



# LAVENDER

## VISIONS

Volume 1, Issue 3

August/September 1989

## Lesbians must take the power within and manifest it without

by Terri Jewell

once upon a time, there was a dream  
 a dream of women, a dream of women  
 coming together and turning the world  
 around. turning the world around and making it over  
 a dream of women, all women being sisters.  
 a dream of caring; a dream of protection, a dream  
 of peace.  
 — Pat Parker, 1978

Black Lesbian Feminist poet Pat Parker is dead of breast cancer at age 45. When I arrived at the 15th NWMF in Bloomington this year, I hoped to hear her read, hoped to attend her workshop. I wanted to see her sit on a panel of other Lesbian foremothers — Z Budapest, Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, Kay Gardner, Sonia Johnson and Merlin Stone. This astounding group of women represent many decades of Lesbian struggle, thought and culture.

But Pat Parker could not be there. She was dead 2 weeks later.

I remember my own rearing as a dyke from the time I came out in 1976. I was in college in New Jersey during a period when Lesbian visibility and "coming out" were the biggest issues. Lesbians consistently led the way in all concerns of the Women's

Movement, including children's rights, the implications of pornography, poor women's health, domestic violence, abortion, and equal pay. Lesbians were also constructing the foundations of our own culture while discovering and preserving our herstories. I rapidly grew strong within myself as a Lesbian then and have carried the seeds of what I learned. These seeds of commitment and perseverance multiply despite the post-Reagan conservatism that is fed by such catchwords as "family," "church," "flag," "morality," "stability," "patriotism," and "traditional values." There is an effort now to suppress societal change that brings about increased human rights and participation in a society maintained for the benefit of white male privilege. It is within such an environment that Lesbians must continue to work for survival today and the future. We cannot afford to become lax in our vigilance or



Pat Parker

(Photo by Martha Dunham)

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## Homophobia: a personal and political perspective

by Rosemary Rocco

Homophobia is defined in many ways by many people and often it seems we are speaking about the behaviors that occur, or the stereotyping and bigotry that feed homophobia, rather than the examining the basic concept of the phobia. Quite simply, homophobia is the fear of loving someone of the same gender. It is not a fear of a certain sexuality nor a fear of specific sex acts.

This distinction is rather important, not only in addressing external homophobia, but also in addressing internal homophobia, if we are really interested in affecting fear. The fear of loving someone of the same gender or of those who love someone of the same gender is supported by stereotypes and bigoted belief systems. The stereotype is carried out by assuming that Lesbians and Gays are always looking for "a lay" and is sustained with thought patterns that focus on what Gays and Lesbians do in bed and only on what they do in bed. If we can begin to talk about stereotyping and bigotry as the ways that homophobia is carried out and

sustained, rather than bringing our private sexual lives into public, we can then effectively talk about the phobia for what it is — irrational fear.

In responding to internal homophobia, I believe that we must also look at our own internal focus on defining our relationships by the amount, quality and kind of sexual expression. In the history of addressing Lesbian oppression, we talk as a movement about wanting our privacy respected and our right to carry out freedoms guaranteed to us as citizens, and yet it seems that we often go about this by making our private lives public and by demanding public sanction for a private act. In this we include a range of sexual expression that is not necessarily accepted within a heterosexual context and which represents small slices of a small slice of the whole range of human expression. In this I include sexual relationships with people under eighteen, non-monogamy,

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## Escorts endure threats to protect women's right to choose

*[The Supreme Court decision threatening to limit a woman's right to choose how she controls her own body has engendered increased violence from the anti-choice forces. We wish to thank and affirm our sisters in the trenches, many of whom are suffering from combat fatigue. —LV Staff]*

Some describe what has been happening in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, in front of the Women's Health Organization as a "war." It is there that the battle lines have been drawn between the pro-choice and anti-choice sides of the abortion issue. For many, however, the issue is not just about abortion, but about reproductive rights and the rights of women to have control over their own lives.

