

New Options

January 28, 1991

Issue No. Seventy-three

How Can an Effective Person Be Happy in the World?

We felt we were running a risk when we printed our article on love and prostitution ("Some of Our Daughters, Some of Our Lovers," #71). We were afraid you'd think it was too "personal." We were afraid you wouldn't understand what we were trying to do.

How wrong we were! Not only were your responses overwhelmingly positive (by a ratio of better than 6:1), they were extraordinarily thoughtful — and, often, just as "personal."

Ultimately we heard from nearly 200 of you. That's got to be some kind of record for periodicals with under 15,000 subscribers.

At first we didn't want to print more than two pages' worth of your letters. After all, our last issue consisted largely of your letters on the Green gathering. But as you'll see, there was something special about these letters that demanded to be heard. Some extra measure of honesty and humanity. . . .

In a way, the last two issues are a perfect pair. If the Green letters speak to the larger question of "How can a good person be effective in the world?," then these letters speak to the larger question of, "How can an effective person be happy in the world?"

"Your issue disturbed me very much"

We begin with some letters debating whether or not our article was a Good Thing.

Opening salvos

I've been out of the country for almost five years, but I got back and saw your issue #71, on love and prostitutes. It is an astonishing piece of reportage and humanity. Congratulations.

— James Fallows

Washington Editor, The Atlantic
Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n

Your Oct./Nov. issue disturbed me very much. I have reflected a long time about the source of my distress.

You reached some conclusions that resonate with my own convictions, hunches and intuitions about prostitution. And I am happy that through your experiences you came to a deeper sense of your own needs and vulnerabilities.

But surely a journalist with your credentials could have discovered a way to establish a trust relationship with those women without becoming a customer who asks to be beaten by them.

Prostitution is a sad and destructive way of life for both men and women. You entered into solidarity with them by choosing to participate in activities which perpetuate the destructiveness and sadness.

It is my decision to no longer trust the political commentary of such a social observer and critic, and I therefore regretfully cancel my subscription to NEW OPTIONS.

— Darlene White

Edina MN, Heartland Bioregion

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for following your heart into the uncharted territory of lovelessness, epitomized by the cycle of prostitution.

I expect to see your article reprinted often, put into anthologies and "literature-based" textbooks and such. You'll probably get book and movie offers.

It reminds me of the article I read many years ago by an unknown journalist named Gloria Steinem, about her experiences as an undercover journalist who became a Playboy Bunny in order to report on it firsthand. I never forgot it. And I won't forget issue #71. If you stop publishing NEW OPTIONS, "Some of Our Daughters, Some of Our Lovers" would be a fitting finale.

— Lauren Ayers

Fair Oaks CA, Shasta Bioregion

As a therapist, may I advise you to seek counselling?

There are many ways to interview prostitutes. Simply paying for their time, then being honest, works. Usually they are grateful to

Countdown to Pub. Date

New Options for America — the forthcoming anthology of our 25 best articles, with special introductory sections by M.S. and a foreword by Marilyn Ferguson — will remain on sale at the special pre-publication price of \$7.95 through March 31.

(Until last week it was our 24 best articles. At the publisher's urging, we've added a final part — "Politics Is Not Enough" — which will consist entirely of our article on love and prostitution.)

Ten or more copies can be purchased for \$5.97 each. Our biggest customer so far: the minority leader emeritus of the Michigan House of Representatives. He bought 150 copies to distribute to all his colleagues.

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not have to perform and will sense your genuine interest.

This is not theory. One of my trainees did his Master's on drug use among prostitutes here in L.A., and his straightforward approach worked fine.

I was concerned by your choice of whipping as a way to seek rapport with them. Then toward the end of the article you spoke of your workaholicism (self-imposed 80-hour weeks). It sounds like a self-hurting pattern.

Analysis

You do much good for others. Please do something for yourself and get some professional counselling.

— **Francis Deffry, M.A.**
Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion

I just finished reading issue #71, and I simply want to applaud you for your courage in writing a piece that is surely going to draw a lot of flak.

When people are finished attacking you, either publicly or privately, for participating in the subjugation of women, or negating what you say because you're a liberal white male do-gooder, or psychoanalyzing your decision to have them whip you, I hope you'll still feel it was worth it. I'll never look at prostitutes — or think about love and gender and drugs and family — in the same way again. You got through. They got through. Thanks.

— **Alan AtKisson**
Managing Editor, In Context
Bainbridge Island WA, Cascade Bior'n

Ugh!

Your article felt very painful. My wish/prayer/hope for you is that you'll begin to be compassionate to yourself. Why have someone flog you when you seem to be doing it pretty well yourself?

— **Bill Withers**
Redwing Blackbird Distribution
Decatur GA, Piedmont Bioregion

Why, why, WHY did you decide to refer to the women you interviewed for issue #71 as "my prostitutes" (p. 7, col. 3)?

Since objectification — what we do when we don't know how to love — is one of the problems, why contribute to it?

— **Mary Pat Connors**
Everett WA, Cascade Bioregion

You probably helped to further prostitution with your concern over the plight of each trapped girl you interviewed. You gave them a positive regard you would surely not have bestowed had they been only nondescript, average typists in the general pool.

