

Anthology on Lesbian Parenting

Book Review : Politics of the Heart, A Lesbian Parenting Anthology, edited by Sandra Pollack and Jeanne Vaughn, Firebrand Books, Ithaca, New York, 1987.

by Carrie Coy

Five years in the making, *Politics of the Heart* is a brand new anthology on lesbian parenting that tells the stories of over fifty women in their own voices.

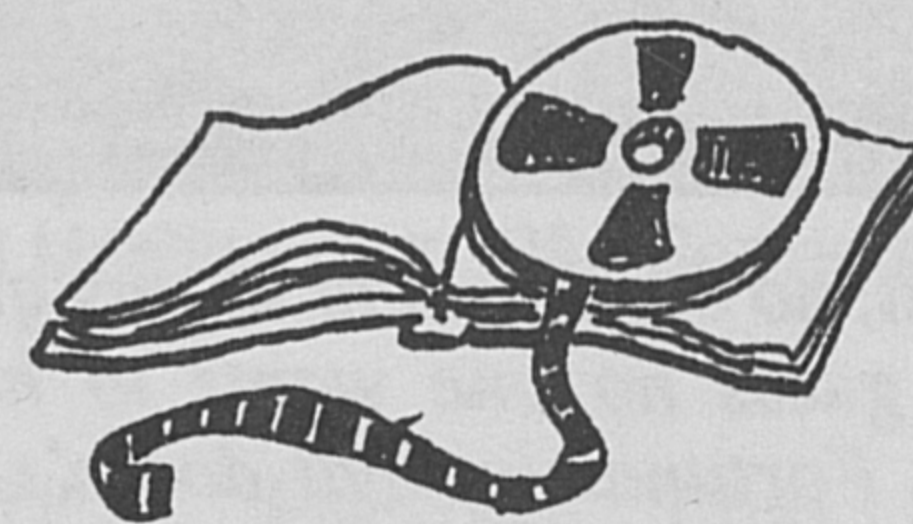
In separate short pieces, they consider the pros and cons, ups and downs, high points and low points, and together paint a vivid picture of what it is like to be a lesbian mother in the United States in the eighties.

The book is divided into eight sections, each considering a unique aspect of lesbian parenting. Section topics range from the dilemmas of co-parents to legal problems,

from children's concerns to the struggle to deal with homophobia. One section, *Conflict*, looks at the fragmentation of the lives of lesbian mothers and the search for integration.

Though the politics and ideologies of the women emerge in subtle and not so subtle ways, I was most moved by some of the smaller moments, the human touches. In one story, a woman describes a birthday visit from her deceased lover's teenage child. The girl, who was returned to her father's custody when her mother died of cancer, visits Ellen and brings along her new boyfriend. The two are in the kitchen fixing hot chocolate and the girl says, "...if I do ever get serious about someone, I hope it will be as beautiful as what you and Mom had together." It is the first open acknowledgment of the two women's relationship.

The voices of the children come



through clearly whether through their parents or in their own words. One woman remembered a cathartic confrontation with her fourteen year old daughter. "She started yelling at me, I hate your hippy food store. I hate everything about you. You are disgusting. I can't stand that you are a lesbian and shop at hippy food stores. You are so horrible!" The mother recalls the blow-up as a turning point in their now "very, very" close relationship.

Many of the writers are brand new mothers, raising infants. I sometimes wished the emphasis weighed more heavily on older mothers, women who have raised teenagers and adults. Theirs is a world full of challenges into which I cannot not even project myself. Jan Clausen, in one piece observes, "...at times I've been concerned with what I perceive to be an intense focus on whether and how to have children, with a lack of equivalent attention to the array of puzzling issues that lie in wait for lesbian parents a little further down the road."

But to be fair, older mother do have a chance to tell their stories in this book. Audre Lorde writes with a backward looking perspective on her efforts to raise her two black children with her white lover. She talks of her struggles to handle her anger constructively: screaming at her daughter's childish banter instead of a rac-

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OITM Needs You *from page 9*

it better and get it into the hands of more people. We're very proud of what we've been able to accomplish as an all-volunteer organization, but we'd love to be able to hire a part-time coordinator to oversee distribution, advertising, and reporting assignments.

Even without a coordinator's salary, it costs approximately \$450 to put out a twelve page issue. That means we need to raise over \$4500 this year. Can you help?

