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TWO
women,

AND
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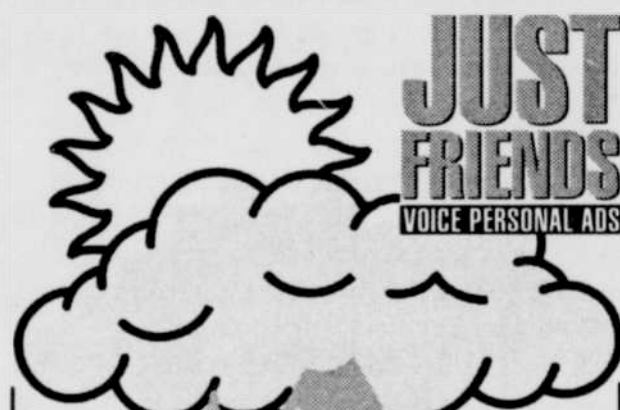


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Dancing in the streets

Techno terrors prompt a look 30 years into the past, when both computers and a movement were new

Y2K means a lot of things to a lot of people. For me, it will mark 30 years since I became a card carrying member of the Women's Movement.

We didn't build bombs or plot the downfall of the government. We didn't subvert kids or put stealth candidates on school boards. We met to unburden angers and confess stifled yearnings. We sang together like Girl Scouts and comforted one another. We parceled out chores and planned demonstrations. We tried

to invent alternative housing, we tried to share money, we tried to get along. We held dances.

The hub of all this hopeful activity for me was the Women's Center in New Haven, Conn. Housed in two castoff rooms in the basement of a Yale dormitory, we had a couch, pillows, chairs, desks and lamps. We took turns staffing the center, answering the phone and rudely turning away curious men. We had no useful strategies, only dreams.

Our models were created by powerful males and disenfranchised males. Books about communism in China were popular, if boring. "Dealing and struggling" was the phrase du jour, stealing the man's technology our rallying cry, as women took up electric guitars and learned to do their own sound.

While a women's band played "Dancing in the Streets," we drank buckets of sangria mixed in 33-gallon garbage cans. We socialized with one another in lefty working-class bars, ignoring the stymied men folk. We alienated our old friends and our families. The women who were not yet out alternately lectured and hectored male lovers. Lesbians either hated all guys or pitied and befriended the gentle ones. Gay men were dismissed as the lowest of the low because they were thought to belittle women with drag and stereotypical "effeminate" behavior. The Radical Faeries were still but a gleam in the eyes of Harry Hayes and the first stirrings of gay liberation seemed like a rip-off.

When we danced in the streets, church basements, college halls and bars, we were dancing to Carol King and Linda Ronstadt. We despised the Rolling Stones, who sang "Under My Thumb."

In great powerful circles we held hands and group-danced to Sly and the Family Stone and the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band.

Laughing and conspiratorial, we sang along with Todd Rundgren's "Gotta Get You a Woman" and Stephen Stills' "Love the One You're With." We made love by candlelight and incense to LPs of Jethro Tull and Joy of Cooking. We scorned the Carpenters, never guessing Karen needed to be with us. Elvis was lower than gay men.

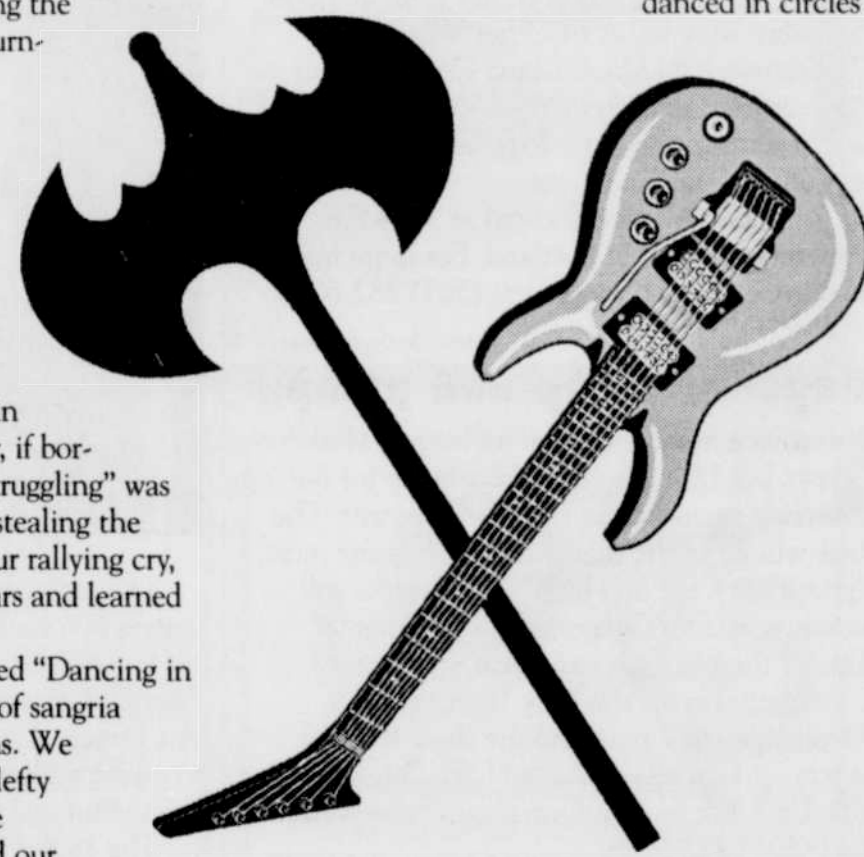
Janis Joplin was a martyr. Joni Mitchell and Aretha Franklin were goddesses. We were goddesses, just discovering the labrys, that double-sided ax with which the Amazons smote their

enemies—and just discovering the labia, that double-sided flower of our sexuality.

In the shadowed women's center we felt the kind of excitement that changes the world. We daringly danced without men. We danced on the campus, in the parks, in moving cars as we drove. We took over straight dance floors.

All of us were exploding with liberated energy. Working 9-to-5 was out of the question. We were in the midst of a revolution simmering with sex, so we danced till we were sweaty with sweat we never knew we had. We had never heard ourselves speak out loud and now screamed with Janis. We thought Angela Davis of the Black Panthers was the greatest woman in the world and we sang inspirational songs with our black sisters and brothers. Indian bedspread drapes hid revolutionary women fugitives from the law. Our phone was tapped.

This new breed of women crowded into New York and Boston gay bars, danced in circles



and met other women afire like us. The old gays were lower than Elvis. They obviously wanted to be men. The butches oppressed femmes in makeup. The libbers secretly wanted to dance like the butches, dirty and possessive. And like the femmes, safe in another woman's arms.

We wore jeans and cotton harem-style pants, long skirts, sandals or ragged high-top sneakers, T-shirts, flannel shirts and peasant blouses. Jewelry was silver or wood and bought in head shops. We grew our hair long or cropped it radically short. The colors of our revolution were bright reds and yellows, mood blues and seductive purples. Everything else was lavender.

We ate vegetables, fruit, brown rice, yogurt, honey bought through our co-op. We split rent so many ways we each paid only \$40 per month. Our homes were run down houses whose rooms we painted in bright orange or other vibrating hues.

The Women's Center, nestled on the training ground for the future military-industrial leaders, was the place where we invented our feminist selves. It was the witch's mouth that spewed us forth into the world like lit torches. Soon women's centers claimed territory in every large city. We were joyous with our anger and our demands for equality. We danced around bonfires in the night. We were the bonfires.

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