do it, and should be celebrated for it.

What connection do songs about women sailors and soldiers have to historically documented cross-dressing women? Mrs. Carrie Grover of Gorham, Maine, sang songs about female sailors in 1941 and was asked by Alan Lomax, who recorded her for the Library of Congress, if she ever had "daydreams" about doing such a thing. She answered: "I sure did. I had daydreams about a good many of these songs. . . . I imagine things like this happened in the days gone by . . . but now they've got laws, so they couldn't get away with it."

As Carrie Grover suspected, women did "get away with it" in days gone by, and their stories are arresting. Reaching back through history, we find that several hundred disguised women were discovered among the casualties of the American Civil War. Earlier still, in one of its first acts, the fledgling United States Congress awarded a military pension to a Massachusetts woman named Deborah Sampson who fought in the Continental Army under the name of "Robert Shurtleff." In eighteenth-century Britain, several women soldiers appeared on stage and were touted in life-stories published by the popular presses.

How did these curious, bold, enigmatic masqueraders carry it off, and why? What part of their motivation for disguise was sexual? Economic? A matter of personal identity? Whom did they love, and how? What have these Mary Lacys to teach us? What about them perplexes and disturbs?

These are inevitable and worthwhile questions for us. Yet regard for the context of these women demands further and more self-reflective questions. To what degree do the very categories "economics," "sexuality," and "identity" misrepresent these women altogether? To what degree do the terms fail to fit the experiences of such women and the decisions they made? The Mary Lacys of "days gone by" bring us not only to consider their world, but deeply to reconsider our own as well.

The life stories of cross-dressing women resist easy interpretation. It is not certain when we encounter fact in them, and when fiction. For example, I have not (yet) established the historical veracity of Mary Lacy, though familiarity with similar accounts that have been corroborated and the details presented here lead me to suspect an actual woman did live some version of her "adventures." Real women stand behind most such accounts. However, even when we

can match tales of disguising women with historical records, we still have only begun to close the gap between life and narrative. After all, most of these sailing and soldiering women could not read and did not write their own accounts. For example, in 1750 a London newspaper printer, Robert Walker, published a book called *The Female Soldier*, the "life and adventures" of a woman named Hannah Snell (1723–92). Snell did not write, for the first page of her "adventures" declares the truth of her story in a statement sworn before the "Lord Mayor" and signed with an "X," "Her Mark." There is always a distance, and sometimes a considerable one, between the story as it appears and the woman whose story it is (when we find such a woman).

Furthermore, we do well to remember how and why such accounts from the past come down to us, and whose they are. Several conditions work to bring stories of cross-dressing women into print. The popular preoccupation with this heroine makes the stories possible—both in fiction and in real life. People of the early modern era recognized and expected them. Such women were familiar eccentrics; readers and listeners were used to thinking about them. In specific cases, particular disguised women were discovered. When this occurred, such women could, on the one hand, legitimize their behavior in terms of the popular story pattern. On the other, they needed to raise money because they could no longer participate in the economy as men, as they had been doing. Indeed, if the masquerading life worked for a woman, she did not write a history about it (as we are reminded by the recent example of Billie Tipton, the cross-dressing jazz musician who was discovered to be a woman only upon her death).

Women's reasons for taking up such masquerades were complex. Their published narratives often echo the ballad idea that "true love" prompts a woman to disguise herself to follow her man to war. However, other factors emerge "between the lines." An angry and determined Snell, for example, dressed up in order to find a husband who had deserted her. Other women may have enlisted out of financial desperation. Then, as now, work was easier to get and better-paying for a man. Charlotte Charke (d. 1760), an English actress of the 1740s, reports that she made a living in all sorts of male guises: grocer, valet, sausage seller, baker, and restaurateur. Charke also posed as "husband" in a masquerading marriage with another woman.

Woodcut illustration of a Female Warrior from an English balladsheet (c. 1650).

Male disguise enabled some lower-class women to partner with women in relationships that we, today, might call lesbian. Although she married and had sexual affairs with several men, Charlotte Charke was equally drawn to women and spent some years as "Mr. Brown" with a companion, "Mrs. Brown." Mary Anne Talbot (1778–1808), a female sailor of the 1790s, refers matter-of-factly in her life story to a long-term householding arrangement she maintained with another woman whom she describes as "a constant friend in every change I have since experienced."

However, while much about the Female Warrior attracts and resonates for us, she is ill-served by standard late twentieth century ways of talking about sexual identity and behavior. Indeed, the concept of sexuality as an "identity" with its trio of interrelated "orientations"—heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual—does not really suit the Female Warrior story. True, the boyishness of these women as they live out their seafaring stories resembles the butch aesthetic of those of us who are tomboy lesbians today—with our horses, softball games, and enthusiasm for tuxedos and cowboy boots. Moreover, these stories do have much that is parodic and queer about them, despite their playing within a system of "heterosexual" gendering. Yet the framing of the stories inscribes an overriding conclusion that we would consider "heterosexual" in that it neutralizes the stories' same-sex eroticism by (almost inevitably) abandoning it in favor of a female-male romance that usually ends in marriage.

Nevertheless, the ongoing play of homoeroticism within the frame constitutes a good part of the stories, arguably their *raison d'être*. Posing as a man, the Female Warrior is reported to appeal erotically to individuals of both genders. Moreover, her own pleasure in courting women often figures prominently in the narratives. In other words, these tales are sites for explicitly homoerotic behavior and innuendo. Encountering them, we cannot avoid imagining women romancing women.

Mary Lacy's story shows the ongoing same-sex eroticism that pervades these accounts. Appearing in the heyday of the Female Warrior's popularity, *The Female Shipwright* was published in New York at the outset of the nineteenth century. The title page describes the tale as the *Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Mary Lacy; Giving An Account of Her Leaving Her Parents Disguised as a Man; serving four years at Sea, and Seven Years Apprenticeship in Portsmouth Dock-yard. Written by Herself.* Born of poor parents in the county of Kent, England, a tomboyish young Mary rode horses as "a favorite diversion." When, at the age of sixteen, she discovers her boyfriend with another girl, she decides to run away: "A short time after a thought came into my head, to dress myself in man's apparel, and set off by myself." From that point to the end, she commandeers an identity as "William Chandler," with considerable panache in all arenas—including romance.

Throughout the story, her relations with women are pivotal. When she enlists to go to sea, the wife of the ship's master buys her clothes, and Lacy's remarks reveal her sense of the transformation wrought by this gift, which she says "occasioned me to think I was well furnished and every inch a sailor." She reports soon after a friendship with a female companion of one of the sailors: "With the young woman I soon became very intimate." Aboard another ship she becomes a carpenter's apprentice and describes her master's wife as "suddenly enamoured" and declares: "I was in general well beloved by the women." Moving from one such romantically tinged relationship to another, the account continually shows the erotic attraction between Mary Lacy and other women.

Charlotte Goodall as Adelaide in The Battle of Hexham *by George Colman, the Younger (1789).*

Lacy supplies vivid, indeed titillating descriptions of her sexual play with her women friends. When compared with other writing of the time, the account is exceptionally graphic in conjuring up sexual meanings. Lacy says: "I was acquainted with several young women, which occasioned [my master] to think that I was rather too familiar with them." She writes in tangible, physical terms: her mistress sits amorously in her lap. After playing cards with a servant girl, Lacy sleeps with her and recounts, "If I had been a young man, I could not have withstood the temptations which she laid in my way." Moving to the town of Gosport, she finds "plenty of sweethearts" and is "thought to be a very amorous spark." At another time, she reports being abed with three frolicsome women who "pinched me black and blue." At these moments, the disguised Lacy is presumably thought to be a boy. Yet, readers know she is a woman—as does the narrator herself—and her account continually sets before us the prospect of sex and romance between women.

Eventually Lacy joined with one "Sarah Chase" in a partnering relationship: "We agreed neither should walk out with any other person." When Lacy returns to her hometown, questions surface regarding her identity as "William Chandler." With a certificate of marriage, she settles with Sarah while rumors about her continue to surface. Eventually, suffering from injury and sickness, she gives up her masquerade. As her chapbook story winds to its close, Lacy bids farewell to Sarah, identifies herself as a woman, petitions successfully for a pension from the Admiralty, and on a dizzying final page marries one "Mr. S____, who had known her as a man." This conclusion to *Mary Lacy's Life and Extraordinary Adventures* thus conjures again an image of same-sex eroticism and coupling, even as she is heterosexually dispatched.

Dianne Dugaw, CSWS Affiliate, associate professor, Department of English.

In specific cases, particular disguised women were discovered. When this occurred, such women could, on the one hand, legitimize their behavior in terms of the popular story pattern. On the other, they needed to raise money because they could no longer participate in the economy as men, as they had been doing.

Engraving of Anne Bonney from Historie der engliesche zee-roovers *(Amsterdam: H. Uytwerf, 1725), a Dutch translation of Captain Johnson's* A General History of the Pirates.

What do we look for when we look for "lesbians"? Many women who identify themselves as lesbians today remark that they do not enjoy doing "girl things," that they have always wanted to do "boy things." This part of the picture certainly appears in the stories of cross-dressing women. But the term *lesbian*—like the term *gay*—today resonates with our culture's preoccupation with the body and sexuality. For us, "lesbian" is a sexual marker that designates a woman's sexual and romantic attachments to other women. Such attachments appear in these stories, but with a muting that does not fit our categories. I suggest that we take to heart how Mary Lacy encourages us to question our categories, enabling us to see the rootedness of these categories in history and culture. "Doing girl things" and "doing boy things" implicate a whole range of categories—economics, power vs. victimization, heroism and having a story, the psychology of being an active rather than a passive person, and, of course, sexuality and eroticism.

Which comes first: having the transgressive crush on the girl, or enjoying the power of wearing blue jeans and wanting to extend it to further arenas of one's life? Might the two experiences not be a dynamic interplay? The stories of Mary Lacy and women like her prompt us to look more subtly than we might otherwise do at women's choices and experiences (erotic, political, economic, etc.). Not only do these cross-dressing women allow us to see gendering and sexuality in history, but their stories underscore the constructedness of both categories—that is, their rootedness in the circumstances and sensibilities of particular places and moments in time.

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Have lesbians and gays traveled far enough through the heterosexually dominated world, coming out as we go, to say, "Yeah, we've been to the mountain?"

The OCA monster is nipping at our heels since we defeated Measure 9. Gay bashing is on the rise, and is the highest in the nation in Portland, Oregon. According to Donna Redwing, the director of the Lesbian Community Project, "There were over 1,200 cases of violence, and harassment reported in 1992."

This is frightening for me as an African American, recently in and out of the closet, mostly separatist lesbian, living in Oregon during these times. It is comparable to having South-African apartheid next door, and takes me back to the pre-Civil Rights South. I am forty-seven years old and I can still remember when I had to sit in the back of the bus as a child, many times on my grandmother's lap, crammed together with other black people, while the seats in the front of the bus remained empty. Those times seem to be creeping back again like fog into the night. Before too long, we could be surrounded by even more ignorance and forced into places that others have designated for us. I will not accept this!

The 1993 Washington march was a strong statement that said, yes, we are strong, we are many, and we are here to stay. This may seem strange to some, since we know that the AIDS epidemic is taking its toll on us in great numbers. This concerns me when I am confronted with "back of the bus" situations within the lesbian and gay communities. I am angry at how we can march in large numbers to make statements about our solidarity, but we cannot talk with each other, nor understand our differences on a sister-to-brother, sister-to-sister, or brother-to-brother level.

One of my main concerns here is limited time. It seems our communities are growing one way, yet diminishing in another with the AIDS epidemic and hate groups coming at us from all directions. We cannot afford to waste time fighting each other over something so stupid as racism and other "isms" when we are so close to becoming an effective, solid group.

Lesbians and gays who expect to make giant steps in the future toward a total acceptance into society had better clean up the mess within and around our communities—a mess that divides and holds us back from becoming one solid force against those who seek to destroy us. We need to build bridges between each other to move toward our survival as homosexual people.

LaVerne Gagchabib, CSWS Affiliate, doctoral candidate, Department of Sociology.

Truthfully, I would have to say that Measure 9 and the campaign against it was a positive experience overall. With some distance now from the daily angst and fever pitch of those grueling months before the November election, I understand that being involved in the campaign built my self-esteem, confidence, and sense of purpose. My convictions are sharper, my support system broader and more solid, and my sense of participation in a national—even global—freedom movement is absolute.

This is not to say, of course, that I liked living in a virtual war zone under a constant barrage of insults and lies. People believe that their kids are not safe around me, that I am to blame for the AIDS epidemic, and that if they don't watch out, I will be getting special privileges like job quotas. Forty-three percent of the voters in Oregon consider me unnatural, abnormal, and perverse.

An amazingly broad spectrum of allies emerged. I clearly remember the day Don Bischoff wrote a column in the *Register-Guard* (Eugene's daily paper) about the launching of the local pink triangle program, its connection to Nazi Germany, and why people in Oregon were starting to use it as a symbol of

Sally Sheklow, CSWS Friend, development director, Feminist Women's Health Center.

solidarity. That same day I was eating lunch downtown and a woman walked into the restaurant with a pink triangle pinned to her blouse. The realization that my oppression was being acknowledged and taken seriously by straight people was exhilarating.

I began to see pink triangles, "No on 9" bumper stickers, and "Stop the OCA" buttons in what I would have thought the least likely of places. Allies surfaced in astounding numbers. I spent one afternoon sitting in my car in a parking lot glued to the radio listening to the City Club denounce the OCA's measure and discuss the disgrace and ill-will it would bring to our community and others throughout the state. The athletics department at the University of Oregon publicly declared its opposition to the measure. The Religious Response Network threw their hearts into the campaign like nobody's business. Jews and Catholics and Unitarians and Presbyterians rose to leadership roles, organized, educated and fought for compassion, acceptance, and love. The *Register-Guard* and the *Oregonian* editorialized against the OCA's efforts to legalize bigotry and discrimination. The uglier the OCA's tactics became and the clearer the threat of Measure 9's passage, the more I felt myself buoyed by the burgeoning opposition.

My dedication to the long haul in this fight for freedom feels more like a celebration than drudgery now. I believe I will see a lesbian and gay civil rights bill passed in my lifetime.

Triple Identity Crisis

A Journey to Survive and Thrive

By Robin Holmes

Many speak of the process involved in initiating and maintaining a healthy, integrated sense of identity. The gaining of a positive identity and ultimately self, a developmental process in many respects, is reminiscent of participating in a long, tedious journey, fraught with pitfalls and disappointments that are tiresome, confusing, and strenuous. Often you are not sure if the apex will be reached, but some instinctual drive seems to push you onward. Although the inclusion into a group of others with similar ideas, faces, and shades often aids in this process, the loneliness and autonomy that is experienced is still evident. Perhaps this is why the journey can be so difficult. But what happens when the concept of identity formation is pluralized by two, three, and sometimes four factors? What role models and mentors do we turn to then? What happens when you have, for example, three separate identities: as an African American, as a woman, and as a lesbian; each with unique issues, difficulties, and rewards? How can you survive and thrive in a world of peers who seem so heterosexual, Euro-American, and male?

By age five, I knew a lot about myself. I knew I was a girl, but I did not necessarily act like one. Frequently, my mother would shake her head in despair and amusement when I would return home from a hard day of tumbling and fighting in dirty, torn clothing. She realized that I was a tomboy, something she accepted and nurtured, probably because she was a tomboy at heart, too.

My being a tomboy was not accepted by all, however. I often ran home crying to mom when I was excluded by the boys because I could not play when they divided the teams into "shirts and skins" (with or without your shirt). This double standard always left me feeling angry and confused, and I realize now, I began learning about male privilege and female exclusion at a very tender age.

I knew that I was black, because everyone in my family and almost all of my friends and neighbors were black. I also knew that, although I had a boyfriend, I liked my girlfriends in a similar way, but that did not seem to be anything to raise an eyebrow about. Although I was often teased and attacked because of my blackness and femaleness, both concepts seemed so salient to who I was, that it did not really matter; I simply fought back. Adding sexual orientation and my strong attraction to women only seemed to complicate matters. Somewhere in that early struggle to identify my sexual orientation I lost pieces of my other identities, and I still struggle to reclaim them.

In reflecting, I realize my sexual orientation had a direct impact on my self-development. As I began my quest to discover, explore, and know who it was that I wanted to love, I left the development of my other two identities (ethnicity and gender) by the wayside. I find myself, at this time in my life, just discovering how I feel about my ethnicity and how powerfully important that aspect of my identity really is to my sense of well-being and completeness. So, I have returned to the beginning of the path, trying to understand first my ethnicity and then my gender in a comprehensive journey that may seem familiar, but is, nonetheless, quite dark and lonely.

Since identity formation is a developmental process, I find developmental models to be quite helpful. Models allow me to see where I am, and where I can go (if I choose to), always at my own pace. And there are elders along the way, who have plodded along this path, and left markers for me to follow. Cross (1971) described a developmental model of black identity development, which he termed as the "Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience." In this model, blacks progress through several stages. First, we progress through the Pre-encounter stage where we are programmed to view and think of the world as being non-black, anti-black, or the opposite of black. Second, there is the Encounter stage, in which we become aware of what being black means and begin to validate ourselves as black people. Next is the Immersion stage, in which we reject all non-black values and totally immerse ourselves into black culture. Finally, in the Internalization stage, we gain a sense of inner security and begin to focus on things other than our ethnicity or racial group.

What is so interesting to me is the parallel between black identity formation as described by Cross, and lesbian identity formation.

