

# Aint I A Woman?

a midwest newspaper of women's liberation

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25¢

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SOJOURNER TRUTH,  
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place... And aint I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me... And aint I a woman? I could work, as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well... And aint I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard... And aint I a woman?"

Sojourner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.

Reprinted from Liberation News Service  
Radical Media Bulletin Board

From: AIN'T I A WOMAN?, PO Box 1169,  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Although we have used your service and appreciated having it made available to us, we feel we must be honest with you about our concerns. The service in general has not presented a very high consciousness of women's oppression or of the movement toward the liberation of women. Often a news packet will have several articles on women while articles not dealing specifically with women actually ignore women. One example of this would be your coverage of the Panthers' Constitutional Convention. You mentioned that the Radical Lesbians walked out in one sentence with nothing more about how women were treated. We feel you sincerely try but we feel you must try harder. Women all over the country are starting to think we need a news service of our own if the services now available do not begin to display a higher consciousness when it comes to women.

From the LNS Women's Caucus:

Dear Sisters of Ain't I A Woman?:

We have thought a lot about your criticism and we accept it. You are right, we haven't had a feminist consciousness throughout the packet. Most of us who have been on the staff for a while came to LNS without much political consciousness at all. In the past two years, some of us went from being general shit workers to having a voice in policy and decision making. But the tremendous amount of time we spend at LNS and the fact that LNS developed as part of a male-dominated movement, kept us for a long time from developing a women's consciousness and expressing it in the packet.

Now, we are trying to change. All of the new people presently coming to work at LNS are women and many of them do have close ties with the women's movement and have developed their political consciousness there. Together we are struggling to make the LNS packet reflect a feminist consciousness.

Your letter was important to us. We realize that stories like the Panther Convention must be written by women. We are open to further criticism and we hope you don't give up on us, but keep on reading the packets.

Love,  
LNS Women

(AIAW -- We have heard that since this reply to us was written that some women have left LNS and we don't know at this time how many women are on the LNS staff or how much of a struggle is going on over the above issue. We trust we will be able to tell by reading their news packets in the future.)

# letters

New Orleans, La.  
November 18, 1970

Sisters:

We want to apologize and criticize ourselves for distributing the material from "Red Women's Detachment" in New York. Our decision to distribute that material to some of our sisters came in the wake of our having discovered an information gatherer working with us, coming to mistrust our own sense of things. We thought we had to treat our "liberalism." Some of the doubts we had about GLF, women's liberation, and our disgust with the roles of SWP-YSA and NOW in the Womens's movement were expressed in the RWD papers. Our mistake was to not trust our own ability to express what we had observed. Rather we took, whole and uninvestigated, papers from an unknown group. Also there was a great deal in the papers that we did not agree with, particularly the tone. For this we severely criticize ourselves. Since that time we have found out that the organization (RWD) is actually only two people, and the papers do not grow from or reflect practice.

There is much to say about our deeper understanding, which would require a long paper, and this is meant to be a letter. The principle of our new thinking is about faith in the people. I realize that I lacked such faith in thinking people had to be pinned against the wall to raise their political consciousness. But the lack of faith is also reflected in a fear of struggling with sisters and brothers. I think most of us have been unwilling to trust our political judgment and growth, and to enter into discussions with people, committed to learn. Too often we are defensive with revolutionary and potentially revolutionary comrades.

Futhermore, since the summer, we have thought a great deal about the questions we had which led us to distribute the papers. Also, two of us went to Cuba on the Venceremos Brigade, and there we struggled over the questions we had with other women, white and third world, and with men, white, third-world, and gay, as well as the Cubans.

Yet I am convinced that the revolutionary love that is necessary for our long struggle will only be born of our

growing struggles, not our wishes. That is what I learned in Cuba: unity and love come from struggle, and such struggle must be continual for unity and love to subsist.

What we must now commit ourselves to is the struggle. We must build a base among women-- the working women, mothers, young girls-- not just our educated sisters. We must analyze our conditions, learn about struggles all over the world, develop a strategy in relation to the total revolutionary movement. We must decide on priorities. If we cannot accept the necessity for priorities, we cannot be serious about change. Whether or not there should be a women's movement, whether or not there must be female leadership, whether or not revolutionary men must be clear on "the woman question," there is no question of priorities. Women's involvement and consciousness and growing vanguard role in the movement is an irreversible fact. No, by priorities I mean: Who will we organize among, since we cannot organize everywhere? What are our demands? How much can we satisfy personal needs before the revolution such as the kind of relations with men and children we project, life-style, skills, etc., and what do we have to sacrifice in order to build a revolutionary movement and win?

