

Rubyfruit Reader

a lesbian commune

VDL. I

ISSUE I

SANTA CRUZ

FEB. 14, 1976

This may just be the publication we've all been waiting for. We're going to begin small and then see what happens...a lesbian newsletter by and for lesbians.

We're a collective of four women who decided to make a commitment to putting out something every two weeks. Eventually we'll get into a newspaper format and come out monthly; if we can get enough support. Our initial gathering was at the Lesbian Exploration, where some sixty women discussed the needs and issues of the community. One of the most vital and immediate needs of the lesbian community of Santa Cruz is a way to communicate with one another. The so-called "grapevine" just isn't functional. Hopefully, with your cooperation, the Rubyfruit Reader will provide a forum for the exchange of information and resources, the sharing of personal and political life experiences, a much needed literary outlet, and a place for a lesbian perspective on current events.

We are very open to new collectivites, and of course this commune can't be an effective forum without your input. /So write us a letter, an article, review, story, or poem; draw a picture or cartoon; and call in activities and news items the community needs to hear.

And how do we plan to support this venture? (No, we are Not rich.) We will depend on contributions, donations in the form of support ads, personal ads (one buck each--send yers in today) and benefits. If you have any ideas, money, input, questions, or feedback, call 335-3803.

There are limited supplies of the Reader so read her and pass her on, or put her on your coffee table for your friends to read. And have a happy valentine's day...of course.

FIRST FAB HEARTS AND FLOWERS ISH

LESBIAN COMMUNITY: FANTASY? OR REALITY AT LAST?

The last two Saturdays in January were the days of the Lesbian Co-Exploration for Santa Cruz County. About 70 women came out for the occasion which was first for Santa Cruz. The first day was spent mostly in small group discussion during which an amazing number of concerns were brought up. I don't know how else to discuss these topics briefly, so I'll just list them now. We talked about wanting to integrate the political and spiritual aspects of our lives, how to come out with people, parents, the fact that cliques seem to exist and that they perhaps alienate us from each other. We need more opportunities to be with women-only in "safe" environments. We discussed the collective process as an integral part of our lives, how we could keep from getting burned out on process. Monogamy, couplets and relationships in general were recurring topics. Finding definitions that everyone could agree on was a problem: What is a lesbian? what is monogamy? what is community? what does "political" mean? who are the oppressors? who and/or what are we struggling against? We talked about the importance of acknowledging our differences without letting them divide us. We realized that there are many assumptions and expectations to deal with, and discussed whether or not they are valid. Most people felt there is certainly "peer group pressure" to deal with, and that there are certain "rules" we're expected to conform to, and agreed that we're oppressed by them. Many lesbians feel pressured to be "politically active" but aren't sure what that means. We also discussed the pros and cons of leadership and power: how it can work for or against us. Many of us expressed a need for sharing resources, a support network, redefining our politics, cultivating our feelings of spirituality, more time to be with lesbians only, space to get in touch with ourselves, and learning about our herstory. Other topics included separatism, racism, stereotyping, guilt, ageism, women's culture, finances, raising children, labels, sexuality, and the concept of over-committing ourselves.

The second Saturday was spent in morning and afternoon workshops, gleaned from the topics mentioned above, and forming on-going groups: a committee formed to provide a space for future monthly meetings such as these; a group of women have begun meeting weekly to work on finding/making a dyke center--this group is currently open--if you're interested, come to our next meeting (see calendar for details); sports are happening every Saturday at Garfield Park; and you are, at this very minute, reading the Rubyfruit Reader!!!

It's really great to see all this energy being focused on specifically lesbian needs. Lesbians seem to spend a lot of time/energy in groups which are directed primarily to the needs of straight women--I think it's about time we get together and focus on our individual and community needs. I'll be writing more about the workshops I was in, and would like to hear about your impressions of the Co-Exploration in general, workshops you were part of, and what you hope/want/need our community to become. So write me at 335-3803 and find out where to send your articles...this is a collective effort!

WRITE AN ARTICLE TODAY!!

SELF-HELP WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN

The Santa Cruz Women's Health Collective will be holding a self-help workshop for women on Tues, Feb. 24, from 7:30-10:30 pm. This will be a time for women to learn how to do vaginal and breast self-examination, as well as to discuss other issues that affect their health, such as infections, how to stay healthy, sexuality, birth control, and so on. There will also be a chance to talk about the health care system; why women don't get good health care, and what they can do to change the situation. Women will participate in a feedback session at the end of the evening in order to provide community input to be used in planning future workshops. This is a one-night-only work-shop--ongoing self-help groups will be starting again in April. All women are invited to participate in the workshops. If you are interested in a workshop specifically for lesbians, call the Health Center--possibly, one can be arranged if there is enough interest. The place for the workshop is the Santa Cruz Women's Health Collective at 250 Locust Street. For more information, call 427-3500.

PERSONALSPERSONALS***PERSONALS***PERSONALS***PERSONALS***

Ever thought about living collectively? Well here's your chance! Live your politics. We want to live together as a supportive household and political support group. This means gathering weekly to talk about what's on our minds (not just house business) as well as day-by-day energy for the house. Right now we are three lesbians and three children (ages 8, 6, and 2). We would like two more dykes to live with us by early March. Call Kater at 335-3803 or 427-3500 (days), or drop by 515 Chestnut and ask for Clytia.

WE'RE ALIVE! CAN YOU HEAR US?

In conjunction with "An Evening of Women's Music" was a showing of a film made at CIW (California Institute for Women), and a discussion led by Karlene Faith about the political and cultural work of women in prison. Faith is affiliated with the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project and is on tour with "Women on Wheels."

