

# Transformation

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## African-American Women and Youth Conference: Answering the Call To Eliminate Violence

Janet Perkins

**I** really had to struggle to write this article to discuss the upcoming African-American Women's conference which will focus on violence in the African-American community.

In March of this year an African-American female student was found murdered in some woods in a small quiet town here in Arkansas. Two of her classmates have been arrested as suspects in her brutal beating. There has been some speculation that one of the boys liked her, but the affection was not returned; she just thought of him as a friend.

One month and a day later another African-American female student was murdered. This time the murder victim, a 15 year old, attended a junior high school in Little Rock. Again she had been brutally beaten and her body dumped in the woods. So far there are no suspects in this case.

Both of these young women were described as being good students, well liked, involved in extracurricular activities, never a problem to their parents or teachers.

I'm afraid for May 10 or 11 to come. Is there a pattern being developed where each month another young female student will die that fits this same description of being the last girl you would ever suspect to end up like this?

Two women in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a town about 35 miles from Little Rock, were found murdered in their homes two weekends in a row in March. The first victim was 89 years old, the other 45, no suspects have been identified in either of these murders.

In one month there were four crimes which involved the perpetrators kicking in doors at various residences to rob the premises, while the homeowners were present. In one case the four suspects kicked in the door of a young woman while she slept, and then robbed and raped her. In another case the intruders had not counted on the owner of the home being armed when they kicked in the door to his home. One of the robbers was wounded in the exchange of bullets. In all cases the possibility of someone being home did not matter.

Since January 1995 through our Women's Watchcare Network, a project which documents bias acts of violence and the murders of women, we have already documented the murders of 24 women.

For this year I have lost count of the number of African-American teenage males whose lives have been destroyed through drive-by shootings or who have been wounded from random bullets. I've lost count of the number of rapes that have been re-

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## Eliminate Violence

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ported, and we never get a real sense of the number of women who are beaten, because so many of those acts of violence go unreported.

My struggle and dilemma is like that of most folks out there, I'm scared and I don't really know what to do. A couple of years ago a friend and I were astonished that a teenager had been killed for his starter jacket.

At that time both of us lamented that things had to get better, because they couldn't get any worse. We were wrong, things have gotten progressively worse, and there doesn't appear to be any resolution in sight.

Fear is healthy when it makes you more cautious and aware and motivates you to move into action, but it also can be paralyzing, debilitating and limiting. This is what I am concerned about. Am I and others to the point that we are allowing fear to structure where we go and who we are willing to talk to? Is fear determining how far we are willing to extend ourselves to work on making changes? Is fear telling us that our primary concern must be protecting and arming ourselves and our families? Is fear moving many of us to think that more prisons, stiffer penalties for first offenders, longer sentences and the death penalty are appropriate responses to the problems we are experiencing? Are we so convinced that there is absolutely nothing that we can do to turn things around?

There are organizations and individuals diligently working in their communities to stop the violence we are unfortunately having to face. But there still are not enough of us who are out there saying that we will not tolerate any kind of violence in our communities. We have

to work together to stop it.

On June 2 and 3, the Women's Project is sponsoring for the African-American community an event which is entitled African-American Women and Youth Conference: Celebrating Our Uniqueness, Respecting Our Roots and Building Bridges for Tomorrow at the First Presbyterian Church at 800 Scott Street in Little Rock, Arkansas. At this conference we hope to join other African-Americans in discussions relevant to defining our role in working to eliminate violence in the African-American community.

The conference will be an opportunity for African-American women, men and children to be involved in dialogues which strengthen our abilities to work together toward making changes in our communities.

The first activity of the conference will be on Friday, June 2, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This will be a forum for women to discuss Reclaiming Our Self-Esteem. The evening will be dedicated to African-American women understanding who they are and the barriers that exist for them growing and developing to their full potential. We also will attempt to find answers to why we are so angry at ourselves and at each other. We hope that through our discussions we can begin to peel away some of the layers of hurt and pain which have played a role in our estrangement from each other. We want to be able to leave this gathering with a desire to see each other in a new light and have a goal of working together to set a new direction in supporting each other in developing whole healthy lives.

