

Interview Transcript

Third Wave: A Voice for RI's Feminist Women / Jodi Glass

Details

- Name of Interviewee(s): Jodi Glass and Ruth Horton
- Date & How Recorded: September 29, 2024 with Digital Recorder
- Interviewer: Martha Young
- Transcript edited by: Compiled by Martha Young using original recording
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What follows is an abridged transcript of the conversation with Jodi Glass and Ruth Horton, two of the founders of The Third Wave publication. The conversation included discussion around the breadth of organizations and associations in which they have been involved throughout their lives, some of which crossed over to The Third Wave. Portions of the conversation not specifically related to The Third Wave are not included in this transcript. An audio recording of the interview in its entirety is available through the Wanderground Lesbian Archive/Library.

MY: So thank you! I'm just having an unbelievable trip down memory lane looking through *The Third Wave* publication because I've been searching for it online and, unfortunately, Rhode Island's best kept secret.

JG: Awww...it's a good secret!

MY: It is a good secret. It's just incredible all the familiar names I'm seeing in the paper that I've known throughout my life. So, the publication itself ran from 1990 to 1997?

JG: I think so, yes.

MY: And you published it under Feminist Resources Unlimited?

JG: Yes.

MY: And that was the organization you set up to handle your publications?

JG: Feminist Resources Unlimited (FRU) started in 1978 as an organization that did a lot of things. The paper was just one of them.

MY: You also produced *The Rhode Island Feminist Yellow Pages*?

JG: Through FRU we had a house called FRU House where different groups were housed in South Providence, including Dorcas Place (now Dorcas International), the Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center (now Day One), and others.

MY: Can you talk about what the impetus was for starting The Third Wave?

JG: The Third Wave didn't directly come out of FRU House; it came out of Feminist Resources Unlimited. I'm from New York, and I couldn't believe how people in Rhode Island weren't networking because the state is so small and it's so easy to talk with each other. So I pulled together a network of people that created the nonprofit group FRU. And I said, "why don't we get all the FRU House groups together once a month and say one thing that's going on with your group." And that's what we did. And then it went from that to everybody being very busy, so we developed a handwritten newsletter. So, *The Third Wave* started out as literally meeting in a room, and it wasn't called *The Third Wave* at the time. It was just called Feminist Resources Unlimited Meeting. And then it went to mimeo format that we sent around. And then we went to typewriter and got some really talented graphic artists (Mary Ann Rossoni and Maria Caporizzo). I didn't know anything about computers or graphic art. I was cutting and pasting everything – doing it on the floor in my house. And they (Rossoni and Caporizzo) knew how to move things, how to do things. And when they said, "we can create a newspaper," I said, "OK!"

MY: And the publication was monthly?

JG: Yes, once a month, and when it ended it was printed seasonally because we just couldn't keep it up.

MY: So, structurally, you had an editorial committee, advertising/marketing, distribution, etc.?

JG: Yes, a lot of committees of one. No one was paid – all volunteers. The way the newspaper was distributed was from my front porch. I had a great big porch on my house on the East Side of Providence. We would line the papers up in stacks on the porch, and people would pick them up and distribute them in their territories across the state.

MY: And the distribution volunteers knew the places throughout the state that were amenable to offering the publication to their customers?

JG: Yes.

MY: (looking through the first two issues of *The Third Wave*) reads out some of the names of content contributors and advertisers who were well known in Rhode Island, including an article from Claudine Schneider, former Rhode Island Republic U.S. Senator; advertisers including attorney Lise Iwon, musician Kate Katzberg, the Dorr War Bookstore, and Jodi's father, Joseph Glass, who placed an advertisement for his New York business in the inaugural issue.

JG: If it wasn't for these advertisers, we would have been able to do it. Advertising pulled us through.

MY: At the height of the publication's heyday, you'd say you printed 10,000 copies of *The Third Wave*?

JG: Yes.

MY: You were appealing to the feminist audience, not just lesbians, correct?

JG: Yes, definitely. We didn't call it a lesbian paper. It was feminism that we were talking about, but we included a lot of lesbian content.

MY: But you had a lot of lesbians volunteering to work for *The Third Wave*.

RH: I think nearly everyone who worked on the paper was a lesbian.

JG: Yes, I think so.

MY: Do you think that back at that time, it was a safer way to produce content that wasn't going to be terribly scandalous in a very Catholic state?

