

PSU Women's Union addresses many issues

To the Editor:

In light of recent articles in *Rag Times* and *Just Out*, we are concerned that the community understand the function and services of the P.S.U. Women's Union and P.S.U. Women's Studies Certificate Program. The "Adhoc Women's Union/Women's Studies" was started at Portland State University by women students and faculty in 1970 to address women's issues in an academic setting. Since that time, the Women's Studies and Women's Union have been committed to being responsive to community issues and concerns instead of focusing exclusively on academic concerns.

Over the past 16 years, the Women's Union and Women's Studies have hosted several events including two film series about lesbians and gays; conferences including "Sex, Violence, and the Law"; and various workshops and support groups — returning women students, single parents with children, eating disorders, and lunch time get-togethers for lesbians. The Women's Union and Women's Studies have also brought several speakers including Jill Johnston, Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, Starhawk, Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan (The Lesbian Nuns), Robin Morgan, and Gerd Brantenberg. Many of these events have been co-sponsored with other groups in the community.

We continue to strive to address issues that people from the community bring to us. Upcoming events include "Women, Body Image, and Self-Esteem," a four-hour work-

shop with Linda Moore on Saturday, November 1st; "The Lesbian Community Conference" on November 8th and 9th in conjunction with the Lesbian Community Project. Furthermore, classes offered by Women's Studies include "Women in the Visual Arts," "History of Feminism," "Women-Identified Women," and "Women and Writing."

The intent of Women's Studies and the Women's Union has never been to tell the women's community how to think or behave but to provide a place and atmosphere conducive to examining the diverse perspectives of women in the community as they relate personally, locally, nationally, and internationally. These programs also exist to recognize and celebrate the achievements of women such as sharing in the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of "A Woman's Place Bookstore."

If you would like more information or would just like to talk about your concerns as they relate to Women's Studies or the Women's Union, please call us at 229-3516.

Amy Sutton
Women's Union Coordinator, 1983-84

Dianne Louise
Women's Union Coordinator, 1984-85

Internalized homophobia strikes again

To the Editor:

As a member of both the P.S.U. and lesbian communities I was both saddened and angered by your news article on the (non-)debate of women's erotica, or pornography (depending on your perspective) at P.S.U.

Internalized homophobia, in the form of hostility to heterosexual feminists, and defensiveness around our choices as lesbians, has widened the chasm between movement activists and academic activists. I have sometimes excused lesbian abuse of heterosexual women in the feminist movement as the result of our pain and oppression in this society. I no longer find this to be a valid excuse, for if we are to be free we must take responsibility for our words and actions. I write this letter not to attack or blame, but to point out that name calling and refusing to dialogue with others is the most potent form of censorship and polarizes issues so that allies are viewed as enemies.

Lesbians have been discussing the pornography/erotic issue; sometimes respectfully and sometimes viciously. Public dialogues have been limited due to fears of division within the community. These fears may be valid as attempts are still being made to organize our diverse community, expand safety and tolerance for opposing views, and come to terms with issues of censorship.

The organizers of the P.S.U. forum did not fully realize the can of worms they were opening in calling for public dialogue. Some of them are heterosexual, some are new to the movement, all wanted information on the issues involved. They may have been naive, but they were *not* acting in bad faith. For their efforts they have been trashed by parts of the lesbian community.

Can we afford to do this to our allies? Or more importantly, are our fear, self-hatred, and internalized homophobia so great that we are unable to dialogue with women whose experiences as women and as feminists are different from ours?

In struggle,
Laurie Todd

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Call for more information.

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