

# Judy Freespirit

April 3, 1936 – September 10, 2010



*because life is an awakening and [she was] alert  
because life is a flowering and [she] blossomed  
because life is a struggle and [she] struggled  
because life is a gift and [she was] free to accept it*

*–From “Bashert” by Irena Klepfisz*

## Memorial Celebration of Judy's life

Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club, Oakland, CA

November 6, 2010



**Please visit the Remembering Judy Freespirit web site** to see a full photo gallery and read & post entries: <http://judyfreespirit.wordpress.com>

**Judy's Archives** are at the GLBT Historical Society

657 Mission Street No. 300 (moving soon)

San Francisco, CA 94105

Phone: (415) 777-5455

Email: [info@glbthistory.org](mailto:info@glbthistory.org)

URL: <http://www.glbthistory.org>

Donations to the Archives in Judy's name will be much appreciated

If you have material you want to add to Judy's Archives, please contact Cathy Cade at [cathy@cathycade.com](mailto:cathy@cathycade.com)

Many thanks to Cathy for her dedicated work on this Archive!



# A Celebration of Judy Freespirit's Life

3:30: Potluck, conversation, music

4:15: Welcome, Elana Dykewomon, MC

Opening remark, Joe Ackerman

“Bashert” by Irena Klepfisz, read by Elizabeth Keir

“Persimmons” by Sheila Burgoslaw, read by Sheila

“You’ve got to be carefully taught” with additional lyrics by Judy Freespirit, from *Polly’s Phat Phollies*, sung by Lynn Ellen Marcus, accompanied by Dick Bailey

4:45: Remembrances by kin – friends & family

5:45: “Jewish Food” by Judy Freespirit, read by Pnina Tobin

“A Conversation” by Judy, read by Judith Stein & Elana Dykewomon

6:00: Open mic for remembrances (4 minute maximum, please)

7:00: “Look to the Rainbow” from *Finian’s Rainbow*, sung by Amy Ackerman, accompanied by Dick Bailey

Group song: “There’s No Women Like Fat Women” (from *Fat Lip*, words by Marilyn Stiller), led by Miriam Cantor & Lynn Ellen Marcus

until 8:00: Potluck and conversations



Thanks to Mo Kalman for the CD mix

Thanks to Max Airborne for the program (and the website!)

Thanks to Barbara Price of the Montclair Women’s Cultural Arts Club for all her help

Thanks to all the volunteers and friends who made this possible!

# Judy Freespirit

## She Made the World A Better Place\*

Among the millions of women changed by the 1970s, Judy became the change she envisioned. Born Judith Berkowitz in Detroit to a working class Jewish family, subject to her father's incest, pressured to diet from age eight, she danced and performed to survive adolescence. She followed her drafted husband to Japan, where she gave birth to her son, Joe. In 1960, they moved to L.A., where Judy finished college with an MA in psychology.

At the advent of the '70s Women's Movement, she divorced, trained in Radical Therapy, came out and became a founder of the Fat Underground. She co-authored the *Fat Manifesto*, and later was a founder of Fat Chance performance group and Fat Lip Readers Theater. She represented the Fat Movement on the Donahue show and disrupted many "health experts" professional gatherings.

When she lived in Sonoma, she fought the Briggs anti-gay teacher initiative in 1978. In Berkeley, she joined the Disability Movement and worked with the Center for Independent Living and, later, the World Institute on Disabilities, to integrate fat rights issues. She was also a founder of the Jewish Lesbian Writers Group and gave numerous readings with them and solo.

Her publication credits include *Daddy's Girl* ('82), *Keeping it in the Family* ('93), *Whole Lot of Quakin'* ('96) and *A Slim Volume of Fat Poems* ('96) as well as many articles, interviews and poems in journals and anthologies.

In the late 1990s, she joined the Unitarian Church, speaking on a range of issues from the pulpit on numerous occasions. At the church, she wrote, produced and directed *Polly's Phat Phollies* in 2003.

In 1999, she was honored by NAAFA (National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance) for her leadership of their Feminist Caucus. In 2004 she received the Bay Area Pat Bond Old Dykes Award for her lesbian activism.

When she moved to the Jewish Home in S.F. (after a successful challenge to their weight discrimination policies), she started creating visual art and organized multiple LGBT events for Pride Month, as well as an LGBT group for the staff.

Judy was an open-hearted, engaged, challenging, loving friend and intimate to many. She loved her son, Joe, daughter-in-law Laurie, and grandchildren, Amy and Andrew. She was a dedicated, irreverent, funny, smart, cultural and political activist. Iconic, mythical now — she remains an inspiration in our lives.

\*Inscription on her tombstone at Fernwood ecological cemetery