

## **Lyla Miklos' speech from the March 4, 2003 Provincial NDP Nomination Meeting for the Riding of Hamilton West**

The one question I've been asked the most during my campaign is "Why are you running for politics?"

To answer that question fully I'm going to have to tell you something about my past. I used to be a Jehovah's Witness. Yes, a Jehovah's Witness. I used to be a member of a religious organization that is sexist, patriarchal, homophobic and proactively apolitical.

There came a point in my senior years of High School when I could no longer accept that as a woman my worth as a human being was less than a man's. I could no longer accept that homosexuality is a disease that needs to be cured. I could no longer accept that the powers that be controlled my destiny and the fate of all humanity.

I had to reclaim my power as a queer woman and say I have the power to not only improve my being, I have the power to make my community, my city, my province, my country. . . my world. . . better, richer, fuller, more diverse, more hopeful, more sustaining and one that truly believes in the inherent worth and dignity of every living being.

I have lived most of my adult life in fierce defiance of those who tell me that I can't do this, can't say that, can't think this, can't feel that or simply can't be. I have protested as an individual and with groups against those in power who would try to suppress or oppress those who have been continually stripped of their rights. I am not afraid of going where angels fear to tread.

I am a queer activist. I helped to create Mohawk College's first social and support club for queer students. I have been a part of the organizing committee for Hamilton Pride for the past five years. I now sit on the GLBT Committee for the City of Hamilton. As a queer activist I have been out, open and frank about my sexuality. A strong political statement in itself - if I don't live in a closet there is nothing to expose.

I am a woman who is connected to her community. I've lived in Hamilton for over 20 years and currently live in Hamilton West. I'm a graduate of Mohawk College's Media Studies program and a former director on the Mohawk College Alumni Association and a Hamilton Community Foundation award winner. And as of yesterday I became a member of The Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative. As a woman I'm outspoken and opinionated. And I make no apologies for that fact. I add my booming voice to a chorus of voices. The louder women's voices are the more impossible it will be for anyone to silence us.

I am an artist. I have been a performer and volunteer with over a dozen community theatre groups in the area for over a decade. As an artist I sing with passion and I write

with intensity. I believe fervently that expression through art is one of the strongest touchstones for any culture. Without art all cultures are dead.

I am a media industry professional. I have been working in the broadcast industry for almost a decade. Currently I am a programming coordinator for CHUM Television and am the Host and Producer of Centre Stage and Theatre Bites for C101.5 FM. As a media professional I urge anyone with the will to make full use of all media technologies. Practice your freedom of speech and expression by reclaiming the power of the spoken word, the pen, the printed page, the radio wave, the television signal and the world wide web.

None of us can sit back passively as our futures are determined and laid out by others. We can no longer allow ourselves to throw up our hands and sigh "Well, there's nothing I can do about it". The future is in all of our hands. Change starts from within. If you can change yourself, you have already started to change the world. Change can happen, one defiant, proud, outspoken, iconoclastic and unwavering individual at a time.

The personal is the political; which is why I continually add my voice to the arena of public discourse and debate.

I must add my voice to this global movement of progressive and positive change. A change that needs, no, that must be embraced by all communities across the globe if we are ever to grow and flourish as a human society.

And that is why I, Lyla Miklos, am running as a candidate for the NDP Provincial nomination for Hamilton West.