

I AM A LESBIAN MOTHER BEING SUED FOR CUSTODY OF MY DAUGHTER. SHE HAS LIVED WITH ME EVER SINCE WE LEFT HER FATHER, AND WANTS TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE LIVING WITH ME. I'VE HAD LEGAL CUSTODY EVER SINCE THE DIVORCE.

HER FATHER LIVES A TRADITIONAL AND FINANCIALLY SECURE MIDDLE CLASS LIFESTYLE.

I AM ONE OF 3 LESBIANS AND THREE CHILDREN WHO ONE YEAR AGO FORMED A LIVING/WORKING COLLECTIVE. WE SHARE MONEY, POSSESSIONS, FEARS, GROWING, JOYS. WE ARE WORKING TO BREAK DOWN OUR SOCIALIZATION, AND TO BUILD NEW FEMINIST WAYS OF BEING. RIGHT NOW, WOMEN IN THE COLLECTIVE ARE WORKING ON 1) ORGANIZING AND RENOVATING A REFUGE HOUSE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, 2) WOMEN AGAINST RAPE (HOTLINE AND SPEAKERS' BUREAU), 3) ALTERNATIVE HEALING CENTER (BUILDING A PLACE FOR TREATMENT AND EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WHO CHOSE ALTERNATIVES TO WESTERN MEDICINE), 4) LESBIAN DEFENSE FUND, 5) PUBLICATION OF WOMENS' MUSIC, 6) WORK IN A HOME BIRTH COLLECTIVE, 7) WORK WITH WOMEN AND ALCOHOL GROUPS, 8) WE LIVE IN THE WORKING CLASS SECTION OF TOWN, DAILY SHARING OUR HOME, FOOD, CARS ETC., AND WORKING TOGETHER ON NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS. IN SHORT, IN ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES, WE ARE WORKING TO BUILD A NEW AND BETTER SOCIETY.

THIS CUSTODY CASE IS BOTH A PERSONAL AND A POLITICAL ISSUE. I'VE SEEN MY DAUGHTER GROW STRONGER, MORE FORTHRIGHT AND SELF-ASSERTIVE, AND LESS PASSIVE AND INTIMIDATED IN THE LAST YEAR. SHE IS GROWING TO BE STRONG.

THIS CASE INVOLVES THE RIGHT OF LESBIANS TO LIVE WITH THEIR CHILDREN. IT ALSO ALLOWS CHILD'S RIGHTS - THE STATE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO SO TOTALLY DISRUPT A CHILD'S LIFE AGAINST HER WILL. IT IS ALSO A BLATANT EXAMPLE OF THE OPPRESSION OF MINORITY GROUPS AND THOSE CHOOSING ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES.

BECAUSE OF MY LESBIANISM AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY, ALL ASPECTS OF MY LIFE ARE COMING UNDER SCRUTINY. I MUST DEFEND IN COURT MY PAST AND PRESENT LIVING AND WORKING SITUATIONS, THE SANITY OF MYSELF, MY CHILD, AND OF HER FRIENDS. TO FIGHT THIS CASE, I MUST HIRE PSYCHIATRISTS AND LAWYERS - BOTH EXPENSIVE. I'M WORKING WITH A FEMINIST VERMONT LAWYER.

I AM APPEALING TO FEMINISTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY FOR YOUR SUPPORT - MONEY, SKILLS, OR USEFUL CONTACTS. PLEASE HELP US WIN THIS STRUGGLE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN. WE ARE GOING FAR AND WIDE FOR SUPPORT BECAUSE OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS: 1) WE ARE ALL PART OF THE SAME CHANGE NETWORK. WE DO THE WORK THAT THERE IS TO DO IN A POOR RURAL STATE. WHEN WE NEED HELP FROM OTHERS WITH OTHER RESOURCES, WE ASK FOR IT. 2) IT IS A CASE WHICH AFFECTS US ALL. THE COURT IS TRYING TO SEPARATE A MOTHER AND CHILD AGAINST THEIR WILLS. IT IS A VERY PERSONAL ISSUE, BUT ALSO AN ISSUE OF CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS SORT OF COURT INTERVENTION AFFECTS US ALL. SOME OF US ARE NOT MOTHERS. SOME OF US ARE NOT LESBIANS. ALL OF US WERE ONCE CHILDREN. CUSTODY CASES CROSS RACE LINES, CLASS LINES, LIFESTYLE LINES... ANY ISSUE CONCERNING THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IS RELEVANT TO ALL WOMEN. THEY ARE TRYING TO TAKE A CHILD AWAY. 3) WE CANNOT PUBLICIZE THE CASE LOCALLY, OR USE SPECIFIC NAMES AT ALL, BECAUSE SUCH PUBLICITY HAS IN OTHER CASES BEEN USED AGAINST THE MOTHER. ALLEGEDLY, THE PUBLICITY HAS 'SUBJECTED THE CHILD TO HARMFUL TRAUMA.' SO WE ARE FORCED TO GO ELSEWHERE FOR SUPPORT. 4) WOMEN ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY NEED TO KNOW IN GLARING DETAIL WHAT SORT OF ATTITUDES LESBIAN MOTHERS AND CHILDREN MUST LIVE WITH.

THE COURT DATE IS COMING UP VERY SOON. FEES ARE ESTIMATED AT FOUR TO FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS. SEVERAL HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS ARE ALREADY OUTSTANDING - FROM LAWYERS AND EXPERT WITNESSES (PSYCHIATRISTS TO TESTIFY REGARDING THE CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH.) WE NEED YOUR HELP. EVERY BIT HELPS, LARGE OR SMALL, SO DONATIONS TO: THE STRUGGLE IS ALL OF OURS. LESBIAN DEFENSE FUND, OR LDF. WE ARE NON-PROFIT AND TAX-EXEMPT. LDF, BOX 4, ESSEX JUNCTION, VT. 05452

Lesbian Defense Fund