Although this is not readily known, many elders have also laid the path for homosexuals to follow and call upon to avoid becoming lost on our journey to a healthy, integrated sexual identity. An example can be shared from Vivian Cass' work that includes six stages. (Note the similarities to black identity formation.) The first stage is Identity Confusion, in which we try to self-define who we are and resolve confusion regarding our homosexual feelings. In the second stage, Identity Comparison, we begin to feel alienated from the larger society as we compare ourselves to others and realize we are different. Through Identity Tolerance, the third step, we attempt to surround ourselves with others who are similar to us, often feeling that the lesbian reference groups are the people that are available to us, given our situation. We find that we will often alienate ourselves from larger society during this stage of development. In the next step, Identity Acceptance, we discover that there may indeed be a preference for homosexual social contexts, friendships, and intimate relationships. We find an acceptance of this realization as opposed to simply a tolerance. We are not forced simply to accept lesbians as the only group with whom we can identify, but we want to identify with this group because it is who we are. Identity Pride follows, a process in which we as lesbians may find that we can handle the incongruence between self-acceptance and society's rejection by revaluing homosexuals as more positive than heterosexuals; not only accepting homosexuality, but most definitely preferring it. In the final stage, Identity Synthesis, the "them and us" view no longer holds the same power, and we become aware that there are other aspects of our lives that are worthwhile and important to us. We also realize that we can initiate and maintain positive relationships with people other than lesbians.

I realized as I analyzed both of these models that the development of lesbian and ethnic identity were indeed similar. I take solace in the fact that I have already traversed the path to my lesbian identity, and I can, of course, guide myself through the acquisition of a positive ethnic identity in the same way.

As a child, I knew of no other girls who felt the way I did about my sexuality, especially among my African-American friends. It was not talked about, and most definitely not approved of, in my family, race, or culture. This I knew and believed strongly. Homosexuality, in general, is not accepted as "normal" in any culture (with the exception of some ancient cultures), but it is particularly scorned in certain cultures and ethnicities, African American being only one of them. I find this interesting, especially given the fact that lesbian herstorians such as Susan Cavin have traced the origins of lesbian societies in many ancient African countries. Somehow, when we came across the big sea in slave boats, these traditions were lost or forgotten, or even, perhaps, taken away. The initiation into Christianity, I speculate, also plays a significant role in the subterfusion of homosexuality in the African-American culture, given the strong stance Christian churches tend to adhere to concerning the topic of homosexuality.

In an attempt to understand my ethnic identity development, I must first take stock of where I am currently. I find myself quite interested in African art and history, searching with renewed fervor and interest to find out who I am and where I come from. Although, on one hand, I am disappointed that I am only in the "Encounter" stage in Cross' black identity model, I realize what is yet to come, and the ways I can become pro-active in moving forward in my developmental process. First, I must be where I am instead of trying to deny, minimize, or avoid the truth. I must affirm for myself that "only" being in the Encounter stage of development is neither good nor bad, it just is. Second, I realize I do want to continue developing a strong and integrated sense of ethnic identity. Allowing myself to explore new things such as buying African art or clothing or whatever else

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feels right to me at the time is essential for my own sense of development to occur. Last, and perhaps most important, is to have patience. Taking time to notice how far I have come and where I intend to go is the source of my peace, and I trust a sense of completeness will come.

I realize I have not spent any time discussing the third part of my triangle of identity development—my gender. Perhaps I have not addressed this topic because it seems so basic to who I am. One has to wonder, what is there possibly to struggle about? Nevertheless, being a woman and embracing those parts of me that are female has been, and continues to be, trying. Again, the interplay of cultural norms and values, as well as the issues surrounding my lesbianism, all seem to have an impact on this aspect of my identity. Is my behavior perceived as being unfeminine because of my lesbianism, or because I am a strong African-American woman? Do I have a fundamental responsibility to my fellow African-American brothers and sisters to propagate the race, make all who are involved proud, and embody as many positive aspects of what it means to be an African-American woman as possible? Perhaps that is the reason I received a Ph.D. before my thirtieth birthday, secured a prestigious position as a staff psychologist at a university, and began a private practice all in the first year of my grown-up career. Not good enough. I am not married, I am not bearing children, and I am not following the prescribed path to prove that I am a woman. I operate independently and assertively, am competitive and self-assured, and not out searching for the perfect black man.

So, how do I prove I am a woman? Unlike identity and ethnicity, there are few models of gender development that have been researched and written down. We really do not know what the process of becoming female or male is, and so we rely on mentors, teachers, parents, and others to help us on this path. This process becomes a little more complicated when you add cultural and societal norms—norms that are sometimes in direct contradiction to my reality as a lesbian. Regardless of the difficulty, I have learned more about this aspect of my identity than the other two combined. I have learned about being a woman by loving women. To think in this way is easy. I love the softness of women, as well as their ability to be strong. I love our reliance on relationship and our ability to nurture others, as well as our ability to be nurtured. I love our shapes and sizes, our weakness and vulnerability, our tendency to be sensitive and emotional. All of these things, to me, are uniquely female and uniquely part of me. To me, being a woman does not have to be defined by relationships with men and does not have to be sanctified by heterosexual marriage. I do not have to pretend to be weak and vulnerable when I am not feeling that way, or to simply appease others. I am not afraid of my power, I revel in it.

Another aspect of being female is the silencing of our experiences. We need to share with each other and talk about the journey that lies ahead. We need to learn from our mothers and our sisters what it means to be a woman, to be a lesbian, and to have a culture.

Female, African American, and a lesbian—all of this is who I am. How can all of these be combined and still thrive? Perhaps it is in the dissecting that helps answer this question. In understanding any part of our identity, we can and will understand all parts.

The path is familiar, because we are walking the same path. There may be different barriers and obstacles in the way: homophobia, racism, and sexism, just to name a few. But the path never changes. As long as we continue to walk, read the markers left for us by others, learn from the roads that we have already traveled, and trust in ourselves, we will eventually find our way home.

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This Work is Like a Marathon

"Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." —Martin Luther King, Jr.

By C. Anne Laskaya
and Harriet Merrick

In the struggle against homophobia some of us teach, some of us study, some of us withdraw for survival, for safety, or out of fear; and some of us confront prejudice face to face. These are strategies along a continuum of responses to prejudice that we all have available. But some people devote their lives, or large portions of their lives, to confronting prejudice. One such individual is Harriet Merrick, a University of Oregon student loan officer, whose most recent effort to fight homophobia led to an Oregon Court of Appeals ruling issued November 12, 1992. Coming, as it did, on the heels of Measure 9's defeat November 3, 1992, the case received wide media coverage.

Harriet was the sole plaintiff in a case that challenged the legality of a 1988 state initiative (Measure 8). If Measure 8 had gone unchallenged, the state would have been able to take personnel action against its employees on the basis of sexual orientation. Charles Hinkle, a Portland lawyer who argued the case, said, "This is a landmark decision in the state of Oregon. For the first time, a court has held that gays and lesbians are entitled to rights under the state Constitution" (*Oregonian*, November 13, 1992).

Harriet's case won on the grounds that the state could only learn of an employee's sexual orientation if the worker talked about it or expressed it openly. Writing the decision, Justice John Buttler cited Article 1, section 8, of the Oregon Constitution which protects freedom of expression: ". . .section 8 applies 'with equal force' to protect expression in 'political and industrial contexts' and 'in personal and institutional relationships.' Free and open expression about

Harriet Merrick

sexual orientation is clearly protected by section 8." He added that "the practical effect" of Measure 8 was to "restrain the right of free expression. . . . Not only does the statute discourage state employees from telling others their sexual orientation, it also discourages them from becoming involved in groups advocating gay and lesbian rights, a constitutionally protected activity, because such involvement might expose them to adverse personnel action. The statute's practical effect is to chill speech and other expression and to severely limit open communication by state employees" (taken from the Court of Appeals decision filed November 12, 1992).

Political work on behalf of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals can be risky, even with constitutional guarantees in place. Harriet has made some difficult career decisions. She has not sought advancement in her career beyond her department and has, instead, put much of her energy into her community work. "I didn't want to wake up and find myself working some place where survival might mean I was silenced or had to be invisible in these political struggles." She counts herself lucky because her supervisor is not homophobic, and, she says, "that's a working situation many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals don't have. Instead, it's a luxury right now in the United States. Everyone should be treated equitably, but that's not the reality."

The case, the brief but dramatic media attention, the momentary notoriety all belong to the public (or more easily visible) side of Harriet's actions, and this side of her life, what she calls her "civic responsibility," has a discernible history reaching back to the 1970s. She has served on panels, political campaign committees, and has frequently entered the public arena as a champion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual rights. She is disturbed by the conservative, anti-gay, Far Right because it at-

tacks basic American freedoms and because these attacks seem to be increasing. Constitutional rights like the freedom of speech, press, and assembly, as well as the constitutionally-constructed division of powers are, she says, under siege by right-wing forces. "This is where everyone's threatened. The Far Right has a great desire to control us, its opposition; they're trying to find ways to exclude us from the American process," she explains. Harriet attributes her motives to some very traditional beliefs: "I really believed all those American ideals I was taught in the eighth grade—freedom, individual rights, and equality. These are the ideals I see under attack by the Far Right." Harriet does not want lesbians, bisexuals, and gays to let the heterosexual community define "family" for them, and similarly, she does not want to let others define what patriotism is: "The gay, lesbian, and bisexual community is on the cutting edge of resisting a growing fascism, a growing extreme right-wing movement in our country which isn't about party politics at all but is rather about chipping away basic constitutional rights and blurring the separation of powers."

One key to struggling effectively against homophobia is to listen to the Far Right, she says. She studies the history of group relations, is an avid reader, and diligently listens to her opposition: "I listen to Rush Limbaugh and some of the Christian telecasts; I don't rush home to it, but I check in every week or so. These people are so afraid, and I try not to think of them as my enemies but rather as my opponents, and it's important to listen to your opponents. If we box people into a stereotype, there's little chance to have meaningful communication."

Her solution? Work for change. "I don't believe that if you ignore something it will go away. But to work for change demands patience and persistence. This work is like a marathon; there are sprinting times and there are relay times. There are times when you may run from A to B, and someone else will run from B to C, and then maybe you'll carry the baton again and run on down the road." Always, Harriet's conversation is interwoven with images of community. When she describes her educational-panel work, she says, "If I reach just one person when I speak, the work is worth it: that one person could influence someone else and so on. Speaking out against homophobia is like planting a seed; it may take seven years, one year, a week, who knows? But at some point, the words will matter. Or maybe, for people who are homophobic, it will take a third or fourth, or a hundredth encounter with homosexuality before they reconsider their biases. Or maybe my work will be like a small drop of water; eventually the drops will make the pond, and more and more people out there will get it. Then again, I may never see the fruit of my labor, or I may be helping to harvest someone else's labor. That's fine. Our work is like that."

But what of the private side? What motivates or compels someone like Harriet to take up a very public fight and place herself in potential jeopardy? The answers are located in a lifetime of experience ranging from a religious and parochial-school childhood to anti-war demonstrations in downtown Portland, from an ongoing struggle to be accepted as a lesbian within her own family, to a spiritual quest for community, from the Metropolitan Community Church to the Society of Friends. And for Harriet, the distinction between public and private is more a matter of convention than how she believes people live their lives.

"In my family, in my school, and in my religious instruction, I was, as a child, raised with the belief that equality and fair play were a basic part of America." The challenge to her beliefs came in the sixties when she began to question the disjuncture between experience and American ideals: "One time, my Dad and I were downtown in Portland when an anti-Vietnam war demonstration erupted into violence. Demonstrators were yelling everything at police, and police responded with batons and a flying-A wedge; all language broke down, and communication gave way to violence," Harriet recalls. Her undergraduate years at the University of Oregon were punctuated by protests and civil rights struggles. "History was being made out on the streets, and it felt like something incredible was imminent."

The public action, the commitment, the changes people created in the late 1960s and early 1970s inspired Harriet. When I asked her, "What inspired you to take on such a public role in the fight against homophobia?" she answered, "Community, the human community." And, indeed, it is clear that community is sacred to her. Her political and social commitments shifted, however, after she came out as a lesbian: "When I came out in the 1970s, I had to decide where to put my community involvement and my focus. I realized that no one was going to save us [lesbians, gays, bisexuals]." At the time, Harriet was still an undergraduate at the University of Oregon, and she became involved with a conference on campus. Her public speaking activity began then and there, and snowballed: "I was working with the Gay People's Alliance then, and I did about 200 speaking engagements. I had come forward publicly at that conference and declared myself a lesbian and spoke about lesbian issues. My name then circulated, and I was asked to speak before all sorts of classes and local gatherings." In the 1970s, she taught five courses at the University of Oregon called "Gays in a Non-Gay Society" sponsored by the Wallace School of Community Service and Public Affairs and by the Department of Sociology.

Then, in 1978, she participated in her first local political campaign, working for a Eugene city ordinance that would ban discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. The city council had passed the ordinance, but a group called VOICE (Volunteer Organization Involved in Community Enactments, VOICES of the People, Inc.) took up an initiative to repeal it. After the ordinance failed, Harriet hooked up with state-wide networks, lobbying the Oregon legislature for a law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

For a time she withdrew from the political front into the activities of the local Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). She served on the board of the church several times, studied for the ministry, and traveled to Los Angeles for intensive ministry training. But after a while, she was uneasy about hierarchical governance: "For me, I wanted a more horizontal structure, a more equitable structure to work within where the church's spiritual ideas of equality moved into practice." She reminisces: "The ideal body of believers is not the same as the actual organization of many churches which reinscribes hierarchies and power relations. I think it becomes difficult to separate belief systems from power systems that structure the actual practices of a church."

Harriet's personal spiritual journey and her search for community have been interwoven. When Harriet left MCC, she did so in part because she felt ghettoized: "I was restricted in a world of gays and lesbians, and I wanted to be more connected with the main heterosexual community. I felt too cut off. For a long time, MCC was nurturing, and it was comforting to be around lesbians and gays, but, for me, it became too limiting. With the Friends, I have a quiet place for contemplation, and the process of the organization is more horizontal. The Friends value consensus and unity as processes as well as ideals." And this is currently her spiritual haven.

However, if the search for justice and equality has taken Harriet on a journey in the political, legal, and ecumenical realms, it has also taken her on a journey within her own family. And perhaps the lessons she learned with her family gave her the wisdom to understand that change—real change—takes time. She has been out as a lesbian to her family for about seventeen years, but, as she says, "Things were pretty stormy for a number of years." She was in a long-term relationship for ten years, yet only in the seventh year did Harriet's mother invite her daughter's partner into her house. Harriet recalls that in 1977, when she was living in Eugene, a family member came to visit: "She said, 'Close your eyes, Harriet.' I said, 'What are you doing?' She said, 'Just close your eyes a minute.' Next thing I knew, I had water on my face. I said, 'What are you doing?' 'An exorcism,' she said. I couldn't believe it! I turned very Catholic on her and said, 'Now really, who's responsible for exorcisms? And what if I really had been possessed by demons?' It was hard not to laugh, but she was really sincere." Eventually, this relative became a strong agent for reconciliation within the family.

The change in the family was slow, and even now, Harriet says, "They would say they accept me but not my homosexuality—sort of, I love you, but not what you do." Last May, she and her partner had a ceremony at the Central Presbyterian Church marking their commitment to one another. Her family chose not to attend: "I wrote them a four-page letter, but they wouldn't come. I hoped they would, but I knew at some level that they wouldn't." And so, Harriet's family has not yet been willing to cross into this sacred space with her. "They get along with my partner, but they have an issue with my homosexuality and don't want to approve of it in those terms," she explains.

Indeed, some of the greatest work counteracting homophobia occurs one-on-one, within the family and between individuals. Harriet reflects, "Even though the law can help, it isn't going to save us; you cannot legislate people's ideas or attitudes. You can create a limited change that way, but the most dramatic changes occur on the personal level. The most powerful thing is coming out; it is the most personal and the most powerful, and individuals must make that decision in their own way and in their own time."

What advice would Harriet give to someone thinking about entering the civil-rights struggle for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals? "Coalition politics is extremely important. We can't possibly win our civil rights on a legislative level all by ourselves. Coalitions can't be about just politics or tactics, momentary alliances; if they are, then we lose something valuable. Coalition is a way of life. It's really what community is about."

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Harriet P. Merrick, Perkins Loan management assistant, Office of Student Financial Aid (left) and C. Anne Laskaya, CSWS Affiliate, senior instructor and associate director of composition, Department of English.

On October 15, 1987, Governor Neil Goldschmidt issued Executive Order 87-20 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation within the executive branch of state government (including the State Board of Higher Education): "No state official shall forbid the taking of any personnel action against any state employee based on the sexual orientation of such employee."

On November 8, 1988, in the general election Measure 8 passed, having the effect of repealing the Executive Order. ORS 236.380 became effective December 28, 1988. This statute eliminated protection for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in the executive branch.

A QUESTION OF CHOICE

Versions of How We Got That Way

By Mary Wood

Over the last few years, research in genetics, endocrinology, and neurobiology has been brought to bear on the issue of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity and behavior. In one of the most dramatic instances of this kind of research, Simon LeVay published findings in an August 1991 issue of *Science* claiming that gay men exhibit a different hypothalamic structure than do heterosexual men. Many lesbians, gays, and bisexuals have greeted this news with relief, suggesting that it may prove that we do not actually "choose" our sexuality, as conservative opponents have claimed, but that our sexuality is biologically determined.

While I welcome forms of research that seek to enlighten our understanding of sexuality, and I admire the courage of the gay men who have been at the forefront of this risk-taking research, I am convinced we need to be particularly wary at this point in time of the seductiveness of scientific discourse. It is also essential to acknowledge the historical alliance of such discourse with moralizing prescriptions for "normal" behavior. Given the efforts of conservative forces to set the terms of the discussion of sexuality, we need to be particularly attentive to the terms that those of us who support lesbian, gay, and bisexual rights use—terms like "choice," "identity," and "sexual behavior." Because the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) has complained that we "choose" to be homosexual, does that mean we have to prove that we did not "choose" our sexuality? Why do we need to assert this?

