

## VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS: Censured Sexualities

by C. Rodgers

I am a dyke. I want to live in accordance with my dykeness, which means I want to love women freely — all women — without fear. I want to feel the strength of women, especially my own, and not have that strength, or my abilities, or any of the possibilities for my life depend on men. I celebrate women! And, once in a while, when I am feeling sexual, I want to share bodies with my woman lover.

Well, there is such a thing as being a lesbian, and a different thing which is being part of the lesbian world. Being a lesbian is the full spectrum of my attraction to women, and how I construct my life around that central fact. Being a member of the lesbian world means having beliefs and behaviors that are acceptable to other lesbians. Failure to act in accordance with the acceptable behaviors brings isolation and rejection.

Ask any woman who is sexually attracted to women, but who still has men for friends, or even (gasp!) an occasional lover. She is a pariah, an outcast.

A lesbian must never, never admit that she once loved a man. If she feels any grief for any pain she undergoes as she begins to call herself lesbian and leaves the straight world behind, she has no option but to suppress. No lesbian will hear her or comfort her.

Damn this nonsense! What gives lesbians the right to reject or censure any woman? Haven't we been victimized enough? Do we have to victimize each other?

I have loved men, and I still love men. Love flows from the deepest, most sacred part of myself, and it isn't worth less because it is directed at a man. I don't want sex with men, but so what if I did? We have internalized the hatred of others into ourselves, and we give forth the rejection we have received. Women have always been trained to hate each other, and lesbians continue to exude the lessons they learned.

Women with cropped hair, stone cold emotions, harness boots, and working jeans are sexy as hell. Women wearing dresses plunging down their backs, blush on their cheekbones, and rings in their ears are beautiful. Mi'Lady with short curly hair, androgynous clothes, and a twinkle in her eye takes my breath away. I have long hair, sometimes wear make-up, and like to sew — and I'm the butch. Don't believe it? Too bad. Come four-wheeling sometime with me in my Jeep Wrangler Sahara as I barge my way through bottomless mudholes. Love those mud bog boogies.

"If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution," or words to that effect were spoken by Mother Jones. How many lesbian women go through their lives sad, lonely, and isolated because they cannot shape themselves to conform to the lesbian world? It isn't freedom we've bought with our wills; it's just another prison, even if we did get to choose the color of the paint. We were co-opted, and we did it to ourselves. ▼



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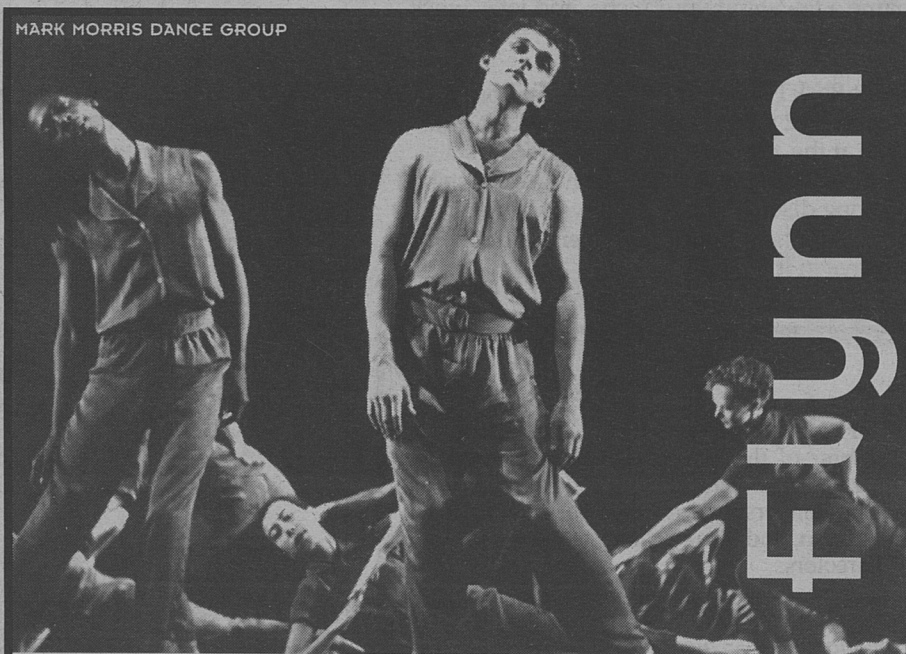
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## Youth & Parent Groups Join for Events

WASHINGTON DC — At the same time the AIDS Memorial Quilt is being displayed in its entirety on the National Mall, two other groups will be holding their annual conferences in the nation's capital.

P-FLAG, the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, will join with the National Youth Festival sponsored by the Indiana Youth Group for a combined special event on Saturday, October 12.

The Youth Group will also be sponsoring a Gay Youth March on Washington that weekend, which coincides with National Coming Out Day. The theme for this year's march and for the IYG conference is "Free 2 B Me."

IYG, one of the largest gay-youth serving organizations in the country, supports youth in gender and sexual self-discovery. For more information about the national Conference, contact Michele at IYG at (317) 541-8726. ▼

## Activists Gather for National Conference

WASHINGTON DC -- Barney Frank, the openly gay and outspoken Democratic Congressman who recently spoke in Vermont on behalf of State Auditor Ed Flanagan, will kick off the ninth annual Creating Change Conference at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Alexandria, Virginia on Thursday evening, November 7.

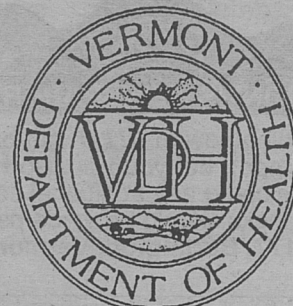
The national gathering of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered activists features pre-conference institutes and trainings on such topics as Youth Organizing, Laying Foundations for Community Centers, and Board/Leadership Development. The core conference itself will run from November 7-10.

This year's conference features the First Annual Vito Russo Memorial Lecture on Art and Politics, to be delivered on Friday, November 8, by author and poet June Jordan. The late Vito Russo, a 1989 Creating Change keynote speaker, wrote the critically acclaimed study of cinema *The Celluloid Closet*, which itself was recently transformed into film.

Veteran organizer Carmen Vasquez, currently the Director of Public Policy at the New York City Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, will deliver a keynote address on Saturday, November 9. Vasquez, a self-described Butch-Puerto Rican-Socialist, is Co-Director of Promote the Vote, a national voter registration and mobilization project of the country's 65 community centers.

Conference attendees can choose from dozens of workshops, panels, caucuses, meetings, and small group sessions throughout the weekend. For more information or to receive a brochure and registration form, call (202) 332-6483, ext. 3329 or check out the conference Web site at <http://www.ngltf.org/cc96>. ▼

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