

# DEBRA'S STORY

I don't think anything worth mentioning or worth thinking about happened to me until I came out as a lesbian. So that means I started my life (consciously) when I was 13. Actually, it wasn't until a year later that I found out what a homosexual was and that was because my mother gave me 'The Well of Loneliness' to read. There was no real hassle in my coming out. It happened so naturally and spontaneously with my best friend, that I had no idea when I became aware of the way homosexuals were talked about by my parents and other "adults". I went to Catholic schools and according to them heterosexuality was non-existent, except sometimes between married couples. Therefore homosexuality was never mentioned. About the same time I came out I had my first sexual experience with a guy, so as my sex life and vocabulary expanded I labeled myself bisexual.

When I was around 14 I learned that a lot of homosexuals lived in a place called Greenwich Village, which my parents called "pervert haven". So I began hanging around Washington Square and allowed myself to get picked up by what I considered very weird women and when things got really bad I'd let a man pick me up. Most of the people that picked me up were much older than I was, which wasn't unusual since I was so young. I don't recall any unusual experiences, but I do remember being very impressed by how intelligent and strong these women were. I guess I

thought that aside from being women and gay, that they had to be crazy and stupid too. I stopped going there after two years when I got kicked out of the Catholic school I had been going to. Somehow the administration found out that I was gay. It was probably the gym teacher that told them since she was always eavesdropping in on the conversations when the girls had to take showers. Anyway, it was some scene. Aside from being considered a pervert in the eyes of the church, I must have been considered beyond salvation and likely to contaminate my sister students. For some reason the school officials couldn't bring themselves to tell my parents and I was dismissed on grounds of academic inefficiency and sent to public high school where they would put up with the likes of me. After being in public high school about three months I somehow managed to get myself pregnant. I got

an abortion from this pre-med student quack who a "friend" knew. All that Catholic school brain washing must have got to me because I went through a lot of heavy guilt trips about how I had killed a life and I made a few serious attempts to kill myself. I still get pretty freaked out about the whole thing even now. I was still having relationships with women during this time and it was the only thing that I even cared about seriously.

I remember thinking then that sexual relationship between women were the ultimate expression of love. Little did I know how right I was.

During senior year in high school I began getting into drugs a lot. The first drug I ever did was acid and during a two month period I tripped 30 times. I was getting more and more spaced out and eventually I began doing harder drugs. What had been happening was that my friends found out that I was gay and they couldn't handle it. They said I was sick but could be helped if I wanted to be. I never thought of myself as sick before, but the more freaked out they got, the sicker I felt and for them I tried to be straight. I wanted them to care about me but they said that it was hard for them to accept my lesbianism. So on came the escape into drugs. The harder I tried to be straight the more dope I took and on it went until I got busted. Not that getting busted stopped me from doing dope, I just did less and was more secretive about it. My parents were pretty fed up with me at this point and my father made my mother throw out all my "hippie" clothes and told her to take me shopping and get me some clothes that would make me look like a young lady and not like "some slut". The school was more than happy to see me graduate even though I was an A student, but I was an activist and they didn't want any more of that. The last straw was when I began wearing pants to school and just to appease me they modified their dress code so that girls could wear dress slacks.

The summer was uneventful except that I managed to convince my father that my going to college would be good for me. So I got into a private college as an art student and picked up where I left off in high school. In the first few weeks I ran in an election for dorm president and won. I was one of the leaders in the first demonstration that the college ever had, which thrilled my parents no end. I was afraid to tell my roommates that I was gay because I was afraid that they would react the same way as my friends did the year before. Anyway I wound up telling one of my roommates and she freaked out completely. She reacted to me as though I was a man and liable to rape her. During this time I had the misfortune to meet one of Boston's (that's where the college was) political leaders. In true form of most politicians he turned out to be an incredible pervert. He knew I needed money so he offered to be my pimp and being desperate for bread, I said yes. As it turned out I was not only hustling men but women as well. I made a lot of money and hated myself for it. My Gay women's consciousness was obviously non-existent for me to have hustled women and to bring them out for money. I was feeling very guilty and got into my suicide trip again. Luckily for me, a friend took me to a women's liberation meeting sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party where Florence Luscomb was speaking. After that I became more and more involved in the women's movement and in SWP. Unfortunately SWP does not like the idea of homosexuals infiltrating their organization (although there are plenty of gays in SWP), so I was not open about being a lesbian. Then the Kent-Cambodia-Jackson action happened and I put a lot of my energy into the peace movement. School soon closed and I found myself back in New Jersey - no skills to get a job with and a family who thought that I was crazy as hell and way beyond salvation.

