

COMMUNIQUE No 4

FROM THE FRONTLINE

February 1994—Those feisty Lesbian Avengers are at it again! **Neither rain, nor sleet nor pesky homophobes will stop our fight** against queer-hating bigots!

Lesbian Avengers **showed our power** when, on the weekend of June 13th, thirty of us flew down to **Tampa, Florida** with women from ACT UP/New York to support Dee DeBerry, an out dyke with HIV whose house had been firebombed by bigots while she was at the March on Washington in April. We worked with the newly-formed Tampa/St. Petersburg Avengers to **let the homophobes know that their actions weren't going unnoticed.**

Our first night in Tampa we hit the bars to talk to dykes about our plans and to incite them to action. The next day **we mixed frolicking in the ocean with serious grassroots organizing and outreach** to tanned and bikinied babes. That night, together with lesbians who had traveled from Austin TX, Durham, NC, Atlanta, GA and Chicago, we marched by candlelight through the trailer park that held the burned-out shell of Dee's home.

Early the next morning, Tampa **commuters felt the effects of Lesbian Avenger wrath** when we slowed rush hour traffic to a near standstill on the major freeway. On the steps of Tampa City Hall we called on Mayor Sandy Freedman to classify the bombing of Dee's home as a hate crime and to speak out against

the recent repealing of the city's Human Rights Ordinance protecting the civil rights of queers and people with AIDS. Of course, **Avengers are too fabulous to go unnoticed**—Mayor Freedman came out of her office and onto the street to meet with us, and local TV news stations made our actions the lead news story three nights in a row.

Back in New York, Avengers geared up for our **first annual NYC Dyke Pride March**, June 26th. Always good with our hands, the Lesbian Avengers built a massive bed, which we rolled down Broadway from 42nd Street to the Lesbian and Gay Pride Rally in Union Square Park. The bed, covered with **undulating, lustful activist lesbians**, was the centerpiece to our theme: Lesbians Lust for Power. Our **desire is a powerful world-rocking force** that moves us to demand respect and civil rights for lesbians everywhere.

A year after the Avengers first leaped into action by handing out palm cards to eager dykes at the Lesbian/Gay Pride 1992, we were distributing our incendiary broadsheets and marching as a loud bold fierce contingent in the 1993 Pride March—complete with **capes, shields and marching band**—calling lesbians everywhere to join us in our fight for power.

And that power was going to



come without compromise.

When we learned that the Campaign for Military Service was holding a fundraiser on

board the USS Intrepid, a symbol of US military aggression, the Lesbian Avengers took the opportunity to remind the CFMS that **they'd left dykes out in the cold** by choosing white male poster boys to fight the ban against open queers in the military. We picketed the Intrepid and confronted CFMS director Tom Stoddard about the organization's elitism and the **US military's violence, racism and misogyny.**

In May/June we supported Avenger volunteer attorney Karen Moulding in a **successful legal battle** against the man who had brutally attacked her.

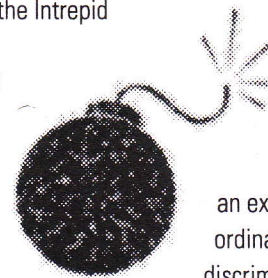
We didn't let the dog days of August get us down. An Avenger **kiss-in at sunset** on the Staten Island Ferry brought scores of dykes lip-to-lip as we circled our favorite lesbian, Lady Liberty. Later that month we took to the streets in force, protesting President Clinton's August 13th meeting with the Pope in **the hate state** of Colorado. We stopped outside the Military Recruitment Center in Times Square to speak out against **Clinton's waffling on the persecution of queers** in the armed forces. We then went on to Covenant House, a Catholic Church-funded home for runaway kids that refuses to teach safer sex or distribute condoms to

at-risk youth, and to the Catholic-run St. Vincent's Hospital in Greenwich Village. The march ended with the **burning of U.S. and Papal flags** at Sheridan Square in the Village.

As the summer came to a close, we geared up for our **Fall Offensive.** In response to the explosion of anti-queer referenda around the country, the Lesbian Avengers decided to mount our own offensive against hatred. We targeted **Lewiston, Maine**, where Christian Right forces were trying to repeal

an existing civil rights ordinance outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Two Avengers headed to Lewiston for **six weeks of full-time organizing** before the November 2nd vote, while dozens of others planned for weekend visits to help local Lewiston queers in their fight against the initiative.