The film, "We're Alive," was made by women in prison, produced by the Video Workshop of CIW, together with the UCLA Women's Film Workshop. An excellent depiction of the inter-relation of people on both sides of the wall was seen in flashes of school institutions, the prison institution, women working in factories, and women in prison on the production line. Women in CIW talked about the treatment they receive such as being drugged on thorazine to nullify anger, being encouraged into domestic habits such as church, appearance, and Amy Vanderbilt's code of ethics. Self-respect, dignity, and independence are discouraged: perhaps they find these qualities a threat to the institution and/or establishment.

Ninety per cent of these "criminals" plead guilty because they cannot afford lawyers. Why is it that 60% of prisoners are Third World people, and 90% have poverty-level incomes? The parole board has the power to determine length of sentence, from the minimum set by the state, up to life. This means that people whose behavior is deviant

****We're Alive**Cont.**

in the eyes of the administration could face up to a life sentence, even after they have served their time. The state makes it overtly clear to the prisoners that they are dependent on "them" for their needs.

The recidivism rate (number of people who return to prison) at CIW is 70%. A probable reason for high recidivism rates is the discrimination in jobs and inability of ex-convicts to survive the cost of living. Some of the women at CIW had returned only because they could not get welfare aid or find jobs, and had to find some way to feed their children. Women, especially Third World women and ex-convicts, have few or no job skills, and find no place in an already outrageously insufficient labor market. The prison administration makes a large profit off the goods that the prisoners produce on assembly lines, paying them SEVEN CENTS AN HOUR.

Before they were barred by prison officials from going into CIW, the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project made available uncensored education and provided materials for the women there. There was a lot of cultural and political work shared with the women at CIW that sparked much growth within individuals, as well as enriching the unity among the women inside.

At the six concerts sponsored by "Women on Wheels," there have been these workshops as well as a drive to collect musical instruments, records, songbooks, and any other musical items. The collection will be presented to the women at CIW along with the concert, with Cris, Holly, Margie, and Meg on Sunday, February 15. There has been a dispute as to whether or not the concert will be allowed. A few days ago a woman warden at CIW was fired/asked to resign, and Allen Brown took the position. On Monday, Feb. 9, he decided, absolutely, to deny "Women on Wheels" permission to do the concert. His primary reason was that some of the women on the tour were associated with the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project. The word spread and hundreds of angry people sent telegrams, made phone calls, and made radio and television spots. A decision was made by the prison board in Sacramento to override Brown's decision to allow the concert to happen, providing only the performers and crew come into the prison. As it stands, the concert can still be cancelled, yet, it was the protest FROM THE PEOPLE that got the decision changed. It is important that the support continue so the women at CIW can experience this important cultural event.

When people are released from prison, they usually have little or no money, housing, and most certainly, little support or chance of finding a job. There is a grave need for support groups within communities to provide temporary housing, aid in job hunting, and general reassurance and friendship.

One woman in particular will be released from CIW in May and wants to come to Santa Cruz. She needs to know what, if anything, is available to her in this area. If you feel you can help this woman, providing transportation, housing, support, or information, please write to her
Jan Carson**CIW BA 1046**Frontera, Cal. 91720

We are all caged in some way: It is more obvious for those whose rights and fortitude have been stripped from them. Nothing will change unless we work together.

Calendar

YET
BASIC
DYKE

EVERY SUNDAY: KZSC/88.1/Womyn's Radio Collective/11am-1pm
EVERY MONDAY: KZSC/88.1 FM/Womyn's Radio Collective/7-10pm/Lesbian Soap Opera--7:30
EVERY TUESDAY: Womyn's Night!/Two Sisters Restaurant/7:30-10:30
EVERY WEDNESDAY: Womyn's Night!:/Two Sisters/7:30-10:30
EVERY THURSDAY: Dykes go bowling/Surf Bowl/10:15pm/reserve lanes under LOIS LANE/Ad for FREE GAME in Good Times
LAGMU meeting/7:30/Fireside Lounge-Cabrillo College
EVERY SATURDAY: Dyke Sports/1pm/Garfield Park(on Almar St.)/bring whatever equipment you have and come out and play

FEBRUARY

Sun 15: Dyke Center meeting/7:30/514 Van Ness/423-8425
Tues 17: Two Sisters/SURPRISE GUEST
Wed 18: Two Sisters/OPEN JAM
JILL JOHNSTON/reading from her new novel/8pm/Kresge Town Hall/
Thurs 19: WITCHAZEL/UCSC--Crown Dining Hall/8:30pm/\$2.00
Fri 20: WOMYN'S DANCE/Harvey West Park/8-midnight/BEBE K' ROCHE/\$2.00
Tues 24: Two Sisters/TISH
SELF-HELP WORKSHOP/250 Locust/7:30-10:30
Wed 25: Two Sisters/OPEN JAM
Thurs 26: "HOME MOVIE" & "COMEDY IN SIX UNNATURAL ACTS"/films by Jan Oxenberg/8pm/Kresge Town Hall-UCSC/Jam will be there to rap after the films
Sun 29: PANCAKE BREAKFAST/Dyke Center benefit/watch for flyers to get the intimate details or call 426-6953

MARCH

Tues 2: Two Sisters/OPEN POETRY READING
Wed 3: Two Sisters/CAROL
Thurs
Thurs 4: LAGMU Potluck Dinner/Fireside Lounge-Cabrillo College/7:30 followed by...Pat Smith & Diane Ramsey, singing & reading (respectively)