Several things strike me about the language the OCA used within the measure and the words and phrases that circulated during the Measure 9 debates. In view of the history of sexology, which rose to prominence at the end of the nineteenth century, I cannot help but notice that the OCA capitalized on terms—especially "perverse," "abnormal," "unnatural," and "aberration"—that can be traced to this early science of sexuality. I find that while most OCA arguments against homosexuality as an acceptable practice depend on Christian beliefs rooted in particular biblical interpretations—especially sections of Leviticus and Corinthians—the OCA discourse draws largely on terms associated more with science than with religion. The proposed amendment referred to "homosexuality" (a term used more in clinical and research settings than in real-life exchanges among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals) as "abnormal," a word that does not define an explicitly religious morality so much as a deviation from an established positivistic standard.

While Christianity may be concerned with defining the "natural" and the "unnatural," since God is presumed to have created a natural order, the business of science has been focused on delineating and organizing the "natural" into understandable categories. The OCA discourse clearly capitalized on this dual understanding of the "natural" as both a religious category given ethical weight (things and people should remain in their "naturally" assigned places) and a scientific category in which the ethical dimension is supposedly absent yet nevertheless reproduced with the added legitimacy of scientific authority. The power of the OCA approach lies largely in this linking of religious and scientific discourses: not only is homosexuality "abnormal," but in that abnormality it reveals its ethical failing. The pervasive use of the word "homosexual" reinforces this linkage because it invokes scientific analysis, marking what is at bottom a discussion of moral rights and wrongs with an aura of rational objectivity.

This blending of moral and scientific discourses in the discussions of sexuality is nothing new. It goes back to late nineteenth-century discussions of sexuality among a growing group of psychologists and sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and others who were interested in categorizing and defining the sexual behavior and traits of human beings. Much of the work of these sexologists is directed at classifying various forms of sexuality in the interest of deepening understanding of sexual difference, yet the moral qualities connected to certain sexual behaviors and traits are obvious in the writing of these men.

For example, Ellis devotes much of his investigation of human sexuality to a discussion of "modesty" as an innate characteristic particularly evident in women. As he explores examples of modest behavior across cultures, Ellis implies that the cross-cultural nature of modesty proves that it is an inherent feminine trait. This scientific "discovery" fits in quite nicely with late nineteenth-century gender and class ideology in which middle-class women were supposed to refrain from acting immodestly by not entering the public sphere as public speakers, political writers, actresses, businesswomen, or any number of other players in public life. Ellis' finding contributed as well to the exclusion of working-class women and women of color from the category of "good, modest women" since they moved and worked constantly within the public sphere.

As sexological studies have historically been implicated in the social and moral control of women, people of color, and lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, I am more than a little skeptical about theories that categorize sexualities into different innate types rather than examining the complex ways that we have been constructed as sexual beings within Western culture. My objection to biological explanations of sexual identity and behavior is not just a question of intellectual hairsplitting about the causes of "homosexuality." As a feminist, I see dangers in these explanations in that historical descriptions of biological differences, as in Ellis' discussion of modesty, have tended to become prescriptions. For example, the nineteenth-century belief, supported by medical "evidence," that mental activity led to the deterioration of women's reproductive organs engendered arguments against women's education. Descriptions of what women are became prescriptions for what women should or should not do. Similarly, racist descriptions of African Americans developed by nineteenth-century "race science" ended up supporting arguments against African-American education and suffrage.

Descriptions of "inverts" by Ellis and other early sexologists implied that even though these strange people should be accepted for what they are (since they cannot help it), they also should be recognized as physiologically different, as "other" than the "normal" person. The constructedness of the "normal" within sexuality is made apparent by the effort to account for those who did not fit the category. For Ellis, a "true invert" was distinct from "the women to whom the actively inverted woman is most attracted. These women differ, in the first place, from the normal, or average women in that they are not repelled or disgusted by lover-like advances from persons of their own sex" (*Psychology of Sex*, 1905). The true invert, on the other hand, is marked not only by her attraction to women, but by a number of other morphological signs. Writes Ellis, "there seems little doubt that inverted women frequently tend to show minor anomalies of the piliferous system, and especially slight hypertrichosis and a masculine distribution of hair. Thus, in a very typical case of inversion in an Italian girl of nineteen who dressed as a man and ran away from home, the down on the arms and legs was marked to an unusual extent, and there was very abundant hair in the armpits and on the pubes, with a tendency to the masculine distribution." Too much hair is not the only problem of these women. "The muscles tend to be everywhere firm, with a comparative absence of soft connective tissue; so that an inverted woman may give an unfeminine impression to the sense of touch. A certain tonicity of the muscles has indeed often been observed in homosexual women" and "not only is the tone of the voice often different, but there is reason to suppose that this rests on a basis of anatomical modification." The invert was a being whose very label revealed her to be a distorted version of the norm.

We need to be careful that we are not reproducing the definitions and morally based assumptions that informed the sexological theories of a hundred years ago. For example, in the research on differences, whether endrocrinological, genetic, or neurological, between "heterosexuals" and "homosexuals," are scientists and commentators inadvertently reproducing a view of living things that opposes a "norm" to "abnormal" variations?

In a recent article on the latest discoveries in homosexuality and biology, Chandler Burr insightfully concludes a discussion of research on sexual orientation in fruit flies by asking, "How can we equate fly behavior with a vast something that in human beings generates aesthetic and intellectual perceptions—with something that encompasses emotional need

and love and the pain of love?" (*Atlantic*, March 1993). A page earlier, however, he describes mutant male fruit flies—studied by biologist Jeffrey Hall for possible clues to human homosexuality—as "unable actually to achieve intercourse with members of either sex." Here he presents this particular kind of fruit fly as "unable" to be normal, as struggling for something—intercourse—it cannot "achieve."

The study and discussion of the biological etiology of homosexuality can all too easily fall into models observed by Ellis and Krafft-Ebing. In one of these models, homosexuality in both women and men is seen as retarded growth, a form of degeneracy, the failure of the human species to evolve the way it should. For example, Krafft-Ebing states that "gynandry represents the extreme grade of degenerative homosexuality. The woman of this type possesses of the feminine qualities only the genital organs; thought, sentiment, action, even external appearance are those of the man" (*Psychopathis Sexualis*, 1906). This kind of being or "man-woman," represents a falling away from the positive directionality of human evolution, a degeneracy not only in the individual case, but in the species. We hear the echoes of this belief in the theory of psychiatrist Richard Pillard and psychobiologist James Weinrich that gay men developed only partial sexual differentiation prenatally, failing to complete the hormonal defeminization necessary for them to become male.

Another major model used by turn-of-the-century sexologists describes gender behavior as biologically linked to physical sex characteristics. In explaining the female invert, or "urning," Krafft-Ebing says she "may chiefly be found in the haunts of boys. She is the rival in their play, preferring the rocking-horse, playing at soldiers, etc., to dolls and other girlish occupations. The toilet is neglected, and rough boyish manners are affected. Love for art finds a substitute in pursuit of the sciences" (*Psychopathis Sexualis*, 1906). In describing a particular case to demonstrate his theories, Krafft-Ebing barely distinguishes what he calls "the physical and psychical secondary sexual characteristics," which in this case "were partly masculine, partly feminine," and "Her love for sport, smoking and drinking, her preference for clothes cut in the fashion of men, her lack of skill in and [dis]liking for female occupations, her love for the study of obtuse and philosophical subjects, her gait and carriage, severe features, deep voice, robust skeleton, powerful muscles and absence of adipose layers bore the stamp of the masculine character. The pelvis also (small hips), distantia spinarum 22cm., critarum 26, trochanterum 31, approached the masculine figure. Vagina, uterus, ovaries normal, clitoris rather large. Mammae well developed, hair on mons veneris female." Here "masculine character" can constitute anything from "powerful muscles" and a large clitoris to a "love for sport." He ignores the fact that there may be compelling reasons for girls to prefer the physical freedom and assertiveness of boys' play.

Krafft-Ebing's denial of the societal or cultural aspects of gendered behavior finds its analog in the conclusion of psychiatrist Richard Green as well as of Simon LeVay that a large majority of children who perform gender-atypical play become homosexual later in life. LeVay, quoted by Burr in his *Atlantic* article, bases his conclusions on studies of monkey-play behavior, and finds this discovery compelling because play "is an example of a sex-reversed trait in gay people that is not directly related to sex." To him, the findings suggest sexual orientation goes deeper than sexual behavior. LeVay, Green, and other researchers, like Krafft-Ebing, fail to consider that powerful social and cultural feedback might help shape the later development of a boy who plays with dolls early in life (or the little girl who plays with trucks). Seeing behavior as a "trait," they ignore the powerful messages conveyed from birth about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of gender-marked play, as well as other strong societal forces and ideologies that have an impact on childhood behavior. Those messages themselves are apparent even in LeVay's use of the phrase "sex-reversed trait," implying cross-gender play is a reversal of the "normal" state of things.

Another model presents both gender and sex in dichotomous terms, even as it works to describe sexualities that lie outside the "norm." In this view, to be a gay man is to be like a heterosexual woman; to be a lesbian is to be like a heterosexual man. This dichotomous thinking is evident in Krafft-Ebing's description above of the "female urning" and her boyish pursuits. Krafft-Ebing and Ellis look for masculine characteristics in female "inverts" and feminine characteristics in male "inverts," remarking their absence with a kind of wonder when they fail to appear. In one case of female "homosexuality," Krafft-Ebing remarks, "In appearance she was thoroughly feminine and modest. Feminine pelvis, large mammae, no indication of beard."

In his study of the hypothalamus, LeVay hypothesized that a certain group of neurons "is large in individuals sexually oriented toward women (heterosexual men and homosexual women) and small in individuals sexually oriented toward men (heterosexual women and homosexual men)" (*Science*, August 1991). The fact that LeVay bases his research on earlier studies showing significant differences in these neuron groups between women and men, reinforces the fact that sexual orientation is here being posited as corresponding somehow to female/male sex differentiation. Beneath this correspondence is the image (should I say specter?) of the little boy who plays with dolls or the little girl who loves sports. We have two "normal" categories—boys and girls. The boy who plays with dolls is not acting like a boy; therefore he is (almost) like a girl. Boy and girl: these are the two basic choices available to human beings, and they are not really seen as choices at all.

Given the legacy of this type of explanation of homosexuality, when supporters of lesbian, gay, and bisexual rights make use of such explanations, we risk categorizing ourselves and others in fixed, predetermined ways. With physiological explanations of lesbianism, gayness, and bisexuality, heterosexuals can avoid seeing heterosexuality as a mechanism of power that works to shape us long before we are born. They can think instead, "Oh, this is just the way I happen to be." Is it an accident of biology that most people become heterosexual given that we are bombarded with images and messages about heterosexuality almost every moment of our lives? We risk ignoring the fact that aside from being the dominant form of sexuality, heterosexuality is, as Adrienne Rich has written, compulsory.

In the United States, heterosexuality and homosexuality—to use the terms of nineteenth-century sexology—are not just two innocuous alternative forms of sexuality that happen to have appeared randomly in the bodies of humans; they are rather highly complex sets of behaviors and identities ("behaviors" and "identities" themselves complex and culturally specific concepts) that come into being in relation to each other under specific historical and cultural conditions. Heterosexuality, like homosexuality, is a relatively recent concept that became increasingly hegemonic throughout the nineteenth century as the United States industrialized and saw the growth of a middle class that worried obsessively about its own demise. In the face of rising rates of foreign immigration, the migration of African Americans to the north, and growing urban populations, white middle-class American educators, politicians, writers, and physicians—from respected author Henry James to feminist economist Charlotte Perkins Gilman—warned middle-class readers that they needed to reproduce if they wished to remain in control of the country. "Homosexuality," coined as a term in the 1870s, came into being in medical discourse at the same time that this hysteria over the failure of middle-class men and women to reproduce adequately was at its height.

This is not to say that before this time women did not have sex with women, and men did not have sex with men. Rather, "having sex" came under the control of medical science and the state so that sexuality was both defined and produced (as theorist Michel Foucault has pointed out) in a way it had not been before. How could someone be homosexual or heterosexual when there was no language to define either such being or the distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality?

Possibly, genes do exist for homosexuality, but the search for and need for such genes are already implicated by the history of sexology and its purposes. As we pursue research into the biological roots or correlates of lesbianism, gayness, and bisexuality, we need to be aware of the ways we are being constructed as we make such a quest. What if I have no such genes and yet I feel I am a lesbian? What if I have no such genes and yet I choose to be a lesbian? What if, in some future time, expectant parents screen for the genes and abort when they find the child may become lesbian or gay? How will people feel if they think they are "carriers" of such genetic markings?

Perhaps more importantly, when we speak of "homosexuality" being traceable to physical causes or components, what do we mean by "homosexuality"? Do we mean the urge to have sexual relations with someone of the same sex? If so, what do we mean by "sexual relations"? Is "sex" characterized by intercourse, by erotic touching? If so, what makes touching erotic? How do we draw the line between an embrace of friendship and one that is "sexual"? Given that erogenous zones vary depending on what culture we are raised in, how can we say that the desire to touch someone of the same sex in certain places is physiologically determined?

My observation is that one way researchers of lesbian, gay, and bisexual studies can make a significant contribution is to expose the construction of the very category of sexuality for heterosexuals as well. We can open up new questions about beliefs that have largely been accepted as givens, such as the belief that there is a firm line between heterosexual and lesbian/gay/bisexual experience or the belief that if experience is constructed then we must be choosing it. Ultimately, we may arrive at a place where the question of whether or not we choose to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual is a moot point. What a wonderful choice any of them would be, after all.

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The Motherly Face of Evangelical Activism

A Catholic church in Hillsboro became the target of Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) supporters after the church's pastor spoke publicly against Measure 9. Other graffiti left by the vandals included "OCA" with a circle around it, "Yes on 9," and "Kill gays and Catholics."

By Linda Kintz and
Marion Goldman

Women in evangelical fundamentalist Protestant churches have been central in opposing lesbian and gay civil rights. They provide what Nancy Maclean (1991), in another context, called the "humanizing façade" for groups like the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA), lending them a motherly face that may not look like hatred. In this article, we will examine women's participation in the evangelical right and the ways in which a broadly sympathetic gender ideology appeals to women and masks the politics of hate.

The coherent ideology of Protestant fundamentalism developed in the United States between 1910 and 1915, addressing different factions that rejected mainline theology and advocated living by the literal interpretation of the Bible, in particular the New Testament. But fundamentalism has come to describe a variety of religious movements in different cultural contexts, all of which portray themselves as fighting back against contemporary, secular social organizations. Protestant, Islamic, Jewish and other fundamentalisms define outsiders as enemies, whether they are liberal agents of modernization or moderates who do not embrace fundamentalist tenets (Marty and Appleby, 1991).

All fundamentalisms share a patriarchal structure founded on an exclusively male image of a deity. And all have a common hierarchical organization, in which God rules over man, fathers rule over mothers, and parents rule over children. But in the United States, Protestant fundamentalists differ in their attention to the political sphere. Some groups simply wish to control their own private lives within the family, while others believe that it is critical to make public life compatible with the New Testament. These activist evangelical fundamentalists are central to the religious right, but some of their messages reach far beyond their churches and appeal to non-activist moderates as well. The messages most attractive to a broad range of Americans involve symbolically recapturing the unrealistic icon of the family of the 1950s: a white family with a strong, male breadwinner, a gracious home-centered mother, and smiling, obedient children. It is a family that never really predominated in American society (Skolnick, 1992), but it has become an ideal for fundamentalist activists and their sympathizers because it symbolizes the patriarchal order described in the New Testament.

Evangelical fundamentalists assert that the appropriate moral shaping of the next generation can lead to eventual transformation of the whole society, and this importance of children makes women central. This religiously grounded imperative provides women with public and private affirmation and moral authority, promising them a way to better their lives through religious/political participation (Warner, 1993). Women often convert to fundamentalism before their husbands do because those faiths affirm marriage, motherhood, and the relational values on which they are founded. For women, participation in religion and related political action often transforms subordination into agency.

What might in progressive feminist terms be seen as female agency here manifests itself, as it did in the groups Maclean studied, as "some women's drive 'to preserve life as they know it' within their own households or communities" and "to collaborate in attacks on other women and men . . . against those personifying the perceived threats. In effect, their female consciousness help[s] to draw boundaries against other groups and justify aggressive action against them." Describing the activities of these women helps resist a tendency to see women's activities as always progressive, a view that makes it hard to recognize or explain "how some women's efforts to defend or advance their own interests lead them to collude with reactionary forces engaged in assailing the rights of others. Coming to terms with the ambiguity of female agency will no doubt prove disturbing."

Pat Buchanan himself acknowledges the power of women's activities in a blurb on the back of a book by Beverly LaHaye, founder of Concerned Women for America: "No group in this nation can claim to have done more to stem the tide of decay in America than Concerned Women for America." The pro-family movement, in fact, traces its origins to national feminist gatherings that shocked traditional women, both housewives and career women, into activism. The active participation by lesbians and the focus on the limitations imposed on heterosexual women by the institution of motherhood sparked a wholesale rebellion, drawing the line between "women" and feminists in a way reminiscent of the division between the True Woman and the Mannish Lesbian and New Woman earlier in the century (Smith-Rosenburg, 1989). At the center of this backlash was a defense of the sacred link between femininity and motherhood, whose definition occurs at the

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Children prove to be indispensable props for women who fear that without a sacred notion of gender, they will be expected to compete with men, only to be found lacking.

center of a messy, tangled intermixture of sacred and profane, pure and polluted, "normal" and perverse.

The attempt to protect a sacred identity reveals the shame and humiliation that underlie American culture's duplicitous reverence for women and children. Children prove to be indispensable props for women who fear that without a sacred notion of gender, they will be expected to compete with men, only to be found lacking. They and their children will then be left at great risk in a society they correctly see as based on masculine competition, whether described by free-market theorists or enforced by liberal institutions.