— **Ruth Hatch**
Huntersville NC, Piedmont Bioregion

Wow!

Great issue on prostitution! How courageous — idea-wise and personally.

— **Alisa Gravitz**
Co-op America
Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n

What strikes me most in your article is your incredible courage — the courage to "go

out with" prostitutes to get the real story, the courage to tell it as you experienced it, and above all, the amazing courage to bare your heart to thousands of readers. I don't think I have ever read an article by a journalist anywhere, anytime, quite like it.

— **Pierre Pradervand**
Author, Listening to Africa (1990)
Geneva, Switzerland

Without question, the most courageous piece I've seen written by anyone in a long time. Moving conclusion. It left me taking a long look at what's really important in my own life.

— **Jim Richmond**
Green Committees of Correspondence
Kansas City MO, Great Plains Bioregion

Your piece on prostitutes was just amazing! GREAT reporting! You are a hero. And, yes, you are a human being . . . don't let life be all work.

— **Claudia Ayers**
Sacramento CA, Central Valley Bioregion

Your prostitute story is incredibly powerful. Thank you for pursuing it as you did, then having the courage to write it as you did.

— **Eliza Klose**
Institute for Soviet-American Relations
Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n

I was very moved by the power of your article.

About halfway through I momentarily put it aside as the level of intimacy was beginning to make me feel uncomfortable. But then I felt that, if you had the courage to put this stuff out, I could receive it; and I continued reading.

— **Larry Sullivan**
Silver Spring MD, Chesapeake Bior'n

Stunning, gutsy work! I salute you.

— **Larry Daloz**
Cambridge MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

You are a saint as far as I'm concerned.

— **Dan Greifenberger**
Norwalk CT, Lower New England Bior'n

The issue of prostitution and people's need for love is important. Keep up the good work — and post a copy of the newsletter in the lobby of your building! (smile).

— **Ethelbert Miller**
Afro-American Resource Ctr, Howard U.
Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n

What I cherish most of all about your article is that you made no judgments — but simply saw how our unhealed wounds cause

violence to ourselves and others.

— **Ms. Gene Knudsen-Hoffman**
Author, Ways Out (1988)
Santa Barbara CA, Pacific Rim Bior'n

I only wish you had not said that "there's nothing I can do for them, really." By searching out the prostitutes' true stories, and writing about them with respect, you have in effect given more than you have taken.

— **Don Bolger**
Isle of Pines SC, Coastal Plain Bior'n

"You missed the main issues"

In these letters you discuss whether or not we understood the prostitutes.

"It is addiction"

You are right. COYOTE et al. missed the main issues with prostitutes. Unfortunately, so did you.

Look at your interviews, man. It ain't lack of love. It's addiction.

Addiction is a primary illness. That means it takes you out if it isn't treated.

— **Francis Deffry**
Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion

I have had COYOTE speak in the Contemporary Sexuality course I teach, and I too have been dissatisfied by their perspective.

In my opinion, what you address at the end of your article — the addictions we pursue (sex, work, drugs, consumerism) to fulfill the spiritual void in our lives — is at the root of much of our personal and social dysfunction.

— **Dr. Mary Beth Love**
San Francisco State University
San Francisco CA, Shasta Bioregion

NewOptions

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Groups

I agree there is a tremendous need for and lack of love in our society. (That's why I always ask the post office for LOVE stamps.) However, one of the reasons the prostitutes remained prostitutes was their need for money for drugs.

Some got drawn into drug use by accident — by being offered drugs by peers. Others obviously turned to drugs to substitute for unfulfilled needs. One of your interviewees admitted she could not get off drugs.

I just ask that you not overlook the drug problem in defining causes.

— Leah R. Karpen

Weaverville NC, Appalachia Bioregion

Live and let live

For men, monogamy is an unnatural state. Prostitution should be seen as polyandry or polygyny for pay. Prostitution must be legalized to ensure health, safety, pimpless wages and intelligent sex.

If I need to pay young women because I can't attract them for sex, so be it. My feelings are my feelings. Live and let live.

— John Spofforth

Athens OH, Heartland Bioregion

You were so focused on D.C. in 1990 in your article that you neglected how compensated sexwork ("prostitution" to you) has undergone many transformations during the last 10,000,000 years.

Long ago there may have been dozens of pacifist, vegetarian indigenous tribes in which multiple relations were accepted. Wealthy widows and widowers lacking matrimonial intent have long sought to compensate sex-partners.

— John R. Ewbank

Southampton PA, Lenape Bioregion

I greatly enjoyed your article on prostitution. You obviously invested a great deal of yourself in it, and I don't want to trivialize that. However, I must take issue with your rather sweeping conclusions.

You interview some prostitutes. Their parents don't get along. They can't communicate with their fathers. Their fathers aren't there to provide emotional support when times are tough. Childhood wasn't so swell.

In other words, these women come from ordinary families with ordinary parents, had ordinary childhoods and experience ordinary problems! Yet from this you want to rush in and say, in effect, "See, prostitution represents something terrible in our society." You call for limiting where prostitutes may conduct their business, and prosecuting the men they hire to assist their affairs.

