

Ten Forty Newsletter

May 2017

www.olderdykes.org



Dinner and Discussion

6pm Saturday 3 June 2017

Lesbian/Feminist Quiz night

Organised and facilitated by
Viviane and Sylvia

There will be something for everyone in this lighthearted and fun-filled evening.

Questions with a feminist orientation and a lesbian focus will include topics such as popular culture, science and technology, music, mythology, history, sport, and politics.

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.

Dykes for Dinner

6.30pm Thursday 8 June 2017

Jasmin 1

116 Marion St, Leichhardt

RSVP by Sunday 4 June to

contact@olderdykes.org

6.30pm Thursday 13 July 2017

Banana Palm

260 Arden St Coogee

RSVP by Sunday 10 July to

contact@olderdykes.org

Feminism

Report from the April 2017 discussion

It seems extraordinary that as Ten Forty celebrates its 30th year the sexist comments and actions of a new American President has put feminism firmly back on the agenda, and across the globe women are turning out onto the street to protest and demonstrate their anger. But even before Trump's astonishing win there seemed to be a new festering of feminism among younger women, a response perhaps to the same forces which were to support Trump's rise to power.

At the end of last year the viewers of the ABC's Bookclub with Jennifer Byrne voted Clementine Ford's book, *Fight Like A Girl*, the best book of the year. This made me curious about what younger feminist's might be thinking and writing. Have the issues changed, does a new generation have a different take on things, are there new

perspectives and strategies for engaging with women's rights?

So for the April discussion at the Mervyn Fletcher Hall in Haberfield I took on reading *Fight like a Girl* and presenting an overview of the book with the intention of opening up a discussion which might tease out where a new feminism might be going.

I am writing this now some weeks later far from Sydney and from my notes and the book so I will not even try to reproduce the broader overview of the evening, but perhaps just make some comments on salient points. For me, Ford's book was a bit of a disappointment in that it did not really suggest any kind of new engagement with feminist issues or offer new insights into how one might tackle the pervasive structures which continue to disadvantage women. Ford's book ran through many of the same issues which were those of a 70's feminism, serving to remind an older reader how little things have changed. On the other hand, for a younger reader perhaps Ford's book is important in highlighting the ongoing misogynist culture that women face and the ways in which girls are consistently undermined and placed in positions of self-devaluation.

The thing that has changed is the increased role of commercial media coupled with that of social media. While the mainstream media

presents us with the image of an idealised woman which is far from the realities of most women, and yet promotes an ideal of suitably constricted womanhood, social media has provided a space for vitriolic attacks on individuals and forums for men to vent their anger and hatred. (Sites like Anti-Feminism Australia which has evolved from being a virulent Facebook page which has been shut down several times by Facebook and now presents itself as a news site.)

Ford's book takes on these attempts to subdue and deride women with gusto. Her book is an insightful and an often hilarious read as she turns the strategies of misogyny on their head. It is also a book which calls enough is enough and argues that women need to fight back. It's time to fight like a girl.

While Ford's book does not attempt anything like some of the more theoretical analysis of the feminism of the 70s and 80s it suggests that young women are angry and ready to engage in a very direct manner with the barrage of disparaging strategies aimed at them. This is a generation of young women who have been brought up to believe they can do it and they will.

The group had an interesting discussion around this kind of renewed feminist energy and we spent some time reflecting on the shift in the theoretical underpinnings and cultural understandings and politics that informed our own earlier engagements with feminism and those faced today. It looks like we may be out on the streets marching again



F.I.E.N.D.S. present
Sydney's Same Sex
Dancesport Competition

Saturday
22 July 2017
2pm

Marrickville Town Hall
303 Marrickville Road

but there will be a younger cohort of women with some very loud voices and much to say.

Gillian

From the archives

In Oct 2003 Jan prepared a paper for a Ten Forty discussion called Lipstick Lesbians and Diesel Dykes: What are our clothes about?

Why do we wear the clothes we wear, how do we feel about tutus, skirts, boiler suits, uniforms, etc? How many of us have found it difficult to wear the clothes our mothers expected us to wear let alone what was regarded as conventional?

The only books on the subject which surfaced after a brief search were: *Dressing Up – Transvestism and Drag: The History of an Obsession* by Peter Ackroyd. He quotes from a book by Theophile Gautier in which Mademoiselle de Maupin, a cross dresser, says: “I possess hardly a womanly attribute except a bosom... It is my body but not my mind that wears a skirt. Beneath my smooth forehead and silky tresses, male and ruthless thoughts are astir.”

A quote from the other book is by Marjorie Garber: *Vested Interests – cross-dressing and cultural anxiety*.

Dress Codes and Sumptuary Laws: All over Europe in the medieval and early modern periods sumptuary laws were promulgated by cities, towns and nation states, attempting, with apparently indifferent success, to regulate who wore what and on what occasion...

