

NOLOSE NEWS



**NOLOSE 2000:
the Conference**
story on page 4

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Call For Submissions

The National Organization of Lesbians of Size (NOLOSE) is planning on publishing an anthology of short stories, poetry, erotica and essays about life as a fat lesbian. The stories and/or essays can embrace any aspect of life as a fat lesbian from growing up fat to dealing with decreased mobility with age. They can tell stories of life's triumphs or defeats; of overcoming obstacles in a fat phobic world, or of glorying in our lovely, sexy selves .

We plan to have the anthology published in time for our next conference, NOLOSE 2001 which will take place next summer, and to promote the book at the conference. This means that we must receive submissions no later than **January 30, 2001.**

Manuscripts should be submitted either via e-mail or on disk. Please save the manuscript in **text only format.** Printed manuscripts will also be accepted and should be in standard double spaced format.

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the NOLOSE anthology will go to the NOLOSE financial aid fund.

Diana Lee
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NOLOSE NEWS

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If you are interested in advertising in NOLOSE NEWS, Please contact Diana Lee at (718) 622-7631.

NOLOSE NEWS

**National
Organization
for
Lesbians of Size**



A Support, Social and
Networking Group for
women who identify
as Lesbians and who
are fat or fat positive



Dot Nelson-Turnier: NOLOSE Woman for the New Millennium

by Diana Lee

Dot Nelson-Turnier started NOLOSE in reaction to an issue of Lesbian Connection which had a beautiful picture of a naked fat women on the cover. In the following issue, many women had written in with fat-phobic comments about the women, and I think all of us were more than a little upset by this rejection by our own community.

Dot had been thinking of starting a national organization for fat lesbians for about two years, but it was those letters in Lesbian Connection that gave Dot the impetus to start NOLOSE. She began with the acronym: what name could she use to send her own letter to Lesbian Connection? Dot decided to use the term "lesbians of size" to reach out to as many women as possible since "fat" still had such negative associations.

The idea behind NOLOSE was to form a hub with spokes leading out to individuals as well as to regional fat lesbian support groups across the country. Dot felt that, while women in many urban areas had access to fat-positive support groups, women in more isolated regions did not. Thus the point of contact had to be the Internet, which allows everyone with access to a computer to become part of a national, even global community.

The original mailing list for NOLOSE had 200 names on it; this year, we have grown to over 600. And it is a tribute to Dot's success with NOLOSE that we had a conference attendee this year coming all the way from Australia.



This last year, because of a flood and matrimony, Dot had to hand over some of her duties as the director of NOLOSE. So while Dot was distracted, the core of this committee -- Dianne Rubinstein, Shira Stone and Diana Lee--formed a conspiracy. We "nominated" Dot for an award (which we made up), and we asked other women involved in

NOLOSE and the fat dyke community to "vote" with their pocketbooks-- in other words, to contribute to the cost of the production of the award. We had no trouble at all getting our nomination ratified.

We wanted to honor Dot for her hard work and her commitment both to NOLOSE and to the fat dyke community in general. I don't think I realized how hard Dot has worked for NOLOSE until I took

over some of her duties. Being contact person for the conference and getting out the newsletter was almost a full time job, and that was only part of the work Dot did last year. Dot may not be indispensable, but it took six women to do the job she did by herself last year, and we still needed her help. But the NOLOSE conference is only part of the work Dot does for the community. There are the NOLOSE web sites that she started and maintains. There is the constant stream of women writing and calling looking for a community in which they can find love and support. There is the work that Dot has done as a board member of The Astraea Foundation, and her commitment to bringing visibility to fat dykes in the larger lesbian community. And there are the individuals whose lives Dot has enhanced so much.

Dot lives her life as an example of the best that we can achieve. She is generous both with her



time and her financial support. She is who she is openly, showing all who she comes into contact with what it means to be fat and a dyke, and that these are wonderful things to be.

The committee probably usurped Dot's authority in our little plot, but we wanted her to know how very much we appreciate all of her hard work, her innovative ideas, and her wonderful heart. So we took the name of Dot's brainchild and named her NOLOSE Woman for the New Millennium.



