

WE'RE QUEER



AND WE'RE STILL HERE!

AGING WITH PRIDE AND STILL SPEAKING UP

A ZINE BY THE QUIRK-E ZINERS

QUIRK-E
Queer Imaging & Riting Kollektive for Elders

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INTRODUCTION

Val Innes

The purpose of the Quirk-e Zine group is to provide a platform to write on specific topics that are important to us as individuals and as members of our queer community and our larger society. In this zine we encouraged elders to write about what they are concerned about personally or, more broadly, for our society, culture or planet, as well about aging with pride. We focused on what's affecting seniors as seen from a queer elder perspective because, after all, our perspective is just that: queer and older. We've collected a wide range of writing around that focus to share with you, and that includes significant, sometimes painful, often treasured, often political, memories. That's not surprising for a bunch of queer, politically oriented, writing elders in 2022.

We live in difficult times these days. There's climate change forcing a crisis of a magnitude that our civilizations have never before faced; there's the rise of the far-right, small, but very vocal and active, even to the point of invading our capital for weeks; there's the consistent racism and colonialism that birthed Canada and which continues today; there's Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the involvement of the military-industrial complex; there's the pandemic that has upended our lives for the past three years and threatened our health care system; there is the opioid death crisis in Canada; there's an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and there are serious questions about how democratic our democracies really are and how well we take care of each other and of our seniors. On top of that, for we queer elders, there's still homophobia and transphobia. But even difficult times usually still have their good points. One of the good things is that we're part of steadily growing movements fighting for change -- real, active, positive change. Quirk-e has always fought for change and continues to Age with Pride!

QUIRK-E
Queer Imaging & Riting Kollektive for Elders

Resilience * Creativity * Advocacy
LGBTQA2S+ writing, imaging and performing

TOGETHER WE STAND
A ZINE BY THE BRIDGE GENERATION

THE BRIDGE GENERATION
A ZINE BY THE BRIDGE GENERATION

QUIRK-E is group of elder, queer artist/activists, together since 2008 at Britannia Community Centre.

We produce books, zines, cartoons, readings, poetry, plays, photos, videos, songs, and artwork.

Visit our Facebook page (search for Quirk-e) for free access to our work and info about activities.

QUEERING COVID

FIGHTING RACISM

FROM A QUEER PERSPECTIVE
A ZINE BY THE BRIDGE GENERATION

Books

Zines

A – G – I – N – G

What Aging with Pride Means to Me

Cyndia Cole

A – Against the current, against the tide, against the odds, against the grain, against the arrogance of agism

G – Growing into ourselves, growing in grit, growing in grace, growing in gratitude

I – In spite of invisibility, in spite of injury, in spite of insidious insistence of irrelevance

N – Nothing nullifying our naming, we advance as we morph into

G – Greats – great aunts, great uncles, great grandparents of generations of a movement that gathers and liberates the entire alphabet

L – G – B – T – Q – 2S – I – A – ++ B – I – P – O – C

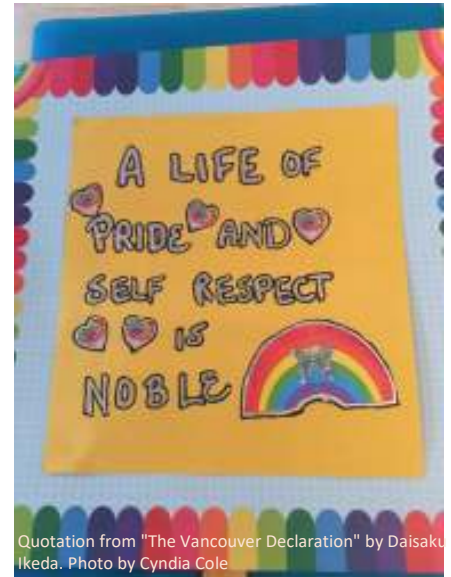
Within our lifetimes We began all alone, the only one, without names, without letters, without words for our identities.

Now We are many.

We claim every letter, every combination, every word we can spell.

We did this.

We are Aging with Pride.



Cyndia Cole



Cyndia Cole

I'M STILL QUEER

Don Orr Martin

One way old queers stay healthier is by being creative. Writing new lyrics to old songs is creative challenge we've tried in Quirk-e. Late last year (2021) when gay elder and musical theatre icon Stephen Sondheim died at age 91, we tried our hand at new lyrics to one of his songs.

Back in the 1970s and 80s--I did a lot of theatre and was a devotee of Sondheim. I listened to all the cast recordings of his shows and memorized all the lyrics. In 1989, I had the privilege to play the role of Riff on stage in *West Side Story*. (You know . . . When you're Jet you're a Jet all the way). Sondheim wrote the lyrics of course.

As much as I revere the masterpiece of *West Side Story* (written and directed by four prominent queers—Bernstein, Sondheim, Laurents, and Robbins), one of my all-time favourite Sondheim shows is *Follies*. The songs are among his best: *Broadway Baby*, *Losing my Mind*, and *I'm Still Here*...a song that lends itself so well to a memoir of one's life—the good and the bad, the ups and the downs, from youth to old age. Here is my autobiographical take on *I'm Still Here*.



I'M STILL HERE

New lyrics by Don Orr Martin

Based on Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim from Follies, 1971

Best times and worst times, I've seen them both 'cause I'm queer
 And I'm here
 Orgies and discos, death threats, a dead-end career
 But I'm here.

Survived off of food stamps, mac N cheese
 Acted my way through the seventies
 Was an anarchist pamphleteer
 And I'm here.

I've been thru polio, measles and COVID and AIDS
 And I'm here
 Baby boom, Woodstock, Stonewall, and gay pride parades
 Hold my beer...

Acid and poppers, MDA
 Bottoms and toppers, what the hey
 In my hippie days grew my hair down to my rear
 Discovered drag, pierced my ear...
 I'm so queer.

I've gotten thru, 'Hey are you a boy or a girl, or partly a HE AND a SHE?'
 Or worse yet, 'Hey, you act like a girl!'
 A compliment if you ask me.
 I've been through gay times and hate crimes, through panic and fear
 And I'm here
 Boyfriends and boyfriends and boyfriends and all so sincere
 Made it here.

Lesbian potlucks with artichokes
 Sperm donors, marriage, and the folks
 Somewhere in deep midlife I got a new career
 Bought a farm with a man I revere...
 He's still here.

My youth was radical, crazy and way too much fun
 Let's be clear
 With plenty of pathos and sorrow, well, son of a gun
 Shed a tear...

I've had many privileges yes indeed
 Plus sutures and bandages, wine, and weed
 'I'm old now,' I plead, as I sneer, 'I can't hear'...
 I stay young at heart and somehow persevere.

I made it thru Reagan, and Nixon, and Hoo-oo-oover
 Harvey Milk, Fred Hampton, and King
 Retired and moved to Vancoo-oo-oover
 Canadian life makes me sing!

Best times and worst times, I've seen them both 'cause I'm queer
 and I'm here
 Pampered and lean times, fairies and ogres and myth
 Never fear.

I've stayed healthy, hiked, and danced
 I've had a few bumps and I've been romanced
 Somehow I made one more year, yes my dear...

I'm fabulous, and I am queer, and I'm here
 I am queer
 I am here.

[Spoken] Get used to it.

ONE LEG TO STAND ON

Chris Morrissey

“My heel is quite sore,” I said after we returned from a visit to the market outside Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. . . “Let’s look,” said Colleen, my friend with whom I was on vacation. I took off my sneaker and sock. There was a sore underneath my heel a bit bigger than a toonie, as the Canadian two-dollar coin is called. “I have some cream that might help,” she said. Every morning and evening, I put the cream on the sore. It didn’t seem to make any difference. Weeks passed and the sore got bigger. Then I noticed that two of my toes had small sores. Periodically, I went to the local community centre to see the foot care nurse. “What do you think, Monica? These sores are not getting better.” “They have wound care at the Health Clinic. What if I refer you there?” “Sounds like a plan,” I said.



Judy Fletcher

I made an appointment. I began going to the clinic. At first it was once a week, then twice, and in the end three times a week. The sores were not getting better. The nurses tried all kinds of things to keep my toes from rubbing. Eventually, the most experienced nurse was asked to come and have a look. “Have you checked the blood pressure in her leg?” she asked. They found the blood pressure cuff. It was one with double cuffs actually called a Doplar. One cuff was put on my leg above my knee and the other below. The same procedure was carried out on my other leg. “There is a difference in the pressure above and below the knee,” the nurse said. “I think we need to refer you to a vascular surgeon.” I had some idea that I was on a train and not sure of my destination.

