

Women and LGBT's in INDIA by Karen Zelermyer, Deputy Director

I was privileged to travel to India for two weeks in January to represent Astraea at the third annual meeting of the International Network of Women's Funds. It was also an opportunity to meet with

LGBT activists and to visit with one of our international grantees- Sangini.

Sangini is a lesbian organization located in Delhi that was founded in 1997. They run a hot line and support groups for

issues in the work of these groups. It hasn't been easy. However, their perseverance and dedication has resulted in some major organizational victories (see the Sangini Grantee Profile on page 5.)



Participants at the 3rd annual meeting of the International Network of Women's Funds

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"women attracted to women." They do this by running an ad in the Times of India that reads, "Are you a woman attracted to other women?" with their hot line number. Then they spend two evenings a week sitting at the phone answering calls. They would like to staff the outreach hotline seven days a week but they don't yet have the money. Twice a week they run a support group that is attended by 10-15 women a night. With more than 50 percent of the population unable to read, they are concerned about all the women they are missing through their written advertisements and they are searching for creative outreach strategies. They have also been working with other women's organizations and human rights groups based in Delhi to deepen their understanding of lesbian issues and for inclusion of those

I also got a first hand look at the power of media to change lives and a strong reminder about why Astraea's support of cultural work is so important. One of the first questions I was asked when I arrived in Delhi was if I had seen the film Fire directed by Deepa Mehta. It's a provocative, sensual, and beautifully made film about two sister-in-laws, both in arranged marriages, without intimacy, who fall in love.

This film has advanced the cause of LGBT organizing in India in amazing ways. First, it has helped to articulate a language and give visibility to the existence of same-sex relationships in India. Its release resulted in an intense backlash that included a banning of the film, protests against the banning and arrests of gay men. These



Setting Goals and Objectives

"A friend is a country with no exit visas," says the late poet Audre Lorde in her somber poem, "Diaspora," detailing

the horror of war and violence. Astraea's giving has crossed all kinds of national and international, sexual, gender, artistic and political borders with strategic courage and humility. Staff and Board members are preparing to round out our fundraising imperatives for 2001-02 so that we can continue to cross those philanthropic borders and sustain our work once there. The U.S. General Grants Fund, the International Fund for Sexual Minorities, the Lesbian Writers Fund, our Donor Advised Funds and all of our avenues of philanthropy are possible because of your continued and generous support. These avenues are our "exit visas."

As Astraea enters its 25th year, its silver anniversary, Board and Staff will be initiating a new Strategic Plan. We will be setting our organizational goals and objectives for the next three years and evaluating our Mission. Is it inclusive enough? Is it still relevant to the concerns and needs of those who lead programs that actively work to eliminate those forms of oppression based on race, age, sex, economic exploitation, physical and mental ability . . ." You, our supporters, are the women and men who, as Lorde says, "wait for something to change and nothing does, so they [make] change themselves." And that is Astraea's mission.

All the best,

New Staff at Astraea

Join the Board

Astraea is seeking qualified and motivated women throughout the United States to serve on our expanded national Board of Directors. Board members actively participate in national and local fundraising efforts and events, serve on working committees, and have financial oversight of and direct strategic planning for the Foundation. If you are interested in being considered for Astraea's Board of Directors, contact the Chair of Astraea's Board Nominating Committee, Brenda Funches at breninsilverlake@earthlink.net or Astraea's Board Chair, Cheryl Clarke at cclarke@rutgers.edu.

Sonja Sivesind grew up in the suburbs of Seattle. She moved to New York in October, 2001 after traveling the country interviewing grassroots social change organizations about their anti-oppression work. Before that she lived in the San Francisco Bay Area working as the Coordinator of the Prison Activist Resource Center. She has worked as a Development Associate at Astraea since December 2001.



HELEN LANG



HELEN LANG

Born and raised in California, Patricia Justine Tumang left the West Coast in 1998 to pursue her college education in New York City. She received a B.A. in Cultural Studies with a path in Race, Ethnicity and Post-colonialism from Eugene Lang College in 2001. Her commitment to anti-racist

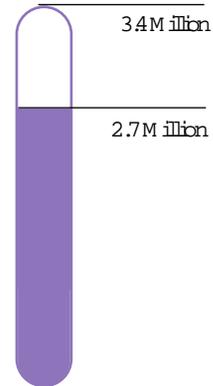
feminism from a queer Filipina-American perspective permeates her life and writing. Her first published essay is featured in the upcoming anthology *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* (Seal Press, Fall 2002). She has been Astraea's Administrative Assistant since January 2002.

