



# Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

November 2013

[www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org)



## Summer Solstice Party

For Ten Forty Matrix women and friends

7pm Saturday  
21 December 2013

At St Peters

Bring a plate of festive food to share and a Lucky Dip gift – (perhaps something you'd like to receive yourself?) – price guide around \$15

Please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) for more details

## End of Year

### Dykes for Dinner

Finola's

6.30pm Wednesday 11 December

Balmain Bowling Club

156 Darling Street Balmain

Licensed

Please email

[contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) by

Sunday 8 December. Please note:

there will be no Dykes for Dinner in January 2014.

### Dinner and Discussion

6pm Saturday 1 February 2014

Suffragettes as political artists and activists

Spider will make a presentation on suffragettes as political artists and activists and how they used art as part of their campaign. She will discuss some of the suffragettes and suffragette actions from Australia, France, USA and UK to illustrate the discussion.

Mervyn Fletcher Hall, 81 Dalhousie Street (cnr Dixon St), Haberfield

BYO food to share and your own drinks.

Entry fee: \$10 fully waged, \$5 concession.

Entry to the Mervyn Fletcher hall is in Dixon Street, which has unrestricted parking after 6pm.

By bus, catch the 436 or 438 buses which set down on the corner of

Ramsay Road and Dalhousie Street.



Toni Morrison

## The Imogens – 2014

Dust off your camera and prepare yourself for the second annual Ten Forty Matrix photography competition.

The competition opens on 1 December 2013 and closes at 5pm on Tuesday 4 March 2014.

There are two categories –

- Lesbian Life
- Rainbows and Other Symbols

Only one entry per person is permitted in each category.

Prizes will be awarded in each category.

Entries will be on display and prizes awarded to the winning Imogens at Haberfield on Saturday 22 March 2014 at 6pm.

Entry is free.

Photographs can be in colour or black and white and can be taken with any type of camera.

Three carefully selected members of Ten Forty with a background in photography have agreed to be judges.

Entry forms and terms and conditions plus information about size and acceptable formats will be available on our website [www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org) and emailed to everyone on our Contact list.

## 55Upitty report

About 20 members of 10/40 gathered on 12 October 2013 to hear Teresa Savage make a Powerpoint presentation titled: ‘55Upitty: celebrating the older LGBTQI woman’.

Teresa launched the project at the Red Rattler during the 2012 Mardi Gras to a much larger (and younger) audience. It was funded mostly by herself, but was also kick-started with a small Linc (Lesbians Inc.) grant of \$1,000. Teresa told how the idea for the project came to her after she read a French report about an anti-gay marriage rally, when denigrating ageist comments were made against older activists shown in the background of a photo.

Teresa explained that the 55Upitty project aims to inclusively document the history and current stories, as well as future visions of women who are over 55 years and identify as a member of the LGBTQI community.

The project’s webpage [55upitty.com](http://55upitty.com) contains reports on interviews with eight different lesbians: Teresa herself, Shauna, Lyn, Liz, Ludo, Kaye, Jude, and Gabrielle (Gail). Teresa showed us their photos and told us some of their stories. She noted that most of them had been referred to her by other lesbians, rather than volunteering themselves. Teresa said that four others (2 transsexuals and 2 lesbians in their late 80s) had eventually declined to participate for reasons of safety (the transsexuals), privacy, and the belief their lives were not interesting. Teresa also mentioned two others with ‘non-

mainstream’ sexual practices, but didn’t expand on this cryptic comment, and I regret I didn’t follow it up with her. However, she expressed regret about those who refused to participate because she wanted her project to be more inclusive.

The lesbians’ stories are produced from interviews carried out by Teresa over about an hour to produce a verbatim transcript of about 1,500 words, which she then asks the interviewee to edit to make the content acceptable to them (although she does not want them to correct grammar and expression, as she wants that to be as natural as it was in the interview). Teresa acknowledged the photographic work done by Viv McGregor (although currently two other photographers are standing in for her while she cares for her mother). She also acknowledged Emily Spencer for designing the logo, and another unidentified lesbian over 55 years for web design.