On Saturday, June 3, the conference will convene for a day of panel discussions which will consist of exploring issues related to the Impact of Domestic Violence on the Black Community, Violence Against

Women and Men's Responsibility in Ending the Violence, The Impact of Social Change on Intergenerational Issues and Issues Related to Health. We have divided each of these topics into four discussions which will help us to bring a variety of views and information related to each area.

The keynote speaker is Loretta Ross, the national program research director for the Atlanta-based Center for Democratic Renewal (CDR). CDR is a non-profit clearinghouse for information on hate groups and bigoted violence including the Ku Klux Klan. Loretta heads the research and program departments and directs specific projects on right wing violence in South Africa and Klan and neo-Nazi involvement in anti-abortion violence. Prior to joining the CDR staff, Loretta was program director for the National Black Women's Health Project and director of Women of Color Programs for the National Organization for Women.

Some of the best work I have seen has been through the use of music to assist young people in understanding their history and culture. We are proud that Jane Sapp from the Center for Cultural and Community Development will be joining us in the conference on Saturday, June 3, to provide a workshop for youth and a concert on Saturday evening at 7:00 p.m. If any of you attended the 1990 conference, you will remember Jane's work and will want to be present to see her dynamic performance. The concert will be open to the public. Tickets will be \$5.00.

In Lexington, Mississippi there is a group of young people who have collected the histories of the older people in the community and have taken all of that information and developed a play which depicts the lives of the residents of Lexington. Ann Brown, one of the organizers of the group will also be

with us at the conference to work with young people in developing their community organizing skills and present various models which they have used with youth in their community.

Whenever we sponsor an event, we also make certain that childcare is available. Throughout the day on Saturday we will provide childcare and have various activities for children. Curtis Tate, a well-known

storyteller, will be with the children on Saturday morning. After lunch we will sponsor a visit to the Children's Museum.

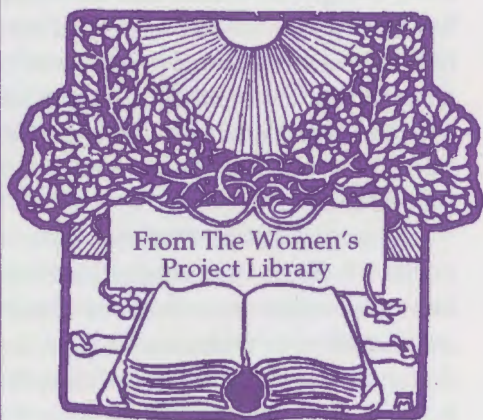
The cost of the conference is \$30.00, which includes the cost of meals, conference materials, the concert and a year's membership to the Women's Project. The cost for youth attending will be \$5.00. If you need further information or would like to request a registration

form, please call the Women's Project at 372-5113.

Hopefully you will be able to join us at this conference. We must have the opportunities to have the conversations which will move us along in stopping the violence in our homes and communities. If African-Americans are going to survive, we must find the strategies to survive together; women, men and children making social change. ■

## Reading List for African-American Conference

Lynn Frost



### NONFICTION

*Saving Our Sons: Raising Black Children in a Turbulent World* by Marita Golden.

*Life Notes: Personal Writings By Contemporary Black Women*, edited by Patricia Bell-Scott.

*Wild Women Don't Wear No Blues: Black Women Writers on Love, Men, and Sex*, edited by Marita Golden.

*Chain Chain Change: For Black Women in Abusive Relationships* by Evelyn C. White.

*In The Company of My Sisters: Black Women and Self-Esteem* by Julia A. Boyd.

*Conversation: Straight Talk with America's Sister President* by Johnnetta B. Cole.

*Deals with the Devil: And Other Reasons to Riot* by Pearl Cleage.

*I Know What the Red Clay Looks Like: The Voice and Vision of Black Women Writers* by Rebecca Carroll.