The Women's Health Organization has been providing health care services, including abortions, to women since the 1970s. For almost as long, anti-choice groups have picketed the clinic and have harassed and attempted to prevent patients from entering the clinic. "Street counselors," a self-designated term of the anti-choice group, confront patients and their family and friends when entering the clinic, shouting such things as "It's not too late" or "Don't kill your baby." They also try to force literature, including pictures of dead fetuses, upon these patients. While one or more "street counselors" engage in this harassment, other anti-choice individuals march on the sidewalk in front of the clinic singing hymns and quoting scripture.

What comes between the anti-choice picketers and "street counselors" and the women attempting to enter the clinic is a group which has come to be known as the pro-choice escorts. The escorts meet women as they arrive, surround them and escort them to the door of the clinic. They attempt to drown out the verbal harassment from the "street counselors" and to prevent plastic fetuses and bloody pictures of aborted fetuses from being shoved into the faces of women entering the clinic. Often, it is the escorts themselves who are shoved and also verbally harassed.

The Women's Health Organization was one of the first clinics in the country to be picketed and it is also one of the very few clinics which has not been shut down by a "rescue." Operation Rescue of Northeastern Indiana has hit the Women's Health Organization twice within recent months. Both times *hundreds* of anti-choice demonstrators sat on the sidewalk in front of the clinic and attempted to block the entranceway to prevent patients from entering the clinic.

During the first "rescue" on April 21, approximately 300 "rescuers" arrived at the clinic at 6:30 AM and attempted to "take" the building. Escorts had received word of a possible "rescue" and had arrived at 5 AM to erect a temporary plywood barricade. Patients were kept in vans in a church parking lot across the street while the police took nearly three hours to arrest approximately 100 anti-choice demonstrators. "Street counselors" circled the vans holding plastic fetuses and bloody pictures up to the windows and had to be stopped by police.

Police intervention is minimal — the job of securing the clinic building and assuring that patients are able to enter the clinic is done by the escorts. Often it is necessary for escorts to surround

a patient, who may choose to have a blanket thrown over her head to avoid being photographed by anti-choice picketers. Escorts walk the patient several hundred feet past shouting picketers and between two mounted police stationed at the entranceway to the clinic.

The pro-choice escorts are a diverse group of women and men, the majority being women, and a significant number of these are from the Ft. Wayne Lesbian community. The escorts have been doing the work of the police, and many are struggling with the feeling of being burned out. It is very difficult in this brief article to convey the feelings experienced by an escort. Carolyn Clark, volunteer coordinator for the escorts, sums up her feelings in this way: "When I first said I would go to the clinic and help, I didn't think I would get involved to this extent. It is unbelievable to me that people can treat patients the way they do and get away with it. No one can really grasp what happens until you're there."

Individuals are strongly encouraged to come to the clinic on procedure days and observe just what does happen. Additional information, including videotapes from past procedure days are available through Ft. Wayne Feminists, P.O. Box 10267, Ft. Wayne, IN 46851, or call (219) 456-5244 or (219) 432-4523. In Indianapolis, the Indiana Pro-Choice Action League (IPCAL) will be holding training classes for new escorts in the early fall; contact Beth Lowery at (317) 283-6033 for more information. Merrillville Planned Parenthood (219-769-3500) is the contact for information on clinic escorts in northwest Indiana.



### Statement of Purpose

Lavender Visions is  
for me and for you,  
for all Lesbians,  
for us to connect within  
our larger community  
so that together we may increase  
our respect and support  
for each other and ourselves,  
affirming, celebrating and  
honoring the women we are.