The surgeon looked directly at me and said “You have very minimal blood circulation to your foot. The first thing we consider is putting in a stint. However, from the X-rays we’ve taken, it is clear that we can’t do that. So what we have to do is by-pass surgery. It involves taking a vein from your thigh and connecting it to a blood vessel just below your knee.” It all seemed so matter of fact. In a way, it was something I was familiar with. Both of my parents and my youngest brother had had open heart surgery. I knew from their experience what heart by-pass surgery was. Now it was my turn, only on my leg not my heart. I tossed and turned in bed having a hard time going to sleep. I told myself that at least it wasn’t open heart surgery. Still . . . During the next days and weeks, I did my usual things. Waiting for surgery was never far from my mind.

The surgery happened. The second day the nurse got me out of bed to walk to the bathroom. A day or two later, I was given a walker and told to walk up and down the hallways, a bit the first day, more the second. After about a week, I went home with information to call the clinic for a follow-up. That appointment was grim. “If you can control the pain with pain killers you will be fine. If not, you will have to come back.” He paused. I have no idea how I knew the answer. I said, “and my leg will have to be amputated.” The doctor agreed as he got up to leave. So clinical.

I returned home, alone to an empty place. The emptiness filled me. I was new at living alone. For 39 years, Bridget, my partner, and I had shared a home. A few years before, she had died after several years of living with Dementia. I missed her. I often felt sorry for myself and was pissed off with her for having left me to live through this on my own. She would not be around to comfort

me, to help me heal, to bring me things. After some days, I was crying and pacing the floor. I took the pills. I didn't care that they were opioids. I didn't care when or how many I took. I wasn't cautious. I couldn't stop the pain. How could it be that the pain was worse than before I had the surgery? The doctor had said I should go back to the hospital. I went to the Emergency Room. It was December 23. I was admitted right away. I couldn't remember what was going to happen. I didn't care. The next day, I was wheeled into the operating room. My leg was amputated below the knee. I had no pain.

The surgeon accompanied by resident doctors came to take a look every morning. One day, a nurse came in with a board and a wheel chair. The process of learning to live with only one leg began. First, how to get from the bed to the chair. I sat on the side of the bed. I looked at the wheelchair. I stared at the space between the bed and the chair. I froze. I couldn't move. The nurse put her arm behind my back. Eventually, I slid onto the board.



Judy Fletcher

I was discharged from Vancouver General Hospital and taken in a hospital transfer van to Holy Family Hospital to begin re-hab. In the beginning, I couldn't get in and out of bed on my own. I had to call for help whenever I wanted to go to the bathroom. Once I could do that without supervision, I met my physiotherapist. She began working with me, teaching me different exercises. I had to strengthen my leg muscles, my arm muscles. Whenever I could, I went outside to the driveway. I spent hours going round and round the driveway in my wheelchair. I had a sense of freedom.

I also had an occupational therapist. We practiced doing activities of daily living in a wheelchair. Many times, we went to the fire doors. They were heavy. I had to open them from the inside and the outside. One day, I was asked to meet my occupational therapist at the car that Toyota had donated to the hospital. I had to learn how to open the door and get in and out. I had to spend time in the kitchen, at the sink, making a cup of coffee. Like all residential care facilities, the Hospital was impacted by Covid 19. Residents were only allowed to have one designated visitor who could come once a day for one hour. Pat Hogan offered to be my visitor. I was very grateful that she came several times a week.

One day after a couple of months, we interviewed several prosthetists to choose the one we would work with. Shortly after that, I began the process of being fitted for a prosthesis and learning to walk with it. A leg was built for me. In the beginning I only had the prosthesis to wear in the gym. I had to learn to stand. Next, to take a few steps between the parallel bars.

There is a real science and art to getting the prosthesis to fit well. First there is a liner made of polyurethane that compresses the limb. The end of this liner has a metal pin that fits into a socket. Over time the residual limb shrinks. In order to have the socket fit better there are "socks" of different thicknesses. I sometimes find it challenging to get the right combination of socks. My physiotherapist has said, "Whenever I come to work with you, you are "under socked". I thought I had been doing it just fine.

I was very ignorant about how having an amputation would impact my life. I thought that an artificial leg would be made for me, and all I would have to do was to walk. I quickly learned that it is not that simple. I can't always tell where my foot is, or how I roll my foot as I walk. Is my foot flat on the floor or slanted a bit to the inside or the outside? How does the socket feel? Does it hug my limb all the way up without being too tight? When I'm wearing my



Judy Fletcher

prosthesis, am I putting an equal amount of weight on each leg? How does my left hip feel?

Balance. I don't remember whether I could stand on one foot when I had two of them. Now I only have one leg to stand on. Getting ready for bed and first thing in the morning when I go to the bathroom I have to stand on one leg. It is a common experience for people with amputations to experience phantom pain and/or phantom sensations. I almost always have pins and needles where my toes used to be, a lot in my big toe. I frequently want to flex my "toes" even though they are not there.

I remember that before I left the rehab hospital, my physiotherapist put a Kleenex box on the floor. "Let me see you pick it up," she said. I looked at it. It looked so far away. If I bend over, will I fall? I never realized before how often things fall or how often I drop them! Every time I wonder, can I pick it up? Will I fall? The expletive "Shit" comes out of my mouth regularly. Every night I take my leg off when getting ready for bed. "Be careful," said my therapist, "Sometimes, amputees forget they don't have two legs when they get out of bed." I have never forgotten. I never forget.

I found a way to get through this. I learned to get through difficult things in my life by regularly locking away my feelings. I simply "got on with it." I ordered and bought tee shirts with sayings to lighten up the experience. The first one was sent to me by a friend. A black shirt with an orange icon of a one-legged person. "I'm Stumped" it declared. There were others. "Quit pulling my



Judy Fletcher

leg. Seriously, it will come off " And, "I'm standing on my last leg." When my definitive prosthesis was ready, I had to decide what I wanted it to look like. It could be flesh looking or I could have it laminated with a design of my choice. I decided to go bold. It boasts rainbow colours.

It is now more than a year since I had my amputation. My limb has shrunk significantly, and I'm going through the process of getting a new socket. This time around, I am going through a wave of feelings. The reality of the losses of the previous few years. Bridget was gone. Our house and home that we had shared for 25 years was gone. And now my leg was gone. This time the lid came off. Now I sob frequently. I often can't hold them in. I scream quietly in anger and frustration.

Now all I can do is put one foot in front of the other every day.

MEMORIES

Something that is really important to those of us who are seniors is our memories. We think back to the past and treasure positive memories, sometimes fearing their loss, sometimes noticing their loss. Most of us look back at marches, protests, political actions with a variety of reactions, one of them being pride: we were there. We brought about change, significant and major change.

We also reflect on the memories that are difficult. Quirk-e members usually have strong memories of the time before they came out as queer, however that manifested. Many of these memories are painful. Here's one . . .



CHILD'S PLAY

Gayle Roberts

School doors open with a bang.
The playground fills,
groups of boys and groups of girls,
never to mix

Boys at play,
Pushing and shoving,
bossy boys . . .
"I'm next, get lost,"
cursing boys,
"It's my turn, God damn it!"
fighting boys,
"Oh yer, what'cha gonna do about it?"

I was one of them,
a cursing, sometimes fighting boy,
independent,
competitive

Girls at play
"Let's play on the swings"
"And then on the slide."
"You'll love the monkey bars,"
"And what about the roundabout?"

Often in my mind,
but forever unspoken,
forever hidden,
the wish for the spirited play of girls,
sharing,
cooperative

Girls at play . . .
for them I am unseen,
ignored,
unknown

For me,
unaccepted,
alone,
the wish to be one of them.

CHRONIC COVID DISAPPOINTMENTS

River Glen (January 2022)

CCD or Chronic Covid Disappointments is a term that refers to this or that normal activity which has evaporated with no concrete promise of a post Covid life yet. Yep, and the cost of living is going up a lot. Naturally, despots around the world see no reason not to threaten world peace under these conditions. It's kind of their modus operandi. And same planet but a different mindset, consumers and business want "as usual" even as the planet heats up. Yes, dear, these are the hard times.

In hard times, it should be reasonable to cut yourself and others some slack. To dish out some comfort as is possible and to praise those barely hanging on for their courage and fortitude. In these chronic times, people should be accommodating as best they can as the world begins Covid year three. But looking around, you don't see that much slack, comfort or making the best of it equally distributed across the world.

If you are a doctor in charge of public health, or the politician in charge of a government response, just watch the approval polls dive every time the wily virus gets the upper hand. One may wonder how many of those polled were anti-vaxers and now just see authorities as the enemy. Big bureaucratic government machines are neither infallible or quick on the draw, and setting up vaccination mandates was no exception. But getting the general population vaccinated wasn't easy: not everybody wants to cooperate even with cajoling or punitive action. Though, when the sport's figures are banned from playing for being anti-vax, that seems like a win for the home team. Definitely, the chronic Covid hamster-wheel all the world is spinning on contributes to divisiveness in societies already torn with inequities.