I suspect that if you went out and inter-

viewed some secretaries, say, you'd find the same kinds of women with the same kinds of backgrounds and problems. Would you then rush in and say the reason we have secretaries is because we don't have enough love in our lives? Would you call for prosecuting their bosses?

C'mon. The reason we have prostitution is that sex is still a (relatively) taboo subject in our society, and that for many people patronizing a prostitute is simply the best available means for fulfilling particular sexual fantasies.

You basically admit you've turned square with advancing age. And you were obviously biased against prostitution before you started your article.

— Terry Inman

Libertarian Student Network

Florissant MO, Heartland Bioregion

It's the bottom line

What implications does it raise when I say that one of the few issues of NEW OPTIONS that I've read cover-to-cover was the one on "prostitutes" — whom I will refer to as "sexual trade workers"?

A rather interesting note was your decision to exclude African-American sexual trade workers. Few writers have explored the notion of the African-American as the sexual property of the white male. This exploration might have put the whole question of prostitutes in a new perspective.

If you excluded yourself on the basis of race (as you say), shouldn't that same severance hold true for class and gender?

You are in a situation of intentional downward mobility, situational poverty, quixotic poverty; yet you are trying to understand those who are part of the permanent underclass and those who are marginally employed. Though you comment on your financial "plight," few persons of your privileged group really grasp the realities of the women and men who work America's streets.

Your article reminded me of the book and popular film *Black Like Me*. Movies and books like that one tend to mock and caricature their subjects. Isn't it rather patronizing to assume that a people can't speak *for itself*? In some ways your article is a sham.

The best part — at least for me — was the section on the male "johns" of the sexual trade workers. (One reason you were able to capture the views of males is you're so much a part of the male cosmology.) Breaking the stereotype of "johns" and seeing them as individuals who are in dire need of loving and caring female relationships was a significant contribution.

I am always appalled at how writers in the

West — even the so-called progressive ones — never really question the American way. For me, the best way to define prostitution is to define it *as* the American way.

To surrender one's dreams for the reality of a two-car home in suburbia is a kind of prostitution. To neglect one's children and lovers for the sake of career advancement is a kind of prostitution.

Prostitution is the bottom line, isn't it?

— Kwaku O. Kushindana

Baton Rouge LA, Delta Bioregion

Can we generalize?

Your recent piece on prostitution was gutsy — self-disclosing in an almost reckless way — but still fallacious in its conclusions.

I've worked with many hookers over the years (as a therapist), and there are as many varieties of whore as there are of accountant — maybe more! You seem to acknowledge that about the johns they service, but are more reluctant to come to the same conclusion about prostitutes.

If prostitution were legalized, the variety would be even more obvious, since participants would no longer have to self-identify as criminals.

— Alex Rode Redmountain, Ph.D.

Atlanta GA, Piedmont Bioregion

Thank you for writing the only piece I have ever seen on prostitution that parallels my own conclusions after working as a prison psychologist where I had a number of prostitutes as clients, and had contact with others.

I never encountered any who had done that work out of anything except desperation. They may fool some people, all of the time, into thinking that they're having a great time, or that that line of work was freely chosen from a position of personal strength. But the heartbreak and self-hate that was revealed in my office utterly belied those self-serving illusions on the part of male clients, "protected" wives and so-called feminists with a case to prove.

I rather doubt that any of these folks would want *their* loved ones to make a career of prostitution, whether it was decriminalized, legalized, or merely tolerated as it is now. There may be a few prostitutes who emerge unscathed, a la the movie *Pretty Woman*, but I would wager it is a precious few.

Through my psychological training and my own self-exploration I have formulated a (not original) view of social and psychological pathology which has to do with imbalance of the masculine and feminine energies we each have within us. What I saw in prison, especially among women who had worked the streets, was devastating rejection of their own

femininity. Some were almost parodies of male toughs, holding their own feminine sides hostage out of fear and anger, so desperately afraid of violence or rejection that they never allowed themselves to show vulnerability or true receptivity to anyone.

The one thing which did not come out in your article was that many women enter the ranks at a very young age after a background of incest — the perfect training ground for sexual subjugation. Not only are the “skills” learned to perfection, but the confusion, anger, fear, self-hate, and distrust and loathing of men which are engendered complete the resumé.

I agree with you that love is a big part of the answer; I gave it all I had while I was in there.

A lot of society has a cynical attitude, both about the value of people who have gotten on the wrong road and about the power of love to effectuate real change. Well, mindless love is *not* the answer. But heartless minds aren't going to solve it either.

— Julie Logan

Lexington KY, Cumberland Bioregion

“I have struggled with similar questions . . .”

In these letters you respond to the article with empathy — often by sharing from your own lives.

Go for it!

I have never written to NEW OPTIONS before, but I just finished issue #71 and, with my heart opened and tears in my eyes, I am moved to say I love you.

My husband's comment after reading this issue (the first one he's read, by the way) is, “That guy has balls the size of the Empire State Building!” Not a Politically Correct metaphor perhaps, but he captures something.

Courage like yours is a major qualification for marriage and fatherhood, which I hope you will pursue as one of your major ways of saving the world. The world needs you to create a family. Go for it!

