



Written by Ursula Rehaag Kopanke and Daria Gabriela Suárez R. (CIPAC/DDHH)

Edited by IGLHRC

With an Introduction by Alda Facio

*To “The Buffalos and the Ladies”,
who made lesbian lives visible in Costa Rica
in the 40s and 50s*

(Bios)

Alda Facio is a writer and lawyer. She has a Ph.D. in Comparative Jurisprudence and International Law on Women's Constitutional Rights by New York University and is internationally well known as an expert in gender and women's human rights issues. She has been part of the official Costa Rican delegation to several UN International Conferences. In 1997, she founded the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice at the International Criminal Court. Since 1994 she is a member of the group that is advocating for an Optional Protocol to the Convention to End all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Since 1992, she is the Director of the Women, Justice and Gender Program at the UN Latin American Institute for Crime Prevention (ILANUD), based in Costa Rica. She has also been a Civil and Labour judge in Goicoechea (CR), founder and director of the Costa Rica National Dance Company and one of the founders of Ventana, the first feminist group in CR as well as of Las Entendidas, the first lesbian-feminist group in the country. She lives with her two dogs and one turtle and is the mother of a 31 years old son whom she considers her soundest achievement because she was able to bring him up in such a way that he has become a tender and intelligent man who respects the human rights of all beings on this planet.

Ursula Rehaag Kopanke has a Law degree and has specialized in Public Law, Administrative Law. She works as a consultant on environmental law issues.

Daria Gabriela Suárez R. Started her work as a lesbian activist in 1997, with Asociacion Triangulo Rosa in Costa Rica. In 1999, she was one of the founders of CIPAC/DDHH. In 2000, she organized the First Central American Lesbian Encuentro and in 2002 opened a Documentation Center specialized in lesbian, gender and women's history issues. At present, she is CIPAC/DDHH's Executive Director and also works as Executive Secretary for the Network of Costa Rican NGOs Working on AIDS.

CIPAC/DDHH: The "Centro de Investigación y Promoción para América Central de Derechos Humanos" is a non-governmental organization based in San Jose, Costa Rica. It works on advocacy, promotion and research on lesbian and gay rights in the region. It's the first lesbian and gay organization to become a member of CODEHUCA (Central American Human Rights Commission). CIPAC/DDHH is involved in several civil society initiatives in Costa Rica and works publicly to integrate lesbian and gay issues to the mainstream human rights movement in Central America. It also runs a Lesbian Documentation Center and provide different

services aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the Costa Rican gay and lesbian population.

IGLHRC: The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission considers its mission to secure the full enjoyment of the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression, and/or HIV status. A US-based non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO), IGLHRC effects this mission through advocacy, documentation, coalition building, public education, and technical assistance –for more details see www.iglhrc.org)

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PROLOGUE

by CIPAC/DDHH

In 1998, during the First Central American Conference on Human Rights and HIV/AIDS for Gays and Lesbians, held in the Costa Rican capital city of San José, the idea arose among a group of lesbian activists of investigating in depth the legal situation of lesbian women in Costa Rica--as those legal forms and codes informed and affected their actual experiences and lives.

During discussions about the project, participants mentioned a number of legal decisions and precedents that would be important to analyze; others have been added as the project developed.

Costa Rica enjoys a well-developed framework of laws which repeat and reinforce one another in many places; analyzing all the legal precedents could become a monumental task, slow and of little practical value. We have selected the statutory provisions that are most significant in regard to events in the spheres of social, political, and economic life as well as labor and health, in order to create a broad and complete panorama of the reality of life for the lesbian women who live in our country.

We believe strongly that lesbian as well as human rights organizations, groups and/or activists require objective tools for their work—it is necessary to know the terrain before crossing it.

Work such as this needs to be done inside each country. Yet support from international human rights organizations, from international gay and lesbian communities, and from the international community in general, is indispensable in order to gather information, focus global pressure and spread the word about successes as well as inequalities and abuses.

The aim of the current report is to turn itself into a practical legal tool for defending the rights of lesbian women. It will examine in detail laws that may affect, directly or indirectly, the conditions and opportunities for development of the national lesbian community.