

devastating. We need better politicians than we have. So that's a fight I continue to engage in—to get more women and queers into politics and to make the politicians we have more accountable.

Feminism might be “post” for some, but as long as women and girls are second-class around the world, including in our own country, feminism is the most essential and dynamic political force in the world today—the only true answer to the destructive forces of gender violence, homophobia and racism, which remain pervasive here and abroad. So feminist work has been a major focus of both the last year and last decade for me. I find that younger women especially believe feminism is over. I want to convince them *it is not*.

I've spent the last decade dedicated specifically to working against the trafficking of women and girls. The selling of women's bodies—girls as young as 5 are sold into sex slavery in India, Pakistan,

## The end of a decade plus the start of the holiday season should invite reflection, both personal and global.

Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China, all of the Eastern Bloc, throughout Latin America and in all the island nations of the Western Hemisphere—is one of the most destructive weapons being used against females worldwide, which is why I have been engaged in this battle for more than a decade.

And so the decade is nearly at an end. Before a line is drawn through the last day, however, we will have the holidays laid out before us in all their glittery, sparkling splendor. It's all as enticing as it is every year. The opportunities to give of ourselves are immense. It would be a shame not to take advantage of them.

One friend of mine is spending her holidays visiting older women in her community. Women are three times as likely as men to be single after 65. My friend

believes that building community among these older single women is an essential element of her personal lesbian feminism. She's holding a solstice dinner for 30 single older women in her neighborhood.

Another friend of mine in a different city is hosting a holiday party for lesbian couples and their children, while another is getting her lesbian friends to each “adopt” a woman in prison and promise to write to her once a week throughout the year.

As for me, I'm looking forward to this year's holidays with excitement. One of the things I had planned for this holiday season was book-giving. I live in a poor neighborhood. The schools near my house are wretched and none has a library. Most of the kids who live near me are without books.

Books sustained me as a child, just as writing sustains me as an adult. I cannot imagine surviving my childhood without books, and the worlds they let me escape into. So I am organizing a book drive for the three elementary schools in my neighborhood, in hope that every child in every grade is given a new book for the holidays. Their own book—not used, not worn. New and just for them.

And so as the year—and the decade—draws to a close and the holidays draw near, join me as I pause and reflect—on the year (and decade) passing and on the one about to unfold. We always have opportunities to give, but the holidays are a perfect excuse. Women and girls worldwide—in our own communities and in our global community—need our help. Queers oppressed and repressed in the majority of non-Western nations of the world need our help. Our own queer communities need our help. So much giving needs to be done and there are not enough of us to do it.

So with that in mind, embrace the season as a huge gift. Get your friends together and choose a holiday “project” that celebrates your lesbianism, your feminism, your belief that the world can be a better place if we all make an effort.

The end of a decade is approaching, but so is the beginning of a new one. Start with Thanksgiving—give thanks for all that you have. And then start...giving. ■

## FROM STUDIO TO CAMPAIGN TRAIL

When artist Debra Walker moved to San Francisco in 1981, she found an affordable space at Developing Environments, a 36-studio live/work artist co-op and San Francisco's first legal artist residence. And she's been there ever since, surrounded on all sides by painters, sound artists and circus artists.



Walker's live/work space has allowed her to survive as an artist in one of the most expensive cities in the country. Her apartment is partitioned into studio and living quarters, which allows her access to her work around the clock. “Every time I have like a spare hour I go in there and paint because it's there, it's open, it's left out. Space, for visual artists, is really important.”

Walker's appreciation for her unique work space has led her into activism. As a member of the Coalition for Jobs, Arts and Housing, Walker aims to secure more affordable spaces for artists. “There's two minds,” she says. “Some artists feel like they need to remain outside of society. And then there's others who are more like community artists.”

Walker is a community artist whose activism has led her deep into the politics of land use and urban planning. She is a member of the San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee and a City of San Francisco Building Inspection Commissioner. This year she kicked off a campaign to run for district supervisor. “I think I might win this race for supervisor,” she says. “So I'm going to have to figure out how to keep an active art project going in my office at City Hall.”

Her politics are driven by her experience not only as an artist, but also as a lesbian. She is one of only six women to ever be elected president of the powerful Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club and sits on advisory boards for the Queer Arts Festival and the Queer Cultural Center. Last year, after California's Prop. 8 ruling, Walker joined in protest with activist Kip Williams and was arrested for disobeying a peace officer and jaywalking. (Charges were later dismissed.)

“The coming together of queer youth, queer supporters, the faith community and diverse communities was truly inspiring to us all,” she says. “I believe that artists play a key role in how our society moves forward from this collapse.” [Nina Lary]