Poor countries had less to begin with, and while the rich ones are on their third doses of vaccine, so many of the poor countries haven't even been able to begin protecting their people. But in this case, the tail (the poor) will wag the dog (the rich) by allowing more mutations as payback for the hoarding of the vaccine as Covid spreads uncontrolled. The empires of the rich are built on cheap resources and the labour of the people who are not being helped enough, so economically the tail and the dog can drag each other down as well as perpetuate the pandemic. Not rocket science.

Yes, there are more "supply chain" problems, and there's inflation. Toss in climate change, related "natural" disasters, and CCD will also rise. This creates hard times for one region after another. However, the stock market continues to go up; the unemployment levels are decreasing, but of course women bear the biggest burden of child care and school closures. At least teachers and other essential workers are finally getting some credit and more bargaining power. A step forward, then a slide back. Every time there is a dirty discarded mask on the sidewalk, it is symbolic of all the resources being used for PPE and all the pollution that causes too. But you can now buy N95's pretty easily, and people have not run out of toilet paper.

This week, the news was rather grim: there was a huge volcanic eruption and tsunami; an asteroid sailed by rather near earth; Putin wants to invade the Ukraine; North Korea fired more missiles toward Japan; the authoritarian Chinese are hosting an Olympics in concentration camp mode; snowmagedon is now on the east coast, while Australia is hit with the hottest temperature ever recorded there; 5G cell towers may ground airlines; poor Queen Betty has to ostracize Andy,



and the democracy in USA is on life support. Breathe. There were, of course, some positive things; Omicron may help push towards some herd immunity; the new telescope is doing well out there in space; a new cheap and easier to make vaccine works, and the blessed creators are planning on giving the formula to the world for free.

So though I am chronically Covid disappointed and have threadbare optimism 2022 will be



happening, the year will happen with or without my approval. There will be enough people of goodwill helping others; some politicians actually have some altruism; scientists aren't going to stop figuring out ways to stay ahead of the mutations, to feed the world, to clean the environment and to speak truth to power. Poetry, novels, plays, music, movies, fine art and folk art will be created. Babies will be born. Maybe the despots will behave better, and the billionaires will divest . . . No, probably not the billionaires, but what can one do except keep on going?

Postscript

When I shared this rant, I received feedback that there wasn't a queer perspective in it. I thought hard on this. At first I was thinking I should rewrite it and add some wise, queer perspective. But after consideration, I decided I would add this postscript as others might write pieces with little overtly queer content. Because I am queer, it IS coming from a queer perspective.

I believe my writing is very much the result of my life journey which has been influenced by being queer, feminist, socialist, environmentalist, a social worker, a parent, and on low income with other influences that intersect. This rant reflects all of them, not just my being queer. So I think that justifies not going back and interjecting "this or that opinion is queer distilled". Being queer is also being a complex human being, sharing most traits with other humans, and, in my case, having a total commitment to the wellbeing of my fellow humans and this fragile, life-giving planet.



SCAFFOLDING

Ellen Woodsworth

In my memoir I have traced what my scaffolding is made of, who put it up and the whys, when and whereas. Now at 74, I am staring at myself as the scaffolding is slowly being stripped away. Some cosmetic, some blood, some tendons, some muscles, some bones even some organs. They mostly hurt coming off, leaving me raw, exposed and vulnerable in a frightening world.

My Grandparents on both sides of the family are gone, as are my parents and all my aunts and uncles. My brothers shunning me is the last part of my immediate family stripped off unexpectedly, a painful raw wound at first, now a clear meadow, a clearing that was once a forest, only occasionally making me sad or angry. The process of selling the family cottage constructed when I was a month old on an idyllic 25 acres on a bay in southern Ontario is painful. The ten remaining families in the co-op are like close cousins. To leave the co-op in Prince Edward County where my mother and family are buried, and the family farm is still active, is like an enormous root system being torn up. I am worn out.



Just a few months ago I reached an agreement to step down as Co-Chair of Women Transforming Cities, choosing to be Matriarch, the release of another scaffolding I had set up myself 18 years ago. That was an agonizing decision. Those nerves continue to twitch and cause pain. My memory gradually not working well is another level of scaffolding invisibly melting away. My right hip aches, my hair is turning white; my left hand shakes; I get tired more easily. I am quivering in the battering gales of uncertainty as the scaffoldings crumble away, leaving me almost naked at 74, facing a scary world. My core is exposed, and I am shivering.

I am afraid, wondering what more will I lose? What will be stolen next from my sense of myself. I am shivering. Who am I now, and how long will that understanding of self-last? Will I be able to steer my future at all, or will age, COVID variants, climate change, a possible civil war in the US or even nuclear war determine my future? I have more time to pay attention to how I feel as these seismic shifts shake the core of my being, leaving me terrorized, waking me in the middle of the night, night after night, wondering how to find peace within.

I reassure myself by stating that I am Matriarch of Women Transforming Cities; I have chosen to be Co President of Women's International League For Peace And Freedom (WILPF) Canada. I am writing. I am not alone. I can reach out to many cousins and friends. I have my partner, Joy, and her family. I follow the news, getting important information on my Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn feeds and email. I take daily walks, do yoga and kayak weekly, and feel my body responding happily. I look forward to my good friend, Laura, arriving tonight from a conference in Copenhagen, though I fear she will bring COVID. Those new scaffoldings hold me together.

I create scaffolding for my plants, and they bring me pleasure. My garlic is up, and I will harvest them in two weeks. The tomatoes are turning red, and the green peppers are getting larger. The snow peas are blooming and gifted me my first pod yesterday. Joy and I go for a walk along the river, and I discover the hollyhock seeds from the cottage that I sprinkled last year, at a curve in the path, have emerged in soft pink flowers.

I will call Yasuko and Mary, both in their 90's, their lives much more fragile than mine. Mary has COVID, and I haven't heard from Yasuko in too long. Another best friend just learned she has Parkinson's. The scaffolding of friends is beginning to crumble. The past is not the future; even the present is not sure. I will take baby steps into today, hopeful that I can walk through this day without

falling through another unforeseen crack. My phone rings. It is Laura, who left for Victoria yesterday after a three-day intense visit. She has COVID. Oh my god, did we catch it? We immediately started to test ourselves each morning.

I will make some granola. I know this will comfort and sustain me. I chop the pecans, mix oil, maple syrup, vanilla, a touch of salt, cinnamon, and sliced almonds thoroughly through the oats and put it into two large pans at 400 degrees. Soon the house is full of the warm scent, and I will fill two green bowls with granola, add some fresh mango and strawberries and top it all with vanilla yogurt. Joy and I will enjoy a moment's pleasure with each other before the next wave comes crashing in and takes another piece of me away.

Maybe I will try to avoid the news today. But there really is no place to hide. There are, though, moments of bliss. This morning I woke up happy, but thinking it is the time just after the tide has sucked up all the ocean and everything around it. I am enjoying the moment preparing for the arrival of my writing group. But I am dreading the tide's return that will come crashing in taking everything with it. No scaffolding seems to be able to prevent the future.

Many of the members of Quirk-e have been activists for most of their adult lives. We have strong memories of the battles fought, the marches and protests attended, the committees formed, the meetings and gatherings, and days and nights of planning and preparing. Here's one of Lorri Rudland's memories of such an action.

WOMEN RALLY FOR ACTION:

The 1976 Womens' Lobby of Every MLA in the BC Legislature

Lorri Rudland

On January 18, 1976, in a smoke-filled room about thirty feminists from many local women's groups met to discuss our response to the newly elected Social Credit government which had eliminated the Office of the Provincial Coordinator for the Status of Women, the Department of Education's Special Advisor on sex Discrimination, the community Advisory Committee on Sex Discrimination and stated there would be no further funding for transition houses, rape relief centres and women's groups. We were very angry.

After intense discussions for possible actions, the women came to a collective decision on a simultaneous lobbying action of all the provincial MLA's and a Rally outside the Parliament Building. At the second meeting, the name Women Rally for Action was chosen. To publicize our plan, women who volunteered for outreach spoke to as many individual women as possible, as well as at women's centres, women's committees of political parties, the BC Federation of Labour, the BC Teachers Federation and the women's committees of various unions and universities. One of my roles was outreach, and I spoke to many women's groups in the lower mainland informing them of our plans and encouraging them to join our action.



Rosemary Brown was an MLA, in the New Democratic Party; lobbyists reported that she said women's centres were a high priority and should absolutely be core-funded. She said that she was not happy with the NDP performance during the last government because it had not listened to the membership on women's issues. She supported community-controlled 24 hour quality child care. She saw the reason that this had not been implemented as being that many people in our society still have the attitude that "a mother's place is in the home." She was in favour of adding sexual orientation to the Human Rights Code and felt that obtaining custody of the children should not be influenced by the fact that the mother is a lesbian.