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## Bulletin Board

**Michigan Womyn's Festival:** August 9-13; contact W.W.T.M.C., Box 22, Walhalla, MI 49458, or call (616) 757-4766.

**Older Women's Network (O.W.N.):** Tuesday, August 15, 7:30 PM. Maryann Steinhart will teach and demonstrate message therapy. Sue and Sherry are hosts. For more information, call (317) 786-5845 or write O.W.N., P.O. Box 2528, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

**Lesbian Discussion Group:** Donna from P-FLAG will lead a discussion on mother-daughter relationships at the group's regular meeting, August 31, 7-8:30 PM. Call (317) 577-2245.

**Labor Day Picnic:** September 3, noon-6 PM, Westlake Park, Indianapolis, IN. Sponsored by Unicorn Club.

**ICLU Annual Conference and Dinner:** September 23. Conference 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM, Indiana University School of Law, Indianapolis. Workshop topics include: "The War on Drugs: An Assault on Civil Rights?", "After Webster: The Current State of Reproductive Rights," "Access to the Courts," "Civil Rights of the Mentally Ill," "Is There Justice for Juveniles?", and "Censorship and the First Amendment." For more information, call the ICLU office (317) 635-4059.

### Branching Out Productions Presents:

**The Old Holly is Back:** Holly Near in concert Sunday afternoon, October 8, Shortridge Jr. High Performing Arts Center. Tickets will be available at Dreams & Swords.

**Breaking Free from Overeating & Compulsive Eating,** an intensive one-day workshop, October 28.

**Claudia Black, Adult Children of Alcoholics,** a day-long seminar for children of alcoholics and/or other drug dependencies, November 3, 9 AM - 4 PM.

[For more information about any Branching Out Production, call (317) 637-2906.]

**Nancy Brooks and Jane Winslow in Performance:** Tentatively scheduled for October 21. See the October/November 1989 issue of *Lavender Visions* for more details.

**"Something's Brewing":** "Something's Brewing" Women's Coffeehouse meets the first Saturday of each month at 7:30 PM at 615 West 43rd Street (Unitarian Universalist Church). For information about programs, cost and schedule changes, call (317) 274-2585.



## RESOURCES

### Indianapolis (317)

**AIDS Hotline:** 257-HOPE, answered 7-11 PM, every evening.

**AIDS: Living the Journey Together:** a family therapy group for persons with AIDS and a care partner, parent, sibling, lover, friend. Sponsored by Courageous Living Counseling Services, located in Westview Hospital Professional Bldg., 925-0043.

**Dignity** meets at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 46th & Illinois, Sundays at 6 PM; P.O. Box 431, Indianapolis, IN 46202; 924-6578 (Drew).

**Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (Quaker);** 635-8646 (Diane or Perri).

**Gay AA** meets at Bethlehem Lutheran, Sundays at 7 PM; 632-7864.

**Gay/Lesbian Switchboard:** 253-GAYS (7 - 11 PM).

**Gay and Lesbian Codependents Anonymous** meets at Winona Hospital, 3232 N. Meridian St.; 925-1135 (Don), 636-4986 (Joe), 297-0386 (Pam).

**Gay Parents Coalition of Indianapolis** meets at Holy Eucharist Church, 38th & Illinois, 2nd Sunday of each month at 7:30 PM; 253-2280 (John)

**Indianapolis Youth Group** for Lesbian and gay youth ages 23 and under meets bi-weekly. For more information call Lesbian/Gay Switchboard at 253-GAYS and ask for the organization's contact person.

**Indianapolis NOW** meets at Planned Parenthood, 3219 N. Meridian, 2nd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM; 925-4641.

**Indianapolis Pitch-In:** Our monthly pitch-in dinners provide

social and networking opportunities for all Lesbians. Generally, the pitch-in is scheduled for the second Friday of each month, beginning at 7 PM. The location (and directions, if necessary) usually is available at Dreams and Swords at least a week before each pitch-in.

**Integrity** meets at All Saints Church, 16th and Central, Mondays at 6:30 PM; 635-3744.

**Justice, Inc.:** Lesbian resource for issues regarding state laws, community/police relations, civil rights, Lesbian/Gay conferences, other special events. 1534 E. 10th St., Indianapolis, IN 46201, 634-9212.

