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## Good Luck Finding A Lesbian Bar In Portland

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Alexis Clements [ponders](#) the decline of America's "lesbian spaces":

Two of the most stark examples are bars and feminist bookstores.

In the 1990s, there were literally 100 feminist bookstores in the U.S. Today there are 14. So in 20 years, they've almost disappeared. Then if you start to do any kind of research about lesbian bars, you see that they are also disappearing. Philly lost two of them. Chicago lost one. Portland doesn't have one anymore. West Hollywood – one of the places many people consider to be one of the gayest areas in the United States – doesn't have a lesbian bar anymore, and it had one of the oldest, the Palms. That's gone now. ...

A lot of people say, "Oh, well, there's gay marriage now, so essentially queer people can assimilate into the larger culture; we don't need places to go." But for both political and romantic reasons, we still need to be able to spend time with people who we want to partner with or who we want to engage in political activities with. Those two things are in many ways core to a lot of lesbian and queer communities. Not every lesbian is a political activist, and not every political activist is queer, but the collision of politics and lesbian identity is longstanding and a very rich and important history.

Update from a reader:

I think that there are fewer lesbian bars because lesbians are much less at war, or at least high tension with straight men.

I've lived in Berkeley/Oakland since 1963, which has long been the lesbian's lower profile mirror to San Francisco's gay male community. In the '70s through '90s, the tough-ass-dyke-man-hater was a local fixture. At some point there was a shift, and the poster person for the lesbian community became much younger and less confrontive. Still tough, but not defined by anger towards males. This new model is also happy to show off her beauty, and less likely to buy into butch/femme stereotypes. I think that this generation doesn't want to be beholden to a way that they are "supposed" to act.

Perhaps lesbian bars represent the "old" angry worldview. How does the saying go? "Living well is the best revenge"? From my bi-male standpoint, it looks like this generation's largely having a great time of it, and in that sense is exacting their revenge quite well.

But I'd really like to hear from your lesbian readership. It's a good question.

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