

# Mormon Women's Forum

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## SECOND ANNIVERSARY

### Editorial by Betina Lindsey

After two tumultuous years, *those women* are still around. Along with everyone else we have been moved by the events of these past two years. In awe, we watched the single greatest bid for freedom in recorded history unfold in Tiananmen Square. We watched as the Berlin Wall came down and repressive governments toppled. We watched as South Africa's male, white supremacist government came to the realization they must share power. We watched and participated in the mass shift in consciousness which is moving us all toward an awareness of our spiritual connection to the earth.

We in the Mormon Women's Forum are excited and heartened by the global transformations taking place as well as by the new enlightenment within our own religious tradition. A recent *Newsweek* article states, "Women have long filled America's pews but now they are also taking their place in theological schools and pulpits. The women are no longer auxiliary. The issue is no longer equality but the thorough transformation of our religious institutions."

In our own Mormon community we have experienced changes and a widening of vision. Ed Firmage's call to ordain women has stirred controversy and discussion. Blessings upon those who, often at great personal cost, have spoken out, and our support to those with the integrity to call for change.

In the Orient there is a greeting, "May you live in exciting times." Despite the intense and frightening struggles necessary in bring about change, I for one am thrilled to live in such exciting times. I believe we have historically misinterpreted the concept of "the last days." As an optimist, I believe the last days will not be the end of the earth, but the end of oppressive systems, oppressive thoughts, and oppressive ignorance. The last days of the old dominator systems. The last days of ruling hierarchies which have suppressed male and female alike for thousands of years. Now will be a

time when we can embrace Christ's greatest teaching of love as the first law of heaven and release the self-serving authoritarian notions of hierarchy and obedience being the true order.

One of the commitments of the Forum is to give women an avenue to speak their hearts. We have invited all people to examine women's issues. In questioning the traditional interpretation of women and their roles, we endeavor to regain the history of yesterday's sisters and to explore the diversity of today's sisters in hope of securing a meaningful birthright for tomorrow's daughters. I think in this spirit the Mormon Women's Forum has been successful, despite the ignorance and uncertainty in our religious community which discourages and draws away from independent free thinking.

In such changing times our journal entries may one day hold our descendants riveted. I often think things would be different for Mormon women if Emma Smith had kept a journal. What insights and experiences would she have recorded seeing the organization of the Church through her woman's eyes? We will never know. But we can know how women of today experience and perceive the changing times.

As we turn the corner into the next millennium, the Forum thought our readers might be interested in excerpts from contemporary sisters' journals. What greater bequest could we leave our descendants than the feminine insights, the feminine witness as we step into an age of awakening and healing on earth, a time long prophesied by prophets and prophetesses. We invite you to send excerpts from your diaries focusing on major events, such as the Berlin Wall coming down, or any other insights you might wish to share. If you wish to remain anonymous, state so in your submission.

On the second anniversary of the Mormon Women's Forum we are looking

ahead with optimism, hope, and determination to make a contribution in creating a better world. Some mornings at sunrise I look eastward and watch the glow of the rising sun shimmer over the magnificent mountain duennas. In that ecliptic moment I think today is the day--the beautiful, bright millennial day. Today is the reward. In that instant I am glad to be alive down to the very spirals of my DNA because I know the struggles and upheavals all have purpose and the universe is aware and evolving. As Dennis Hopper says in the movie *Flashback*, "The nineties are gonna make the sixties look like the fifties." Let's hope so!

Mormon Women's Forum presents

### Linda Sillitoe Off the Record

Telling the Rest of the Truth

Linda Sillitoe covered the Sonia Johnson excommunication as an Associated Press reporter and is the co-author of *Salamander—The Mormon Forgery Murders*

Friday • Sept. 7, 1990 • 7:30 p.m.  
U of U Fine Arts Auditorium  
\$3.00 admission

"A journalist sometimes protects names and sensitive information; sometimes the full story eludes publication periods. Sometimes the community that demands to know soon prefers to for-get. Always there are stories behind the stories.

This is my time to return. The resonant implications of certain stories to where they began, where they belong—within the community that defines and must confront the issues of our time and culture."

Linda Sillitoe

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# READERS' FORUM

The comments, suggestions, thoughts and feelings of women and men of good will are welcome. Calls to repentance and threats of eternal damnation are tolerated. Spiteful or abusive letters on any side of the issues will not be printed. Unsigned letters will be rejected, though requests to withhold names will be honored. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

I'm disappointed that our church leaders missed an opportunity, when making the temple changes, to create a relationship of full partnership between men and women. We still have work to do and it appears that half the battle is just telling the truth about how we feel about things.