Women Will

A PROFILE OF A PLANNED GIVER



ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN UPDATE MAY 1, 2002



With a few short months left until the official end of The Astraea Challenge: A Campaign to Empower and \$700,000 still to raise, we are pushing hard to achieve our \$3.4 million goal. It is a challenge we intend to meet and exceed.

If you have already made your gift or pledge to the Campaign, thank you.

If you have not, now is the time.

WOMEN WILL: A GIVING CIRCLE FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE MADE PLANNED GIFTS AND BEQUESTS TO ASTRAEA FOUNDATION

ASTRAEA HAS BEEN THE BENEFICIARY of gifts entrusted to us by generous and farsighted donors. Too often, these gifts have gone unrecognized because they have come at the end of a donor's life.

The Women's Will Circle provides a way for Astraea to recognize and thank donors who have designated us as a beneficiary of their estate during their lifetime and to involve them more intimately in the Foundation's work.

Women's Will Circle members will be recognized in Astraea publications and at special events.

The list of Women's Will Circle members listed below includes only those women who have informed us in writing that they have included Astraea in their estate plans.

If you have designated Astraea as a beneficiary in your will, insurance policy or retirement fund, please notify us so we can include you in our Circle.

Gifts In Honor Of	In Memory Of	Women's Will Donors
Tracy Gary Elizabeth Armstrong and Stacey Dekai Terri Ekin and Adena Gilberts Ann Tobin Rose Walton and Marge Sherwin Ruby Joy Day Jill Campbell	Diane Dinardo To give a gift in honor or in memory of someone, contact Astraea at info@astraea.org or 212-529-8021 ext.20, or send in a pledge envelope filling out the appropriate section.	Katherine Acoy Diane Bernard and Joan Heller Gail Bernstein Melanie Berson Pam Calvert Donna Cassidy Debra Hirschberg Marjorie Lightness Kate O'Hanlan and Leonie Walker Joni Ross Stephanie Roth Dixie Sheridan Cindy Sterling Victoria Watkins Jan Zobel

PASSION, INCLUSION, COMMITMENT:

A Board Member's Journey to Astraea



Inspiring.

Amazing.

Impressive.

These are just some of the adjectives Su Ming Yeh uses to describe her work as a member of Astraea's Board of Directors, particularly

when applied to her colleagues on the Board. "I feel so honored to be a part of this group of talented, intelligent, thoughtful women. Sometimes I can't believe I'm among them."

A modest reflection considering that Su Ming has a remarkable list of accomplishments and experiences of her own. She was a science teacher in Tonga as a member of the Peace Corps and was the former Executive Director of Asian Professional Extension Inc. (an Asian American mentoring program). She worked for both Funders Concerned About AIDS and the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families and ran an after-school program in the South Bronx. All this before being chosen as one of only four annual Public Interest Scholars at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania Law School, where the 30 year old is now finishing her first year as a law student.

A donor since 1997 and a member of the Board of Directors since 2000, Su Ming recalls becoming interested in Astraea after receiving an invitation to a house party. "When I attended the event I met (long-time Astraea member and then-Chair of Astraea's Board) Mai Kiang and decided to get involved." Members of the Astraea family frequently note that once an introduction to Astraea is made, it

"at Astraea the practice of inclusion is not just a token nod to diversity, not just an add-on, but is vigorously pursued throughout the entire organization, from grantmaking to staff to management to the Board"

is often the beginning of a lifelong relationship. This appears to be the case with Su Ming as well. "I was initially drawn to Astraea because of their mission to advance the well-being of lesbians through fostering social change, and I was impressed by the International Fund grants program for LGBT activists at the grassroots level." She has remained involved because of what she sees as Astraea's leadership in grantmaking and a demonstrated commitment to diversity.

"Astraea really is at the forefront of working for social justice. And at Astraea the practice of inclusion is not just a token nod to diversity, not just an add-on, but is vigorously pursued throughout the entire organization, from grantmaking to staff to management to the Board. I find such passion, not just for the value of diversity but for the incorporation of intersections— of race, class, age, ability, of differences of any and all kinds— to be rare and, for me personally, inspiring."

