THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LESBIAN SPACES AND IDENTITIES

RECLAIMING

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The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

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“My concern is that as we advance farther into the 21st century, we are witnessing the almost flippant dismissal of recent late 21st century lesbian culture, particularly the loss of physical sites such as women’s bookstores and women’s music festivals and their material legacies (books, journals, albums, tapes, magazines, etc). At it’s peak, lesbian performance culture in the 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s was every bit as unique as gay male drag, punk rock, Seattle grunge, and other genres.”

AfterEllen, Michigan Womyn’s Festival, bookstores, record labels, magazines, recording studies, communes…
• DC, Philly, and San Francisco, London, and West Hollywood, once homes to lively lesbian scenes, have all lost their only remaining lesbian bars within the past 5 years
• New York City, now home to only three lesbian bars (Gingers, Cubbyhole, Henrietta Hudson), boasts the city with the largest amount of lesbian bars in existence
PRIDE CENTER OF NJ: GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

- Gay men: 6
- BDSM: 5
- Queer: 5
- Trans: 2
- Queer women: 2
- Lesbians: 0

http://www.pridecenter.org/groups/
There’s also been a dishonest change in the U.S.—although some events are still called “women’s” or even “Lesbian”, men are usually allowed in. Even the 1987 “Lesbian Conference in San Francisco was open to het and bisexual women AND men! This situation doesn’t exist because of legal restrictions on Lesbians, but because the Lesbians involved care more for male and het acceptance than Lesbian safety. The conference organizers wanted male media attention. Some functions are named “especially for women,” which is a reformist version of a once revolutionary position, but at least it’s more honest. The general feeling is that saying “women only” is too strong.

In queer theory and queer studies, lesbians seem to appear only where they can assimilate seamlessly into gay male culture and politics.
“Many of our best radical theorists have shifted their professional focus from women’s history to queer studies, and the result is both disappearance and devaluing of things uniquely lesbian, and is now often retroactively stigmatized.”

Lesbianism is antithetical to much of the discourse taught in gender studies and queer theory curricula—the identity category implies a binary-gender; meanwhile, gay, trans, bi-sexual, and queer, do not imply any gender category. As queer theorists and gender theorists discuss how “fluid” gender and sexuality are, where does this leave homosexual females?

- Gender neutrality and male inclusivity
- post-modern understanding of the fluidity of gender and sexuality seems to deem lesbianism a relic
LESBIANS IN THE ACADEMY

- queer theorizing of sexuality of issues which are of concern to feminists and lesbian feminists, such as sexual violence and pornography or any politics of sexual desire or practice, and there is no recognition of the specificity of lesbian experience
- Historic overlap between lesbian feminism and radical feminism
- “What even is a lesbian? Not all lesbians are homosexual. Not all lesbians are women.”
THE LAVENDER MENACE

- Lavender menace (1969)
- Lesbians threaten the credibility of feminism with their man-hating ways
- The “Sex Wars”
“The fearless Amazon generation that build an entire network of lesbian music festivals, albums, bookstores, bars, presses, production companies, publications, and softball teams us teetering on the brink of oblivion, just grey-haired enough to be brushed aside with an impatient “good riddance” by younger activists, yet too recent a moment to enjoy critical historical acclaim. But the majority of middle-aged lesbians who came out in the 70’s and 80’s are neither at death’s door nor silent; in fact, more lesbians are able to live and speak freely in plain sight than ever before. Instead, what we’re experiencing is a semantic phasing out; a threefold dismissal of the word, the female aspect of lesbian identity, and the recent cultural history of lesbians are all vanishing faster than a magician's handkerchief. Historic, scholarly detachment is almost impossible for those who built or encountered lesbian culture as a labor of love.”
Emmi Schatz

to me

Hi Olivia,

I am planning to come on the 12th so I will meet you then. If something comes up & I can't make it I will let you know.

I am a lesbian; I came out in 1974 when I was 18. I'm going to tell a few friends to see if they also want to come.

I am not coming because I need support but instead I'm coming to bridge the generation gap. Like many women of my generation I was confused: why do all the young butches want to transition? I thought that was really sad. I did not understand the enormous pressure put on young GNC women to identify as trans. I didn’t know that it is now unacceptable to identify as a lesbian, that it’s now LGBTQ without the L. I only found out about this when I met some young lesbians at SisterSpace. That’s how I got in the lesbian safe space & butch group on FB.

I look forward to meeting you, thanks for setting this up!
Works Cited


