

## Lesbians prepare for 1st state lesbian conference

LOCALLY-SPONSORED MEET FEATURES RANGE OF SPEAKERS, EVENTS



Noted feminist Sonia Johnson will speak at the Texas Lesbian Conference, scheduled for May 6-8 in Dallas.

**L**esbians from throughout Texas and surrounding states will gather for a first-of-its-kind statewide conference in Dallas, May 6-8 at the Ramada Hotel, 3232 W. Mockingbird (across from Love Field). The Texas Lesbian Conference, sponsored by two local lesbian organizations — Among Friends, Inc. and Lesbian Visionaries — is intended to provide opportunities for lesbians to learn, share and network with one another in a safe and supportive environment.

The workshop will feature a range of speakers, including Sonia Johnson, a noted feminist author, activist and speaker who first came to national prominence when she was excommunicated from the Mormon Church for her outspoken support of the Equal Rights Amendment. The only independent Presidential candidate to receive federal matching funds in 1984, Johnson is lecturing throughout the country about her book, *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation*.

Also featured at the conference will be Rosemary Dempsey, current Chair of the Lesbian Task Force for the National Organization for Women (NOW). An attorney in Trenton, NJ, Dempsey will address activism and women's roles in government and in

movements for social change. And Kay Hagan, the feminist theorist and author whose work juxtaposes feminist theory and issues of codependency, addictive behavior and internalized oppression, will present one of her "feminars," the goal being "to learn practical ways to apply a feminist perspective to our daily lives," she says.

In addition, JEB (Joan E. Biren), one of the outstanding photographers to emerge from the feminist movement, will present her widely-acclaimed multi-media work, *Out of Bounds: A Lesbian Journey*, celebrating lesbians and their lives.

A variety of workshops, panel discussions, and entertainment events will be offered, and exhibits of craftworks will be on display.

"We want to reach out to all parts of the community and bring together lesbians of all ages, races, economic backgrounds and nationalities," said Charlotte Taft, one of the founders of Among Friends, Inc. Another founder, Kay Vinson, elaborated: "The Texas Lesbian Conference is a celebration of women being comfortable with who they are as lesbians. The hardest part about being a lesbian is dealing with your own feelings about it first. We want this conference to validate, affirm and celebrate all lesbians as

the wonderful human beings that we are."

Child care, signing for the hearing-impaired and financial assistance are available. Registration fee for the conference is \$40 at the door. For further information, call 528-2426, 328-3792 or 521-9642.

Additional details and a complete conference schedule will be printed in next week's *Voice*.

## Volunteers needed for 6-month study

PROBING EFFECT OF EXERCISE ON IMMUNITY

**A** graduate student at North Texas State University is seeking volunteers to participate in a locally-conducted, six-month study seeking to determine the effects of exercise and counseling on individuals infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

Larry Rigsby, a masters' candidate in exercise physiology at NTSU, will conduct the study as part of the requirements toward his degree, and 80 male volunteers will be



# Welcome to Dallas!



JOIN TODAY—DALLAS GAY ALLIANCE

## TEXAS LESBIAN CONF.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE —

All scheduled events will take place at the Ramada Hotel, 3222 W. Mockingbird Lane (across from Love Field).

#### FRIDAY, MAY 6:

2 p.m. — Registration  
6-10 p.m. Hospitality Suite (sponsored by Lesbian Visionaries).

#### SATURDAY, MAY 7:

7-8 a.m. Exhibition set-up  
8-9 a.m. Registration and continental breakfast (provided). Exhibit viewing  
9 a.m. Welcome: Scout Lee  
10-11:30 a.m. Workshop Session I\*  
11:45 a.m. Speech: Rosemary Dempsey, chair of the National Organization for Women's Lesbian Task Force, on women's roles in activism, government and social change.  
1:00 p.m. Lunch (on your own)  
1:45 p.m. Keynote speaker: Sonia Johnson, author of "Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation"  
3:45-5:15 Workshop Session II\*  
8:30 p.m. Nancy Scott performs (noted Austin vocalist)  
9 p.m. — Dance, with music provided by Little Feather Band.

#### SUNDAY, MAY 8:

9 a.m. Registration & Continental breakfast  
10 a.m. Multi-media presentation by noted feminist photographer JEB.

11:45 a.m. Lunch  
12:45 Spirituality panel, with excerpts from recent Theatre Gemini production, "Sisters."  
3:00 p.m. Herstory and trends in women's music.

\*Workshop sessions will include: Coming Out; Legal Issues; Substance Abuse; Sexuality & Health; Lesbian Music; Spirituality: Mothers of Lesbians; Child Custody; Women's Mythology/Literature; Moving past 'isms' (racism, sexism, ageism, classism).

# DALLAS VOICE

NO. V/1

MAY 6, 1988



LESBIANS TRAVEL TO DALLAS FOR A LITTLE

## T.L.C. —

THE TEXAS LESBIAN CONFERENCE — THE

STATE'S FIRST — PROVIDES LESBIANS A

FORUM FOR NETWORKING, CELEBRATION . . .

AND DELIBERATION ON TOUGH TOPICS.

**I**t's probably typical of Texans to be interested in energy and power. But at the Texas Lesbian Conference, the energy wasn't oil and the power wasn't driving machines — it was the energy of lesbian women from all over Texas, feeling the power of their numbers for the first time.

The conference was a dream of two relatively new lesbian organizations in Dallas: Among Friends, Inc., which organizes educational and inspirational events for women, and Lesbian Visionaries, a networking and support organization for women who love women.

B.J. Anderson, co-founder of Among Friends and a coordinator of the conference, says it's the culmination of a process that began about 15 months ago. "We had new blood coming in from out of state, bringing

**"We've gone from almost no organized lesbian activities to four or five major organizations, a statewide conference, music, arts — it's like a revival here."**

—LAUREN RAMSEY

## SIGNATURE AD TO MARK COMING OUT DAY

**PARTICIPANTS AT THE** Texas Lesbian Conference last weekend endorsed a major public campaign for the gay/lesbian community that is aimed at heterosexuals, organizer Charlotte Taft said. The project calls for a "signature ad" to be placed in at least one of the Dallas daily newspapers on Oct. 11, 1988, which is National Coming Out Day for gays and lesbians.

The spirit of the day is for gays and lesbians to reveal their sexual orientation to someone, whether family members, co-workers or friends. The signature ad would be full-page and would display the names of everyone who wishes to be public about their homosexuality.

"We would be saying 'we are your sons and daughters, brothers and sister, friends,'" Taft explained. The cost per person is at least \$5, although more can be donated to the event. Participants can stipulate whether they want their names, initials only, or not to be listed on the ad at all.

Taft hopes to have at least 1,000 signatures on the ad, and notes that many people feel there is safety in numbers. In fact, those involved can indicate at what number of names they feel their own can be included. Some may feel comfortable to be listed if there are at least 200 other names, 500, etc.

"The context here is for everyone to take their next step [in the coming out process]," Taft explained. "What we have to gain is so significant." She said the lesbian group Among Friends will soon be mailing letters to "every organization in Dallas we can think of," asking for help and participation. "We have even considered the concept of making this a statewide movement."

Taft said forms for the signature ad will be available soon, but for now those interested can send their \$5 or more, along with a note specifying the extent of their involvement in the ad, to Among Friends, P.O. Box 710185, Dallas, 75371. "They should be sure to put whether they want their name, initials, and how many names they would feel comfortable with," Taft said.



Left to right Peggy Clark, B.J. Anderson and Shelley Oram were among the many volunteers who helped make the first Texas Lesbian Conference a success.

Women's Lesbian Rights Committee.

It's Dempsey's view that lesbians nationwide are at a historic point. "The energy is at such a level that the lesbian community has more now than any other progressive movement going, and we've got to go forward and take the power. You've got a lot of young women who didn't come up with all that oppression, and a lot who came in through working in the AIDS crisis, who are ready to get on with eradicating oppression."

Dempsey sees lesbians stepping into the gay rights leadership gap caused by AIDS. "Gay and lesbian organizations are still dominated by men. But when you look around, many of the men in leadership positions are dying, or ill, or totally consumed by the whole thought of AIDS. And women do have to take over these leadership positions in the interim. Maybe this will bring the gay and feminist agendas together."

Conference coordinator B.J. Anderson concurs with Dempsey. "Let's face it, gay men are sexist, too. So they haven't given us the roles and we haven't had the power to take them. Now, in a sad and tragic way, women will be assuming leadership roles that they've been perfectly capable of handling but may not have been invited into the private male

social-leadership-political club. They've got to be in there now, somebody's got to lead the fight."

Dempsey urges lesbians not to relinquish their own voice in the process. "We have to speak for ourselves. We may need our own national organization, network and agenda. We have a lot of issues to address in the '90s: legalizing our families, self-defining and protecting them. There are custody issues, visitation, donor insemination, day care. We're going to have to be on the front lines fighting sodomy statutes with the men. There is nothing radical about saying that our relationships need to be recognized as legitimate."

The key is visibility, says Dempsey. "I have seen all of our conciliatory politics tactics and it just doesn't work. The major issue is taking the power by being out and visible, organizing, raising money to take the power and not pouring money down the black hole of our so-called liberal friends who stab us in the back every time." (Along those lines, Among Friends has started a project for National Coming Out Day, October 11, 1988: a signature ad to appear in Dallas area newspapers, bearing the names of those who'll pay five dollars for the privilege of seeing their names

in print, identified publicly as gay and lesbian.)

Author Sonia Johnson seems to take a different tack on power. Her keynote speech on *The Metaphysics of Liberation* didn't talk about seizing power, but about acting as though women already had it. "The future is the birth canal of the present," Johnson told the conference. "If we want a world in which women are not afraid, we have to be unafraid right now. If we don't want a world in which women are begging men, we have to get off our knees right now. You can't struggle — all we can get from struggle is more struggle."

Lauren Ramsey thinks there's more agreement between Dempsey and Johnson than meets the eye. "There's a concept that Sonia Johnson talks about, that of a 'critical mass' of people. You talk to enough people about an idea and get enough people thinking about it — in Dallas, it was about 15 or 20 for this conference — and what that does is create change, a shift in thinking. And that shift creates a vacuum, opens a door for so many people. That's my hunch as to really what's happened here. And it couldn't have happened before that, and it will keep going after."

Ramsay foresees more activity from the lesbian community in Dallas. "I see a strengthening of the groups that have begun, some divergence, some new things happening. I expect more creative arts, more writing, film, new theater, musical events. We've made the connections, we've done some educational things: now you're going to see a spiritual and cultural outpouring."

**"The future is the birth canal of the present. If we want a world in which women are not afraid, we have to be unafraid right now. If we don't want a world in which women are begging men, we have to get off our knees right now. You can't struggle — all we can get from struggle is more struggle."**

—SONIA JOHNSON

And the spirit may have touched other places in Texas — next year's lesbian conference is already planned for San Antonio. ▼

## A JOB WELL DONE

An "extraordinary experience" and "a rave review" are some of the phrases being bandied by lesbian leaders after an historical gathering of lesbians in Dallas last weekend. The Texas Lesbian Conference, held at the Ramada Hotel on Mockingbird, was the first statewide meeting of its kind and was attended by an estimated 340 women, many more than the initial 186 registered. The conference was co-sponsored by two Dallas groups, Lesbian Visionaries and Among Friends.

"I am a mile high," said organizer B.J. Anderson after the conference. "It was one of the most positive and rewarding experiences in my life. . . . The accomplishment was self-empowerment for every participant. It was a leap in self-esteem and a personal coming out experience for a lot of lesbians."

She guessed 60 percent to 70 percent of the participants were from the Metroplex, with others from Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Lubbock and even Albuquerque, N.M. And she coined a new term to explain the unanticipated high turnout: "LML — the Last Minute Lesbians who showed up and helped the conference pay for itself."

Fellow organizer Charlotte Taft added, "[The conference] exceeded all of our expectations and dreams. It provided an experience base that is critical for the lesbian community." Taft praised the more than 75 volunteers who worked for the success of the conference. "We didn't want people to have just an intellectual experience; we wanted to connect their brain to their heart."

Taft said the keynote speaker, noted feminist author Sonia Johnson, was enthusiastically received, as was Rosemary Dempsey, chair of the National Organization of Women's Lesbian Task Force. And Anderson noted many women stayed late into Sunday afternoon for sessions, "and it was a beautiful, sunny day out."

Taft explained the Texas Lesbian Conference was not arranged to set a political agenda, but to be more of a group affirmation of lesbian identity. "This was more of a soul work conference — one of internal change. Enlightenment, not just information."

Participants agreed to hold another conference next year in San Antonio. This one was successful enough, Anderson added, that money was left over to be used as seed money for the San Antonio conference.



Charlotte Taft

**VISIONARY ROAST:** Dallas lesbian leader Kay Vinson, one of the guiding forces in Lesbian Visionaries and Among Friends, will be honored with a "roast" at the September meeting of Lesbian Visionaries Monday, Sept. 26, at 7:30 p.m. at Rumors, 5039 Willis.

Plans for awarding Lesbian of the Year honors will also be discussed at that meeting.

**TLC PROFITS:** Profits from the Texas Lesbian Conference held here in May totaled \$6,109, according to a financial report published recently by Among Friends, Inc. The money will be divided among lesbian organizations, with \$500 going to ELLAS (a Latina Lesbiana second annual statewide lesbian retreat), \$2,000 to Lesbian Visionaries, \$1,000 seed money for the 1989 TLC, and \$2,609 to Among Friends to pay for future programs.



## **7** *Lesbians continue their drive to build an organized community in Dallas and in Texas.*

Foremost among the achievements of local lesbians — who already had established Lesbian Visionaries, the soon-to-be-defunct Among Friends, Inc. and a thriving discussion group — was the first-ever Texas Lesbian Conference, held in Dallas under sponsorship of Among Friends and Lesbian Visionaries. The event was so successful it will become an annual event, hosted by different lesbian communities around Texas.

Other achievements: speakers ranging from Kay Hagan to lesbian sex therapist Joann Loulan, and a lesbian town meeting to lay the groundwork for a lesbian resource center, and, in general, the more pervasive and influential presence of lesbians in the life of the community.

But local lesbians are discovering that with growth comes growing pains. Not the sort of satisfying pains that one feels after a day of good hard work. Instead, it will be the pain of bickering and internal strife which, as in the gay male community, will be an inevitable part of their movement, which already is beginning to become apparent.

The quality of the lesbian community will, in large measure, be determined by how successfully the women surmount these

inevitable but prickly problems.

One organization which saw a taste of those problems in 1988 was Among Friends. The three-member board dissolved because of self-labeled differences in style. What that means is, the women agreed that they were unable to agree, and they decided after a several-hour "conflict resolution" session with the aforementioned Hagan that dissolution of the organization was probably the best way to go.

The way that potential controversy was handled impressed many of us. The women were able to face a serious problem squarely and honestly, and act in the best interests of community — without accusation and counter-accusation or berating each other with personal attacks.

In 1989 another controversy will come to a head, over who has the "right" to develop a lesbian resource center. Is it an ad hoc group of organizers who have decided to proceed on its own, or is it Lesbian Visionaries, one of whose interest groups first originated the idea, according to an LV organizer.

These disagreements will come. They will provide the organized women's community with a chance to prove its dicta about patriarchy and group consensus. It will be an exciting as well as a trying time, and a wonderful chance for women to show gay men something about how their philosophies can produce better systems for the working out of gay and lesbian goals.

## Lesbian authors to keynote June meet

1,000 EXPECTED TO ATTEND HOUSTON EVENT

**T**wo native Texas lesbians are scheduled to deliver the keynote addresses at the second annual Texas Lesbian Conference, slated for June 2-4 at the Astro Village Hotel in Houston. TLC 1989 is sponsored by All Mujeres Interested in Getting Active (AMIGA), and Womynspace of Houston,

environment.

Keynoting the Saturday morning session will be Gloria Anzaldua, co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Her address will focus on the borderland experience of being caught between two cultures and being an alien in both.

Lesbian novelist Antoinette Azolakov, in her Sunday keynote address, will explore the contrasting views of the feminist and non-feminist and of women in the traditional versus non-traditional occupations. Azola-

kov's published works include *Cass and the Stone Butch*, *Skiptrace* and *Contactees Die Young*.

For more information on TLC 1989, write: Box 908134, Houston, TX 77098, or call 713-520-5667. A TLC volunteer orientation is set for Saturday, May 6, and all interested women should call or write for information. ▼



## TLC '89 to feature dance and concert

TWO TEXAS AUTHORS WILL KEYNOTE EVENT

The second annual Texas Lesbian Conference, slated for June 2-4 in Houston, will include a dance on Saturday evening and

a concert Sunday evening featuring several entertainers, along with keynote addresses by two noted native Texan authors.

AMIGA de Houston (All Mujeres Interested in Getting Active), a latina lesbian organization, and Womynspace of Houston, a non-hierarchical feminist organization founded to create an alternative space for women, are producing the 1989 conference. It is being held at the Astro Village Hotel, 2350 S. Loop W, and will focus on bringing together women of all races, economic backgrounds, political identities, spiritualities and ages, organizers say. The theme for the conference is "Celebrating Diversity."

Gloria Anzaldua, co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, will deliver the Saturday morning keynote address, and will discuss "the borderland experience: caught between two cultures, an alien in both."

Lesbian novelist Antoinette Azolakov will explore the contrasting views of the feminist and non-feminist and of all the women in traditional versus non-traditional occupations in her Sunday keynote speech. She is the author of *Cass and the Stone Butch*, *Skiptrace* and *The Contactees Die Young*.

Houston deejays Becky Contreras and Cherry Wolf will be mixing the sounds for the Saturday night dance, and culminating the conference will be a concert Sunday featuring Heartsong, Edna Garcia, Rossalyn Ruffin, Terry Maldonado, Las Companeros, Ginger Doss and other Texas talent.

The objectives of the conference are to create a network of lesbians to facilitate communication, promote grassroots organi-



Native Texan authors Antoinette Azolakov (left) and Gloria Anzaldua will deliver the keynote addresses at TLC '89.

THE DALLAS VOICE/MAY 18, 1989

"We certainly hope nothing like this ever happens here again. You can't stop everything from happening, we are doing all we can to make sure things like this don't happen again," Jack said. ▼

## Lesbian gathering praises diversity

250 WOMEN ATTEND HOUSTON CONFERENCE

By KAY VINSON

Special to *The Voice*

HOUSTON — There is clearly a "lesbian movement" in Texas, and despite an occasional trip, stumble or fall it is coming together with a respect for diversities. That's what emerged this past weekend in Houston at the Second Annual Texas Lesbian Conference (TLC) which attracted 250 women, about 20 of them from the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The conference featured two keynote speakers — Texas author Antoinette Azolakov and poet and fiction writer Gloria Anzaldua, a Texas native now living in California. Both women addressed the issue of diversity within the lesbian movement.

Anzaldua said lesbians must embrace their cultural identity, something not necessarily encouraged by mainstream society and an underlying, sometimes unspoken, issue with many lesbians.

## LESBIAN OUTREACH

THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FUND (HCRF) has announced the creation of a new Lesbian Issues and Outreach Project to advance the lesbian political agenda within the U.S. Congress and the gay and lesbian community.

The project will address the political and policy issues of the lesbian community and develop strategies to advance those issues through federal legislation, education and advocacy.

"The Lesbian Issues and Outreach Project will enable HCRF to expand and communicate — to Capital Hill and our community — a feminist agenda for civil rights," said newly-appointed HCRF Executive Director Tim McFeeley. "This includes equal social and economic opportunities and a broad range of other issues, such as reproductive rights, guardianship and domestic partnership concerns."

HCRF is now accepting applications for director of the project. Individuals interested in the position should send resumes to the Human Rights Campaign Fund, 1012 14th Street NW, Suite 607, Washington, D.C. 20005, Attention: Lesbian Issues and Outreach Project. Salary will be commensurate with experience. Deadline for applications is July 30.