This notion of sacred motherhood organizes representations of two kinds of bodies: the virile male, the Father; and the cleaned-up, asexualized woman, the Phallic or Pure Mother. This logic also works in the interests of the body politic that must be similarly purified or cleansed of its messy residue, variously represented by women and other groups that are feminized, each in specifically different ways—people of color, lesbians and gays, Jews, and those who engage in manual, dirty labor. Their representations often take the form of threatening floods, contagions, diseases, decay, suffocating fluidity. Interpreting this fluidity as eerily dangerous justifies representing the victimizer as victim. As Michael Warner (1993) argues, "What queers often forget, jeopardized as we are by resurgent fundamentalisms in the United States, is that fundamentalists themselves are not persuaded by 'moral majority' or 'mainstream values' rhetoric; they, too, consider themselves an oppressed minority."

The irony, of course, is that negative codings of threatening others must be continually *produced* in order to enable the group of insiders to constitute its own boundaries, coherence, and legitimacy. The threat is, at one and the same time, necessary for the production of—and the object of a violent reaction by—a vigilant social organization focused on cleanliness, purity, and decency according to a strict, literal interpretation of selected passages from the Bible. Pat Robertson, Patrick Buchanan, Rush Limbaugh, or Robert Dornan—highly visible, celebrity defenders of morality—are only possible because the discourses that produce feminists as disgusting and homosexuals as perverted simultaneously produce the necessity of their positions as moral defenders of the faithful threatened by those dangers. Motherhood is thus about the enforcement of the Pure Mother, rather than an investigation of the economic and social circumstances of mothers in general. This is a restrictive definition of mothers that shows up in discussions of poverty, functioning as "the camel's nose under the tent for feminists" according to Connie Marshner (1990), in a book of advice for Christian mothers. Programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children, she says, are "couched in a rhetoric of 'enabling the poor to achieve self-supporting status,' and together they add up to $2 billion a year of federal subsidy of the destruction of motherhood." Poor mothers do need their lives changed, but only the church can do it: "The church—through its practical ministry and its preaching of Christ and Him crucified—can change lives; government programs cannot. . . . Our help is in the name of the Lord, not in Washington, D.C."

This view of poverty links motherhood to the sacred status of free enterprise. For Pat Robertson, the eighth commandment is God's recognition of the sanctity of private property. "You shalt not steal" is about taxes: "What a man has accumulated was his. In God's order there are no schemes of wealth redistribution under which government forces productive citizens to give the fruit of their hard-earned labors to those who are nonproductive." This view, collapsing religion and politics together, also accompanies a very different understanding of the Constitution than that held by those who see it as a secular document and argue for civil rights on secular terms. For, as Tim LaHaye writes, the founding fathers understood that the Constitution is divinely inspired and must be interpreted literally, as the Bible must, for "government is of divine origin, not human."

Though sacred motherhood props up a misogynist institutional structure, it also provides many women with complicated and often powerful role models, with mothers analogous to the Holy Spirit. As Marshner explains, "the essence of femininity is response. The church is feminine because it is a response to a call from God. So, for that matter is creation." Because her role is so difficult, the mother takes on the characteristics of the real hero in this struggle, for "it is a decision of the will that enables a mother to submit herself to the reality of other people's needs," a decision much more difficult than that of the husband. "Whatever his personal, intimate response to his family, his primary responsibility is to go out and earn money among strangers so that the mother of his children can minister

personally to them." The most heroic, even revolutionary, of all decisions is the one to devote oneself to one's children: "This is a free country. But women are not free to be mothers." Paradoxically, thus, great will power is required to lead a life of Christian dependency and submission, and this life may, in fact, be more appealing to many women than that offered by secular culture, which has few resources and much contempt for women responsible for children.

The model for submission is Christ: "After all, even God Himself did what He is asking mothers to do . . . He took upon him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death." Though the mother is defined as selfless, she is nevertheless provided with the most secure and legitimate self imaginable in this logic, a proximity to God greater than that available to men, since, as Marshner states, "Our Savior Himself came into this world as a dependent."

By now, however, the admonition to women to be submissive and useful to men has become double-edged. For this view of mothers also undercuts the closeness of the relationship between men and the Creator, men created in the image of God. For here it is women who seem to have been created in that image. Marshner asks, "How can we possibly imitate the Creator in our relationships if we can't learn from our mothers to give of ourselves, to offer ourselves in love to another, and to control our fleshly impulses for the sake of another?"

This kind of strength counters the anxieties of modernity, for in traditional society, according to this mythical version, a woman who knew who she was really could have it all. Her domestic work was at the center of society, even situating her as the model of the hero of capitalism: "And since whatever she did achieve benefited her entire clan, it benefited her as well. Free enterprise in its most original form," Marshner observes.

In this logic, of course, which is not only religious but more broadly patriarchal, deep worries about children are addressed. By this logic, every mother should be ideal—never is—and has always already failed. The deep guilt that is culturally produced is highly useful, since motherly guilt is notoriously resistant to argument. The most painful, visible bruise or wound within this guilty miasma reminds women of their responsibility: "The biggest losers in most cases are children," according to Marshner. Those nearest to children both notice that pain and shoulder the blame for it.

Yet as natural to motherhood as the supposed glow of nurturing are deep depression, loneliness, exhaustion, poverty, and shame. Countering any doubt about women's primary responsibility for childcare requires a turn to absolutist formulations of fundamentalist teaching, opposing God to Satan and making clear how indispensable women are. A mother can either "resist the dependence or find grace in it. That's all there is." These clear binaries bring understanding under control, with only two responses available: "One, decorate it how you will with high-sounding rhetoric, comes down to this: 'I don't want to.' The other comes down to this: 'Yes, Lord.' Rebellion or submission. No other choice." And the mother must teach a literal view of language: "[T]he child will not learn that words mean something but rather will become distracted with too much context. If 'come' does not mean the same thing from everyone who says it, the child will suspect that other words mean different things depending on who says them. And then the child will spend precious time trying to interpret what is said and deciding whether it must be taken seriously rather than simply obeying," (Marshner, 1990).

Christian advice to mothers is part of a defense of America's mission in the world. As Irving Kristol, one of the conservative intellectuals of the New Right, argues, "If you de-legitimize this bourgeois society, the market economy—almost incidentally, as it were—is also de-legitimized. It is for this reason that radical feminism today is a far more potent enemy of capitalism than radical trade unionism." It is for this reason, as well, that the threat represented by multiculturalism and deconstruction, which question and undercut any sort of binary thinking or absolutist logic, are intimately and powerfully linked to the way the mother raises the child. For in this conservative view, refusing to obey without question, or suggesting that there might be many ways of assessing value and morality, can only lead to nihilism, which Kristol calls "*the* problem in our future."

Revealing a profound distrust of thinking and of people in general, based on the belief that people act only according to self-interest if they are not reined in by God or an absolutist definition of God, Kristol shows how the domestic issue of child rearing is related to the almost vicious waging of what the Right calls the culture war. For issues of meaning and a resistance to critical questioning are at the heart of the defense of "capitalism, the American political tradition, and bourgeois civiliza-

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One of the most important factors in America's frightening and violent turn to the right may, in fact, be the women who find affirmation within the evangelical right and the motherly face it provides them, an affirmation with devastating effects on many other groups and other mothers.

tion grounded in religious truth." Women's resistance to this self-sacrifice is no small matter; it challenges "the very principle of sociality," as Julia Kristeva (1982) argues, seeing this crisis of identity as exposing the "increasingly dark caverns of male paranoia."

It is thus only heterosexual, Christian Mom's presence as primary caregiver that can, as Marshner says, preserve America from a "disorder between parents and children, which yields in time disorder between adults, which yields in time the destruction of the human community." And further, "When the most fundamental human relationship, that of mother to child, is compromised, mind and flesh are disordered, reflecting the disorder introduced with the Fall." Perhaps most importantly for those preachers and politicians whose very legitimacy depends on faith, faith itself rests on this mother who provides the model for submission. Who can we have faith in, if not our mothers?

Women's role is thus key to "decency," to contemporary culture's flight from the cities in an anti-urban "folking" that draws on an unacknowledged logic of purity in which the ravages of Reaganomics, a global economy, and modernity are resisted by drawing together with "people like us" in a response to a world perceived as increasingly hostile. This contemporary secession from cities and from public responsibilities such as taxation for schools finds very diverse kinds of people seceding. The successful, propertied classes retreat from urban areas to their armored sanctuaries, described by Faith Popcorn, the market analyst, as cocoons that would lead to marketing possibilities such as takeout gourmet foods, home entertainment centers, and home security systems. Global corporations, too, seceded, jettisoning many of their responsibilities to the public sphere during the anti-regulation days of Reaganomics. Evangelical Christians retreat to communities of other born-again Christians, where they open private religious schools or engage in home schooling. Far-right supremacist groups escaping to "pure" places like the Pacific Northwest are only the most extreme form of this phenomenon in which a sense of security, highly dependent on purging difference and reconstructing communities of the Same, becomes its own virtual reality.

The power of women on the evangelical right is paradoxically the complement of the "remasculinization of America," in Susan Jeffords' (1989) words; the pure Mother exists side by side with the patriarchal Father, each requiring the other. And the human face of the resistance to modernity is the Motherly woman. The backlash against angry cities full of racial minorities, socialists, bureaucrats, perverse artists, Jews, feminists, and homosexuals can no longer be best represented by the straight white man, like the character played by Michael Douglas in the movie, *Falling Down*. Instead, the human face of backlash is now a very feminine one, the imaginary woman, the perfect mother advocated by the Evangelical Right and embraced by a wide spectrum of other Americans, both mainstream and on the Far Right. One of the most important factors in America's frightening and violent turn to the right may, in fact, be the women who find affirmation within the Evangelical Right and the motherly face it provides them, an affirmation with devastating effects on many other groups and other mothers.

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I came out as a lesbian about ten years ago. I was twenty-one and in my first year of university. As an instructor of undergraduates now, I realize how meaningful it would have been for me to have had an instructor like me. Years ago such openness would not have been feasible for a graduate student en route to becoming a professor. Without the groundbreaking courage of queers inside the academy and outside who risked coming out before me, my experience as both an instructor and a student would have been vastly different. I am out as a lesbian to carry on for those brave people, but ultimately, I am out as a lesbian because to do otherwise would be to strangle in my own silence. I do not like secrets, having grown up with such a frightening and compelling one.

The climate around Measure 9 undermined my confidence more than I expected it would. Before the election, I had to develop a course outline for a class I was teaching the following January. My decision to include the lesbian and gay movement in the course curriculum along with other social movements was more loaded than usual. I realized that if the measure passed, I could be breaking state law, rather than pushing unofficial boundaries of tolerance. Not only would I have to consider the possibility of formal sanction, but more likely, I would encounter student complaints about me as an instructor and my department or the university probably would fail to back me up. I made the decision to proceed regardless, but I did not do so from a position of defiance or strength. It just seemed the most honest solution.

While I was relieved that Measure 9 did not pass, I was not able to shake completely the feelings of bitterness that the campaign had engendered. On the positive side, I appreciated the broad-based coalition that organized against the measure. There was such affirmation in seeing so many people, queer and straight, who were concerned enough to organize so effectively. But as I said to my students when I taught the section on the lesbian and gay movement, many of us would have preferred to put our energy into more constructive rather than defensive efforts at community building.

Teaching the lesbian and gay movement this past quarter was one of the most rewarding teaching experiences I have had. The level of critical discussion in my classroom was impressive. My evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. I phoned my parents, who like many parents, fear for the safety of their openly lesbian daughter, and I told them about the success of the course. I wanted them to see my way of living as courageous rather than foolhardy. I wanted them to shift their critical focus to relations of power that make my life dangerous, rather than wonder whether or not the choices I make are wise. I think they have begun to understand, but it is important to remember that the world has changed. They said they were glad that my timing worked out okay. They know what would have happened thirty years ago, and they also know what could happen today.

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I have never considered talking or writing about "being lesbian" because I do not think that what I do in the privacy of my home or my bedroom, or who I love or how I love is a topic for conversation or anyone else's business. Although I have never hidden the fact that I am a lesbian, I am generally a private person. The recent hot and fierce political battle over Measure 9 has made me realize how much ignorance there is about lesbians and gays.

Discrimination and hate are not new to me. Because I am a woman of color, because I am a child of a biracial marriage, I have seen discrimination from the beginning within my own family. I have grown up fighting this racism; I have lived with hate, violence, stares, and segregation, so adding homophobia to the list of reasons people may hate me is just that: only an addition to the list.

At forty-nine, I realize that I have made it. I have survived, and perhaps this is a good time to look at the broader picture. Every day there are senseless deaths. Innocent people are hated and killed because of their skin

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color, spiritual beliefs, or their sexual orientation. You can read the papers every day, watch the news: hate crimes are increasing, child abuse is increasing. For me, the broader picture is not just the Oregon Citizens Alliance, not lesbian rights or who I am as a lesbian, but the big picture is simple, basic human rights and that is what needs to be talked about, written about, and worked on.

The Oregonians who voted for Measure 9 believe that gay people are perverse. They simply do not know who we are. They do not know that we are the people next door, in the office down the hall, in the supermarket, at church, or anywhere else they might be. The people we can reach are the people who need to know and may even want to know that we are just human beings who get up every morning, brush our teeth, eat our breakfast, and go to work. They need to know that as lesbians, we have periods, babies, and menopause. Some of us are mothers and grandmothers. We care about the homeless in our communities, starving children in Somalia, the mounting cost of health care, and the increasing devastation of child abuse.

I believe a very simple way to fight for basic human rights, civil rights, is to be who we are. We all have a right to be here, have a job, a place to live, proper health care, and an education, and we all have a responsibility to respect each other's rights.

WHEN IS A LESBIAN NARRATIVE?

By Marilyn Farwell

Ten years ago, I attended a conference at Stanford University on women poets and poetry. It was an ambitious event that gathered together women poets such as Judy Grahn and Denise Levertov along with literary critics who were then writing on women's poetry. I was scheduled to talk on Adrienne Rich at the last session of the conference, midday on Sunday, a notorious time that usually draws a small audience of those who could not arrange for a flight home earlier in the morning. The audience, however, was not disappointing. The first papers—I was scheduled to speak last—were interesting but predictable analyses of Rich's early poetry. My paper dealt primarily with her prose and with her development of the idea that the word *lesbian* was not simply a clinical term but a metaphor for women choosing themselves, for identifying with other women, and for the creativity in all women.

For the first time in my academic career, I was going to talk about a lesbian topic. As I read my paper, I barely noticed a number of people getting up to leave. "Going to the bathroom after a long session and a long conference," my mind registered in the few spaces that were not concentrating on the delivery of my speech. In the discussion session after the paper, a restrained pandemonium broke loose. One of the prominent poets in the audience objected to the characterization of creativity as lesbian because, she said, she liked men. I sat, naively surprised at the uproar, wondering how a poet of that stature could miss Rich's insistence on this metaphoric use of the word *lesbian*. The arguments, for and against, continued for some time, and, according to friends in the Bay Area, for some time after we who lived elsewhere had left the city. It was only later that I learned that the people who left my reading had left in protest.

Today, many academic discussions of literature and literary theory would be greeted by shock only if the word *lesbian* were **not** mentioned. In fact, in literary studies, the cutting edge of theory and criticism is the relatively new area of lesbian and gay studies. But while new theories have arisen since I first spoke at Stanford, the same central questions remain for literary studies: what does the term *lesbian* mean and how can we define lesbian literature? I have used my initial work on *lesbian* as a metaphor as a point of departure for a research project in which I will attempt to define the lesbian narrative.

What would, on the surface, appear to be a simple issue of definition—a lesbian is a woman who is sexually attracted to other women and a lesbian narrative is a story about lesbian women—has become a cauldron of sizzling theoretical issues. Most traditional definitions of lesbian literature depend on thematic or literal readings of a novel or poem. Does the literature speak about a lesbian topic, portray lesbian characters, or is it written by a known lesbian? In the last twenty years, however, critics have challenged the simple empiricism of the assumptions behind these questions.

For instance, because lesbians, like gay men, have had to live most of their lives in the closet, especially those who wrote prior to the 1970s, many closeted their literary themes as well. Although a lesbian, Willa Cather never directly addressed this topic in her well-known fiction. Are there, however, coded messages in *My Antonia?* Even more problematic is a book such as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, a fantastical work whose main character begins as a young boy in the Renaissance, lives 300 years, and in the middle of the eighteenth century changes into a woman. This book has been called the longest love letter in English literature because the figure of Orlando is a depiction of Woolf's lover at the time, Vita Sackville-West. This love letter, however, never mentions the word *lesbian*, and portrays its androgynous hero/heroine as primarily heterosexual. Is this novel, then, lesbian? Is Woolf a lesbian author? Given her long marriage to Leonard, can we even call her sexuality lesbian? What of *The Color Purple*, in which a straight woman portrays two bisexual women in a lesbian relationship which is never named as such but becomes the focal point for the revitalization of the entire community, male and female. Is this a lesbian novel? Does this label mean something else when applied to an African-American novel and writer?

Contemporary theorists ask a radically different question: is *lesbian* narratable? In this approach, *lesbian* is considered a category of meaning that is unstable and ultimately indefinable. As such, it challenges or "deconstructs" the assumed inflexible gender system of both language and narrative. According to these critics, *lesbian* can operate in this capacity only indirectly because any lesbian character who appears in a narrative will be absorbed by its male and heterosexual ideology. If, for instance, two lesbian lovers are depicted as they were in the movie *Desert Hearts*, they are immediately caught in the inevitable heterosexual romance story that places male and female characters in uneven power positions. This argument implies that only when *lesbian* **does not** appear in the text, or does so indirectly, can we have a successful lesbian disruption of traditional literature. Does this mean that only modernist novels like Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* are lesbian?