Two women in my ward were talking about how pleased they were with the temple changes. One woman asked the other why she had never mentioned being bothered by things in the temple until after the changes were made. When she didn't get much of a response, she suggested that change might have come about sooner had women been more open about things that disturbed them.

I believe that if we want a church that works for all that we need to start telling the truth about our experience. Unfortunately we have been conditioned for so long that we are not to complain, criticize, give input, or counsel the Lords' anointed. We cite Nephi as the exemplar of obedience to the exclusion of Moses (Exodus 4) and Abraham (Genesis 18) who weren't as compliant and ended up not only giving input to the Lord but finding the Lord willing to compromise.

We as Church members have been taught to view criticism as being negative. I think it is more accurate to view any organization that discourages criticism as a potential breeding ground for mischief, absurdity, injustice or worse.

Thank goodness for women of courage who are willing to speak up. It is not an easy thing in the Church. Charges of being contentious, power-seeking, headed for apostasy, overstepping her domain, in defiance of Church authority, being in the grips of the Devil, and lacking feminine virtues of patience and peace turn up around women who venture beyond conventional parameters.

Carlan Yorkstetter, San Marino, CA

Marti Esplin's editorial made my day! It was a beautiful, honest, and very moving statement of belief. Bill, my husband, has not stopped talking about it.

Irene Bates, Pacific Palisades, CA

Your first issue was moving. I sympathize with your anger and hurt over these issues. I too am a Mormon feminist, and choose to work from within [the Church]. It shames me that my church basically ignores women, allowing only a token few into the decision-making councils or onto the Tabernacle pulpit. On the other hand, I believe the Gospel is true because it works. I have been touched by the Spirit, have known inner healing and felt the joy of service.

So, I will continue my balancing act: to try quietly to raise the consciousness of my sisters and brothers in the ward, to read and write for *Exponent II*, to raise a granddaughter that **won't need to be** a feminist, and to live the **Gospel**. **After all**, as a feminist in a **male-dominated church** and an **environmentalist working for the Corps of Engineers**, I didn't choose an easy life. I believe that persistent pushing causes change; as Gospel Doctrine teacher I have recently spent at least 5-10 minutes per lesson discussing significant women in the prophets' lives.

If you choose to publish this, I expect you'd better sign me "a Southern woman," since I am the only feminist in [my town] besides my daughter, and she's a bishop's wife. I fear that you are marked as troublemakers, or worse, and are on the proverbial list. It breaks my heart that my church fired Margaret Toscano for her feminist views.

A Southern Woman

Please remove my name from your mailing list. I would be interested in knowing where you got my name . . . I am sorry you women and your sympathizers feel a need to form a group and publish a newsletter. I have been a member of the Church all my life . . . Never have I felt "voiceless." Never have I felt that my role in the Church, let alone in the doctrine of the Church, has been anything less than equal to my husband's; different, perhaps, but not less.

My reaction to reading your newsletter is that you don't understand the gospel. You certainly are not a forum for all Mormon women.

Shelley Chaves, Sandy, UT

I've been reading a bit of Church history lately, and I am having a hard time figuring how the Church has really benefited women. For the most part women are left out of our Church history books like some insignificant baggage that arrived with Brigham Young and the men. I look at our foremothers who defended polygamy, and all they got was a temporary husband, much heartache, the law on their trail, and scarce financial support along with a lot of children to raise.

Today I feel like Mormon women watch from the sidelines as their husbands and sons play ball. Even though these women know that they could coach, hike, throw, run with the ball, and get that touchdown, they are arbitrarily told that their place is on the bench to support, keep score, supply the water and towel, and be on hand. Never are they to taste that sense of accomplishment that comes with calling the plays, executing the maneuvers, and then feeling the glory of the touchdown.

It reminds me of the situation women were in, in the early days of the American experience. Women who supported the independent nation raised money, made uniforms, provided the food supply, kept businesses going, and served as cooks, menders, nurses and sometimes soldiers in the Revolutionary War.

What they got out of the war is questionable. They couldn't have citizenship because women were the delicate sex and only suited for home and hearth. Women came to accept citizenship in the form of educating their sons to be moral and virtuous citizens and, thus, ensuring the future of the nation. This did not sit well with a number of women. Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John charging men with the same form of tyranny that the colonists experienced with England. John countered in a letter to a male acquaintance that "their delicacy renders them unfit for practice and experience in the great businesses of life."

Abigail speaks to me. She wrote in 1776 that "if particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation."

We could use a little of this spunk today in the Church. It is time for Mormon women to stop waiting around for their heavenly rewards and start creating a heaven that seems more equitable and fair.