*Testimony: Young African-Americans on Self-Discovery and Black Identity*, edited by Natasha Tarpley.

*Racism 101* by Nikki Giovanni.

*Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* by bell hooks.

*Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers & Daughters*, edited by Patricia Bell-Scott et al.

*The Black Women's Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves* (new expanded edition), edited by Evelyn C. White.

*Laughing in the Dark: From Colored Girl to Woman of Color-A Journey from Prison to Power* by Patrice Gaines.

*Gal: A True Life* by Ruthie Bolton.

*Skin Deep: Women Writing on Color, Culture and Identity*, edited by Elena Featherston.

*Court of Appeal: The Black Community Speaks Out on the Racial and Sexual Politics of Thomas vs. Hill*, edited by The Black Scholar.

*Home Girls: A Back Feminist Anthology*, edited by Barbara Smith.

### FICTION

*Liliane: A Novel* by Ntozake Shange.

*Ugly Ways* and *Baby of the Family* by Tina McElroy Ansa.

*Coffee Will Make You Black* by April Sinclair.

*Crossing the Mangrove* by Maryse Condé.

*Phenomenal Woman: Four Poems Celebrating Women* by Maya Angelou.

*Her Own Place* by Dori Sanders.

# Can the Federal Government Be a Victim?

Amy Edgington

**T**he shock and horror of the Oklahoma City bombing is on the minds of all of us these days. I have been thinking a lot about this terrible incident in light of the Women's Project's work against hate crimes. This was certainly a crime full of hatred, but was it a hate crime? First, let's examine what we know about hate crimes. Victims of hate crimes are selected because of their membership, real or perceived, in a group that is hated and feared as a whole by the criminals. The victimized group has reduced economic and/or political power within our society and has a history of having been persecuted. Unlike ordinary crimes, hate crimes are meant to punish and control the whole group by making an example of the victim. Hate crimes typically involve overkill—racist epithets, humiliation of the victim, extreme brutality, mutilation. Hate crimes don't necessarily occur in large numbers. Especially if the victimized group is small in number in a given community or they are extremely disadvantaged, just a few spectacularly violent crimes serve as ample enforcement. A climate of prejudice in society at large against the group targeted encourages the hate criminal's actions.

Throughout history, hate crimes have tended to increase in frequency whenever members of the target groups begin to gain real prospects for increased economic or political power. An example would be the increase in lynchings following Reconstruction. (I think this also explains why crimes against women

outnumber all other hate crimes in our Watchcare Log. Compared to other hated groups, women have more numbers and white women especially have made greater strides

**Oklahoma City gives us a prime example of the way an atmosphere of hatred and the official sanction of prejudice lead to violent attacks, in this case, not against members of the hated groups, but against those *perceived to be their defenders.***

economically and politically.). The fact or appearance of official approval of prejudice against the hated group also foments hate crimes. Note the increase in gay bashing in Colorado following the passage of Amendment 2, which repealed local civil rights ordinances that included protection for gays.

Now back to the Oklahoma City

question. Clearly this crime involved extreme overkill. However, the target of the bombing was not an oppressed, disadvantaged group, but the federal government, the very bastion of power itself. At least that's what the TV and newspapers keep saying, over and over. That in itself makes me suspicious. The bombers appear to be involved with the right wing militia movement which hates the federal government. But the examination in the media of WHY these people hate the government has been all too shallow. Only their fear of being disarmed has been prominently mentioned. No one ever seems to ask the obvious: who are these people arming themselves AGAINST?

It would not be difficult for reporters to discover and disclose the fact that most members of these militias have or welcome those who do have varying mixtures of deeply held racist, anti-semitic, anti-abortion, anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti-immigration beliefs, although the leaders sometimes take pains to disguise this, by using code language describing themselves as defensive groups against the "crime wave" or the "threat to the family," or the "one-world government" (an idea that seems to be a re-hash of the "Jewish world conspiracy" or "Papist Catholics taking over" theories that were used in the past to justify hatred of immigrants). Members of these groups are painted in the media as mostly ridiculous paranoids or as secret terrorist armies in the making, but little attention is given to their actual convictions, which are shared by much larger numbers of Americans: that white Christians are a threatened group, that white men are "oppressed" by programs like affirmative action,

that race war is inevitable, that foreigners are taking over America, that the heterosexual nuclear family is under attack, that the "liberal" federal government has lost touch with the "real" America and serves "special" (minority) interests.