**The First Annual
Fat Dyke Contingent
at Dyke March 2000**
*by Michele Hunt & Bertha
Markowicz*
Girls! Girls ! Girls!

Thousands of dykes showed up on Saturday, June 24th, 200 to participate in the annual Dyke March in New York City, which parades the day before the Gay Pride Parade. This year, a group of us from FLAB (Fat is a Lesbian Issue/Fat Lesbian Action Brigade) decided it would be great to make our fat selves visible. Fliers were mailed, a banner was made, and we headed off to the Public Library on 42nd Street & Fifth Avenue from where the Dyke March begins it's journey down Fifth Avenue to Washington Square Park.

We started with a small group at first and handed out stickers and the FLAB Manifesto. Some women were surprised but most were very excited. More women joined us as we marched down Fifth Avenue with our banner--Fat Dykes Rule--held up proudly! Everyone wore stickers, which included such messages as: *Fat Dykes: Bet you can't eat just one!* and *Fat Girls Love to Fuck*.

At the end of the march, in Washington Square Park, we had a table for literature and stickers, and a place for us to congregate. Our Fat Dyke contingent at the Dyke March was a great success! Join us next year to celebrate Fat Dyke visibility.

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A word about the first NOLOSE couple

by Jennifer Polhemus

What can I tell you about our love that sets it above all others on a pedestal of romance and wonder? Nothing. But I can tell you that it binds us together with all of your souls who seek unconditional acceptance and acknowledgment of the beautiful creatures that we are. It was not by chance that a strong, vibrant woman sought to gather fat lesbians together in a place of safety and pride, or that others joined willingly to guide it into reality. It was not an accident that Chris and I struggled in our own separate, solitary worlds to muster the courage and resources to be a part of that herstoric event in early July 1999. And it was not luck playing her hand, moving us to reach out and connect with a ride or roommate or whisper of camaraderie a soothing sister trying to heal from a society that starves us of everything. No, there was energy and light and faith and blessing.

Why did Chris call my name? Why did I answer again and again? How did we cross over from "Are you safe?" to "My soul is bound to yours?" I don't know. But I do have an aching suspicion that my fat lesbian sisters fostered a rich soil of thought growing with poppies of possibilities that allowed us to thrive those first few months. And now, as we approach the date of our wedding (Saturday, October 21, 2000), I marvel at the miracle that has sprung from the NOLOSE conference last year. We are grateful to be the first couple of NOLOSE.

Editor's note: Jennifer & Chris met last summer just prior to the NOLOSE conference. They were "introduced" when they were matched as roommates for the conference. By the end of the conference, they were a "couple". We extend our best wishes for their upcoming wedding.



Awakening *By Jennifer Polhemus*

The press of our bodies brings me back into the land of the living. I feel your belly swell against the numbness between my legs and I think that God just might love me.

How many burns and cuts brought this pain from inside to out? You trace the scars with the silk of your tongue or the delicate prickling of slender fingers.

Take me away leave me alone save me support me let me suckle at your breast and fall in silence by your ear. Help me unravel this twisted mystery that throbs inside my chest. Let me stand, arms outstretched, on the palette of autumn and say "I am God's child".

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The Many Talents of NOLOSE

by Alicia RaMosa

The NOLOSE conference, in it's 2nd year, was a great success. 85 wimmin attended. I felt that there was a great mix of events - lots of workshops, good food, a place to swim, fat-positive items for sale, a dance, time for fun, and quality performances.

This article highlights the 1st NOLOSE Talent Show. The idea was Joyce Wermont's. She made an announcement on Saturday that those who wanted to perform should sign up with her. The show was scheduled and listed in the program for Sunday after the closing luncheon, which ended with the singing of fat-positive songs such as "Put that Diet Cola Down," "We Have Beautiful Bodies," "It Ain't Over Till the Fat Lady sings," and "I Love My Body."