Susie Anthony, Woodland Hills, CA



I pride myself in being liberal in both mind and heart . . . But somewhere the line needs to be drawn between fact and fiction. True, while we have a wonderful and glorious Heavenly Mother, we pray to her husband, God the Father, and not her. We worship Him and not her [sic]. In other words, as great a Queen in Eternity as she now is, she still is subservient to the Priesthood, plain and simple! Those who've been through the temple rituals know that God resurrects the male Priesthood-holder first, then he, in turn, resurrects his dear wife . . . Any woman who wishes to progress in gospel knowledge should be permitted to do so, especially seeing as how women are usually more spiritually-minded than men are. And women should . . . be allowed to administer to their children and other sisters by the simple prayer of faith. But whatever liberties are granted them, should be within the parameters of the Priesthood of God and never outside of it!

Even for some of us Mormon liberals, Ed Firmage's idea of women receiving the Priesthood smacks of similar rebellion once played out in the pre-existence. No, while I may be liberal in many things, I'm not that liberal!

Dr. John Heinerman, Salt Lake City, UT

I would like to address the letter to Elder Nelson that was reprinted in the column entitled "Speaking Out."

I find it very disheartening that the author of the letter did not feel that she could sign her name to it. She ponders, "What kind of church is this where women fear to sign their names?" I must question what kind of woman is she that she allows herself to be intimidated to this extent?

The author refers to women as "victims" and attributes the fault to others without ever acknowledging that most women have the ability to choose not to serve in this role. A relatively emotionally and physically healthy person who allows herself to "become unwilling victims of depression" is probably fooling herself. I do not believe that such a person can unwillingly become anything.

Please relay to the author of the letter that . . . emotions are fine, but actions are better . . . Use your emotions, intelligence, voice and NAME to help bring it about.

Ramona Maile Barreto, Santa Monica, CA

A hearty "well done" for the establishment of your newsletter and organization. Here's to you!

Brenda Hansen, Redmond, WA

There is a tremendous need for the Forum. I have hope that things can change in the Church. My testimony is strong, though confusion lingers as I try to wait patiently for the male priesthood leaders to start asking Heavenly Father and Mother the right questions. Thank you so much for your courage and strength.

Karen E. Gerdes, MSW, Washington, DC

I just finished reading my second issue of your newsletter and I wish I could tell you how wonderful I feel. When I read these words that others have written it is as if I have found a way to express my own thoughts and feelings. My eyes are full of tears and I feel truth and joy. When I read the letters from people who say this is darkness—how ironic—that is the feeling their thoughts give me. I want to shout, "The Glory of God is Intelligence." It's all right to question, to think. I just wish I could hug you and say thanks.

Lynda Ford, Rogers, AR

## Patriarchal Blessing

Patriarchal blessing contradiction in terms, penitentiary benefit, Eve's can of worms.

Mormon euphemism for men who do not see that women are not ever blessed by patriarchy.

Scope of limitations in holy free verse; self-fulfilling prophecy, articulate curse.

I'll predict my purpose, divine my destiny; I'd rather have my own limits haunting me.

Maxine Hanks  
Jan. 1989

## OPEN LETTER

To My Daughter  
by Andrea Moore Emmett

Dear Erin:

It is important for me to write this letter to you now while the memory is fresh in my mind, though you will not read it for several years.

A few weeks ago, as has happened many times since I became a mother, you (as have your brothers) taught me again the meaning of *out of the mouth of babes* . . . However, this particular incident gave that expression a more profound meaning than ever before.

I entered the room to find you intently drawing with pencil in the flyleaf pages of the Book of Mormon you'd been given in Primary. When I began to scold you, you interrupted to explain, "But Mommy, I'm drawing a picture of Heavenly Mother."

I came over for a closer look at your picture as you continued to explain that the book already had a picture of Heavenly Father (it was actually Jesus), so you had to put Heavenly Mother in too, as though the book was broken and had to be fixed.

On the page opposite Heavenly Mother, you had drawn a rectangular shape, and I asked you what it was. You

answered, "Heavenly Mother's door." It was awhile before I was able to ask you why Heavenly Mother has, or needs, a door. "She just does," you said.

Oh, my little daughter, you have seen the door, too! I thought I had opened it so wide for you that it was not so noticeable — at least not yet, not at age five. But that door has been slammed shut often enough in your short life that I shouldn't wonder. The Sunday your Primary teacher reprovably told you to pray only to Heavenly Father, the day you came to me in tears because your friend (another Primary child) told you to stop talking about Heavenly Mother because there isn't such a thing, and all the times before and since that you (as I) painfully noticed how She is so obviously excluded from our worship at church — the unmentionable Mother Goddess we so love and need.