The university teacher who was co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, also pointed out that skin color is not the whole of cultural identity. She said that where you grew up and who you associated with make up your cultural identity. "There are worlds we share," she said, "and before we move on we must be stable in our own cultural identity."

Both Anzaldua and Azolakov reminded their audiences that being a lesbian in America is about not fitting in, and learning to deal with that.

"Everything in society today tells us we don't exist," Azolakov said during her Sunday keynote talk. "We are brave. The lesbian movement is a monument to our individual courage."

The award-winning author who shares a trailer house in Austin with her cats and dogs encouraged lesbians to honor their differences. "Fear is something we were taught at an early age ... to be afraid of anyone different than ourselves. We try desperately to categorize people so we can push them away. We condemn each other."

The 45-year-old Azolakov, who has had a variety of jobs including welder, gas station attendant, high school English teacher and explosives plant worker, said "We must honor ourselves, understanding that we don't have to be like somebody else to appreciate" who they are or what they are all about.

Our parents have taught us to despise our differences. "Deep in your heart, don't you wish more dykes were like you?" Azolakov queried. "Lesbians have isolated themselves in little groups for too long. It is time we see each other for who we are," she said. "Some of us look like pretty queer queers to each other. Let's do something about that. Throw out all the things they taught us over the years. Let's honor ourselves and each other."

"We must see past the fears of our differences to see the possibilities," said Azolakov. "We challenge each other and from that comes change. Lesbians are a tremendous energy force. We must inspire each other while honoring our differences."

The Second Annual Texas Lesbian Conference — funded in part by proceeds from the



Antoinette Azolakov (left), one of two keynote speakers at the Texas Lesbian Conference last weekend in Houston, is pictured here with two TLC organizers, including Linda Morales (right), who is also one of the four plaintiffs in the 21.06 court challenge filed by Texas Human Rights Foundation.

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## TEXAS LESBIANS STAGE SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE

THE 1990 TEXAS LESBIAN CONFERENCE (TLC), held May 18-20 in San Antonio, drew the largest crowd yet in the annual event's three-year history, with 453 women officially registered and "probably over 500" actually participating, according to Deb Elder of Dallas, who attended the event as an exhibitor.

"I walked away from that conference feeling successful as one of the many women who have worked so hard to bring our [lesbian] community together," commented Elder, who helped organize the first TLC held in May, 1988 in Dallas. "I felt tearfully successful. It was such a joyful feeling of success that our work has been worthwhile, that the time and energy all those women have donated over the years has paid off."

Elder compared the "feeling of unity" that prevailed at the conference to the unity promoted by such events as Dallas' annual Black Tie Dinner, Razzle Dazzle Dallas and the Extra Mile Awards Banquet. "We were all there for the same thing," she said. "All our differences just seemed to erode away, and we were one."

Evilu Pridgeon, director of Oak Lawn Community Services' OASIS program, agreed: "The whole conference was empowering, I thought, just having all these women there together. Overall it was empowering to see all those women there. There were a couple of workshops I

went to that just reinforced that [feeling]."

Of keynote speaker Joan Nestle's speech, Pridgeon said, "It gave me a sense of history. Women did exist before me, and they had to put up with a lot."

Elder called Nestle's address "fabulous" and "dynamic." She also commented favorably on speeches by Ivy Young of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and Kathleen Stroll of the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

Elder also pointed out that this year's conference "was the first event like this I have attended where I didn't immediately go 'snow-blind.' In other words, there were lots of women of color attending, and that was wonderful."

Overall, Elder described the conference as "one of the most well-organized, well-publicized and loving events I have ever attended. The only complaint I heard the whole weekend was about the air conditioning not working in one of the rooms the first night. But that was it, and that's unusual. There was so much sincerity and camaraderie there, I came away feeling totally energized. And for a person just attending as an exhibitor — not attending any of the workshops — to be so energized by an event, that's really saying something."

The 1991 Texas Lesbian Conference will be held in Austin next May or June. Details will be announced as they are finalized, organizers said.

— TAMMYE NASH



... and they reminded everyone about next month's Texas Lesbian Conference, also scheduled in Austin.



arriving.

■ **Weekly Events: Library Hours**, 1-5 p.m., Lesbian Resource Centre, 1315 Skiles, call 821-3999; **Lambda Weekly** radio program, 2-4 p.m., KNON, 89.3 FM; **Outlook**, Christian group for gay and lesbian teens ages 14-18, 6 p.m., Metropolitan Community Church, 5353 Maple; **Oak Lawn Tennis Association** singles play, 11 a.m., Samuell-Grand Tennis Center; **Trinity River Aquatic Club** practice, 2 p.m., SMU Indoor Pool, call 942-3062. ▼

## Annual TLC set for April in Austin

By Dennis Van der

Texas lesbians will gather in Austin in mid-April for the fourth Texas Lesbian Conference, an annual event designed to establish a lesbian agenda, facilitate communications among lesbians across the state and affirm and celebrate lesbian life and work.

Under the theme, "Moving Forward Together: Empowerment, Pride and Strength," the conference will occur April 12-

14 at the Driskill Hotel, located in downtown Austin just blocks from the state Capitol.

Three prominent lesbians will speak at the conference, including Houstonian Linda Morales, the lead plaintiff in the successful lawsuit challenging the Texas "homosexual conduct" law which prohibits most forms of private sexual expression between consenting adults of the same gender. The law was declared unconstitutional last December by a Travis County District Court judge, although the state is expected to appeal the decision.

Also speaking to conference-goers is Dell Martin, who with her lover Phyllis Lyon started the first national lesbian group, the Daughters of Bilitis; and Deborah Johnson, founder and director of the National Institute and co-author with her lover of *Ceremonies of the Heart: A Celebration of Lesbian Unions*.

Conference coordinators have organized 24 workshops on a wealth of topics. The workshops will be conducted six at a time in four separate time blocks, so that participants will have the opportunity to attend as many workshops as possible. Workshop topics include lesbian sexuality, relationships, lesbian entrepreneurs, lesbian history, spirituality and alliance-building, among others.

"We're also having a speak-out at the end of the conference, with a panel discussion by lesbians of color," explained Jackie Urbach of Austin, a conference co-

ordinator. "We're trying to be as diverse as possible, and at this speak-out, lesbians of color will explain what it's like to live in their world and offer advice on how to merge ourselves."

Special entertainment is planned on Friday and Saturday evenings, Urbach said. On Friday, entertainment will be provided by five or six groups and individuals representing what Urbach termed "local talent," headlined by Girls in the Nose.

On Saturday evening, the conference will stage a dance, featuring Second Wind, a California group, interspersed with recorded music for dancing.

Urbach urged lesbians who wish to attend the fourth TLC to get application forms completed and turned in now. "They don't have to pre-register and can show up on the day the conference begins," Urbach commented, "but we really prefer that as many as possible pre-register. We have to have a fairly good count of how many people to expect so we can plan the arrangements and accommodations."

In Dallas, application forms are available at Curious Times, Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas and the Lesbian Resource Center. Applications also are available from Paula Mathes and Alpha Thomas, she said.

Conference fees, excluding housing and meals, are less than \$50 per person, and a fund is available to assist women with limited means. All the conference rooms are wheelchair-accessible, and child care will be available. ASL and Spanish language interpreters will be provided.

For more information about scholarship funds or other aspects of the conference, call the TLC Hotline at 512-462-2369 or write to the Texas Lesbian Conference, PO Box 402-063, Austin, TX 78704. ▼



The three keynote speakers at the 4th annual Texas Lesbian Conference will be (clockwise from top, left) Linda Morales, Dell Martin and Deborah Johnson. The conference is set for April 12-14 at the Driskill Hotel in downtown Austin.



Paula Mathies is president of Lesbian Visionaries.

## Reviving the dream —

Reconstituted and reorganized, Lesbian Visionaries begins an autumn schedule of meetings and services

By Tammye Nash

Five years ago, a small group of women struggling to find a cohesive, active lesbian community in Dallas sent out invitations for women to attend an organizational meeting. To their surprise, some 50 women showed up, and Lesbian Visionaries was born.

The group instituted monthly program meetings, a Lesbian Information

Line — known as "LIL," still in existence at 528-2426 — and a monthly newsletter to help the women of Dallas keep up with current issues and give them a forum to express their views. The organization sponsored several special events and was instrumental in establishing the Texas Lesbian Conference, the first of which was held in Dallas in the spring of 1988.

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## Visionaries

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As time passed, the leaders and members of Lesbian Visionaries became more involved in a number of political and social groups and activities, and by December of 1989, leaders decided they could no longer keep up with the demands of monthly meetings. Instead, they announced, the organization would focus on publishing the monthly newsletter and keeping LIL current, and occasionally producing special events in the city.

By August of 1990, the newsletter was cut back to a bi-monthly publication. In November, Visionaries sponsored a program by Susie Bright, the prominent lesbian "sexpert." But by that time the steering committee was down to only about five members, and after Bright's program the steering

program meetings on a wide variety of topics.

Some of the topics on the agenda for the Lesbian Visionaries' new "Share The Vision" meetings are maintaining a lesbian relationship, lesbian dating and leather lesbian fashions.

"We're going to have a variety of meetings on a variety of topics," Mathies said. "We're calling them 'Share The Vision' meetings, but we're not calling them monthly meetings. We'll have meetings in September, October and November, then we may take off for December and January. Everyone is so busy in December, and January is so cold, meetings in those months usually aren't very well attended. Then we'll start up again after that, really get off with a bang. We plan to have really interesting, real quality meetings and topics."

The first program offered by the newly-reorganized Visionaries is set for Sept. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Gay and

Lesbian Community Center, 2701 Reagan. It will be a panel discussion featuring three lesbian couples who, among them, share 40 years of partnerships, said Linda Haines, editor for the *New Visions* newsletter.

The panel, Mathies explained, will discuss "how to make a relationship last and what they've done in their own lives to keep their relationships together. JoAnn Loulan says that after a couple of years in a relationship, there comes 'bed-death.' That's one of the things we'll talk about — why it happens and how to avoid it," Mathies commented.

Panelists include Louise Young and Vivienne Armstrong, Gail Rekers and Michal Anne Pepper, and Ana Rodriguez and Miriam Miranda.

The topic for the October meeting, Haines said, evolved from discussions about the September program. "We were sitting around talking about topics for these meetings, and people were talking about wanting to be in long-term relationships, and what to do to make those relationships last. But then we started thinking, what about those women who are still trying to find the right woman to be in a relationship

with? So we came up with the topic for October: The Dating Game," she said.

Mathies noted that while the format for that meeting has not been firmly established, it will most likely include a variety of activities and discussions on the ins and outs of lesbian dating.

On tap for November is a leather fashion show produced by Terrie Anderson. Mathies said the show will be choreographed and set to music, and will last a full 30 minutes. "Terrie tells me it will be like the show they did for us last November when we brought Susie Bright to town, only better," she said. One possible meeting topic after the mid-winter break, Mathies added, is "a lesbian soap opera."

The *New Vision* has undergone some changes from the original Visionaries newsletter. Edited by Haines, the newsletter is larger and contains a wider variety of articles, stories and poetry. "We have narrowed it down, really, to target it more to local issues and topics of interest. There's less political information now, and more feature-type things," Haines remarked.

*New Visions* regularly includes book reviews by Barbara Bond, music reviews by Kenni Evans, poetry submitted by readers and other regular features. "We're trying to pick up more feature writing," Mathies said. "Eventually, we'd like to put *New Vision* on a subscription basis so it pays for itself, and take it state-wide, even nation-wide."

Interested women can call the Lesbian Information Line, 528-2426, and request sample copies of *New Vision*, Haines said. "We'll send them free copies for three months, and then we ask that they buy a subscription. It's just so expensive we can't afford to send them out free anymore," she explained, adding that a year's subscription is \$15, and that the newsletter is free to those who join Lesbian and Visionaries. Membership dues are \$15 per individual or \$25 per household.

The Lesbian Information Line also has been revamped, Mathies said. "LIL was the first thing Lesbian Visionaries formed in 1987, and it has been there, a continuous message about events in the lesbian community since that time," she said. "I update the answering machine message at least twice a week to make sure it's current, and I'm trying to get it all organized so the message won't be so long. But there's just so much going on!"

LIL contains information about upcoming special events, regular community events, volunteer opportunities and whatever else Mathies and the other Visionaries feel might be of interest to not only the women who live in the Dallas community, but to those visiting the area as well. Callers can listen to the message and leave their name and phone number afterwards to receive more detailed information on specific events.

"I have a lot of people call for information, for referrals or to find out where they can go to volunteer. I refer some of them to counseling or whatever



Lesbian Visionaries selected a new steering committee and officers in July, and will begin "Share the Vision" meetings on Sept. 20. Pictured above are Lesbian Visionaries officers, including (l-r) Paula Mathies, president; Paula Cooper, vice president; Susan Wagner, secretary; and Jeanne Bozzetti, treasurer.

## Visionaries

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

they're looking for. I got a call the other day from a woman in some place called Copperas Cove. She wanted a referral for counseling services. I didn't even know where Copperas Cove is! Actually, LIL is more like a lesbian hotline. I get calls from New York, from everywhere, and I try to return all calls to LIL within 48 hours."

In addition to revitalizing previous programs such as LIL and the newsletters, Lesbian Visionaries is expanding to offer more programs and services. For example, Lesbian Visionaries is an umbrella organization for a group Haines started, called Sprouts — for women who are just coming out (see related article). Lesbian Visionaries is also the umbrella organization for the Fourth Annual Texas Lesbian Conference planned for next spring in Dallas. And the organization participates in the Dallas Gay Alliance Credit Union — making Visionaries members eligible to join the Credit Union — and the Foundation for Human Understanding Lambda scholarships.

"When we joined the DGA Credit Union, they asked us if we would be one of the founding members for the FHU Lambda scholarships," Mathies explained. "We're one of several

organizations that have agreed to donate so much money for these scholarships, and to hold fundraising events and so on. They have already notified three people they have been awarded these scholarships."

Overall, Mathies said, Lesbian Visionaries is moving full-steam ahead, and the future is bright. "We feel like it's going very well so far. We're getting a lot of enthusiasm from this new group of steering committee members. I feel very optimistic."

"We're branching out. Linda and I [spoke] about being lesbians at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Oak Cliff, and Linda is going to be one of the speakers on the KYRO Project television show on Monday. They're doing a contest. We feel that's very important, and we're trying to establish a speakers' bureau, people who will go and talk to other people about who we are and what we do. We've got a lot of new ideas we want to try out."

And Mathies and other new leaders of Lesbian Visionaries are planning ahead to avoid the burn-out situation that depleted the organization's ranks before. "We're developing new leadership, pulling in new people. And we're learning to delegate some of the work. That's very important," Mathies said. "We have to be open to new ideas. We have to be trying to get new people to assume these positions of leadership when we do get burned out. We won't let it die out." ▼

## A Visionary history —

Ten years ago, the Lesbian Task Force of the Dallas chapter of the National Organization for Women, led by Charlotte Taft, established a bar called Rumors through which a young woman named Deb Elder first became acquainted with the idea of a community of lesbians.

Deb Elder moved away from Dallas for several years, and in 1985 when she returned, she was dismayed to discover that "the lesbian community was gone. There just wasn't an active lesbian community anymore," she recalls. So she began to look for ways to find that community she remembered.

William Waybourn and Bill Nelson — men Elder calls "my first role models" as an activist — rented space to Elder in their Crossroads Market for her jewelry business. Elder's workshop soon became a meeting place for women searching for their community.

The Dallas Gay Alliance helped Elder start up a new Women's Coffeehouse, and those attending the Coffeehouse were asked to fill out a questionnaire describing what they felt the community needed and should do.

One day another young woman, Lauren Ramsay, walked into Elder's shop and volunteered to make bracelets for the new Women's Coffeehouse. But, she wanted to know what she knew they were going to do. The Coffeehouse was fun, and it provided a great social atmosphere, but the women needed more: they needed a way to become involved, informed and active in a community struggling to not only survive, but to make a difference.

In 1987, using the jewelry store's mailing list, Elder and Ramsay sent out invitations asking women to attend a meeting at a women's bar called Rumors (now Desert Moon) which owner Barbara O'Brien had offered as a meeting space.

More than 50 women attended that first meeting, and an organization called Lesbian Visionaries was born (see accompanying article). Many changes have occurred in Lesbian Visionaries, as the accompanying article makes clear. The pressures of activism and involvement have taken their toll. But Visionaries has survived, and this month embarks on a new stage in its life.

"Change is a real scary thing," Elder told the new Lesbian Visionaries steering committee at a July meeting at which steering committee members and officers were installed, and during which Elder was presented with an honorary lifetime membership. "But you have to have change to grow. Lesbian Visionaries has changed, and it has grown. I know it's not always easy, but sometimes you have to just bite your lip and barge on into the dark. Or maybe, it's barge on into the light." ▼



# Week-long haunted house to benefit lesbian meeting

Organizers for the fourth annual Texas Lesbian Conference, slated for next spring in Dallas, are sponsoring a week-long haunted house at the Wave, 4025 Maple, as one the major fundraisers for the conference. The haunted house will open Friday, Oct. 25 and will run through Halloween Night, Oct. 31. The haunted house will be open from 7 p.m. to midnight each evening except Saturday, Oct. 26, when the hours will be extended.

"This is a pretty major event for us," commented spokesperson Karen Buerger. "We expect the haunted house to raise a lot of the money we need for TLC. We'll be finishing the work on it this weekend, and anyone who wants to help is welcome to come by. We'll get there about 9 a.m. and work until dark Saturday. Then if we aren't finished, we'll go back Sunday. But we have to be finished by Sunday evening."

TLC organizers also need volunteer ghosts and goblins to haunt the house during its run, Buerger added. "The shifts won't be really long. We don't want to work any of the volunteers for more than three hours," she said.

The \$5 admission fee will include admission to the bar as well as to the TLC haunted house, and all proceeds will benefit TLC, Buerger said.

Anyone interested in helping with the haunted house or other TLC events can contact Buerger at 942-5921.

The TLC organizing committee meets the first Sunday of each month at 2 p.m. in the Gay and Lesbian Community Center, 2701 Reagan. All interested persons are invited to participate in the planning. ▼

DALLAS VOICE

OCTOBER 11, 1991



The singing duo On the Verge is just one of the acts that will be performing at the November Extravaganza Saturday. The arts and crafts fair, followed by a dance, will benefit the fourth annual Texas Lesbian Conference set for next spring in Dallas.

■ The Texas Lesbian Conference, annual statewide event to be held in Dallas next May, sponsors an "Extravaganza" fundraiser beginning at noon at First Unitarian Church, 4015 Normandy (at Preston). The Extravaganza will feature an artisans' show, live entertainment, bake sale and raffle, and will be followed by a dance. All proceeds benefit the Texas Lesbian Conference.

# Vinson is tapped for Lobby post

Former co-chair is named  
director of development

The state's gay and lesbian lobby organization has hired a noted Dallas lesbian activist as its Director of Development, officials announced last week.

Kay Vinson, operator of Curious Times bookstore, will assume her responsibilities on Feb. 1. Vinson, a former LGRL co-chair, resigned her post in mid-December.

As development director, Vinson will be responsible for raising the more than \$100,000 needed to cover the LGRL budget this year. She will maintain an office in Dallas but travel to communities throughout the state, officials said.

The 40-year-old former television

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9**

## Vinson

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

news reporter is a co-founder of the Texas Lesbian Conference, a former co-chair of the Dallas chapter of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

Persons willing to host or volunteer at LGRL fundraising functions should contact Vinson at 941-6847. ▼



Kay Vinson . . . co-founder of Texas Lesbian Conference and Dallas GLAAD is named director of development for Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.



# TLC announces keynoters

## Lesbian humorist Kate Clinton also sets appearance

Officials of the 1992 Texas Lesbian Conference announced three keynote speakers who will be present for the event.

