

Part 1:
WAR

It feels like the pain of war, no less than the cry of the wounded, no less torn apart than the soldiers scarred and left bleeding in the battlefields.

And yet we rage a war on yet another battlefield. Our hopes, fears and changes that we must go through are heaped, piled and thrown upon our selves - our souls, that feel tormented and strong.

In moments of sadness, when all that we have done seems overwhelmingly shadowed by uselessness, we feel the bitterness, the shame, the tiredness. And then as we sit in our questions, alone again the critic in us comes out.

Don't even count the times - again and again you've had to lay aside your plans because of lack of money, sick kids, or the inability to find someone to watch your children. Don't even try to remember what freedom is all about - it's something you read about in an adventure novel, or plan to recapture when you're 63 and retired. Plan on spending two-thirds of your paycheck on day care alone if you can afford to work. Or, plan on facing the inequities of welfare once you're stomped, torn and invaded by the red tape that lines your guts. Don't ever count on support, because this is it, baby, rock bottom blues!



Part 2:
OURSELVES

We find comfort in each other. There exists a beautiful touching, reaching out to one another. There's always the honesty we exhibit in our lifestyles. We're not afraid to expose our happiness or guilts, because we can feel safe with each other. The most beautiful people I know at this point in my life are single mothers. They don't kick you in the ass when you're down, they are there for support. They don't ignore you when you have your bad moments, they sit and cry with you. They are the only people that truly realize what each single mother is going through. We're protective of each other, and we're fierce

to those around us who try to tear us apart. Never before have we been pulled together by such a universality. Never before have we experienced the continuing love that exists between us...no matter what...

Trying to mesh careers with mothering pinpoints our frustrations with being so unique. We run across people who have no idea what the single mother experience is. Our bosses don't realize that there's no one else to stay at home with our children if they're sick. Our families don't even realize the extent of our frustrations. Constantly we run across people who are extremely misinformed about what we have to go through. Men have higher paying jobs because they are considered the breadwinners. Women continue to get lower salaries even though they are the breadwinners. No one realizes how hard it is to come home from a hassled day at work. You can't just sit down in your overstuffed chair and read the newspaper. You can't express or bitch to anyone about what a horrible day you had. You can't ignore the children because they're getting on your nerves. You can't sit down to a nice meal already prepared (unless you're industrious enough to put something in the crockpot in the morning).

You must pick up the children from the babysitter or day care center. Then you must go home, fix the dinner, straighten the house, listen to the children and all of their needs and questions, do the dishes, get the children ready for bed...and then and only then, does a silence occur that has medicinal values upon your soul...

Every light is out except the one left on beside my bed. The quietness is a welcomed sing, and the rain and thunder accentuate the natural rhythm of the night. For a change, I'm free of worries. I was able to say what I felt tonight—to say what I needed to say—and my body is relaxed with the contour of the pillow behind my back. I'm happy and it feels good. These moments are rare, but yet come often enough so that I can maintain a sense of identity, a sense of self. It seems as though every night when I "tuck myself in" I delve silently and deeply with myself. I try hard not to rationalize too frequently about the state of things. Gradually things are changing and I do the best I can.

Part 3:
WE'RE HERE

We wouldn't change being single mothers for anything in the world. We get lonely and frustrated, true, but the strength that comes from doing it your own way, and being able to depend on yourself is something no one can take away from you. We're the ones who provide every need for our children and ourselves. We're the ones who realize how hard it is to change and grow, but we're the ones who change effectively. We have very special relationships with our children, that nuclear families don't touch upon...we feel blessed with this feeling, this happening. We set our own goals and work toward getting there. We're the ones who go to school full time, work full time and still have children at home. The responsibility (at times) is overwhelming. Our needs at times are so great. Yet we're the ones who are getting together and meshing our lives with one another. We're the ones who live

Single Motherhood

And then there is the pain...

By JULIA GEIER

We've been single mothers a month, a year, a decade, for eternity. It is not just a transitional stage. It is our now, our needs and lives now. Some of us have 7 children, others only 1. We have been divorced, widowed, separated or always single. We've changed our consciousness to involve a life alone with children. Not every person can do this.

We've come "a long way", but our uniqueness makes us evolve slowly and carefully and creatively. We're closing in the gaps of severed emotional and financial ties that we've become accustomed to for years. Poverty for many is a new taste that sours in our mouths.

aloneness a new emotional concept that we try to grow with.

Some of the children's fathers give support, others only use the children in a game of chess...back and forth, back and forth. The week-end-or-when-ever-it's-convenient-to-him father is another commonality. Some of the fathers don't even know that their children are alive. Others range from alcoholics to child molesters. We deal, obviously, with every kind of father.