My heart breaks for you because of that door, and I promise you that I will always continue the work I am doing to open that door again and again until there is no door left to slam shut between our Mother God and us.

I love you, Erin, and so does your Heavenly Mother.

From Mommy

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# SISTERS IN HISTORY

## Mary and Martha or Am I a Spiritual or Material Woman? by Margaret Merrill Toscano

The story of Mary and Martha in the Gospel of Luke has been both encouraging and troubling to me. You remember the story. It is short and seemingly straightforward. On one of his journeys, Jesus is welcomed into the house of Martha, who has a sister named Mary. While Mary sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to his words, Martha is busily engaged in her many household tasks. Finally, in exasperation, Martha chides the Lord for letting Mary leave all the work for her, and she asks him to tell Mary to give her a hand. Jesus answers with these words: "Martha, Martha, you are fretting and fussing about so many things; but one thing is necessary. The part that Mary has chosen is best; and it shall not be taken away from her" (New English translation, Luke 10:41-42).

The story encourages me for obvious reasons. As a woman interested in theology and spirituality in a church which has mostly emphasized the domestic role of women, I have felt a great deal of comfort from Jesus' words. When I was in my early twenties, I often felt out of place in Relief Society and other Church meetings. My interest in the scriptures and in doctrinal and intellectual discussions frequently put me in the company of men. It took me a number of years before I made connections with women who had similar interests, and so I sometimes wondered during those years if I somehow had too much maleness in me. Added to this was the fact that it seemed that my intellectual and spiritual interests made me unattractive to men in a romantic way. So at this time, Jesus' words about Mary sounded in my mind as an affirmation that what I was, was not unwomanly.

But the Mary and Martha story also troubled me, not only because I had been trained, as a good Mormon girl, to take the domestic role, but because I also valued it. I always enjoyed cooking and sewing and even house cleaning. And I wasn't bad at them either, just slow. These are the chores that must be done to keep life going and entropy at bay. I have little respect for men or women who see themselves as being above such menial jobs, or who are unwilling to pay decent wages to those who carry the burden of child care and housekeeping. I know my husband Paul's perspective has been changed since he has taken over the never-ending job of the

family laundry. Trying to write late at night, while spotting and sorting out piles of darks, whites and pastels, has given him new respect for the kind of balancing act that women have always had to do.

But, in spite of my commitment to the Martha role, I have felt considerable guilt for my failures in this area. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in my relationship with my mother-in-law, who is now dead, God rest her soul. I played Mary to her Martha. She was the epitome of the meticulous housekeeper. Her watchwords were cleanliness, frugality, and efficiency. I remember her saying, "Whenever I sit down to read a book, I can't keep my mind on it because I keep thinking of all the jobs I need to do." I, on the other hand, could never be an efficient housekeeper because I was always thinking about the books I wanted to read. Though I have felt guilty about my failures as a Martha, being responsible for the care of my family has, paradoxically, served to deepen my intellectual perspective by grounding me in the details of the material world. My little girls especially have helped me strike a balance between the spiritual and the temporal.

The conflict I have felt about my domestic and spiritual roles is an example of a long-standing historical problem for women. For hundreds of years the Judaeo-Christian churches have told us that our proper sphere is the domestic one, that this is what God has appointed for us. Womanhood has been defined in these terms. At the same time we have been given models of spirituality which picture holiness in terms of a male priesthood that denies or subordinates the holiness of the homely. The Virgin Mary in the Catholic tradition has constituted a similarly mixed image. She is seen as the perfect mother who conceived without sexual desire or contact. She denied the body and yet she reaffirmed the importance of the body because she provided the tabernacle of God. Mormonism has not escaped this dilemma of body versus spirit, either in its views about sexuality or about sex roles, even though our theology contains substance out of which can be woven a unified view of the spiritual and the physical. Martha and Mary, as long-standing symbols of these realms, are usually seen to be at odds.

In spite of the tradition that sets body

and spirit at variance, I do not think the New Testament story was meant to deny the importance of the temporal. Rather, it was meant to reassert that spiritual reality should give life and meaning to physical reality. The Lord commended Mary because she understood that when the Lord was near to her, she should draw near to him. Mary's virtue was not in any rejection of everyday necessity, but in her understanding that she, as creation, must draw near to her creator. In the context of a culture which relegated women solely to the domestic sphere, Jesus' insistence on the validity of Mary's understanding expands the view of woman's nature and possibilities.