These questions, it seems to me, suggest the need to provide the widest possible definition of lesbian literature. If we decide, for simplicity's sake, that only literal lesbian themes and characters are allowable as lesbian literature, then we must leave out a work like Woolf's *Orlando;* on the other hand, if we decide that only postmodern novels that disrupt the linear and gendered structure of the narrative and that use lesbian themes and characters only *sotto voce* are lesbian, then we must leave out obvious lesbian narratives like *Desert Hearts* and popular novels such as the classic story by Isabel Miller, *Patience and Sarah*. Neither alternative seems appropriate to the vast literature that might be included under the heading lesbian literature. At the same time, while attempting an inclusive definition, we must be careful not to develop a meaning so abstract as to include everything and therefore mean nothing. This happened recently when a critic argued that even William Faulkner could be called a lesbian author if we defined the word *lesbian* broadly enough.

I believe that the answer to these problems lies in the expanded meaning of *lesbian* that has developed since its inception in the nineteenth century. Since then, *lesbian* has always meant

more than a woman who is sexually attracted to other women. That narrow, genital definition became problematic both to the first wave of lesbian writers in the 1920s and 1930s and to the lesbian feminists of the 1970s. In the earlier era, writers like Virginia Woolf, Gertude Stein, Radclyffe Hall, and Djuna Barnes responded in various ways to nineteenth-century male definitions of the lesbian as a sexual monster, from Baudelaire's poetry on the "Femmes Damnees" to Richard von Krafft-Ebing's description of what he considered the hideous "gyandry" of women sexual inverts. These women writers of the 1920s and 1930s developed two responses: they parodied the outrageous and inaccurate definitions of lesbian sexuality or they refused the solely sexual definitions for the utopian and nonphysical notion of androgyny, the ideal union of the two sexes in one person. Woolf, in *Orlando*, did the former and, in *A Room of One's Own*, the latter.

This dilemma of definition persisted into the next wave of lesbian writing and thinking in the 1970s. By downplaying the sexual, the lesbian feminists of the 1970s idealized *lesbian* as a political stance available to all women. *Lesbian* became the "rage of all women" or, in Adrienne Rich's vocabulary, the creative potential of all women and the primary attention, sexual or not, that one woman gives another. French thinkers like Luce Irigaray and Monique Wittig defined *lesbian* as an abstract space from which to challenge the hierarchical gender system of language and narrative. The most recent thinking embodied in "queer theory" returns *lesbian* to the body and, most often, to parody and masquerade, for now *lesbian* can mean the gender ambivalence and crossdressing that highlight the unnaturalness of the accepted gender dichotomy. The word, *lesbian*, then, has come to mean a woman who breaks or puts into crisis the controlling gender structure of language and narrative. Women writers of the twentieth century have used these enlarged definitions of *lesbian* to challenge the patriarchal and heterosexual structure of storytelling itself.

The lesbian narrative, then, is what happens when this figurative lesbian enters the narrative system. This lesbian is either the non-bodily, utopian ideal of woman or the often parodic embodied excess of female and lesbian sexuality. This lesbian disrupts the narrative system in a number of ways and by a variety of degrees. Because of these larger definitions, both nonlesbians and lesbian figures can function in this disruptive way, although it is also true that the mere presence of a lesbian figure will not guarantee disruption. With this definition, it can be argued that writers as diverse as Ursula Le Guin, Virginia Woolf, Gloria Naylor, Jeanette Winterson, and Isabel Miller have loosened the powerful narrative system by refusing some of its heterosexual power alignments. They have accomplished this task by positioning women in primary relationship to one another, by then loosening the control the narrative has over female agency, and by parodying the narrative's attempt to control and define the female body. The larger use of *lesbian* has become a narrative strategy that disrupts a narrative system that traditionally needs to keep *lesbian* as well as *woman* in control.

The only way to know how this narrative *lesbian* disrupts the story is to analyze the elements that make up the male and heterosexual narrative system and then to define how the entry of the lesbian figure or metaphor disrupts these elements and their relationship to one another. Narrative is not a neutral literary form but rather a system that contains a hidden agenda of power alignments that divides characters into male and female functions, places them in a heterosexual relationship to one another, and forges a central place for the male who is usually, if not always, the actor or mover of the plot line. Feminist critics have provided stunning analyses of the ways in which the traditional narrative structures have mitigated against the potential of women or lesbians becoming narrative agents. What was once considered merely neutral elements of any story—e.g., the protagonist, the narrator, the plot line—have been analyzed as part of an ideological system shoring up the status quo.

In *Alice Doesn't*, the film theorist Teresa de Lauretis argues that narrative is always about an active force (protagonist) moving through a passive boundary. In terms of our culture's symbolism, narrative is then always about the male moving through and conquering the female. Odysseus moves on a journey through the stationary female figures of Circe and Scylla and Charybdis and is rewarded at the end with the princess, Penelope, the defanged female who then can provide plot closure, i.e., the end of the male journey. Other critics have enlarged this view, claiming that narrative movement replicates heterosexual social patterns, what Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls "social scripts." If, then, story is structurally male and heterosexual, the question for women writers becomes how to change it. But the feminist desire to challenge this stranglehold on the nature of a story is not without its problems, for the system itself resists change.

Here, several examples, I hope, will be helpful. When the term "Ms." was first introduced, the intention was to provide a neutral means of address for women—parallel to "Mr." for men. When I ask my students what "Ms." has come to stand for, I am told everything from an unmarried woman to a radical feminist. Never am I told that it is a neutral term. Language is a system which, because of its gendered biases, cannot absorb a neutral term for women; women must in this system be defined in relationship to a man. In terms of narrative, we need only examine a popular movie such as *Aliens* to see how the narrative system absorbs any attempt to change its ideology. The hero of this movie is a woman, Ripley, a fact that encouraged many viewers to call this film feminist. But the heroine is made to accomplish the same journey as the traditional male, one that conquers a female monster, this time in the form of a destructive insect. The woman is acceptable in this heroic role as long as she has some redeeming feminine characteristics—for instance, nurturing the little girl—that allow us to condone her violence, usually the prerogative of the traditional hero. From this perspective, nothing, or very little, has changed in the nature of the storytelling. The tale is still structured as a journey in which a slightly modified male force violently overcomes a female boundary or obstacle. The story system, in fact, is so powerful that some believe it will absorb any challenge thrown its way.

Unlike these critics, however, I believe that ideological systems are not unalterable. Narrative is not a fixed system that can never be put into crisis, as I believe women writers from Charlotte Brontë to Virginia Woolf, from Djuna Barnes to Ursula Le Guin, have proved. But unless we acknowledge it as a powerful system, we will be fooled into thinking that mere role reversal will suffice to challenge the structure of the story. This is where the figure of *lesbian* in its expanded and metaphoric role has become a central tool that women writers have used to break apart the slanted narrative system.

Lesbian is the potent figure that many women writers have used to tell a different story. For instance, Marion Zimmer Bradley does this in an unlikely context of retelling the Arthurian legends from the point of view of Arthur's half sister, Morgaine. In Bradley's version, Morgaine and the story are decidedly heterosexual, but Morgaine's erotically charged relationship with a fellow priestess, Raven, forces the reader to see her as a different narrative protagonist. Through this relationship, Morgaine becomes a heroine who challenges the male heroic role in a way that Ripley in *Aliens* never does. Virginia Woolf does this in *Orlando* by refusing the stable narrative linearity and therefore, I would argue, the stable narrative gender system. Gloria Naylor accomplishes this feat in *The Women of Brewster Place* by using the two lesbian women, in spite of their homophobia, as the metaphor for the power of a women's community, thus again destablizing the role of the protagonist as male agent in the narrative. Adrienne Rich does this in "Twenty-one Love Poems," a sequence of poems telling a story about a lesbian love relationship. By refusing to number the only sexually explicit poem in the sequence, "The Floating Poem," Rich challenges the narrative system that in the rest of the poems squeezes the life force from the women's bodies and their relationship. Jeanette Winterson does this in *Sexing the Cherry*, a wild fantasy that centers on a woman whose excessive body breaks all realistic and narrative controls.

Each of these narratives has *lesbian* somewhere in the text or context, but not always at the center of the story. Each writer uses this reference, directly or indirectly, to reorder various elements of the story, from the protagonist to the plot line. None of the writers accomplishes this task in the same way, leaving us with traditional adventure stories and postmodern novels as capable of using the expanded definition of *lesbian* as a disruptive narrative strategy. These women writers prove that the narrative is a system but also prove that it is not invulnerable, especially to the disruptive image, the lesbian.

After at least five years of strong academic activity, topics like the lesbian narrative are taken for granted as part of academic inquiry in my field of literature and literary theory. These topics are doing what academic inquiry should do, "pushing back the frontiers of knowledge." However, some still object. Last year, one week before the election on Measure 9, Oregon's infamous anti-gay measure, I was invited to present my research on the lesbian narrative to a conference at Oregon State University. The conference was an exploration of various lesbian and gay issues, and one session was devoted to academic topics. This time, after I had finished talking, I noticed two young people in the front row with "Yes on 9" buttons. The presence of two people who supported the measure that would have condemned lesbians and gay men as immoral and perverse was unsettling and puzzling. But these people did not walk out in protest; instead, they religiously taped the proceedings.

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Zoned Straight and Narrow

Lesbian Lifestyles and Municipal Land Use

By Marsha Ritzdorf

While we all breathed a collective sigh of relief at the narrow defeat of Measure 9 in the fall of 1992, the respite was short-lived. The Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) is already hard at work to return the measure to the state-wide ballot in 1994. The organization is also currently pursuing its passage at the local level in the thirty communities in which it passed during the November, 1992, elections. However, even if tomorrow the State of Oregon (or the federal government) were to guarantee the civil rights of lesbian and gay citizens in regard to employment, housing, and public accommodations, there are many ways communities can and will continue to discriminate. This has been the case with those who already enjoy "protected" status. One of these quiet, but significant, mechanisms of discrimination is municipal zoning ordinances. While most citizens assume zoning is a technical tool to ensure that a factory is not placed next to a home, it has far-reaching social powers and agendas. The most significant of these for women, in general, and lesbians, in particular, is the right to define and enforce regulations about what types and numbers of people constitute a family in the community.

One of the fundamental value assumptions implicit in American zoning and land-use policies is the "rightness" of the single-family lifestyle. The single family is assumed to be a traditional nuclear family consisting of a stay-at-home mother, working father, and children. Although 1990 census statistics reveal that only 13 percent of American families conform to this norm, it is still embedded in our cultural mythology and reinforced in our land-use policies. A single-family detached home on its own piece of land, located on a quiet and tree-lined street far from the bustle of the city, is the metaphor for the American dream. Zoning is the tool with which this spatial metaphor is bonded to the landscape.

Regardless of changes in the American family, most zoning laws remain basically unyielding in their nostalgic interpretation of "correct" community land patterns in which work, home, and services are spatially separated. The more isolated one's residential environment from jobs, services, and those with a different socio-economic status, the "better" the neighborhood.

Throughout zoning ordinances, the language of family is used over and over again. Not only will a zoning ordinance contain a family definition, it will present a typology of family dwellings from single family to multi-family. In all cases, it is assumed that the definition of family will create socio-physical spaces that reflect this stratified and value-laden classification.

There is an assumption built into the design and planning of an exclusive single-family residential district that the area will be occupied by a "traditional" nuclear family or a municipally sanctioned alternative. In general, "municipally sanctioned alternatives" are unrelated individuals comprising no more than five people living as a household, and group homes (also of five or fewer clients) for the mentally retarded or developmentally disabled.

When groups (such as a lesbian couple) representing a voluntary alternative lifestyle and perceived as deviant by the majority of a society are sanctioned, they are allowed to cross cultural spatial boundaries heretofore forbidden. In America, with the nuclear family representing the cultural norm of the white, middle-class dominant social group, the entry into a neighborhood of groups who live together but are "not like us" is a threat. The neighborhood, regarded as providing a sphere of protection, is considered to be violated (Perin, 1988).

The presence of a male to head the household is intrinsic to the nuclear family. "Family also depends on husbands and fathers for its legitimacy, and mothers and children have their place derivatively" (Perin, 1988). Historically, in Western Europe, nuclear family households were associated with high degrees of independence and the connected possibility of rapid economic mobility (Coontz, 1988). In nineteenth-century America, as home and workplace drew apart, the nuclear family unit took on a more significant social meaning, perpetuating the belief that the "monogamous family (is) the outcome of evolution from lower forms of life and [which] is the final divinely ordered form" (Lund, 1937). Is it any wonder that America would embrace residential patterns that protected the "one socially legitimate family?"

The absence of a man breaches the middle-class norm of family, a norm with which many women identify more strongly than with their gender. In general, women have continued to support a system that ultimately stigmatizes them because the definition of family is fundamentally defined by gender-assigned roles (Perin, 1988). While the census now acknowledges a variety of family types in their data, the traditional stereotypes are still played out in zoning regulations. The language of the ordinances defines and privileges certain housing types and reinforces stereotypes about the appropriateness of family based on the size, quality, and location of the dwelling that houses it. "A family home," gushes the real estate agent as she or he describes a stereotypical single-family suburban home. "It's just the place to raise your children."

However, the external nature of the neighborhood or the home or the "traditionalness" of the form do not at all guarantee the quality of life within. For example, mounting statistics related to the frequency of and the nature of the perpetrators of child/wife sexual and physical abuse show that these are crimes that occur in all economic classes and are primarily the crimes of "family men." Yet the reliance on outdated stereotypes remains at the heart of the public land-use agenda.

In addition to dictating spatial use of land and buildings, almost all American zoning ordinances contain family definitions. These definitions dictate the composition of the family, limiting or forbidding those who are unrelated by blood or marriage from living together. These definitions have been included since the earliest zoning codes were written and implemented in the early twentieth century. Early definitions tended to use a simple standard, defining family as "one or more individuals sleeping, cooking, and eating on the premises as a single housekeeping unit" (Bassett, 1936). However, since the 1960s there has been a move in American communities toward more restrictive definitions containing limitations on the number of unrelated people who can live in a dwelling unit. Faced with changing lifestyles (especially the move toward communal living and the de-institutionalization of the mentally ill)

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and a strong desire to preserve the existing small nuclear oases they had created, local governments began to incorporate strict family definitions into their ordinances. The new post-1960 definition of family began to limit the number of unrelated individuals (and in some cases the number of related but non-nuclear family members) who could live together.

A wide variety of reasons and rationalizations have been advanced by courts and communities for restricting household composition. These justifications have included the preservation of property values, preservation of rent structures, prevention of parking or traffic problems, preservation of neighborhood safety, control of population density, prevention of noise and disturbance, and control of immoral or anti-social behavior (Shilling, 1980). Additionally, the power of a municipality to deny the rights of extended families and unrelated individuals to live together represents a potent form of exclusion, affecting not only the minority and poor members of society, but all who, through choice or necessity, live alternate lifestyles.

Zoning regulations attempt to separate deviant living arrangements from the neighborhoods called "single family" where the mythical nuclear family resides. Beginning with the colonists, European immigrants emphasized their cultural difference by limiting membership in their local communities to like-minded people. Those who did not support commonly shared community values could leave voluntarily or were driven out. This exclusiveness was focused on the sentimentalized nuclear family unit following the development of transportation systems that evolved during the industrial revolution, making the separation of work and residence a reality for a broad spectrum of the middle class. The model of the home-based wife and the single-family detached home became emblematic of the American Dream. The physical separation of economic classes and the spatial separation of difference was codified in communities through covenants and zoning.

In the nineteenth century restrictive deed covenants were used to protect the spatial exclusivity of neighborhoods within the larger community. Subsequently, in the twentieth century, zoning added a public tool to help ensure not only neighborhoods that are homogeneous with regard to the use of the land but also are protective of lifestyles based on traditional family relationships. Further, the courts, as arbiters of values, have exhibited a consistent pattern of willingness to protect the rights of communities to perpetrate their homogeneity of lifestyles.

Since 1926, the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently upheld zoning to protect and maintain the character of single-family residential areas. Alternative living arrangements have been dealt with harshly. Although, in the original sense, the phrase "single family" was a designation of a physical structure, it was a quick leap to municipal interpretation of it as a regulation on the type of dwelling occupancy—occupancy by the traditional nuclear family unit.

While in several areas of the law (insurance and housing, for example) there have been recent decisions that have supported the rights of homosexual couples in domestic partnerships to maintain rent-controlled housing units and to obtain insurance for their partners, a recent zoning case was decided in just the opposite fashion. There are no zoning cases in which an explicitly lesbian or gay couple has challenged the family definition in a community. However, in 1991 the Connecticut Supreme Court upheld the right of the community of Stratford to continue to have a family definition which allowed no more than three unrelated parties to live together. Historically, family definition cases that have focused on unmarried partnerships have been harshly treated by the courts in most states. In the eighteen years since the U.S. Supreme Court supported the right of communities to define family in an extremely narrow way, the term "family" has still not been defined in any consistent manner within municipal zoning ordinances. The state courts tend to be far more liberal in their interpretation of family (three now forbid numerical family definitions).

An examination of a typical zoning ordinance shows further divisions based on lot coverage, number of units, etc. For example, a single-family neighborhood may be more or less dense, with some neighborhoods having minimum lot sizes far bigger than others. In multifamily zones, some may only allow duplexes while others may allow high-rise apartments. Each of these zones carries a multiple set of cultural messages about owning and renting, more prestigious and less prestigious neighborhoods, and so forth. In addition, the actual uses allowed in each of these zones varies according to the "prestige" of the zone. Indeed, there are communities that incorporated solely for the purpose of insuring that absolutely no other use than large lot (one acre or more) expensive housing would be allowed. These small communities have no services at all. Because of historic disparities in women's incomes and their lack of access to capital, it is highly probable that a single woman or a lesbian couple will have a far more difficult economic time acquiring a home in the "better" neighborhoods of most communities. Yet, many lesbians, especially those rearing children, want the same access to parks, good schools, and other family amenities as the traditional nuclear families that zoning is set up to protect.

