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NOW continued from page one

The momentum of volatility was kept alive in the workshop "Gender, Sexual Identity and Sexual Preference." The panel had been selected for its diversity in living and experiences. There was a moment when the discussion became more of a shouting match between a transgendered person in the audience demanding change in the attitudes of NOW members who have 'issues' or 'problems' including transgendered people in the membership.

As I strolled back to the registration area, the charged discussion was still ebbing and flowing. Down the hall from the workshop noise stood the most inviting scene. A well-respected, radical feminist was listening intently to a transgendered individual. They were deep in conversation. Here were two very different beings trying to listen to one another minus the membership in a large group of 'sided people'. They had already moved together to better understand one another.

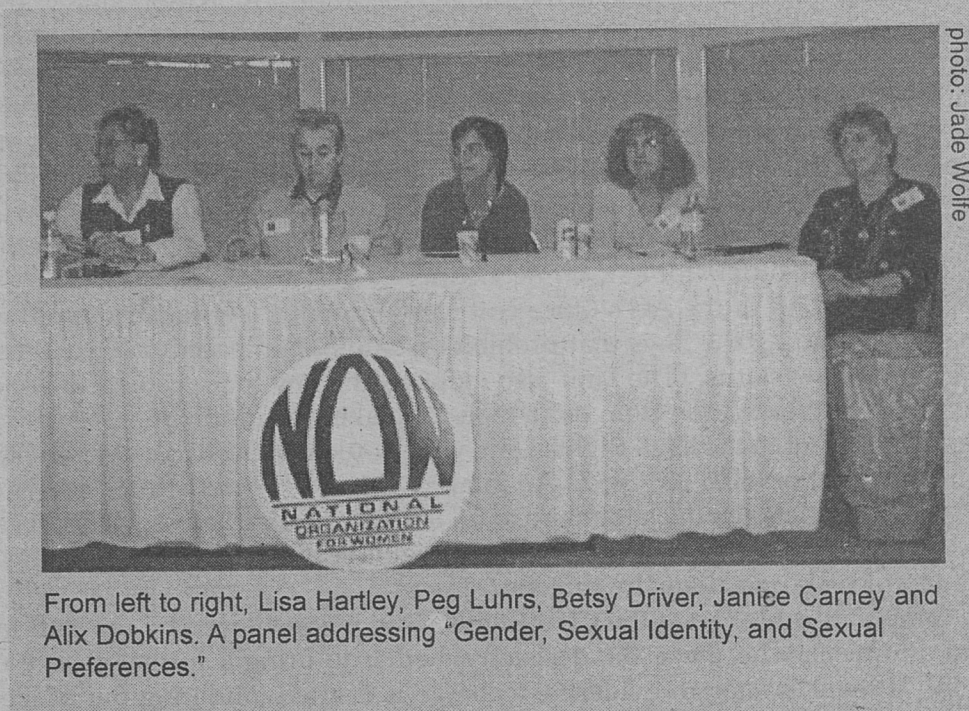


photo: Jade Wolfe

From left to right, Lisa Hartley, Peg Luhrs, Betsy Driver, Janice Carney and Alix Dobkins. A panel addressing "Gender, Sexual Identity, and Sexual Preferences."

The evening entertainment was tuning up on the small stage next to the booths and displays. Fifteen of the twenty workshops would soon be closing for the day. The two and a half day summit was into its second evening. A film festival would continue until Sunday's 9 am showing of "It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School."

Everything from early morning yoga to evening poetry slams would fill out the experiences of this summit.

Judy Murphy, a NE NOW coordinator, stood in the empty registration area as the workshops were ending. She seemed a bit 'conference weary' yet satisfied with the amount of progress being made. After a day or two of reflection how would this conference measure up? Upon reading the conference evaluations, Judy and her committee were "pleased with the turnout and the comments that referred to the conference as 'eye-opening and heart-opening.'

The conference had opportunities for moments of growth. Seizing moments of expansion in a charged atmosphere often proves illuminating. If, as a species we keep living and responding primarily as a crowd of people, I am going to try having these essentially individual conversations as often as possible. The divided attendees at the NOW conference at least began some of these 'smaller group discussions' with some success.




photo: Jade Wolfe

Robyn Ochs, educator, writer, speaker, activist, and editor of Bisexual Resource Guide "When All You Have Is A Hammer, Everything Looks Like A Nail."

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