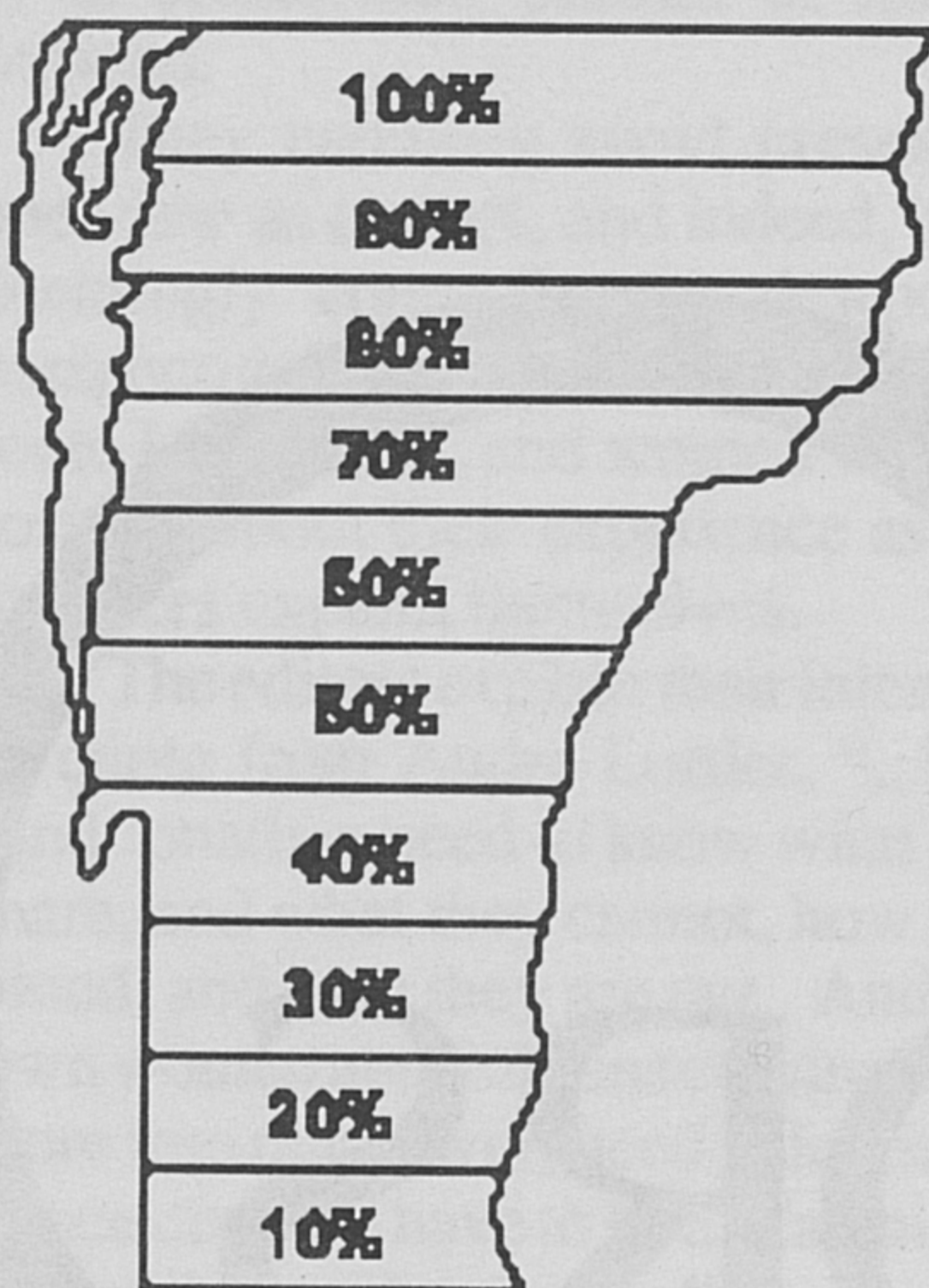
Maybe you could afford to pay for an issue. Maybe your group or organization could make a commitment to pay for half an issue. How about one page of an issue? Or maybe you can only afford a smaller amount. Any and all contributions are ap-

So think about it and give as much as you're able because lesbians and gay men in this state deserve to have our voices heard.

preciated and are a vital part of keeping this paper going.

OITM comes to you each month thanks to the continued efforts of a small number of dedicated individuals. But we cannot continue without support from the community at large. So think about it and give as much as you're able because lesbians and gay men in this state deserve to have our voices heard. Thank you.

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OITM Contributions

- _____ \$450, twelve page issue
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323 Pearl Street
Burlington, VT 05401
863-5510