

CROW'S



C A W S

BY CROW COHEN

Thoughts On Man-Hating

"It's not men I hate, it's the patriarchy. I hate war, capitalism, rape, incest, and multinational corporations that fuck up our earth and economy. I hate hierarchy, religious fundamentalism, and the courts that punish minorities more harshly than whites. All of these evils are concepts and institutions invented and upheld by men. It's not men I hate. It's the patriarchy."

This is not a direct quote, but the gist of arguments I often hear in radical lesbian feminist gatherings (which, by the way, are few and far between these days). It's probably inevitable we've toned down from our man-hating days that helped launch the women's revolution in the early '70s. Quite a few of us are having boy babies (or boy grandchildren, in my case), and many of us were damaged back then by the harsh judgements of sisters who urged us to withdraw energy from the patriarchy by giving up our sons. I know a few walking wounded dykes or ex-dykes still reeling 20 years later from pressure to choose between motherhood (particularly of sons) and smashing patriarchy to, presumably, make our world a better place.

Yet it's not only mothers who are re-thinking man-hating. It's dykes gone bi, dykes gone trans, dykes gone careerists as they head toward retirement, dykes gone spiritual, who embrace that universal harmony concept that urges us to believe we are all one with the earth or else we're doomed — this means you, no matter what gender you're messing around with.

OK, so I'm not bi or trans, and I'm not a careerist (although I now have two straight jobs), but my spiritual practice includes men and plenty of them, so I don't consider myself a man-hater either.

It would be easy to just say I hate the patriarchy and let that define just whose side I'm on in the war against women. But lately I've come to realize that phrase doesn't work for me after all, mainly because I AM THE PATRIARCHY! Therefore, if I hated the patriarchy, I'd be hating myself — and that is not the firmest foundation for personal growth, let alone sweeping global change. Besides, any movement fueled by hatred is bound to fail, as far as I'm concerned, simply because the rate of burnout will lead to self-immolation.

So when am I patriarchal? Whenever I think things will make me happy; whenever I find myself sex-obsessed; whenever I'd rather work all the time than play or eat; whenever I cling to a relationship like a life-raft; whenever I give into cravings for food, drugs, alcohol; when I find myself going for immediate grat-

ification more often than not; when I speed through the day like a house afire; when I watch a lot of TV; when I eat junk food; when I steal, lie, or power-trip;

this culture, and continuing to live in America, I am permeated with patriarchy. Even though some of us may be more conscious of walking softly than oth-

finger-pointing days over? (Damn! Those days were fun!)

What's probably required is that I become increasingly adept at sidestepping bullshit, at learning how to call it as I see it without shoving it down people's throats, and, most of all, at confronting the patriarchy within me so I can become more accountable for my actions.

How will these acts of self-discipline prevent me from that old woman-hating pitfall of blaming myself for the mess men have created? How will this stance keep me from being consumed with guilt? How will I be able to step out of the role of self-sacrificing female if I don't pursue the enemy with rigor to keep from turning that hatred inward and become depressed?

The only antidote I know of to keep from the depths of despair when we examine the enemy within is learning to rely on strong, loving, tolerant, ethical communities. If our communities

are faltering, then chances are there's a missing ingredient. Is it tolerance we lack, a scarcity of patience for those still stumbling awkwardly on our paths towards freedom? Are our communities driven by hate rather than motivated by love? Do we have a system of ethics firmly in place to help us guide one another toward right action, even when we don't feel like it — which is more often than not, since most of us loathe giving up our comfortable self-destructive habits? (Have you noticed the claw marks on your favorite chocolate bar lately?)

Am I deluding myself? Do I dare hope our communities can become that clear, that self-loving, that rigorous in their honesty, that adept at embracing ethical behavior without slipping into dogmatism or fundamentalism? I think so. As a matter of fact, there are models out there well on their way, but I'll leave that search up to you. Happy hunting. ▼

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when I hoard money and refuse to share my wealth; when I scream at kids or beat up on people; when I trample the earth with my vehicles or excessive consumption of natural resources.

The fact of the matter is, I'm as addicted to patriarchy as the rest of you. Having grown up in

ers, no one's perfect and no one's exempt.

So what's a revolutionary to do, forced to admit that shedding bad habits requires rigorous self-examination coupled with compassion? Does that mean I can no longer afford to hate violence and those who perpetrate it? Are my

A Message from the Ad Hoc Committee continued from page ten

because the process was fair and inclusive. People from all over the country were motivated to commit their time, energy, and resources to build the marches because they realized that they were both heard and represented.

And finally, when the big day arrived, we reveled in and were empowered by our accomplishment. The marches on Washington strengthened our movement largely because they were democratically run grassroots efforts on a massive scale. They have become an essential part of our proud history and a model to other movements for social change.

OUR MOVEMENT'S FUTURE IS AT STAKE

Now, as a fourth march on Washington is being proposed, we must summon the legacy of the previous three for the process by which this discussion proceeds will define not only the nature of any event that may follow, but more importantly, that of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender movement itself.

Therefore, we, the Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Process, propose:

that a call be issued for an organizing and strategy conference to include discussion and a decision on the proposed march on Washington and other proposals brought forth, with nothing about the proposed march on

Washington presented as a fait accompli; that all lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender organizations be invited to send two voting representatives to the meeting; that attendance and participation (other than voting) be open to all.

LET THE COMMUNITY DECIDE

We are calling for an open process to engage our movement in a serious, national discussion on whether or not we want to go to Washington, what's the purpose, when do we want to go, what would we be calling for, and how do we insure the maximum, most diverse participation in any planning process. ▼

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