We search, grasp, reach and cry. Struggle and flounder, fall, stretch and grow. We overcome, strengthen, weaken, try and fail. We scream, meditate, manage, work, play and always live. And then there is the pain...

in constant contradictions as far as our circumstances and emotions go, but who have broken away from anything that is not honest and true.

Forty-nine percent of all families in Lincoln are headed by single parents. If that isn't a figure to be respected, I don't know what more evidence one needs to realize that we're more and more closer the norm, and not the deviants of society! It takes a strong constitution to raise children alone. We feel like the pioneers of today, of tomorrow. We receive our stamina from each other, as do all "minorities". Society is still unwilling to accept anything that isn't white, middle class or male. We refuse to be isolated anymore. We're breaking the mold, the pattern. It feels good. We feel complete. Captured by time, harassed by money, neglected and betrayed by the community, completely ignored by the government, bled by day care, overextended by routines, striving to equalize our opportunities in this world, we cry—we are here!

Part 4:
OUR MEN,
OUR CHILDREN

The men in our lives are, for the majority, bewildered. They usually consist of our fathers, brothers and lovers. Ex-husbands or fathers of our children rarely enter into the picture. The men in our lives don't quite know yet what it is like to enter into a situation where they're already getting a

children do NOT need male, father figures. It's even harder for them to step away from the "firm hand" "guiding light" image they have in their minds of what father figures consist of. And so it goes.

Contrary to current, irrational thinking of psychologists and the single mother experience of raising children, our children are just as "normal" as any other children. They learn to express a sensitiveness that is usually considered "out of the sex-typed roles" they "should" be in. For instance, our sons are allowed to cry and are not made to feel ashamed; i.e., they're "sissies" if they cry. They're also allowed to have dolls, and they learn to cook! Our daughters also are taught "abnormal" behaviors like how to fix things and are allowed to play with trucks! So, as we are liberating ourselves into a unique lifestyle, likewise our children are liberating themselves without even knowing it. This is "abnormal" they shout at us, and to prove it, the teachers at school observe these peculiar behaviors. (Horrors!!) The deliberating effect of this however, is that it immediately goes down upon record to carry with them until they set their records on fire, which as we all know is impossible.

Single parent children also have each other. They don't taunt each other with "you don't have a daddy" tunes or pick fun at each other, and their ideas seem surprisingly more free and open with other children. They don't have that "don't say this or you'll get ridiculed" undercurrent. And because they are mommy's little helpers, they rely more on themselves, take on much more responsibility around the house, make more decisions for themselves since mommy can't always be there to make decisions for them, and talk more freely and openly to their mothers. A lot more conversations go on about expectations that aren't true, free schools and children's liberation (along with mommy's liberation). So when it comes time to deal with the "norm" of society, many older people can't handle the realism and the "shocking" discussions that go on. Amazing, isn't it?

We are not saying, however, that our children will not want a nuclear family when they start their own. It's a well known fact you want what you didn't get, right? They will realize, though, that princes don't come galloping up on their steeds to swoosh a fainting princess into their arms and travel into the setting sun, living happily ever after. Instead, with the therapeutic encounters they have with their mothers, the delving into the why's and wherefore's of situations and not just accepting anything that is laid in front of them, the up and down emotional feelings that they will have and learn how to grow with and control, and the going-without-because-of-lack-of-money situations they will be more adept at going out into a world that hopefully will not seem so frightening and strange, even though it is not easy to deal with or enjoy. Needless to say, our children, along with their mothers, are growing up healthy and strong and free.

AN AFTERTHOUGHT
WITH THE CONCLUSION

We're here, we will continue to be here, and we have been here forever. (Even before Christ, I'm sure.) And yet, as is so

typical of society and the people in it, apathy will continue to override any considerations that need to be given to anyone that is not, as I have stated before, white, middle class and male. And as we SCREAM to those in "control", our voices will be heard. Eventually. Maybe in the next 500 years.

And I haven't even brought up the subject of the Lesbian mother, who is a thousand times more unjustly dealt with. If anyone finds out that she enjoys and loves and prefers women to men, they can take her children away! And for what? It's a proven fact that homosexuality is not a mental illness, if that's what they think the problem is. And it's certainly more apparent to me that women are definitely better able to relate to women than men are able to relate to women.



Try being a minority in this day and age. Try being discriminated against and made to feel unimportant at anything you do. Try marking "second class citizen" on your driver's license and see what happens! Or better yet, try screaming at your local government officials for the betterment of everything that concerns the single mother and the education of the people about the single mother's experience. Join MOMMA, the organization for single mothers, and start living again. Start breathing life into your lungs, start breathing life into your lungs, start believing in yourself again, start loving again. It's happening NOW. We're beautiful. We're in control. We will be heard!

—The Growing Season
(University Women's Action Group)

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