During her tenure with Astraea, Su Ming has been witness to exciting growth. When the organization reached a \$2 million dollar annual budget, she felt it was "a testament to both Astraea's excellent leadership, and to the extent to which people believe in us and our mission." In addition to continued expansion, she envisions institutionalizing Astraea through the building of the Endowment as well as simultaneously "moving to help our grantees institutionalize themselves, allowing them to become sustainable long-term." The relationship between Su Ming Yeh and Astraea, as with all of Astraea's supporters, moves us closer to our mission of a just and peaceful world for lesbians and for everyone.

For more information about serving with Su Ming Yeh on Astraea's Board of Directors, please contact Brenda Funches, Board Development Chair, at brensilverlake@earthlink.net.

We Recruit! We Need Your Help!

Astraea's membership campaign is in full swing, learn how you can be involved:

Astraea's members provide our core support— enabling our grants, philanthropic advocacy and public education programs. You can help us expand our membership and programs. Here's what you can do.

- ☞ Renew your membership if you haven't already done so.
- ☞ Introduce your friends to Astraea and ask them to become members. We can provide you with materials to send to them or you can call, fax or email us with their names and we'll do it for you.

- ☞ Host a party for 2 to 200 of your friends, share the good work of Astraea and ask them to become members.

We've been told that we're the best-kept secret in the LGBT and Women's community. Get involved and help us spread the word!

For more information, contact [Sonja Sivesind](mailto:sonja@astraea.org) at sonja@astraea.org or 212-529-8021 ext.14

Building Alliances with the Women's Movement

By Maya, Sangini Staff person

The year 2000 was particularly significant for Sangini in terms of forging links with the Indian women's movement. In May 2000 Sangini was invited to participate in a meeting with some of the largest political women's groups in India, including the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), Janwadi Mahila Samiti and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW).

These groups are members of the seven national women's organizations affiliated to political parties, known as the Seven Sisters. The purpose of the meeting was to educate these groups about lesbian issues and Sangini presented an overview of the experiences of women who are attracted to other women in India. This marked the beginning of a series of meetings held throughout the year with these groups about lesbian inclusion in the women's rights discourse. One particular focus was the inclusion of lesbian groups (Sangini and CALERI) in the March 2001 International Women's Day rally. In a number of confrontational debates, the women's organizations concluded that:

- the focus of International Women's Day in Delhi was small-scale industrial closure and displacement, therefore lesbianism did not fit in;
- there was a need for "greater debate" on the issue of lesbianism within their own organizations;
- including lesbian groups would bring about detrimental media publicity; and,
- lesbian groups could participate in the rally providing they agreed not to carry banners identifying their groups and status as lesbians.

In response to this position, several autonomous women's groups, along with Sangini and CALERI, wrote a formal letter of protest to AIDWA and NFIW. Thereafter a counter-reply was sent to all the groups who had signed the letter (other than Sangini and CALERI) attempting to justify their homophobic decisions. Although the outcome of the meetings did not lead to lesbian groups being included in the rally, a positive consequence was that seven of the autonomous women's groups came out in support of lesbian issues and joined with Sangini and CALERI in their fight for inclusion. Some of the groups also encouraged Sangini to apply for a stall at an event organized by the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), a governmental agency. The response from the DCW was positive and Sangini's involvement in the fair was a major success. More than 800 leaflets were distributed to women and we had valuable discussions with a number of women's organizations taking part in the event. Fifteen members of the Sangini support group prepared posters on lesbian issues and twelve members came to help or to visit the stall during the one-day event held on March 8, 2001. For some members it was their first time of being exposed openly as a lesbian, bisexual or transgender woman.

This year Sangini decided to organize its own event for International Women's Day. With a lot of effort and enthusiasm the event, "Ek disha, ek raah hamari" ("One direction, one path. Ours!") was held on March 5, 2002 to celebrate and broaden understanding about the lives of women attracted to women (WAW) in India. This event, a fundraiser for HIV positive children living in New Delhi, was aimed at women's groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other organizations and individuals concerned with human rights and women's rights.

