

Sisters and Brothers, Ladies and Gentlemen --

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Being Lesbianism has always represented for me one of the possibilities ~~ef-~~ for self-expression open to women. It is one of many possible life- and love-styles, ~~and is just as desirable as~~ ~~no better but also no worse than~~ certainly any other. Like the other alternatives, lesbianism is a positive good in itself, rather than a second-best choice or a refuge to ~~nurse hurts sustained~~ escape hurt inflicted by the opposite sex. Like male homosexuality, lesbianism is a positive attraction for the same sex ~~p-~~ a psychological, ^{and} emotional, ^{as well as a} and physical ~~involvement-~~ inclination. ~~Lesbianism makes lesbians happy.~~

Some of you have seen the David Susskind Show on lesbianism shown in Washington two weeks ago. At one point, a man from the audience asked ^{the} us 7 ~~panelists~~ lesbians panelists if there weren't some advantages to being a gay woman ~~k-~~ advantages that straight people didn't have. He asked this question in order to change our posture & having to enumerate all the things ~~hy~~ ^{he} was not from a defensive one -- warding off David Susskind's attacks ~~4/10~~ in which we were a ~~positive approach of saying what homosexuality was~~ instead of being explaining the positive essence of able to concentrate on what lesbianism actually was This man was Dr.

George Weinberg, a N.Y. psychologist whose book Society and the Healthy Homosexual will be published in early spring. ^{Although not gay himself} /He ~~knew~~ knows the positive aspects ~~advantages~~ of gay life, and he wanted us to emphasize the positive Unfortunately we didn't respond adequately to this opportunity to sing good of lesbian relationships. But, alas, most of us were so used to the praises of lesbian love. For

~~protesting that we were not this or that stereotype or~~ exploding myths ~~about~~ on the subject that we've never gotten around to defining the actual advantages. Personally I have always felt that homosexuals ~~have-~~ had a great deal to teach straight society, but I never dared say so in public. To do so, seemed to me, to add fuel to the fire of prejudice and evoke a caustic "So you think you're better than we are, eh?", simultaneously ~~slamming~~ ^{and} shut ~~any~~ the door that might have ~~per-~~ ^{about homosexuality} mitted some ~~enlightenment~~ understanding/to penetrate. Many years ago a low profile was absolutely essential when homosexuals pleaded with

heterosexuals for an end to injustice. We even permitted ourselves to be pitied in order not threaten the security of the heterosexual. But that was many many years ago. And this is a different age. It is time to let it be known that lesbians and homosexuals have a good life, that we are happy human beings, and that through our struggles to define ourselves we have learned things about being alive and enjoying life that are of use to everybody.

Things have taken an unexpected turn for the better for us and recognize the advantages of our life style lesbians. For who should come to our aid/-- but the women's movement! After gaining insight into the inequality & oppression of too many heterosexual The women in women's liberation were suddenly made aware of the beautiful-relationships-lesbianism-could-offer-to-women---Two-les-bians-are-two-equals lesbianism as a viable alternative for those women who can love other women. Two lesbians are equals -- there is not a greater or a lesser, or at least not a priori/ There is no role-playing pattern imposed on the two lovers. They are able to explore their own individualities and to create a love relationships unlike any other. Since there is no blueprint imposed on homosexual by the church or state relationships/governing & regulating conduct, the two can create their own world just-as in accordance with the requirements of their ~~two~~ unique personalities. In the personal sphere they have true freedom.

~~A-word-might-be-said-here-about/role-playing--Dividing-a-les-bian-couple-up-into-butch-(the-more-aggressive)-and-fem-(the-more-passive)-and-wearing-clothes~~

Since there is no marriage contract, the individuals are not bound legally to live together whether their love is ~~still~~ alive or not. One cannot legislate love. Love can only grow in freedom, and its purpose is to make people happy. If it dies, ~~ex-livers-~~ the two individuals should be able to part ^{hot} and be forced to ~~live-a-sterile-~~ under a sterile or painful union.

What about children, you will ask. Children make life a bit

more complicated, it is true. Most lesbians don't have children. Though I am finding out more and more, how many lesbians there are that do have children ^{and/or} ~~and~~-that are still heterosexually married. Not to have children to worry about can be looked at as an additional advantage gay people have. We can't be coerced into sacrificing our private lives "for the sake of the children" as so many straight people are. We all know of mothers and fathers who play their roles to the hilt and actually do not exist outside these roles. A mother without her children would be forced to redefine her identity entirely.