— Sarah Conn

W. Newton MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

I was touched by your afterword in the last issue of NEW OPTIONS. I have struggled with similar questions myself.

To make a profound difference in one small corner of the world — your own home — is as vital as any broader, shallower campaign. And I think family keeps you honest

with yourself — nothing calls your soul into account more than the demands of a spouse and children.

It's easy for idealistic people to feel that they mustn't stint in their service to the wider world, but to sacrifice one's personal life misses the point of it all. Just as physicians must heal themselves, so reformers must reform themselves if they are truly going to do good.

— Sharon Kass

Takoma Park MD, Potomac Valley Bior'n

Until I was 50 years old, I wasn't a father — and my wife and I led lives that were to an important extent independent of each other.

At age 50 (she at 42), we became pregnant. Our daughter is now almost four years old and is a great light in our lives.

Toward the end of 1989 my wife was diagnosed as having ovarian cancer, stage three. She's had three operations since then, and her prognosis is guarded.

I have had a minimal *public* professional life since my daughter was born (we always co-parented). I no longer teach, write, lecture or organize. I am too involved in taking care of my daughter, wife and self — in addition to maintaining my practice in psychotherapy.

My last four years have been the hardest, and in some ways the most rewarding, in my life. I have become so much more human — so much more able to empathize with people's hardships and suffering.

— Frank A. Rubinfeld, Ph.D.

*Author, The Peace Manual (1986)
Berkeley Ca, Shasta Bioregion*

On becoming a person

Your closing paragraphs are almost unbearably poignant.

In the 1970s I was trying to save the world. I was also an avid outdoorsman (canoeing, rockclimbing, backpacking, cross-country skiing, etc.). My other major project was attempting to become a person, as Carl Rogers put it — largely by trying to overcome a lack of love as a child. (Funny how that pops up.)

I had never paid much attention to making a living. In the mid-70s I was making \$2 an hour working in a backpacking shop. I had always enjoyed children, and at family gatherings I often preferred their company to that of the adults. Yet I never thought I would have a child. I couldn't see ever earning enough to be a decent provider, nor could I see bringing a child into “a world like this.”

Well, to make a long story short, I'll skip ahead to getting married (I didn't ever really expect that to happen either) in 82 and having a daughter in 83. My best friend, who had a young son, told me he was really looking forward to our having a child, and I found out

what he meant — Mercedes has been an absolute delight. She's the most joyful free spirit I have ever known. I have learned so much from the experience of living with her.

There are a lot of older parents of young children around, and a lot of them just enjoy their children without the need for control that seems more common in younger parents. One of my hopes for a better world rests on these children, who are, I believe, more emotionally secure than any group in history.

— Lloyd Hansen

Minneapolis MN, Heartland Bioregion

Belly of the beast

I consider the prostitution issue of NEW OPTIONS to be a turning point for you, and maybe NEW OPTIONS itself.

For some time I have detected the unhealed places in you even as you supported positive, life-affirming ideas and projects. Your burnout came across loud and clear in your writing recently, and I would never have thought an article on prostitution would turn the tide. Thinking about it, though, it makes sense: going to the belly of the burnout beast — the prostitute's life — would cause you to re-evaluate what is personally important to you.

Thanks for sharing your experience. I have a feeling that the best is yet to come for you.

I had a similar experience (albeit not with prostitution) in reaching my limits with social change work. What really did it is that I was seriously considering getting deeply involved with Habitat for Humanity, a worthwhile project indeed. Then I woke up and realized that I don't even have a home of my own.

I had so disassociated myself from my own need for security, I was almost willing to give up the one thing that feels like safety to most people — a home. So, now I'm involved in co-housing, which will give me a modest home at a reasonable cost. Then I can help others!

I recommend Anne Wilson Schaeff's work to you, particularly *When Society Becomes an Addict* (1987). She talks about how “helpers” — therapists, activists, and other do-gooders — often play the role of co-dependents in an addictive society.

Her work opened my eyes. I'm committed to helping create a better world, but I will no longer sacrifice myself as I've sometimes done in the past. The only possible result is burnout, and I'm in this for the long run.

— Roberta Wilson

Seattle WA, Cascade Bioregion

New directions?

Your last two issues — on the Greens and on prostitution — were quite remarkable. I

am deeply moved by your courage and your insistence on looking for a truth that is outside any set of pre-defined buzzwords.

I personally feel a strong need to involve myself in the political process, but have had a hard time doing so because I can't identify with anything going on in the political spectrum — right, left or center. No one seems to be speaking in human terms.

I have been reading NEW OPTIONS for some years because the ideas you report on are ideas that make sense. However, in your recent issues you have gone beyond mere ideas-that-make-sense. You have begun the task of articulating a truly human politics.

I work as a psychotherapist, and it is clear to me that the difficulties my clients experience have a strong political dimension. People suffer because they cannot find a place for their experience in the collectively created definitions of reality that they are taught.

Political activists from the entire left-right political spectrum share a common definition of political reality. Each party sustains the others by providing them with convenient and predictable sparring partners.