Some information has come to light recently that links the prime suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing, McVeigh, with right-wing radicals inside the armed forces, who are incensed by the Clinton administration's proposal (not yet implemented) to allow gays to serve openly in the military and by the placement of U.S. troops under foreign U.N. command during U.N. sanctioned missions to third-world countries. Right-wing groups are not new in the armed services, but their resurgence at this time is undoubtedly linked to both the open rebellion and contempt of highest ranking officers towards their commander-in-chief when he ordered an end to the ban on gays in the military and to the murders of gay servicemen by their straight comrades.

While the Oklahoma City bombing is not a typical hate crime, it is vital to keep in mind the evidence that **the philosophies of hate groups and the climate of hatred and sheer meanness in this country led directly to the commission of this horrendous act.** Every effort will be made by the media and Congress, especially, to obscure this fact. Why? Because we might begin to notice that there is all too little difference between the rhetoric of militia spokesmen about the "one-world government" and Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson on the "new world order" and almost no difference between them and Newt Gingrich/Dick Armev (love that name) with their Contract with (or

on?) America, full of code words like "crime control" and "welfare-reform" (read: lazy, immoral Black folk) and "immigration reform" (read: "disease-ridden, job-stealing foreign hordes"), etc. And, of course, we here in Arkansas know that Clinton always tries to appease the right-wing whenever they pose a challenge to him politically.

Oklahoma City gives us a prime

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example of the way an atmosphere of hatred and the official sanction of prejudice lead to violent attacks, in this case, not against members of the hated groups, but against those **perceived to be their defenders:** the federal government under the Clinton administration, which is continually characterized by the militias, right-wing talk shows and

preachers and most of the Republican majority in Congress as liberal, soft on crime and immigrants, pro-gay, baby-killers (and then there's that ball-busting arch femi-nazi, Hillary).

I expect, dread, and already see in progress a number of consequences of this atypical crime by right-wing fanatics:

1) An attempt to downplay and deflect attention from the true, ultimate targets of hate groups: women, people of color, foreigners, religious minorities and gays. You might think the terror induced by this singular, unprecedented (in this country) attack might give broad insight into the way isolated instances of violence can frighten all the members of a group targeted by hate crimes. But I fear that the effect will be to de-emphasize the much more frequent, but widely scattered and less spectacular crimes against gays or people of color. While horrific, the picture we see over and over again of a dead white baby carried in the arms of an Oklahoma City fireman does not represent the usual victim of a hate crime in the U.S. Can you imagine a picture of the Ethiopian man bludgeoned by skinheads or the Lesbian shot down in the Appalachians getting this kind of wide coverage and sympathy?

2) An attempt to blame the Clinton administration for the outrage felt by violent right wing extremists over the "liberal" federal government's alleged protection of immigrants, minorities, gays, abortion clinics, separation of church and state, the criminal element, etc. and their so-called persecution of Christians, white men, the NRA, etc. I expect to see the right wing publicly condemn extremist militias, while they eagerly push the

*(continued on page 6)*

## Federal Government from page 5

mean-spirited policies of the Republican Contract, which are a tidy, legal means of arriving at the same kind of repressive power and control over the lives of women and minorities that hate criminals seek. After all, it's neater and more effective to make people feel like whipped dogs before anyone raises a hand against them.

3) A rush by everyone, Clinton and Congress alike, to enact laws allowing increased "anti-terrorist" activities, ostensibly to prevent crimes like the Oklahoma City bombing, but in fact primarily aimed at groups of foreigners in this country. Did you notice how quickly the assumption was made that Middle-Easterners were responsible for this attack? Even now hints are occasionally dropped about a possible Arab connection, and the president drums up support for such laws by stressing his fears of attack by foreign terrorists, not domestic militias.

