

INTERVIEW

"Passover Revisited" draws a comparison between the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt and women's desire to get away from men—to a women-only space, presumably.

Continuing the analogy, how would you contemporize and feminize what happened when the Jews reached the "promised land"—that they killed or enslaved everyone who was already living there?

As anyone familiar with Lesbian feminist community history knows, we did a damned good job of killing each other off or driving each other off during the alcoholic, drug-infested '70s and '80s, particularly our nearest and dearest.

You were ultimately reinvited to the Philadelphia rally. How was your reception? Did you speak or just perform some music?

This is an interesting saga, which cannot be described briefly, and which I documented in "The Philadelphia Story," five consecutive Minstrel Blood columns running in August and September 1998 *Outlines*.

Briefly, the committee issued a most ungracious reinvitation only after some Lesbian and transsexual heavy hitters criticized their blatant censorship. I did not sing, but spoke about how wonderful being a Dyke is (which explains why everyone wants to be one). On the March itself, about a dozen Lesbians covered their faces with pie plates bearing my photo and the legend "We are all Alix Dobkin."

It's a long and fascinating tale of how their reversal of "inclusion" excluded me, and how they reinvited me only after getting transsexual permission, as well as an account of the extraordinary post-March meeting between the committee and disgruntled Phila. activists who had left the committee, [because they] felt left out of the March before they invited me in the first place.

Believe it or not, this is the "short" version of that long story.

What do you say to people who challenge separatism because they believe feminism won't truly succeed unless it allies itself with other social justice movements?

Only that I agree with them. Since there are 24 hours in a day and since there are 7 days in the week, etc., etc., many of us can do more than one thing in our day, our week, our life. You see, the "separatism" I subscribe to is a consciousness and a tactic to empower women and not simply about not ever relating to men ever, which is what some separatists try to do, but which I myself have never done. This is why I get so tired and frustrated with these tiresome, frustrating questions and definitions of "separatism" and in fact have not described myself as separatist for over a decade.

Of course there are "separatists" who disagree with me and my definitions and do not regard me as a separatist. (I have just used up more than my entire quota of the usage of that word.)

In a 1995 interview with Michael Elkin for the *Jewish Exponent*, you said: "My ideal world is one created by lesbians."

Would you be OK with a world in which men were victimized by patriarchy?

I am not at all interested in victimizing anyone or in living with anyone who does.

Do you think there's any danger of patriarchal ideology invading women-only space through the separatists' preoccupation with defending the space? All the effort at excluding men doesn't strike me as an effective escape from patriarchy—unless it's a sacrifice one woman could make so that others benefit from the space?

Huh? Well, I can't speak for all separatists. All I can say is that I (and those Lesbians I'm close to) are not at all preoccupied with men in any regard. *Au contraire*. However, back in the early '70s we had a really great time keep-

from your Minstrel Blood columns at In Other Words bookstore. Which organization approached you first—whom should we thank for bringing you to Portland?

We can (and should) thank Wendy Cutler at PSU, who was the initiating and main driving force behind my visit. I would also like to express my appreciation to the various students and other PSU faculty and administration working with her. Also to our friend, Reeni Goldin, to Catherine [Sameh] at In Other Words, to Kristan [Aspen] at LCP, KBOO and everyone who makes a positive contribution to the Lesbian community, the LGBT, Queer, progressive and allied communities as well.

Two final questions: How is your memoir coming along, and are you planning to record any new music in the future?

Between keeping up with my two monthly columns; writing articles for *Lesbian News* and other journals; recording monthly radio commentaries; answering in-depth questions for interviews; hustling bookings to make a living (provided by none of the other efforts); volunteering at my (Montclair Women's Cultural Arts) Club; preparing lectures and concerts; practicing guitar; watching *The West Wing*, *The Simpsons* and *The Sopranos*; revising and copying my promo; updating my mailing list; answering e-mail; taking daily walks; touring the country; keeping in touch with my daughter and other loved ones; and living my wonderful life with my wonderful pals in Oakland, CA, I have not found the time

I should devote to completing my memoirs. (I do manage to sneak a few memoirs in some columns, allowing me to revise some of the second draft). But thanx for asking!

I lost interest in songwriting quite awhile ago, so I have no new material to record. However, I did just write my first song in 10 years for my daughter's wedding on Earth Day, an event I'm very excited and thrilled by.

ALIX DOBKIN AND FRIENDS

THESE WOMEN NEVER BEEN BETTER



ing men out of our spaces. (See "Further Adventures of Lavender Jane" and "More Further Adventures..." and "Throw Out the Pricks!" *Outlines*, Jan. 7 and 21, and June 17, 1998.)

In its press release about your storytelling forum in Portland, the Lesbian Community Project has invited "lesbians and friends."



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Men and transsexuals—both MTF and FTM—have been hot topics at recent LCP events.

Do you plan to address the women-only issue directly, obliquely or not at all? Has anyone from LCP explained the group's situation to you, and are you concerned that someone will raise a stink either way?

I am familiar with some of the issues you refer to. If our stories mention women-only space, then it will be mentioned. I'm not concerned about someone stinking up our storytelling session, because then everyone will know who stinks. If, however, people want to talk about other concerns, I am willing to meet at a different time to discuss those concerns.

In addition to your lecture and concert at PSU, and the LCP forum, you're reading

■ ALEX DOBKIN is playing in the all-day music festival *Lesbopalooza* on April 29 in Agate Hall at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

She presents a free lecture, *Talking Lesbian: Generating Lesbian Culture from the 1970s to the Present*, at Portland State University on May 2. Her talk begins at noon in the Parkway Commons adjacent to Smith Memorial Center, 1825 S.W. Broadway.

On May 3, Dobkin reads from her award-winning column *Minstrel Blood* at In Other Words bookstore, 3734 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. The reading starts at 7 p.m.

The Lesbian Community Project hosts a potluck and storytelling forum featuring Dobkin and others sharing memories of the early days of the feminist movement. This event takes place at 7:30 p.m. May 5 at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, 2400 N.E. Broadway. Call (503) 233-3913 for more information.

Dobkin performs her legendary lesbian folk music at 8 p.m. May 6 in the Multicultural Center in the basement of PSU's Smith Memorial Center. Tickets cost \$5-\$10 sliding scale and are available at the PSU women's studies office, In Other Words and *It's My Pleasure*.

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