The average municipal zoning ordinance enforces traditional heterosexist married life in a variety of other ways as well. For example, current residential land policies in many communities exclude the combining of home and work; exclude the location of childcare, shopping, or services in residential neighborhoods; forbid the remodeling of large expensive older homes into more than one unit; and exclude other forms of affordable housing such as modular or manufactured units. This model punishes all women by making the tasks of daily life (most often a woman's job in heterosexual households) more time-consuming.

The language of family as it is used in municipal zoning ordinances, like any culturally bound discourse, is a language that both persuades and informs us about values and attitudes. It presumes a specific type of social tie, the nuclear family unit with children living at home, in a unit unrelated to the workplace, as the apocryphal norm. The relatively narrow range of choices this creates in most American environments must be altered to meet the needs of a changing population of which lesbians and their loved ones are part. For lesbians, who are both poor and of color, race becomes an additional axis of oppression. Traditional municipal rules benefit whites while exploiting or diminishing the life opportunities of persons of color. This has been absolutely true of zoning which has consistently been used to prevent the spatial extension of people of color into white, middle-class America.

One of the challenges of twenty-first century planning and design will be to change and enhance the scope of the boundaries that shape American (read: suburban) communities. If progress is to be made toward equality of access to safe, well-designed neighborhoods that meet the needs of women, both lesbian and straight, married or single, child rearing, or responsible for an older lover or parent who needs care, the women's community must become involved. Listed briefly, some of the changes we should work for are:

1. the elimination of discriminatory family definitions and their replacement by reasonable standards for neighborhood densities that apply to related and unrelated groups of individuals;
2. a restructured meaning of the use parameters of "single-family" homes to include home occupations, child and eldercare, and reasonably designed accessory apartments as outright permitted uses in all residential zones; and
3. integrated design solutions and social arrangements (such as cohousing) should be encouraged and supported.

All these pro-woman changes can be and are reasonably integrated in a very few exemplar communities scattered across the United States. Grass-roots awareness and action focused on municipal land-use policies is necessary. Women need to know that there are fundamental institutional forms of land-use discrimination that affect them every day. They need to run for positions on school boards, planning commissions, and city councils. Here, in Oregon, the ongoing mobilization of the OCA makes this even more imperative. They, like similar groups nationwide, are successfully using exactly the strategy I previously described: the placement of sympathizers on local boards and commissions. In addition, they are systematically using the initiative and referendum process to target communities to pass a revised Measure 9 at the local level. Finally, and particularly dangerous because of its subtlety, the OCA is attacking the Oregon Land Use Planning process and circulating a petition to replace its appointed membership with a board elected from fifteen state-wide districts. This sounds very reasonable on the face of it, which is part of its subtle danger. I would not be surprised if they get this initiative on the ballot and it passes. Then, using the same grass-roots power they have displayed in the past, they will work to dominate the board with sympathetic members. As a land-use planner, it is easy for me to see that they will at the same time work toward further placement of members on local land-use and zoning boards.

The OCA's open agenda is the return of property rights to the individual owners of property; but, in my opinion, there is also a hidden agenda. The secret agenda represents further control over the lives of individual women and men who do not conform to their norms. They already have hidden support in the traditional bias of municipal zoning ordinances that are seriously supported by many Oregonians who otherwise consider themselves to be liberals, not conservatives. The family values reflected in the ordinances are entrenched in the heart and soul of the American middle class of all political persuasions. The entry of the OCA into the land use planning arena should be a red flag to all who care about women's already limited access to safe, women-friendly environments.

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An Autobiography of Teaching

By Barbara Dale May

BARBARA DALE MAY

"Lesbian—because I ***want*** *to be." International Women's Day in Seville, Spain.*

I. Invisible/Divisible

The two men who approached me in Waremart certainly were not local *vatos*.[1] They looked as if they had just arrived from Mexico, maybe Honduras, somewhere south. *"Señora, con su permiso . . ."* they began, and asked me if the tortillas they had picked out of the cold case were good ones. *"No, las mejores son las frescas, las que están por allí,"* I answered, pointing to another part of the store. Funny, I thought to myself. They took me for a *pocha*[2] in spite of my Birkenstocks and REI shorts but they probably did not realize that this *señora* ("lady") was, in addition, a *tortillera!*[3]

It happens with a certain frequency, this situation where at least one part of my identity is recognized, and there is always a sense of only partially being seen, of partially being invisible. And it happens in diverse and unexpected settings.

At a dinner given by a successful Eugene businesswoman to welcome some of her new neighbors, all of the guests were lesbians and, like our host, feminists. Toward the end of an evening of good food and friendly conversation, the businesswoman became very serious and looked around the table at us. "You know, one of the unfortunate things about Eugene is that there just aren't any feminist women of color here. I mean, look at us!"

We select what we want to see. The *vatos* saw a helpful *señora* but were blind to the *tortillera*. The lesbian feminist saw the lesbian feminist but was blind to the woman of mixed race.

There is such power in seeing and being seen; there is such helplessness in invisibility.

Marilyn Frye, in *The Politics of Reality*, speaks of the lesbian as "A seer in whose eye the woman has authority, has interests of her own, is not a robot," and, further, "by virtue of her focus, her attention, her attachment, is disloyal to phallocratic reality. She is not committed to its maintenance and the maintenance of those who maintain it, and worse, her mode of disloyalty threatens its utter dissolution in the mere flick of the eye" (Frye, 1983).

Cheryl Clarke, an African-American lesbian examines this issue of vision and visibility within a racial context. In "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," she insists that lesbians, and particularly lesbians of color, must become more visible. "If radical lesbian-feminism purports an anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-woman hating vision of bonding as mutual, reciprocal, as infinitely negotiable, as freedom from antiquated gender prescriptions and proscriptions, *then all people struggling to transform the character of relationships in this culture have something to learn from lesbians."* [emphasis mine] (Anzaldúa and Moraga, 1981).

As a lesbian/feminist/mixed-race person, I believe in the tremendous power and risk of seeing and being seen as a multiple minority, a composite individual nearly always seeing and being seen from the margin. I am inspired by another composite individual, Gloria Anzaldúa, who calls this situation "living in *El Mundo Zurdo*," or "living in the Left-Handed World." "Both cultures deny me a place in their universe. Between them and among others, I build my own universe, *El Mundo Zurdo*. We are the queer groups, the people that do not belong anywhere, not in the dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures. . . . *In El Mundo Zurdo* I with my own affinities and my people with theirs can live together and transform the planet" (Anzaldúa and Moraga, 1981).

There is a righteous zeal, an almost visionary energy about being visible and, consequently, indivisible. For those of us who would change the world to be a better place where all people are welcome and honored, this mission springs from a sense of personal displacement followed by an awakening—a sense of finally coming home. This awareness is, ironically, not unlike what some might call being "born again." In Frye's words, "The event of becoming a lesbian is a reorientation of attention in a kind of ontological conversion. It is characterized by a feeling of a world dissolving, and by a feeling of disengagement and re-engagement of one's power as a perceiver" (Frye, 1983).

If you are wondering what this has to do with the title of this essay, "The Autobiography of Teaching," well, in a word, everything. I was born female and of mixed race. But I chose to become a feminist, and, yes, I chose to become a lesbian. My life story is interwoven with my experience with education, first as a student, then as a teacher, and, although it is only my story—the story of one woman—I believe it illustrates the disengagement and re-engagement of one's power so well described by Frye, Clarke, Anzaldúa, and other lesbians.

Come back with me to a world I lived in once.

II. A Colonial Life

I am nineteen and married to an eighteen-year-old. I work part time cleaning bathrooms, part time typing. I go to school full time and make extra money over vacations as a cowboy-hat creaser in Denver. By the time I am twenty-one I have been married, divorced, and married again. I stay in college, continue on to graduate school because I love to read and because I do not want to be poor for the rest of my life.

What a strange place, what an odd time to come of age as a feminist—Salt Lake City in the 1970s. I am a graduate student in Spanish literature. Most of my classmates are women, but nearly all of my professors are men, and Spanish literature as they teach it is essentially male literature. As a young feminist, I read Millet and Steinem and Greer outside of class. I challenge my professors and their male point of view, but, still, I sit in my classes like a good girl and learn and learn. When I go home from a day of teaching and taking classes, I prepare dinner and clean up while my graduate-student husband writes poetry. An enlightened sort, he sometimes helps dry the dishes.

While in my minor fields, English and American literatures, I read Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, and the Brontës among many other women writers. In Spanish, somehow, there just do not seem to be many women writers. In fact, in my entire graduate program we read works by only two women, Santa Teresa de Jesús and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Since my calling is neither mystic nor rooted in the distant past, the voices of these great literary foremothers do not speak to me. Still, my love of books and my love of the Spanish language—my almost lost "mothertongue"[4]—never wanes. I continue in Spanish and assume, naively, that if there were other great women writers in Spanish, our professors would know about them, and we would be studying them in my classes.

This is an era of specialization, something I will later come to think of as tunnel vision, and I must choose between a focus on Latin American literature or the literature of Spain. Many of my classmates are attracted by the "boom" of Latin American novels, but I find it hard to share their enthusiasm. I feel a special connection to Mexico, since my mother is Mexican. But my grandparents, Teresa Navarro and Refugio Martínez, came to the United States desperate to find a new life after the Mexican Revolution and had died as young immigrants—people I never knew and only later would come to know through research spanning decades. The family connection is simply not enough to balance other factors. As a woman, I am infuriated by one of the revered poet/philosophers of the "boom" who places the blame of Anglo subjugation of New World peoples on the shoulders of an indigenous woman[5] and, thus, intellectualizes Latino men's brutalizing of their women.

Never feeling really Mexican (like my mother) or really Anglo (like my father), I feel *ex*-centric to either identity. I opt to specialize in Peninsular Spanish literature, the literature of Spain, and specifically the modern era, leaving aside the issues of *Malintzin's* defamatory mythification and the colonization of indigenous peoples. Still, I am active in the Chicano Students Association, even though most of its leaders, like my professors, are peacocks with peacock agendas.

I write my M.A. thesis on Miguel de

Unamuno, a Spanish existentialist whose catholic/agnostic anguish mirrors my own. I write my Ph.D. thesis on Rafael Alberti, a Communist poet, exiled at the end of the Spanish Civil War. Even though both are men, they speak of things that I understand: of nostalgia for a paradise never found, much less lost; of an exile I feel I have lived in all my life.

In 1973, I meet Alberti in Rome where he is spending the last of his nearly forty years of exile from Spain. As a young man he had opposed fascism and, during the Spanish Civil War, he had become a revered poet of the people. As secretary of the Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals, he established his home in Madrid as a center for international writers and artists who opposed Franco. The list of writers drawn to Alberti's circle reads like a *Who's Who* of committed writers: Hemingway, Orwell, Regler, Neruda, to mention but a few. At the age of twenty-three, I am awed to be in the presence of this hero. What a man!

Two years later, I finish my Ph.D. and sign a contract with the University of Oregon as a specialist in modern Spanish literature with an emphasis on poetry.

When two of my male colleagues, senior members of the department, arrange a discussion with me concerning our M.A. and Ph.D. reading lists that first year, I realize only later that it has been a pretext to grill me, to test this uppity young woman's knowledge of Spanish literature. I am furious, but at the same time curiously satisfied that I have met their standards. I have been thoroughly schooled in male literature, and I know what is expected of me as one whose task it is to transfer that knowledge to others.

I have, effectively, been colonized!

Over the next several years, I meet with Alberti again, now in Spain and enjoying a hero's welcome upon his return. With Franco's death, Spain evolves from a monolithic dictatorship to a multi-party constitutional democracy with a progressive monarchy. The Spanish Communist Party is legalized, and Alberti is elected as a *diputado* for Cádiz, a seat he later relinquishes to a younger member of the Party.

So much is happening in Spain during those years of transition. I spend as much time as I can every year in what I call my "second country," not just doing academic research, but living within a social and political context that forms the backdrop to what is happening in literature.

And what is happening in Spanish literature in these transition years is nothing short of stunning. Where exile had produced a wealth of literature by male writers in the post-civil war period, the new, post-Franco era ignites with literature by women. My time in Spain is spent reading works by feminists, Rosa Montero, María Aurelia Capmany, Montserrat Roig, and lesbian feminists, Ana María Moix, Marta Pessarrodona, and others. At the same time, I join two radical feminist organizations, *Grupo Siete* and *Mujeres del Sur*.

The last time I see Alberti he is still a master of communist rhetoric, but is living in a five-star hotel, not with his wife of fifty years, but with a woman half his age!

In 1982, during the same week that I receive word of my promotion with tenure, I finish reading two books that have added much meaning to my life since: Adrienne's Rich's *On Lies, Secrets and Silences* and Gloria Anzaldúa's and Cherrie Moraga's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. And that very same week, my husband of eleven years—an unemployed poet/professor—leaves me!

III. Visible/Indivisible

Marilyn Frye is right when she defines a lesbian as a woman who sees and is seen by women, a woman whose gaze goes beyond the main actors on the stage—the men—to the stagehands—the women in the background. (See Frye for the development of this metaphor). For some, that ability to see is a birthright. For me, it was a matter of learning to see, of seeing women as the central characters, and of seeing myself as the protagonist of my own life. It took the "accident" of falling in love with a woman to catalyze what must have been an intellectual and sentimental process begun much earlier.

1982—my year of tenure, divorce, and the deep rethinking of my focus as a teacher, researcher, and, above all, human being—has become, for me, a year of celebration, a year of awakening.

But something momentous had been happening all along over the years. I had not just been teaching my classes; even as I taught, I was listening to my students, most of whom were women, and, moreover, listening to myself as if I were a woman in my own class.

I had been teaching nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish literature the way it had been taught to me by men. Now it seems so obvious: it was not all literature; it was **men's** literature. Like Octavio Paz's fantasized *Malinche*, I had sold out my tribe—in this case, women.

It seems as if that chapter of my life, opening in 1982, became a sort of reverse image of the first part of my life.

As a child, I had used books to travel far away from my real life. I could fly out of reach of my parents. They could be falling down drunk or brawling; I would be hiding, ears stuffed with Kleenex, my nose in a book, floating far, far away in a peaceful land, maybe, or commanding a glorious crusade in a warring kingdom far from the battlefront at home. I did not have to do anything or be anybody. I was not guilty or innocent. Unpredictable events leading to reward or punishment did not exist in my book world. In my book world, I could be anybody, go anywhere, do anything.

My hero-teachers, some of whom I now realize, were sensitive to my family situation, aided and abetted my flight into what academics sometimes like to call "the life of the mind." The farther away from my own lived reality, the more comforting were my literary journeys.

It is only logical that I would see education as a door to a better world; it is only logical that my field would be literature.

But it was only as a feminist and, specifically, a lesbian feminist that I realized how much I **wanted** to close the distance between the book world and my lived reality, between what I taught and wrote about and what I wanted to teach and write and continue reading about.

My yearly pilgrimage to Spain has become a personal and professional

mission. I read and buy as many books by women as I possibly can, and I teach those books in my classes and write about them. My goal is to teach the kinds of classes I never was able to take as a student.

"Women Warriors," "Spanish Women Dramatists," "Spanish Women Poets," "The Censored Sex: Spanish Women Writers of the Franco Era," "Spanish Women Writers of the Twentieth Century," "Spanish Women Short Story Writers," "Spanish Feminism and Literature," "Women Writers of Cataluña," "The Narrative of Girlhood in Spain," "Women Writers of the Twenty-first Century"—these are some of my seminars. In addition to my teaching and research on Spanish women writers, I have taken my gaze beyond and, in a sense, within the very private sphere to Chicana lesbian writers.

True, it would have been wonderful to have taken such a course back in Utah in the 1970s, but those were different times and, as for myself, I only wanted books to take me away from and not into my life.

I really believe that my reading and, consequently, my research and teaching during the past decade, far from taking me away from my life as it once did, has brought me closer to it in countless ways, from the political, the sexual, the spiritual; from the head to the body to the heart, in no necessary order.

Endnotes

1. *Vatos* is a neutral to friendly term in Chicano/Mexican slang; "guys" of Latino or Mexican origin.

2. *Pocha* is sometimes pejorative, sometimes not, used to refer to a person of Mexican descent, probably born in the United States and more assimilated than more recent arrivals. A pejorative connotation is suggested when a *pocho* or *pocha* appears intent on total assimilation into Anglo culture for materialistic improvement. This process is termed "climbing white."

3. *Tortillera* is literally, "a tortilla maker," one of many terms for lesbian; the Spanish slang equivalent of "dyke."

4. Orphaned at six and raised in a Catholic orphanage in this country, my mother forgot her first language, Spanish. As an elementary student in the Denver public school system, I participated in one of the country's first bilingual programs and, in a sense, began a journey toward remembering, if not the mothertongue, what might be called the grandmother-tongue. See Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) for an excellent discussion of our original language, the language spoken to us by our mothers and sabotaged by the language of the patriarchy.

5. *La Malinche* or *Malintzin* was an Aztec noble woman who served as a translator for Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador and, presumably, as his concubine. Octavio Paz discusses her image as *La Malinche, La Chingada* (literally, "the fucked one"), *La Vendida* ("the sold one"), and first traitor of indigenous peoples in his *El laberinto de la soledad (The Labyrinth of Solitude)*, translated by Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, 1961). For an excellent deconstruction of this male mythification of *La Malinche*, see "El Chingón: Octavio Paz and the Oedipal-Conquest Complex" by Emma Pérez in *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, edited by Adela de la Torre and Beatríz M. Pesquera (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

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MEREDITH MYLLENBECK

In the Wake of Ballot Measure 9

By Ann Bunnenberg

By a vote of 56 percent to 44 percent in the fall of 1992, Oregonians rejected a ballot measure that would have amended the Oregon Constitution to mandate discrimination against lesbian and gay Oregonians. At a political level, Ballot Measure 9 and the campaign that led to its defeat marked a turning point in the maturation of the lesbian and gay community in Oregon as a potent political force and signaled the creation of a broad-based coalition of progressive, predominantly straight groups mobilized along themes of "anti-bigotry." The battle over Ballot Measure 9 was of tremendous practical and symbolic importance to both the lesbian and gay community and the Oregon Citizens Alliance's (OCA) conservative evangelical community, and was reflective of broader issues of urban/rural splits and economic divisions within Oregon. While Ballot Measure 9 was defeated statewide, the measure passed in twenty-one of Oregon's thirty-six counties reflecting a profound urban/rural split on this issue.

