

lieve nonsense and promote hate live on. ... I wouldn't wish that life on anyone." Beyer and writers on other sites also declare that radical feminists oppose third wave feminism, when in fact a cursory search of women's studies theorists would show that third wave intersectionality owes its existence to radical feminist authors and activists.

But who wouldn't disparage old radical lesbians who still attend women's music festivals after reading these posts, or *Salon's* declaration that TERFs are "a hate group masquerading as feminists," or *The Advocate's* that "TERFs followers fundamentally despise other women"? Once attached to social media, these viewpoints reach *millions*. The TERF definition ends up being pretty much every radical woman from the era of radical feminism, as appearing on the Michigan festival was for decades a very competitive honor. The festival stages played host to artists as diverse as Taiko drummers, indigenous Australian and Hawaiian performers, the Native American trio Ulali, Shikisha (South Africa), Cobra (China), Frank Chickens (Japan), authors Alice Walker, Alix Olson, Dorothy Allison, Sini Anderson, and poet StaceyAnn Chin, who fled sexual violence and homophobia in Jamaica only to be boycotted economically by white women in America for appearing at Michfest.

By now, admitting to working at or attending the festival has become the equivalent of being listed in Red Channels (*Are you now, or have you ever been, a participant at Michfest?*). I find that I must go abroad to present papers on women's music as a topic of scholarly history. In the scary ad hominem cyberposts I read every day with a sinking heart, both young and older queer activists are urging each other to ban or abandon the work of black lesbian artists and poets who play Michfest: not just StaceyAnn Chin but other artists with indescribably long social

activist résumés, including (to name a few) Toshi Reagon, Vicki Randle, Nedra Johnson, Gina Breedlove, and Shelley Nicole. By default, their choice to ascend the stage at Michfest makes them TERFs.

This trend of beggaring our best recording artists, many of whom are working-class women of color, will escalate before it slows, since no one is stepping up to denounce it. And as lesbian elders who contributed so much to the movement do begin to die off, the backlash has a chilling effect on the collection of their oral histories for posterity. I suggest that making peace with the radical separatist past will be necessary for anyone charting the progression of queer visibility, rights, and power; shaming and silencing every woman who has experienced the Michigan festival effectively erases almost anyone who dipped a toe into lesbian culture in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s.

I CAME OUT as a teenager in 1980, right at the exciting crossroads of feminism, women's music, and the gay and lesbian rights movement. Each of these overlapping revolutions called on followers to make lesbian lives and contributions more visible. That they *had* been kept invisible was a given: no lesbians were identified as such in the history books I read, or in the films and television I watched as a girl-liking teenager.

Once I entered graduate school in the 1980s, I found my scholarly field. I committed myself to studying and archiving lesbian history, activism, art, and culture. I quickly learned that bold foremothers had laid out a path for me to become a professor of lesbian history: not, perhaps, the job my parents had in mind for me, but a lavender door thrillingly kicked open by some of the nation's most dynamic scholars: Evelyn Torton Beck, Lillian Faderman, Audre Lorde, Karla Jay, Adrienne Rich. I inherited their wisdom with gratitude and awe, poring over their writings. Looking around for a research subject of my own, a slice of history no one else had documented, I settled on the women's music movement. Concerts, festivals, and album releases were *the* signature lesbian events of my own coming out into activism, impacting hundreds of thousands of women.

For the next thirty years, I spent every dime I had and every summer attending, working at, documenting, photographing, and collecting the material culture of as many women's music festivals as I could. Throughout those pre-digitized decades, I dragged two cameras, three notebooks, and a battery-operated tape recorder to Campfest, Sisterfire, the National Women's Music Festival, the West Coast Music and Comedy Festival, the Gulf Coast Women's Festival, the Heart of the West Fest, the Virginia Women's Music Festival, the North East Women's Music Festival, the East Coast Lesbian Festival, and, of course, the biggest event of all: the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.

Like a fine wine, this research slowly matured, allowing me to publish dozens of articles and at least one award-nominated book. Now I'm sitting atop a golden egg of rare material, my city apart-

Singer

Just when I think I can talk to her, I lose my voice.
My fat tongue stuck and lips too shy confuse my voice.

I drag my vocal chords through awkward exercises,
race up and down the hills, like this unscrews my voice.

But still can't talk to her. I have too much to say
or feel too much. My springing spirit slews my voice.

She takes me to her friend's apartment, maybe lover.
She talks, she says. She does. It seems to bruise my voice.

It seems like she has verbal lovers everywhere.
She introduces us. If I could use my voice.

She loves me singing in her choir, and I sing
her music perfectly in tune. She woos my voice.

All this was years ago, in crushing times, and yet
my customary solitude still skews my voice.

MARY MERIAM