JG: I don't know. I don't ever remember being nervous about the publication. Ruth used to do the food columns occasionally. I don't remember her having a problem going into places that were unwilling to put it out. They just thought it was a novel idea. But again, we weren't saying we were a lesbian publication.

MY: I recall seeing online a reference to *The Third Wave* in The National Archives.

JG: I have my stuff in the archives at the Hay Library at Brown University and at the LGBTQ Archives. I don't think it's in The National Archives.

MY: So back to the paper, I see you went two-color printing in the second year of publication.

JG: Maria and Mary Ann, who knew newspapers, really knew how to do this. It was the greatest support team. I would say that everyone was at an extremely equal level of getting things done.

RH: Yes, we just did.

JG: We knew how to do it, but we got exhausted. We didn't have anybody to write grants for us. It was an all-advertising supported effort.

JG: We are a non-profit. FRU's incorporation still exists. What came before us was the Women's Liberation Union. We fashioned FRU after the Women's Liberation Union with the founders' blessing. We continue to pay for the corporation every year, so we could technically continue the paper again if we wanted to.

MY: Did *Options* take over after *The Third Wave* discontinued publishing?

JG: *Options* started before us – I think in the 1980s – but they struggle with the same issues that many papers do. Little money and not enough people to do the work. They are currently looking for board members. But it was never lesbian- focused; it was gay-focused. It certainly wasn't woman focused.

MY: Was it all word-of-mouth in terms of finding people to write for *The Third Wave*?

JG: Lots of word-of-mouth. Articles were contributed from such organizations as Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR), the precursor to the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In 1997, when we went to a seasonal production schedule, we changed the format of the calendar, and instead created a resource list of aligned organizations. We were really beginning to die out at that time because it was really hard.

MY: Did you have most of the same volunteers across the entirety of *The Third Wave's* lifetime?

JG: Yes, we did.

JG: I think it's a shame that people don't get to see issues of *The Third Wave* anymore. I'd really love to have them out. I feel strongly that people should see what came before them. Many of the people who wrote for us are still around.

JG: We even used my home address as the mailing address for the publication. That was brave.

MY: It's obvious *The Third Wave* was a labor of love that kind of ran thin on energy.

JG: Yes, and everyone started to get older and have other jobs. People get tired. Reducing the publication to four times a year was even hard.

MY: So did the publication start to wind down in 1996?

JG: Yes, that's when we started the seasonal schedule.

MY: Anything surprising that you learned over the course of building *The Third Wave*? Was it bigger than you ever expected? I'm curious about what sticks out most in your mind about the experience.

JG: I think what I learned is how much people loved talking to each other and sharing what they had to say. People talked about the hard work they did for their organizations such as Planned Parenthood or The Coalition Against Domestic Violence. And they really wanted to share their information, and they didn't have a way of doing that outside of their circle. The other thing I learned, that is not a positive thing, is that once a lot of money comes into a group, the group changes from grassroots to a much different kind of group. And that's not the kind of group I

like to work with. You know, it's a double-edged sword because you can't really work without the money.

RH: You have to sell a little bit of your soul when that happens.

MY: But you had a health budget to do the work.

JG: Yes, we did, and for a long time.

RH: The advertising was good, but we did put a little money into it to float things at certain times.

JG: Yes, the advertising was great, but it was hard for people going out and getting the advertising. But people loved getting the paper, the store owners loved making it available to customers. They just couldn't get enough of it.

RH: We never had any bad press or feedback.

JG: We never talked to Mayor Cianci or the governor about the paper. The paper stayed really clean as a project.

MY: While *The Third Wave* as a publication is gone, there are organizations like The Womyn's Project that replaces it?

JG: I would love to have a paper through The Womyn's Project. I think they've managed to get some money, but they're still struggling to find a permanent place. But they do "out there and in your face" stuff.

MY: To summarize what I'm hearing, *The Third Wave* covered all aspects of feminism but was largely built by lesbians.

JG: We got together on a monthly basis to plan and manage distribution.

RH: The popular spots for distributing the newspapers were certainly around Providence (Wickenden and Hope streets) as well as South County.

JG: I can still see the stacks of papers sitting on my porch and my stomach getting in knots when people didn't come on time to pick them up.

JG: The paper was always distributed by the first of the month to ensure the calendar of events was timely.

RH: We were so young and had so much energy then.