**Lesbian Discussion Group:** Next meeting August 31. Beginning in September, will meet 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month, 7 - 8:30 PM, at 6360 N. Guilford; 253-5160 (Nancy VanArsdall Jones).

**Lesbian Incest Survivors Therapy Group.** Contact Linda Gensheimer, (219) 426-5778 (Fort Wayne).

**Older Women's Network** for Women Over 40 meets at 5602 Wagon Wheel Trail, 3rd Tuesday of each month; 786-5845.

**Overeaters Anonymous** (for men and women) meets at Dreams and Swords, 828 E. 64th Street, Fridays at 6:30 PM, 253-9966.

**P-FLAG** (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meets at Butler University in Atherton Center, Room 312, 2nd Sunday of each month at 2:00 PM; 251-9307 (Donna).

**University Gay/Lesbian Alliance** meets at 3754 N. Illinois St. (Lambda Center). Call 274-2585.

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## Attorney relies on self-acceptance, self-confidence in life

Marie knew as a child that she wanted to be a trial lawyer. She also knew she was a Lesbian.

At 30, several years into her law career, she is a successful attorney working on social justice issues and is a woman who accepts her Lesbianism as a natural part of herself. Both accomplishments are the direct result of a great deal of self-confidence and the ability to focus on a goal, heading almost single-mindedly toward it.

Marie grew up in Indianapolis, the oldest of four children in a middle-class Catholic family. She describes her parents as supportive of her goals and the source of a major portion of her self-confidence. Thanks to them and a progressive school environment, she never went through the believing-she-couldn't-do-something-stage. Good grades, athletic honors, involvement in school activities and politics — anything Marie set her mind to, she achieved. Boys? Dating? Marie had neither time nor interest in them. "I remember boys were brats," she says. She hung out with the boys on her AAU swim team and went to dances with them because she liked to dance. But date? Go steady? No interest. Her relationships with girls, however, were somewhat different. There were intense emotional relationships that Marie now recognizes as "falling in love." And at the all-women schools she attended right through college, intense female friendships were the norm. No one questioned or expected that the friendship

went further, so Marie never faced isolation or ridicule because of her sexual affectional preference.

Her experience in the professional world is similar,

where she's risen quickly to the supervisory and managerial position she holds today. She does not openly talk about her sexual affectional preference at work; neither does she hide it. Marie believes that her Lesbianism has helped her in the work world. While heterosexual women often flounder in confusion over their relationship to their male bosses and colleagues, she has used her self-confidence and sense of focus to produce results. She is proud of the fact that at 30 she has been instrumental in making new law and setting precedents.

"Power is a perception," says Marie. "In order for people to have power over you, you have to be afraid of the consequences." Marie clearly is not, and yet she recognizes that some people have greater fear of losing their jobs and therefore must acquiesce to the "system" more than she does. "We are a minority who has to make a decision about identifying ourselves," she says. And she believes there is room for working within the system. Both radicals and moderates need one another, she believes, and at this time she has chosen to be a moderate working within, affecting needed changes.

Yet she recognizes the changes in herself. Just a month before this interview, she "came out" to her parents: shock and a promise to deal with it from one, less positive response from the other.

Marie is still waiting to see where the chips will fall as time goes by.

Why did she choose this time to tell them? She says it became too easy to go on believing that the perfect time would come. She has been working on family issues, and continuing to keep that secret touched the core of her integrity.

"I am working on living as honestly as possible, and accepting the consequences of this commitment. This commitment is an ongoing struggle between my own fears and my own abilities to act," she says.

And as she becomes more honest with her family about her life-style, she feels herself moving toward doing more work in the Lesbian community and becoming more political.

Marie is a person who has always figured out what she's wanted, gone after it and gotten it. Now she is learning to accept that she doesn't always know what she wants, that she doesn't have to know, and that what she wants is constantly changing. "I'm learning to be comfortable and secure with ambiguities," she says.