Our gracious and graceful emcee was Janet Myers, who wrote 'It Aint Over Till the Fat Lady Sings.' The show began with Andrea Stockle singing "Amazing Grace." Then Linda Hansen sang Sheryl Crow's "My Favorite Mistake", and then she performed two original songs, "Clear Blue" and "If Only for Tonight." Linda was then joined by Anique Lamerduc, a vocalist from Australia for "Proud Mary." Catherine Babcock read from a novel-in-progress, dealing with very personal issues. She held our full attention.

For something quite different and delightful, Jan Zimmerman read a Shakespeare sonnet to Debra Johnson, who did an interpretive dance. Jan tells me that she chose this particular sonnet, which begins with the line, "My mistress eyes are nothing like the sun" because "it's about loving people for who they really are, and appreciating all kinds of beauty, rather than thinking people have to conform to 'standards' to beautiful." The audience enjoyed this piece. They finished with the song "Twisted" (My analyst told me...), which was popularized by Joni Mitchell. Debra danced to this tune as well.

I wanted to offer a flute meditation to the group, and this meant changing the mood. I asked for the lights to be dimmed, and for everyone to get comfortable and quiet. I began by suggesting that we take a moment for ourselves to really relax and absorb the wonderful energies from the weekend. We did some slowed breathing together, progressive body relaxation and connected our bodies to Mother Earth (the original symbol for roundness and beauty, and much more!). I then suggested that one way to take what you want from the weekend with you is to gather those memories and feelings, and place them in your heart. Think of a word to recall this state of mind after we've gone. Then, put your hands over your heart to seal it in and hold them there a while. I then began improvising a flute meditation.

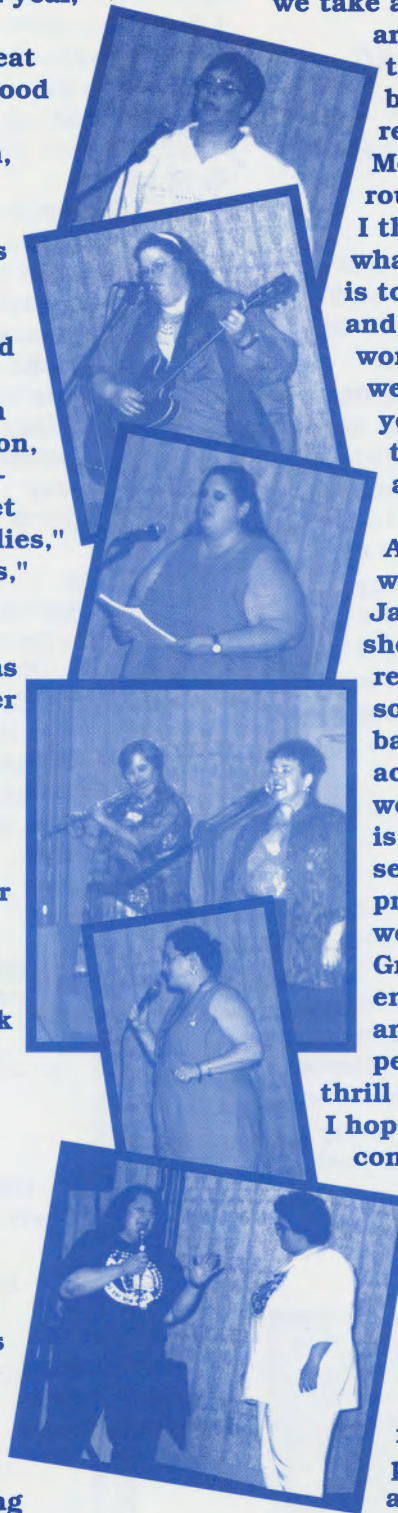
Anique was next, and just before she went up, I mentioned that I also play Jazz. We selected a few tunes, and while she started getting her audio equipment ready, Dian Nelson-Turnier sang a comic song about soda crackers. Anique had a back-up CD of her band for accompaniment, and sang incredibly well. She has a number of CDs out, and is well-known in Australia. She sang several songs she had written from her prize winning CD "Lover Mine" which won the Australian equivalent of a Grammy, and was called back for several encores. Anique invited me to join her, and we played as though we had been performing together for years. What a thrill for both of us!