I also like to juxtapose this story in Luke against the story in John 11. Though written by different authors with different purposes, the stories seem to comment on each other. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary and Martha are again main characters in the drama. Their brother Lazarus has died and been in the tomb for four days when Jesus finally comes to see them. Martha is the first one to greet the Lord. Here she is not simply a woman concerned with trivial matters. Rather, we see her as a woman of spiritual depth. She asserts her belief in the resurrection and the power of Jesus to perform miracles as the Messiah of God. Also, the frame and theme of the story is important. Jesus here proclaims himself to this woman as the resurrection and the life. And though he knows that he will bring Lazarus back from the dead, he weeps along with the other mourners, not, as some critics assert, from frustration at human weakness, but out of compassion for the real suffering of his people. He acknowledges the importance of the everyday pains and concerns of the temporal life. And as God of the resurrection, he affirms the importance of the physical to complete the spiritual creation. As the scripture states, only when the body and spirit are united do they receive a fullness of joy. It is in this theological context that Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

The story of Mary and Martha can be reinterpreted as a new parable for women. It tells us that we need not choose between the spiritual and the material; we need not deny parts of our nature. As integrated individuals, we may reclaim all that is ours. For it is in the act of uniting the physical and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, the domestic and the public, and the intuitive and the rational that women may not only become whole but may, perhaps, serve as the means and the model for the healing of society as well.

# I HAVE AN ANSWER

This column presents answers submitted by our readers and responds with challenging or illuminating questions—in effect, a “questions to gospel answers” column. Submissions to “I Have an Answer” should be sent to: Mormon Women’s Forum, I Have an Answer, P.O. Box 1614, Salt Lake City, UT, 84110. Answers submitted must be signed, and may be edited for clarity and length.

**ANSWER: “Patriarchy has led the nations of the world and its religions for thousands of years and proved to be workable. You people are anarchists. Leave things to leaders, especially those who are called.”**



**QUESTIONS:**  
James Lindsey, husband of Betina Lindsey, father of five children, partner in a training development company, and Gospel Doctrine teacher.

If history is any judge, the use of authoritarian structures (patriarchy included) to achieve human ends is flawed both in concept and execution. While centralized control is often seen as an effective way to focus resources and achieve political and social goals, the cost is usually great for those outside the controlling hierarchy. The traditional corporate model with its top-down structure appears best to solve immediate economic and political problems. The authoritarian structure, however, has repeatedly failed as a truly human solution. Even religious organizations with otherwise benevolent and transcendent goals suffer a flawed existence when based on the authoritarian or corporate model.

The argument of expediency for an authority-centered organization is strong, especially during the early, more emergent history of a religious group. Without absolute respect for their leadership and authority, neither Joseph Smith nor Brigham Young could have instituted such radical social changes as polygamy and economic communalism. The timetable for an emerging movement seemingly allows no time for any other approach.

An organization that embodies the concept of absolute authority, however, offers an obvious temptation to its leadership, one very difficult to keep in check. This point was not lost on Joseph Smith who summed it up insightfully in Section 121 when he noted “that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men . . . to exercise unrighteous dominion.” No exception

was made for religious leaders, Mormon or otherwise. It’s not *bad* men or women who abuse power, it’s *almost all* men or women who achieve (or are called) to positions of authority. It seems authoritarianism makes both leaders and followers its victims.

The reasoning isn’t complicated. Simply stated, power has an insidious and corrupting influence on ethical integrity, perhaps the single most indispensable trait of righteous leadership. As Mormons, the unwritten dictum to follow our leaders because they will never lead us astray, puts those same leaders in a morally dangerous position. If they can’t lead us astray, then all of their actions are okay even when some of those actions fail a routine ethics test. And the temptation grows to where personal image and organizational image can become so badly entwined that there is no difference between the two.

The coverup by the First Presidency following the Mountain Meadows Massacre in 1857 is a case in point. Morally reprehensible, it put in place a policy of deniability that exists to this day concerning the action of Mormon leaders in southern Utah, despite incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. The pressure levied against historian Juanita Brooks (*The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1962) wasn’t prompted by questions of accuracy, but rather by the potential harm such a public disclosure held for the personal reputation of the Church leaders involved. Balanced against the tarnishing of personal image, the temptation to revise history was too great (and too available).

History also reveals that at an early point leaders of authoritarian organizations enmesh the need to maintain personal reputation and power with the need to achieve organizational goals. Church members who attempt to separate the two today (i.e., question the motives or actions of their leaders without questioning the religious goals of the organization) are invariably discounted as detractors and heretics. The separation is disallowed. “Support the brethren” has come, unfortunately, to mean “don’t look too closely,” and if you do, “look the other way” when

you see something that appears inconsistent with the high ideals embodied in Christ’s teachings. Situational ethics are the unfortunate legacy of the authoritarian model.