Our numbers grew. Committees were formed, over 23 of them. Each committee chose a coordinator who met weekly with the other coordinators on Sunday in a committee coordinators' meeting. Examples of committees were the Lobby Committee to develop a lobbying plan for each MLA with the interviewer taking control of the interview, a Finance Committee to raise money from button sales, shaking the can at every meeting and seeking donations, a Billeting Committee to house the out-of-town women, a Media Committee to keep the media informed, a MLA's Appointments Committee to make a concrete appointment with each MLA for March 22nd (not an easy task), a Transportation Committee to hire the buses we needed to transport the women who needed it to Victoria and back, as well as many more committees including medical, food and sanitation, daycare, and placards.

A Brief committee was formed to do research. Each issue to be addressed contained a rationale, followed by a series of recommendations in point form. The researchers made sure the recommendations were all within provincial jurisdiction. The brief writers included urban and rural issues and added local issues of concern to women of particular ridings when they brought them forward. Some of the issues were representation for women within government, Women's Centre core funding, family law, education, childcare, human rights, maternity protection, rape, health care for women, and labour standards.

The Central Communications Committee issued a weekly newsletter of Rally organization and distributed it far and wide, to women's groups, individual women, libraries, labour and teacher's groups. In addition to the day of the demonstration, we had rented a large hall and organized billets and accommodation for women for the day *before* the action for the lobbyists and some organizers. Many of the women who joined the lobbying action had never met their MLA and were nervous about the lobbying action. Some of these MLA's can be slick customers in taking control and moving the lobbyists off the issue. So our lobbying planning group prepared skits and information to assist all of the women lobbying to take control of the action, present their issues, make their recommendations. They were then to write down the responses of the MLA's which would be reported to the larger group at the microphone outside.

In one skit, The ***Minister of Absolutely Everything Important***, played by Gail Meredith, greeted the lobbyists with these lines, "Hello girls. It certainly is wonderful to see the fairer sex brightening up our office. Now, girls, I've had a look at this LONG (21 pages) brief you've drawn up and my goodness, haven't you gone to a lot of work! And you have an agenda, haven't you? Well, since you're members of my constituency, I think we can just abandon this piece of paper and chat in a friendly fashion." And that was NOT going to happen, not after our lobbying demonstrations.

Bill Bennett, Premier, MLA, Social Credit Party re: funding for women's centres "the pie is small"; he was noncommittal on changes to family law as recommended by the Berger Commission, "only read the highlights"; he was unaware of the daycare needs in his own riding; he generally didn't want anything recorded, and tried to deal with the lobbyists as Premier rather than as their MLA, passing off issues as the responsibility of other departments, stating "I did not create the issues."

A program was developed for the day of the Rally in front of the legislature, a sound system was rented and two women, familiar with all Rally policy decisions were chosen to maintain control of the microphone and MC the demonstration. Ellen Frank had the morning shift, and I had the afternoon shift. Both shifts contained speakers and songs and most importantly reports from the lobbying sessions. On March 22, 1976, a cold and cloudy day, all MLA's in the BC Legislature were lobbied by teams of 2 -5 women from every riding in the BC legislature. In all 246 women arrived representing 48 ridings. The Rally turned out to be rousing, as one after the other, the teams of lobbyists presented their MLA's results at the microphone, which were not always, but often, dismal. Being MC was great fun, and the crowd was noisy and supportive. Following that, reports of the lobbying session were presented all day at the microphone located at the front steps of the Parliament Building to a waiting crowd of 500 women. Responses from the crowd varied. Roars of laughter were heard when lobbyists delivered the response from William Vander Zalm. Social Credit Party.

Vander Zalm said, with regard to sex discrimination in the schools, "I didn't know there was any sex discrimination. My son took cooking; I thought he was crazy. . . . If women want to weld, fine, but I don't think we should discourage them from cooking. Women make the best cooks and housekeepers and should be encouraged in that role."

The media response was excellent, primarily in the lower mainland and lower Vancouver Island, but there were articles here and there throughout the province and television coverage on the major news outlets. When women organize around issues, we are not so naïve as to expect we will immediately win. Sexism and misogyny have lasted for a long time and continue to oppress women systemically throughout Canada and the world. But an immediate result of Women Rally for Action was the reinstatement of funding for transition houses and some women's service organizations. Some MLA's from all parties went on record as supporting these issues.



The Rally revealed to all parties that the women's movement in BC was alive and well and growing. It also served to connect women and women's organizations with each other in amazing ways. While some of the issues in the Brief have in the intervening years been implemented, unfortunately many have not, and the Brief did not include everything, just the major

concerns. Sexism, while it has taken a few powerful hits, is still alive and flourishing. The battle is far from over.

Rudland's added comment: *During this action, I was a hard-working organizer, served on several committees, and worked with The Status of Women. I was in process of coming out as a lesbian and was hoping to find a woman to be my lover. Alas, despite the hundreds of wonderful women I came into contact with over the organizing period, this goal was not to be realized for another year.*

Sourcebook, *The Rally Story*, by Judy Bourne, Diana Ellis, Carol Norman, Bobbie Patrick and Lorri Rudland



THE INDIGO SURVIVORS PROJECT: ADDRESSING ELDER ABUSE IN THE QUEER COMMUNITY



Claire Robson, Simon Fraser University, Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies



Gloria Gutman, Simon Fraser University, Gerontology Research Centre



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Anoop Gill, Co-executive Director, QMUNITY

Introduction

Older LGBTQ2SA+¹ people share many of the classic risk factors for abuse, statistically speaking. We are more likely to live alone, to be poor, to suffer from depression, to have histories of trauma, and to suffer from disabilities (Frederickson-Goldsen et al. 2013, Choi and Meyer, 2016). The research indicates that for all these reasons, and others, we are much more likely to experience abuse at the hands of those we should be able to trust (Bloeman et al., 2019).

Though we have known this for years, very little has been done in terms of further research, responses from health care professionals, or calls to action within the queer community. Though we suspect that LGBTQ2SA+ people are more likely to be abused, no-one has run the numbers, and no-one has talked to survivors. Simon Fraser University and QMUNITY are now partnering on the Indigo Survivors Project in order to address this gap. The queer rainbow has many colours, and though we have often celebrated the bright colours of pride and joyfulness, the blue end of the spectrum has sometimes been ignored – colours that represent a willingness to face hard realities, to fight for recognition and social justice, to engage in deep reflection, and to acknowledge grief and tears. These stories are part of our rainbow, and we believe that it is time for them to be shared.

What is elder abuse?

The National Initiative for Care of the Elderly² (NICE) defines elder abuse as the mistreatment of older adults within a trust relationship. In LGBTQ2SA+ contexts, this means drawing a distinction between generic homophobia (such as slurs uttered by strangers) and abuse within families, intimate relationships, or by caregivers and financial institutions. NICE lists five main forms of elder abuse: 1) physical, 2) emotional/psychological, 3) financial/material, 4) sexual, and 5) neglect.

¹ We use this inclusive acronym unless citing from work that uses a different one

² NICE is a Canadian organization with international partnerships in nine countries

Westwood (2018) notes that the abuse of LGBT people can be seen as three sub-categories: 1) elder abuse of individuals who are LGBT 2) homo/transphobic abuse of LGBT people who are also older, and 3) homo/transphobic abuse of people because they are both older and LGBT.

Examples of elder abuse include harm by partners who steal our money; caretakers or loved ones who abuse and neglect us in intimate family relationships; or harm and neglect within institutions providing support through health care, financial services and advice, and residential and in-home care.

Hidden and Invisible

The seniors' advocate for British Columbia (McKenzie, 2021) published a report, *Hidden and Invisible*, on elder abuse as it affects the general population in BC, citing "woeful gaps" in the system of protection of BC's elders. The report highlights recent increases in reports of senior abuse, the adverse impact of COVID on seniors, and the lack of a single agency responsible for receiving and acting upon reports. It fails to discuss the greater likelihood of abuse in the LGBTQ2SA+ population – a great oversight in the view of these authors – and it also fails to situate elder abuse in any kind of historical or cultural context.

Cultural Context

This is not unusual, since studies of elder abuse have largely been generated within the field of Gerontology, and have thus depended upon scientific, data driven approaches that have largely ignored systemic inherent cultural biases and assumptions. Elder abuse is seen as something that occurs (almost like an illness) to individuals, independent of their culture and histories. Even more problematic is a predominant assumption that elders, like children, are a homogenous group of frail and vulnerable individuals. This paternalistic and reductionist approach does not serve the interests of our queer community, since it ignores key factors that have served to put queer elders at risk, and also, to render them silent.

Historically, LGBTQ people have experienced hostility and ignorance from police and health care providers (Johnson and Stryker, 1993). Many older queers remember mistreatment during the AIDS epidemic. Oppression, shame, and stigma (Yang et al., 2018) have served to silence the voices of survivors of neglect and abuse, so much so, that hardly any first-hand testimony is available. Homophobia, include internalized homophobia, plays into this silence through such things as threats of outing, reluctance to admit problems in already contested relationships, fears of losing contact with grandchildren, self-stigma, and fear of institutional homophobia. The problem of elder abuse in our community must be situated in its historical and cultural context in order to better understand how it operates, and, in practical terms, to enable us to prevent abuse, intervene when it happens, and engage in healing after the fact of its occurrence.