The idea of a “sumptuary law” designed to regulate dress may seem at first an alien concept to modern sensibilities, but only if we think of it in national or civic rather than more local terms.

Jan talked about being brought up with both written and unwritten ‘dress codes’ that seemed as rigid as any Elizabethan edict. In her middle-class, suburban community

girls were not permitted to wear pants to school, except for 'snow-pants' in excessively inclement weather. Boys were not allowed to wear shoes without socks.

That girls could wear shoes without socks, and boys could wear pants, makes clear the fact that regulation, rather than another vestimentary or anatomical logic, was the main object here.



In truth, there is no true way to tell.
None or all of these girls could be gay.

A stack of stuff has been written about butch and femme and perhaps others may be able to find some interesting quotes.

The following is a report of the discussion:

“The influence of the costume penetrates to the very soul of the wearer.” Oscar Wilde

What clues about our personality do we send to those around us by the way we dress? Do lesbians go for bland camouflage or eccentric individuality?

Today, many more styles of clothing are perceived as being neither particularly masculine nor feminine. Has signalling male

or female through what we wear become less important because of the erosion of inequalities between the sexes? Would a completely androgynous look in a society so deeply programmed into dividing the world into male and female be too unsettling and disturbing?

Some lesbians care considerably about what we wear, others less so. Some of us retain bits of our former dress styles, hippie necklaces and skirts, fashionable earrings, moderated butch-type clothing and so on. For many, comfort and warmth are the major determiners of what we choose to wear.

Femme clothes were seen by many as really 'dressing up'. The glorious dresses that emerge at lesbian balls attest to this. We agreed that femme clothing was somewhat frowned upon in the lesbian feminist movement of the past, and to some extent still is today.

There are some very funny stories about lesbians just coming out and trying to find out what exactly they were supposed to be wearing to signal their sexuality.

One woman, on coming out as a lesbian, was told by a straight friend, “You’d better get a checked shirt and sandshoes”. Another lesbian was told once, when wearing pants, denim shirt, and carrying a handbag, that “Lesbians don’t carry handbags or umbrellas”. Really?

The old question of whether to bra or not to bra came up. There were stories of women

going uncomfortably bra-less and others who kept their bra-wearing a secret for years.

“Who so doth the breeches wear lives a life as free as air.” French proverb

Do you need gay marriage?

In New South Wales same-sex couples can enter into domestic registered partnerships/relationships. These provide conclusive proof of the existence of the relationship, thereby gaining the same rights afforded to de facto couples under state and federal law without having to prove any further factual evidence of the relationship. In this way, a registered relationship is similar to a registered partnership or civil union in other parts of the world.

As of December 2016, six Australian jurisdictions (Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia), comprising 90% of Australia’s population, recognise same-sex marriages and civil partnerships performed overseas, providing automatic recognition of such unions in their respective state registers.

Photographs tell a story

How many photos of women attending Ten Forty events do you still have in your collection?

We are planning to have a photographic display during Ten Forty’s 30th birthday celebrations and would love to include any photos you still have.

Celebrate!

If you can help, please email contact@olderdykes.org

Ten Forty plans to celebrate our 30th year in style

Celebrations will include:

- **Wednesday 26 July** – A Ten Forty Matrix Inc. subsidised Winter Lunch at Fisherman’s Wharf, Woy Woy (Ten Forty Matrix Inc. members only)
- **Friday 15 to Sunday 17 September 2017** – A subsidised weekend away at Vision Valley, Arcadia, one hour north of Sydney. (Ten Forty Matrix Inc. members only)
- **Sunday October 22** – a free daytime celebration involving lunch, entertainment, photo displays from the past 30 years, and more (open to everyone).

Further details of these events will be sent out via email.

Are you a member of Ten Forty Matrix Inc. ?

If you are already a financial member your renewal is due by 30 June 2017. Please renew by making an electronic funds transfer of \$20 waged/\$10 concession (DON’T FORGET TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME!) to: Ten Forty Matrix Inc. BSB: 062148 Account Number: 10526147.

No I’m not a member, but I’d like to become one:

Please email contact@olderdykes.org for more information.

About Ten Forty

The first national conference of Ten Forty in the mid-eighties attracted politically active feminists of all hues and sexualities. However, over time it became obvious that a huge majority of women attending follow-up meetings and activities in Sydney were lesbian feminists.

Today Ten Forty and Older Dykes refer to the same group of women. We enjoy discussion 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.

Our website www.olderdykes.org encourages national and international connections between older lesbians.

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

Newsletter

To receive a free emailed newsletter, please email contact@olderdykes.org

The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website www.olderdykes.org/about_us/newsletters.html

Who currently does what?

Events planning: Diann, Gillian, Wendy

Contact listing in LOTL: Jan

Utilities box: Sylvia and Gillian

Money Management: Kel and Esther

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Dorothy, Diann, Sandy

Newsletter: editing and layout Ruth and Dorothy