Many members of the Church were, and still are, uncomfortable with the First Presidency’s handling of the Mark Hofmann affair. While God wasn’t a party to the investigation, “lying for the Lord” apparently became a standard justification for the steady stream of denials and overall unapproachable attitude attributed to our leaders. Since the Lord abhors dishonesty, why not admit to a mistake or even the appearance of a mistake? After all, being called of God doesn’t denote infallibility. Given that we are all imperfect people living in an imperfect world, certainly the general membership of the Church and non-members alike are understanding enough to accept and deal with the mistakes of leadership. What is it about authoritarian leadership that values a spotless reputation so highly? After all, even godly men make mistakes.

The lesson of history is that authoritarianism breeds its own inertia, consuming both leaders and followers alike. Changing the system is problematic at best and impossible at worst (especially where divine intervention is claimed as a necessary ingredient). For it to happen, leaders must change their attitudes and practices about what leadership and authority mean, and followers must change their notions about the role of subordination. Leaders must learn that good intentions aren’t enough and that true leadership is given, not taken. Followers must learn that to defer ethical responsibility to their leaders is no less damaging than for the leaders to take unfair advantage of their position and authority.

The biggest danger of the authoritarian model is the seduction of leadership into expecting more than it deserves. Our leaders deserve our confidence and support as we all keep our eyes single to the glory of God. They don’t deserve to be put in a position of infallibility, nor do we as followers deserve leaders who assume this trait. The cause is too great.

I swear it to you  
on my common woman’s head  
the common woman  
is as common  
as a common loaf of bread . . .  
and like the common loaf of bread  
she will rise.

— Judy Grahn

# BOOK REVIEW

by Bethany Chaffin

WALTZ WITH THE LADY by Betina Lindsey

*Waltz With the Lady*, a rousing historical romance recently released by Pocket Books, is a book set to burst the buttons of apathy in modern women who are unaware of the cost of the freedom they take for granted.

The author of this provocative period piece is none other than Betina Lindsey, local women's rights activist, but don't expect a hell-fire, burn-'em-up-alive kind of story. Though spunky enough, India Simms, the protagonist, is a prim and proper Bostonian transferred to the wild and woolly west (Wyoming territory in this case) by her own self-appointed crusade to secure enfranchisement for women.

Early in the story, India rescues a young woman who is being abused by her husband. The crusader socks the old man in the poky and convinces the wife to divorce him and move to calmer quarters. Then, and only then, does India embark on her mission of equality. The reader is bound to admire India. Here is a gal who gets things done. Educated in an era when most women weren't, able to speak up to men when most women didn't, India first learned the effects of discrimination at the feet of her father, a man who held the unshakable opinion that education was wasted on females. Contrarily, India sells her wardrobe and goes to school.

When our heroine hits the rolling plains near Cheyenne, a boomtown in 1869, she is the picture of propriety—tiny, auburn-haired, and dressed like a typical finishing school graduate, with manners to match.

Cowboy Gat Ransom, rough-hewn but attractive and schooled for survival in the raw environment, is assigned to escort India on her speaking tour. He considers her uppity, as well as a darned nuisance. Though unsympathetic to her quest, Gat supplies the protection an innocent like India needs on the frontier. They endure encounters with Indians, hostility, tar and feathers, gunfire and birth and death on the untamed plains—all the elements of a true western saga—but behind all the action a moving love story unfolds, despite their unlikely match.

At their first encounter, "Gat watched the ladies, the uppity one in particular . . . At first he watched her because he hadn't

seen a woman in a month and then because he'd never seen a woman like her . . . She was all arrogance and bravado, and green to the frontier—as green as the prairie grass . . . He whistled under his breath and reluctantly pulled his eyes away . . . "That gal's a stunner."

At that point both are stubbornly determined not to marry, India because of her dedication to women's rights, and Gat because of his notion of the value of freedom. But during the course of their relationship, India admits that her philosophies might be carried to the extreme, and perhaps if the laws were changed marriage wouldn't necessarily be all slavery and subjection.

Gat is changing, too. He tells India, "There's more justice in the world than you think. But it takes a windsinger like yourself to bring it about." Something inside India melts toward Gat. "Here was a man who had stood beside her, supported and protected her right to speak up, and now he was giving her words of encouragement. How could she not love a man like this?"

