

AUSTINDYKE

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LESBIAN RAP & DISCUSSION GROUPS TO FORM

We are three lesbians who wish to begin a lesbian rap group sometime in September. We would like to open the group up to any lesbian wanting a politically/emotionally supportive atmosphere in which to explore topics relevant to lesbians, e.g. relationships with wimmin, lesbian feminism, etc. (and a whole range of unexplored territory). Any lesbian interested, call Marie at 472-4520 after August 1st.

The three of us would like to explore lesbian politics on a discussion level. Topics in mind include lesbian separatism (its many definitions and practicality). We would also like to explore topics originating from some of the questions and theories proposed by Mary Daly in her book Gyn/Ecology. We are considering forming two groups: the above rap group and also a political discussion group. Call same name and number for information or ideas; after August 1st.

- Marie, Dheena, Kathy

UP FOR DISCUSSION: LESBIAN FRIENDS AS FAMILY

In many ways my lesbian friends have been like a family to me, and I'm certainly closer to them than to my family of birth for many reasons. Lesbian friends have lent and given me money, given me clothes, lent me cars and given me rides, given me places to stay. I can count on my lesbian friends in ways that I never have been able to count on my straight friends, now or when I considered myself to be straight.

However, I have never had exactly the same kind of intimate friendships with women, except my lover, since I've been a lesbian as I had with straight women. I think this may come from the "family" nature of the lesbian community too. One is close to family members in different ways and with different expectations than to non-family members. In some ways one is much closer but in some ways much more distant. This may be because both families and lesbian communities are rather involuntary groupings. Sure, I choose to be with lesbians rather than anyone else, just as some people choose to be with their families. But I don't have a choice about who is a lesbian any more than I have a choice about who my parents, brothers, or sisters are.

I think this closeness of our ties and the reliance we place and want to place on each other, together with the great variety of politics and opinions among lesbians, may be responsible for the high levels of anger and tension that often exist between lesbians. We are each other's families--for better and for worse--and there's a lot of both.

- Ginger

AUSTINDYKE asked several lesbians for their comments on the idea of lesbian friends as family.

--I don't consider just any lesbian as a family member because she's a lesbian, but the lesbians I'm close to I do, in some ways deeper than my own blood family. There are some common problems that make some kind of bond.

--Some lesbians are like my family. The emotional bonds are closer than just casual friendships. But I wouldn't claim some lesbians as third,

(cont'd on p. 4)

Welcome to AUSTINDYKE! We hope to provide a way for Austin area lesbians to express views, let each other know about things, etc. We welcome short contributions on any topic of interest, as well as reviews, coverage of any lesbian event you happen to attend, and so on. Please send these to us at: P.O. Box 3374, Austin, Texas 78764. Please let us know how and whether you want your article signed.

The OUR TIME HAS COME collective are ^{not} giving us their subscription monies and we will continue all paid-up subscriptions to OUR TIME HAS COME for the appropriate time period. * A subscription blank for AUSTINDYKE will be found on page 4. Copy deadline for the next (September) issue is August 20th.

* See p. 4.

fourth, or fifth cousins.

--I consider *everyone* my family.

--I think of lesbians - those in the lesbian community, not those in the closet - as family because I feel at home with them. They accept things about me that men and their women don't. We can disagree without being enemies.

LETTERS & OPINIONS

WHAT'S GAY COMMUNITY SERVICES TELLING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT US?

GCS was scheduled to make a presentation (billed as "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Gay Rights and the Gay Community but Were Afraid to Ask") to an Austin Community College sociology class. Since I work at ACC, I thought I'd go.

GCS sent a panel consisting of three lesbians and two gay men. All looked pretty average, not dressed up, on the young and studenty side--no dykey women, no very effeminate men, but no super-straight either. All were Anglos. They introduced themselves and asked for questions.

Questions were rather slow in coming and it made for a very lackadaisical presentation. I suspect students were still "afraid to ask."