4) An increase in the typical kind of hate crimes against those of foreign descent or those perceived to be (potentially anyone with dark skin or an accent). The official policy of viewing groups of foreigners as a threat will undoubtedly encourage such attacks as well as the legal chipping away of the human rights of immigrants and other foreigners in this country.

*Please*, think carefully about how "anti-terrorist" legislation may be used, especially if we wind up with a Republican controlled Congress and President. Are our memories so short in this country? Have we forgotten the revelations of FBI activities against Martin Luther King, Jr. (known for his advocacy of non-violence) and why these restric-

tions on infiltrating and spying on domestic groups were enacted in the first place? We must keep clear heads in the coming days and fight those who would attempt to use our outrage over the Oklahoma City bombing to trick us into impulsively supporting legislation that will probably wind up being used against groups that work multi-culturally, have progressive agendas and support civil rights, including rights for immigrants.

You might think that as a member of an organization that fights the radical right, I would support legislation that might enable law enforcement to stop hate crimes before they happen. However, I am convinced that these laws are not the answer. With its extensive resources the government already has the means to gather a mountain of information about who the right-wing extremists are, what they are thinking, doing, and planning: what is and has always been missing is the commitment to oppose the radical right. Even the Women's Project already has more information on these people than it can process. Further laws to restrict access to weapons and bomb materials might make a difference in the sheer deadliness of hate crimes and numbers of victims, but since the attempt to ban assault weapons is being blamed for the Oklahoma City bombing, I don't think we're likely to see further restrictions. The only real solution to the problem of hate crimes is to attack and defeat the underlying climate of social and economic injustice, that gives bitter, alienated people permission to look for scapegoats. That is why Watchcare is an important part, but only one part of what we do at the Women's Project. ■

*Amy Edgington is a member of the Board of Directors of the Women's Project.*

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# Women's Watchcare Network Bulletin

May 1995

Suzanne Pharr

## Let Us Mourn for Them All...and Act

This nation is in mourning for the children (& adults) of the terrible tragedy of the bombing in Oklahoma. We are mourning them as we have never mourned those whose deaths we engineered in Vietnam, in Nicaragua, in El Salvador, in Hiroshima, in Beirut. Here at home, we are mourning them as we have never mourned the other thousands of children who die horrible deaths daily in this country.

For example, who is mourning the deaths of the young girls under the age of twenty who were brutally murdered in Arkansas since January 1995?

*Bald Knob, March 11, 1995*

**Kenyatta Haynes, 18**, was found handcuffed, bludgeoned to death with a shovel, and partially submerged in a creek in a remote wooded area. She was a cheerleader, planning to attend college. Two other classmates, **James Derrick Grubbs, 17**, and **Donnie Ray Tempel, 18**, were charged with capital murder and kidnapping.

*Hot Springs, February 14, 1995*

**Jennifer Harper, 17**, and **Ruby Britton, 21**, two young mothers, were found strangled and possibly sexually assaulted in a warehouse.

*Little Rock, April 13, 1995*

**Lakesha Chandler, 13**, was killed

by a blow to the head and dragged into woods where she was found by utility workers.

*Searcy, April 19, 1995*

**Carla Willmon, 20**, was found in the trunk of her car. She was a junior at Harding University.

*Scotland, April 25, 1995*

**Baby, 9 months**, was born to **Tracy Rowland, 17**, who then wrapped the baby in towels, threw her into a fire in a garbage pit; when Rowland's parents arrived several hours later, they found the baby still alive but after being transferred to Arkansas Children's Hospital, the infant died. The mother later reported that the pregnancy was the result of a rape.

*Gillett, April 27, 1995*

**Nikki Raye Muse, 17**, was strangled by hand and possibly sexually abused. She was a straight-A student and academic award winner. **Willie Davis, 19**, has been charged with capital murder, kidnapping, aggravated robbery and theft. **Willie Spencer, 16**, has been charged as an adult with kidnapping, aggravated robbery and theft.