Marie acknowledges what to her feels like a huge dent in her self-confidence, an internal fear that she could, indeed, lose everything. And her insurance policy against that is a to-death pact with a friend: neither will allow the other to end up a bag-lady, dependent on garbage scraps. Somehow this writer doubts that pact will ever be called upon.



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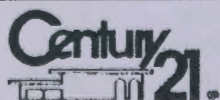
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## Dorin's Diary

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[Editor's Note: Dorin's Diary is a compilation of short descriptions (provided by our readers) identifying experiences of affirmation, celebration, consciousness-raising, connection with, and nurturance from other women/Lesbians in the local/global community. Please let us hear from you. We grow in collective strength and peace sharing our lives. Don't be shy. Let us hear from you. Send to Dorin's Diary, c/o Lavender Visions, P.O. Box 321, Zionsville, IN 46077.]

- Recently, while on a business trip in Europe, a woman questioned me about the true status of women in corporate America. She explained that her career options were limited and that she and others were looking to the U.S. to pave the way for women in her country. It's something to think about the next time you see or make a "small" victory for womankind. It's not so small — all international eyes are focused in our direction.
- The Dyketones — what a show and what a gathering! Over 400 Lesbians were in attendance — some seeing friends they hadn't seen in years. How encouraging it was to be among so many sisters!

- As a Lesbian manager, I sometimes am discouraged in constantly fighting the battles of discrimination and in making certain that I do my job so well as a representative of Lesbians (and women) everywhere. During those times, I remind myself that although I may not be able to change people's attitudes, the children of those working for me are growing up watching Daddy work for a woman, and, in particular, a Lesbian. What a comforting thought!

- With regard to the National Women's Music Festival, a very close friend told me, "The first time I went to the workshops, I was intrigued. The second time, I was drawn to the Festival — I felt a strong urge to go." Now, I understand. As a virgin workshop participant, I was curious to learn a little about Spirituality. Instead, I discovered more about myself or at least came away being able to verbalize my feelings. Next year, I'm going again as a chance to rejuvenate my energies. Oh, I didn't agree with everything presented — in fact, I left one seminar because I wasn't comfortable. But, I understood and *accepted* why I didn't want to attend.

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## Take the power

*continued from page 1*

disarmed in our constant battle to assert our love for women and this planet.

"& this is important  
in the loving  
in the act of loving  
each woman  
I have learned a new lesson  
I have learned  
to love myself"

— Pat Parker, 1978

Those of us who are working now must teach the Lesbians moving after us that the fight for Lesbian rights is not something already finished. All was not well in the '80s. "Mainstream Lesbianism" must not become the catch-phrase for "the closet" of the '90s. Our Lesbian foremothers are passing the affirmations onto us: a long proud herstory; a living culture of Lesbian arts, etiquette, psychology, spirituality, philosophy and environmental survival; power and vision. We must not give way to the numerous devices placed against us by a larger society that wants us extinguished. Instead, we must envision a future that is NOW as we want it to be and live it.

[This essay was inspired by the panel discussion presented on June 1, 1989 at the National Women's Music Festival. The panelists

*mentioned here have given permission for distribution of the audio tape with proceeds benefitting WIA/NWMF. (For more information on obtaining tapes, see Lavender Pages listing under Bookstores/Media).]*

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## Valdez Journey

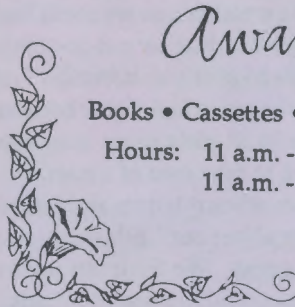
Sea Otter lies now  
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Do you remember us?  
He asks  
Do you remember  
How, long, long ago  
We gave you life?  
Do you remember  
How we gave you food?  
Do you remember  
How we clothed you?  
Do you remember?