But in the end, when the history of the civil-rights movements for lesbians and gays in Oregon is written, the late 1980s and early 1990s may be remembered not so much for the political and legal battles that currently delineate it, but rather as a period during which lesbians and gays in Oregon defined themselves as a "community" moving toward the so-called "mainstream" of Oregon political, social, and cultural life. There is always a danger in trying to "make the call" when the ball is in play, but the purpose of this article is to begin to trace some of the structural changes occurring within the lesbian and gay community during the early 1990s by focusing on some of the changes that are evolving in the organizational infrastructure of the lesbian and gay community. However, there also are equally significant changes taking place in the "straight" community in the post-Ballot Measure 9 era.

Perhaps the most striking development brought on by the persistent OCA-led attacks on lesbians, gays, and bisexuals in Oregon has been the formation of a "lesbian and gay community." Though always viewed by their opponents as a unified group, to homosexuals the acceptance of the notion of lesbians and gay men as a unified community is relatively recent. Some have argued that a sense of a combined lesbian/gay community existed during the 1950s and early 1960s, but that sense of a common community, to the extent it ever existed here in Oregon, faded with the onset of differential cultural forces during the 1970s. The influence of the women's movement on the lesbian community emphasized that lesbians and gay men were members of two quite diverse subcultures. The existence of these differences was accentuated by the separatist elements of both communities, most notably the lesbian separatist movement that generally viewed gay men as a privileged group integral to the oppressive patriarchal system. The gay men's movement was not generally characterized by a similar separatism along ideological lines, though there was among gay men a generalized sense of simply belonging to a different world than that occupied by lesbians. The worlds of lesbians and gay men intersected with each other only occasionally and with varying success, such as in the smaller metropolitan areas where the "homosexual" community was not large enough to support both a lesbian and a gay bar.

Though distinctions between the lesbian community and the gay community still exist in many ways, the beginnings of a Gay Rights movement in Oregon in the 1970s provided the motivation for building bridges between these two communities. This process, accelerated by the AIDS crisis and the increasingly persistent political attacks upon the lesbian and gay community, led to the formation of more organizations drawing upon the energies of both lesbians and gay men. Within these organizations, often based on the experience of cooperating around political campaigns, there has been a rise in the number of people who would consider themselves members of a common lesbian and gay community. This perception is, however, not universal, and significant issues of gender-based oppression, economic differences, and scope of political agenda continue to divide lesbians and gay men in many areas.

Of considerable significance in helping to form a "common" lesbian and gay community identity has been the development of a vibrant local and national lesbian and gay press. Drawing on such successful examples as *Womyn's Press* in Eugene, Oregon, and other feminist regional papers, these local and national magazines have restructured substantially the way in which information circulates in many parts of the lesbian and gay community. Prior to the mid-1980s, most of the "homosexual" publications were targeted at either a female or a male audience. With the foundation of *Just Out* in Portland and *The Lavender Network* in Eugene in the early 1980s, Oregon saw the rise of a strong local lesbian/gay press. These publications are comprehensive monthly magazines with community calendars, business advertising, and local and national lesbian/gay oriented news in a format designed to appeal both to lesbian and gay readers.

Publications such as *Just Out* and *The Lavender Network* have contributed in an important way to the development of a sense of lesbian and gay community in two primary ways. First, by targeting and making available to members of each community information on the activities of the other, there has been a sense of participating in a more unified community. Second, by making both regional and national news on lesbian and gay-oriented events more available, focus has been drawn to the number of issues upon which lesbians and gay men have, at least to some degree, common interests.

In this area also, the process of building a sense of common community, where at least two very distinctly separate communities had existed previously, has not been entirely smooth. It is a rare organization in this state that has not had allegations, at least at one point or another in its history, of gender dominance, racism, or other similar concerns. These issues in the mid-1980s tended to revolve around issues of gender parity on governing boards, equality of coverage in the media, for example, and

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now have transmuted to more subtle issues of scope in regard to the political agenda, "imagism," assimilationism, and the like. As the lesbian/gay papers have moved from being strictly insider-oriented publications to being read by a somewhat wider progressive audience, complex questions have arisen regarding how the magazines and other press reflect the lesbian and gay community. The question of whether these magazines should portray images of this community that are politically prudent or whether they should retain their tradition of depicting the variety within the community remain complex, and in many ways, unresolved.

Another striking change occurring immediately before and in the wake of Ballot Measure 9, has been the rapid rise of several lesbian and gay-oriented organizations that explicitly promote a positive and relatively mainstream image of the lesbian and gay community, within the wider community as a whole. Illustrative of this trend is the mission statement of the Equity Foundation, which states that the foundation exists: "to assure the prosperity of gay and lesbian health, cultural and service organizations, and to promote a positive image of gay and lesbian people by making visible our contributions to the wider society."

This foundation, established in 1987, in addition to providing significant current funding for such traditional purposes as lesbian and gay support services, arts services, and so forth within the gay community, has also been active by making visible the financial support traditionally provided by lesbians and gays to "straight" arts organizations and charitable organizations. This granting program, coupled with Equity's ambitious Oregon Speak Out Program, represents a broad-based effort of public education. Speak Out strives to change anti-gay stereotypes throughout the state by giving the lesbian and gay movement a "human face," promoting a climate of tolerance of diversity in contrast to the frightening images conjured by the OCA.

Also coming out of this period has been the development and revitalization of a number of community-based lesbian and gay business organizations. A dramatic example of this trend in the post-Ballot Measure 9 era has been the formation of the Portland Area Business Association which has attracted a large membership of relatively mainstream business people who either are lesbian or gay or are interested in doing business with the lesbian and gay community. This group, attracting high visibility speakers such as Mayor Vera Katz and former Police Chief Tom Potter, has been instrumental in positioning the lesbian and gay businesses within the emergent progressive Portland business community.

The number of political organizations, both within the lesbian and gay community and in the wider community, directed at opposing anti-lesbian/gay bigotry and promoting tolerance of diversity more generally has expanded exponentially. At last count, there were more than twenty-five lesbian and gay organizations taking an active part in opposing the various OCA-sponsored initiatives, with more forming each day.

But perhaps the most remarkable development at the organizational level within this period has been the rapid proliferation of lesbian and gay-oriented service, recreational, and cultural groups. In 1986, when *The Lavender Network* began publication, an effort was made to compile as comprehensively as possible a roster of the lesbian and gay organizations in Oregon outside the Portland metropolitan area. In October of 1986, that list consisted of twenty-one organizations located in five Oregon non-metropolitan communities, with the majority of those organizations in Eugene. As of the June 1993 issue of *The Lavender Network*, the community organizations totaled 134 political, cultural, social, and recreational groups in Eugene and thirteen other non-metropolitan communities and an additional 107 organizations located in Portland for a total of 241 organizations listed statewide. These groups, ranging from the Lesbian Garden Club in Portland to Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in Baker/La Grande, represent an extraordinary coming together of lesbian and gay people throughout the state.

With these organizations has come increased efforts at building broad-based coalitions with other progressive organizations in the wider community. While many groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the McKenzie River Gathering and others have traditionally included the lesbian and gay community within their constituencies, many other groups within the straight community, including trade unions, churches, and others, have, in response to Ballot Measure 9, taken strong positions in support of the lesbian and gay community. In many ways, this willingness of progressive and even politically moderate groups within the straight community to make Measure 9 their issue and not just a lesbian/gay issue, has accelerated the process of the lesbian and gay community's increasing visibility to, and in some senses, belonging with the wider mainstream community.

This effort to present a "positive" lesbian and gay image to the wider community led by groups such as the lesbian and gay business community (that have historically tended to be highly "closeted"), has had the effect of making visible a more diverse picture of the composition of the lesbian and gay community. Within the lesbian and gay communities, this movement toward being more visible to the mainstream of society has led to charges of "assimilationism" by some within these communities. Their argument is that the lesbian and gay communities are being co-opted by the crumbs thrown to them by the straight community. These charges of assimilationism have led to unprecedented numbers of attacks and "trashings" by some segments of the lesbian/gay community directed against another segment of that community. In a recent article in *The Lavender Network*, a suggestion was made that the lesbian and gay "assimilationists" and not the OCA were the real enemy of lesbians and gays.

During this period of rapid change within the organizations composing the infrastructure of the lesbian and gay community, a difficult issue has been the relatively generalized failure of the more "mainstream" lesbian and gay groups to fully reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity of the two communities. These issues have forced the predominantly white, middle-class elements of the larger lesbian and gay community to come to terms with the practical realities of how very diverse their communities are. As occurred within the women's movement, growing clarity points to the inappropriateness of attempting to speak on behalf of the lesbian and gay community as if we were all a part of an undifferentiated whole with a common experience.

In many ways, I think we can argue that the macro-effects of Ballot Measure 9 on the lesbian and gay community have been quite positive, and the earlier political battles around Ballot Measure 8 in 1988 and 20-08 in Springfield have brought many previously closeted lesbian and gay Oregonians into greater activity within the lesbian and gay community. However, it appears the price of being more visible to the wider society as a whole has been increased assaults and other hate crimes. The Lesbian Community Project records hate crimes statistics in the Portland area and reported a dramatic rise in incidents of hate crimes during the recent election.

In the end, the rising rate of hate crimes and other OCA-inspired bigotry may prove to be what Jennifer James, noted cultural anthropologist from Seattle, calls a "death rattle;" a last, desperate effort by a group unable to acknowledge that a feared change has already occurred. The incredible human toll of these divisive ballot measures is difficult to estimate. While this attack may have led to a strengthening of ties within the lesbian/gay community, for most people, the psychological stress has been considerable.

Though the focus of this article is on the organizational level of changes within the lesbian/gay community, these ballot measures have led many people on a personal level to "come out" to a wider range of people. However, others within the lesbian and gay community, stung by the viciousness and vindictiveness of the OCA attack, have returned to their closets.

Note: The information presented in this article draws heavily on comunity-based newsletters and other hard-to-access documentary materials. The preservation of these types of important socio-political documents has been a funding priority of CSWS with its support for the Oregon Women's Political History Library Collection at the University of Oregon's Knight Library. Also underway in Portland is the formation of a Gay and Lesbian History Archive with partial funding from the Equity Foundation.

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GAIL SHIBLEY

OREGON STATE REPRESENTATIVE

The following is excerpted from an interview with State Representative Gail Shibley conducted by CSWS Director Sandra Morgen in March 1993 at the State Capitol in Salem, Oregon, and from a speech Representative Shibley presented to the Portland City Club, May 14, 1993.

The personal is political. That phrase was used time and again in the modern feminist movement, signaling that women "got it." Women, and many men, recognized the political policies underlying what they had accepted as everyday reality. Since the 1970s I have not given much thought to that phrase, a nostalgic relic of a historic era, but it fits. It fits the fight Oregon went through with Ballot Measure 9 last year. For lesbian and gay Oregonians, though, it fits even better reversed: the political is personal.

I do not know how many of you have had your humanity up for a popular vote. I do not know how many of you have been the target of a vitriolic campaign of lies. It is not fun; it is not validating; it does not feel good.

How did we ever get here? Oregon has a tragically long history of discrimination, and we are not unique—in the country or in the world. Here are some absurdly conflicting stereotypes; I think you will recognize them: "They are clannish, they are loners; they look just like everybody else, they look absolutely different from everybody else; they are communists and anarchists, they are affluent capitalists; they love money, they despise worldly goods." Do these sound familiar? While some of these and other stereotypes have been attributed to lesbians and gays in Oregon and around the world, their origins are, in fact, a paraphrase of Cornell University's Sander Gillman's comments in the opening scene of "The Longest Hatred," a program on anti-Semitism that appeared on the Oregon Public Broadcasting network.

I borrow them here for two reasons: First, all discrimination, fear, and ignorance are unique to the targeted minority. The cost is specific; it cannot be quantified or equated. But the dynamics of the scapegoating and illogic behind the phenomenon, and the pain it is intended to inflict, are the same. Thus, we shed light on one by illuminating the other. National gay activist, Phil Wilson, captured this truth succinctly when he stated, "I've been called a nigger and I've been called a faggot, and I know the difference: *nothing*."

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Second, as with religious, cultural, and racial minorities, the stereotypical image of lesbians and gays is a protean one. It shifts. That is precisely what is so convenient about it. Lesbians and gays are not just "X." Lesbians and gays become everything you do not want yourself or your family to be. Lesbians and gays become everything that threatens you, your sense of the way things are, and the way things ought to be. Lesbians and gays, as with other groups throughout history, know what it is to be accursed; we know what it is to be excluded; what it is to be unworthy of respect; to be the "other."

Saint John Chrisastum once said of the Jews, "They are the common disgrace and the infection of the whole world." Nearly a thousand years later, in 1990, the Reverend Lou Sheldon said of lesbians and gays, "They live perverted, twisted lives that feed upon the unsuspecting and the innocent—like our children." Sound familiar?

Again, this sadly human phenomenon of scapegoating and stereotyping was played out on Oregon's political stage in 1992. With Ballot Measure 9, the question was whether to amend our state constitution to require discrimination on the basis of one's sexual orientation. At this time, I was running for office as an incumbent and the first and only openly gay legislator in our state's history—one of only a few in the history of state legislatures in our country. And because I shared the ballot with Measure 9, the issue of discrimination was often discussed. I felt the voters should know exactly where I stood on the measure and why. In effect, I "came out" on doorstep after doorstep, night after night, neighborhood after neighborhood, month after month.

At times, I was physically frightened. At home, I received harassing phone calls and hate mail, my home was egged, my car vandalized, my lawn signs targeted for destruction and theft. My partner and I slept with a crowbar by our bed.

The following is a short, edited portion of a letter I received during my first term in office:

"Dear Ms. Lesbo:

Having just read about your efforts in behalf of the queer community and pending legislation thereof, you may be interested in my bigoted opinions: [there is a list of several, including the following] I run a major company, it is our policy not to consider any fags or dikes [sic] for employment, this will never change despite any legislation you may come up with.

I am not homophobic, I have no fear of your type, just contempt, you are a crime against nature.

As far as I am concerned AIDS is the best disease ever to come along. I personally get a lot of pleasure each time some [expletive deleted] faggot dies, hopefully all will follow.

In summation, you never will be more than the slimey [sic] pervert that you are now, forcing a law upon the rest of us will only act to stimulate more people to become active against you.

[signed] The Committee to Keep Clackamas County Fag/Dike [sic] Free!"

The campaign against Measure 9 was enormously costly in money, time, and expertise—precious resources that were necessarily diverted from the many pressing, real problems facing our state. The human toll, however, was even more devastating.

Personally, I was utterly fatigued, abjectly exhausted. I felt as though I had run six marathons in two months, moving in a daze. In a true manifestation of community, however, I soon learned that I was far from alone. Lesbians and gays met in formal and informal support groups, meetings, and discussions. Some took on the added role of emotional counselor, helping others they knew from professional associations, social relationships, and so on.

I really am far too young to be saying this, but sometimes I do get tired of fighting the same battles over and over and over again, whether the issue is women's right to a safe abortion or lesbian and gay rights, or any other rights. I come again and again to the realization, as the Nike commercial says, that "There is no finish line." There will never be a day that we can look back and say, "Wow, wasn't that a good fight? Aren't we glad it's over now?" That day does not exist. We must understand this in a visceral way and we must commit ourselves to living a life of honoring people of all kinds of backgrounds, races, creeds, sexual orientation, and abilities, if we are to succeed in this task.

During the campaign, the political became intensely personal. In many respects, we were the walking wounded, but we made it through, and we will never be the same. After such a long, expensive, offensive campaign, no wonder our skins are thin, emotions run high, feelings are on the surface, anger only too ready to flash. Last January, though the election was successfully over, I learned I was far from recovered. In a legislative caucus meeting, discussion understandably turned to Measure 9, the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) and political lessons learned. I could literally not stomach such dispassionate discourse about a subject suddenly so personal; I had to leave the room.

To this day, I have not yet learned how to distance my life, my family's life, my friends' lives, from the harsh political reality we faced in 1992, and we continue to face today. I hope I never do.

One of the shifting stereotypes often faced was (and is) phrased in the question, "How can lesbians and gays be oppressed when there are so many of them in high places?" In reply, I am reminded of Austria in the 1930s, when Jews there included noted poets, playwrights, jurists, physicians, psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud, and composers like Schoenberg and Mahler. But even as they prospered in their individual professions, European anti-Semitism was rampant. The rest is history. Thus, the question is not, "How can there be oppression when there are so many in high places?" but rather, "How can strides be made in the face of such oppression?"

The remarkable thing is, there have been strides. Today, in national politics, there are numerous lesbians and gays in high-ranking administrative positions. And here in Oregon, in Portland, we are also making strides. In spite, or perhaps because of, Measure 9, I won a three-to-one victory in my contested election. In fact, I came a close second to receiving the most votes of any House of Representatives' candidate in the entire state—including those running with no opponents. Further, I am privileged to represent a legislative district in which over 85 percent of the voters said "No" to Measure 9. And now I am not alone. Oregon again made history recently, when our legislature included in its members the first openly gay man, Portland attorney, George Eighmey.