Indigo Survivors

Our project, Indigo Survivors, is a long overdue response to these longstanding calls for action. We seek to amplify and share stories from survivors of elder abuse in order to further understand the conditions in which abuse of LGBTQ2SA+ elders occurs, to identify the best way to support the agency and resilience of survivors, and to challenge and expand theoretical discussions of queer elder abuse.

The project is being conducted as a partnership between researchers at Simon Fraser University and QMUNITY (BC's Queer, Trans and 2 Spirit Resource Centre). We have contacted survivors, interviewed them, and then worked together to polish the interview transcripts and turn them into powerful first-hand accounts. At the time of writing, we are in conversation with a large international publisher with a view to publishing the stories, along with some analysis, as a print anthology. We hope that in this way, finally, survivors will get to tell their stories directly, and the

research community can begin to pay attention to how abuse plays out differently (and probably the same in some regards) in our rainbow community.

Our participants are brave souls. When other levels of shame and stigma are added (such as race, class, income and/or gender), and then we further add an admission of having being abused, they have shown tremendous courage as they came forward to share their stories. We do believe and trust in their resilience. And we have provided them support, including trained counsellors, at every step of the way.

If you identify as an old or elder member of the queer and/or trans community, and are also a survivor of physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, or financial abuse or neglect, please contact us by phone, snail mail, or email at the contacts below. If you know of anyone in your community who qualifies, please encourage them to contact us. We are committed to confidentiality and we offer support. We will listen to (and support) anyone who contacts us, regardless of whether or not they choose to have their stories published.

For question, more information, or to be involved in the project, please contact Claire Robson, Principal Investigator: clairerobson@shaw.ca or call 604 836 6498. All communications are confidential.

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And now for something completely different, here's another memory, one that's treasured and thought about. Maggie Shore, one of our older members of Quirk-e, recounts this memory. It's an interesting and unusual past.

MAGGIE'S SPY STORY

Margaret (Maggie) Shore

At 86, I am just having a flashback to the time I was a government agent in the 80's, working in secrecy at a remote location. At my job near Ladner, the staff consisted of six men and two women. I was aware of the higher status of the men, but I was honing my own honourable personal authority, and I lost no arguments.

I learned typing and Morse Code at that large intercept operation near Ladner. I was located in a large room with technical receivers and operators working them. I sat by my wall of machines wearing large earphones, and was plugged into and listening to the barrage of clicking and growling sounds coming over the air as I turned the dial. I had learned to discern the dah, dash, dit, dot, the language of Morse Code, as letters of the alphabet and to type it up in groups of five, a common format.



For ten years, five days a week, I drove out there in my VW from my cabin in Ladner. I also remember transferring to Ottawa in the 80's where I worked at a similar job. I remember being sworn to secrecy by officials. Also, I recall Ottawa was deadly hot in summer and frigid in winter. I did enjoy this work for its challenges and that it allowed me to work alone and independently. There was a key organization in Ottawa that coordinated the information from these intercepts for world-wide, so-called, protection.

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY – WHAT WE QUEERS CAN DO.

Val Innes.

This summer we celebrated Pride again, and we have much to be proud of. When I came out in 1977, it was an alternative to suicide, and I was lucky. I did lose my teaching contract with Brandon University, and I had no civil rights from which to fight that, but I kept my family and friends, and I became actively political. By 1991, when I started teaching at Kwantlen College, my then partner received benefits from the College as my partner, and by 2005, I had the right to marry should I want to. That is the fastest social and legal cultural change in Canada's history: 28 years. We queers did that by peaceful protest and by legal action. It's time we applied that pressure again in a different, but arguably perhaps even a more important cause: saving the planet as we know it. We're good at affecting change, and we have a loud voice. This is a call to action to use that voice.



Civilizations have collapsed before. In every case, equality went out the window, and the rich got richer while the poor got poorer, and the city-states grew until they bankrupted the land, the trees and the wildlife and then ultimately collapsed. That's what capitalist consumerism is doing today. This time, it's the whole planet. The climate scientists are telling us that we have run out of time: we have eight years to act radically to fix this, or our civilization will accelerate its collapse as so many before us have done over the millennia.

There is no Planet B to escape to. We must change or, as a species, face famine from crop



and livestock failures, from droughts, fires, floods and wars, leading to civilizations eventually collapsing. This is not about jury-rigged, piecemeal solutions; it's about the fact that the planet cannot support 7.98 billion people (and that number is growing daily) while a small percentage of them own the majority of everything and are greedy for more, no matter the cost to

the rest of us or to the environment. In addition, the world's military-industrial complex, alone, has an enormous carbon footprint that must be massively reduced if we are to survive. Nor can we, rich and poor, continue to ignore climate change and live as if resources are infinitely available and the planet invincible because they are not. Speed, convenience, comfort, possessions and the status quo all seduce too many of us into willful ignorance and inaction, built on seeing the environment and its animals as commodities, there for human use. And most of the populations of the developed world continue to consume beyond the capacity of the planet.

Incidentally, did you know that Canada, while having a small population, is one of the top ten worst polluters in the world?¹ And our emissions are rising, not falling. If we are to have any hope of surviving, that has to stop. Rapidly. There's a short door of opportunity, and it's closing. This past couple of years' extreme climate has taught us that.

And the UN, as well as the world's scientists, is desperately warning us. The U.N's Secretary General Antonio Guterres said regarding the latest UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in April that climate change is "the defining issue of our time – and we are at a defining moment": and the moment is this: "We are on a fast track to climate disaster: Major cities underwater; unprecedented heat waves; terrifying storms; widespread water shortages; and the extinction of a million species of plants and animals . . . Some governments and business leaders are saying one thing but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic."²

Governments have to be forced, through constant, informed, relentless, organized pressure from significant numbers, to free themselves from their own and the elite's invested interest in the status quo. Governments must be made, from the bottom up, to mandate actions to tax and control the wealthy, switch from oil to sustainable power sources, move to more sustainable agricultural practices, reduce consumerism and stop overstraining the planet's resources because what we have now is a suicide machine on a path to this civilization's collapse and untold damage to the planet. These are the last few years in which we can change this -- if, as Naomi Klein says, we "embrace systemic economic and social change"³ right here and right now. Other countries are doing so, but our politicians in Canada have not been willing to do that -- they'll have to be forced by huge public pressure to change their reliance on rich, influential corporate lobbies.



We can still do this -- just. Currently, we still have the tools and resources to change our system, our governments and our civilization, and there is still time, a very short time, to stop the worst consequences of the climate change we have caused and save the planet as we know it. We can do this. Read Chris Turner's *How to be a Climate Change Optimist: Blueprints for a Better World*,

Seth Klein's *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*, Bill Gates' *How to Avoid A Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need* and Bob McDonald's *The Future Is Now*. You'll get specific information on what's being done, what needs to be done, and what can be done. We CAN do this.

But will we?

As I think about the extreme climate events and actions to address climate change happening in the world, with little but words coming from our politicians in North America, I believe that the only thing that will save us is to build a mass public movement here, the kind that we queers launched to successfully gain our civil rights in Canada, the most successful, fastest social change in Canadian history. This is where we queers come in. We know how to do it, and we should do it. We're good at it, and we can make a very solid difference in this fight too. Again, it's for our survival.



Vancouver Climate Change Protest

According to a major study by Chenoweth and Stephan⁴, non-violent protests involving 3.5% of the population that have the support of a majority of that population have always succeeded in bringing about serious change.⁴ It's up to the people to force politicians to deal with the climate emergency as radically as is necessary. It's up to us, every single one of us. Keep in mind the very recent coalition between the Liberals and the NDP with one of their agreed goals a just transition off of fossil fuels. Words or action? Trudeau's recent decision to give the Canadian fossil fuel industry a further multiple billion dollar subsidy makes it clear that it's just words again. So make it be action: use your voice and organize: talk to the people you know, use social media, take to the streets and march, go to protests, call, email, tweet or write – but PROTEST - - often and loudly! It's up to all of us, every single one of us. We all have a voice. Use it.



Vancouver Climate Change Protest

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And on to another memory from Gayle Roberts about existing as trans and moving into her space.

The Shoe Salesman

Gayle Roberts



“Will that be cash or credit card?” the shoe salesman asked.

I found myself relaxing a little more as my twenty-minute shoe shopping adventure was coming ever closer to ending. “Cash,” I said, recalling my decision before I even left home that if I bought anything that day, it would be paid for with cash. I was not going to give anyone my credit card with my male name emblazoned (at least from my perspective) on it.

“Shall I put them in the box?” the salesman asked politely. “Or would you like to wear them? They go well with what you’re wearing.”