[Reprinted from *The Foundation for Shamanic Studies*]

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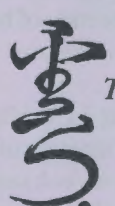
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## Recognizing internal homophobia helps combat effects

More than half of all Lesbians and Gays think that homophobia is an aggressive and hateful disease afflicting the world's non-homosexual population.

In truth, however, every person is homophobic. And we don't stand much of a chance in dealing with other people's homophobia until we acknowledge and work with our own.

For Lesbians, the single, most prevalent homophobic thought—consciously and/or unconsciously—is that it is not OK for women to love women: I am a woman who loves other women; therefore there is something inherently wrong with me, and I am a bad person.

This thought is subconsciously manifested when you are out in public with your lover and find yourself feeling that maybe she looks a little too "butch," and then you trip into head games that in no time at all have you thinking that everyone is watching the two of you, that everyone *knows* what the two of you were doing to each other in bed last night, that because you enjoyed what happened last night, all of your fingers will turn green and fall off your hands right here in front of all those people who you know are smirking at you.

And it's consciously manifested for many of us at the workplace (avoiding connecting our lovers' names to any mention of dating or lovemaking, etc.) and with our families of origin (maintaining separate bedrooms for appearance's sake, etc.).

Homophobia: I have it; you have it; we all have it. And we came by it honestly.

There is no way a person can grow up in our culture and avoid being homophobic. If Lesbians are not treated as if we don't exist, we are ridiculed, moralized against, looked down upon. Books, magazines, T.V. shows, movies — the positive Lesbian image is rare even in 1989.

As children we were taught to be caretakers, so we could find a man and raise a family. There were subtle or not-so-subtle disparaging remarks about "poor Aunt Muriel who never did find a man who would marry her." And we began to feel shame because we didn't like boys or because we liked girls more than was acceptable or because we didn't want to take care of a man.

As adults we "de-dyke" our homes when relatives and certain friends come over. We avoid talking about our Lesbianism and desperately hope that people won't guess. We limit our joy by celebrating our love in secret or with carefully selected friends.

And it is this homophobia that places undue stress on long-term relationships. Granted, there are a multitude of reasons why relationships fall apart, and it is important that we acknowledge that one of those reasons is homophobia, pure and simple. In her book, *Permanent Partners*, Betty Berzon states, "Insofar as you have problems with feeling good about being gay, no matter how subtle, they will show up in your same-sex intimate partnerships."

And so we must handle a homophobic onslaught from the inside as well as from the outside. No wonder we often feel besieged. And it is the internalized homophobia that paralyzes us and prevents effective action to deal with the external homophobia. We must, therefore, deal first with our insides, stopping the internal onslaught.

But homophobia, like racism, does not go away with the wave of a magic wand or with the determination to feel good about ourselves. And after lots of hard work, when we're sure we have the problem licked, here it is again, rearing its ugly head once more in yet another subtle form. It is only in recognizing it in all its deceptive masks that we can begin to banish it from our lives and be free from its influence, taking strength from each other and all the strong women who have come before us.



## Homophobia : a perspective

*continued from page 1*

and the various forms of sado-masochism and bondage. I believe it is important to look at our own psychosexual socialization and how we continue to perpetuate relationships based in the oppression of power imbalance, sexual performance, and prowess, and which then negates the inherent mutuality of a relationship based in loving that flows freely between two persons regardless of their gender. When we focus on seeking external acceptance for our private lives, I think we must do so from the perspective of having first assessed our own self-acceptance and willingness to be responsible for our personal power issues.

Homophobia is the fear which keeps me from knowing me and others from knowing me. Let us not look for sanction of what we do in the expression of our sexuality; rather let us seek sanction and acceptance for our loving and demand respect because we are respectful of ourselves, our partners, family and community members.