In bringing your own personal experience into the discussion, and in exploring the personal experiences of the prostitutes, you are challenging the entire stale, cut-off, depersonalized nature of politics in this country.

— Eric Weiss, M.A.

Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion

Permission granted

NEW OPTIONS #71 is quite incredible. I applaud your insight and your personal courage and honesty.

The Greens issue and parts of this one make it seem like it may be time for you to move on. If you do, you'll have my blessings and wholehearted support — even though I know we'll all miss NEW OPTIONS dearly.

The world is much bigger than any of us understands, though; and in some way the particulars of which may be impossible to anticipate, you may end up doing a more profound service to the causes and ideas, and principles, and *people* you've been working for, by moving on to your next chapter.

— Jim Guinness

Newton MA, Lower New England Bio'r'n

I have a feel for what you've been through over the last decade, for I have had my share as well: the New World Alliance; writing *The Heroes Are Us* ("A Call to Rescue Our World"); running for the U.S. Congress (17 months, 12 hours a day — nonstop); writing *Russell, Alexandra and John* (a story of personal and planetary change); starting and being executive director of ProEarth; and now

going to the Yale Divinity School and studying Ethics, Global Ecology, and the State of the World (a unique program I structured and had approved).

I am getting tired of it all. Like you, I think. That is what I read in your piece on the Greens and the one on prostitutes. You are sounding like you want to get out, that you've had enough. That you would like some rewards for all of your efforts — both some financial rewards and being able to see some tangible results, politically.

Some people applaud your efforts (and mine) as noble while they go on earning a living and providing for their security within the existing problematic paradigm, one that they perpetuate. The changes you and I (and many others) seek may one day come about — to some degree — but probably only by crises.

If you're considering getting out of the "save the world" business, go ahead and do so and start enjoying your life. You've paid more than your share of the dues. If it makes you feel any better, know that I am tired of it all too.

— Joe Simonetta

Sarasota FL, Peninsula Bioregion

Shadow and act

I just read your prostitute issue of NEW OPTIONS and I expect that of your 13,000 subscribers at least a thousand will overcome their inertia and respond on this one. I expect that some overwhelming percentage of that will contain marriage proposals, and I hope that there will be many responding as I intend to do right now by taking issue with your self-castigation.

I'm sorry for whatever disconnection you feel because you have not married and had a family. I cannot deny the importance nor depth of the joy and lessons provided by the fulfillment of these instinctual drives and being a direct link in the propagation of the species. But I do want to put in my own small vote for the value of the life path you have taken (that has taken you).

So often in your writings one gets the sense that you feel it has been all adolescent illusion driving you — that you wish you'd stayed in America during Vietnam and were now a powerful figure on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or in some other established institutional context. In reading your life as a psychoanalytical parable, you interpret it all as adolescent rebellion which you are ready to be done with.

But the institutions really did call for critical resistance. And your work continues to be important while you continue to live out archetypal dynamics more visibly and dramatically than many of us.

All of this is just a way of saying, I guess, that you are not alone. It's not the national political movement — nor the family — that you want. But in these dark times we cannot deny the sparks.

— Amy Hannon

Greenville NC, Coastal Plain Bioregion

"Lack of love is killing the world"

In these letters you confront the heart of our article: you ask if the central problem in our society is lack of love.

Breakthrough!

I can hardly believe that you wrote the piece on prostitutes.

I am sure many of your readers will be startled. For me, it was wonderful to see a journalist make his topic into a path with a heart. A path to his own heart.

And what did you discover? Just what many of us are discovering these days. Namely, that the deep source of our troubles — personal, social, economic — began in childhood, where we missed the experience of feeling loved and accepted.

This is a much deeper and more significant discovery than we ever suspected. It's given rise to what I call the "personal responsibility" movement which springs from A.A.-type 12-step models and which is being carried forward by the work of authors like John Bradshaw (*Homecoming*, 1990) and Robert Bly (*Iron John*, 1991).

The bottom-line message is just what you discovered in befriending prostitutes — that lack of love and lack of emotional intimacy is what many of us are (or were) dying from. It's killing the world.

Congratulations on your exemplary journalism. You actually broke through the crust of intellectualism!

— Paul Shippee

Boulder CO, Rocky Mountain Bioregion

Take it from us

I want to take a moment to let you know how moved I am by "Some of Our Daughters."

I am a lifestyle assessment counsellor here in the Midwest. From my personal life and "professional journey," I've come to know that most of the ills of the world are emotional. We are a people suffering from an inability to love.

— Marilyn Silver

Springfield IL, Heartland Bioregion

Our civilization is short of love. Just as we deny the threat of nuclear war and environmental disaster, so we also deny this fundamental fact: that most of us live relatively impoverished emotional lives.

I am working on it myself. I've been married for 43 years and we have three grown kids. Like many of my World War II generation, I was busy being a student and provider during all the years my kids were growing up, and was in many ways an absentee father.

Last week I went to see two of them for visits, the third comes soon, and I plan to make such visits more often and more meaningful.