The keynote speakers include Laurie Eiserloh, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas; Emma Perez, Ph.D., an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas in El Paso and author of *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*; and Sabrina Sojourner, coordinator of leadership instruction for the National Black Gay and Lesbian Conference and past director of the National Organization for Women's Women of Color in Diversity program.

"Diversity, Unity and Community" is the theme of the conference, slated for May 15-17 in Dallas. Organizers say they expect between 600 and 1,000 women from throughout the state to attend the three-day conference being held at the Southland Center. TLC 1992, the fourth annual state-wide lesbian conference in Texas, is sponsored by Lesbian Visionaries, the organization which co-sponsored the first TLC held in 1988.

The 1992 steering committee "wanted to show the strength of our diversity," co-facilitator Susan Melnick said in explaining the choice of speakers. "We didn't have to look far to find our keynote speakers, who definitely reflect the spirit of this conference."

This year's workshops, Melnick added, were also designed to reflect the

diversity of the Texas lesbian community. The 35 workshops will offer a vast variety of topics, she said. TLC 1992 will close with an session that is a first in the history of the conference, Melnick said. "In the spirit of unity, we've decided to close this year's conference with a round table open to gay men, so that community gender issues — focused lesbian concerns — may be addressed," she noted.

Despite the variety of serious topics on the agenda, conference-goers also will have time for fun, Melnick said, especially Saturday night when nationally-known "lesbian-feminist-humorist" Kate Clinton takes the stage. The concert is open to the public.

The conference fee is based on a sliding scale, Melnick said. Special rates have been arranged at the headquarters hotel, and TLC organizers can provide out-of-town visitors with "home hospitality if it is requested in advance," she noted. Persons wishing to arrange travel and hotel arrangements should contact Fantastic Voyage at 1-800-622-6988.

Melnick also stressed that workshop sponsors are still needed, and a room for vendors and artists and craftspersons will be set up, with local entertainment to help draw in shoppers. Table tops are still available for \$15, but space is limited, she said.

For more information about the 1992 Texas Lesbian Conference, call 720-3407. ▼

# Dallas VOICE

The Community Newspaper for Gay and Lesbian Dallas

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 1992

VOLUME IX, NUMBER 1

## 500+ expected at upcoming Texas Lesbian Conference

By Tammy Nash

Organizers expect 500 to 600 women to attend the 1992 Texas Lesbian Conference slated for May 14-16 in Dallas, according to TLC co-chair Susan Melnick.

The conference, a project of Lesbian Visionaries, is the fifth in a series of statewide events established in 1988 to help increase lesbian visibility, Melnick explained. The first conference was held in Dallas, moving to Houston, San Antonio and Austin in subsequent years.

"Even though this is called the Texas Lesbian Conference, we have women coming in from as far away as California, New Mexico and even Canada," Melnick said. "I think we're the only state that has this kind of statewide conference for lesbians. There are a lot of festivals around the country, but this is the only conference of its kind."

Three "outstanding" women have

been lined up as keynote speakers for TLC 1992, Melnick said. They are Sabrina Sojourner, Emma Perez and Laurie Eiserloh. Sojourner, former director of the Women of Color in Diversity program of the National Organization for Women, is currently the coordinator of leadership instruction for the National Gay and Lesbian Conference.

Perez, an assistant professor of History at the University of Texas at El Paso, was also a featured author in the book *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*. Eiserloh, a graduate of the University of Texas Law School, now works as executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

This is a year of firsts for TLC, Melnick continued, including an appearance by nationally-known lesbian comedian Kate Clinton. Clinton will perform on Saturday night during the



On Saturday, May 16, TLC will sponsor a concert by lesbian comedian Kate Clinton. The performance is open to men and women.

conference, and the performance is open to both men and women. Tickets to the concert are available at Curious Times, Crossroads Market and Shades of Gray.

Another first is the number of workshops being offered at the conference, as well as some of the kinds of workshops available. "When we started organizing this conference, we

were planning on about 30 workshops. Now we have 40 on the schedule," Melnick said. The workshop topics include ageism, sexuality, S/M, classism, parenting, racism, legal and reproductive rights, anti-Semitism, lesbians and HIV/AIDS and more.

As a separate post-conference event, organizers will stage a roundtable for lesbians and gay men, to explore ways for the two groups to better communicate and cooperate.

About 45 vendors "from all over the state and from as far away as California" offering a variety of items including arts and crafts will also be set up at the conference, Melnick said. *On Our Backs* magazine is sending a video tape for viewing, and LGRL and the Human Rights Campaign Fund will be among those with tables set up to dispense information, she said.

Women can pre-register by mail for the event, set for the Southland Hotel, and the fee is \$45. "Women can also register in person at the door that Saturday morning, but we prefer that they register beforehand," she added.

Registration forms and fees should be mailed to TLC '92, P.O. Box 191168, Dallas, Texas 75219. For more information, call 720-3407. ▼

### T.L.C. '92 Registration Form

Please type or print. One form per person (copy if necessary).

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ \$45 Registration Cost

Registration includes admittance to all speakers, workshops, Friday night entertainment and Sunday brunch. Kate Clinton's concert on Saturday is an additional charge as detailed below

\_\_\_\_ \$10 Concert  
(w/conference registration)

\_\_\_\_ \$15 Concert Only  
(no conference)

\$\_\_\_\_ TOTAL ENCLOSED  
(Make check payable to TLC '92)

Mail to: TLC '92  
P.O. Box 191168  
Dallas, Texas 75219  
For more information,  
call (214) 720-3407

## 5th Annual Texas Lesbian Conference May 15-17 Southland Center Hotel • Dallas

Keynote Speakers

Sabrina Sojourner • Laurie Eiserloh • Emma Perez  
Mini Musical Festival • Friday, May 15, 6:30-11:00

Benefit Concert  
Kate Clinton

Saturday, May 16, 8:00p.m.

Tickets available at Curious Times, Crossroads Market and Shades of Gray

### Workshops

"Parenting the Child Within," Susan B. Meny, L.P.C.

"Lesbian Writing: from the Page to the Stage," Carol Young, Playwright/Director

"Intimacy and the Co-committed Relationship," Dr. Pamela Bell, Psychotherapist

"Self Help, Self Examination," Charlotte Taft and Shelly Oram, Routh Street Women's Clinic

"Domestic Violence and Lesbians," Debra Julian, M.S.

"Add Women and Stir: Recasting American History," Dr. Kathleen Underwood, Asso. History Prof., U.T.A.

"Tax Planning and the Emotional Aspects of Money Management for Lesbian Couples," Judith Cannon, Ph.D. and Anne Myrick, C.P.A.

"Leather, Power and Trust," Terri Anderson, National Leather Asso.

"Women and Addictions," Beverly Winters, LCDC, Coordinator of the Oasis Recovery Program OLCS and Anna Rodriguez, Intern OLCS.

"Lesbians and HIV/AIDS: A Safe Sex Workshop," Jill Havens and Susan L. Coulas Southwest Info. Quest

"Feminism and Racism," Sabrina Sojourner, Legislative Aide to Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D/CA)

"From Bubbas to Bomb Threats," Laurie Eiserloh, L.G.R.L. and Mica England

"Issues of Lesbian Parenting," Carolyn Dunbar, Psychotherapist

"How to Start and Run Your Own Business," Elizabeth McLane and Suzanne Anderson, Business Owners

"Old Lesbian Networking," Arden Evesmeyers

"Reclaiming Our Space as Women," Christine Jaroz, Founder of the Lesbian Resource Center

"Lesbian Spirituality," Karen Ashmore, President of Women's Southwest Credit Union and Rainbow N.O.W., Jossi Mata, Founder of Umoja Hermanas and Vicky Folform

A Project Of Lesbian Visionaries, Inc.

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May 15-17  
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### NEXT WEEK —

A feature report on the fourth annual

## Texas Lesbian Conference

scheduled next weekend at the Southland Center Hotel in Dallas

*Feature Report — Interview with Kate Clinton*

*Complete Conference Schedule*



# The power of laughter

Self-labeled 'fumorist' meets oppression with humor

By Tammye Nash

Lesbian comedian Kate Clinton describes herself as a "fumorist" — a combination of "feminist" and "humorist"

## INTERVIEW

— and as such, she says, she uses humor as a weapon against oppression. "I used to say that women were oppressed, and the oppression must end. Now I say that women are

powerful and the power must be released. I talk about things like the church, the media, the government, all those things that oppress us. The way that oppression ends is that we laugh. We celebrate who we are and what we do."

Clinton will be the featured performer at the Texas Lesbian Conference this weekend in Dallas. The concert begins at 8 p.m. Saturday night. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 18**



Comedian Kate Clinton performs on Saturday evening in conjunction with the Texas Lesbian Conference.

MAY 15, 1992

laugh at ourselves."

Remembering to laugh at ourselves, to not take ourselves too seriously is especially important at a time when the gay and lesbian community finds itself caught up in a tidal wave of "political correctness," Clinton stresses.

The prevalence of "political correctness" in the gay and lesbian community indicates, Clinton says, that "We've internalized the strictness in the world around us, the strictness of the straight world. We want to show the straight world how serious we can be, how real we are. Sometimes, I'm afraid, we outdo them."

"I see being gay as something very ground-breaking, something very daring and frightening," she continues. "Sometimes we pull ourselves up short because it is so terrifying. And we're doing just that at the time when we don't need to lose sight of the importance of humor in our lives."

By succumbing to rampant political correctness, Clinton adds, "we've internalized a belief that deep down, people really aren't good. The level of political correctness in our community is a measure of the oppression we're under right now — the increase in gay bashing and hate crimes, the AIDS hysteria. So we circle up the wagons. We want to know just who is with us and who is against us. Political correctness is an attempt to once and for all define who we are."

For Clinton, such a definition would actually be antithetical: "I think part of the excitement of being gay is that it is quite fluid. We should continue to explore the richness of who we are. Political correctness is basically a fear of talking to each other. We want to have our little houses, our insular lives, but we need to realize that we won't collapse if we argue with each other. We need to talk about what we feel, what we fear and what we think. Calling someone politically correct, or calling them politically incorrect effectively shuts that down."

One area of Clinton's humor with which some politically correct persons might take issue is that "I try to do humor about differently-abled people," she says. "Generally the jokes I do are about accessibility. The abled people get

very nervous about those jokes, but the people in wheelchairs, they think it's hilarious. I think it's because, for once, they feel like they've been included."

"If I think something is off limits [as a subject for her humor], then I think that's something I need to look at," Clinton says. "If I can get the right angle on it, the right anger on it, then it's fair game. See, anger is the fire in a lot of humor, certainly in a lot of political humor right now. I'm not interested in humor that comes from anger that puts someone down, but in humor that comes from anger that wants to change things, that comes from a love of who we are and who we can be. I'll go for that."

Clinton, a former teacher, said that her career switch from education to comedy was "a slow and organic process." Teaching high school English was "a natural preparation for stand-up comedy," she said, noting that it was in some ways easier because as a teacher she had a captive audience. "And they [the students] came back every day! That's the scary thing."

After eight years of teaching, Clinton says, she "wanted to do something that didn't have to do with school." But since she could only get a leave of absence from her job if she were attending some class to further her own education, she persuaded a friend involved with the Women Writers Center to say that Clinton would be attending classes there, and the future comedian got her leave of absence.

"I really had no intention of going to classes there, but the visiting faculty that first week was Rita Mae Brown. I was so impressed that I started to write — and to drool," Clinton says. "I had gone to college and graduate school before women's studies came along. So there was a whole lot missing from my education. During that time, I read a lot of works by feminist thinkers that I hadn't read before. I'd write these really serious poems and short stories, and when people would read them, they'd laugh."

Deciding to not fight the inevitable, Clinton gave up on the serious short stories and poetry and instead wrote a comedy routine. She was living in Syracuse at the time, and called a friend

## TLC '92 Conference Schedule

The fifth annual Texas Lesbian Conference begins Friday at the Southland Center Hotel in downtown Dallas. Organizers stress that women who have not yet registered may do so either Friday night or Saturday morning.

The conference includes workshops, keynote addresses by Emma Perez, Sabrina Sojourner and Laurie Eislerloh and a performance by nationally-known comedian Kate Clinton as well as performances by local entertainers. Following is a complete schedule of workshops and events for the conference.

### FRIDAY, MAY 15

4-10 p.m. Registration  
5-9 p.m. Vendor set-up  
8-10 p.m. Local musical entertainment at Olive Street Pub  
7:30 p.m. Shabbat service

### SATURDAY, MAY 16

7 a.m. Vendor Set-up  
8:30 a.m. Vendor sales (until 7 p.m.) in Mason's Room  
9-9:45 a.m. Registration  
9-9:45 a.m. Welcome Address and Keynote by Emma Perez, Ph.D.  
10-11 a.m. Workshop Session A  
Women in the Peace Movement (Austin Room); Classicism in the Lesbian Community (Rio Grande Room); Add Women and Stir: Recasting American Herstory (Travis); Lesbian Health Care (Houston); Ageism, What Is It? (Trinity Room); Dealing With Diversity (Brazos Room); Intimacy and the Co-Committed Relationship (Ballroom); Money Management for the Nineties (San Jacinto Room)  
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Workshop Session B  
Eating Disorders (Brazos Room); Out of Bounds: Exploring Lesbian Sexuality (Houston); The Americans With Disabilities and the Civil Rights Act of 1991: In Simple Language, What's In It For Me? (Travis Room); Parenting the Child Within (Rio Grande); Bubbas to Bomb Threats (Ballroom); Crossing the Cultural Lines: Cultural Relationships (Trinity); Networking With Old Lesbians (Austin)  
12:30-1:45 p.m. Keynote by Sabrina Sojourner; optional box lunch from Olive St. Pub; Musical entertainment in Mason's Room  
2-3 p.m. Workshop Session C  
Domestic Violence and Lesbians (Rio Grande); The Indigenous People of the Americas and the Violation of Treaty Rights (Brazos Room); Ageism and Lesbians of Color (Trinity); Dealing With Diversity (San Jacinto); Lesbians and HIV/AIDS (Houston); Baby Talk: Artificial Insemination (Austin); Reclaiming Our Space as Womyn: Separatism and Our Community (Travis)  
3:15-4:30 p.m. Workshop Session D  
Homophobia in the Community of Color (San Jacinto); Lesbian Spirituality (Rio Grande); Issues of Lesbian Parenting (Austin); Anti-Semitism and the Lesbian Community (Travis); Tax Planning and the Emotional Aspects of Money Management (Brazos); Playing Wimmen: Exploring the Fun in Our Lives! (Trinity); Women and Addiction (Houston)  
4:45-5:45 p.m. Workshop Session E  
Feminism and Racism (Houston); Lesbian Writing: From the Page to the Stage (Travis); The Game of Life: How to Play the Game Metaphysically (Trinity); Leather Power and Trust (Rio Grande); In Our Own Hands: Self Help, Self Examination and Menstrual Extraction (San Jacinto); Eco-Feminism and Animal Liberation: Making the Connection (Brazos)  
6:30 p.m. Haddallah  
8 p.m. Kate Clinton Concert  
10 p.m.-1 a.m. OLOC Dance

### SUNDAY, MAY 17

8:15 a.m. Multi-cultural Spiritual Gathering  
9 a.m.-2 p.m. Vendor sales in the Mason's Room  
10-11 a.m.: Workshop Session F  
How to Start and Run Your Own Business: Forever Young: Baby Dykes Battle Ageism; Internalized Homophobia (Seminar Theatre); What T.R.U.S.T. (Teens Relating Unique Situations Together) Means to Children and Teenagers of Lesbian and Gay Parents (Trinity); Safe Touch (San Jacinto)  
11:15 a.m. Keynote by Laurie Eislerloh, Brunch, Close  
1 p.m. Community Round-Table

who operated a comedy club there, asking for the chance to perform.

Clinton admits that there was definitely a degree of luck involved in her success as a comedian, right from the start. "In every community, there are lots of funny women, the women who emcee at talent night or who write the funny columns in the paper," she says. "But I was fortunate enough to have a friend who had been in a band for about 10 years. About the same time I was getting started in comedy, that band broke up, and my friend agreed to book me for the summer. She ended up booking my shows for the next five years."

At first Clinton's audience was "predominantly lesbian," she recalls, but now it has grown to include a large number of gay men as well. Now, even "a lot of straight people" are coming to see her act.

The majority of Clinton's material has to do with lesbian and gay issues and lives, but she says she doesn't see that as limiting her career. "It makes it harder for me to get on certain talk shows, but that's okay. It also gives me more freedom," she says. "I play in

concert halls, and I do a lot of theaters. Because of the kind of audience I get, I'm not having to try to please a bunch of drunken 20-year-olds. And I get to do 90 minutes of work a night. A lot of comedians who work the comedy clubs tell me they wish they could do more than 20 minutes a night. I get to do what they want to do."

Clinton derives a lot of her comedy from politics, not just within the gay and lesbian community, but often from the politics of mainstream institutions — the government, the church — and how they react to the gay and lesbian community. Ever since Desert Storm, she says, "the material is changing every day." When Clinton comes to Dallas this weekend, she claims her audience will "be seeing a lot of pretty contemporary stuff."

Clinton says she is "really excited to be coming back to Texas," particularly to the Texas Lesbian Conference, an event that "I've heard a lot of good things about."

But whether she's in Texas or New York, on the East Coast or the West Coast, Clinton says, "I love my job. I'm glad I'm not an accountant." ▼



## OVER 600 TAKE PART IN FIFTH TEXAS LESBIAN CONFERENCE

*Workshops Address Homophobia,  
Class Issues & Other Topics;  
Kate Clinton Highlights Weekend.*

DALLAS — Over 600 women representing every major city and many rural areas gathered at the Southland Center Hotel in Dallas last weekend for the Fifth Annual Texas Lesbian Conference. Conceived in 1988 by a grass-roots coalition of women who wanted to raise the visibility of lesbians, this year's conference was the largest and by all accounts the most successful to date.

More than 40 workshops facilitated by professionals and volunteers were presented to capacity crowds. Speeches by Sabrina Sojourner, coordinator of leadership instruction for the National Gay and Lesbian Conference; Emma Perez, Ph.D. and author of *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*; and Laurie Eiserloh, Executive Director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, stirred their audiences to enthusiastic standing ovations.

On Friday, the first night of the conference, as participants signed in, they were treated to the sounds of Backroads, a local six-woman band, and other talent performing in the hotel's pub.

Saturday morning, Perez related her experiences as one of only a few professional chicana historians and how some of her straight male colleagues at the University of Texas/El Paso refer to her with hostility as a "lesbian terrorist" because she has dedicated her life to fighting racism, heterosexism, classism, colonialism, in her words, "all the 'isms.'"

One of the most popular workshops offered, in fact, was about classism in the

lesbian community. Facilitator Ari Chagoya pointed out to participants that since most lesbians are working class people, they are financial victims of the system. Group discussion was lively. Some women identified themselves as "middle class" and "privileged." Anita Wright of Fort Worth said that she used to be middle class but later became poor. Generous friends helped her out in her time of need, but she said the experience has left her feeling much more aware of her own class and how others perceive class.

Another workshop, "Out of Bounds—Exploring Lesbian Sexuality," was intended for about 20 participants, but 150 applied. There were women in this workshop who had been out for as long as 30 years and for little as six months.

The most heated feelings were expressed during and after the "Feminism and Racism" class, facilitated by Sabrina Sojourner. Many white lesbians who took part were unaware of their own repressed racist attitudes, and some became defensive and accusatory.


Amy Swetnam, M.S., N.C.A.C. II, facilitated "Internalized Homophobia," which examined homophobia in different forms, including that promoted by lesbian and gay media. Participants offered specific examples of what they considered misogyny and homophobia in the lesbian and gay press.

The most rousing event of the weekend was undoubtedly the performance by comedian Kate Clinton, who drew over 860 lesbians to the hotel ballroom to hear her make them laugh (and sometimes scream) about men, "tall men" (transvestites), Catholics, penises, "Uncle (Clarence) Thomas," condoms and latex in general, Will Smith, Reagan and "Mommie," and sanitary napkins.