I looked down at myself. They did look good with my off-white skirt, white blouse and matching handbag. I had made a good choice, I thought, as I remembered earlier that morning agonizing over what would be best to wear on my first day ever buying shoes as a woman. A lot of thought had gone into choosing what to wear. Being as passable as possible as a woman was my primary goal; I hadn’t yet transitioned—I wasn’t even sure whether it was possible for me to transition and live in society as an ordinary woman. I was very much aware that I was exploring the world around me from the vantage point and insecurity of presenting as a woman as opposed to the complete confidence

I felt when presenting as a man. It felt strange to be focused on the immediacy of buying new shoes while feeling insecure, nervous, and, at the same time, elated.

“I’ll wear them; that’s a good idea,” I said, “They *are* very comfortable.”

“Do you need any polish for them?” the shoe salesman asked as he walked towards the till while I carefully stood up from sitting on the chair. I was very much aware that I was wearing a skirt, not pants.

As I walked towards the till, I felt myself relaxing more and more. There was no doubt in my mind that the shoe salesman’s pleasantness and helpfulness had played a major role in making me feel at ease. He had picked out a number of pairs of shoes for me to try on and check for comfort. Each time I had sat on the comfortable chair opposite him after walking around the store in my potentially new shoes, he had sat patiently on his shoe store fitting stool at my feet, leaned forward, carefully and, it seemed to me, almost tenderly, raised one of my bare legs slightly with one hand and then with the other hand had removed the unsatisfactory shoe and wiggled a replacement back and forth until it was comfortable. For my part, I had focused on the shoes’ appearance and comfort. But above all, I had made sure I had kept my knees together.

As I had sat on the chair watching the salesman, I had felt strangely disconnected from the immediate world around me. As I had expected, the process of choosing women’s shoes had been fundamentally no different than that for men’s shoes. But, emotionally the experience had been different. Was it because when I sat in the chair, I could see so clearly that I was wearing a skirt not pants? Or, perhaps, it was because a man was touching my bare legs? Had I experienced vulnerability as the shoe salesman touched me and sat so close to me? As I reached the counter to pay my bill, those feelings passed and once again I felt elated; I *am* passable and he doesn’t know my secret, I thought. I knew that my choice of clothing for that day had been a major reason for my success. Yet, I was also aware that my makeup had helped too.

The shoe salesman stood at the till and was holding up a can of Kiwi shoe polish. “I recommend this to protect your new shoes. The wet weather will be starting soon.”



I had my doubts about the wet weather; it was mid-August. It's good stuff though, I thought, having used it all my life on my men's shoes. I nodded and my thoughts returned to my makeup. I couldn't leave the house dressed as a woman without, what for me, was mandatory makeup. I remembered taking extra care that morning as I had applied my eyeliner. How many times, I wondered, had I managed to touch an eyelid with the end of the brush or even the end of my nose leaving a large unsightly black mark that would take at least five minutes to remove with my ever-handy bottle of make-up remover.

"Would you like to keep the box?" the shoe salesman asked.

"Please. You may as well as put the polish and my old shoes in the box. How much do I owe you?" I asked.

"The shoes, polish, and tax come to \$58.73."

I reached into my handbag for my wallet and took out three \$20 bills and gave them to him.

"You may as well put the receipt in the box too," I said

"Would you like me to put the box in a plastic bag?" the shoe salesman asked as he handed me my change.

I picked up the box and walked towards the open door to the mall. "Thanks. Just the box is fine," I said as I turned to look directly at him. He appeared to be looking at me intently as I stepped out of the store into the mall. In a loud voice, his parting words were, "Thank you...*sir*."

THE NEW WAR

River Glen

It's March, 2022, and I'm moving and in a fluster with all the things that must be done. And the world background to this is grim. Putin has unleashed the horror of war on the Ukrainians. Look at all this stuff. I have given boxes of it away. I had some already carted

off by the junk people. Bombs are dropping; homes, schools and hospitals are on fire. I packed some more today. Still need to give more away, and, yes, the junk guys have to come back. Wives are saying goodbye to their husbands, and kids don't know if they will ever see their parents again. I can't get rid of this and that that belonged to my grandmothers, aunt, dad and my mom. I have dragged so many things with me since the seventies, but I can't seem to loosen my grip on the things



I inherited from them. In a week, 1.5 million refugees have fled with a suitcase, with a grandma in a wheelchair or an infant in their arms. I still haven't been able to connect with my new strata council for permission on the new flooring. The toilet will need to be moved, and then I have to get a plumber in right away to reinstall it according to the by-laws. The nations of the world are leveling unprecedented sanctions on Russia but are scared the madman will go nuclear.

I had a nice visit with my family on the



weekend; what with Covid, I hadn't seen my daughter in many months. I saw on the news a father weeping over his dead son who was covered with a bloodstained sheet. I emailed my friends and arranged for us to meet for lunch this week. The Russians agreed to a temporary ceasefire over a humanitarian corridor to let people flee, and then, after only several hours broke it and started killing again. At the birthday party we had, my older daughter made a cake for her sister. It was a Kyiv cake, which was a yellow cake, meringue, a little jam, hazelnuts and chocolate frosting. It was very decadently delicious. I ate the irony, hoping the Ukrainians would once again be able to have that cake.



I also saw on the news that the orange-faced friend of Putin called him a genius. The weapon dealers are meeting the challenge of arming everyone to the teeth at enormous profit. Should I order my new mattress this week, and do I really want the couch dark blue? Gas prices hit \$2.10 a litre today. How high it will go is anyone's guess, and, of course, everything will be even more expensive on top of what we had already thought was terrible inflation. More bombs are falling. I wonder how we can fight climate change. The poor planet is wilting under the weight of our humanity and inhumanity. I may need to get some more boxes. Tears have begun running down my cheeks. I don't know if I am a bad person because I want to feel excited and optimistic about my new place.

SPEECH ON BEHALF OF WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM (WILPF).

Ellen Woodsworth

Canadian No Fighter Jets Rally in Vancouver March 19, 2022



Bad Dreams, bad dreams were the first things my partner said this morning as I was still struggling out of my nightmares. We are struggling awake into a world full of fear and desperation:

- The attack on Ukraine that could lead to nuclear war
- Climate change, short years away from disaster, being aggravated enormously
- Millions of refugees all over the world

- Famines expanding all over the world due to war devastating the breadbasket of Europe along with climate change, drought, floods and fires
- COVID 19 and variants with almost half world, especially the global south, still not vaccinated
- Huge paid job losses and increases of unpaid work for women
- Uncountable ongoing mental health issues
- Increasing racism, domestic violence, transphobia and homophobia

In the meantime, the most powerful nation in the world totters between democrats and republicans, whose proposal for a totalitarian regime was just revealed with an election two short years away. Putin, inflamed by US and NATO, moves to attack Ukraine, destroying its border nation full of relatives of its own people and reaching out to CHINA as the US moves to encircle China.

No wonder we are all waking terrified! We wonder what we can do? We're watching the billionaires and their military industrial complexes raking in billions in a matter of weeks from weapons sales. They control the media which markets war and creates more and more conflicts. Lockheed Martin, an American aerospace corporation with worldwide interests dealing in defense, security, and technology, in one week increased their holding by 20%. The US military budget is over \$700 billion a year and they have just approved \$800 million more in military aid to the Ukraine while they continue to build their base close to the Ukraine border and encircle China. The Canadian Defence budget is one third of the entire Canadian budget and they are proposing to purchase 88 new fighter jets and increase the budget to over \$50 billion.

Tamara Lorinz, who is WILPF's representative on the national NO FIGHTER JETS coalition of over 90 organization, spoke on Co-op Radio this morning. She cited former Canadian Deputy Canadian Defence Minister in a Global Mail Op Ed stating categorically that Canadian does not need military jets. She talked about how Canada had used fighter jets to attack Libya and other countries. She talked about the violence of the military, calling for a feminist analysis of the Defence Department, whose attacks on women are notorious at home and abroad.

We need an environmental impact study of Defence spending. The flight of one fighter jet causes the same emission as does one car in one year. Our oil and gas pipelines are driven across unceded indigenous land by the demands of the military industrial complex, and the RCMP jails fill with indigenous people who protest. We need to expose the social costs of the Defence budget when the government says it can't afford to address the call to action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the 2SMMIWG, Two Spirit Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girl's Inquiry.

The social sustainability crisis could be met by axing the Defence budget to address the lack of affordable housing, transit, education, childcare, adequate health care and really open our doors to immigrants and refugees. We see the desperate need for peace in the world. Canada could play a significant role for peace, if we stopped holding onto the coat tails of the US government and the billionaires behind them who are creating the situations that require more military expenditures.

What do we have in the face of the destruction of humans and the earth?

