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The **display advertising** deadline is the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue.

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steppin' out



Happy Mother's Day

PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

guest editorial

Change does happen

The election of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa is a time for all freedom lovers to rejoice and reflect

▼
by Kathleen D. Saadat

The civil rights movement of the 1960s rekindled the spark of possibility and commitment in all our hearts—not just in the hearts of black people but in the hearts of all freedom lovers, including women, people of color, lesbians and gay men. Our ongoing struggles for civil rights in the United States have helped inspire and support the movements for democracy in China and for democracy and majority rule in South Africa.

I want my sisters and brothers in the lesbian and gay rights movement in the United States to know that we are connected to freedom lovers in China and in South Africa. I want us to be inspired by the people there. We who have dedicated our lives to the struggle for freedom and democracy have much in common. We need to explore both our differences and the commonalities we share so that we may empathize, understand and rejoice in our victories.

Can you imagine how you might have felt as a black South African this past week, voting and remembering your suffering and that of your ancestors ruled for 400 years by a violent, racist regime? Imagine the commitment it takes to fight for 400 years. Imagine being vulnerable daily to armed and racist representatives of those who govern you and who have, with ease and apparently little conscience, murdered your ancestors, your peers, and your children. Imagine the furious pounding of your heart as you contemplate trying to save your life, by risking that very life.

Let yourself feel the surges of fear and love and respect for one who stands in front of a tank in Tiananmen Square, or in

front of an armed guard in Soweto. Feel the happiness for what has been gained. Feel the grief for those who have been lost and could not see this day. Stretch your imagination and feel the exquisite joy of watching your black hand cast your first ballot—the first in your life, the first in your country. Feel the tightness in your throat, the tears come unbidden into your eyes. Feel the dignity, feel the pride.

Our struggles for freedom and democracy in the United States are entwined with others around the planet. We are involved in, and part and parcel of, a worldwide movement for human and civil rights—our own rights no more or less than others'. Change *does* happen, and we constantly choose to be part of that change, for better or for worse. With every campaign we mount, with every stand we take, we must decide whether change means to work to get a foot off of our neck while reserving the right to keep our foot on someone else's neck, or whether it means to work towards removing all feet from all necks and to move towards that equality of which we so passionately speak. We can choose either to reorganize *oppression*, i.e., work only for what we see as our own personal freedom, or to reorganize *societies*, i.e., transform ourselves and truly work for liberty and justice for all.

As we watch the world around us rapidly change, remember that as human beings we are all connected. In the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "What affects one directly, affects all indirectly." I hope that "we who believe in freedom" will find loving ways to celebrate freedom's victory in South Africa.

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