

LESBIAN PRIDE NEWSLETTER

GOOD NEWS, POSITIVE REMINDERS AND INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES
BY, FOR AND ABOUT LESBIANS

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Forgive, and Remember

No matter what your religious preferences, the December holiday season is generally a time of peace and giving, and reflection and gratitude. It is a time to spend with family and friends, a time to renew faith and practice forgiveness, a time of celebration and joy. And if you have no religious preferences at all, then hopefully this time of the year still reflects those feelings (the same as any other time of the year).

There are many stories we have come to know that tell us about the true meaning of the Christmas season. This year, I think I'll add to my own repertoire the Shepard family's story of tragedy and forgiveness.

Matthew Shepard, as you no doubt remember, was a Wyoming University student who was savagely beaten and hung on a fence to die a little over a year ago. He didn't die there, but he never regained consciousness and he did die a few days later in a Fort Collins, Colorado hospital.

One of his murderers, Aaron McKinney, was recently on trial for the crime. The prosecutors proved their case and sought the death penalty. I thought that sounded like a pretty good idea, except that I thought a thrashing (a slow and tortured death) would be a more appropriate consequence for the murderer than a sterile and quick state execution.

You see, the older I get, the more I tend to think in an Old Testament, eye-for-an-eye kind of way. For what he did to Matthew Shepard, I don't think any form of punishment would be too harsh for Aaron McKinney (I felt the same way about the murderers of James Byrd). Sometimes in these days of horrific crimes against human beings I think the harsher the punishment, the better. I am beginning to feel my own kind of hate.

But Matt Shepard's parents didn't see it that way. After the guilty verdict, they talked with prosecutors of forgiveness and moving on, and ultimately accepted a life sentence instead of demanding another young man's death.

I am trying to learn from that act of forgiveness. And it's hard.

The Shepards, particularly Judy, Matthew's mother, have also been speaking out publicly about hate crimes, and what this past year has meant to them and their family and friends. And Judy isn't just talking to try to change the minds of the McKinneys and Hendersons (the other murderer) of the world, she is trying to reach the people who remain silent whenever hate raises its head. From that I am trying to remember what I already know.

I know we won't necessarily change the world by trying to change the Ku Klux Klan or the Aryan nation, or the white supremacists or the religious fanatics – I've known that for a long time. The way to change the world is one person at a time, starting with your own family, your own neighbors, your own friends.

The way to stop the groups who hate is for everyday people (including Christians who believe we are all God's children) to say *Enough! We will no longer tolerate the hate and the killing!*

The people who can make the difference are the people who know hate is wrong, but who don't think it's their problem – the people who empower haters through their very silence, the people who turn and look away when someone goes berserk and kills or maims an innocent human being. We are all in this together, and we need to start taking care of one another.

Judy Shepard has found a way and a strength to lead, to forgive her son's murderers and to try to turn her pain into something positive in the world. She has forgiven the men who killed her son, but she remembers what they have done, and she is seeing that others remember also.

That's a lesson we've learned from history, whenever we care to remember it. It is good to forgive, but it is by remembering that we can ensure it never happens again.

Judy Shepard is my shining Christmas star this season, as I learn from her about forgiveness and remembering, and turning to positive action instead of toward my own feelings of hate.

– Mel White

♀♀ December Affirmations

*Today is as good a time as any for quiet reflection
and for making peace with myself.*

*I may not be perfect, but today I forgive myself
for all of the times I don't live up to my own standards.*

Send us your favorite affirmations and we'll share them with everyone.

I am a gift-giver to the universe.

Holidays and giving don't have to be equated with commercialism. Thinking about the tradition of offering presents, I reflect on giving the intangible. I give a gift of myself to those I love whenever I share my time, my energy, my thoughts, my feelings. When granted without reservation, these gifts are truly priceless.

In my same-sex orientation, I deal with a world that often discounts what I have to offer. Today I affirm the special talents and wisdom I bring to the benefit of all around me. Moving beyond the desire for acknowledgment of my gifts, I go about my living without apology. My reward is the satisfaction of being able to contribute. I offer the gift that is me to the universe.

*— Eleanor Ruth Wagner in *Lavender Reflections**

Reminder:

*Measuring yourself by anyone else's process,
achievements or life circumstances
is a violation of your own very tender, delicate being.*

*Remember, always, each of us has:
different lessons we're learning, different learning styles
and different inner timetables for our own unfolding.*

*Robin Posin from *Rememberings and Celebrations*,
a 64-card deck of
*Loving Reminders of the Great Mother's Voice**

*Our self love and our love for our gay sisters and brothers are the core of
our revolution, and this love ultimately binds us together no matter
what our exterior differences or opinions.*

— Karla Jay

Savvy Sapphic Suggestions
for Successful Lesbian Living

Dear Savvy Sappho,
My lover just came home with 42 chinchillas in cages! Last year she was into home P.J. party wear. She looks terrific in bed, but we're still two grand in the hole. How can I get her to give up these money sucking schemes?
Signed, Shirtless

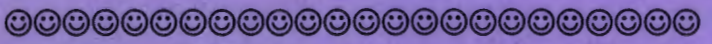
Dear Shirtless,
Before she unloads her new money making adventure, sit her down with a pen and paper and calculator to see if and how this idea is going to add up. If it looks good, you'll have to go and get 100 pounds of chinchilla chow and 400 pounds of shredded newspaper. If it doesn't add up, send her back to the salesperson who talked her into this scheme.
- SS

Dear Savvy Sappho,
I want to be non-traditional for the holidays this year, because Scrooge has bitten me in the butt. Will bolts of lightening get me if I try this?
Signed, Rebel

Dear Rebel,
I hope not! Breaking with tradition gives you more of a feeling of control over your life at this time. You'll be surprised that with just a little effort (no TV, no paper, no phone, no relatives) you can completely overlook any holiday season you choose.
- SS

This month's Savvy Sapphic Suggestions
by Stacy Chandler © 1999 Stacy Chandler

If you have questions
that need some savvy Sapphic suggestions,
send them along to Savvy Sappho,
% Makaw, PO Box 5812, Denver, CO 80217



No artist is ahead of her time. She is the time. It is just that others are behind the time.
- Martha Graham

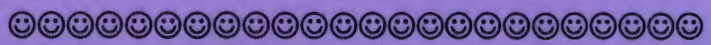
POETRY AND MORE BY
ANNE WILSON



White Sage/Black Sage

*White sage, black sage,
osha root gathered
before the dawn;
herbs for smudgesticks
dried in the storeroom,
tied with embroidery silk
for burning.
Red chili, green chili -
green for roasting,
savory on fry-bread,
pungent in the stews;
red, for drying in ristras
from adobe walls,
red for thick, winter sauces.
Cedar smoke, pinon smoke,
pinon-nuts, golden roasted
and melting like butter.
Smoke scent lingering
like arcane secrets
and precious oils
rediscovered
by New World pharaohs.
Lemon grass by the river,
old women nod in passing.*

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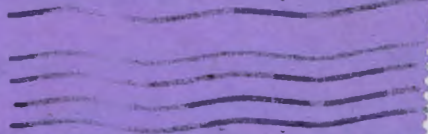
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