If you could look at the data I have examined in terms of who is registered to vote and how they vote, who is registered and does not vote, and who is not registered, you would find these statistics paint for you, and everyone around this state, a very stark picture between the haves and the have-nots. There are those who understand the system and have a stake in the system, and there are those who do not understand and have not been made a part of that process. So, absolutely number one—just like Jesse Jackson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and a lot of other people have talked about for decades now—there is an absolutely critical need for all citizens to register and vote. I do not care what the election is—your vote counts. PERIOD. People have died in this country and around the world for the right to vote. Women used to chain themselves to the gates of the White House so that we could have the right to vote. After all, it has not been that long in Oregon, or around the country, since women were forbidden from voting.

Another thing, from a personal standpoint is—and I do not know how to say this other than making it sound humorous—God forbid I should be the most radical person somebody knows. God forbid I should be the most radical feminist lesbian somebody knows. If we do not have individual organizations out there defining the edges of radicalism, then people are going to look to people like me. I am a small-town Oregon girl. We all should understand that I represent only a small slice of a wide spectrum. I do not define a boundary one way or another. That is not my role. We all have roles to fill and all have parts to play. My role I hope, at this point, is to do the very best job I can as a representative for a lot of individuals and groups of individuals in the Oregon legislature. But to be effective, I must be seen as more than just some fringe boundary-setting radical element.

In a double-edged sword of progress and pain, a 1989 law requires law enforcement personnel to track crimes perpetrated specifically because of someone's real or perceived sexual orientation. Enactment of that law was progress; the pain comes with the resultant knowledge that the category of hate crimes is increasing at two, three, and four times the rate of crimes based on other factors.

Further, though Oregon leads the nation in teen suicides, national studies show that lesbian and gay teens are as much as four to six times more likely to attempt suicide, and more of them are "successful" in their attempts.

During my time in Salem, fellow legislators have told me privately about gay family members or close friends they have; they have shared the pain they witness as their loved ones suffer humiliation and degradation. Legislative committee staff furtively seek me out to thank me for speaking out on behalf of equal rights for lesbians and gays. Two particularly poignant moments came shortly after testifying for a bill codifying equal protection for lesbians and gays—in 1991 and again in 1993. Various staffers sought me out each time, with appreciative glances and words, vicariously grateful for having the courage to go public.

I look forward to the day when employees—at the State Capitol in Salem and around the state—are not afraid to be who they are, and valued for their professional contribution in the workplace. That will not happen until Oregon guarantees basic protection from discrimination for all its citizens, including lesbians and gays.

Such legislation has been introduced in the Oregon Legislature every session for the past twenty years. Still, there is no statewide protection from discrimination of lesbians and gays in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

By the time readers see this article, we may be looking at another statewide ballot measure. Certainly, there will have been as many as thirty-two different measures on city and county ballots around the state. It is all the more critical for us to:

1. identify our friends;
2. identify our enemies;
3. shake up the complacent;
4. energize the apathetic;
5. take care of ourselves and respect ourselves; and
6. build coalitions like we have never built before.

National studies show that lesbian and gay teens are as much as four to six times more likely to attempt suicide.

Understand, we are never going to win a popularity contest on the issue of gays. It is just not going to happen. The real issues are whether or not all Oregonians deserve life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and whether we really believe the words we recite on the floor of the legislature every day in the Pledge of Allegiance about liberty, and justice for all. So, if we can use that as our standard, there are all kinds of patriotic Americans and Oregonians who, very justifiably, will join with us. This kind of broad-based effort is necessary to make sure the OCA, and whoever else would infringe on our efforts to gain our rights, is ultimately thwarted. Clearly, we need a unified effort from a variety of sources: from education to political and social action. We need to understand what our missions are, the ways they differ from each other, and to come to respect our separate and distinct roles while doing the best job we can with the script we have.

Meanwhile, the OCA is not relenting in its attack on law-abiding Oregonians. The OCA's Lon Mabon was in Salem recently, not to testify about the need to finance schools, encourage economic development, increase worker training, or reduce child poverty—or to offer creative solutions to these urgent problems. No, Lon Mabon was in Salem recently to introduce what some call "The Spawn of 9." This sanitized version of Measure 9 may attempt to be, in marketing parlance, "new and improved;" it may even be presented in some bright, new box; but do not be fooled: it is the same, old—very old—stuff.

Here we go again.

The front lines in this latest battle of the war against discrimination and injustice are drawn in the OCA's city and county ordinances on the ballot this year. There the OCA hopes to keep building its mailing list, adding to its bank account, and inflating the lies told for so many years. To beat the OCA at the local and state level, we must redouble our efforts to educate, because ignorance breeds fear, fear breeds distrust, distrust breeds resentment, resentment breeds hatred, and hatred breeds discrimination and violence.

We must also fight two related enemies: apathy and complacency. Complacency results when people do not believe they need to become involved, when they do not perceive a threat as real, when they do not understand the connection between events happening outside their lives and events happening within their lives. Apathy results when people do not believe they make a difference when they do become involved. Both are deadly to our democracy; to our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

With Measure 9, with the local ordinances, with 1994's promised, "Spawn of 9" the target is lesbian and gay Oregonians, and it is so much more than that. In reality, the target is each and every one of us, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, class, or partisan label. As Hanan Ashrami has stated, "Once you strip others of their humanity, you yourself lose a significant portion of your own humanity."

A CONVERSATION *Between* Jackie Balzer and Marlene Drescher

Jackie Balzer (left), coordinator of educational and support services for lesbian, gay, and bisexual concerns, Dean of Student's office and Marlene Drescher, director, Office of Student Advocacy.

M: As director of the Office of Student Advocacy I come into contact with a wide range of students, and because I have been well known as a lesbian since I first accepted this job, lesbian students, particularly, come to my office. Since I am not part of university administration but am an independent contractor, I think that a level of trust has developed. Before the university created your position to officially address lesbian and gay concerns, the Office of Student Advocacy was perhaps the only place lesbian and gay students felt secure, especially because the whole job of this office is to assist students who are in adverse relationships to the university.

Students would come to us, for example, with harassment issues or complaints about university professors or other officials; and sometimes with more generalized complaints on what they saw painted as graffiti around campus, or leaflets they had seen, or comments they had heard. I am glad now to see that offices such as yours have created more accessibility for lesbian and gay students to find an ear, a role model, or someone to turn to.

J: Historically at the University of Oregon, lesbians have found safe places, safe havens where they could go. Now, in my job as coordinator of educational and support services for lesbian, gay, and bisexual concerns, I can steer them toward those safe places as well as be a safe place—a safe place where they can address academic concerns, harassment concerns, personal concerns, medical concerns, counseling concerns. I can guide them toward the appropriate resources on campus, and I am a resource for those who are questioning their sexual identity, or looking for support, or for referrals concerning sexual orientation. In my position, I also facilitate support groups for lesbians, lead discussion groups on various topics that are of interest to lesbians, and attend events as a representative of the university. So it is not just that we are responding to the needs of lesbian/gay/bisexual students, but we are trying to make the university a better and safer place for them as well as retain them as students.

M: I have noticed in the past five years, while there has always been harassment, while there have always been insults thrown at lesbians (as well as gay men, of course), the harassment has really heightened in the last year-and-a-half since Ballot Measure 9. We have always received complaints about assaults, but these have increased over the last year. And I think that there has been a lot of self-censorship because of the social circumstances around Measure 9. Lesbians who used to feel okay about making a class presentation on the topic, or making an art project, or writing a short story, may not have wanted to risk harassment in the classroom.

J: I want to talk about what lesbians are going through on our campus, and how the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) affects them. On our campus, lesbian and bisexual women are dealing with their own issues of sexual identity development—"Who am I?" and the basic student development issues of "Where am I going to go?", "What is my career choice?", "What is my 'lifestyle' choice?"—in a climate of hate. That creates its own difficulties and fears of how to be and where to be out, and how safe one is. Being able to attend a support or therapy group, gives a young lesbian a place to feel, a place to laugh.

M: Often the women who are coming to us are very young, and while some of them may have formed a sexual identity in high school, I believe that many more have not, especially in this era of AIDS. There is less sexual experimentation now than there was ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago and I think, particularly for young women, sexual orientation may be less of a certainty than for most gay or straight men. I think that truly there are more bisexual women. Because there is generally more feminist consciousness among women college students, lesbianism may be chosen as a means of avoiding the sexism that is endemic in society. Some of these young women have had what others would call successful relationships with men, and what they would call successfully "playing the game" or pursuing a role that society expects them to play. Others, of course, do not feel there is a choice for them—that they are lesbians—and they need to devote a great deal of emotional energy to dealing with that.

J: I often hear, "It is difficult for me to concentrate in class. It is difficult for me to concentrate on my career decision-making when I am faced with understanding myself as a lesbian, faced with not understanding how that may interplay with my career decisions, my feelings of safety in or out of the classroom." Add to those issues the parental pressure centering on their sexual orientation, and I find it incredible that these students are able to succeed in college at all.

M: With Ballot Measure 9 on top of the inner-psychic turmoil, you wonder how they can continue to function. It is really an incredible toll placed on these young women who may be rejecting everything they have learned socially about the role of women, to still be asserting their own identity while knowing that there are social institutions set up to undermine their efforts. It is a tremendous emotional burden and a tremendous display of strength for them to come out and to seek help at all.

J: A prime example of that is a very small classroom project that was done by a graduate student in my office. She surveyed lesbians as well as gay men on our campus about how Measure 9 was affecting them. The report included sleeplessness, nervousness, inability to concentrate on classes, missed classes, depression, as well as some physical illness. There was consistency throughout the survey that the campaign and aftermath of Measure 9 caused these students to have difficulties functioning in their daily life on our campus. I am frightened that the students will continue to be faced with that in the future.

M: Practically every lesbian student who came to me to talk in confidence with the door closed, at some time or another broke down in tears. Some of them have been very active and have managed to channel their fears, anger, pain, and distrust into very effective organizing. But something struck each one at her core that threatened to buckle her essential identity, because of this organized bigotry that she was having to face. We see very strong young women making very difficult choices, while feeling constantly invalidated and undermined by the fanatical beliefs, bigoted actions, and deceptions and manipulations of those supporting the OCA measure.

When you look at it from this standpoint, the right-wing Christian attempt to ban any neutral or positive portrayal of lesbians or gays in the schools is particularly harmful. You see a young woman who needs role models so much, who needs to see that others have gone before her and had good lives. If she does not hear something positive about her potential in life, she is left only with those images condemning her, saying that she is wrong, and bad, and that there is no place for her in this society.

J: We are discussing connectedness and finding people going through similar experiences. If the OCA and the Christian Right continues their work, they are building walls between us so that there is no dialogue, and the result will be that women will still be lesbians, but alone.

I know, during the Measure 9 campaign, sometimes when driving down the road I would see one too many "Yes on 9" signs, and I would cry because they were talking about me. I cried because I was frightened. I cried because I was afraid of what might happen if the measure passed, and I was angry that someone hated me. It had nothing to do, for me, with how they felt about homosexuality. It had to do with the fact that they were trying to take away my rights as a human being, and that was very painful. It was hard to concentrate on work and it was hard to be who I was on a daily basis. I saw what it did to students recently out and the effects were even more dramatic.

A person does not have to leave campus to see homophobia and bigotry. Lesbian students on college campuses see it in their classrooms, observe it in their professors, feel the repercussions from their supervisors. It is not just the OCA that exhibits homophobic reactions to lesbians. Coming out to a boss or a roommate, or dealing with being the brunt of a joke, is just not something we are taught. A lesbian can get very hurt and very lost—even our strongest activists experience that.

M: Yes. Some of the most egregious complaints I have heard have been about fellow students of lesbians and gays who have harassed them intolerably and even raped them. One lesbian came to see me who said that after she came out in a class, a male student in the class followed her and harassed her continually. Even during the class discussion, he would make very rude and inappropriate comments to her. So I enlisted the support of the faculty member. Knowing this faculty member, I was surprised that he had not intervened earlier, but it turned out that he was not tuned into the harassment. He didn't realize that something exceptional was happening to this young woman because she had come out. The faculty member took the male student aside and had a very stern talk with him. The harassment stopped both in and outside the classroom. Unfortunately, you and I probably could not have done as well. This was a very male faculty member talking to a very male student and there had to be strong disapproval from a male authority figure to stop this bully. Although I was glad for this remedy, in this situation I felt personally powerless.

J: We could name many examples on our campus where lesbians have been victimized either by other students, faculty members, or the system. In fact, on many college campuses, students have been victims of hate crimes and then victimized again by the system itself.

M: You and I find ourselves still receiving complaints from lesbian students that their reports of harass-

ment or assault are not being taken seriously by our campus administration or the Office of Public Safety; that they are being given misinformation, or that they are not allowed to file a complaint during a standard, routine complaint procedure.

J: Before our conversation, I sat down with a few lesbian leaders on campus from our student organization, some of the folks who are expressing themselves as activists, and I asked them what are some of their most pressing issues. They strongly emphasized what we are talking about: harassment, lack of role models, the desire to meet people like themselves, and coming-out issues. They also talked about sexism and oppression. By being both lesbian and obviously women, they felt doubly oppressed. They have had to deal with being discriminated against because of their sex and now, as lesbians, they are experiencing some of the same oppressive reactions and finding that very difficult to overcome.

On my job, I have the opportunity to go out and do anti-homophobia workshops that take me to Greek houses, residence halls, campus organizations, faculty groups, and administration groups. I get to talk to them about how best they can serve lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, ways of becoming allies, and a recognition that there is much work ahead for everyone involved. And I talk to them about their fears. Their fears come out in a variety of ways, from resistance to displaying a safe-zone symbol because that might be political, to the outright hate I see in just a campus residence group. I ask, "What are you afraid of?" "Well, we are afraid of THEM." "Well, who is them?" "We do not want lesbians in our living group." "Why?" "I don't know." Often they do not know where the fear comes from. It is just there. "Do you know someone who is lesbian or gay?" "Yeah." "Are you afraid of them?" "No." "Then why not live with them?" That is just too big a step for some residence groups. When I am doing a workshop, the ignorance that is right in front of my face is so sad, so sad.

I also think the lack of role models profoundly affects young lesbians in their quest to find out who they are, and what being lesbian or bisexual means to them. They live in a world where homophobia surrounds them. The young lesbian rarely sees examples of an out lesbian. She is looking for women to look up to. She wants to ask questions. She aspires to achieve as these successful lesbians have, but there are very few women for her to emulate. That is beginning to change, but very slowly.

M: Yes, when you talk about role models I think back on how important it was for me in 1971 when I came out, to see that there were a few other women who were out and active and successful. That shaped my life, even my career choice to become a lawyer. I knew an out lesbian lawyer and that helped me go on to law school and become a lawyer myself.

J: Now I have lesbians come and ask me: "Do you know somebody who is a lesbian who is in architecture that I can talk to, or computer science?" That is how important it is: "I want to know someone who is in my career field."

M: Sure. Even when I think of high school kids and the tremendous suicide rate of lesbians and gays, I think if only they knew there is a place for them, if only they knew there is a whole social structure and network for lesbians and gays. Lesbians should know that there are people who have succeeded in all fields and whose lesbianism has been an asset in many cases. For example, how many lesbians do you know who have written their Ph.D. dissertations on lesbian-related topics?

I wish that every female faculty member who is a lesbian could come out in some way to her classes. This openness not only would provide role models, but it would help disseminate information to other faculty members about the experiences of lesbians on campus.

J: I guess if there is a message that I would like readers of this article to understand it is that lesbians are incredibly diverse. We come in every size, shape, color, and form, and express ourselves in every possible way. Trying to combine sexual identity development with being a student is incredibly difficult. Expressing some sensitivity and awareness of that fact could be critically important to a young lesbian. You do not have to be a lesbian to be a role model. Many of our allies on campus serve as beautiful role models, but they stick their necks out and say they care about lesbian issues, demonstrating their interest and winning the trust of lesbian students.

M: I would like to mention the importance of courses offered by the Women's Studies Program. Often, for the first time, women have the opportunity to analyze their own circumstances from a variety of perspectives. This is particularly true for young lesbians. They find the safety to really evaluate what kind of choices they want to make in their lives. In this safer environment framed by more intellectual freedom, students often come to terms with living truthfully, openly, and ethically with who they really are.

J: For me, taking a women's studies class was one of the first steps to my coming out. I had to understand who I was as a woman before I could understand who I was as a lesbian. That was very important to me. In my women's studies classes, for the first time lesbianism was discussed from a woman's point of view. I had heard information on homosexuality and had read a few things, and even attended a program in my dorm, but for some reason, in that women's studies class, talking about the diversity of lesbianism, talking about history, and understanding the diversity of women helped me really to feel okay about myself.

M: I think that for a significant number of young lesbians, taking a women's studies class for the first time really identifies for them what is going on in their lives in terms of their personal oppression as women. They learn to identify the oppression, name it, show why it is happening—in short, it provides a venue to figure out what to do about their own experience. I have seen young lesbian students who, after taking a women's studies class, feel suddenly free to make choices they never even realized they had. It is a great liberating experience for them. They can use intellectual theory to make the rest of their lives orderly and understandable and functional and provide direction for them to take more control over what they want to do in their lives.

J: I am very optimistic that lesbians on college campuses will become even more effective in their lives as more positions, such as mine, are created, as we add lesbian specialists to our counseling center, as more faculty come out, as we continue to confront injustice. I am hopeful for change, as women's studies classes continue to be offered, university-level lesbian and gay studies increase, and sexual orientation issues are integrated into sociology, anthropology, and psychology classes. Maybe some day young lesbians will be looking through the college catalog and one of the classes that fulfills a requirement in history will be "The History of the Lesbian and Gay Movement" or a class on lesbian identity development. I believe those times are not too far away. I am very sure that change is coming.

M: Perhaps we should end on that encouraging note. Thanks for being there, Jackie.

J: Thank you, Marlene.