

# Book Review

by Sue Aranoff

## Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering

Edited by Kerry Lobel for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Lesbian Task Force; The Seal Press, 1986

Naming the Violence is the first book to come out on the subject of battering in lesbian relationships. As such, it is a landmark in the field of lesbian literature.

Naming is a collection of personal narratives' and theory oriented essays that were written by a very diverse group of women.

Naming is organized into four parts. Part I and III contain personal accounts by survivors of lesbian battering. Part II and IV contain essays that address many of the issues connected to and involved with lesbian battering. Some of these essays offer ideas for organizing services within the lesbian and shelter movements.

Naming the Violence would be good reading for any lesbian who has ever been or is currently being battered by other lesbians or gay men who are interested in issues that effect lesbian and gay communities, and anyone working with people who are or were in battering situations. Naming might be beneficial to lesbian who were or are in battering situations because it validates and affirms the experiences of battered lesbians as well as the existence of lesbian battery. Many of the narratives relate very similar stories despite the fact they were written by a very diverse group of lesbians. Read together the stories reveal patterns of indifference, disbelief, nonrecognition, and nonownership of lesbian battering on the part of lesbians, shelter workers and friends and family members of the women involved. As Naming reveals the existence, persistence and patterns of lesbian battering it conveys the all-important message that no victim/survivor of lesbian battering is the only one that has ever experienced the feelings and events

that are so poignantly written about in the narrative sections.

Lesbians, gay men, and shelter workers can read Naming the Violence and gain valuable insight into the problem of lesbian battering. From the sections on organizing safe space and shelters they can learn a lot about the needs of lesbians in battering situations. Perhaps some readers will be motivated to act and search for remedies for lesbian and gay men in battering situations who currently have none available to them.

Naming the Violence neither raises nor answers some of the trickier questions about lesbian battery, like: What remedies need to be available for both the survivor and the batterer? How can lesbian battery be prevented? How can lesbian batterers be accountable either to the lesbian whom they have battered or to the lesbian community? These important questions are beyond the scope and perhaps the mission of this book. In as much as Naming the Violence's mission is to name the existence of lesbian battery, it's triumphant

## VT Conference of United Church of Christ Upholds Right to Ordination Regardless of Sexual Orientation

On May 2, delegates to the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ voted 200-72 to uphold the right of individuals to seek ordination as ministers without regard to sexual orientation. The delegates rejected a motion which declared that "homosexual behavior is incompatible with the high standard of holiness in thought, word, and deed to which all, both lay and ordained, are called as Children of

God in Christ Jesus." The resolution called upon Church bodies "not to recommend as a candidate for ordination any person involved in patterns of homosexual behavior or who advocates homosexual lifestyles."

Charlotte Gladding was a delegate to the conference who made the following presentation in favor of an open ordination policy.

"The Fourteenth General Synod recognized that a person's sexual orientation is not a moral issue, but that sexual behavior does have moral significance."

Sexual behavior as honest, loving response to another human being as expression of compassion resulting from a bondedness and commitment to that relationship is right and just and cannot be denied. When sexual behavior becomes the result of lust or idolotrous attitudes manifest as a manipulative means of controlling another human being to serve one's own desire then a moral injustice has been done.

Neither of these behaviors is limited to either heterosexual or homosexual relationships. Sinfulness can occur on either side. The moral issue hinges on attitude and motive, not on gender. Is the behavior honest, responsible, and loving or is it deceitful, irresponsible, and self serving?

The resolution, "Calls upon the churches and people of the conference to seek renewal in their spirits and to rediscover the power of Christ Jesus to break the chains of every sin and to lead into wholeness all who call on His name."

Perhaps if we were to acknowledge wholeness as coming to understand and to own both the male and female parts of ourselves, that is, the anima and animus halves of our psyche (personality) we could respond to the freedom resulting from that understanding. It is possible that we might become nealed of our fear, our sin of denial (of hiding from our whole selves) and truly

become whole persons empowered to love one another completely as did Christ Jesus. In this awareness I cannot justly condemn those relationships which are born out of love and the human struggle to be in right relationship with oneself, another, and God.

It seems to me there are far more pertinent questions to ask of a candidate for ordination than who he or she makes their bed with.

My recommendation is that we give General Synod credit and recognition for having undertaken the sizable study on Human Sexuality and accept the possibility that through prayerful discernment God's word has been heard and responded to through the recommendation as published and read here this day.

"A. The Fourteenth General Synod acknowledges that associations have the responsibility for ordination and for ministerial standing. It therefore recommends to Associations that in considering a candidate's qualifications for ministry, the candidate's sexual orientation should not be grounds for denying the request for ordination."

## Legislative Corner

by Sue Aranoff

There is a new kid on the block. From this issue onward, this column will contain news and views of goings on at the Statehouse. One of the first articles will contain a glossary of key words used a lot by people in the know to keep everyone else in the dark. If you can read and understand the next few sentences, then you may have a future in politics or selling used cars or... "The Judiciary committee didn't vote the bill (H.247) before crossover, but it was given a waiver. Still the committee didn't vote the bill, then it did, 7 to 4. Then the bill came up for second reading before the full House. Rather than let it die on the floor, no vote was taken. Instead, another committee asked to take the bill for further hearings. A vote was taken on that question. After division, the ayes appeared to have it, the ayes did have it and the bill is now in another committee." Get it? If not, don't worry. Keep reading *OITM* and you too will know how to lobby your Rep. without losing your job, where to park when you go to the Statehouse, how to make lesbian and gay civil rights an election issue, how to write a letter to the editor without having your windows broken or your tires slashed, and where the Bills are that affect us. these questions and more will be answered here, in *OITM's* new legislative corner.

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