No men were allowed in any of the presentations, and many women expressed their joy at feeling free to share with one another without their usual defenses. One woman, Vicky attended with her lover Anna. Vicky explained that she holds a very visible position in her city.

"I can't afford to be out," she said, "for my safety or my security. I even have to refer to Anna with a man's name to make people think I have a boyfriend instead of a girlfriend."

"It is great to be here and be true to ourselves! We'll make this an annual event."

The Sixth Annual Texas Conference will be held in Houston next year. 



# Cathedral of Hope hosts 'Sister, Sister Symposium'

Event seeks to stimulate greater cooperation, empowerment of lesbian community

By Tammye Nash

The Women's Program of the Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church sponsors a "Sister, Sister Symposium" this Saturday from 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. — a special workshop focusing on communication and leadership within the lesbian community.

"The idea for this symposium came from several of us working together on the Texas Lesbian Conference," explained Dilia Loe, public relations chair for the event. "There seems to be, in the lesbian community, a certain unwillingness to work with other women and organizations. What we want to do here is open a dialogue and talk about the problems that exist."

The day starts at 8:45 a.m. with registration. At 9 a.m. Dr. Nancelee Jose, director of discipleship for COHMCC, will deliver the keynote address. The first panel discussion, "Who Needs Enemies When We Have Each Other?" will run from 9:30 to 11 a.m., followed by small group discussions from 11 to 11:30 a.m. The panel will be mediated by Rev. Carol West.

The panel for this topic is made up of "some high-powered lesbians from different aspects of the community," Loe said, who will discuss "the ways we can all help each other, and why some lesbians can't or won't work effectively and efficiently and positively with other lesbians."

Lunch will be served from 11:30



**Laurie Eiserloh . . . executive director of Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas will speak at Saturday's symposium.**

a.m. to 12:30 p.m., followed by an address on the power of unity in the lesbian community by Laurie Eiserloh, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

The afternoon workshop will focus on issues of classism and racism and how they divide the lesbian community. A panel discussion mediated by Loe and Rev. Colleen Darraugh and titled "It's a Money Thang; It's a Color Thang" will last from 1:15 to 2:45 p.m.

"There are a lot of lesbians who have money, and they are always donating their time and their money to the gay men's organizations, but they

won't give to or work with lesbian organizations. If we can give our time and talent to gay men's organizations, why can't we give to each other? Is it a class issue? A race issue? A closet issue?" Loe said. "We'll also talk about getting women of color involved, and we'll talk about communication among the lesbians and building a stronger community."

From 3:30 to 4 p.m., Karen Ashmore, co-founder of Dallas' Rainbow chapter of the National Organization for Women, will lead a debriefing session "in case some really intense issues come up" during the panel and small group discussions, Loe said.

"Actually," she added, "we are really hoping that some of those intense issues do come up, so that we can open discussion about these problems [of racism] that people like to talk about superficially, but which no one wants to deal with in-depth."

A wrap-up session from 4 to 4:30 concludes the symposium.

"We hope that this kind of event will be an on-going thing at the church," Loe said. "I hope that more lesbians will see that more programs are being developed for them here, and they will want to get involved. This is not a time for lesbians to be quiet in any organization."

For more information about the symposium, call Sue Schrader at 351-1901. The symposium is free, and lunch is included. The church is located at 5910 Cedar Springs. ▼



# Texas Lesbian Conference set May 21-23 in Houston

Speakers range from lesbian 'sexpert' Susie Bright to founders of Daughters of Bilitis, early advocacy group

Dr. Nancelee Jose of Dallas will join Susie Bright and Akasha (Gloria) Hull as keynote speakers for the 1993 Texas Lesbian Conference at the Houston Stouffer Presidente Hotel the weekend of May 21-23. Also speaking at the conference will be Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, founders of the Daughters of Bilitis, the first national lesbian organization in the United States, and publishers of the famed lesbian newsletter *The Ladder*.

The theme for the sixth annual TLC is "Many Kinds of Power," inspired, organizers said, by the works of the late poet Audre Lorde, who once wrote,

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"recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than settling for a shift of characters in the same weary drama." The conference will include a variety of workshops covering a diverse range of lesbian-oriented topics, from sexuality and intimacy to parenting and lesbian legal issues.

Entertainment during the event will feature Denice Franke, the Therapy Sisters and Girls in the Nose.

Lyon and Martin will speak Friday evening, May 21, in a presentation sponsored by Houston's Lesbians in Business (L.I.B.). The meeting is free to all women registered for the conference who are not Houston residents, and will be followed by a performance by Denice Franke.

Hull is slated to open the conference with her keynote address on Saturday morning. A professor of Women's Studies and Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz,

her presentation will deal with understanding Audre Lorde from her own experience and study.

Sex journalist Susie Bright will deliver the noon keynote on Saturday, sandwiched between workshop sessions. Known as a sex pioneer and author of several books, the latest of which is *Sexual Reality: Virtual Sex World Reader*, Bright will speak on "The Sexual State of the Union."

Entertainment by the Therapy Sisters and Girls in the Nose, with emcee Marianne Pendino and disc jockey Cherry Wolf round out Saturday's schedule.

Sunday's activities begin with a spiritual service followed by the final workshop session. Dr. Jose, director of discipleship for Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church in Dallas, will close the conference with her address at noon on Sunday.

The conference will also include a screening of the film *A Place of Rage*. The film features June Jordan, Angela Davis and Alice Walker recounting their experiences in the civil rights movement. Interwoven with Jordan's poetry are issues of homophobia, racism, U.S. imperialism and liberation struggles around the world.

Registration for the conference is \$65, which includes entrance to all workshops and speakers, three meals and to the screening of *A Place of Rage*. A "hard times" discount registration rate is available. Tickets for the Saturday night concert/dance are \$15.

For more information about TLC, to receive a registration form, to volunteer or to purchase a vendor table or a program advertisement, call 713-867-8904 and leave a message. ▼

# 400 women attend annual Texas Lesbian Conference

Late poet Audre Lourde lauded at women's gathering

By Delia Loe  
SPECIAL TO DALLAS VOICE

HOUSTON — When the steering committee of the sixth annual Texas Lesbian Conference first met last January, they developed a tongue-in-cheek theme for their work in progress. "Motorcycles to Menstrual Cycles" was their fun way to capture the diversity of the lesbian community.

"When word got out about our theme, more women signed up to help with the organization of the conference," remarked Susan Turrell, conference chair. "I guess they figured we needed all the talent and creativity we could get."

Soon afterwards, a revamped committee chose to dedicate the conference to the late poet, Audre Lourde, and to let her words speak this year's theme — "Many Kinds of Power." The spirit and power of Lourde's life work was present throughout the weekend, but most notably in the speeches from the four keynote speakers.

All four brought an impressive array of credentials to the conference. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, founders of Daughters of Bilitis, the first year, national organization for lesbians in the U.S., opened the conference at a reception sponsored by Houston's Lesbians in Business. Lyon and Martin spoke of the long list of lesbian leaders since 1953. And they reminded the audience that no one is alone in the fight for civil rights.

The mission of Daughters of Bilitis was "to aid the lesbian in discovering her potential and her place in society," and Lyon and Martin appeared as heirs of the rich legacy of the lesbian community. But more than that, the pair offers present-day voices providing words for those "who do not yet have [words]."

Saturday morning's keynote paid tribute to Lourde, who strongly identified with both her African American and lesbian heritage. Akasha (Gloria) Hull, poet, author, lecturer and professor of Women's Studies and Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz, introduced some to Lourdes' work and reminded others of the magnitude of the late poet's legacy.

Dr. Hull described her feelings of inadequacy upon first hearing Lourde's poetry as a "collective agony of thought about our own complacency and lack of courage." As a woman of color, Dr. Hull's tribute seemed almost a love sonnet from one sister to another.

It was a presentation especially appreciated by women of color in the audience. Matilda, a Latina lesbian from



Dr. Nancelee Jose of Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas, presented the closing keynote at the Texas Lesbian Conference.

the Rio Grande Valley, said she appreciated the one voice from her African American sister, but wished for greater emphasis on lesbians of color. "I would have liked to have seen more of us [women of color] and hear more of our stories. I believe we must see ourselves in our community leaders. Maybe next year," she remarked.

The first luncheon speaker took on the subject of body politics — and then some. In her titillating speech on "The Sexual State of the Union," Susie Bright, pioneer in the study of lesbian sex, erotica and practices, seemed to respond to Lourdes' words, "What are the tyrannies you swallow day-by-day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken or die of them, still in silence?" Bright questioned the ignorance lesbians share about their own sexuality, an ignorance she believes was born in response to fearing or loathing a heterosexual model.

Bright's message was simply that lesbians and women need to become empowered by their own sexuality so that they can decrease the number of deaths from rape, AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases, and cervical and breast cancer — which she believes occurs too often due to the habit of neglecting one's own body and health care.

In a speech laced with humor, Bright's most profound question was, "How can we as women say 'no' when we don't know what 'yes' is?"

The most influential address was delivered by Dr. Nancelee Jose, director of discipleship at Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas. In her first public address since becoming a licensed minister, Dr. Jose

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## Conference

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challenged listeners to work for social and spiritual justice.

"There's no political correctness about remaining in the closet about your sexual orientation or your opinions," Jose stated. "We are lesbians and bisexual women out there literally fighting for our lives, and we are not in the service of lining the closets to accommodate or make more comfortable heterosexual silence . . . . Your comfort is my death. As long as we keep silently tithing the coffins of oppression, they can continue to speak the generalizations, the lies about who we are and how all of us should live."

Jose suggested that the spiritual connections with others must be emphasized. "Our lives are connected at the root, we are connected at the hip, simply because we are human," she stated. "I believe the church can help us learn to believe in ourselves — not as individual, solo characters, isolated and set apart from one another — but as a people who, together in right relation, can come to see and recognize the many diverse faces of God."

Jose's message was enthusiastically received. "She is a realist, living in difficult times. She gave us possibilities to grasp onto and provided

**"We are lesbians and bisexual women out there literally fighting for our lives, and we are not in the service of lining the closets to accommodate or make more comfortable heterosexual silence."**

encouragement and hope," stated Marg McMartin, a Houston businesswoman and member of the TLC steering committee. "Dr. Jose is a gifted and unique woman, and more should hear her message."

As Lourde once said, "It is better to speak, remembering we were never meant to survive." The steering committee of the sixth annual Texas Lesbian Conference intended to provide a platform for the many voices of the community. And with various workshops and a diversity of speakers, they made a solid attempt to be inclusive throughout an empowering weekend.

"We wanted the workshops, but especially the speakers, to be thought-provoking, an event that would evoke the spirit of Audre Lourde," said Terrell. "And from the feedback thus far, we've exceeded in our goal." ▼

## San Antonio chosen as site for '94 conference

By Delia Loe  
SPECIAL TO DALLAS VOICE

HOUSTON — More than 400 women attended last weekend's sixth annual Texas Lesbian Conference, dedicated in honor of the late poet Audre Lourde.

Organizers expressed satisfaction with the attendance. "You know the feeling you get when you get on a roller-coaster ride," said Susan Terrell, conference chair. "You know you can't stop or get off and that it's going

whether you want it to or not. That's how I felt just prior to the conference beginning."

The Texas Lesbian Conference is re-created every year through grassroots efforts from the women of the hosting city. The conference takes on not only the color of the local setting, but also reflects the personality of the steering committee members.

The scheduled events reflected the theme chosen by the steering committee, with a focus on "The Many

Kinds of Power" in the lesbian community. Workshops ranged from lesbian parenting to women and the Catholic Church, and entertainment also catered to varying tastes.

"We are very happy with the response and would like to do it again in two or three more years," Torrie Justus, facilities co-chair, remarked.

Next year's conference will be held in San Antonio. For information, write to Womanspace, PO Box 12327, San Antonio, TX 78212. ▼

# Gay, lesbian march scheduled in Austin

By Tammye Nash

STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

The Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas and lesbian and gay organizations from around the state are joining together to sponsor the Texas March to Stop the Violence, Stop the Hate on April 2 in Austin, according to Diane Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lobby.

Noting that enactment of a stronger hate crimes penalty enhancement law is the Lobby's top legislative priority for 1995, Hardy-Garcia said the march will be "significant" in helping focus attention on the issue of anti-gay violence.

"Hate murders in Texas are up from 11.5 percent in 1993 to 16.5 percent in 1994. There were seven gay men killed in Texas [in 1994] because of who they were, and that doesn't count the anti-gay harassment and verbal attacks gays and lesbians face every day," she said. "We should be outraged by this violence. The whole state should be. Lord knows, if seven preachers were killed in Texas because they were preachers, we'd surely be having 'Hands Across Texas for Jesus.'"

While previous gay- and lesbian-oriented marches on the Texas Capitol have been "unfocused," this event will

be "extremely well focused solely on the issue of hate crimes," Hardy-Garcia said. "We are also asking that people stay over an extra day, and spend Monday lobbying their legislators. Marches are great for energizing us and showing our volume. But what really matters is walking in that legislator's office and saying, 'I am your constituent, and I want a stronger hate crime law.'"

Hardy-Garcia asked for all interested persons to contact the lobby to help organize the event, saying she especially needs persons to help carry the news of the march to gays and lesbians outside the larger metropolitan communities. "We need as many people as possible to be as involved as possible."

The march will begin at noon on Sunday, April 2, but gay and lesbian events are slated for Austin throughout the weekend. The eighth annual Texas Lesbian Conference is slated for March 31-April 2 in Austin, and the Lobby and the Texas Human Rights Foundation are co-hosting "The Biggest *and Hottest* Party in Texas" on Saturday night, April 2.

Two previous gay and lesbian marches have been held in Austin. For further information about the April event, call 512-474-5475. ▼



# TLC '95 —

## Lesbian conference set during March on Austin weekend in capital city

By Tammye Nash

STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

Organizers are finalizing plans for the eighth annual Texas Lesbian Conference slated for March 31-April 2. The conference will be held in Austin the same weekend as the 1995 Texas March to Stop the Violence, Stop the Hate.

The theme this year is "Texas Women Living Out Loud," according to organizing committee member Cindy Huyser, who said that workshop proposals for the conference are still being accepted.

She noted that the Austin committee "got a late start" in organizing the conference, but noted that planning appears to be going well. Organizers hope to have two keynote speakers,

four rounds of workshops and entertainment on both Friday and Saturday nights. "We should have the keynote speakers confirmed by the first of February," Husyer added.

She pointed out that TLC organizers hope that holding the conference the same weekend as the March will substantially increase participation in the conference. "We knew there was going to be a march this year, so we specifically chose to have the conference that weekend in hopes of drawing more women," she said. "Another reason we did it was for the benefit of women who wanted to attend both events but wouldn't be able to make two trips in one year."

The host hotel for the conference will be the Austin Radisson on Town Lake, with workshops scheduled both at the hotel and at the Austin Convention Center located approximately two blocks from the hotel. Early registration fee is \$45.

For details on registration or to submit a workshop proposal, call 512-326-4453, or write to P.O. Box 200546, Austin, TX 78720-0546. ▼

# Lesbian conference set during March on Austin weekend

Latina lesbian activist Letitia Gomez and award-winning journalist Ann Northrop will be the keynote speakers at the 1995 Texas Lesbian Conference, organizers announced. The conference, entitled "Texas Women: Living Out Loud" is set for March 31 through April 2 at the Radisson Hotel on Town Lake in Austin.

Also on tap for the conference is entertainment by San Gordon, Rene Russell, San Francisco's Mother Tongue, Lourdes Perez and root wy'mn theatre company.

The conference begins with registration on Friday evening and a women's celebrative Shabbat service.

The conference continues through Sunday morning, ending at 11:30 a.m. All TLC participants are being urged to participate in the Texas March to Stop the Violence, Stop the Hate, stepping off from Palmer Auditorium at 1 p.m. that afternoon.

Texas Lesbian Conference events will be held at the Radisson Hotel and the Austin Conference Center.

To receive a registration form or further information, call the TLC Hotline at 512-326-4453. ▼

— Tammye Nash

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DALLAS VOICE

# Hundreds expected for state's annual lesbian conference

## Gomez, Northrup to deliver keynote addresses

By Tammye Nash  
STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

Some 150 women have already registered for the 1995 Texas Lesbian Conference scheduled for March 31-April 2 in Austin, and organizers expect the final registration to reach approximately 450, according to organizer Ann DeRose.

"We expect the bulk of the registrations to come on that Friday, the day the conference begins," she said.

In addition to two workshop sessions on Saturday, the conference will feature Letitia Gomez and Ann Northrop as keynote speakers. Gomez is co-founder and executive director of the

National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization, a founding member of the D.C. Women's Council on AIDS, a co-organizer of the first Texas Lesbiana Latina Retreat and a former member of Houston's Gay Chicano Caucus. She was elected as an open lesbian to the national board of the Latino Civil Rights Task Force.

Gomez will speak Saturday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and at the Texas March to Stop the Violence, Stop the Hate on Sunday. Gomez and her partner Sabrina Sojourner also will conduct a workshop on inter-racial, inter-cultural relationships.

Northrop is an award-winning New York journalist who, since resigning from CBS in 1987, has worked full-time as a lesbian activist/educator. She is involved with New York's Hetrick-Martin Institute for Lesbian and Gay Youth, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), the Gay Games IV board of directors and the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies board. Northrop will deliver her keynote address Sunday from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. She, too, will lead a Saturday workshop, focusing on how to get attention for gay

# Forum

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consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same gender — is an "archaic" law that should not be on the books, but that the Dallas City Council is not likely to include in its legislative package a call for the repeal of the law.

Claiming that the Texas judicial system has upheld the constitutionality of 21.06, Kirk said the council does not need to hold debate on the issue. Garcia simply stated that as "the most conservative candidate in the campaign,"

he believes that "government has no business in people's bedrooms."

Both Jordan and Ludwig said that 21.06 is a state statute outside the city's venue, with Jordan adding he would "have no problem personally supporting the repeal" of 21.06.

Of the declared mayoral candidates, only petitions by Kirk, Garcia and Rufus Higginbotham have been accepted by elections officials. Pending petitions awaiting final approval have been filed by Ludwig, Jordan, Luis Sepulveda and Roy Williams. Jennifer Gale and Cedric Andrews will not appear on the ballot, but are expected to mount write-in campaigns. ▼





Ann Northrop

## Northrop urges focus on public opinion

Lesbian Conference keynoter says mainstream media may be a key to ending myths about gays, lesbians

By Tammye Nash  
STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

To attain full equal rights, gays and lesbians must effect a positive change on public opinion, according to activist Ann Northrop. And to change public opinion, Northrop adds, gays and lesbians must participate in the "national conversation" taking place daily in the mainstream media.

"If we're going to talk about being visible in the world, then we need to be

where the action is, and that is the national conversation taking place in the media," declares Northrop, one of two keynote speakers who will address the eighth annual Texas Lesbian Conference this weekend in Austin.

Northrop herself is in a prime position to realize the importance of marrying gay and lesbian activism with media savvy, having maintained a "very mainstream" journalism career. She **CONTINUED ON PAGE 21**

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## Northrop

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ended that career in 1987 when she resigned her position as producer of the CBS morning news program.

She took a position as an AIDS educator with the Hetrick-Martin Institute, which operates New York's Harvey Milk High School for gay and lesbian students. From there, she became involved with the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). After four years with Hetrick Martin, she found herself "much more politically active than I had ever been," and from there she became involved in organizing Gay Games IV in New York and now works as an independent freelance journalist and activist.

"Look at the practical things that go on in our lives. Look at the way we are affected by things like legislation, murders, or anything else you can raise as an issue," she continued. "So many of these are affected by public opinion. Public opinion controls what legislation will be passed and what will be killed. It controls whether or not a certain murder

is properly investigated and prosecuted."

