

SOMETIMES CLARITY AND LOVE PREVAIL

By Linda Strega

I wrote this as an expression of love for Lesbian identity and in support of Lesbian pride. I believe Lesbianism is a choice that originates from female clarity, love, and self respect. I'm not naïve; I've known the emotional pain women can inflict on each other. I'm not saying that being Lesbians makes us all admirable. I am saying that it is important for us to honor the integrity of our choice to intimately love other women, and that it is important to refuse non-lesbians' definitions of what it means to be a Lesbian.



If women owned all the words and they were not man handled (the words or the women), everyone would know what Lesbians mean when we say we love each other. We mean we are moved by each other—mind, body, heart and soul.

Everyone would know we don't mean that we just happen to like women's bodies instead of men's, or that we like both instead of only men's, or that we were mysteriously born with a "different sexual preference," maybe some hormonal problem, or that we're androgynous or partly male or really male.

Everyone would know that women who love each other completely and exclusively have good reasons for loving that much, even though we are punished for it. No mystery. No need for scientific research or explanation. Why wouldn't women be moved by each other? And considering male domination, male violence, rape, sexism—the whole lethal machinery of patriarchy—isn't it harder to understand women being attracted to men?

Does the fact of heterosexual biological reproduction mean women can't help but fall in love with men, no matter what? Does it mean women can't help but be loyal to patriarchy, putting boys and men first in their lives? No, propaganda and a system of rewards and punishments have to be enforced to accomplish that, but those don't always work. Lesbians are proof of that.

It is not reasonable that heterosexual and bisexual women are considered the "real world" of women and the correct center of attention, while Lesbians are considered an oddity that doesn't quite fit any

understandable picture of human society without convoluted speculations and pseudo explanations.

Are Lesbians considered unnatural and in need of explanation because we are a small minority of women? No, patriarchy labels us as unnatural because if all women put women first in their lives in every way patriarchy would disintegrate.

Patriarchal loyalists want to eradicate Lesbians to safeguard patriarchy. Since they can't, they do all

they can to make sure we remain a minority and as invisible as possible. They claim we don't exist, or are a biological mistake, or choose to selfishly break the laws of nature. They claim that we embody all the worst qualities of men so other women should be afraid of us. They pressure us to be closeted, to feminize ourselves, and to imitate heterosexual ways of life. They ridicule and despise us even more if we're not feminine. They want us to disappear under the catch-all label of queer. They use fake images of us as pornography. Rapes of Lesbians tend more often to be gang rapes, especially when the Lesbian is Butch.

There is constant insecurity and punishment for being out Lesbians, worse for Lesbians who are racially oppressed, poor or working class, disabled, very young, old, refugees, undocumented immigrants, and/or institutionalized. But we are now meant to believe we have achieved all our legal rights and complete social acceptance unless we live in countries where being a Lesbian is still a crime.

If women owned all the words and did not let men steal their meaning, Lesbian girls would not be pressured into identifying as male and given harmful hormones and irreversible surgeries. Men would not get away with claiming to be Lesbians and demanding sexual access to us. They would not be protected by some Lesbians and other women who put those men's demands ahead of our rights.

If women owned all the words and did not let men steal their meanings, women and girls would be freer to be ourselves, to love ourselves, and to love each other. Everyone would know that being a Lesbian makes the most natural sense in the world, and that sometimes clarity and love do prevail.