Sangini rented a conference room for the full day at the Gandhi Peace Foundation in Central Delhi. The room was filled with photo exhibitions, posters, and five installations that voiced the lives of women attracted to women. One attraction was the Sangini journey, the history of Sangini in word and photo exhibited on a white Bengali sari.

The event was inaugurated by Jaya Srivastava (Ankur), a very important figure in the women's movement, who has been extremely supportive of the issues of women attracted to women for the past two years. Her appearance was followed by speeches, poems and a short play by the kotis (men

who have sex with men and who see themselves as feminine in sexual partnership) of Naz Foundation.

One of the highlights of the day was women speaking in public about their experiences of being attracted to women in Indian society. Voices and lives of other WAWs were seen and heard in installations on screen, through audio, in photo exhibits, art pieces, poems, posters, songs and dance pieces. Other NGOs working on sexuality related issues were also invited to exhibit their work.

On March 8, 2002, Sangini, for the second year, took part in the fair organized by DCW (Delhi Commission for Women). This year, however, Sangini was invited and did not have to ask for permission to take part in the event. The fact that we were invited to run a stall is seen as a big success in the attempt to link up with the women's movement. And, unlike the event on March 5, which was aimed at women from the women's movement, the DCW fair was attended by women mainly from a lower class background, giving us the opportunity to introduce ourselves to a new audience.

Additionally, Sangini attended various events organized by other women's groups happening on and around International Women's Day. Sangini continues to work to build stronger and broader alliances with India's Women's Movement.



SANGINI C/O .The Naz Foundation (India) Trust
PO Box 3910, Andrews Gunj New Delhi 110049 India
SANGINIHELPLINE 011-685 1970/1971 (Tue and Fri - 6 pm to 8 pm)
sangini97@hotmail.com

Astraea Lesbian Visual Arts Fund Established First grants awarded

Astraea has always funded cultural work. From film and video, to lesbian writers, publications, theater and dance, Astraea believes in the power of art and culture to affect social change. In 1997, Astraea launched the Lesbian Visual Arts Project to promote the visibility of contemporary visual art by lesbians. This year, with a \$5,000 lead gift from sculptor Shirley West and a \$205,000 gift from Astraea Founding Mother and artist, Joan Watts, the Astraea Lesbian Visual Arts Fund was established as an endowed fund to support the work of lesbian visual artists. In March 2002, the first grants were announced. Each of the two artists selected, Xylor Jane and Fan Lee Warren, received a \$1,000 grant.

Visual Artists Awarded



Fan Lee Warren: Natural Resources Acrylic, latex, permanent on paper



Fan Lee Warren received her MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1985 and a BFA from Illinois State University in 1982. She has been exhibiting her sculptures, installations and works on paper professionally for 20 years. Her work is displayed in several public and private collections, including the Harold Washington Library Center in Chicago, the Spertus Museum in Chicago and the permanent collection of the Bemis Foundation in Omaha NE.

The "Middle Passage" series began in 1986 and continues to the present. This work has been motivated by the tortuous journey from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean by African peoples as their rite-of-passage into slavery.

"I am influenced by the collective consciousness and shared memories of the survivors of this passage, and their relationship to the New World. I want to compose a historical relationship between the images of slavery and the reality of Black peoples lives in contemporary American society.

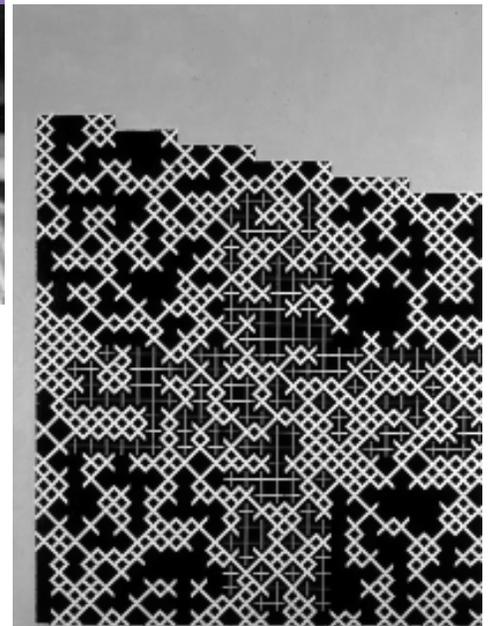
These images with beaten and torn surfaces are embedded somewhere within my psyche. Perhaps they represent conditions that continue to be part of my identity and experience as an African American woman. The emotions that the images often transmit serve as references for a process of living in the present that has been shaped by the past, and is symbolic of how the future is constructed daily."