— David Thatcher

Sebastopol CA, Shasta Bioregion

I just finished reading your synthesis of good journalism and tender sensitivity on the subject of love. It derailed a firm resolution to finish revising the final chapter of my new book, which, relatedly, is entitled *Moving to Utopia: 12 Guidelines to Personal and Planetary Evolution from Loneliness to Love*.

I suppose I should simply thank you for this serious attention to a subject rarely discussed as a most serious dynamic in both personal and political life. And sign this letter. But that would be inadequate.

It took me decades to learn to give love, and longer to face the terrors of opening up to accept it. I was far too busy as a political activist and polemicist. Love was silly sentimentality, maudlin escapism from the "cold hard facts" of the planetary crisis.

In the final 15 years of a previously loveless marriage, I cared for a wife slowly dying of an incurable disease and began to give up my macho defenses against even uttering that four-letter word. Nearly 40 years in a 12-step group of "sharing experience, strength and hope" with fellow alcoholics continued my education. I'm still learning.

Blaming venal politicians and anachronistic institutions is not enough. Somehow, we have got to get the guts to open ourselves to the intimacy we crave, and open our nations to the cooperation we need. Or perish!

— Ted Cox

Palm Springs CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion

The author was an investigative reporter for Scripps-Howard and UPI. He is 79 years old.

Not so fast, bub

If the largest cause of prostitution is lack of love and not sexual discrimination or male oppression, then why isn't the number of male prostitutes who cater to female clients equal to the number of female prostitutes who cater to male clients?

And why is it that the unloved women in

your article have become prostitutes and drug addicts, while the unloved men have become ordinary middle-class guys?

As usual, your newsletter's trivialization of feminist issues disturbs me.

— Penny Norris

Baltimore MD, Chesapeake Bioregion

Friendly amendments

Congratulations on inviting controversy. Perhaps now our approach — to present body acceptance as a part of the solution to social misery ("Body Acceptance Is the Idea, Nude Recreation Is the Way") — will no longer seem so radical.

— Lee Baxandall

Naturist Society

Oshkosh WI, Heartland Bioregion

If love is the social antidote for prostitution, then particular emphasis should be placed upon enhancing the sharing of rights and responsibilities between the spouses.

Unless children see the love between their parents, teaching the parents childrearing techniques does not necessarily prevent dysfunctional families.

— John R. Ewbank

Southampton PA, "Lenape Bioregion"

Thanks for "Daughters/Lovers." Now take your research one step further and look at the long history of sexual repression and denial in this society. That's what produces the dysfunctional relationships you write about.

— Cullen Stuart

Lincoln ME, Highlands Bioregion

Your article on whores was marvelous. It shows that we must attack the evil in the world — e.g., Saddam Hussein — so we don't all wind up like the poor souls in your article.

— Max Van de Meirer

Pasadena CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion

How it all works

I was not going to renew . . . a 64-year-old liberal tired of just bull-shitting . . . thought your Greens article was right on . . . not wanting to read idealism any more.

But I'm a psychotherapist of 30 years, and this is the first article on prostitution that really hits it. Thank you! You are one hell of a journalist.

Guy named Kohut said it best, but in jargon where you need your detective decoder pin to decipher what he's saying. Essentially, if you didn't get the love you need during that first two or three years, you chase it for the rest of your life, but nobody can give it to you . . . like pouring love down a rathole. Kids

need to be heard, need to be told that they are special, that they can do it . . . *very early*, and from *then on*.

The illusion of love (being held, listening to others, giving others what they need) never fixes it. Only way to fix it is to love your Self, love your "inner child" unconditionally. And that takes a long time. Kohut thought six to nine years of therapy.

Now John Bradshaw has translated Kohut and Masterson and Miller and a bunch of other radical therapists into plain English and taken to the TV boards . . . a bit preachy, but I see this kind of pain now in 70% or more of the population . . . not just prostitutes . . . workaholics, affair addicts, religious groupies, haters, you name it.

I have come to the place where there is less and less I disbelieve. Beats hell out of me how it all works. Six weeks ago my hardwood floor small businessman (whose ex-wife is dying of AIDS because she left him for a guy she met in the rehab. program for drug addicts, didn't tell her he had AIDS till he gave it to her) said he ran into this book in the bookstore and started reading it . . . about a channeled personality, a Dr. Peebles, channeled through this young man on KABC San Diego (I think) . . . well . . . very appropriate book for him . . . Peebles points out that all the interaction between human beings is love-motivated, including murder . . . lots of short concepts that shake up your brain, like, "Why do people come to Earth?" "To learn relating . . . to peoples, animals, earth. . ."

Prostitutes are trying to learn relating . . . to get love somehow . . . and so are the people who come to them, you say. Right. I have women who don't screw their men . . . suppressed rage . . . the men didn't give them the love they thought would cure their pain and they get even . . . and then the husbands get even and also look for that relating. Weird. Fascinating.

Anyway — keep my subscription coming. You are very special.

— Patricia Sheffer

Cupertino CA, Shasta Bioregion

"The nuclear family is not the only way"

Finally, here are some letters that accept our premise (lack of love is the problem) but don't necessarily accept our conclusion (marriage is a "major clause in the human contract").

