

2 June 2019, Leuven City Hall

WOMEN IN BLACK LEUVEN 25 YEARS

-LESBIANS IN THE PEACE MOVEMENT -

**RECOGNIZING, ACCEPTING, CELEBRATING**

**LESBIAN FEMINISTS IN THE PEACE MOVEMENT**

**lepa mladjenovic & laurence hovde**

***On the 12.12 in 2012 at 12 o clock and 12 minutes in this City Hall of Leuven there was a wonderful lesbian marriage event with Nans Luyten and Ria Convents, the moderator of today’s historic event. I believe many activists here remember this celebration of love.***

**We lesbian feminist peace activists have a very deep experience of what is a heterosexual patriarchal world, that has pressured us from our childhood with a heterosexual world vision and life values. In the meantime, we also learned that neo-capitalism is manufacturing heterosexuality as the norm and compulsory regime; we had to invest our energy and wisdom to transform it in our diverse lesbian community lives.**

**Over the last hundred years of the women’s peace movement, there have always been women active in the peace movement who had to hide their lesbian identity. Many of us were searching for radical movements where we could be out loud lesbians and be disobedient. So, 25 years ago we lesbian feminist peace activists insisted that we be recognized as lesbians in the WOMEN IN BLACK MOVEMENT. AND WE WERE. We found a space of sisterhood and solidarity in WOMEN IN BLACK.**

**OUR JOURNEY OF ALLIANCES started at WOMEN IN BLACK meetings in Jerusalem and Novi Sad already back in 1993. We were continuing on the courageous practice of visibility of lesbians in the GREENHAM COMMON anti nuclear women’s movement in UK. Every Women in Black meeting from then on has had a discussion or workshop on lesbians in the anti war movement. Leuven Women in Black has fantastic lesbian feminists peace activists - we are proud of their visible lesbian activism within the peace activism in Belgium.**

**We lesbian feminists are contributing to the revolutionary spaces we create together, with a clear statement that the ethics of peace we desire recognizes differences among people, as well as lesbian existence.**

**From the beginnings of Women in Black, out lesbians linked activism for peace and justice with working against sexual discrimination and male violence against women. In the past 25 years, we have made many successes in the visibility of lesbians, but discrimination, racism, lesbophobia and violence continue to be used to silence lesbian love in many places. That is why we two stand here in front of you to say: The more different we are in the movement the more power we have. Lesbian feminists bring to the movement the love between women in a way not seen in the history before we arrived.**

**Love is peace. Love is justice. Love is power!**