

We are here to discuss the fact that, as lesbians, we are increasingly under attack. When I speak with other lesbians, we all have our stories to tell, stories about anti-gay and ant-lesbian jokes from co-workers, stories about exploitative presentation of lesbian sex in the media, stories about feeling increasingly threatened on the street, threatened ~~XXXXXXXX~~ when we are physically affectionate with other women and also threatened just because of the ways we dress and the ways we walk. One woman I know said, "I still hold hands with women in public but I no longer have the guts to be openly defiant, to really look people in the eye when I'm doing it. And I don't know how much longer I'll have the guts to be publicly affectionate. On the street, Things sure feel like they've gotten a lot heavier.

Everyone I know speaks of the difficulty in being openly lesbian., of coming out. We speak of being silenced in a thousand different ways, through ridicule, through pity, through being ignored, through increasingly brutal attacks..

Right wing groups, with the full support and encouragement of the state, are trying to silence us, to scare us into rendering ourselves invisible. They know that we will not go away but they are trying to push us into the closet where we are no longer a threat.

In other cities in Canada and in the United States, the attacks against lesbians are more open and vicious. Since the raids on the baths in Toronto, the rape crisis centre there has reported an increase in the number of rapes against open lesbians. In the United States there is a bill before the which would not only make it impossible for gays and lesbians to receive any government funding (this would, as far as we can tell, include social security and unemployment insurance) This bill would also

cut all government funding to any groups which .  
These groups would not even have to be working directly with  
homosexuals. Thus, the bill would force an all out attack on  
gays and lesbians by all groups dependent on the state. ~~XXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

We can no longer afford to stand by in silence. As Holly Near  
said in her recent concert here in Vancouver, "The greatest gift  
we can give to the right is our silence." When we look at pre-  
vious historical periods in which there have been similar attacks,  
we can see the possible price of our silence. Those of us  
who have seen the play Bent are aware of the fact that thousands  
of gay men were exterminated in concentration camps under Nazi  
Germany. In the states, under McCarthyism, thousands of men  
and women lost their jobs on the suspicion that they were  
gay or lesbian. We have to fight back. We have to fight back  
loudly and clearly.

Yes, whenever things get really bad, whenever the government needs  
a handy scapegoat on which to blame the deterioration of living  
standards, gays and lesbians are summoned up as the main scape-  
goats. Didn't you know, we are the threat to the great Canadian  
way of life. Why, were it not for us queers, this country would  
be made up of happily married wite families where the white father  
cheerfully goes out to work each/day while his wife blissfully  
adorable  
plays house with her brood full of happy white children. Wouldn't  
life behind pink glasses be wonderful?

When we look more closely, it is not only gays who are being  
targeted but the rights won by women, by racial minorities,  
and by working people. The economies of the Western world  
capitalist  
are in deep crisis. Prices are rising almost daily while wages

fall further and further behind. ~~In this period~~ and unemployment rises. In this period when people are driven closer and closer to their limits, social services are being cut back. The recent civic strike in Vancouver saved the city thousands of dollars. So, if we look with clear lenses, we can see that as lesbians we ~~we must not be silent~~ can no longer afford to be silent. As Holly Near said in her recent concert here in Vancouver, "The greatest gift we can give the right is our silence."