As an example of how public opinion directly affects the gay and lesbian civil rights movement, Northrop points to the Montana state legislature. Last week, lawmakers there debated a law requiring sex offenders freed from prison to notify local authorities when they moved into an area. Some of them added an amendment to require persons convicted under the state's felony sodomy law, as well as rapists and child molesters, to register with authorities.

However, media exposure of the amendment lead to a public outcry and a pledge by the state's conservative governor to veto the provision if it were approved by the legislature. As a result, the anti-gay amendment was dropped from the bill.

"No one has ever been convicted [under the sodomy statute] in Montana. They were going to pass it just for show," Northrop says. "The point is that media exposure served as a communication pathway for our community. If we did not have an established presence with the media built up over the last few years, we would not have had that communication, and that law would

have passed."

The media is "about power, about lobbying. It's about who's in charge and what happens," Northrop declares.

Northrop firmly believes that society's image of gays and lesbians is strongly affected by the image of gays and lesbians that people see depicted in the media. And, she adds, gays and lesbians must become much more proficient in shaping the image the media portrays.

"We have to be a lot smarter about how we explain ourselves," Northrop insists. "This prevailing image of us as disgusting, unnatural people is being used against us, and we have to go a lot further and a lot deeper in addressing that."

But, she adds, she is not advocating "homogenization." She is not suggesting that the less mainstream aspects of the gay and lesbian community remain hidden.

Instead, Northrop says, "We must assert that same-sex attraction is natural and normal. It is common and good and it is to be celebrated and respected, not given second-class status, or held in contempt, or just tolerated. We must treat ourselves with respect and demand that others do so, too."

So far, Northrop believes, the gay and lesbian community has not done a very good job of "explaining ourselves. We make demands, but we cannot articulate who we are and why we should get the things we want. We come

## 8th Texas Lesbian Conference in Austin offers support, information

Organizers formalize group's structure, announce selection of board of directors, including 2 Dallasites

By Tammye Nash  
STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

AUSTIN — Between 300 and 400 women gathered in Austin March 31-April 2 for a weekend of workshops, speeches and networking at the eighth annual Texas Lesbian Conference. The Texas Lesbian Conference is the only annual statewide conference specifically for lesbians in the United States.

Organizer Pam Tise on Sunday noted that "We had a few of the usual misuses — presenters not showing up at the right time, rooms being locked when we needed in them. But overall, everything went very smoothly. We're pleased with the conference."

The women attending the conference seemed pleased as well. Cecilia Chavarria of Austin said she had attended previous TLCs, and that she decided to become involved in planning the 1995 event because "I had friends who were involved, and I wanted to be a part of it, too."

For Chavarria, the high point of the conference was "seeing a lot of my friends from around the state, and having the opportunity to network with new people. The best part is that this conference gives lesbians a chance to be seen, to be out there."

Maria H. of San Antonio was grateful for the chance to "learn a little bit from the workshops and to get to meet new people. I think the best thing about the conference is that it is bringing all of us together as a family of lesbians."

Another woman, from the Dallas area, said that she was not comfortable being "too out" about her sexual orientation, and that the conference allowed her the opportunity to participate in the lesbian community without forcing her beyond those boundaries prematurely.

One Austin woman, who identified herself as Candy, said she "wished there were more women from Austin here. But maybe the cost was prohibitive for some of them. But there are a lot of



Many women who attended the Texas Lesbian Conference last weekend in Austin stayed over for last Sunday's March to Stop the Violence, Stop the Hate.

women of color here, and that's a really cool thing. You really don't see that too often, at least not in Austin. I guess that has a lot to do with different politics, different backgrounds."

A meeting to establish a state-wide

TLC board of directors was also held during the conference.

The first TLC was held in Dallas in the spring of 1988, organized primarily by members of the now-disbanded

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## Gay and lesbian rights movement linked to other civil rights struggles

Tejana says gay and lesbian advances now threatened

By Tammye Nash  
STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

AUSTIN — Using her own history of ever-growing awareness as an example, Latina lesbian activist Letitia Gomez last weekend linked the gay and lesbian rights movement to other battles for civil rights, employment equity and simple justice.

Gomez was one of two keynote speakers at the eighth annual Texas Lesbian Conference held March 31-April 2 in Austin. Gomez, executive director and co-founder of the National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization, is also a founding board member of the D.C. Women's Council on AIDS, a co-organizer of the first Texas Lesbiana Latina Retreat, and a former member of Houston's Gay Chicano Caucus. In 1993 she was elected as an open lesbian to the national board of the Latino Civil Rights Task Force.

In dissecting what it means, to her, to be a *Tejana* (Texas) lesbian, Gomez described what it means to be a Texan, to be of Mexican heritage and to be a woman.

Gomez recalled that as a youngster in school, she thought of "Texas heroes" as only the Anglos who fought in the Texas war for independence, and was ashamed of her Mexican American heritage. Not until she was a co-ed at the University of Austin did she learn the names of the Mexican heroes who fought alongside Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie and Sam Houston.

The names of those Mexican heroes, she said, "had been left out of history lessons." They and their role in Texas' history had been made invisible, much as gays and lesbians — or the fact that certain individuals were gay or lesbian — had been omitted from the textbooks.

Gomez said that as a UT student, she participated in the San Antonio-to-Austin-to-Houston leg of the 1977 Texas Farm Workers' march to Washington, D.C. She also pointed out that earlier on the day she was making her speech, Texas farm workers were marching down Congress Avenue in Austin, carrying their familiar red flag with the black eagle, and carrying signs voicing the same demands that spurred on the 1977 march. "Here it is 18 years later, and they're still marching for higher wages," she said.

Gays and lesbians, Gomez continued, also are still marching; they also are marching for the same reasons: "to educate, to protest, to agitate, make those in the Capitol and others aware of the hate and the fear" with which gays and lesbians live daily.

She also pointed out that California Gov. Pete Wilson, who has backed that state's Proposition 187 denying health and education benefits to illegal aliens, is the same governor who vetoed a recent gay rights measure and rescinded a state policy allowing gays and lesbians to adopt children.

Gomez applauded the Texas Lesbian Conference organizers for their "good attempt" at making the event inclusive,

national lesbian conference looks to us as a role model. We want to make sure that doesn't change."

The proposed board would include representatives from each of the four TLC host cities, plus at-large representatives from other, smaller cities around the state. In addition to Justis and her partner, Susan Terrell, of Houston, the board so far includes Tise, Frankie Jones and Peggy Harris of San Antonio, Carol Hagler of San Antonio,

"It will still be up to each city to form a committee to put the TLC on each year. The purpose of the board is just to provide continuity."

Amelia Mentha of Dallas and C.C. Shelmon of Dallas. Carol Hagler is an at-large member from Waco.

Two at-large board positions remain open. ▼



Tejana lesbian activist Letitia Gomez was a keynote speaker at last weekend's Texas Lesbian Conference, held in Austin.

noting that "the attempt to be inclusive is what affirmative action is all about."

Many gays and lesbians may not think that the current conservative attack on affirmative action is a gay and lesbian issue. But, Gomez declared, it definitely is an issue of concern to gays and lesbians as well as racial minorities and women.

"Those attempting to dismantle affirmative action say things are better now. They say that the battle for civil

rights has already been fought and won, and that race and gender do not play a role in hiring, promotions or acceptance," Gomez said. "can we honestly say that we are color and gender blind now? I don't think we can."

"Leading the charge against affirmative action are white men and women with economic and skin privilege and black men who have already benefited from affirmative action," she continued. "You may ask, 'How does this affect me as a lesbian?' The fact is that the same people who are not blind to race and gender, are not blind to sexual orientation, either."

Gays and lesbians have benefited from the "mindset that allows for discussion of these issues" created by affirmative action, Gomez said. Now that affirmative action is being threatened, she added, the gains gays and lesbians have made are also in danger.

She warned that California's Gov. Wilson has said he will run for president in 1996, as has Texas Sen. Phil Gramm who is also "less than stellar" on gay and lesbian issues. Gomez, running down the list of conservative and right-wing politicians who have announced at least an interest in a 1996 presidential bid, urged gays and lesbians not to allow recent gains to be drowned in the conservative tide.

"What can we, as Texas lesbians, do when we go home to make Texas a more inclusive society?" she asked. "We have to keep abreast of who is representing, in Congress, in Austin and locally. We have to tell them we want support for HIV funding. We want [the Employment Non-Discrimination Act] passed. We have to tell them we are against anti-gay language in legislation."

"We have to be out in numbers, loud in our voices and our votes. We have to be proud to live our lives," Gomez declared. "All of us have to dare

**"We have to be out in numbers, loud in our voices and our votes. We have to be proud to live our lives. All of us have to dare to dream, and to act on the dream, of an America where all people are free of oppression, poverty and violence."**

to dream, and to act on the dream of an American where all people are free of oppression, free of poverty and violence, and free to live healthy, well-educated, financially secure lives." ▼

## Conference

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

organization Among Friends. Since then, the conference has alternated between the state's four largest cities, moving to Houston in 1989, to San Antonio in 1990, to Austin in 1991, and then back to Dallas in 1992 to repeat the cycle.

Each conference is planned and produced by a group of volunteers in each city, without a statewide board or organization overseeing the planning. The proposed statewide board of directors would, according to Tory Justis of Houston, provide "a support system and an information clearinghouse, as well as offer resources for the local committees that plan each conference."

"We have no intention of getting in the middle of the planning," she said. "It will still be up to each city to form a committee and put the TLC on each year. The purpose of the board is just to provide continuity, to make sure the TLC keeps happening. This kind of conference doesn't happen anywhere else in the U.S. As a matter of fact, the



# Getting some TLC —

## Organizers prepare for upcoming Texas Lesbian Conference, scheduled May 3-5 in Dallas

Organizers of the 9th annual Texas Lesbian Conference have announced Marj Plumb, Rita Shimmin and Texas State Rep. Harryette Ehrhardt as keynote speakers for the event. The entertainment headliner will be comedian Suzanne Westenhoeffer.

The TLC is slated for May 3-5 at the Dallas Grand Hotel, on Commerce Street downtown. The theme for 1996 is "Telling and Tracing Our Past, Living and Loving Our Present, Challenging and Charting Our Future," and the event will include entertainment, speakers, workshops, a vendor gallery and a special health care component with free mammograms courtesy of the YWCA/Dallas.

The event begins Friday, May 3 with registration from 4 to 10 p.m., and performances by Root Wymn from 8 to 10 p.m. and On The Verge from 10 to 11:30 p.m.

Workshops start at 9 p.m. Saturday, with four different sessions, each featuring five workshops, slated throughout the day. Topics include parenting strategies, breaking the cycle of abuse,

massage therapy as a holistic practice, butch-fem roles, retirement, leather issues, domestic violence, sexuality and spirituality, same-sex marriage, credit, activism and more.

Plumb and Shimmin will deliver their keynote addresses during lunch Saturday, from 12:15-1:45 p.m. Plumb is director of the Office of Gay and Lesbian Health Concerns in New York City's Department of Health, and a lesbian health consultant for the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Shimmin is an activist and author.

The afternoon workshops wind up at 4:45 p.m., and lesbian romance author Peggy Herring will be on hand, autographing copies of her latest novel, *Love's Harvest*, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Westenhoeffer's performance begins at 8 p.m.

Sunday begins with a spiritual service led by Rev. NaDine Rawls at 9 a.m., followed by a selection of roundtable discussions from 9:45 to 11:15 a.m. Roundtable topics include lesbian activists, lesbian educators, lesbians of color and older lesbians.



# Health classes you never got in school

Texas Lesbian Conference health fair to teach about breast cancer, stress, childbirth, dealing with doctors

By Tammye Nash

STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

The Women's Health Project of the Nelson-Tebedo Community Clinic is sponsoring an all-day health component as part of the ninth annual Texas Lesbian Conference slated for May 3-5 at The Dallas Grand Hotel.

Project director Joann Raskin said the mini-workshops at TLC will replace the Lesbian Health Fair the project usually sponsors each year. "It is much more cost effective to participate this way in the Texas Lesbian Conference than it would be to have to rent facilities ourselves to stage the health fair," Raskin said. "This also gives us a chance to reach women who are coming in for the conference from all over the state, women we probably wouldn't reach with the regular Lesbian Health Fair."

The health care mini-workshops will be held on Saturday, the first full day of the conference, beginning with a presentation by Barbara George, MSW, on "Stress Management Techniques" from 9 to 9:30 a.m. From 9:45 to 10:15 a.m., Shawna Stewart will discuss "Issues on Choosing Parenthood."

Breast cancer will be the topic of the final two mini-workshops for the morning session, with Connie Winkle of the YWCA presenting "Learning How to do Your Breast Self Exam," and Alpha Thomas talking about her experiences as a "Breast Cancer Survivor."

The afternoon workshops begin with Charlotte Coffey, MSW, presenting



Joann Raskin

"Getting the Answers You Need from Your Doctor." From 3:15 to 3:45 p.m., Regina Zoglo, R.N., will present "Holistic Concepts of Health Care," and Starr Eaddy of Cathedral of Hope will wind up the day discussing "How to Cope if Your Partner Develops a Life-Threatening or Chronic Illness."

Raskin said that other mini-workshops could be added to the schedule later.

Several tables displaying informational materials will also be set up for the health component of the conference. Those with tables include Edie Peterson with information on hypnotherapy; Shawna Stewart with information

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on parenting issues and resources; Regina Zoglo with information on holistic health; Debbie Watts with information on gynecological and anatomy issues; Debra Daboub of Methodist Hospital with information

**"This gives us a chance to reach women coming in from all over the state."**

on blood sugar and body fat testing; midwife Cassie McFall with information on birthing issues and options; tables with information on AIDS and HIV; the American Cancer Society with information on Oncology and an oncology professional on hand to answer questions; herbalist Diane Hackette; blood pressure screenings by the American Red Cross; nutritionist Nathalie Cook; the American Lung Association; the American Heart Association and information on drug

and alcohol use and abuse.

Registration for Texas Lesbian Conference begins at 4 p.m. Friday, May 3 at the hotel, located on Commerce Street in downtown Dallas. Entertainment will be provided by Root Wymn and On The Verge on Friday evening.

Saturday will be filled with a number of workshops and seminars, in addition to the health care mini-workshops, with keynoters Marj Plumb and Rita Shimmin speaking during lunch. Romance author Peggy Herring will be on hand to autograph copies of her books from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., and lesbian comedian Suzanne Westenhoefer will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday evening.

A spiritual service led by Rev. NaDine Rawls, a series of roundtable discussions and a lunch time address by State Rep. Harryette Ehrhardt (D-Dallas) will wind up the conference on Sunday.

For information on TLC, contact Naomi Madrid at 520-8108. For information about the health care component of the conference, call Raskin at 528-2336. ▼

DALLAS VOICE APRIL 26, 1996

## Lesbians from across Texas gather in Dallas

Annual conference offers keynotes, workshops, range of entertainment

By Tammye Nash  
STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

Lesbian health issues will take center stage at the ninth annual Texas Lesbian Conference this weekend, with a day-long series of health mini-workshops and a keynote address focused on lesbian health set for Saturday.

Marj Plumb, director of the Office and Gay and Lesbian Health Concerns for the New York City Department of Health and a lesbian health consultant for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and author Rita Shimmin, former director of HIV Services for Lyon-Martin Women's Health Services in San Francisco and now a consultant with the organization, will deliver the keynote at noon Saturday. The two women will give a co-presentation that "focuses on lesbian health at the individual level and at the community level," Shimmin said this week.

"There is a saying: 'Invisibility  
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CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE -- equals death.' That's very true," Shimmin said. "If we are not seen, we are not served. To succeed in getting health care, [lesbians] need to be seen. And to be seen by the health care establishment, we must start with ourselves seeing each other."

Individual lesbians, Shimmin said, often tend to hide parts of themselves — they consider undesirable from themselves and from society at large. That tendency translates itself to the lesbian community, Shimmin said, as a proclivity to exclude groups of women seen as different or undesirable.

"We must stop creating this invisibility internally and within our own community," she said. "We must see and accept ourselves and each other so that we are not assisting [society] in making us invisible."

Both women said they were excited to be participating in the Texas Lesbian Conference, which is described by organizers as a unique event unmatched anywhere else in the country.

Shimmin said that when she attended a National Gay and Lesbian Health Conference in Houston, demands that a display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt be removed and protesters outside the conference meant that the conference "did not feel like a safe place."

"So when I heard about [TLC], I thought, 'Damn, this is great. These are women who are coming together make [the lesbian community] visible,'" she added. "That shows great courage in the face of what we live with today. It's exactly what is needed. When we come together, there is strength in that. There is encouragement in that."

The 1996 Texas Lesbian Conference, being held at the Dallas Grand Hotel on Commerce Street downtown, begins with registration from 4 to 10 p.m. today. Root Womyn will perform from 8 to 10 p.m. at the hotel, followed by On The Verge from 10 to 11:30 p.m.

Registration continues from 6 to 9 a.m. Saturday, with workshops begin-

ning at 9 a.m. The conference includes four different sessions throughout the day, with each session offering five different workshops. Topics include parenting issues, abuse issues, same-sex marriage, retirement issues, leather issues, relationship issues, activism, credit, legal issues, spirituality and sexuality.

Plumb and Shimmin will deliver their keynote address from 12:15 to 1:45 p.m.

Romance author Peggy Herring will be on hand from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday to autograph copies of her latest novel, *Love's Harvest*, and lesbian comedian Suzanne Westenhoefer will perform at 8 p.m. at the hotel.

Also on Saturday, the Young-Elder Women's Health Project of the Nelson-Tebedo Community Clinic is sponsoring a day-long series of mini-workshops focusing exclusively on health issues, including stress management

"These are women who are coming together to make the lesbian community visible."

techniques, breast cancer, medical-legal issues and holistic health. The YWCA/Dallas will have a mobile unit available for those who have pre-registered for a mammogram. Other agencies will be available to perform blood sugar and body fat testing and blood pressure screenings, and to offer information on a variety of topics ranging from oncology to drug and alcohol abuse.

The conference continues Sunday, with a spiritual service at 9 a.m. led by Rev. NaDine Rawls. Four different round-table discussions will be held from 9:45 to 11:15 a.m., and the conference closes with lunch and Ehrhardt's keynote address from 11:15 to 2 p.m.

The TLC vendor's gallery will be open all day Saturday and Sunday. ▼

### Westenhoefer performs —



Lesbian comic Suzanne Westenhoefer performs at 8 p.m. on Saturday at the Dallas Grand Hotel in conjunction with this year's Texas Lesbian Conference. Tickets \$16 in advance, \$20 on the day of the show. Advance tickets available in Dallas at Crossroads Market. For more information about the Texas Lesbian Conference, see the article beginning on Page 9 in this edition.



Marj Plumb (pictured) and Rita Shimmin, women with extensive credentials on lesbian health issues, are keynote speakers at this year's Texas Lesbian Conference. The conference will be held throughout the weekend at the Dallas Grand Hotel.



THE PEOPLE-WATCHING PATIO PLACE

SUE ELLEN'S

WELCOME TEXAS LESBIAN CONFERENCE



# TLC keynoters challenge conference-goers on diversity, coalitions

By Tammye Nash

STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

Rita Shimmin warned her listeners right up front: "As keynote speakers, we are asked to set a tone for this conference. That tone will run the scale, from joyful to whatever you think is not joyful."

Shimmin and Marj Plumb — who together presented the Saturday keynote address at the ninth annual Texas Lesbian Conference last weekend in Dallas — then went on to present a range of ideas, theories and challenges in an almost free-form structure.

But as the women passed the microphone back and forth, each taking her next topic up where the other left off, they created an atmosphere of electricity that left their listeners charged and did, indeed, set the tone for the rest of

the conference.

While they approached it from a number of paths, and covered myriad issues in route, the central focus for Shimmin and Plumb was the need for acceptance of diversity within the lesbian community.