Educated at the San Francisco Art Institute with a BFA in Painting in 1993, Xylor Jane's work has been shown in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York since 1997. Xylor Jane began painting with oils on her tenth birthday. A winter solstice baby, she was raised in Orange County, California by born-again Christians.

My recent paintings explore a numeric formula devised by thirteenth century mathematician, Leonardo Pisano (AKA Fibonacci). Each number in the Fibonacci series is the sum of the two preceding numbers, producing a ratio of "Golden Proportion" or Phi (1.618034). I use gridded landscapes to translate Fibonacci's numeric expression for organic growth into color.

For each painting, I select a portion of the Fibonacci series determining the shape of the grid to map. Once the grid is drawn, I fill each square (or circle) with digits as I add the growing numbers down the canvas by hand. The process is laborious and repetitive, embodying a slow carefulness that complements the feeling (and previous uses) of the surfaces I've chosen—primarily used chalk boards and jigsaw puzzles from the 60s.

The simplicity and abstract perfection of basic arithmetic exercises evoke my desired impact on the eyes of the viewer: a nursery rhyme-like circling of the paintings' surfaces, "abnormal" thoughts.



Xylor Jane: 144 233 Ink and colored pencil on mylar



Members of Group Divers of Prohova, Romania

ASTRAEA ADMINISTERS SIX GRANT PROGRAMS including our long-standing U.S. Grants Program, the groundbreaking International Fund for Sexual Minorities, the valuable Lesbian Writers Fund for emerging writers of poetry and fiction, and our newest fund, the Lesbian Visual Artists Fund. We also offer the Margot Karle Scholarship for City University of New York undergraduate students. And we work with our donors to supplement the work of our panels and our movement through our Donor-Advised Funds Program. Since our last newsletter in the fall of 2001, Astraea's U.S. grants program received 117 applications from organizations and filmmakers from 31 states and U.S. territories, doing great work around lesbian and LGBT issues. Astraea's Community Funding Panel will be meeting in late May to make funding decisions and grants will be announced in June 2002. The March 8 entries to our Lesbian Writers Fund are currently being reviewed by an anonymous panel of noted lesbian writers in our communities and will be announced in July 2002. Check out our website or our next newsletter for the results!

In March, Astraea's International Grants Panel met for our second cycle of grants from the International Fund for Sexual Minorities. Including this round of grants, we will have awarded more than \$200,000 in grants to groups organizing outside the U.S. this year. We are proud to share with you this list of amazing organizations around the world doing community building and organizing around the human rights/sexual rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

Women and LGBT's in India continued from page 1

arrests, in turn, spurred the creation of new organizations working to change the law that makes homosexuality illegal throughout the country. One of these groups, PRISM (People for Rights of Indian Sexual Minorities), sponsored a forum for the LGBT community in Delhi while I was there with an Australian Supreme Court Judge, a gay man, who spoke movingly to the group about the importance of fighting for the rights of LGBT people.

It is an incredibly exciting time for the women and LGBT liberation movement in India and it was amazing to see and hear about the range of work, the organizations and the networking that is happening amongst these groups across the country—especially given some of the oppressive and controlling social conditions for women and sexual minorities.

After spending a week immersed in these issues I traveled to Hyderabad, a city in south central India, to attend the third annual meeting of the International Network of Women's Funds. I spent a week sharing ideas and strategies with women from India, Nepal, Mongolia, the Ukraine, South Africa, Ghana, Hong Kong, Brazil, Mexico, England, Germany and the Netherlands. The U.S. was represented by the Global Fund for Women, the Women's Funding Network and Astraea.

I was inspired to see women from all over the world, facing very different political, economic and social conditions, all sharing a common mission—to improve the status of women—and organizational challenges. This was Astraea's first opportunity to attend this annual meeting. And, it was the first time in the three years that this group has been meeting that lesbian issues were placed firmly on the table as a women's issue. Thus

far, not one of the foundations working in the Global South or former Soviet States, with the exception of Semillas, the Mexican Women's Fund, has ever funded a lesbian organization. Several of the Funds expressed their fears that if they did fund a lesbian group they would lose all their donors and their funding. There was, however, great openness to the issue and by the end of the meeting, as a part of a visioning exercise, a hope was expressed that, within five years, they would all be able to fund lesbians. Several of the groups asked for our support in learning how to think about the issue.