## RESOURCES

*continued from page 3*

**Women's Open Network:** 274-5041 or 274-2585 (Sue Moenius).

**Womenspired:** 274-5041 or 274-2585 (Sue Moenius).

Bloomington (812)

**Bloomington Switchboard:** 336-4299.

**Gay/Lesbian Alliance:** 332-1847.

**SPARKS:** a social/educational forum for Lesbians. Contact Marcia, 334-0414, or Carolyn, 339-4283.

Columbus (812)

**Pitch-In:** for information, call 376-0784.

**Switchboard Concern:** 293-8671 (24 hours).

Evansville (812)

**Tri-State Alliance Meeting** meets at Unitarian Universalist Church, 856 So. Kentucky Ave., 4th Sunday of each month.

Fort Wayne (219)

**Dignity/Fort Wayne,** P.O. Box 12151, 46862.

**Drop-In** meets at Up the Stairs Community Center, 3426 Broadway, Fridays at 7:30 PM

**Fort Wayne Women's Bureau:** 303 E. Washington Blvd., 424-7977. Peer Counseling: 9 AM - 2 PM, 426-0023. Rape Awareness Program Hotline: 426-RAPE.

Liberty (812)

**The Pearl:** Feminist resource/journal. Contact: Natalie Isaac, editor, 304 South Fairground, Liberty, IN 47353.

Mishawaka (219)

**Open Arms:** Monthly newsletter for Michiana Lesbians. Contact:

P.O. Box 845, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Yearly subscription: \$10.00; sample copy: \$1.00. Make check payable to Roberta Miller.

Muncie (317)

**Ball State Gay/Lesbian Alliance,** P.O. Box 354, Pittenger Student Center, 47907; 743-6675.

South Bend (219)

**Help Line:** 232-2522 (9 AM - 5 PM).

**Hot Line:** 232-3344 (24 Hours).

**IUSBU Womyn's Center:** 929 Greenlawn, 237-4494.

**Monthly Lesbian Potluck** and weekly Lesbian support group; 291-3720.

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The October/November issue will focus on ecofeminism — environmental/spiritual/political concerns locally and globally, in addition to regular features.

Send submissions to P.O. Box 321, Zionsville, IN 46077; all material must be received by August 25, 1989.

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**Linda, Dorin, Pat, Kathleen and  
Carol.**

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Dreams and Swords., Inc., 828 E 64th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220 ..... (317) 253-9966

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## In Tribute to Angry Women

A prose poem by Julia Trahan

I am an angry dyke;  
my temper as black as my brow  
as sharp as my nails  
as impartial as a flood  
that is seeking, always,  
somewhere to stop.

I say these words because I want women to become who they want to be. I am not talking about myself. I am talking about women.

My body is held together by metal pins; each time I stand chronic pain fills my legs and torso. This in itself makes me angry. Angry that I have a broken body at the age of 23. People are stupid about people with broken bodies. This is the source of my anger.

I am not saying these things to hear myself talk or to complain about how oppressed I am. If anyone comes to me and asks me about my handicap, I shall be quite disappointed, knowing that I did not get my point across.

I could just as easily talk about one of the millions of women who come to this country expecting fulfillment of their dreams; instead of finding wealth, happiness and open arms, they find systematic destruction and lies. I could talk about a woman hunched upon her knees, the red blood puddles around her ankles. She is naked. She is also dead. The victim of an abortionist who already has all the money she could borrow tucked inside his pocket. I could talk about the housewife married 25 years to a man who calls her Lard Butt because she eats a lot, remembering the times her alcoholic father drank it up. Married to a man who punches her because she is "stupid." I could tell many stories, but I'll refrain. Most of us in this room have been raped; we know the stories too well.

Last night I dreamt of volcanoes. A volcanic eruption, like a woman's anger, is a natural force that cannot be predicted or controlled.

A volcano erupting with pure, raw energy, releasing built up pressures. In my dream, this is what I saw.