Teresa then analysed some of the stories, according to themes: activism (Kaye), well-being (Lyn), ‘glass half full’ (Shauna), creativity (Liz Ashburn), adventure (Ludo), friendship (Jude), and animals (Gail). She noted that the only critical comment she had received was about the need for greater diversity, which she was trying to address. Otherwise, she stated that the project has been received well both here and overseas. Teresa has a range of plans to develop the project further (e.g. through the production of a calendar, book, exhibition (52 suburbs),

a musical and a panel event). She ended by asking for nominations of women to be interviewed for the project, which can be forwarded to her via the website [55uppitty.com/contact-us](https://55uppitty.com/contact-us).

### **Some personal observations...**

I enjoyed hearing the stories of lesbians I knew and others I had not met. All have led interesting lives that involve overcoming prejudices and discrimination because of their political and sexual activities and convictions. Teresa's method for gathering the stories seemed to follow standard academic standards, although she did not need to go through the additional hurdle of gaining approval of an institutional ethical committee. It would have been interesting to find out how she carried out the structured interviews (e.g. What were the questions she asked? Were there open-ended questions that led the participant to speak about unanticipated issues?)

The outcome of the project's website certainly is valuable for publicly acknowledging and affirming lesbian lives and experiences. However, I regretted that there was no discussion, during or immediately after her presentation, about a number of aspects of her project. I had trouble putting my ideas and words together immediately, but they became clearer after I had had one-to-one discussions with other members, and Teresa, and thought further after the night was over.

Firstly, there is an issue of definition. The 55Upitty project aims to follow a GLBTQI 'inclusive' agenda without acknowledging that there are lesbians who do not identify with the project's definition of a woman and/or who do not see themselves as part of the GLBTQI community. To me, this omission is not being inclusive. Only by ignoring the fact that there are lesbians who do not identify as part of the GLBTQI community can Theresa position GLBTQI as inclusive. Excluded lesbians might then be blamed for 'excluding themselves' when their self-exclusion is actually a political position that needs to be acknowledged.

Secondly, leading on from the 'queer' agenda, the web site explains that the project aims to acknowledge how women aged over 55 hold similar values to 'youth-oriented queer cultures', such as '(d)iversity, political awareness and activism, style and beauty'. Style was also a focus in Teresa's presentation. While I agree many older feminists would value diversity, political awareness and activism, style and beauty would may not necessarily be their aspiration. This is another example of how some lesbians would be excluded from the project.

A third issue is the name of the project itself. 'Uppitty' means to be self-important or arrogant, and usually is used to criticize those who don't know their place in society. Teresa noted the different spelling used for her project, and but it was not clear why. However, 'uppitty' seems to have a similar

meaning to 'uppitty' in being used to counter ageist attitudes that disempower women aged 55 and over older women who don't know their place in society. A problem with this attempt to reverse the value of the word is that many older feminists do not aspire to be 'uppitty' because the language implies upper class aspirations, similar to feminist rejection of the term and aspiration of being a 'lady'.

A fourth issue is the classification of transcript contents, which appears to need some a little improvement. For example, in the presentation's analysis, Gail was given as an example of the theme of 'animals' in her interview transcript, yet her story emphasised other themes much more. On the project's website, each participant's transcript also has been classified according to 'categories' and 'tags', where the categories appear to be major themes, and tags are sub-themes. This classification system could have been more accurately descriptive of Gail. For example, fashion is a minor part of her story, yet it is emphasised as a category. On the other hand, feminist political activism forms a major part of her story, yet it is not listed in either categories or tags.

It will be interesting to follow the 55Upitty project online, to see how Teresa manages to achieve her aims, increase participation and diversity, and manage the tensions and conflicts such as the ones I have discussed.

*Viviane*



## Vale Doris Lessing

Doris Lessing, who has died aged 94, was one of the major fiction writers of the second half of the 20th century and one of the most vividly representative literary figures of our times.

Born in Iran, brought up in the African bush in Zimbabwe – where her 1950 first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, was set – Lessing had lived in London for more than 50 years. In 2007 she came back to West Hampstead, north London, carrying heavy bags of shopping, to find her doorstep besieged by reporters and camera crews. “Oh, Christ,” she said, on learning that at 88 she had just become the oldest author and the 11th woman to win the Nobel prize in literature. Pausing rather crossly on her front path, she said: “One can get more excited”, and went on to observe that since she had already won all the other prizes in Europe, this was “a royal flush”.

Later she remarked: “I’m 88 years old and they can’t give the Nobel to someone who’s

dead, so I think they were probably thinking they’d probably better give it to me now before I’ve popped off.”