Shimmin, who spoke first, began the presentation by calling on her listeners to recognize the ways they have been "trained" since birth to avoid joining forces with others.

"Look at the woman sitting next to you," Shimmin said. "Think of two things about her that are different from



Rita Shimmin



Marj Plumb

you. In the hands of a skillful manipulator, you can be made to hate that woman because of those differences.

"Now look at another woman sitting next to you, and think of two things you have in common with her," she continued. "In the hands of a skillful manipulator, you can be made to hate that woman because she is like you. Because you are both fighting for the same things, and there's not enough to go around. . . . We have been trained not to like ourselves for very long, and not to like each other."

Shimmin pointed out that everyone today is "living in the context of a past history that is largely invisible to us. It is invisible because we don't want to hear it." But, she added, hearing that history is imperative if we are to learn from it.

Shimmin quoted from a speech delivered in 1712 by West Indies plantation owner Willie Lynch to plantation owners in Virginia who were facing "slave problems."

Lynch urged his fellow slave owners to play on any and all differences between the slaves — from skin color to gender to size to "status" — to engender fear and distrust between the slaves and so prevent them from rising up in a united front against their oppressors.

"Distrust is stronger than trust. Envy is stronger than adulation, respect or

## Focus on health care dominates '96 Texas Lesbian Conference

By Tammye Nash

STAFF REPORTER OF DALLAS VOICE

Some 181 participants attended the ninth annual Texas Lesbian Conference held last weekend in Dallas, according to event co-chair Naomi Madrid. And, she added, that count does not include TLC presenters and participants in the health care component of the event.

"I think we were very successful [in conveying] the information we presented, and the health care component of the conference was probably the most successful part," Madrid said. "The evaluations were mostly positive, although I do think some of the workshops should have been duplicated, such as the workshop on gay and lesbian marriage and a workshop on relationship issues" so that more women could have attended each.

De'An Olson, chair of the TLC program committee, said she was pleased with the "overall program evaluations" by participants. "They said they enjoyed the topics, and we had some really quality presenters and workshops," she noted. "A lot of the participants did say, though, that would like to see more social time and more time

for networking and bonding at the next conference."

Indeed, networking did appear to be high of many women's lists of motivations for attending the conference. Shawna Stewart of Artemis Counseling in Fort Worth said she saw the conference, first of all, as a method of "providing good exposure for my business."

But it also provided her with a chance, Stewart added, to share valuable information with others. Stewart presented a workshop on parenting issues as part of the conference's health care component. She and her partner, Amy Jacobus, brought their daughter Sierra to the conference.

Cassie McFall, a midwife with WomanKind Birth Services, said the opportunity to share information with others was also a vital part of her decision to participate in the conference.

"Midwives, so far, have not really been open to lesbians," McFall said. "In this area [North Texas], midwives tend to be very religious. But I hope to see that change. I think if anyone would profit from the home birth experience, it's our community. So often we [lesbians] have had to go through so many

technological feats to get pregnant, I think we forget there are other ways of doing things."

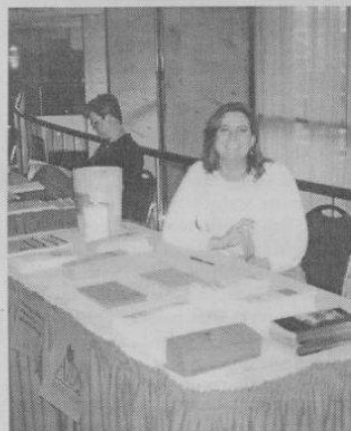
Kathery Parr and Rita Granburry, partners from San Antonio, said they had helped organize the San Antonio conference, and that the Dallas event was the fifth Texas Lesbian Conference they have attended.

For them, Parr said, "being with other lesbians in a safe place, where we out-number the straights for once, it's just such a high for us. We make some wonderful friends each year at the conference."

That was a statement with which Stewart wholeheartedly agreed: "Any chance to be around a bunch of lesbians is just wonderful."

Madrid said organizers also heard "some really positive" comments from participants about keynote speakers Marj Plumb and Rita Shimmin. Olson noted that, following the theme of Shimmin and Plumb's keynote, numerous participants called for even more focus on diversity in the lesbian community.

Although previous TLC events have had higher attendance, Madrid said she



A volunteer passes out information about women's health programs.

feels attendance for this conference was more than adequate. "I think that we were prepared for about 200 participants. Very many more than that, and I think we'd have been pushing it," she said.

"This was the first time this committee has actually organized a TLC, and I think we learned a lot of things along the way," Madrid added. "Overall, I thought it went really well." ▼

### TLC '96 —



Rita Shimmin (l.) and Marj Plumb kicked off the 1996 Texas Lesbian Conference with a call for lesbians to celebrate the diversity within their ranks. Nearly 200 women from throughout Texas gathered in Dallas last weekend for the ninth annual conference. Stories begin on Page 12.



# Lesbian Conference announces keynote speakers, entertainers

10th annual statewide event, scheduled May 16-18 in Houston, features Cammermeyer, DeLaria, Price, Morales

By Tammye Nash  
Staff Reporter

A keynote address by National Guard Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer and a performance by nationally-known lesbian comedian Lea DeLaria are two of the highlights of the 10th annual Texas Lesbian Conference slated for next month in Houston.

The conference — which began in 1988 in Dallas — kicks off Friday, May 16 at Houston's Renaissance Hotel, and runs through Sunday, May 18.

Conference registration will be held from 4 to 10 p.m. on Friday, with Cammermeyer delivering her keynote address at 7 p.m. Her speech will be followed by a singles event sponsored by the *Houston Press*.

Cammermeyer is the woman who successfully fought her 1992 discharge from the Washington National Guard after she told a superior officer during an interview for higher security clear-

ance that she was a lesbian. On the strength of a federal court order, Cammermeyer returned to the National Guard in 1994. Cammermeyer was named "Woman of the Year" by the Woman's Army Corps Veterans, has received the Meritorious Service Medal of the Army Reserves, and was the Veterans Administration's "Nurse of the Year" in 1985. She also was awarded a Bronze Star for her work at an evacuation hospital in Vietnam.

A television movie starring Glenn Close as Cammermeyer, *Serving in Silence*, was broadcast in 1995. Her appearance at TLC is co-sponsored by LiB.

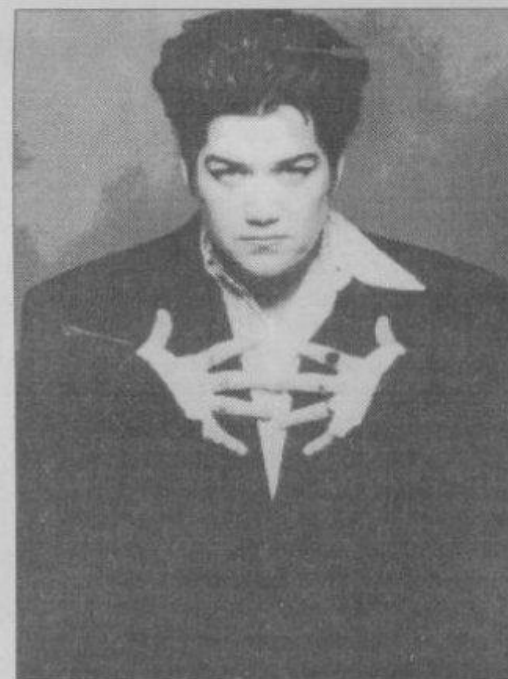
In addition to a variety of workshops, Saturday's schedule includes continuing registration from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., a lunch time keynote by activist Linda Morales, and DeLaria's performance at 7 p.m., followed by a dance featuring Dallas band II Girls II Guitars



Margarethe Cammermeyer

II Much.

Morales, who lives in Houston, was lead plaintiff in the lawsuit which challenged the Texas sodomy law outlawing private consensual sexual activity between adults of the same gender. She now works as the administrative assistant to State Sen. Mario Gallegos, and is a legislative aide to the senator's Texas Senate Committees, Health and Human Services and Education. She is former president of Mexican-American Democrats de Houston, Gay and



Lea DeLaria

Lesbian Hispanics Unidos and the Latina lesbian social group AMIGA. She also is a former board member of the national Latino(a) Lesbian and Gay Organization and the AIDS Equity League.

DeLaria landed in the national spotlight when she appeared as the first openly gay comic on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. She now has recurring roles on *The John Larroquette Show* and *Matlock*, a has made special guest appearances on

*Continued on Page 8*

# Alamo City hosts this year's Texas Lesbian Conference

By Tammye Nash  
Staff Reporter

Keynote speeches by Carmen Vasquez and Suzanne Pharr, along with performances by Sharon Bridgforth, Karen Ripley and Monica Palacios will highlight the 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference in San Antonio at the end of the month.

The theme for this year's conference, scheduled for May 29-31 at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel on San Antonio's Riverwalk, is "Creating Balance — Creando Balance," according to co-chairs Rosetta Pittman and Maria Salazar.

The event kicks off Friday night with

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an open house featuring the comedy of Palacios. It continues Saturday with opening remarks by Pharr, performances by Bridgforth and Teri Varner, a variety of workshops and — capping off the evening — a performance by Ripley, followed by a dance.

Vasquez will wrap up the conference with her keynote address on Sunday.

Pharr is a social and economic justice worker who founded the Women's Project, a 17-year organization in Portland, Ore. and Atlanta which focuses on multi-issue, multi-racial organizing.

Bridgforth, an Austin-based playwright, is the director of the nationally-acclaimed root womyn theatre and an accomplished writer known for the adventures of black lesbian folk hero "Bull-jean." In addition to her noon performance Saturday, Bridgforth will lead a workshop on the creative writing process.

Vasquez is the public policy director for the New York Lesbian and Gay Community Center, and has previously worked as coordinator of Lesbian and Gay Health Services for San Francisco's public health department. She is the founding director of San Francisco's Women's Building and she currently sits on the board of the OUT Fund for Lesbian and Gay Liberation.

Another well-known lesbian writer, Katherine Forrest, also will lead a workshop, and Ripley, a Berkeley-based comedienne, will lead an interactive workshop, both on Saturday afternoon.

Pittman said organizers have tried to

schedule workshops on a variety of topics ranging from health to spirituality to legal issues to "stuff just for fun." Others among the some 20 workshop presenters are Dallas massage therapist Sandra Lugo-Camacho and Project Esperanza's Graciela Sanchez discussing advocacy and progressive issues.

Salazar said TLC '98 organizers have worked to "give a little bit of everything to a community we perceive as being very rich and diverse."

And Pittman added, "That's the whole idea: everyone in our community is different, and we want to honor that diversity."

Currently, Salazar said, some 65 women have pre-registered to participate in the conference. "But we expect to have a lot of people showing up that Saturday to register. San Antonio has a history of late registrations."

"We have put a lot of emphasis on bringing out the San Antonio lesbian community for this event," Salazar continued. "It's very hard to organize here. It is such a closeted community, thanks to the military bases and a big Catholic influence. So we've concentrated on getting the women here to attend. But we want women from all over the state to attend, too." ▼

Registration fee for the entire conference is \$60. Registration for Saturday only is \$40. Tickets for Ripley's Saturday night performance are \$10.

For information about registration, call 210-828-LISA or 210-228-0201. To make reservations at the Four Points Sheraton, call 210-223-9461.

# TLC begins next Friday in San Antonio

Noted lesbian author Katherine V. Forrest will be one of several presenters highlighting the 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference that gets underway Friday in San Antonio.

Keynote speeches for the event will be delivered by Carmen Vasquez, public policy director for the New York Lesbian and Gay Community City, and Suzanne Pharr, a social and economic justice worker who founded the Women's Project, a 17-year organization in Portland, Ore., and Atlanta focusing on multi-issue, multi-racial organizing.

Also on tap for the weekend are performances by Sharon Bridgforth of Austin's root womyn theater and comedienne Monica Palacios and Karen Ripley.

The theme for this year's conference, which runs through Sunday at the Four Points Sheraton hotel on the Riverwalk, is "Creating Balance — Creando Balance." The committee presenting the event is co-chaired by Rosetta Pittman and Maria Salazar.

The weekend begins Friday with a performance by Palacios, a comedienne/activist who works with San Antonio's Project Esperanza. It continues Saturday with opening remarks by Pharr, a noon performance by Bridgforth and Teri Varner, a variety of workshops and — capping off the evening — a performance by Ripley.

Bridgforth, an author perhaps best known for her character "Bull-jean," a black lesbian folk hero, will lead a workshop on the creative writing process, and Ripley, from Berkeley, Ca., will lead an interactive workshop, both on Saturday afternoon.

According to Pittman, TLC organizers have tried to schedule a variety of workshops on diverse topics ranging from health to spirituality to legal topics. Among them are a workshop on massage therapy presented by Dallasite Sandra Lugo-Camacho, and a workshop on advo-



**Noted lesbian author Katherine Forrest is among the presenters at the 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference.**

cacy and progressive issues by Project Esperanza's Graciela Sanchez.

The conference concludes Sunday with the closing keynote by Vasquez.

TLC organizers have worked "to give a little bit of everything to a community we perceive as very diverse," according to Salazar.

She noted that by early May, some 65 women had pre-registered, and said that San Antonio TLCs have "a history of late registrations."

The registration fee for the entire weekend is \$60; registration for Saturday only is \$40. Tickets to Ripley's Saturday evening performance are \$10.

For information, call 210-828-LISA or 210-228-0201. To register at the Four Points Sheraton, call 210-223-9461. ▼



# 11th Texas Lesbian Conference draws 200 women to Alamo City

Keynote speakers, social justice theme highlights event



Longtime lesbian author Katherine Forrest (l.), pictured here with Dallas author Kaye Davis, presented a workshop exploring the history of lesbian-oriented fiction at last weekend's Texas Lesbian Conference.

Longtime lesbian author Katherine Forrest (l.), pictured here with Dallas author Kaye Davis, presented a workshop exploring the history of lesbian-oriented fiction at last weekend's Texas Lesbian Conference.

By Tammye Nash  
Staff Reporter

SAN ANTONIO — Some 200 women attended the 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference here last weekend, participating in a variety of workshops on topics ranging from creative writing to organizing around social justice issues.

"We are very happy with the attendance," noted TLC organizing committee co-chair Maria Salazar. "We had set of goal of 200, and we met our goal."

Salazar said on Tuesday that she and other committee members had just finished reading evaluation forms filled out by conference participants indicating that "the women who attended really enjoyed the speakers. They particularly appreciated the fact that the keynote speakers also participated in the workshops, which gave [participants] the chance to engage in some real dialog with them."

"Overall, everyone said they were very impressed with the quality of the speakers and the quality of the workshops," Salazar said.

She added that participants seemed "energized and challenged" by opening and closing keynotes Suzanne Pharr and Carmen Vasquez, both of whom issued the call for lesbians to widen their focus to include other social justice issues.

And, Salazar continued, Sharon Bridgeforth's presentation at the Saturday lunch gathering "really complimented the theme of the whole conference," which was "Creating Balance."

Bridgeforth, a writer and performance artist who founded root woman theater in Austin, and her colleague Teri Varner presented highlights from Bridgeforth's

work, including segments on her character "Bull-jean," who has become a black lesbian folk hero.

"The fact that [Bridgeforth] gave more of an artistic presentation instead of just a speech allowed the issues she addressed to be very compelling to all the women there," Salazar noted. "Everyone could find something in her work to identify with. And the fact that she used such a multi-faceted approach helped bring everyone together in a way that really helped develop a quick sense of community among the women there."

Workshop topics included queer activism on campus, lesbians and substance abuse, bisexuality, race and class issues, legal issues, relationship issues, massage and holistic healing and lesbians on the internet.

Among the workshop presenters was Katherine Forrest, the "grande dame" of lesbian mystery novelists, who took participants on a guided tour of the history of lesbian fiction, discussing how changes in lesbian fiction over the years have reflected changes in the community.

Forrest identified what she described as "the five milestone novels" in lesbian fiction, starting in 1928 with the publication of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. Despite the book's flaws — including an unhappy ending in which

one woman gives up her beloved to a man because she thinks her lover would be better off that way — it was, Forrest said, a "very important and extraordinary, for its time, call for tolerance."

In 1952, Forrest noted, Patricia Highsmith, working under the pen name of Claire Morgan, published *The Price of Salt*, notable as the first lesbian

novel with a happy ending.

The "Beebo Brinker" series, published from the late 1950s to the early 1960s and written by Ann Bannon, were set in Greenwich Village and "conveyed the bar scene of those years," Forrest said. "These books were important because they were the first books about our visible community which, back then, was the bar scene. These were the first books to really talk about who some of us were, and how some of us really lived."

Isabelle Miller's *Patience and Sarah*, published in 1969, remains "one of the best books our community has. It is just beautifully written," Forrest said, adding that an opera based on the book recently opened in New York City.

The last in Forrest's list of milestones came in 1972 when Rita Mae Brown published *Rubyfruit Jungle*. "There's just no overstating how important this book has been and still is to our community," Forrest declared. "This book taught us what gay pride was before we ever had the words for it."

"Rita Mae Brown was our community's first media star," Forrest continued. "She really did open some doors for our community."

Forrest also talked about those works of lesbian fiction which have won Lambda Literary Awards since the awards began in 1989, and about how while the majority of early lesbian fiction centered on coming out, being out is now "just kind of taken for granted" in most lesbian novels.

The emphasis these days seems to have switched, Forrest suggested, to issues of personal identity and lesbians' internal and external searches for themselves. As an example, she cited recent Lambda winners such as Blanche McCrary Boyd's *Revolution of Little Girls*, Achy Obejas' *Memory Mambo* and Sarah van Arsdale's *Amnesia*.

Forrest also talked about her own career as a writer which started in 1984 when Naiad Press published the coming out/love story *Curious Wine*, which was quickly followed by *Daughters of a Coal Dawn*.

But Forrest is perhaps best known for her mystery series featuring Los Angeles Police homicide detective Kate



Sharon Bridgeforth . . . Austin performance artist presented selections from her work, including 'Bull-jean,' a black lesbian folk hero.

Delafield, who was, Forrest said she has been told, the first fictional lesbian police officer to appear in print. That series started with *Amateur City*, and includes *Murder at the Nightwood Bar*, *The Beverly Malibu* which has been optioned by the Alliance Production Company and is headed for the big screen, *Murder by Tradition* which was based on a real hate crime murder in Wisconsin, her most recent effort *Liberty Square* and the soon-to-be-released *Apparition Alley*.

Forrest currently is working on her seventh Kate Delafield mystery, entitled *Sleeping Bones*.

Forrest, who recently left Naiad for a mainstream publishing house, insisted that she continues to write "for a lesbian audience. Other people have begun to find my books, but it's always been clear to me that I will always write for a lesbian audience."

"I try to write the truth about our lives," she continued. "I do not tailor my work to appeal to a mainstream audience. My idea of a crossover audience is gay men. But I think it is very important that lesbian writers be published in the mainstream, because it is time for our literature to be accorded the recognition and respect it deserves." ▼

## Pharr calls for coalitions with other social-justice organizers

By Tammye Nash  
Staff Reporter

SAN ANTONIO — All the various issues in the area of social justice already are connected, and the only way to make progress on any of those issues is to get the people working on them connected as well, according to Suzanne Pharr.

Pharr, a long-time activist for social and economic justice and founder of the 17-year-old Women's Project, was

the opening keynote speaker at the 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference last weekend in San Antonio.

"No person carries just one issue. We are all complex," Pharr said, noting that lesbians also face issues of gender, race, disability, religion, economics and more.

"Into anything that we do, we bring all those parts of ourselves," she noted. "No lesbian could ever be single issue." *Continued on Next Page*

*Continued from Previous Page*

Lesbians, especially lesbians of color, have long been leaders in multi-issue politics, Pharr said, suggesting that leadership came as a result of lesbians' involvement in the women's movement. Women who started out focusing on issues of gender equality suddenly began seeing other areas of vital concern unfolding before them, and they began taking action.