After India's tour is completed and the governor signs the proclamation giving women in Wyoming the right to vote, hold office, and own property, India addresses the territorial assembly: "Wyoming is the first place on God's green earth which can claim to be the land of the free. Thank you for a patient hearing, and for securing the ballot in our hands. May you have no cause for regret; but may this measure make us more helpful wives, more womanly women, more patriotic mothers."

And everyone rejoices, especially Gat Ransom. India, in her crusade for women's rights, has learned that the fundamental freedom for women is woven through their inborn rights as wives and mothers. And Gat has learned to love her and that for which she stands.

And so ends a delightful story, based on actual historical events in Wyoming, with the two central characters molding their individual selves together to make a better life than either could have fashioned alone.

Next Issue: Janice Allred reviews *Strangers in Paradox* by Paul and Margaret Toscano.

## *The Essence of Life*

ON THE PATH presents

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*One becomes real only at the point of action.*

## The Marmalade Feminist Ward

Here, amid reconstruction attempts on old houses and old minds, a thriving deconstruction survives deriving vitality from fallacies and facades older than the city, misconstruction more ancient than the neighborhood, more dangerous than shame beneath faulty frameworks of tall buildings.

This resistance first existed in the silence of troubled minds, found assistance in the nexus of reality, crossed the lines of dogmatized duality to holy space eroding the stones, undermining the foundations of aged patriarchy.

Now, illuminating intuition's unformed passageways, it lives, free and flourishing in the play between what men and women say, inter-coursing its way above conformity.

Priestesses stroll the streets, bless the residents, serve the sacrament of wine, bread and poetry, fill the empty halls with uni-versal worship sung in silent songs, hymns of humble dignity.

Prophetesses see beyond the finite, past the future, utter holy scripture, words of plenty for a congregation of women, men and children, homeless fallout of a nuclear family.

Here, fraternity and sorority mend archaic dichotomy, find original complicity in a peculiar community without The Authority, conceived and born out of necessity with a conscience immersed in forgiveness for the suffering of its members, and a clergy self-ordained from a forsaken Mormon laity.

Maxine Hanks

Sept. 1989



# IN MY OPINION

by Lavina Fielding Anderson

I wish there were more stories about women in the scriptures, but I'm glad for the ones that are there. I cheer every lesson manual that contains a lesson on Ruth (whose affection for Naomi was certainly commendable but whose after-dark behavior was certainly not what we tell our Laurels to emulate) and was delighted to see an article on Deborah in the *Ensign*, even though it quoted Daniel H. Ludlow's rather outrageous suggestion: "the fact that a good woman was recognized as the spokesperson for the Lord is . . . indication of the failure of priesthood members to honor their responsibilities" (Kristin E. Litchman, "Deborah and the Book of Judges," *Ensign*, Jan. 1990, 34). Is it so impossible to think of a woman as the Lord's spokesperson under *any* other circumstances?

One of the stories I've never seen in a manual or an *Ensign* article, however, is the story of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11). Jephthah, like Deborah a judge in Israel, bargained with the Lord: for deliverance "without fail" from the Ammonites, Jephthah promised to "offer . . . up for a burnt offering . . . whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me" (v. 31). The Lord, says the record, "delivered them into his hands" and what came out to meet him was his daughter, "his only child" (v.34). To Jephthah's credit, "he rent his clothes" in anguish. Hearing his trouble, she accepted her fate, asked two months to "beware my virginity" upon the mountains with her maidens, and then "returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow" (vs. 37, 39).

The story reminds us, or course, of the fairy tale of the Beauty and her Beast, transformed into a handsome prince by her love. Or of Isaac. But there was no transformed prince for Jephthah's daughter, no ram in the thicket. When I think how easily her story could be made to support absolutist patriarchy, I'm glad I don't hear it more often. But when I think about the possibilities it contains for discussions, say in that Laurel class, of whose revelation you should accept to govern your life, perhaps there'd be something to say for discussing it oftener.

I think that Mormon women, especially those who attend the temple often, must inevitably deal with Eve as a role model. She is far too complex to deal with in a paragraph or two, but I recommend Jolene Edmunds Rockwood's essay in *Sisters in Spirit*. I think another frequent scriptural role model is Mary. Often as women, we try to put ourselves in her position of perfect submission when she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Such a pattern of behavior makes me uneasy. We have to remember that she was talking to an angel. There are some statements you can make to an angel that it's really not wise to make to anyone else.