- We have strong and growing movement led by indigenous, black, Asian and other racialized people in the Indigenous, Black, Asian and People of Colour, women's, the 2SLGTBQIA++, and seniors movements
- The climate change movement
- Labour unions
- Students
- Seniors
- Immigrants and refugees

We can stand up and address all these issues in broad coalitions and call for peace now, and no fighter jets. We can act together; as Martin Luther King said: "Those who love peace must learn

to organize as effectively as those who love war.” In Vancouver, we have had 50,000 people marching across the Burrard Bridge calling for peace and no nuclear weapons, 70,000 people calling for indigenous rights, 100,000 at the climate change marches, and the World Peace Forum with 35,000 people. We are part of cities for peace, a global movement. Our signs said we were a non nuclear city. We can rise up together.

I call on each of you to talk to your family, friends and organizations and discuss how we can work together in unity with others to build a movement for peace. We need it now. Yes to Peace. No to Fighter Jets!



Reflections on Getting Older

Gayle Roberts

“And finally a news item of interest to all James Bond fans. Roger Moore, who played the role of James Bond more times than any other actor, has died of cancer at the age of eighty nine.” I sat back in my easy chair and pressed the mute button on the remote control as images of Sean Connery, Roger Moore, and still living Daniel Craig silently flitted by. Yet another actor who's passed on, I thought. I liked Roger Moore but was never really impressed by his characterization of James Bond. An image of a much younger Roger Moore crossed my mind along with the memory of him acting in the British television series thriller *The Saint* in the 1960's. His character was suave, wealthy, and stereotypically upper class British.



That's the Roger Moore I remember, I thought. What was his character's name? I could see Roger Moore yet at the same time my mind had a vague sense of emptiness as I struggled to recall his character's name. Names were always my nemesis even as a child. I felt my sense of frustration giving way to confusion, anger and fear. Fear of dying was more and more part of my conscious mind – the fear of getting older, the fear of infirmity, and the fear caused by the almost continuous reminders of the deaths of famous people, some of them older but others much younger than me. “Simon Templar,” I said quietly to the TV which was now silently trying to convince me to buy a new car. “Simon Templar that was the character's name.”

I found some solace in remembering the name almost instantly this time. Sometimes recalling people's names could take me several minutes. Sometimes I never succeeded. As a child, I believed that remembering names should be easy. As an adult, I wrote out important names, so that I had them available should I need them. Now that I was in my eighties and much more likely

to be unable to recall names and general knowledge, I worried that perhaps I was witnessing the first steps of what might be my eventual tumble into a world of remembering less and less until eventually I would forget that I had even worried about losing my mind. All too often my elderly friends either became infirm and needed support or they were similar to me – but more so – very forgetful.

My friend John came to mind. Whenever I saw him his hands were shaking uncontrollably, and routine activities such as eating or walking were increasingly difficult for him. That shouldn't be happening to John, I thought. He's younger than me. He's a big man, a strong man. Soon he would be unable to talk or swallow. I knew that as horrible as John's future was going to be for him, my personal worry was not my body but my mind – the possibility of the lack of mind increasingly concerned me – the gradual descent into a world where my essence, my thoughts, feelings, and ability to reason and express myself would imperceptibly slip-away. Thoughts of my mother-in-law who died of Alzheimer's disease came to mind. Over several years her world had shrunk from living completely independently in her own home to being bedridden and totally dependent. Had she become trapped in a body unable to communicate or understand her world, or had her mind been drained of every thought, feeling, and memory before nature claimed her frail body?

Has it already started for me, I wondered as I slid my footstool under my legs and closed my eyes? I recalled a few weeks earlier picking up my half-full kettle, placing it on the stove, and turning the heat to high. I remembered deciding to wait in the living room for the few minutes it would take the kettle to come to the boil. I saw myself walking out of the kitchen and then a blank. My subsequent decisions had erased themselves from my mind. Minutes later, I discovered my kettle, bone-dry, sitting on a red hot element with its bottom severely warped and the Bakelite handle destroyed. Now, I felt fear. Fear of forgetting and being, in a very strange way, no longer the whole person I normally saw myself to be. "Anyone can forget things," I told myself and the kettle. Probably everyone burns a pot at sometime in their lifetime, I thought. I knew that was true, but my fear had not dissipated. Instead the destroyed kettle, which normally I would have given little thought, seemed permanently and clearly etched into my memory as a reminder of the loss of self.



I noticed potential loss of self in other ways. More and more it was not just people's names, it could be the word for almost anything – the title of a well known book, the name of a place or a movie. Like the names of people, the missing word would sometimes pop into my mind in minutes and sometimes not at all or suddenly appear with clarity, if the person I was talking to mentioned it.

It was dark, other than a flickering light from the television, when I awoke. I noticed that this time the television was silently trying to convince me that I really needed to buy beauty products. I was amused. "You're too late," I told the television. Yet again, I was once more aware that my youth had left long ago. I wasn't really convinced that I had ever experienced beauty and certainly not out of a bottle. I reached for my table lamp, turned off the television and picked up the **Scientific American** magazine which had arrived in the mail earlier that day. "*The Quantum Multiverse*," declared the cover. I flipped through the magazine until I reached the article and then studied the diagrams. That will be the first article I read tomorrow, I promised myself.

I rose from my chair, walked into my bedroom and threw the bed sheets back. Life's a game, I thought. It's nature's game, and nature sets the rules. Ultimately, everyone plays the game and ultimately nature ends the game. Happiness and a sense of success is what one creates between nature's extremes. I turned the bedroom lamp off and pulled the sheets and blankets up around me. I'm doing pretty well, I thought as I closed my eyes.

THE RECIPE FOR RESILIENCE: WHAT A QUEER WOMAN HAS DECIDED

River Glen

#1. There is something that has happened to you that makes you feel you will never pick yourself up again. Still a part of you hopes for recovery and healing, but where to begin? It is unlikely that, in all the generations of humans who have come before you, some people haven't gone through similar things. All over the world there are sticky old index cards, crusty cookbooks or the trusty internet filled with ideas and tried and true instructions for just about anything possible. Take a deep breath and pick something to work on that sounds like it matches with the ingredients, tools and the skills developed over your life and begin making a plan.



#2. As you draw on the knowledge and the resources in the current reality surrounding you and immerse and focus on creating something at the same time, a space, a temporary respite from the daily grind that is grinding you is created. The effort you invest will change your circumstance and or change you.

#3. Once committed to the idea that doing nothing is not the answer and accepting action is required, it's time to act with legs over edge of bed, motivators in place, be it a coffee, a kiss, a bathroom visit, the dog needing walking or whatever that moves you. Some find checking things off a list satisfying. Others are so good at lists, they don't get to what is on them. The clock says there is time, if you just get started.

#4. Taking stock: it pays to stay present with any task at hand. Knives are sharp, boiling liquid is hot, steam alone can set off the smoke alarm. Sometimes it is not the time to answer the phone or check your email for a hundredth time. If you have done the above work of deciding to make a change, are making a plan and taking steps toward it, acknowledge your progress. Begin adding new ingredients as required.

#5. Finesse: The more complicated the recipe, the more attention to detail. Is too little or too much of a good or bad thing going to make the sauce lumpy or life bumpy. The right time to add ingredients matters, and so does the mixing, folding and blending be it with others, obligations, escapes or cornstarch.

#6. Proof is in the pudding: The timer has sounded, and your creation is cooked but may need a resting period or decoration. The recipe for resilience means taking the time to recover and to savor. It can mean indulging in the frostings of life. If you can share what you have made that adds even more enjoyment. Because you have moved through the stages from the attempting to the immersion in the experience, now you find yourself all the way to an achievement. And as long as one is alive, the act of trying is, in itself, a good definition of resilience.



Addendum: As a senior I have lost loved ones, lost jobs and money, experienced divorce, the emptying of the nest, loss of vitality, loss of my youthful looks and beloved pets, and have, at times, been buried under depression and anxiety. Some people and things can never be replaced, but nature seems to fill the vacuum -- if you leave a window open, start a new journey, are fully present, and are aware and appreciative of what is at hand. Creating anything is such a balm for the soul. Twenty-five years ago, I came out as queer and found a community where I belong. I have grown kids doing well, just enough security to

breathe, good friends, interests and passion for just causes, and my health is good enough to have a decent quality of life. Yes, I do wait for the next shoe to drop; it is the real world after all, and I am an elder, but as long as I have a heartbeat, I want to keep trying.

LETTER TO THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Paula Stromberg

Dear Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC),

My white ancestors farmed land stolen from First Nations people in Saskatchewan. In an effort to make personal restitution, here is my donation to help further the goals of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), and acknowledge past harms created by colonization. As a lesbian senior, I empathize with people impacted by colonialization: Colonial laws introduced systemic discrimination that incarcerated, shamed and punished First Nations, non-Christians and homosexuals, among others.

I am a 72-year old lesbian who is taking this small step towards reparations. In addition to making a donation for Indigenous women, I have written my Will with provisions to sell my Vancouver condo after my death (and my partner's death) and donate proceeds to an Indigenous women's group. I wonder if other queer seniors may be similarly inspired to make reparation through their own bequests, Wills, insurance policies, trusts etc.?