*How can any country afford such destruction of its young?*

It is time that we begin caring for and protecting the lives of children throughout this world as well as at home. Though the media uses cases of injury to children to tug at

our heartstrings, the protection and well-being of children is not a major priority of this country. We harm them each day through our nation's refusal to provide adequate health care, fair wage employment for teenagers and poor people, welfare benefits and enforced child support payments to mothers and children—and the refusal to control severely the accessibility of drugs and guns in this country.

Because our concern for these children keeps deepening, we have decided to expand our Watchcare monitoring to cover more than bias violence. Beginning April 1, 1995, we began monitoring the murders of boys under the age of 20 in addition to those of girls, whether the perpetrators are youths or adults. We are beginning to ask ourselves if there could be a possible connection between the extraordinary numbers of murdered adult women and the large numbers of murdered children? And the larger question: what does it mean to live in a society that is literally littered with the bodies of women and children?

We cannot live here with peace of mind and conscience without speaking out and taking action. We ask the same of you. Please mourn these children and work for the social change that brings about a world that nourishes them and their lives.

# The Rise of Mean-Spiritedness & the Gay/Lesbian Movement

Suzanne Pharr

**F**or weeks, calls were crisscrossing the country to me: "You need to know how people are attacking Melinda on America Online." It took me awhile to get around to it, but finally I read the 112 entries posted about Melinda Paras, the new executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). It was a daunting and exceedingly depressing task. What bitterness, what rancor, what viciousness, vindictiveness, and anger from a small group of gay men leapt from the screen. When an occasional voice offered a few words in Melinda's defense or identified as a woman or person of color, then that person became the object of attack. I'm new to these on-line postings, and frankly, it took my breath away to see so much venom on screen.

This experience made me reflect on the mean-spiritedness that is on the rise across the country which expresses itself in attacks against women, people of color, Jews, poor people, immigrants, lesbians and gay men. It is carried by a defensive and aggressive anger that is infecting even the liberation movements for various identity groups. It sometimes seems we are going to eat each other alive as conflicts erupt along the faultlines that run along issues of race, gender, class, and sexual identity.

Consider the attack against Melinda and NGLTF.

As one of those people who signed a letter in support of Melinda, I had to wonder what in

the world could have led to such outbursts of passion, such vehemence, such shrillness in these on-line messages that came from "our" people, not the anti-gay and les-

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bian bigots. The primary charges against Melinda were concerning her financial management at Shanti, her Left politics, her not having a true disability. Yelling "Commie" seems strange at this time in history. So Melinda, like many of our leaders, was at one time a Marxist and probably still uses some Marxist analysis to good purposes in her politics. So she worked to defeat Marcos, a despot—are people suggesting that she should have been on the side of Marcos? So she is a female, a woman of color, and her disability is chronic fatigue—does

this mean she cannot provide leadership in the work against AIDS along with all the other many issues NGLTF takes on? As a woman of color can she not also represent men and white people? And how many times must people be told that no one absconded with any money at Shanti?

What is really being talked about here?

Frankly, I think some of this mini-cyclone circling Melinda is about fears concerning Melinda herself (and anger at her) but I believe most of it is about other things that represent the conflicts taking hold of this society. I am reminded of Hillary Clinton and the relentless attacks against her for everything from bad hair styles to power-mongering among the mighty. Hillary is a lightning-rod for the hatred many people in this country have against women (especially smart, liberated ones), against feminists, and against progressive people. The same is true for Melinda: a lightning-rod. Even Mother Theresa would be having a hard time these days in either of their positions because her work among the poor would be seen as seditious anti-capitalism, I'm sure, and her clothes as self-damning poor taste.

The general mood of many people in this nation at the moment is to destroy, not to build. We see this at every level of society but nowhere any greater than in the attack against elected political leaders, people who are victims of historic injustice (poor people, women, people of color, Jews, lesbians and gay men, etc.), and the leaders of organizations whose job is to work on behalf of oppressed people.