One night last June, I was sitting home bored stiff and watching the t.v. and there was this program on about homosexuality. There were members of several different homophile organizations present. It was the first time that I was even aware that a gay movement existed, although I had known about DOR for several years. There were two women on who I was really digging. I didn't know then what groups they belonged to. One of the women knocked me out the way she was talking about her feelings for women and what it meant for her to be a lesbian. I knew I felt pretty much the same way. It was announced on the show that it was Gay Pride Week and that there would be a march on Sunday. That Friday I bought a Village Voice and saw that there was going to be an all-women's dance on Saturday. I kept thinking about the things that the woman had said and decided that where I really belonged was in the Gay movement. I was 18 at this time and although I had been gay for 5 years, it took me two hours to get up the nerve to walk into the dance. I couldn't get over how beautiful the women were. They all danced together and everybody seemed to know everyone else. Eventually I began going to GLF meetings and then to Radicalesbian meetings. I soon realized that I couldn't live with my family anymore and that it was vital to my growth as a woman and as a lesbian to live in a gay community. With the help of some Radicalesbians I soon found a place to live and went to tell my parents that I was moving out. My father couldn't understand why I would want to live with a "bunch of broads" and forbade me to go. So I told him that I was a lesbian and a lot of hateful words passed between us, he really got pissed and proceeded to beat the shit out of me and then threw me out.

That happened last August and now it's spring. I've changed in so many good ways that I get sick when I think about what I was headed for in trying to make myself straight for my friends and all that other bullshit. It's impossible to relate the different head trips I've still got a lifetime of changes to go through. For the first time in my life I'm confident that I can make decisions that will be good for me. It's getting a whole lot easier to be me.



Coming-out for me very much meant that I could say to myself, "I am a lesbian and I am beautiful!"

I was 20 once and it was then I remember having my first gay experience. While attending school and living with a family, I became close to the woman I worked for. It wasn't until Christmas that I became aware of my sexual attraction for her. I was leaving to spend the holiday with my family when she kissed me good-bye, a light loving kiss that women often share with each other on special occasions of goodbyes and hellos. For me this was intense and I could think of nothing else during my four hour train ride home.

I am 25 now, a lesbian. What I choose as my first gay experience is arbitrary of course. I had sexual things for women before her and I fantasized about them - however this is something concrete so I choose it as my first. It was not until 2 1/2-3 years later that I actually said, "I am a lesbian"; what people admit about themselves (especially if it concerns something as heavy as homosexuality) and what they actually are might very well be two entirely different things. I was a lesbian at 20, and probably at 13 when I used to fantasize about a nun in my school, but it wasn't until later that I realized it. That is what it means to be really in the closet, and that is what gay oppression is all about.

There was a period of repression-oppression between my first experience and my actual coming out. It was a time of trying to be heterosexual, of really trying to fit in. During this time I had conversations with the abovementioned woman about homosexuality. I remember her commenting, "homosexuality is a phase many people go through before they become sexually mature". Now I realize that is bullshit, but at the time I believed her. I was trying ever so hard to deal away with my "homosexual tendencies" and in the process become mature. I had deep relationships with 2 other women during this time, but was afraid to deal with my sexual feelings towards them. Not being able to accept the beautiful feelings I had within myself towards these two women is a not-so-good comment on where this society of ours is at regarding gay people. All in all, I was hung-up, frustrated, unable to move forward because the forward in which I wanted to move was too scary.

My coming-out was a very positive experience for me. I did not have to deal with the many horrors of the gay-bar scene that so many of my lesbian sisters had to go through (in fact, I was so naive that I was unaware that gay bars existed!). I came out with my best friend a year and a half ago. I went through the whole beautiful, struggling process with her; that process of discovering each other's bodies, and dealing with each other's inhibitions and fears, discovering how outasight kissing a breast or tongue or clitoris can be, discovering if you put your finger or tongue in her vagina, how soft and warm and wonderful this is, discovering each other's smells - that process of discovering that what we were doing was good and knowing that "being scared doesn't mean stop!"



# come out!

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A LIBERATION FORUM BY & FOR  
the **lesbian community**



A WEEKEND OF LOVE, SPRING-1971.

PHOTO BY L. STEPHAN who is NOT in the picture

love each other love ourselves  
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