

# NEW ALEXANDRIA LESBIAN LIBRARY THREATENED

PLEASE  
POST!

December 10, 1982

DEAR LESBIANS:

On Wednesday, December 8, I, Bet, received several threatening/harassing calls at my home, which houses The New Alexandria Lesbian Library. The calls were an attack against me as an individual, my home, the Library, and the Northampton Lesbian and gay community as a whole.

Because The New Alexandria is a Lesbian community collection and because my apartment is a gathering place for Lesbians and a place with frequent Lesbian visitors, I want you to have as much information about what happened as I have.

I have little faith that the Northampton police, though notified, will do much to protect what is ours. I am sharing this information, too, so that if more threats are made or are carried out, you will be prepared and know what to do, with other Lesbians. And perhaps so you'll be thinking right now about how Lesbians can act in an emergency in an organized way, if one of our projects is threatened or damaged. I am asking for your help and support in creating such an emergency plan of action in this community.

It's my hope that this caller will not succeed in the possible violence of keeping even one Lesbian from coming to The New Alexandria Lesbian Library, a space which we claim as ours. We need to be aware and watchful, but not become so frightened that we cease to connect with and celebrate our Lesbian lives in Lesbian space.

This is what happened:

At 11:00 AM on December 8, I answered the phone and there was silence. The very next minute when the phone rang again, I answered and heard a male voice start to say:

"Look out you Lesbian, because you're all a bunch of sick ..."

and I hung up on him mid-sentence. I decided to put on the answering machine and in the next ten minutes, got three more calls where the caller hung up and called back without saying anything. I left the answering machine on and went out for the day. When I returned home at 7:00 that evening, I found two recorded messages on the answering machine from the same harasser I had heard that morning. This is what the harasser said:



1st recorded message:

"Listen you Lesbian. By the time you hear this phone call we'll already have checked out your apartment. There'll be no more Lesbianism in this town! Be warned!" (male voices in background ... sounded like a bar)

2nd recorded message:

"I think you Lesbians are SCUM! You're the sickest things on this earth. You're the most disgusting things that have ever come in Northampton. We will never accept homosexuality or Lesbianism in OUR TOWN, anymore. Down with gay rights. Down with Lesbians."

I called some Lesbians and then called the Northampton police. Patrolman Robert Dunn arrived in 5 minutes and stayed another 5 minutes. He listened to the tape and told me, "Of course you're concerned ... with all the Lesbian rapes downtown." He said Northampton police have a tape of threatening phone messages from a suspect in the recent rapes/assaults. He implied the rapist had called the Lesbian(s) involved first, before he committed the rape/attack. Patrolman Dunn also told me he was certain this caller was someone who lives in my apartment building because the caller used the words "your apartment" instead of saying "your house" or "your home," in his threat. He also said the caller had probably seen Lesbians coming in and out of my apartment or building.

I feel now these statements/conclusions made by Dunn were attempts at heaping terror on top of the fear and shock I already felt.

After Dunn called his superior to consult, he asked me for the tape from the answering machine as a possible aid to connect this voice with the voice he said they already have a tape of. He repeated that he wanted to try and connect this harassment to the rapes downtown. I agreed to make a cassette of the two harassing messages rather than give him the whole tape which had Lesbian messages on it as well. I have since given the police a tape of the harasser's voice.

Dunn also advised me how to have incoming calls traced so the location of the harasser could be determined. I decided not to go ahead with this since all incoming calls to NALL would have to be traced and the location of Lesbian callers would also be determined. I asked for increased police protection outside the building and was told Dunn would drive by a few more times than usual, but not much more could be done.

I met with four Lesbians that evening and early into the morning. Two of them stayed with me through the night and eased my shock, hurt, confusion, and fear. Thanks to Susan, Fran, Linda, and Edie.

I feel it's important to see this violation in the context of other



recent attacks against Lesbians and Lesbian and gay projects,  
within our spaces:

August, 1981: the rape of one of the owners of La Papaya Restaurant in Brooklyn, within La Papaya, the only wimmin's restaurant in NYC.

October, 1981: campaign of terror against Joan and Deb of The Lesbian Herstory Archives in NYC by threatening letters left on their doorstep, where the Archives is housed.

July, 1982: destruction by fire in Boston of Gay Community News offices, equipment, and archives.

Sept/Oct., 1982: rape/assault repeated against Lesbians in downtown Northampton.

We need to be strong. We need to pull together now.

Thank you.

Bet Birdfish