

## **BLOODGIVING OR BLOODSUCKING: LESBIANS COLLECTIVELY DONATING BLOOD AS A POLITICAL ACTION**

Good afternoon and welcome to the second most homophobic country in the world. The first one for You is, I assume, Your own country, the one You come from.

Even though these words of welcome are rather cynical, I want to express my most sincere and profound solidarity with all the oppressed social groups and individuals that are gathered here today. Because what I do is, I look at the pain brought by homophobic oppression. And in this respect I look at what has been confined to the personal and try to transform into political.

My situation is this: I wanted to organize a blood giving session that would involve lesbians only. Unfortunately, and to my great frustration, there remains only bloodsucking so far.

How come? The political action which was meant to take place in September 2005 actually could not happen because only two people applied. Nevertheless, the idea of this action persists and over these next few minutes I would like to share its many dimensions with You. Hopefully, some of You might find it suitable enough for Your own context and could use it. Let me state first that what I want to present here is more of a draft idea, but this will give us more time to debate, which is something I am really looking forward to.

So, let me explain what stands behind the idea of lesbians collectively donating blood first, then I will explain the basic social context in Slovenia and then my reasons why I find it a good practice.

The basis for this action grew out of an explicit individual homophobic disqualification. The idea evolved that it can be proved to all homophobes who display their rights to exclude, discriminate or humiliate homosexuals that there is at least one point where they cannot eliminate or simply avoid them. It is clear that one can publicly display his/her right not to go for a coffee with a homosexual or refuse to mix in any way with them, but the most elegant part of the blood donating activity is the fact that none, even the most furious homophobe can exclude her/himself out of the unbearable possibility to receive life saving blood from a homosexual for instance. Same goes for nationalist, racist, sexist etc.

Are You interested to hear what was an explicit homophobic disqualification that made my marbles in the head start to clank?

Once upon a time in 2003 me and my girlfriend were invited to spend our vacation on a small, romantic island in Dalmatia...

By the way, the above mentioned refusal to go for a coffee with a homosexual was a widely well known exclusion statement made by a gentleman who became a vice-

president of the Slovenian parliament in the meanwhile if we name only one of his notorious discriminatory statements. He is the next one who is about to get my lesbian blood.

Actually the event itself was supposed to be a media action. And I am still dwelling on the idea of a small performance accompanying it. It should simply be given in a form of ritual chant over the pot of boiling water, where women would drop the leaves of various red flowers. The ritual saying would be: "I give my blood to the man who spat on my face when i was fifteen and walked through the park with my first girlfriend hand in hand." Or: "I donate my blood to the professor who called me frigid in front of the classroom for being a lesbian" "I give my blood to my parents, mother and father who had thrown me out of the house when i came out at the age of sixteen." And so on...with an aim to name the most typical exclusions lesbians face. Then such tea (along with the sugar) would be served to the media representatives.

It is of a great political importance to show other citizens that lesbians as women and as nonheterosexual women, inevitably, do take a vital and equal role in society, such as tax paying, social and other community work etc. In this way the greater visibility but at the same time also the very importance and vitality of a lesbian existence is manifested. In this way an average, let\*s call this passively, homophobic person might get the idea that would otherwise have never occurred to them; it is not only that "we" don't mind what they do in their beds as long as ..., but even more that a lesbian is not only a hyper sexualized - phantomic creature but that in a certain, persistent sense she is a citizen who can justly and rightly demand her citizen\*s rights for a nondiscriminatory treatment. And it is of great political importance that the rest are willing to accept and support her to fulfill this right. This is the political core of this action. At the same time we must not forget to take into consideration also the symptomatic fact that gay men are not allowed to donate blood in the second most homophobic country in the world. It is obvious that as usual the officials do not even mention lesbians. As though they didn't exist. It is time that authorities consider the consequence of this minor ideological overlook. I dare to assume that it is quite unlikely to expect the ban on the lesbians would be given as a result. Still in many law texts of many governments this might be the only mention of this civil category at all. We can move now from political to more philosophical and the social realm of the phenomenon of lesbians collectively donating blood. Besides its strong political gesture when a lesbian as a subject is involved, donating blood has also a strong but naive humane and nationalistic aspect to it.

Governmental strategy remains completely, so to say, socialist in its character while fixating a donor activity solely in the sphere of individual humane action. So far a donor in Slovenia does not get paid for the donation of blood or blood tissues and cells (it is actually illegal to offer money for it). This is another important dimension of the current situation since it places the donor's act in a highly moral position. They do it for the sake of the benefit of other co-citizens. Lesbians can make use of it.

Naturally if this were the whole story, there would never be enough blood on the Slovenian market. If we look closely, it is true that people do not get paid in cash but get some specific benefits, such as a day off from work, a day off from school, a day off from army service (before Nato). As one can see all of the benefits are replaced from the direct responsibility of the government's health system to its institutions: employer, the school, the god etc. While for example a healthy unemployed person can do with a sandwich and reimbursement of travel costs. None health insurance benefit is meant for donating blood (i am not aware of donations of other medical suppliances). Lets not go further this way but shortly conclude what a closer look reveals, is a fact that instead of having only human to human relationship there is an actual tripartite net of same figures, which underlines every (medical) donation: the citizen in need - the state - the humanitarian citizen. The law that regulates the circulation of blood as live tissue does not mention selling of those products but an exchange with another country or within a humanitarian help to another country in need is possible. What can i say; a lesbian is potentially giving blood as well to a global homophobic receiver.

By these means, donation is not a universally reciprocal deed and one's moral imperative intermingles with an unethical epilogue. This is a clear case that when a lesbian donates blood she donates it not only to a homophobic citizen in need but above all to her homophobic country or homophobic society in general. Such a perversion can be named bloodsucking.

Let's scan some points and some statistics.

As mentioned above this action is suitable as well as a promotion against racism, nationalism, sexism, ageism etc. since the logic is the same. It can be done with no budget and costs and persons involved do not need to be out to participate in media coverage.

5% of citizens of Slovenia are blood donors, which is Europe's average. Two thirds of donors are male, one third are female. Statistically every 5 minutes someone from Slovenia needs blood.