The sad truth is that mean-spiritedness is being nourished by

talk shows and politicians and is growing across the nation. After the 80's decade of focusing on me, me, me, during which time we plunged deeper into debt and economic crisis, there is now a cry for getting mine, for not getting left out, no matter who has to be hurt. The individualism of the 80's has run amuck, and the backlash is vicious and coordinated against those seeking justice and equality for everyone, not just the few. It is a nasty mood that seeks to attack and destroy anyone who gets in the way or differs in politics or opinion.

Tragically, this vicious mood and conflict has taken root in many of our progressive organizations. Rather than being united in our commitment to people-centered liberation politics which stand in opposition to the Right's agenda, we find that within our movements we have people who join in the ranks of the Right in their political vision of a world that excludes almost everyone but "people like me."

I would like to think that lesbians and gay men are exempt from this mean-spiritedness, but unfortunately some of our people are major proponents of it. Leadership on the national and local level has been decimated by angry personal attacks that allow no quarter for past mistakes, for redemption, for change and growth. I believe that some of our Rightwing attacks come from within. Let's face it: there are people who would like to see NGLTF destroyed if it embraces a multi-issue approach to social change.

Within the lesbian/gay/bi/transgendered population we have the same conflicts that exist among heterosexuals. Despite our dreams of one movement, we probably share in common no more than the

experience of homophobia and varying degrees of discrimination. We stand in very different places on all other issues. What we are beginning to comprehend is that we are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered people, we are people of color and white women and men, we are Republicans and Democrats, and like the general population, we have a political Left and Right and lots of middle ground

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inbetween. And at this moment, the Right seems to be in ascendency.

I think we need to face up to the current political moment and consider that part of the conflict displayed on America Online concerning Melinda and other issues is a reflection both of the conflict between conservative and progressive politics in general and in particular, of the influence of the Right on gay and lesbian politics. The debate is often focused on whether the gay/lesbian/bi movement should be single-issue or multi-issue, and whether we should be conservative or progressive. But deeper

within the conflict is the question of who has worth, who gets a share of the resources, who gets full participation, a question of queer supremacy (rights for queers alone) or of democratic participation and equality for everyone.

NGLTF, along with other progressive organizations, will have to choose where it will stand in this conflict.

Here's where I weigh in. I believe in everyone's right to be represented and to have a part in constructing a platform for their issues—but I do not believe one or two national organizations can represent everyone's concerns. I would like to see NGLTF to come out openly as a truly progressive organization that recognizes how discrimination against lesbians and gay men is intricately connected to the discrimination against other groups, how almost everyone in its constituency brings more than one issue of discrimination to the table (homophobia, AIDS-phobia, racism, classism, sexism, ageism, etc.), how we are all hurt when a nation scapegoats and disrespects any group of people, how we must build allies by supporting each other through reciprocal work. This focus will give it a solid place to stand as a liberatory civil rights organization with a varied agenda which focuses on the many facets of gay/lesbian/bi/transgendered lives. And it will not have to try to serve lesbians and gay men on the Right.

To have such an organization does not preclude there being many other single-issue gay/lesbian/bi organizations, liberal or conservative. It simply clarifies the work of one of the national organizations and gives a framework for our expectations of it. It gives lesbians and gay men a clear choice. I hope

*(continued on page 10)*

NGLTF becomes an openly progressive organization that works to end violence against our community, to end the AIDS epidemic and all of the discrimination in its wake, to bring affordable and just healthcare to all our people, to win

**The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), along with other organizations, will have to choose where it will stand in this conflict.**

a civil rights amendment, to end the practice of racism and sexism in our organizations and communities, to end discrimination in the workplace and in the courts and in social services, to take a committed place in the effort to bring about justice and equality for everyone. And in doing so, I hope it takes the time to consider the complexity of every issue and, listening to many voices, applies complex, thoughtful answers to their solutions.