The citation from the Swedish Academy called her “that epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny”.

Read the full obituary here

[www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/17/doris-lessing](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/17/doris-lessing)

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## Quotes from Doris Lessing

“What’s terrible is to pretend that second-rate is first-rate. To pretend that you don’t need love when you do; or you like your work when you know quite well you’re capable of better.”

*The Golden Notebook*

“We should never underestimate the conservatism of the literati ... When *The Golden Notebook* came out nobody noticed that it was quite an interesting form I was using, they were much too obsessed by the fact that I was meant to be anti-male, this ball-breaker.”

*In an interview in the Guardian after winning the Nobel prize, October 2007*

“Art is the Mirror of our betrayed ideals.”

*The Golden Notebook*

“There is no doubt fiction makes a better job of the truth.”

*Under My Skin*

“The collapse of communism created many a fine businessman. If you have spent your life analysing the crimes of capitalism there could not be a better apprenticeship for becoming one.”

*On the Golden Notebook, the Guardian newspaper, January 2007*

“As you get older, you don’t get wiser. You get irritable.”

“Whatever you’re meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible.”

“Loneliness, she thought, was craving for other people’s company. But she did not know that loneliness can be an unnoticed cramping of the spirit for lack of companionship.”

*The Grass is Singing*

“Because I was permanently confused, dissatisfied, unhappy, tormented by inadequacy, driven by wanting towards every kind of impossible future, the attitude of mind described by ‘tolerantly amused eyes’ was years away from me. I don’t think I really saw people then, except as appendages to my needs. It’s only now, looking back, that I understood, but at the time I lived in a brilliantly lit haze, shifting and flickering according to my changing desires. Of course, that is only a description of being young.”

*The Golden Notebook*

*On winning the Nobel:*

“Oh Christ! I’m sure you’d like some uplifting remarks of some kind.”





## Dyke Books Inc.

Dyke Books Inc. is pleased to announce the launch of their newly established Dyke Books Inc. website, set up and designed by Pat Mitchell.

Also being launched are three ebooks and pdfs by Jean Taylor: *Shannon*, a lesbian romantic mystery, *The Womyn's Revolution*, a lesbian novel set in Melbourne in 1973, *Brazen Hussies: A Herstory of Radical Activism in the Women's Libration Movement in Victoria 1970 - 1979* (previously launched as a paperback in 2009)

2pm - 4pm Sunday 8 December 2013,  
2 Piera Street Brunswick East, Melbourne  
(trams 1 and 8, tram stop 22)

Afternoon tea will be provided, speeches will be made and all lesbians are welcome to attend.

## For your 2014 diaries

1st February Dinner and Discussion Spider - Suffragettes

22 March - Imogen's Photo Competition

5 April Dinner and Discussion Pat Joyce - The Aged Care Rights Service

May social event - Elizabeth Farm (date to be decided)

7th June Dinner and Discussion Kelli Jean Drinkwater - Fat Activist

July social event - DVD (date to be decided)

2 August Dinner and Discussion Oral History

September social event - Barefoot Bowling (date to be decided)

11 October - Dinner and Discussion (details to be decided)

November social event (date and details to be decided)

## About Ten Forty Matrix

Ten Forty Matrix is an informal group of lesbians over forty, many of whom have been socially and politically active in Sydney since 1987. We enjoy discussion and debate on the issues we face in work, life and at home, and hold regular fun events to keep us in touch with the lighter side of life.

Ten years ago we established the website [www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org) to encourage national and international connections between older lesbians.

Ten Forty Matrix is not an organisation you have to join, but if you want to receive regular information about our activities and our bi-monthly newsletter, email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) and ask to be put on our mailing list.

Please note our new postal address is PO Box 1312 Randwick 2031

## Newsletter

To receive a free emailed newsletter, please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org)

The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website [www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org)

## Who currently does what?

Events planning: Cheryl, Daniela, Diann, Frances, Gillian, Helen, Krystyna, Rob, Wendy

Contact listing in LOTL: Jan

Utilities box: Sylvia and Wendy

Money Management: Cheryl

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Dorothy, Diann, Margot, Sandy

Newsletter: editing and layout Ruth and Dorothy

If you would like to become involved in any of the above, or have some ideas about social events and/or topics for our bi-monthly dinner and discussion evenings, please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org)

“Do not regret growing older. It's a privilege denied to many.”