Making a donation is important to me. I am a descendant of Scandinavian settlers who farmed stolen land near Hearne/Briercrest in Saskatchewan, Treaty 4 territory. My mother's people were English settlers who claimed colonized land in Carievale, south eastern Saskatchewan (Treaty 2) to operate a leather goods & harness store. I want to give back some of the resources created on this stolen land.

I acknowledge that colonization disrupted the communal responsibility to land inherent in Indigenous nationhood and instead made land a private commodity for wealth accumulation. I believe that decolonizing, returning land to Indigenous nations, not just individuals, is necessary to avoid reproducing these dynamics, along with misogyny and patriarchy.

NWAC, please use the donation as you wish— Perhaps some funds might go towards compelling the Federal Government to end gender discrimination in the Indian Act, so that all First Nations women and children can gain access to rights, status and benefits?

Also through this donation, I hope to encourage elderly LGBTQI+ people and others without children or inheritance-expectant relatives, to leave some of their Estates to First Nations groups, especially those advocating for Indigenous women, LGBTQ2S+ and gender-diverse folks.



From Paula Stromberg's collection

I hope that if I share that I am making this donation with other queer seniors across Canada, I might inspire others to make similar commitments. If you have any guidance in this regard, I would welcome it.

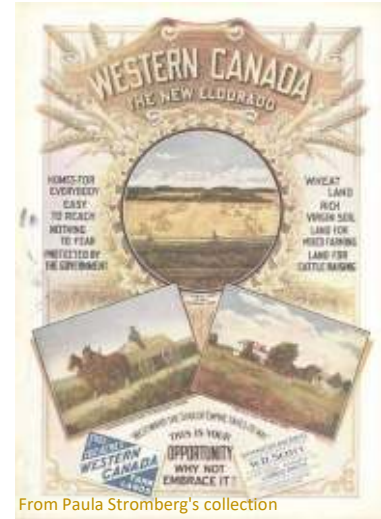
With gratitude,

Paula Stromberg

Paula Stromberg Actively supporting women's empowerment, LGBTQ2+ and human rights issues in Canada & around the world.

web: paulastromberg.com

Currently I live on the unceded ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ə m (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. In the context of ongoing colonial violence and structural discrimination, I recognize that land acknowledgements are insufficient, and that we all have responsibilities on the road to justice, land-back and decolonization.



From Paula Stromberg's collection



Queen's Athletic Park, Victoria, Orange Shirt Day, Sept. 30, 2022
Photo by River Glen

The following is another memory of political action well worth remembering. Most of us remember Anita Bryant (with some horror), but you may not know about some of the queer action in the States against her homophobic attacks on us.

DON'T CRY FOR ME MIAMI

Don Orr Martin

October 11 is National Coming Out Day in the US, where I lived most of my life. I came out of the closet in 1972, letting my friends, family, and the world know that I am gay and proud. I'm seventy now, and I partially credit my survival to date with my refusal to hide my sexual identity and my fight for my rights. For fifty years I've been a LGBTQ+ activist. Our movement has had many victories, but the struggle is far from over. It's better in Canada, but even here many are still under threat. The forces of regression are relentless. In US states, homophobia is used as a tactic to rile up the right-wing voting base and to drive election fundraising. Florida politicians, for example, continue to trample on LGBTQ+ rights. They recently passed a "Don't Say Gay" law that muzzles public school teachers and librarians. We queers have to keep coming out every day to make our voices heard. Here is a remembrance of an earlier struggle in Florida that reverberated in my small town in Washington State.

Anita Bryant was an also-ran Miss America contestant in 1959—Miss Oklahoma—and a Christian pop singer who became a spokesperson for the lucrative Florida citrus industry. She popularized their slogans. "A day without orange juice is like a day without sunshine."

Anita was also a rabid homophobe and a lightning rod in the thunderhead of anti-LGBT politics of the late 1970s. Anita Bryant was a piece of work.

Miami (Dade County) had passed a local ordinance in 1977 to ban discrimination against gay and lesbian residents in employment, housing, and accommodations. Anita and her evangelical zealots successfully campaigned to overturn the ordinance. They conducted a well-financed media blitz to brand gay men and lesbians as child molesters. Their political action group was called Save Our Children (save them from the gays). She went on the road with a national campaign.

The LGBT response was vocal protest in several cities and a national boycott of Florida orange juice. Anita famously got "pied" at a press conference in Iowa. She ended up galvanizing the gay and lesbian communities. LGBT folks leapt into the politics of nondiscrimination legislation, just ahead of the AIDS pandemic. I think in a way Anita helped us prepare for what was coming—all the death, repression, suffering, and indignities of the Reagan era.

But I get ahead of myself.

Major cities on the west coast swung into action. San Francisco, Seattle, Portland. Even in little Olympia, Washington, where I lived in 1978, we had anti-Anita singers. *Karen Silkwood Memorial Choir*, a neighborhood group, met regularly to sing labor, feminist, antiwar, and liberation songs. We occasionally performed around town—young people bursting into song. Karen Silkwood, the namesake of our choir, was a labor activist murdered by the nuclear power industry, coincidentally in Oklahoma, from whence Anita Bryant came.

Our choir had close ties to cultural workers in Portland, a theatre company known as *Family Circus*. They wrote and staged plays in the style of the *San Francisco Mime Troupe*. Members of *Family Circus* wrote a satirical song about Anita Bryant which the Silkwood singers often performed back then:



The Orange Juice Song

[Verse 1]

Down in the wet coastal town of Miami,
 where Yankee dollars and southern charms meet.
 The drinks may be dry, but the jailhouse is clammy,
 so don't take your loving out into the street.

There once was a Dade County statute that read,
 regardless of who you make love with in bed,
 you still need a job and a roof overhead.
 But that was too loose
 and gave some folks excuse
 to turn out with crosses and turn up the juice.

[Chorus]

Oh, oh, oh. Orange juice, orange juice,
 Florida-da-da-da orange juice.
 Lemons and oranges fresh from the trees.
 But they aren't the only fruits getting the squeeze.

Anita shopped her anti-LGBT campaign around to several states and cities. Seattle had passed anti-discrimination ordinances in the 1970s protecting women and gays. These ordinances were threatened with repeal in 1978 by Initiative 13. It was the same tactic that had succeeded in Miami. Anita promoted the initiative with her brand of hate mongering.

Olympia's *Karen Silkwood Memorial Choir* proudly performed the Orange Juice Song at a rally against Initiative 13 to a throng gathered at Westlake in downtown Seattle in 1978. It was one of many memorable events that fall staged by the LGBT community. The effort to stop Initiative 13 was the best organized and most successful gay rights campaign in Washington State up to that point. The initiative was defeated two-to-one by voters in November. A major victory for LGBT rights.



This was all happening at the same time the musical *Evita* was making Patti LuPone a legendary Broadway diva with her portrayal of Eva Peron. I was a gay actor who adored musicals. I couldn't help but draw a parallel. Anita. *Evita*. Smalltown girls rock the media, go into authoritarian politics, and become the object of religious adoration. I was also a graphic designer at the time, and I found the show's logo—an art deco *Evita* in a sunburst—ripe for parody. I created a copycat version of the sunburst featuring an image of Anita Bryant in the same style and a two-letter change to the typography. *Evita* became Anita. Lovers of musicals appreciated my humor.

Over the next few years many cities in Washington passed non-discrimination ordinances, including little Olympia. Eventually, protections were extended to the whole state and Washington is now considered one of the gay-friendliest in the country.

Perhaps it is a fitting postscript to note that Anita Bryant's granddaughter came out as a lesbian last year and announced her marriage to a woman.

WHAT PRIDE MEANS TO ME

Cyndia Cole

P – R – I – D – E!

The persistence, purpose and perseverance
of the people pushed down, punished and persecuted as pariahs.

The resistance, resilience and resourcefulness
of the rebels against restrictive recipes of realness.

The independence, integrity and intelligence
of the individuals insisting on the inalienable right to inhabit inner identities.

The determination, dedication and devotion
of the decent decrying, defying and demystifying the desperate denials of the deceivers.

The elation, excitement and exuberance
of the enlightened elevating, exhibiting and expressing

P – R – I – D – E!

QUEER ORGANIZATIONS

If you're looking for connections within the queer community in the Lower Mainland or on Vancouver Island, the following contacts should be useful.

- Rocketman website with a list of queer organizations: <https://rocketmanapp.com/blog/13-organizations-supporting-lgbtq-communities-in-british-columbia/>
- Qmunity- <https://qmunity.ca>, reception@qmunity.ca, 604-5307 ext. 100 , 1-800-566-1170
- Vancouver Island Queer Resource Collective (Vancouver and Victoria)
<https://viqueercollective.com/>
- Dignity Seniors Society <https://www.dignityseniors.org/>, dignityseniorssociety@gmail.com
- Vancouver Pride Society <https://vancouverpride.ca/>

Collected by River Glen

AGING WITH PRIDE AND STILL SPEAKING UP

