

We lesbian women accuse the World Bank

My name's Laia, I'm 30, I'm a social worker, and I was born in Sant Esteve d'en Bas. About a year ago I had to leave my home town. I'm a lesbian, and I've never made any attempt to hide my sexual preference. When my boss found out at work he took advantage of the process of privatization our service was going through to get rid of me, claiming absolutely incredible reasons like low output, budget cutbacks and so on. In the end I didn't actually lose my job but I was removed from the responsibilities I had carried out until then, when I was still assumed to be heterosexual. I decided to go and live in a big city — Barcelona — because I thought things would be easier there. But it's not true. At every job interview I can tell I'm being excluded when we get to the personal questions (Have you got kids? Have you got a boyfriend? Are you planning to get married?), because I'm not prepared to deny my identity as a lesbian woman. I want to have a child, but the public centres for assisted reproduction won't take me, and if I can find a private one that'll take me it costs the sort of money I can't pay. If I want to go out, I can go to the "Gaixample" gay district, but there the "pink peseta" rules: the beautiful people with the usual male role models you get the world over.

We **lesbian women** accuse the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and also the Catholic church of jeopardizing human rights with their heterosexist policies; they fail to encompass a gender perspective that takes in all the sexual preferences of women. We accuse them of exerting explicit violence on us as women and as lesbians, as a consequence of the invisibility in which we are kept, which makes us all the more vulnerable to the perverse effects of their policies.

We accuse them for their policies of privatization and dismantling of the welfare state in those countries where it exists, which affects us as women and especially as lesbians, since the public sector offers us certain guarantees against labour and legal discrimination that the private sector does not. In a fiercely competitive job market, these policies lead us towards unemployment, job insecurity, exclusion and, in short, day-to-day conflict with our sexual preference. Deregulation policies also hinder our chances of attaining rights that we do not yet have, such as: legal recognition of shared maternity by two women; free access to centres for assisted reproduction; the right to family reunification, social security and citizenship for lesbian spouses from outside the European Union; the right to paid time off in the event of spouse's illness; and widow's pensions.

The World Bank, with its educational campaigns for women, reinforces the role of mothers and carers, brushing aside other ways of living and feeling. It thinks and produces from a one-way sexist and heterosexist standpoint, from which we are excluded as women and especially as lesbians. It is for this reason that we demand that governments take our existence into account, by implementing policies of education and awareness-raising towards all the sexual preferences of women and supporting lesbian grassroots organizations. In other words, they must also take diversity into consideration in terms of sexual preferences.

Grup de Lesbianes Feministes

www.lesbifem.org

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