What I am saying is not that children are undesirable or are an inconvenience but that they have been used to justify the ^{imposition} ~~creation~~-^{on} These ~~and-maintenance~~ of constricting roles ~~for~~ mother and father.-- roles, which that permeate-the-psyche-instead-of-relating-purely-to- far exceed loving and their functional purpose~~of~~ taking care of the kids, ~~to~~ define the robbing the individual of freedom to be himself. whole personality. Mother and father have to be pretty ~~we~~ self-assertive in order to escape this societal programming ~~to~~ and to be able to look upon themselves as individuals who have needs and joys other than those involved with child-rearing. Constrictive parental ~~which-cancel-out-the-freedom-of-parents-as-individuals-and-which~~ roles ~~///~~ ~~make~~ individuals feel guilty if they don't make sacrifices for the children. ~~///~~ ~~can-only-and-dees-only-result-in-one-thing+~~ Parents sometimes even be an-oppressive-environment-for-the-children, where parents-are-their of their children, a situation slaves/~~and~~ where duty and a slavish devotion replaces genuine ~~and~~ ^{respect} between and among responsible individuals. natural love and affection, where-responsibilities-lie-equally-with-parents-and-children--

come the ^{actually} In this situation ~~it-is~~ neither parents nor children can enjoy their relationships with each other. ~~Obligation, guilt~~ And yet family life should be a joy, but can only be if every person is truly happy, that is, if she or he is fulfilling her individuality and is encouraged to take joy in being alone. The example has to be set by the parents, of course. If they are joyful people, then the children will

tend to learn to enjoy life, too. But if the parents are ~~only-being~~ ~~their-duty-~~ sacrificing their self-hood to the role of mother or father, the children will become ~~anxious~~ ^{in them} about a role that is imposed upon them by ~~implication:~~ that of the grateful receivers. They should be grateful, their parents say, that so much is being done for them. Then comes rebellion against a joyless existence.

The best gift a parent can give to a child is that of the love of life. Joy is infectious and it makes for vital personalities. Unfortunately, too many Americans (thanks to the Puritan ethic) have never learned to enjoy themselves. So how should they teach their children?

Happy parents will be the best parents. Unhappy parents will place a burden on their children. One happy parent is better than two unhappy ones, ~~--And-a-lesbian-mother-~~ or than no parents at all. ~~The-single-person,-~~

More and more I am finding out how many lesbian mothers there are. Some are still married to men; ^{while} others are divorced, ~~and-others~~ and rear their children with the help of a female lover. A happy lesbian will make a good mother, an unhappy one will not. I think it's a mistake to ~~require-that-children-~~ assume that children will suffer if not reared by a married couple of man and wife. ~~Single~~ I think that children suffer only if their parents are unhappy or don't really love them.

Some married couples have children that they don't really want ^{but gave birth to} because they ~~think they are~~ ^{were} expected to have children. Childless couples are sometimes looked ^{upon} ~~at~~ with suspicion by others, for they seem to be eating their pie and having it, too: enjoying the status accorded a married couple in this society without bearing the burden of child-rearing.

To return to my topic of lesbianism as an alternate life style

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 , I have so far listed ~~the~~ characteristics of lesbian relationships:
 lack of role playing. Some people may be surprised to hear this,
 because they ~~associate~~ have been exposed to the stereotype of the
 lesbian couple as composed of a butch, ~~the~~ i.e., a masculine woman,
 and the fem, ^a the feminine woman, united in a relationship that imitates
 heterosexual role playing: one is the husband, the other the wife.
 There are some gay relationships which fit that mold, but it is a
 disappearing pattern. The older generation of lesbians often still
 do fall somewhat into this category. But it should be pointed out
 that even ~~with~~ this imitative role playing does not measure up to
real role playing, as practiced by heterosexual men and women, and
 that there is between butch and fem a lot more understanding and
 egalitarianism than between man and woman.

When the women's movement came along, it helped us lesbians a lot.
 It showed us that we were women, not some undefined creatures that
 had to label themselves homosexual but real honest-to-God ^{goodness} women,
 individuals as meaningful valuable
~~women-who-as-good~~ and as complete as any other woman. ~~We-lesbians~~
~~-More-and-more,~~ Increasingly,
~~are-becoming-recognized-by~~ enlightened heterosexual women are recogn
 nizing lesbians as ^{those} ~~women~~ who have chosen to live ^{out} a certain female
 possibility which is one among several open to women. Many ~~women-~~
 in the women's movement, once they have ~~discarded~~ their irrational
 fear of lesbianism are discovering in themselves the potential to
 love another woman. Why should it be a frightening thought? Many
 psychiatrists agree that we are basically bisexual, but that society
 has trained us to suppress our homosexual inclinations. Perhaps the
 idea that bisexuality is not bad is gaining a foothold among enlightened
 people.

Thus the women's movement has helped both straight and gay women take a new look at lesbianism. ^{Non-gay} Straight women began to see it as an alternative; gay women, with a new female identity, see less and less need to pattern their relationships along heterosexual lines. An impetus in this direction was also given by the youth movement. Young people had already discarded many of the ^{just} trappings of role-playing of their elders, and the young gay women were as individualistic as their ^{copying the} unconcerned about established patterns of their gay elders. ~~as their heterosexual counterparts were~~

Individualism

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Individualism