I hope that the organizing committee will continue to schedule talent shows at future conferences for all to see and enjoy.

NOLOSE 2000: The Conference

by Diana Lee

My first fat women's conference was four years ago, and it was the turning point in my life. Suddenly, I wasn't fat and ugly and unwanted. I was part of a community of big, beautiful women. It started me on a path, an evolution into someone I can be proud to be. And I am very thankful to the women who worked so hard to make that conference happen.





This year, I had the privilege to be one of the planners; one of the women who made it happen. But this story isn't about self-congratulation. It's about all of the incredible women who made up the fantastic synergy that was NOLOSE 2000.

There are so many special things to relate: the drumming that shook the entire hotel with its power as we celebrated being the strong, wonderful women that we are; the performances by performance artist C. C. Carter and singer Nedra Johnson; the buzz of excitement as we greeted old friends and made new ones. There was no awkwardness in our coming together; just an instant feeling of community. Even the women for whom it was a first fat women's conference felt quickly at home.

The second day started with water aerobics in the pool -- at the ungodly hour of 7 AM, so I did not attend myself. But the women who did loved it so much, we scheduled a second workshop for the following morning. Breakfast started with a buzz of excitement, but excitement is what can best describe the entire conference.

The keynote address was by C. C. Carter. C. C. is a poet, performance artist and teacher, and her address embraced all aspects of her talent. I don't think there was a single woman in the audience who she did not speak to. She spoke about her own culture and how that is a positive thing. She spoke of finding her own power as a strong sexy woman. And of how she tries to serve as a role model to the vulnerable young women who are among her students: the women who do not fit the media image of what a woman should be. C. C. shared the principles which she tries to teach her students, and it was her second principle--speaking with good purpose-- that set the tone for the conference. Speaking with good purpose involves acknowledging the positive in those you encounter and sharing it with them: telling them how good they look in that dress, or how moving a point they made. Speaking with good purpose not only makes the hearer feel good, but the speaker as well as she acknowledges what is positive in both herself and in others. So all through the conference, we spoke with good purpose--a very easy thing to do with some many incredible women.

I can't relate all of the wonderful moments. There were workshops that made us laugh and made us cry. There were workshops that opened the path to healing of the wounds we have received as women, as lesbians, and as fat all of our lives. I

could see the change in one friend as she left a workshop on Big, Big Sex (facilitated by Hanne Blank, who wrote the book) and had an epiphany about her own sexuality. It was as if a light began to shine in her.

There was a panel discussion about how oppression comes to us in all of our range of sizes. Some super-sized women feel that their thinner "midsized" sisters cannot feel the same pain, the same discrimination that they do. The thinner women do not know how hard it is to exist in a world where seats are too small, and where we cannot go into a single store and buy clothing off the rack. And then there is the pain of the midsized women, who ARE discriminated against and taunted in the "thin" world, and who then are rejected by the fat community for not really being fat. There was anger and pain expressed, but there was healing too because we could hear each other, acknowledge each other. And maybe, maybe if we do this often enough, we can turn the anger into something constructive and not fight amongst ourselves, but address those who are the real problem: those who feel the world should be filled with a one-size-fits-all population.

What can I say about the dance? First, I don't dance. As much as I've grown, I can't move my body to that rhythm. But I can watch. I can admire. I can revel in the freedom of movement and in the beauty of the bodies as they sway and jiggle and weave with the music. I don't know if you have ever seen a super-sized woman dance. Her body moves in such complex motions--not just her arms and legs and head moving to the beat, but her belly and breasts, her thighs.... they all move in counterpoint. It makes the dancing of skinny women look angular in contrast. I admit to an open envy of that ability in my fat sisters, and I hope that someday I will be able to emulate them.

