

Lesbian Strength 2019

Welcome to Lesbian Strength Leeds

Hopefully the first of many.

We have come together to celebrate our strength as Sapphic Sisters united by our love of women.

This is Lesbian Revival.

I have 3 Rs for us.

Reclaim our Roots, Rebuild our Community, Resist Erasure.

Reclaim. Rebuild. Resist.

As is our way - we all do what we can. And what a lot that has been. Each contribution counts - however large or small.

Whatever part you have played and will continue to play - remember we are only as strong as our weakest link. So make those connections. Weave the web. Spin the Yarn because we are here to stay!

Before we bring on our fabulous speakers I have 10 points to make.

Point 1:

Why are we in Leeds? Up North for a change where we say it like it is!

And it is only 5 hours from Glasgow!

Leeds has a proud Herstory of women's activism – not least of which was WAVAW (Women against Violence against Women)

They know a thing or two about Lesbians in this part of the world.

There seems to be something in the water. So I say keep hydrated.

Not too far from here in Halifax a certain Anne Lister knew what a Lesbian was before the word was even used. To quote her, "I love and only love the fairer sex, and thus, beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any love but theirs"

Let's channel the swagger of Anne Lister!

Point 2:

Why are we a threat to Patriarchy?

Looking out at you I don't see a fierce or scary bunch.

We are a threat because we reject the phallus.

Point 3:

The L-word. Definitions matter. Words matter. We know what Lesbian means.

Women In Iran, South Africa, Ukraine know what Lesbian means.

Point 4:

So refuse to use Newspeak. I read 1984 on holiday - read it or reread it as it is frighteningly contemporary. And remember - to quote Orwell

"Freedom is being able to say $2+2=4$ "

Point 5:

Reject the nonsense of the alphabet soup, which lets people wrap themselves in rainbows whilst feeling virtuous, and allows companies to grab cash from a newly-created, ever-expanding market.

Point 6:

Stonewall used to know what a Lesbian was but seems to have forgotten.

Point 7:

Some of us have been around a long time and have long memories.

We remember Clause 28.

We are used to being incognito, being invisible. We know how to exist like that.

If needs be we can do it again. Not all of us have been assimilated.

Point 8:

We know how to network. 37 years ago, way before mobile phones, we managed to get 30,000 women to surround the base at Greenham common.

In those days we were up against a shoot to kill policy when stopping Cruise convoys.

We were up against the American Military. In fact we were up against the entire military industrial complex.

So we understand threat. And we know a thing or two about the long game.

Point 9:

We know how to build movements.

To quote Marge Piercy, "It goes one at a time. It starts when you say we and know who you mean, and each day you mean one more!"

Point 10:

Looking out at the crowd I see the symbol of the double headed axe. We need to use the Labrys to cut through the crap. So let's turn out the gaslights and turn on the torchlight of truth.

This march and Rally is dedicated to Magdalen Burns, a young Lesbian who has been shining that torch consistently.