A more useful model for me at my stage of life is Hannah. She was praying before the Lord in the temple for a child when Eli, the high priest, saw her lips moving and thought she was mumbling drunkenly. He rebuked her. Some of us know what it feels like to be misunderstood and rebuked by a priesthood holder whose authority we acknowledge and

even accept. What would the end of Hannah's story have been if she, as a mere woman, had said to herself, "Well, he's the high priest. He must be speaking for God, even though I don't think he understood. I must accept this rebuke. Be it unto me according to thy word, Eli." Or, contrariwise, if she had said, "How dare he judge me without finding out the facts? See if I ever darken the door of *his* temple again. And you, God, how can you have such an insensitive and arrogant man for a high priest?"

Instead, she said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." Eli responded to both her information and her attitude: "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him" (1 Sam. 1:9-17).

You'll notice that she didn't blame; he didn't apologize. She didn't demand, and he didn't promise. Instead, both of them understood each other on a different level and joined in the hope of their faith in God.

I think that's a good model for dealing with the all-too-human elements of our sometimes obscurely divine church. Being Hannah's daughters means acknowledging our griefs and being vulnerable to our hopes. If you remember the story, it also means being willing to make enormous sacrifices.

We don't know the end of Hannah's story, any more than we know the end of Mary's story. But we do know the end of Jephthah's daughter's story. It should remind us that a destiny we choose, rather than accepting someone else's choice for us, is the stuff of triumph.

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# OVARY ACTIONS

The news of our progress and our concerns, our accomplishments and our disappointments, of our sisters in the effort and our challenges in a man's world.

## Women on the Board— an Odd Coincidence

Congratulations to Lorie Winder Stromberg and Carlan Yorkstetter for their successful efforts with the petition protesting the exclusion of women from the board of editors of the encyclopedia of Mormonism. In April, attorney Jeanne Bryan Inouye and University of Utah professor Addia Fuhrman were appointed to the board. Editor-in-chief Daniel Ludlow maintained the petition drive had nothing to do with these appointments to the previously all-male board. However, Lavina Fielding Anderson, editor of the *Journal of Mormon History*, said the timing of the appointments might be considered an odd coincidence and added, "I would think the juxtaposition of the events would be suggestive."

## Report on Gender and Justice Ignored

The Utah Task Force on Gender and Justice was established in 1986 "to inquire into the nature, extant, and consequences of gender bias as it might exist within the Utah court system . . . the Task Force was charged with examining both substantive and procedural aspects of the law and with making concrete recommendations for reform where necessary."

A perusal of the 160-page *Gender and Justice Report*, which comprises the findings and recommendations of the task force, reveals an astonishing amount of gender bias that permeates every level of Utah's justice system.

Since the *Report* was first released in March 1990, Utah's government officials and administrators, judicial agencies, and law enforcement have generally reacted with a "let's ignore it and maybe it will go away" attitude.

The Forum believes it is the responsibility of each of us in Utah to educate ourselves and others on the scope of the problems explored in the *Report*. Only through awareness and action can women avoid further victimisation and abuse in the Utah justice system.

To obtain a copy of the *Gender and Justice Report*, send \$7.00 and your request for a copy to:

State of Utah  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
230 South 500 East, Suite 300  
Salt Lake City, UT 84102

## Support Our Forum Chapters

For information, to volunteer, or to be added to the mailing list of the following chapters of the Forum, write:

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1685 West Haven Road  
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755 Page Mill Road #B-9  
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Seattle, Washington Chapter  
1021 142nd Avenue SE  
Bellvue, WA 98007

## Rape in Zion, a Community Crisis

"The number of rapes reported to Salt Lake police in 1989 increased 50 percent over the previous year, according to FBI figures . . . Nationwide, the incidence of rape rose only one percent" (*Deseret News*, April 9, 1990). Within weeks of the FBI report, Salt Lake County commissioners voted to cut funding to the Salt Lake Rape Crisis Center.

This alarming news was the catalyst for a panel discussion on rape, sponsored by the Forum, in which half of all donations benefitted the Rape Crisis Center. *Rape in Zion: A Community Crisis* was held June 28, 1990 with panelists Jacqueline Fogel, program coordinator, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action; Dr. Emily Rosten, psychologist; Sergeant Roy Wasden, Sex Crimes Unit, S.L.C. Police Dept.; and Christine Watters, director, S.L.C. Rape Crisis Center.

Besides giving the Rape Crisis Center a financial boost, the intention of the Mormon Women's Forum was to increase awareness and prevention of rape in our cloistered Utah culture which sets the stage for, rather than shields against rape.

Margaret Matlin connects rape with patriarchal culture in *The Psychology of Women*: "[This] kind of violence can be traced to traditional feminine and masculine socialization. Males are 'supposed to be' aggressive, dominant, and in control of the situation. Women are 'supposed to be' submissive, yielding and unaggressive. In a sense, rape . . . represent[s] an exaggeration of traditional gender roles."

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