More flashes of memory: pool parties...fat women in swimsuits, laughing and playing, lounging by the pool, or playing volley ball. Having a great time, and enjoying the eye candy. Reveling in our bodies. The sweet, young couple who met at last year's conference announcing their engagement...Quiet conversations over dinner... discovering connections...making new friends.... Zooming down the hallways in scooters...look out world, we are coming, and we are big and bad and we have attitude. And saying good-bye: tears and laughter and lots and lots of hugs. Until next year...



By Miriam Berg
miriam@cswd.org

Coming out (again) at NOLOSE

As we all know, coming out is not a single event, but rather an ongoing process. If you don't tell the people you encounter that you're a lesbian, they assume you're straight.

The 2000 NOLOSE conference took place in my home community. I was already out to my parents, of course, but I knew they had not told all of their friends that the woman I lived with was my life partner. Since I was married to a man for many years, and still use my married name, I also knew that there were people who knew me professionally or casually who assumed I was still married to my ex-husband. So when the reporter from the *Kingston Sunday Freeman* asked me if I would be in the photograph for the article on NOLOSE, I knew this would be another opportunity for me to come out, and I said yes. It was very empowering, especially when local people told me they saw my picture on the front page. Someone jokingly called me a "star".

Shortly thereafter, a letter appeared in the same paper objecting to the very idea of a fat lesbian conference, saying: "Twining lesbianism and obesity is absurd; they are two distinct issues and whoever planned the "Nolose" organization has misconceived the relevance of the one to the other."

The letter angered me and gave me an opportunity to come out again, both as a lesbian and as a fat activist. My response was published a few days later: "Since I am both fat and a lesbian, and since I attended and thoroughly enjoyed the NOLOSE conference, let me tell you that the two issues are very much related."

"Both groups--lesbians and people who are larger than the average--suffer discrimination in hiring and job promotion. Both groups are harassed on the street. Both groups continue to be the objects of derision and ridicule on mainstream television

programs from Saturday Night Live to David Letterman's monologue. Those of us who are both fat and lesbian are doubly oppressed by today's fat-hating and homophobic culture."

"The point of the NOLOSE conference was that the first step towards political action is self-empowerment. When fat women stop apologizing for their size, and when lesbians expect no less than respectful treatment, both groups start to flourish. From that point, we can begin to change how society regards us, and ultimately to change how we are treated within our communities, at our workplaces, and under the law."

I felt great about the letter. Up to this point, my local activism has mostly been in defending legal abortion, and my fat activism has mostly been on a national level. I strongly support the GLBT liberation movement, but from the sidelines. Now I had taken a stand for lesbian rights, and had moved my fat activism into the local arena.

But the headiness of going public was soon lost when I was forced to face the personal reality of bigotry. A good friend of my mother literally could not believe what I wrote. She told her own family that there must be another person with the same name. The Miriam Berg she knew could not possibly have written that. When my mother informed her that it was indeed me, my mother's friend was heartbroken. My mother was very upset for her friend, and asked me "Did you have to say it in the *Kingston Freeman*?"

I was hurt that my mother didn't defend me and my lifestyle, but I realized that I had not given her the political education she would have needed to do so. I calmly explained to her that yes, I had to say it, and I had to say it publicly. Her friend's reaction, I told her, was a perfect illustration of the reason for coming out. The idea is not to shock people like her friend, but to let them know that--despite what they believe--they already know someone who is a lesbian. Since her friend knows me and knows that I am a responsible, compassionate, and ethical person, she will have to rethink whatever negative stereotypes she has been holding onto regarding lesbians.

So far, unfortunately, this has not happened. My mother's friend came to her and said "I don't care what they say. I don't think Miriam is a lesbian." She is facing two realities that she cannot reconcile. The easiest thing will undoubtedly be for her to slip back into denial. I'm not certain that she can ever let go of her prejudiced ideas.



I have to decide whether to keep confronting her with a truth that makes her very uncomfortable, or to give up on changing her mindset, and put my energy into educating those who start out with some degree of tolerance and open-mindedness. The latter is easier, but has more chance of succeeding. The former is more difficult, and may not have any chance of success.