One barrier that remains, however, is that of class, Pharr said.

"I really don't know if we can organize the rich and the poor together," she acknowledged. "Often it seems that money blocks our ability to be connected to one another . . . A lot of people think they can purchase freedom."

The answer, Pharr continued, is to "organize those who have faced injustice. We all have to come to understand that there is a system of injustice. It's not just one unjust person here, or one unjust person there. What we face is a whole structure that promotes injustice."

The gay and lesbian rights movement, Pharr said, has made progress. But the goal for which we strive is still a long way out of reach, she insisted.

"Certainly we as queers have more visibility now than ever before. We have carved out a niche. But have we gained equality? No. Have we won our civil rights? No," she said. "We have persevered, and that is a step. A small step. The fact that we connected, at last, with each other, is progress."



Suzanne Pharr, founder of the 17-year-old Women's Project . . . "We have come to understand that there is a system of injustice."

justice and economic issues in their efforts.

"We must accept the public reality, and not just hold on to our private realities," she said. "The reality is that we have lost a lot. We have lost a lot."

Pharr listed the "destruction of welfare," the decline in medical and health care services, and the switch from production based in the United States to production based overseas as some of the most "tremendous" losses this country, and by extension its gay and lesbian community, have faced.

"These are queer issues just as much

as the issues of domestic partnerships or [same-gender] marriage," Pharr said. "These are the kinds of issues we must address. And I do have hope that we can organize around the issues in the future." ▼

## Vasquez: leaders' quest for inclusion marginalizes many

By Tammye Nash  
Staff Reporter

SAN ANTONIO — One of the biggest threats the queer community faces come from gay and lesbian leadership that does not accurately reflect the community and which is willing to buy mainstream acceptance at the cost of the community's soul, according to Carmen Vasquez, director of public policy for the New York City Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center.

Vasquez, who closed the 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference with her keynote address here Sunday morning, touched frequently on a theme voiced by TLC's opening keynoter Suzanne Pharr: that the gay and lesbian community must broaden its focus to include social justice issues other than gay rights.

"The idea of freedom rings hollow without a commitment to social justice," Vasquez said. "We can't have

queer liberation without an end to racism, without healing our environment, without fighting for the rights of immigrants to be treated with respect . . . We are all those people. To abandon those other causes is to abandon ourselves."

But Vasquez vented most of her passion — and her scorn — on the topic of how political and community leaders are "seduc[ing] us with the possibility of belonging. They are offering us safety in exchange for domesticity."

"We are a wounded people," Vasquez said of what she calls the queer community, adding that the most heinous wound of all is that "which calls us immoral and perverse. We are the victims of the preachers . . . We have had our community taken from us, and been told we have no history, no soul. The religious right has convinced America that there is not a soul worth saving among us."

LESBIAN CONFAB

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The 11th annual Texas Lesbian Conference, held last weekend in San Antonio, focused on a theme of social justice. As always, the event featured workshops, entertainment, and keynote speakers, including Carmen Vasquez (pictured), program director of the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center of New York.



# Lesbian conference organizers seek workshop presenters for '99 event

Organizers for the 1999 Texas Lesbian Conference have issued a call for workshop proposals for the statewide meeting, slated for the weekend of May 21-23 in Dallas.

The 12th annual conference will be held at Dallas' Ramada Market Center hotel. It will feature speakers and entertainment as well as workshops on a wide range of topics, organizers said.

The conference theme is "Visualizing the Future."

Organizers hope to schedule more than 30 workshops, and have asked that individuals interested in developing and presenting workshops at the conference submit proposals to the TLC Workshop Committee by the end of this month.

Committee members are looking for proposals on topics including but not limited to: humor, dating/romance, literature, relationships, sports/fitness, ethnicity, information technology, health/wellness, feminism, personal development, business/career, synchronicity, companion animals, journalism/television, sexuality/erotica, arts/culture, parenting, politics, life stages/changes, community/family, legal/financial, religion/spirituality,

history, lifestyle/homelife, communication and identity.

Workshop proposal packages should include a brief outline of the topic, including the workshop's purpose, intended audience and time required; a copy of any handouts, and a biography of any speakers plus a summary of their speaking experience.

These materials will not be returned, organizers noted.

Proposals should be mailed to the TLC Workshop Committee, c/o TLC, P.O. Box 191482, Dallas, Texas 75219, and should be postmarked no later than Dec. 31.

Conference organizers also are looking for individuals and businesses to advertise in the TLC program. Ads are available at prices ranging from \$30 for a business card-sized ad, to \$150 for an inside full page ad, to \$250 for the inside front or back cover, and \$500 for the outside back cover.

Design and production services are available. Ad deadline is April 15. ▼

*For more information about advertising in the conference program, contact Erin Moore at 214-549-3863. For information about the conference in general, call 214-521-5342 ext. 468.*

# Lesbian conference accepting registrations for May event



Doris Daze, the popular local women's group, will front for women's music legends Cris Williamson and Tret Fure, who will perform in conjunction with the 12th annual Texas Lesbian Conference. The event, scheduled in Dallas in May, also features GLAAD executive director Joan M. Garry and Millennium March executive producer Robin Tyler.

Tyler, Garry named as keynote speakers at 12th annual event; volunteers sought for fund-raising effort in March

Officials of the 12th annual Texas Lesbian Conference, scheduled in Dallas May 21-23, are seeking volunteers for a fundraising venture next month to help finance the conference.

Committee members need 40 volunteers a day on Mar. 26-28 to staff a concessions booth at the Texas Motor Speedway. Proceeds will benefit the conference.

People who wish to volunteer should e-mail [julz@ti.com](mailto:julz@ti.com).

The conference, organized on the theme "Visualizing the Future," will feature keynote speakers Robin Tyler and Joan M. Garry. Tyler was the first openly-lesbian comic in North America and is an activist, speaker and special events producer. She has been named executive producer of the planned Millennium March scheduled in Washington, D.C. in the year 2000. Garry is executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against

Defamation.

The event also includes entertainment on Friday and Saturday evenings. On May 21, the conference presents comic, actor and writer Suzy Berger. The following evening, the Dallas group Doris Daze fronts for women's music legends Cris Williamson and Tret Fure.

A number of workshops and networking sessions will be held during the conference, organizers said.

Registrations are being accepted now, with fee discounts available for registrations postmarked no later than Apr. 10.

For Berger's Friday night appearance and all conference sessions, the early registration fee is \$60; for the Saturday conference sessions only, \$40; for Sunday conference sessions only, \$25; and for Berger's appearance only, \$10.

*Continued on Page 8*



# TLC set for next weekend in Dallas

Event to feature activist Robin Tyler of the Millennium March, GLAAD's Joan Garry, filmmaker Kelli Herd

By Chris Leeds  
Staff Reporter

The nation's only continuing lesbian conference kicks off next Friday, and organizers are looking forward to the weekend just for women. With four keynote speakers, over 50 workshops and back-to-back nights of comedy and performance, the Texas Lesbian Conference promises to be educational and entertaining.

Ranging from public speaking to belly dancing to issues of domestic violence, there are over two dozen workshops. Conference goers have four opportunities to attend classes over Saturday and Sunday.

"The 30 or so workshops and the vendor area with gay-friendly companies will be a real treat," said Emily Cruse, co-facilitator. "We're expecting people from California over to Louisiana and Arkansas. We've even had women from as far away as Australia."

While organizers aren't sure how many people will attend this year, they

admit there has been a gradual decline in attendance since the first conference.

"The first year we had over 500 lesbians, but since then so many activities for women have come along," Cruse said. "Today lesbians have bars and plenty of other things that compete with the conference, and that's led to registration numbers being a lot lower."

Still, TLC planners believe that their speakers are top notch, a feature that will draw greater numbers for the women-only event.

Beginning with activist Robin Tyler, who is helping coordinate the Millennium March on Washington, two lesbian icons will speak each morning of the event. Over Saturday lunch, guest will hear actor Trisha Todd of the lesbian classic *Claire the Moon*.

"We consider all four speaker keynotes; they're all very big names," Cruse said, admitting that GLAAD executive director Joan Garry will likely be the weekend's highlight.

Also presenting is Kelli Herd, who is

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## TLC

Continued from Page 6

the director and screenwriter for "It's in the Water," a comedy that hit the big screen last summer. Herd's piece has received several awards, including

Audience Favorite/Best Feature Film Awards at the Laguna Beach Film Festival.

Entertainers are lined up for both Friday and Saturday night, beginning with Suzie Berger, described as



Garry

"comic perfection" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Berger has enjoyed a loyal following, that TLC's planners hope will draw more women, they said.

Folk performer Jamie Anderson is scheduled for Friday night. On Saturday, local band Doris Daze will open for Cris Williamson & Tret Fure.

"This is a really special event, and lots of women should consider attending," Cruse said. "Diversity is great, but there just isn't much out there for just lesbians. That's what makes this whole event so unique." ▼

Registration continues through the event. For more information, call (214) 521-5342 x468.



## Texas Lesbian Conference

May 21-23, 1999  
Dallas, Texas

Sign up now for this one-of-a-kind conference  
in a women-only space.

Saturday night concert is open to men and women

Sponsors:

Dallas VOICE



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- Cris Williamson/Tret Fure, Robin Tyler, Joan Garry, Suzy Berger, Jaimie Anderson, Doris Daze, Trisha Todd, Kelli Herd, and more!!

- Workshops
- Vendors

Registration Forms available on the web at:  
[www.cyberramp.net/~tlcinc](http://www.cyberramp.net/~tlcinc) or by calling 972-862-1180

# 200 expected for 12th annual Texas Lesbian Conference

Variety of keynoters, entertainers, workshops planned

By Tamiye Nash  
Staff Reporter

Organizers said they expect more than 200 women from around the state to participate at this weekend's Texas Lesbian Conference, an annual event opening this afternoon and concluding on Sunday.

The conference, now in its 12th year, is organized around the theme, "Visualizing the Future of Women." The annual gathering, alternating among Texas' four largest cities, is believed to be the only continuously-operated lesbian event of its kind in the country.

"This is a really special event, and lost of women should consider attending," said Emily Cruse, co-chair of the local organizing committee.

All events will be held at the Ramada Market Center Hotel.

Four nationally-known lesbians have been engaged as keynote speakers for this year's event, organizers said. They include:

- Robin Tyler, the nation's first openly-gay comedian. Also an activist and



Jamie Anderson . . . singer helps kick off Texas Lesbian Conference at a concert Friday evening. Several other entertainers are scheduled to perform during the 3-day gathering in Dallas.

producer, Tyler has been named executive producer of the gay and lesbian Millennium March, scheduled in Washington next spring. She also organized Olivia Cruises, a company designed to offer all-women travel opportunities.

- Joan Garry, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. In addition to leading the community's primary response to negative images in the media, Garry is also the mother of two children. (An interview with Garry begins on Page 1.)

- Trisha Todd, a San Francisco-based actor, author and teacher.

- Kelli Heard of Dallas, a lesbian filmmaker. Her comedy, *It's In the Water*, shot in Dallas and Greenville, Tex., with a mostly local cast, played to

great acclaim at several gay and lesbian film festivals before going into theatrical release last year.

In addition to the keynote speakers, the conference offers more than 25 workshops on a variety of topics ranging from health to relationships to cyberspace to belly dancing.

Cruse said organizing committee members are especially excited about this year's entertainment line-up.

Performances Friday night by San Francisco comedian Suzy Berger and singer Jamie Anderson kick off the weekend long event.

On Saturday night in the Grand Ballroom, located on the third floor, local favorite all-girl band Doris Daze will be the opening act for women's

Continued on Next Page

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music icons Cris Williamson and Tret Fure.

The members of Doris Daze have made a name for themselves with their performances at nightclubs in both Oak Lawn and Deep Ellum.

Williamson and Fure, who have been partners in music and life since 1981, first made their mark in the music industry as pioneers of the women's music movement in the 1970s. In fact, Williamson's landmark album, *The Changer and the Changed*, remains one of the best-selling independent albums of all times. Their appearance at the conference is part of a national tour promoting their newest CD release, *Radio Quiz*.

While most conference events are for women only, the Saturday entertainment is open to both men and women. A registration table will be available at the hotel preceding each day's scheduled activities. Advance reservations are encouraged but not required, Cruse said.

The Texas Lesbian Conference was born in 1988 when 500 lesbians attended the Dallas inaugural event. ▼

## IF YOU GO

WHAT: 12th annual Texas Lesbian Conference.

WHERE: Ramada Inn Market Center, 1055 Regal Row.

WHEN: Friday through Sunday. Friday registration is 4-8:30 p.m., with mixer at 6:30 p.m. Shabbat service at 8:45 p.m. and entertainment by Suzy Berger and Jamie Anderson at 8:30 p.m. Saturday registration is 8-9 a.m. Robin Tyler speaks at 9:15 a.m., followed by workshops at 10:15 a.m. Lunch with Trisha Todd is scheduled at 12:15 p.m., followed by workshops through the afternoon. The evening's entertainment, featuring Doris Daze and Cris Williamson & Tret Fure, begins at 9 p.m. Sunday registration is 8-9 a.m., with workshops beginning at 8:30 a.m. followed by Kelli Heard at 10:30 a.m. and Joan Garry at 11:15 a.m.

TICKETS: Entire conference, excluding Saturday concert, is \$85. Saturday-only tickets are \$55. Sunday-only tickets are \$35. Friday night entertainment is \$15 at the door. Saturday night entertainment is \$20 at the door. The conference itself is women-only, but men are welcome at Saturday's entertainment.

INFORMATION: 972-862-1180. ▼



Doris Daze performs at the Texas Lesbian Conference on Saturday and holds a CD release party at Sue Ellen's on Sunday.

May 21, 1999

# TLC'99

## Visualizing the future

May 21-23, 1999  
Dallas, Texas

**Sign up now for this one-of-a-kind conference in a women-only space.**

Saturday night concert is open to men and women

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## Texas Lesbian Conference

### 'This is a slow and steady time'

GLAAD's Garry says dearth of galvanizing issues requires greater strength, dedication of gay and lesbian community

By Tamiye Nash  
Staff Reporter



Garry

Occasionally, an event or an issue comes along that electrifies the gay and lesbian community, prodding everyday people into action and creating herds of newly-inspired activists.

But this is not one of those times, says Joan Garry, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. And that means that the movement needs activists now more than ever, she says.

"This is a slow and steady time, a

time in our movement that's less about huge victories and more about moving along steadily and being more strategic," says Garry, who will deliver the closing keynote address at this weekend's Texas Lesbian Conference in Dallas.

Without those energizing issues like gays in the military or referenda designed to negate gay rights, individuals tend to drift away from the movement. With that in mind, Garry says she is issuing a call to action, urging the women attending the conference to find their place in the movement and generate their own enthusiasm and excitement.

"I want people to define and to redef-

See GARRY on Page 14

## GARRY

Continued from Page 1

fine the idea of activism, so that there is a place for each and every one of them in the movement," Garry says. "We need more people who are really engaged in the work. I see it all the time where people who attend a conference like this or an event get totally enthusiastic and motivated. Then they go home. I will be successful as a speaker. If I can find a way to get them to carry that enthusiasm and motivation with them when they leave, carry it back to their own communities and use it to make a difference."

Garry, who has a long-term partner and three children, notes that it was just two years ago when she took the position at GLAAD that she became a "professional activist." But activism has been a part of her life for much longer.

"Activism just kind of crept up on my family when we weren't looking," she laughs. "My activism really began when our first child was born. . . . It

became very clear to me that there I was lot of work to be done, and that I had something to contribute."

Everyone, Garry insists, has something to contribute to the gay rights movement, and everyone must find their special niche if the movement is to succeed. "Look at Texas right now. There are so many battles to be fought right there," she says. "It is time, right now, to hook people in and get them engaged in the movement."

Considering her 15 years experience in the cable television industry — including seven-plus years at MTV where she was one of the first 40 employees, and seven years with the Showtime Network — the executive director's position at GLAAD was the perfect place for Garry. "When I saw that GLAAD was looking for an executive director, I told my partner, 'Somebody like me should apply for that job; somebody with a media background and who has the white picket fence kind of life.' She just looked at me and said, 'Then someone like you ought

to apply."

Now Garry says she is happy to be on the front lines, working with an organization she believes is perfectly positioned to play a very important role in winning the gay rights battle.

"The most effective way to change the hearts and minds of people is to change their cultural influences," and the most effective weapon for changing cultural influences is the media, Garry says. And it is GLAAD's specific mission, she adds, to reshape the images of gays and lesbians that the media displays.

"I think GLAAD has made a very significant contribution by working with the media professionals" to change the way gays and lesbians are portrayed, Garry says. "We've made some good progress there, but we still have more to do."

One area on which GLAAD will focus is advertising, she notes. "We're still not seeing ourselves often enough in either print or broadcast advertising," Garry says, although there has been progress.

Garry adds that she also hopes to soon see a continuing gay or lesbian character, or perhaps a character with HIV who is on the new "drug cocktail" regimen, on one of the daytime dramas. "The characters on these shows are in people's homes every day. People can and do connect with these characters, and that can make a difference," she says.

While openly gay lead characters on shows such as *Ellen* and *Will and Grace* have certainly given the community cause for celebration, Garry says it is important now to work for media images geared toward the younger generation. "To me, one of the biggest heroes is Kevin Williamson, executive producer of *Dawson's Creek*," which includes a gay teenager as one of its principal characters. "That's important, because in many young people's minds, if there's a gay kid on television, then that means it's okay to be gay," Garry says.

But there is much work yet to be done, Garry says she is proud of the work GLAAD has done in recent years. This spring's "Equality Begins at Home" campaign — a set of state-level



Joan Garry, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation . . . "To me, one of the biggest heroes is Kevin Williamson, executive producer of *Dawson's Creek*."

gay rights lobbying and educational efforts coordinated nationwide — was "a particularly important victory because it shows what we can do when we all work together," she says. "All these state and national organizations got together, and we all did what we were good at doing, and it was a big success."

The organization's efforts surrounding the coming out of lead character Ellen Morgan on the now-cancelled ABC sitcom *Ellen* and GLAAD's "crisis intervention" work in situations such as the murder of Matthew Shepard last October in Laramie, Wyo., are also great examples of how GLAAD is helping the gay rights movement progress, Garry says.

Garry adds that she is very happy to be participating this weekend in the Texas Lesbian Conference. "When I look at the schedule for the conference, I see a really smart mix of culture and activism. In that context GLAAD's presence at TLC is right on the mark," she says. "After all, that's what GLAAD is really all about: culture and activism combining into a very powerful and effective mixture for change." ▼



It's in the Water filmmaker Kelli Herd speaks at the Texas Lesbian Conference at 10:30 a.m. on May 22.

# TLC '99 was a 'huge success' organizers say

By Tammye Nash

Staff Reporter

The 12th annual Texas Lesbian Conference, held last weekend in Dallas, was a huge success, both financially and in terms of content, according to organizing committee co-chair Emily Cruse.

"That place [host hotel Ramada Inn Market Center] was packed, Cruse enthused. "It was great, just wonderful. All the evaluation forms we got back said kudos, kudos kudos.

"The only real glitch was that the service for the lunch on Saturday was slow, and by the time most people got their food it was cold," she said.

Cruse said at least 225 women attended the conference, "and that's not counting the vendors, the speakers, the entertainers and the folks who just dropped by to see what was going on."

Although organizers had been concerned by slow advance ticket sales for the Friday and Saturday night entertainment venues, Cruse said both nights were very well-attended. She estimated that more than 200 women turned out to see comedian Suzy Berger and singer Jamie Anderson on Friday night. The Saturday night crowd for the Cris Williamson/Tret Fure concert, with local band Doris Daze as the opening act, exceeded 300, Cruse said.

Even more encouraging, she said,

was the financial success of the event, which has been a problem in the past. "We aren't sure exactly what the final count is yet. But we know for sure we aren't in the red," she said.

Cruse estimated the cost of the three-day event to be "right at \$25,000."