Following the example of activists during the civil rights struggles of the mid-1960s, we also organized a **Freedom Ride** the week of October 8th to 15th: a cross-state road trip throughout the Northeast to meet with lesbians about **mobilizing to fight the Christian Right**, with Lewiston as our final destination. Along the way we held a forum in each town to show *Gay Rights*, *Special Rights*, the homophobic propaganda video put out by the Traditional Values Coalition; it attempts to pit people-of-color communities against lesbian and gay communities, perpetuating the myth that the two are mutually



exclusive. We also showed our own new video, *Lesbian Avengers Eat Fire Too*.

Barrelling into Boston, Avengers hosted a forum at the national *Out Write* Conference for queer writers and ate fire in front of the Boston Public Library to bring attention to Christian Right activity in the area.

We then headed for Northampton (**Lesbianville, USA**) to join luscious lesbians there in a loud **Coming Out Day** march on City Hall on October 11th.

In Albany, NY we stormed the New York State School Board offices to protest Pat Robertson's speaking at the **State School Board Convention**. Outside the building, Avengers dressed in schoolgirl attire, jumped rope, sang **lesbian-positive jump rope chants**, handed out fact sheets on violence against lesbian and gay youth and lollipops with tags reading "Lesbians Taste Good! Lick Homophobia!" In near-by Syracuse, we held our forum, ate brunch with Radical Faeries and hit the local mall in a "**Lesbians Go Shopping**" visibility action. At Hamilton College we invaded the dining halls singing lesbian songs, handing out lollipops and **shocking straight frat boys**.

In Burlington, VT we were welcomed by local dykes at our largest forum—nearly 80 lesbians in attendance—and participated in a "**Lesbian Fall Foliage Festival**" in an open mall in the center of town.

Finally, we reached Lewiston, ME to join Avengers, Equal Protection Lewiston and the Under Thirty's Committee in outreach at local bars and door-to-door leaf-letting. There, Avengers had been running an openly lesbian and gay campaign focusing on grassroots

community organizing, **voter registration and political and visibility events**. Avenger efforts targeted low income, predominantly Franco-American areas, purposefully neglected by EPL campaign organizers. Avengers also held a forum on the Christian Right at nearby Bates College, a round-table discussion by local lesbians and gay men on what the anti-discrimination

ordinance meant to them and a visibility speak-out for openly lesbian and gay members of the community. It had the **larg-**

est public turn-out of lesbians and gay men in the history of Lewiston.

Meanwhile, Avengers back in New York were not idle. We leafletted on the L train to Williamsburg—a train and a neighborhood that had witnessed three queer bashings in the months of September and October. We **infiltrated a speech by Senate Armed Forces Committee Chairman Sam Nunn** at the 92nd Street YMHA on October 13th and interrupted his presentation by standing and reciting our own **pledge of allegiance—"to the dykes and fags of America."** Security guards at the Y turned violent, and in response we organized a series of actions to let the Y know that such **dyke bashing will not be tolerated**.

On Halloween, we set up our **annual shrine** on the corner of Bleecker and Sixth Avenue to call attention to homophobic legislation which fosters violence against lesbians and gay men. Up in Maine, outraged that the initiative repealing the anti-

discrimination ordinance passed on November 2nd, Avengers there took to the streets of Lewiston with local queer activists to let people know that **dykes will not be silenced**. Also in November, the Lesbian Avengers Civil Rights Organizing Project was founded to establish **grassroots lesbian and gay controlled rural organizing projects** in states facing anti-queer referenda in 1994.

"Wait!" you cry. "**Don't those Avengers ever stop?**" Well, ease your spinning head by watching our new video, *Lesbian Avengers Eat Fire Too*, which chronicles our work from our first action in Queens, September 1992, to our trip to Tampa this past summer (\$15 for 50 minutes of thrilling Avenger activity!) Or get a piece of the action at our weekly meetings—Tuesdays at 8 pm at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center (208 W. 13th Street).

**CALL THE LESBIAN AVENGERS
HOTLINE 212-967-7711 x3204**

Start an Avenger chapter in your town—just read our newly updated *Lesbian Avenger Handbook*, Wear a Lesbian Avengers t-shirt (yes, still only \$10) with a vengeance.

We're not stopping now. Join thousands of dykes from all over the world at the great **International Dyke March and Dyke Ball** we are organizing in NYC the last weekend in June, the eve of the 25th Anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion. We're out for power, and we won't rest until every lesbian can come out with pride.

**GET MAD! GET EVEN!
JOIN THE LESBIAN
AVENGERS AND JOIN
THE RIOT. WE RECRUIT.**

Communiqué text by Sara Chinn and Hadar Dubowsky. Design by Carrie Moyer. Production by Amy Parker, Ana Simo and Kelly Cogswell.

