

# CROW'S CAWS

by Crow Cohen

## THE FLAVOR OF RADICALISM

I just got back from a conference of women activists on environmental issues, and I'm sad to admit I experienced culture shock. Now these committed gals are doing crucial work - tracking the high incidence of breast cancer in Vermont, organizing farmers to do sustainable agriculture, challenging corporations to clean up their wastes, etc. I am so grateful these women see themselves in leadership roles as they head up grassroots committees to fight the good fight.

So why did I feel so alienated? After all, they used the word "feminist" a lot, which is one of my all time favorite words (in case you couldn't guess.) But I noticed they interchanged the word "feminine" with "feminist." I noticed they kept buying into the notion they were doing this work for their children as if it's not enough to do it for themselves. I noticed they were awfully uniformly nice.

Although they loved to mention how much they valued diversity, out of 100 people there were no women of color present, no women with disabilities, nor was there a genuine class mix that I could detect. As for the dykes, they may have been there, but they were not the least bit identifiable; and believe me, my "gaydar" is pretty sophisticated. I just think the signals are getting weaker.

And that's my point. There was a distinct lack of fire, passion, stimulating debate, or even political outrage. Most of these women were so polite it genuinely worried me. I couldn't help mulling over the difference between radicalism and liberalism. I don't want to polarize the issue since we had enough of that in the '70's, but there was no doubt about it - as a group, the environment they created felt deadly to this frustrated dyke eager to make the connection between rape of the earth and rape of women. (Words like "rape" were totally avoided.) Mostly what I heard was eagerness not to offend.

My question is, can these

major challenges to garbage-making industrialists, greedy developers, and war machine lovers (99% male, by the way) be held off by sweet women? Or is it that these women weren't really as sweet as they seemed and could be appropriately ferocious when needed? Perhaps. But there's a problem. If judicious, diplomatic, grown-up, strategic ferocity is what's needed to save the planet, how do we train one another for that kind of courage in a totally contained (let's face it) WASPy milieu?

What about acknowledgment that some of the first women who fervently made the connection between violence against women and "conquering" nature were radical lesbian feminists in the 1970's like Susan Griffin, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin. When we were teaching each other these (in my mind) universal truths we had no problem pumping each other up with the energy that was released when we found the pulse to our own liberation. Back then it was "Dykes Against Nukes" since we felt compelled to insist on visibility in those save-the-earth campaigns. Classism, racism, homophobia, and the devastation of our earth are all pieces to the not so mysterious puzzle that threatens us all.

Failure to truly grapple with these issues including dealing with the discomfort and anger that arises when working through the pain, is probably a mistake. It's one thing to give lip service to embracing differences. It's another thing to face the gut level expression of outrage when an oppressed individual or group feels free enough to empower themselves.

Although these women undoubtedly valued dissent, how true to their women power are they if they set up an atmosphere where the voices of dissent are unconsciously stifled? I don't have an answer to that, and from the bottom of my heart, I wish them (I wish us all) luck.

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STOP! Take 10 minutes, Help OITM, Help your community, and win some fabulous prizes!



Welcome to the OITM Community survey. OITM with a number of other Vermont groups have come up with a series of questions so we can better understand and serve our community. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey and the entry blank at the bottom. We will separate the two and pick winners for the prizes on July 25th. You do not have to fill out an entry form to fill out a survey and vice versa.

\* All entries and information will be completely confidential. You do not have to answer every question.

### PRIZES

- ▼ One overnight stay for 2 at Turquoise B&B in Montreal.
- ▼ One overnight stay for 2 at Highlands Inn in New Hampshire.
- ▼ A 1-hour Therapeutic Massage from Brad Highberger, L.M.T. in Stowe.
- ▼ 10 Subscriptions to Circles Magazine - the awesome new national Lesbian magazine.
- ▼ One Basket of Goodies from Hummingbird Hill Enterprises.
- ▼ 2 Outright Vermont Water bottles.
- ▼ 2 Outright Vermont T-shirts.

1 How do you identify:  
 Gay  Lesbian  Bisexual  
 Transgender  Heterosexual  
 Multisexual  Questioning  
 Queer  
 Unwilling to be labeled  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Are you:  
 Male  Female  
 Transgendered MTF  
 Transgendered FTM  
 Unwilling to be labeled

3 Are you open about your sexuality?  
 yes  no

4 What is your age?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4 Are you:  
 single and dating  single not dating  partnered  
 multiply partnered  
 partnered and non-monogamous  married to a member of the same sex  married to a member of the opposite sex  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

5 Do you have children? If yes, How many?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Are your children from  
 a previous relationship  
 foster care  co-parenting  
 adoption  artificial insemination  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

6 If same sex marriage were legalized would you get married?  
 yes  no

7 What is your income range?  
 \$0 - \$10,000  
 \$10,001 - \$20,000  
 \$20,001 - \$30,000  
 \$30,001 - \$50,000  
 \$50,001 - \$100,000  
 over \$100,000

8 What level of education have you completed?  
 Some High School  High School graduate  Some College  
 College Graduate  Some Post Graduate  Post graduate  Doctorate

9 Which state or province do you live in?  
 VT  NH  NY  MA  PQ  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

If in Vermont, what county do you live in?  
 Windham  Bennington  
 Windsor  Rutland  
 Orange  Addison  
 Washington  Caledonia  
 Essex  Orleans  
 Lamoille  Franklin  
 Grande Isle  Chittenden

What city/town do you live in?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Return this survey to:  
 Out In The Mountains  
 POB 177  
 Burlington, VT 05402

10 Do you consider yourself:  
 Atheist  Agnostic  
 Christian  Jewish  
 Buddhist  Pagan  
 Hindu  Muslim  
 Tribal  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

11 What is your racial identity?  
 African/Black  Asian/Pacific Islander  European/White  
 First Nation/Native American  
 Latino/a  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

12 What party do you tend to vote with:  
 Democrats  Republicans  
 Progressives  Libertarians  
 Grass Roots  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

13 Do you intend to vote in the next election?  
 yes  no

14 Would you use/visit/support a GLBT community center?  
 yes  no

15 What do you view as being the current political/legislative priorities for our community?  
 Domestic partnership recognition  Domestic partnership benefits  Same gender marriage  
 State appropriation for youth services  Medical records confidentiality  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_

OVER ►