Can you imagine what would happen if all women who have fires waiting to explode removed the skins of respectability, removed the layers of history? If their fury were expressed, a volcanic explosion would look small. The Earth would be covered with fire.

I want to explode as a volcano does, molten lava flowing over lies and liars.

I do not want to be destroyed by my own anger. In order to survive I have to express it.

It is for these reasons I accept with pride being called a bitch or aggressively lesbian or evil woman. I simply, but not easily, understand if called overbearing when I am being assertive or trying to express a point or refusing to be destroyed by my own anger.

I say to all women, whether your pain, your anger is private, or openly expressed or unknown even to you

I am an angry woman,  
an unreasonable woman.

If you are not, I question, why not? If you do not want to be labeled as such, I ask you not to negate us so-called unreasonable, angry, moody women. We are not bitches, or cunts, or evil. We do not appreciate being told to be a little nicer, a little quieter, or to change in some way that will make us more feminine.

And yes, I am unreasonable.  
We are so unreasonable,  
so perfectly reasonably, unreasonable.

It's a damn good way to be.

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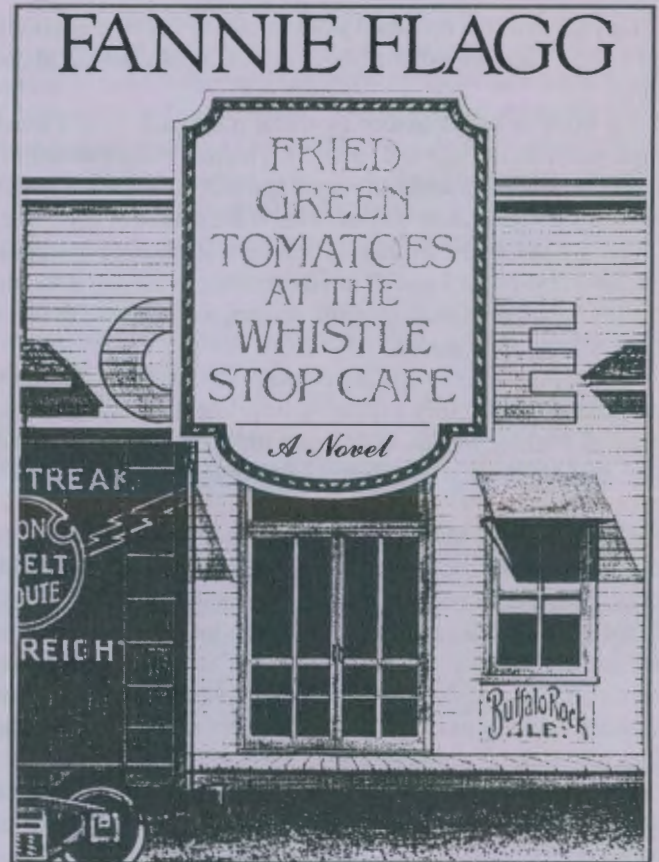
The themes explored include prejudice, acceptance, belonging, the importance of humor, what's important and what isn't, fears about aging, and the effects of love on the human experience. When Idgie (age 15 or 16) is smitten with Ruth (age 21 or 22), Momma Threadgoode warns the siblings, "Now, children, your sister has a crush, and I don't want one person to laugh at her. Is that understood?" But faced with an uncustomarily scrubbed and hair-greased Idgie, they cannot control themselves and are dismissed from the table to roll on the parlor floor with laughter.

This is the story of Ruth and Idgie, who run the cafe and raise a son together. It's also the story of Evelyn Couch who, at mid-life, longs to find herself and a place to belong. And it's the story of

Sipsey, Onzell and Big George, the black folks who cook at the cafe and of dozens of others who come to life in these pages.

The folk of Whistle Stop will bring tears and laughter into your life and will live in your heart and mind long after you've read about them.

(*Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* is available at Dreams and Swords.)



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