What was most striking about this trip, both while there and upon reflection, was the visceral realization of the unique and critical role that Astraea plays in supporting and promoting the human rights movement for LGBT people worldwide. It is a deep and profound responsibility, one that I am proud to say Astraea assumes with great care and integrity.

International Fund for Sexual Minorities

Grants March 2002

Association for the Advancement of Feminism (Hong Kong) will produce a volunteer-run bilingual Chinese/English website on women's sexuality and sexual rights which includes both useful information and a much needed discussion forum on women's sexuality inclusive of lesbian sexuality. \$8,000

Durban Lesbian & Gay Community Health Centre

(Durban, South Africa) for the legal advice and equal rights project, addressing a range of issues from employment discrimination to immigration to human rights. \$10,000

GAHUM -Phils, Inc (Cebu City, Philippines) promotes basic human rights through community education and organizing, documentation and legal representation for human rights violations against Filipino sexual minorities. \$8000

Gender/Sexuality Rights Association of Taiwan (Taipei, Taiwan) seeks educational, legal, political and social rights for sexual and gender minorities through grassroots organizing, fostering the lesbian, queer, and transgender community, and building empowering knowledge. \$10,000

Group Divers (Prohova, Romania) combats discrimination and inequality by providing legal and social assistance to lesbians and other sexual minorities, educates the community, and offers psychological and medical services to LGBT persons. \$2,600

Information Center WOMYN FOR WOMYN (WOW)

(Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) is a regional organization working for human rights of women who suffer from prejudice and discrimination against their sexual preference as well as gender, predominantly through research and disseminating information through a website. \$3000

IX Encuentro Feminista de Latino America Y El Caribe

(Pavas, Costa Rica) will host the 9th Annual Feminist Meeting/conference for Latin America and the Caribbean in Costa Rica in 2002. \$5000

Events at a Glance

Look for our upcoming events in a city near you

Saturday, June 1 Los Angeles, CA Tea Dance 5-8pm

Join us for Astraea's 3rd Annual LA Pride Party

Saturday, June 15 Shelter Island, NY Barbecue 4-7pm Join this historic event where the North and South Forks meet on Shelter Island for our 11th Annual Astraea Party in Long Island

August 10-15 Astraea and NCLR Ride For Pride 2002, Oregon. Join with 15 other beautiful bike riding women to tour the Oregon coast and raise money for Astraea. Contact Sonja at sonja@astraea.org or 212-529-8021 ext.14 for more information.

Astraea Past Events

The Power of the Erotic

BOSTON



PHOTOS: PETRINA HICKS

Performers from left to right: Stacy Montgomery, Letta Neely, Priyanka Sinha, Jaclyn Friedman, The Princess of Pain, and Melissa Li

SAN FRANCISCO / BAY AREA



PHOTOS: DONNA KORONES

Performers clockwise from top left: Dorothy Allison, Happy Hyder, Nadereh Fanaeian, and Afa Walking Tree

Astraea Bulletin Spring 2002

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- Donna Korones, Berkeley, CA
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- Nusrat S. Retha Rabbee, Jamaica Plain, MA
- Babara Turk, Brooklyn, NY

International Grants Panel

- Marta Drury, Half Moon Bay, CA
- Nguru Kangu, New York, NY
- Daniel Lee, San Francisco, CA
- Javid Syed, San Francisco, CA

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Our Mission

Astraea Lesbian Action Foundation is a feminist public charity whose purpose is to advance the economic, political, educational and cultural wellbeing of lesbians, their families and allies working for social justice. Our mission is enacted through a variety of programs including grantmaking, training and technical assistance, philanthropic advocacy and education, and fundraising.

Who is Astraea?

Astraea or "Starry One" was the Roman title of the Goddess of Holy Law or Libra, and was also known as the Goddess of Justice. In most ancient writings, Astraea is associated with natural law, matriarchal justice, and the personification of truth and justice.

American Airlines® The Official Airline of Astraea Foundation