Please spare us

I am gay, happily monogamous, and very much in love with my partner, Paul. I was sor-

ry to see an otherwise excellent story on prostitution dissolve into a maudlin paean to the nuclear family.

Sexual intimacy between two lovers is truly one of the greatest gifts the universe offers. If it is lacking in your life, I hope you find it. But please spare us from your overwrought generalizations about the joys of matrimony and fatherhood.

— **Mark A. Hogarth**
Staten Island NY, Hudson Valley BioRegion

You limited your compass to heterosexuals. But it could easily apply to homosexuals as well.

The lack of love that casts teenage boys out onto the streets (usually by hateful fathers!) where it is hard to avoid prostitution, drugs, and violent crime, is a real horror story. The impersonal sex encounters that many gays engage in are also a consequence of a lack of love (and also often a consequence of a heterosexual marriage that should never have occurred).

On the other hand, I've known gay couples who've been together for decades. And the gays who volunteer to care for AIDS patients are proof that at least some of us are dedicated to a sharing/caring lifestyle.

— **Laurence G. Wolf**
Cincinnati OH, Cumberland BioRegion

Back to basics

As a person who was married only 18 months ago, I can attest to the value of having a life partner!

— **Dana Ullman, M.P.H.**
Author, Homeopathy (1988)
Berkeley CA, Shasta BioRegion

Read your issue #71 last night and thought, How sad! We are coming too slowly to the realization that we've failed badly at the basics in this country for decades.

We decry symptoms — our diminishing international competitiveness, poor educational system, drug problem, crime problem, violence problem, prostitution problem. . . . In the meantime, our divorce rate approaches 50%. *Who is raising the children?*

Who is teaching them (necessarily by example) love, commitment, devotion, endurance, perseverance, integrity? Without those, can we really expect them to understand literature, history, psychology — not to mention business administration, algebra, geometry?

Much as I loved them — much as I recognize the good that came out of them — the 60s and 70s did terrible harm to this country. People stopped being unselfish, effective parents, and this has created and encouraged a

host of egregious social ills. The large number of Americans involved in prostitution is only one example.

We're in trouble.
— **Paul D. Mallamo**
Taos NM, Rio Grande BioRegion

Broaden your vision!

My compliments to your in-depth exploration of the world of prostitution. In my view, your gutsy "research" methods lent credibility to your conclusions. ☸

Your last sentence spoke of seeing marriage and children as a "necessary . . . clause in the human contract." I would suggest broadened vision here.

The family has long been too rigid an institution to accommodate the vast range of intimacy and closeness possible for human beings. Your article didn't say it specifically, but I suspect you'd agree with the notion that failures of the family are an ingredient in much of prostitution.

Changing the family goes beyond eliminating just the sexism (as important a goal as that is). Other pieces that are in need of examination and "cleaning up" include homophobia, monogamy, the definition of what constitutes "faithfulness" and "commitment," ageism — the list goes on.

Closeness and intimacy are among the *easiest* human needs to provide for — except for all our deeply held and protected hurts related to them.

— **Scott Reed**
Seattle WA, Cascade BioRegion

It is not true, as American romanticism would have us believe, that the only way to be truly close, loving and supportive with anyone is in the nuclear family.

I've done both. Married for many years, grandchildren — I love them all very much. But I also love and (I hope) support people in many other relationships: community dwellers, students, and so on.

I would even say (hint, hint) that working for people is a love for them that fulfills, so long as we can be uncompulsive about it. I always remember Kasturbai (Mrs.) Gandhi's reply to how many children they had: "I have four, he has 400 million."

— **Michael Nagler**
Author, America Without Violence (1982)
Berkeley CA, Shasta BioRegion

"Go and sin no more"

I was touched by your issue on prostitution. You handled a very difficult and controversial issue with a great deal of grace and sensitivity.

Though I don't agree with many of your political conclusions, I am quite heartened by your personal conclusions. It saddens me, however, to see that the one thing that could truly help the life situation of prostitutes, drug addicts, pimps, fathers, mothers, etc., is passed over with so little understanding.

When a prostitute was brought to Jesus, He said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Did Jesus cast the first stone? No. Instead He told her, "Go and sin no more."

I realize that this injunction probably seems simplistic to you — for haven't many of these women tried to do just that, and failed miserably? You are right: they can't do it on their own. We need to have communities that are loving and supportive. We need sensitive teachers and role models.

But most of all, we need to have a change of heart. For we are all flawed. We have all sinned.

Let's face it. Multiple sex partners and drugs just aren't good for us. Our minds and bodies are not made to handle those things.

Sin starts out being pleasurable — temporarily filling an emotional or spiritual void. But we know that in the long run it will destroy us, not just spiritually but physically or emotionally as well.

— **Michelle Seward**
Boulder CO, Rocky Mountain BioRegion

Lives of our own

There is another point of view on the issue of family life — namely, that not all of us will have it, or at least not the ideal.

I have two children, but have never had the cozy homelife — the perfect birth scenario with a loving husband coaching me through each contraction, a spouse who loved my children as I loved them.

As a man-crazy woman who has finally kicked the Romance Habit, I am enjoying the clarity of thinking, the effectiveness in my work, the extra time for my children, and the delight in friendship which fill my life now. I wouldn't try to fix what isn't broken by looking for a Significant Other.

