



A KINHEART POSH PERSPECTIVE

Offered by the Kinheart Program On Sexuality & Homophobia in its work toward social justice

REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIPS WITH WOMEN

The second Quarterly Women's Dialogue at Kinheart Women's Center produced a wealth of materials and discussion on women's friendships with women. We would like to share two pieces with our wider audience of Kinheart friends and supporters. The first is poetry shared by Phyllis Jean Athey, Co-Director and staff counselor at Kinheart, who was one of three panelists at the Dialogue. The second is an "outline" (given to us by a woman who attended the Dialogue) in which she shares some of her reflections on trying to establish and maintain a straight-lesbian friendship.

A lesbian friendship

A lesbian friend

I don't know where to find one

I am afraid to find one

I need to find one - or ten.

We struggle in the half-light,

Hard to see each other

In the glare of heterosexuality.

There we are - on the edges

Some of us are dancing.

But

What if lesbians only want sex

And do not want to be friends?

And - what if they only want to be friends?

We need to stay away

From each other - some lesbians

are not acceptable,

Lesbians are dangerous.

They will want me to be out

They will want too much

They will look like I cannot

Be in public with them.

We need to be very close

To each other -

Huddling around the strength

Of our community,

Standing strong shoulders together,

Weaving threads of caring

To be each other's family,

Touching gentle fingers to

Remember how to love

Each other best.

I need a lesbian friend

I need her laughter and her language
To talk ourselves into being.

We need to be lesbian friends

To learn how to be

Couples and singles and family

We need to dare to break

Those places that have been

Walled off

Between us, within us, among us,

To know which rules exist

Only to keep us apart,

To learn to know how to

Be together without becoming

Each other

We need each other to be
So we are, so we exist.

Struggling in the half-light

It is hard to see each other in

The glare of heterosexuality.

There we are - on the edges

In and out, making spirals,

There we are - some of us are

Dancing.

- Phyllis Jean Athey
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The Ruminations of Lesbians and Non-Lesbians on the Subject of Being Friends With Each Other

A lesbian wonders:

What if she knows - Can we be friends?
She will leave me if she knows.
What if she doesn't know - Can we
be friends?
I will leave her if she doesn't want
to know.

A lesbian wonders:

What is the point of this,
Why should I try?
She will stand me up and make me wait,
I will be the third or fourth priority
After the men in her life.
And yet...if we can be sisters...

A non-lesbian wonders:

Does she know - that I am not like her?
Does she know - that I have men in my life?
What does she want?
What is she after?
What will she think of who I am?

A non-lesbian wonders:

What if she finds me attractive,
What will I do?
What if we are too different
And I cannot understand her?
(And oh, what if I find her attractive,
What will I do?)
And yet...if we can be sisters...

They all wonder:

Can we go out in public?
Do we go to her space or to mine?
What will my friends think?
What will her friends think?
Will she want them to know
Who I am?
That we are friends?

The lesbian wonders how you touch

A non-lesbian:
What will she think it means?
What will she think I think it means?
What will it mean?

The non-lesbian wonders about
Touching her:

What will she think it means?
What will she think I think it means?
What will it mean?

We all wonder:

What should I wear?
How should I act?
What if she doesn't get my jokes?
Why is this so difficult?
Is it worth it?
Should I try?
And yet...if we can be sisters...

If we can find a way to love each other,
a way to value what our mothers
Taught us to deny,

If we can learn that we are different
And we are the same,

What will the world look like
When we are sisters?

- Phyllis Jean Athey
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