I am learning a lot from this experience. Coming out is a journey. And this particular leg of my journey is far from over.



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**Dian Nelson
& Dot
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June 10,
2000**

*by
Dianne Rubenstein*

I was quite pleased when I was asked to write about Dian and Dot's wedding, because I am so fond of both of them. Their wedding was nonpareil: from the moment Dian's father walked her down the aisle answering the question "Who gives this woman..." by saying "she gives herself," through Dot's love song to Dian sung by Shira Stone, an the duel ceremonies (performed by the minister of the Universalist-Unitarian Church and by Miriam Berg), and of course their moving vows, we were all moved by the beauty of the ceremony and the obvious love shared by the couple. Dian was beautiful in a traditional wedding gown, while Dot and all of their attendants wore dashing tuxedos.



The couple has announced that henceforth both shall use the surnamed Nelson-Turnier. On behalf of myself and the entire membership of NOLOSE, many

wishes to Dot and Dian Nelson-Turnier for uncountable years of connubial bliss.



PERSONALS

I am a 34 year old white, single lesbian, incarcerated, and I sincerely want someone to write. I am very lonely. I am not asking for anything but friendship.

Leslie Seiferit #515783
1401 State School Road,
Gatesville, TX 76599

GWF, 48, quiet, inquiring mind, deep spirit. I value integrity, and truth and want to share/grow in a relationship that combines independence and commitment.
Sheila: shadowlight52@hotmail.com

Fatdyke new to Northampton
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(413)585-4805 or olhada@aol.com

Name: Elayne Age: 60
I am looking for pen pals, friends, companionship, and "travel buddies". Traits: Loving, caring, and sensitive to mine and other's needs.
Elayne Brown, PO Box 204
Pennsauken, NJ 08110

46 year-old femme switch looking for kinky friends and play partners in NYC area. I am wheelchair bound, so traveling outside the city is a problem. Hobbies include reading, writing and making leather toys.
Diana: Artamas@rcn.com or send responses care of NOLOSE.

If you would like to place a personal in the next issue of NOLOSE NEWS, send your copy to:

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Personals are FREE for NOLOSE members, and \$10 per issue for non-members. Ads should run no more than 50 words, and we reserve the right to edit for the sake of brevity. If you wish responses to be sent care of NOLOSE, included a stamped, self-addressed manila envelope with your ad. Be sure to include enough postage. Checks should be made payable to NOLOSE.

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS

This is a partial listing of fat support groups that are either lesbian or lesbian friendly. This list includes names of women who want to start groups in their own area as well. You should contact them if you are interested in helping to start a group or join in a new group.

If you want help starting a support group, please contact us and we will help in any way that we can. If you have a support group that is not listed here, please notify us so that we can include them in our next listing.

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To join NOLOSE. Currently, only about 5% of the women receiving NOLOSE NEWS are dues paying members. This means that we are seriously in the red, not only in terms of producing NOLOSE NEWS, but in funding all of the other NOLOSE projects as well.

WHAT DOES YOUR NOLOSE MEMBERSHIP DO? It gives us the opportunity to reach even more fat women in the US and abroad. It gives us the opportunity to invest in new projects such as publishing an anthology of short stories, essays and poetry. It helps us extend financial aid to women who have little or no resources. And it helps give crafts women, artists and performers in our community opportunities to

showcase their work.

WHAT DOES NOLOSE MEMBERSHIP GET YOU? While you won't stop receiving the NOLOSE NEWS if you don't join, you WILL get discounts on special items at www.FatAmazon.com. You WILL get discounts on conference fees and from vendors at the conferences. And we have two limited time special offers if you join NOLOSE NOW.

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OFFER 2: While supplies last, everyone who joins NOLOSE AND contributes an additional \$25 to the NOLOSE scholarship fund will receive a free copy of *Women En Large*, the ground breaking book of images of fat nudes by Laurie Toby Edison and Debbie Notkin.

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