The leadership for such work requires the commitment of all of us who believe in multi-issue politics. It is time to do more than writing online. It is time to sign up for the long-term work of liberation. ■

# Women's Project CALENDAR

for May and June 1995



• **Tuesday, May 9**

Lesbian Network - 7p.m. - 2224 Main St., Little Rock - Topic: Safe Sex for Lesbians - presented by Annette Shead.

• **Tuesday, May 23**

Lesbian Network - 7p.m. - 2224 Main St., Little Rock - Topic: How We Might Fight the Right! Get an idea of how the religious Right is portraying lesbians and gay men to your elected officials and the public by watching the film, "Hate...Lies...& Videotape." Afterwards, discuss ways to empower our-selves and reclaim the right to define ourselves as women loving women.

• **Friday & Saturday, June 2-3** - African-American Women & Youth Conference (See cover story for details).

• **Tuesday, June 13**

Lesbian Network - 7p.m. - 2224 Main St., Little Rock - Topic: Building Relationships That Last!

What you need to know to maintain long-lasting partnerships.

• **Tuesday, June 27**

The Lesbian Network will not meet due to abundance of Gay Pride Week activities offered by AGLTF, Spirit Song MCC Church, DSRA, the Unitarian Church, Norman Jones and others!

**Other Events:**

• **Thursday, May 18**

7p.m. - Julia Boyd, author of *Girlfriend To Girlfriend*, will present "Sister Session II" at Pyramid Gallery & Books, 1308 S. Main St. in Little Rock. For more information call 372-5824.

• **Saturday, June 10**

7p.m. to 10p.m. - Daddy & Ruth Anne's Fish Fry - A benefit for AIDS Outreach of Arkansas - D.S.R.A. Clubhouse, 4521 61st St., Little Rock. For more information call 372-5543.

**There are no programs scheduled for the Women's Coffeehouse! We are looking for a working committee to help keep the Coffeehouse going. If you can help, call Lynn at 372-5113.**



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# Our Mission...

Our goal is social change or, as the poet Adrienne Rich writes, "the transformation of the world." We believe this world can be changed to become a place of peace and justice for all women.

We take risks in our work; we take unpopular stands. We work for all women and against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We believe that we cannot work for all women and against sexism unless we also work against racism, classism, ageism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia. We see the connection among these oppressions as the context for violence against women in this society.

We are concerned in particular about issues of

importance to traditionally underrepresented women: poor women, aged women, women of color, teenage mothers, lesbians, women in prisons, etc. All are women who experience discrimination and violence against their lives.

We are committed to working multi-culturally, multi- racially, and to making our work and cultural events accessible to low income women. We believe that women will not know equality until they know economic justice.

We believe that a few committed women working in coalition and in consensus with other women can make significant change in the quality of life for all women.

**Transformation** is published six times every year.

In each issue, members and volunteers receive analysis of contemporary issues, information about Women's Project upcoming events and activities, book reviews, and more.

If you are not a Women's Project member or volunteer and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please fill out the membership form on this page.

## Current Projects

### ■ Prison Project

A support and advocacy project for women in prison that provides support groups for battered women in prison, a prisoner-led AIDS program and a transportation program for the children of incarcerated mothers.

### ■ Women's Watchcare Network

A project to monitor and respond to incidents of racial, religious, sexual, and anti-gay violence; and to provide education and strategies to counter the activities of hate groups and the Radical Right.

### ■ The Social Justice Project

Workshops on understanding racism and homophobia and developing methods to eliminate them; women's economic issues; organizational development for social change organizations.

### ■ Women and AIDS

A project to develop strategies for working with women and caregivers around AIDS issues.

### ■ African-American Women's Institute for Social Justice

A project which creates strategies for overcoming the barriers that hinder African-American women's efforts toward power and self-determination.

### ■ Communications and Events

A newsletter, a lending library, statewide and regional conferences, and production of women singers, poets and novelists.



**Yes, I would like to join the Women's Project.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/day \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/evening \_\_\_\_\_

\$ 7.50

(low income)

\$ 20

\$ 25

\$ 50

\$100

**Make checks payable to:**

Women's Project  
2224 Main Street  
Little Rock, AR 72206

# Women's Project

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