

# Coming Out

## Who Has the Right to be Righteous?

by Holly Perdue  
Co-liaison to the Statewide Coalition for  
Lesbians and Gay Men to the Governor

So, here we are celebrating ourselves, our community, and our achievements during another Coming Out Day. Everyone has read about our achievements in the papers, and they are in no way minor. Once again history was made when the Hate Crimes Bill passed both chambers to become law. Once again we were seen as important activists who represented an intelligent, powerful community.

So, we have a reputation now. But our reputation will not be the only force we will need to put forth our agenda in the future.

We have been targetted by the religious right as the primary focus of their campaign to keep the country righteous. Part of their agenda is to divide their opposition and break it down. **WE MUST NOT LET THEM DIVIDE US.** We must continue to put forth a unified front. **IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT STARTING RIGHT NOW** no one sees dissension in our ranks. It is most important that the members of our community see past their differences, and see instead their commonalities.

I read with sadness the dialogue that has been continuing in Lesbian Connection about the women at the last Michigan Women's Music Festival who took it upon themselves to purge the Music Festival's community of the S/M women.

What right has this small group of women got to declare themselves more righteous and more moral than these women whom they don't even know? Whose right is it to dictate what kind of sexual practices are acceptable and which aren't? **NO ONE; NO ONE'S.** Yet these

women consider themselves a part of the lesbian community, a community which constantly is threatened and moralized against by people that do not know us.

I listen with anger as members of our community condemn tea rooms, one night stands, anonymous sex, and non-monogamy, because who are these individuals to tell other members of our community what is righteous and moral?

I am tired of hearing from the "out" members of our community that someone they know crossed the street to walk on the other side so that that individual would not greet them. Are our lives so narrow that we only know people from one social context,

the queer one?

I now ask you all to look within yourselves and examine your agendas, your moralities, your scorns - and determine if these thoughts are worth enhancing the isolation of even one member of our community. I implore you all to overcome your societal upbringings and reach out to the individuals who are alone at the bar, who are deep in their closets, who are out there in the forefront trying to make each one feel welcome, to feel a part of the powerful community to which we belong.

The Goddess knows how much each of us is going to need that support in the very near future.

## A Recent Episode in My Coming Out Story

by Celia Hunter

Other women may find coming out to be relatively quick and painless, but that has not been the case for me. I have been a lesbian for at least 13 years, but it was only four years ago that I started coming out to straight friends and family for the first time.

Since then, I've come out steadily, one person at a time, to the people who matter to me. I haven't lost anyone yet, and having the burden of the "terrible secret" fade slowly into something approaching insignificance has changed my life in ways I never imagined.

The process has been slow. By the beginning of this past summer, I still hadn't come out to all my friends and relatives. The reasons varied: one friend was a colleague from work, and that was a line I hadn't crossed. Another was friend from high school whose life is very different from mine. I was afraid she wouldn't understand, and I didn't want to risk losing

her. I was unwilling to change the image these people had built up of me over the years. I didn't want them to think of me solely in terms of my sexual orientation, which is what I thought they would suddenly do, and I wanted to be free to change my mind about my lesbianism without losing face if I decided to do so later on.

This summer my relationship with the woman with whom I once thought I'd spend the rest of my life broke up. The pain and grief were terrible, and I found it wasn't possible to pretend to people I cared about that everything was fine. To do so felt like a betrayal of the relationship, myself, and the friendships these people thought they had with me.

So one day in early September, I sat down and wrote coming out letters to four old friends. I told them I was a lesbian, that I was in the middle of a break-up and was having a hard time. I told them a little bit  
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