The general thrust of many answers to questions was that homosexuals are just like other people except for sexual orientation. Since I strongly disagree with this, at least as far as lesbians go, this did not please me; however, I realize that it is probably the view of more homosexuals than mine is. There were a few interesting moments:

Weirdest question (from a middle-aged woman): You're all obviously attractive young people. What do you do when someone of the opposite sex is attracted to you?

Most interesting answer: One gay man on the panel said that by the time he was six he, taught by his extremely homophobic father, could pick out some women as lesbians and had learned to be afraid of them--although he had no idea what a lesbian was.

My favorite answer: The brief comment of one lesbian that her feminism did have something to do with her lesbianism, that it was her best solution in a patriarchal society. Such perspectives were never otherwise mentioned.

Basically, I feel that the panel managed to convey neither the joy and excitement homosexuals feel about being gay nor the pain and fear we feel at homosexual oppression. Both came out somewhat in answers, but not strongly enough, I think, to make a lasting impression on anyone who didn't already know these things. I was surprised at how ill-informed the panel was about laws affecting homosexuals (on which there were several questions); I think GCS should make an effort to have at least one person know a lot about this.

I feel that not having a formal presentation made for something of a zoo atmosphere. "Here we are! Real live queers!" Of course there is definitely going to be an element of this anyway, but there could be much, much more in the way of education.

However, let's hope that did some good. I know that, in my case, seeing two women I actually knew to be lesbians at a meeting both scared me and had something to do with my coming out two years later. But for the future, I would strongly suggest to GCS that they have a more organized and formal presentation, that they have more diversified panelists, that they make more of an effort in the presentation to acknowledge differences of viewpoints among homosexuals, and that they have someone well-informed on laws affecting homosexuals. I think that in this way they could have a less awkward and more effective presentation, and make much better use of the opportunity to inform the general public about homosexuality and homosexual oppression.

- Anne Peticolas

CABARET DECISION: CAUSE FOR REJOICING?

It's hard to imagine lesbians wanting to go dance in a straight disco; most of us have enough contact with straights all day without choosing to be with them during our few recreational hours. But in any case, the Cabaret decision doesn't make it any easier for any lesbians who want to dance there. The Cabaret says it hasn't changed its house rule, and the fine they got was a slap on the wrist. But what taking

this kind of thing to trial does do is assure us that we can't keep straights out of our places (if we ever get any). A glance at the newspaper any day will demonstrate that the laws are made and enforced to benefit those in power, and that ain't us. In fact, the biggest effect I can see of this business is putting more money, time, and energy into the legal system--which is a male system, one scarcely designed to protect, and certainly not to benefit, women--and especially lesbian women. Of course the gay lawyer from San Francisco says that the right to dance at the Cabaret is not the point, but that now people can see that "gays...are just plain folks like anyone else," and that "the whole point is one of changing people's minds...." How naive can you get? Lesbians, at least politically conscious lesbians, are certainly not "just like anyone else." And even if we were, we ought to know that you don't get people to love you by taking them to court.

- Ann Azolakov

REVIEWS

Songs of Fire: Songs of a Lesbian Anarchist by Kathy Fire. Folkways Records FS 8585

Kathy Fire doesn't call herself a singer or a musician but quotes a friend as saying that what she lacks in talent she makes up for in energy. These songs are roughly done (recorded in a one-time-through, one-hour studio session) but tremendously exciting because they deal directly with things that go on in our real lives. Not all are readily singable, though some are, but their content rings true, and that's what will get your adrenalin up. She sings about lovers, lesbian mothers, the FBI, the dream of living in the country, coming out, and the fight against the patriarchy. The effect of the album, though rousing, is vaguely unsatisfying, but the lack of satisfaction comes not from the songs or their delivery, but from the truth they tell: that lesbians who work for real change in this world are involved in a hard, frustrating, grinding fight in which the bright moments are not easy to find. But Songs of Fire is not depressing. Instead it is full of courage and encouragement. There are some victories; there are some things to laugh about; we can--sometimes--count on each other, as friends, as lovers, as sisters in struggle. This is a real lesbian album that says what it means.