The last TLC held in Dallas, in 1996, lost money. So organizers for this year's event started from scratch, Cruse said. "A lot of people on the organizing committee really dug down deep in their own pockets to pay for some things to get this conference up and going," she noted.

But organizers for the next Dallas TLC, set for 2003, won't face that problem, thanks to income from this year's conference. Cruse predicted that once the final figures are tallied, "We'll have between \$3,000 and \$4,000 that will go back into TLC, Inc., and to be used as seed money for the next TLC in Dallas."

The silent auction alone brought in more than \$3,000, Cruse continued, thanks in part to the donation of two pairs of airline tickets donated by conference sponsor American Airlines.

"American Airlines is such a great sponsor. They really add a lot to the conference, and the tickets they donated made our auction a little bit sweeter than it already was," she said.

Cruse said that one of four vacant positions on the TLC, Inc. board of

directors was filled during the board meeting held during the conference.

"We had had no representation from Austin for several years. That's why Austin was left out of the rotation last time," Cruse said, explaining that TLC is supposed to rotate yearly between Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Austin. "If we hadn't found someone from Austin willing to take a position on the board this time, we would have taken Austin out of the rotation permanently. So we were all really glad when a woman from Austin volunteered."

Three board positions remain vacant, including one for a Dallas-area representative, Cruse noted. "If anyone is interested in serving on the board, they can call me at 972-862-1180," she said.

Next year's conference will be held in Houston, and Cruse said organizers there already have begun planning for TLC 2000. In fact, the next TLC, Inc. board meeting will be held in Houston in August, she said, noting that portions of that meeting will be open for input and feedback from the public.

Cruse said that while the TLC, Inc. board — formed in 1995 — has been advisory up until this point, "We are going through some major changes right now. I believe that by the time we finish our annual board meeting in October, this will be a working board and not just an advisory one." ▼



## Lesbian conference seeks to fill posts on board of directors

Organizers are seeking four women to fill open positions on the board of directors of the Texas Lesbian Conference, according to Dallas area representative Emily Cruz. One of the positions must be filled by a woman from Dallas, she added.

An Austin area representative and two geographic at-large representatives also are needed, she said.

The organization sponsors an annual event, the Texas Lesbian Conference, which alternates among sites in Texas' largest cities.

At a meeting last weekend in Houston, board members considered a plan to give additional importance to the group's standing board.

At past events, the board has served only an advisory capacity. A separate steering committee in the host city actually plans the conference.

Previous steering committee members have recommended that the board take a more active role in planning the annual conferences, Cruz said.

"That's been one of the biggest complaints from the steering committees in the different cities that plan the conference each year," she said.

Cruz added that she expected board members at their next to formally approve a plan to become more active. The meeting will be held in Houston in October.

Cruz said last weekend's board meeting was productive, but she expressed disappointment that no one attended an open session board members had scheduled. The session was designed to give women in the community an opportunity to express recom-

mendations and remarks about the conference, she said.

The 12th annual Texas Lesbian Conference will be held May 19-21 in Houston. Cruz said further details will be available after the October board meeting. ▼

*Women interested in joining the Texas Lesbian Conference board of directors may call Cruz at 972-862-1180 for additional information.*

—Tammye Nash

# 13th annual TLC set for Houston in May

By Tammye Nash

Staff Reporter

Organizers of the 13th annual Texas Lesbian Conference are asking for women from across the state to submit workshop proposals for the event this spring, according to steering committee co-chair Christy Burchette.

The conference, "still the only one of its kind in the country," is slated for May 19-21 at the Renaissance Hotel in Houston, said Burchette, who co-chairs the steering committee with Madelyn McNeil.

The theme for TLC this year is "Power in Motion," and Burchette said organizers are expecting proposals on a wide variety of topics, just as at past events. "We expect we'll get proposals for workshops on everything from sex to pets to children to economics," she said.

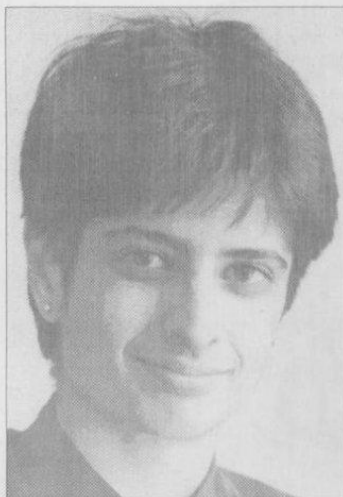
Organizers asked that anyone with an idea for a workshop call the TLC hotline at 713-863-

1453. "They can leave their names and phone numbers, and we'll send them a proposal package," Burchette said.

Several speakers and entertainers are already confirmed to participate, including activist/author Urvashi Vaid who will open the conference with the Friday night keynote address. Cartoonist Allison Bechdel, creator of the comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*, will speak at the Saturday luncheon, and writer Ntozake Shange delivers the closing keynote on Sunday.

Comic Marga Gomez will perform Saturday night.

Burchette said organizers are now finalizing registration brochures for TLC 2000. Women planning to attend the event or anyone else wanting information can call the same hotline number and leave their names, phone numbers and addresses "so we can send them their registration forms," Burchette said. ▼



Urvasi Vaid . . . said her activism changed her from a shy child with "Coke bottle glasses" to an extrovert. Vaid is director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

# Lesbian event draws important names

Hundreds of women expected in Houston next weekend for annual Texas Lesbian Conference, organizers say

By Kay Dayus

Houston Voice

HOUSTON — A few hundred lesbians from around the region are expected in Houston next week for the annual Texas Lesbian Conference — and organizers promise something for everyone.

Everyone except for men, that is. The conference is for women only.

This year's event, "Power in Motion," promises to be exciting, informative and diverse in nature, said Christine Burchett, conference co-chairwoman.

"We are trying to do our best to reflect our community and have the whole community represented," Burchett said.

The three-day event has attracted a diverse mix of speakers and workshops, including former National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director Urvasi Vaid, Latina comic

Marga Gomez, cartoonist Alison Bechdel and writer and performer Ntozake Shange.

Time recently named Vaid one of the nation's 50 most promising leaders under the age of 40. Although a respected leader in the fight for gay and lesbian civil rights, Vaid has moved beyond her childhood days as a self-described geek.

"I wore thick Coke bottle glasses," Vaid said in a recent telephone interview from New York. "I had straight, thick Indian hair down to my waist. I was chunky and completely non-athletic. I read books all the time and I had a thick Indian accent."

By her own admission, she lived a lot in her head, but she said, "I had an imaginative life around politics and social change. Stupid and adolescent, but meaningful to me at the time."

Nowadays, she says she's an extrovert.

Born in India, Vaid's parents moved to the U.S. when she was eight years old. She was politically active at an early age, taking part in

an antiwar march at age 11. In 1972, she gave a speech praising Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern.

Educated at Vassar and Northeastern University's law school in Boston, Vaid joined the ACLU's national prisoners project in Washington, D.C. She became involved with the NGLTF in 1985 when she served on its board of directors.

"I was barely making \$22,000 a year and there I was serving on a national board," she said with a laugh. In 1986, she handled media relations for the task force and was named executive director three years later.

In 1992, she quit to move to Provincetown, Mass., with her partner, comedian Kate Clinton. While there she wrote *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gays and Lesbians*. After the book was published in 1995, the couple moved to New York, where Vaid returned to the task force to direct its think tank, called the

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## CITY

### CONFERENCE

Continued from Page 6

Policy Institute.

"As we say at the task force, it's not just a job, it's a life sentence," Vaid, 42, said with a laugh.

But her current stint with the policy institute, where issues range from aging and racial justice or gay people of color has, has returned Vaid to her geeky past.

"I'm a data queen. I think I've returned to my nerd Coke bottle thick glasses thing," she said.

And Vaid is quick to rattle off some of those numbers: Only 11 states have some sort of protection for gay men and lesbians. Nineteen still have sodomy laws. Most school systems don't teach tolerance to students.

"Our relationships are still essentially still illegal," she said. "We've achieved visibility, but we haven't achieved comprehension on the part of straight people. We have to tackle that cultural uneasiness; the cultural homophobia in our daily life."

During her visit to Houston, Vaid plans to tell attendees at the conference about additional problems lesbians face as they try to gain equality.

On Saturday, cartoonist and author Alison Bechdel, who pens the comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*, will speak. On Sunday, gay Latina comic Marga Gomez joins the conference.

Gomez's humor quickly shines through. Making people laugh is one of the many things she likes, she said in an interview from her apartment in Brooklyn. Another is pizza.

"I'd eat it every day if it didn't have so many calories," Gomez said. "So my second favorite food is sushi."

She likes her new apartment in Brooklyn, her Jack Russell Terrier, Tabasco, and her home entertainment center. She says she's "turning into an eccentric bachelor with all her things around her."

The Texas Lesbian Conference will mark Gomez's first trip to Houston, though she has made stops in San Antonio and El Paso.

But making an appearance to a roomful of lesbians is exciting, she said with a laugh.

"I'm always looking for someone to date. It definitely helps if there's a dating pool at the show," Gomez said. "I get as much fun out of getting a big white guy to laugh as much as a bunch of lesbians."



Comedian Marga Gomez says the Texas Lesbian Conference may yield a new person she can date.

As well as doing her stand up routine across the country, Gomez has appeared on Rosie O'Donnell's *Stand Up Spotlight* and HBO's *Comic Relief*. She was a featured performer with Lily Tomlin, Harvey Feinstein and Robin Williams in a benefit to raise funds for the filming of *The Celluloid Closet*.

The daughter of a Cuban comedian and a Puerto Rican showgirl, Gomez says her first gigs were in her parents' comedy sketches on the stages of Manhattan's legendary Latino theaters. She later studied acting and creative writing. She also said, tongue in cheek, "I considered becoming a ventriloquist, but I have this big gap between my front teeth."

For the future, Gomez plans to continue stand-up acts, which include "Memory Tricks," "Marga Gomez is Pretty, Witty and Gay," — which played to great reviews from San Francisco to Key West — and "A Line Around the Block."

Workshops at the conference cover a variety of topics, including two by Joyce Gayle, author of the "Dating Dance" "Flirting 101 for Lesbians" and "50 Ways to Have a Lover." Psychologist and Houston activist Maria Minicucci will lead "The Erotic Self: Discovering Our Power."

Other workshops include health care for lesbians, lesbian mothers, writing the lesbian novel and selling and buying a home.

Also, Older Lesbians Organizing for Change will host a panel discussion on issues facing lesbian seniors.

Closing out the conference is African-American playwright and poet Ntozake Shange, a resident of Houston. Her critically-acclaimed play, *For Colored Girls, Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*, hit Broadway and was nominated for several awards. Shange's work portrays African-American life in today's America. ▼

The Texas Lesbian Conference will be held May 19-May 21 at the Renaissance Houston Hotel, 6 Greenway Plaza. Cost is \$65-\$85. For information, call 713-863-1452.

## Texas Lesbian Conference next weekend



The annual Texas Lesbian Conference is expected to draw hundreds of women to Houston next weekend for workshops, entertainment, and celebrity guests such as Urvasi Vaid, pictured, director of the Policy Institute of the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force, and nationally-known lesbian comic Marga Gomez, among others.

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CRUISE to Cozumel with Lesbians -  
October 2002. Join the Texas Lesbian  
Conference & Cruise. Call 512-740-5512  
or go online at:  
<http://www.texaslesbianconference.com/>  
for information.

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SEPTEMBER 13, 2002

DALLAS VOICE

**this was the last mention of the 2002  
event in the Dallas Voice...nothing after  
the slated date, was it held?**

# Lesbian conference headed to sea

By Don Maines

Staff Reporter

The Texas Lesbian Conference is seeking a Dallas representative as the group gets ready to set sail on a cruise to Cozumel, Mexico, for its 15th anniversary confab, Oct. 17-21.

Anyone interested should contact Susan West, who is completing her fourth and final year as chairman of the nation's only ongoing state conference for lesbians. She can be reached at [qwest@evl.net](mailto:qwest@evl.net).

"The primary purpose of Texas Lesbian Conference, Inc., is to provide an annual conference for the education and empowerment of lesbians in the state of Texas," West explained.

The cruise from Galveston to Cozumel aboard the *Carnival Celebration* liner, will replace the usual host city format which has experienced dwindling attendance.

"The theme of the conference is 'What Lesbians Really Want,' and one of our goals is to determine if TLC is still needed in the community," said West.

Dallas hosted the first TLC conference in 1988. Since then, it has rotated among Dallas, Austin, Houston and San Antonio, and each of those cities has been able to nominate two board members who serve four-year terms.

Three at-large positions are filled by women from geographical areas outside of the host cities, and three positions are designated

for women of color, said West.

"Currently, we have three board members, one from Austin, one from Houston and one from San Antonio," she said. "We have plenty of room for new members from any city, large or small."

The conferences typically feature educational workshops, appearances by nationally prominent lesbians and opportunities to meet other lesbians from across the state and nation.

"We have had participants from all over the U.S. and as far away as Australia, Africa and Europe," said West. "Many of the conference participants each year represent the larger cities, but substantial minorities are from small towns. TLC is one of their only connections to the lesbian community," she said.

The itinerary for this year's conference is in the planning stages, said West, but Michele Balan, known in lesbian circles as "da Comic Princess," is already booked to entertain.

"With the cruise we hope to revitalize and attract a different crowd," she added. "We wanted to do something special to honor TLC's record of service to our community. But we also wanted to make it something fun and exciting that no one had ever tried before."

The four-day trip mixers, entertainment and a day in Cozumel, followed by conference events on the return trip. ▼

For details, visit [www.texaslesbianconference.org](http://www.texaslesbianconference.org). APRIL 12, 2002

DALLAS VOICE

**OUT THIS WEEK****Emily Cruz promotes conference cruise**

In 1988, the Texas Lesbian Conference began as a small conference for lesbians throughout the state to gather, network, share information and have a good time. Over the years, the conference has moved among Texas' major cities and flourished. This year, the board decided to do something different and take a cruise.

Emily Cruz, pictured below at right with her sister, has been involved in the conference since 1988. "It wasn't my idea, but I jumped on the bandwagon and have been with it ever since," she says. She is a past board president and has been involved in planning each of the conferences when they have taken place in Dallas.

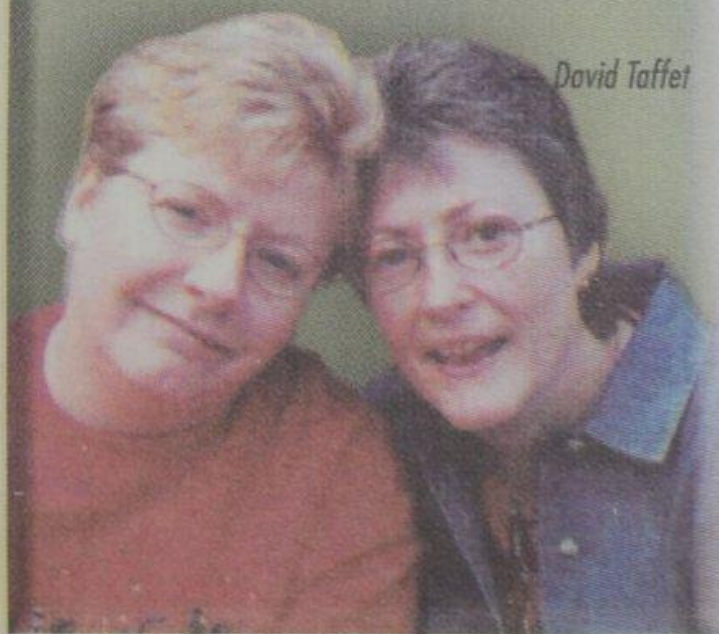
As happens in the life cycle of all events, attendance ebbs and flows, and last year attendance was down. Because of that, Cruz says, the board decided to shake things up and do something really different this year. The four-day cruise aboard a Carnival ship leaves from Galveston for Cozumel on Oct. 17. The theme, "What lesbians really want," will be reflected in a workshop Cruz will conduct, "Where do we go from here?"

Over the years, Cruz explains, the conference has amassed "a large treasury." Her workshop will focus on where the Texas Lesbian Conference is headed. Should the conference continue with more cruises, return to the rotating city format? Or is the annual conference worth continuing at all and what should be done with the money? Although she expresses hope that the conference will continue, she notes that the need for this conference is not as great as it was in 1988. With groups like Women's Business Network, for which she has served as program chair and board member, and Women's Communities Association, in which she is also active, women have other outlets that didn't exist in the past.

In addition, Cruz says there isn't the same need for separate women's groups today. "The girls play with the boys better than we did before," she says. But the Texas Lesbian Conference might be partially responsible for that. As the only statewide, annual lesbian conference in the country, the organization has attracted top-name speakers and entertainment through its 15-year history. Empowered, energized and armed with ideas from the conference, women have returned to their communities and created many of the new groups that now benefit men as well as women.

Cruz is looking forward to the conference aboard ship and taking a few days off from her busy schedule juggling school, studying for a degree in business management, a full time job with a pharmaceutical company and a part-time house-sitting business. Information on the cruise can be found at [www.texaslesbianconference.com](http://www.texaslesbianconference.com).

*Texas Lesbian Conference. Oct. 17-21. From \$439 per person. 1-866-200-2086.*



*David Taffet*



Texas Lesbian  
Conference - 2002

15th Anniversary  
CRUISE to Cozumel

Stateroom Costs  
and Details

Conference Itinerary  
and Speakers

## Texas Lesbian Conference - 2002

### Texas Lesbian Conference 2002--Cozumel Cruise



#### What Lesbians Really Want

The Texas Lesbian Conference (TLC) started way back in 1988 as a way for Lesbians to network, learn, share information, and have a good time with their sisters from across the Lone Star State and beyond.

Times have changed since 1988, and this year, TLC will be looking at "What Lesbians Really Want" from the only statewide Lesbian Conference in the United States.

And there's no better place to find that out than on a cruise from Galveston to Cozumel!

**Texas Lesbian Conference 2002 takes place on a 4-day cruise from Galveston to Cozumel, from October 17 thru October 21, 2002**

To **book** or if you have questions about the **cruise**,

call Stan the Cruise Man, *toll free*, at

**1-866-200-2086**

or email him at [Stan@OUTcruising.com](mailto:Stan@OUTcruising.com)

Although the pre-registration deadline has past, there is still time to book a berth on the coolest conference for Lesbians happening this year.

#### DARE TO COMPARE:

It costs \$499 just to fly to Oli\*\*s resort in Cancun.. It will cost you another bigger chunk of change to have a roof over your head!

The TLC Cruise gives you 4 days at sea, Cozumel, all the food you can eat, nightly entertainment, casinos, piano bars, pools, games, and the TLC Conference for less than it costs to fly to Cancun!

[Texas Lesbian Conference - 2002](#) | [15th Anniversary CRUISE to Cozumel](#) | [Stateroom Costs and Details](#) | [Conference Itinerary and Speakers](#)

**it appears TLC only had a website for about a year, mid-2003 to Aug 2004, and this page is the last info posted**

Booked as of August 21, 2002

#### Entertainment

Michele Balan, "Da Comic Princess" entertains on Friday evening and cruises with us through Monday.



We asked the Mayan Gods, "What Do Lesbians Want?" They told us, "Take them on a cruise and ask them."

#### Speakers and Topics

Sunday at Sea

#### "What Lesbians Really Want"

Emily Cruse and Susan West will facilitate a discussion to examine what Lesbians want from a statewide conference.

#### "Late Bloomers"

Pat Stone talks about how she went from a dedicated Pflag parent, to the founder of a thriving organization for women who come out late in life.

#### "Whole Body Stress Relief"

Something you'll want to try back in the cabin! Massage Therapist Rossana Dumas shows you how to relax and just DO IT!

#### "Incommunicado"

Therapist Debra Pinnock addresses how lack of communication affects intimacy and sex in a relationship.

*Keep checking back as more speakers confirm!*