A life of working with people I love at a Waldorf School, living in co-housing, reading, writing, and contra dancing suits me better than all my attempts to meet a man's expectations in a Relationship.

Ralph Nader was once asked about his private life, and he replied to the effect that, "A person who has an interesting public life doesn't have time to have an interesting private life." I've often pondered that and now consider it a sound basis for life, for those who can manage it. But I never thought that would include me. Surprise!

This fervent letter is only to suggest that

what we think we want might not be what we really need in order to be happy and contribute to others.

— **Lauren Ayers**

Fair Oaks CA, Shasta Bioregion

At the age of 13 I decided to never have children. Partly because I was saddled with four younger siblings, partly from fear of what the world would have to offer. There have been times when I've come close to changing my mind, but overpopulation has clinched the deal for me.

So, being a fairly normal woman, what do I do with my generative, nurturing instincts? For years I tried to make men happy. I would give them my trust, my money, my body, but it never seemed to be enough, for either of us. A dozen years ago I met an intelligent and very understanding man who has (mostly) stuck with me since then. We nurture each other. But there is still a lack.

A little over a year ago I decided that my child would be the Earth. She is everybody's mother, certainly; but just as an aging parent needs extra help and support, so does She.

So far I have done little: joining Nature Conservancy, helping out with Earth Day activities. But the Earth is in my mind almost all the time, much as a child would be. I can judge the worth and rightness of all my actions against what I perceive to be the Earth's best interests, and I am trying to form the most accurate picture I can.

— **Kathe Wilson**

Bartlett IL, Heartland Bioregion

Laurel's community

I have been a fan of NEW OPTIONS for years but your Oct./Nov. issue was the most powerful yet.

If you know the *Laurel's Kitchen* books at all, you know that supporting loving families has been my first priority for years! So what I want to say to you may be a little surprising.

Everyone *does* need a loving family. But everyone doesn't have to get married and have children in order to "love [their] family with every breath." Your newsletter is aglow with the great love you have for people — not the "I love humanity, but it's people I can't stand" sort, either.

Maybe it would help if I told you about my family. I live in a community of 50, with Francisco, the youngest, a week old and our oldest, 80+ years. Some are married, many (about half) single. My husband and I don't have children but I can have an armful of kids any time, and still put in long hours at work. Not trying to be self-congratulatory here — it's what I wish for everyone. Especially you!

Surely, "love" is a much grander thing than

even the nuclear family, precious as that is, and if we can free it of its hampering association with sex, it can embrace everyone we meet. This society thinks love is sex. The only way I know of to reverse that is for some of us at least to make non-sexual loving our primary job.

The mystics talk about "love without an object" — I would say that anyone attempting great work must strive for it.

— **Laurel Robertson**

Tomales CA, Shasta Bioregion

Laurel Robertson is co-author of my favorite cookbook, The New Laurel's Kitchen: A Handbook for Vegetarian Cookery (1986).

Come back when

I have been one of your readers for about three years. During that time I lost my wife to cancer, after her bearing me six lovely children (the oldest just turned 20, a brilliant freshman at Berkeley, prime candidate for the draft). I remarried last July and wrapped two more children into our family, and my wife, AIDS coordinator for our county, is pregnant.

I have taught sexual ethics to some extent in every introductory class in philosophy I teach. But nothing I've said has had as much impact as my completely unconscious, indeliberate references to my wife and children. The student evaluations constantly refer to it: "I like the way Prof. Dundon talks about his kids."

The students are afraid that they will not find happiness in marriage and family, but they feel themselves being drawn there.

I see, now, that my *primary obligation* is to show my great happiness at being in love, at being married, at being a father. Show it by sheer accident, by deliberate fidelity, never letting my eyes wander, never suggesting that

some outside interest would be anything except great pain to all. Students want to believe that fidelity is possible and is happy.

When it comes down to some kind of principle which can help them sort out the do's and don't's of sex, I have simply come down to this: "No matter how innocent, harmless and seductive it may seem, don't do anything that separates sex from the deepest, most committed and permanent love you are capable of." Don't run away from commitment — or, if you are not ready for it, do not imagine that you can, without causing great pain and damage to yourself and dear friends, enjoy the sweetness of sex.

I am glad I'm out of that world of "relationships" — so devoid of love — among whose injured ones I walked during my brief widowhood.

If you carry out your resolve to get married and have children, you will indeed have less time, but its quality will be higher and your search for policy answers will be more realistic. I remember the story of the leader of the postwar Italian Christian Democratic Party (somewhat left-leaning at the time) talking to his intellectual henchmen. They were bursting with schemes for social planning that were going to make great demands on the middle class and intellectual/political leaders.

The elderly leader finally began to fear their increasingly fervent enthusiasm, their boundless expectations of their capacity to create a New Italy. He said: "You are living like monks, and you expect the rest of the world to be able to live that way. Go out, fall in love, get married, and then come back and we will plan a real society."

Good luck in your good work.

— **Prof. Stanislaus J. Dundon**

University of California at Davis

Davis CA, Central Valley Bioregion

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