- Ann Azolakov

Debutante by Willie Tyson. Urana Records, Division of Wise Women Enterprises, Inc.

Willie Tyson's most recent album is a strong, exciting collection of feminist songs which are entertaining lyrically, interesting musically, and well-delivered. Tyson's BobDylan-esque lyric style which dominated her first album still shows up here, though the messages of the songs come through more clearly than on the previous record. My favorites in this collection are "Did You Say Love?" and "Witching Hour." The first is a sardonic look at what women do to try to please their lovers when the lovers turn out to be less than expected. The second is probably the most emotionally powerful feminist song yet recorded. It will give you goose bumps and send you off looking for someone to defy. I have yet to see any woman remain unmoved by it. It alone would be worth the price of the record, but fortunately the other songs are high quality, too. The only ambivalence I feel about Debutante is that from the title and the fact that Willie Tyson appears in drag on the cover one would expect the album to represent the singer's coming out as a lesbian. Although there is lesbian content in some of the songs (one assumes), the album is really much more a straight feminist record than a lesbian one.

- Ann Azolakov

The Two of Them by Joanna Russ. Berkley Publishers, 1978; now in paperback also.

Joanna Russ's new science-fiction novel is not another Female Man, but it's a real winner just the same. Its protagonist, Irene Waskiewicz, is a trans-temporal agent, who, with her co-worker Ernst (a "good man"), is working on a Moslem planet in another possible world. She is outraged at how women are treated there and does manage to rescue Zubeydeh, a 12-year-old girl, though she has to leave other oppressed women behind.

Zubeydeh, though she chose to leave, carries her Moslem perceptions with her. She is hostile to Irene, often preferring Ernst. Her perceptions of what goes on between Irene and Ernst enable Irene to see Ernst in a new way (e.g. she insists Irene and Ernst must be married, though Irene believes they are not), and to realize that "good men" are oppressors like the rest.

The book is essentially a (successful) attempt to deal with the fact that women (my mother, your mother) can be much more unpleasant than the men who are in charge and love their daughters--and to still put the blame where it belongs, on the men. It has a startling and satisfying denouement which I won't reveal. The heterosexual sex scenes may be offensive to some. Still, I highly recommend it.

- Anne Peticolas

HOW-TO

KEEP MEN FROM SITTING NEXT TO YOU ON THE BUS!

I prefer to sit alone on the bus; but, if the bus is crowded, I had far rather a woman than a man were next to me. I decided to see if there was some way I could control this.

The first thing I tried was to look friendly when a woman went by and to avert my eyes when a man passed. This had the exact opposite effect from what I wanted. Almost always it was a man who sat by me!

Then I figured that perhaps men preferred to sit by women because of the way I noticed men near me were sitting, knees spread widely apart, taking up lots of room. I tried sitting like that but it didn't seem to help.

Finally, I realized that looking at people made them not want to sit by you. Now I look, in an attentive but neutral way, at the men who get on the bus. When a woman approaches, I look out the window, sometimes shifting my body slightly to make room for her. This works almost all the time!

- Anne Peticolas

SPREAD WORD ABOUT AUSTINDYKE!

At the last minute (night before mailing) AUSTINDYKE's arrangement with the OUR TIME HAS COME collective fell through. What happened? We'll run a brief account in our next issue.

This means that: (1) We have no access to any mailing list. We are mailing this issue only to a short list of friends, friends of friends, acquaintances, etc., and distributing the other copies as best we can. (2) We are definitely in the hole. Expenses for this issue so far are \$16 for P.O. box plus \$19 for printing (actual cost). This is \$35 so far, and we will also be spending a presently unknown amount on postage. Income for this issue so far is \$5 we have received for a subscription.

This does not mean that AUSTINDYKE will fold. We promise to publish AUSTINDYKE monthly till the end of the year, and we plan to continue publishing after that. We do need subscriptions and names for our mailing list. Also, please help us out by showing AUSTINDYKE to your friends.

Anne Peticolas, Ann Azolakov, Barbara Hopson and Nancy Elaine worked on this issue.

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