More than anything, in Cuba, I was humbled by learning the necessity for sacrifice and hard work; how serious and long-term (all our lives) is our task. We learned this from the Cubans as well as the Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, Africans, Latin Americans. In our rebellion against woman's traditional role, we have tended to scoff at the virtue of sacrifice, which has been forced upon women and other oppressed peoples. But sacrifice is one of the basic necessities in a revolutionary struggle, for a vanguard force, and is a virtue we should transform from its present bourgeois setting, which keeps people down, to a revolutionary perspective. Let us not throw out the baby with the bath water. Power to the sisters, Venceremos,

Love  
Roxanne Dunbar



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D. Dunbar

# High school women

Last week I went to West High with women from WL to speak to the students. Women's workshops were organized to discuss Lesbianism, Marriage and Roles, and Daycare and a male group discussed roles and stereotypes.

I walked in after the workshop on marriage had started. Having previously attended other workshops with women I did not know, I expected the usual hostility and defensiveness. I was elated that the 50 or so women were having a real warm and personal discussion. Ann from WL talked about her child and how daycare helps the child as well as the mother, by surrounding him with other people who play with him so he does not feel so dependent on one person. Some of the high school students really related to this, and I think because she had a child, trusted her opinion about daycare.

When the second hour came all the students went to one room and some of the women decided they had had enough of just relating to women and were ready to talk to men. Two WL women explained that they had come to speak to women, and that they didn't intend to speak to a mixed group. The high school women were really insistent so we broke into two groups, one mixed, and one women only. Because the women went into the second workshop with the intention of "telling off the men", it developed into a shouting ego trip, and our presence there was totally unnecessary. What I realized was that we had made a terrible mistake by dividing into two groups. First of all we insulted the WL women who had so insisted on talking to women only, by leaving them to talk to men (remember that trip) in a mixed group. Secondly we had

been invited there for a reason - to speak to women about women. Experience has showed that speaking in a mixed group never allows women to relate to each other - but again puts them in the position where they have to be defensive. Where the hour workshop could have been really important as far as allowing women the opportunity to speak about themselves, (as the second hour women-only workshop did,) the time was wasted. I came away really upset for having allowed myself to fall for the old line of putting the interests of men before the interests of women, and frustrated

because of the comparison of how really beautiful the first workshop was compared to the second. I think it's real important to understand why we should be aware of how easy it is to be divisive, and how destructive it is. We should not have offered any alternatives for a mixed group to the high school women, and should certainly not have supported them when they insisted. This is not saying we would not have allowed one to take place, if they thought it was so important. By supporting it and attending it we gave validity to a masculine-identified discussion that was anti-women.



## Bloomington's Women Center

The whole business of the house came up when we were trying to find a place that wouldn't have all the drawbacks of the apartment that was the center last year. For all our sentimental attachments to it, everybody saw that the apartment was IMPOS-SIBLE. The worst thing about it was that people couldn't live in it with the organization. Trying to do so was destructive of them.

When we started looking for a house, the first thing we found was that it was impossible to find anything to rent. When the chance came to buy on contract with the owner of 414 North Park, we began - the few of us around at the end of summer - to think of ways we could do it. The biggest problem was getting the down-payment money (\$6000) plus \$200 for insurance and legal fees. We were able to find people (some of them outside WL) who would put up the money, but most of them needed it back

soon. We figured that we could sell shares in the house to pay them back. We would need to sell 260 shares at \$25/share to make \$6500, a sum that would allow a small cushion for emergencies. This did not seem impossible - in fact, we thought it could be done. We have a large membership, a larger periphery, friends in many parts. We even thought it might be easily done.

We put the matter before Women's Liberation at the September meeting and got an enthusiastic response. Since then hundreds of people have seen and used the house - it has been successful as a center. The people who live in it and make the monthly payments have not been too hassled by living with a center. It has been a refuge for many other women who needed a temporary place to stay. It has housed the office, the literature, many a meeting of support or activity group. All in all, it's

a good house.

But we have a problem. We didn't expect September to be a good month for shares. October was our big hype. And by the end of October we had sold 16 (sixteen) shares. That is not very many shares. Moreover interest seems to be dying down. The house has begun to be taken for granted.

Well, we can't take it for granted. There is no way we can keep the house if we don't pay the money. It's as simple as that. If we want a center - this center - we will have to sell shares.

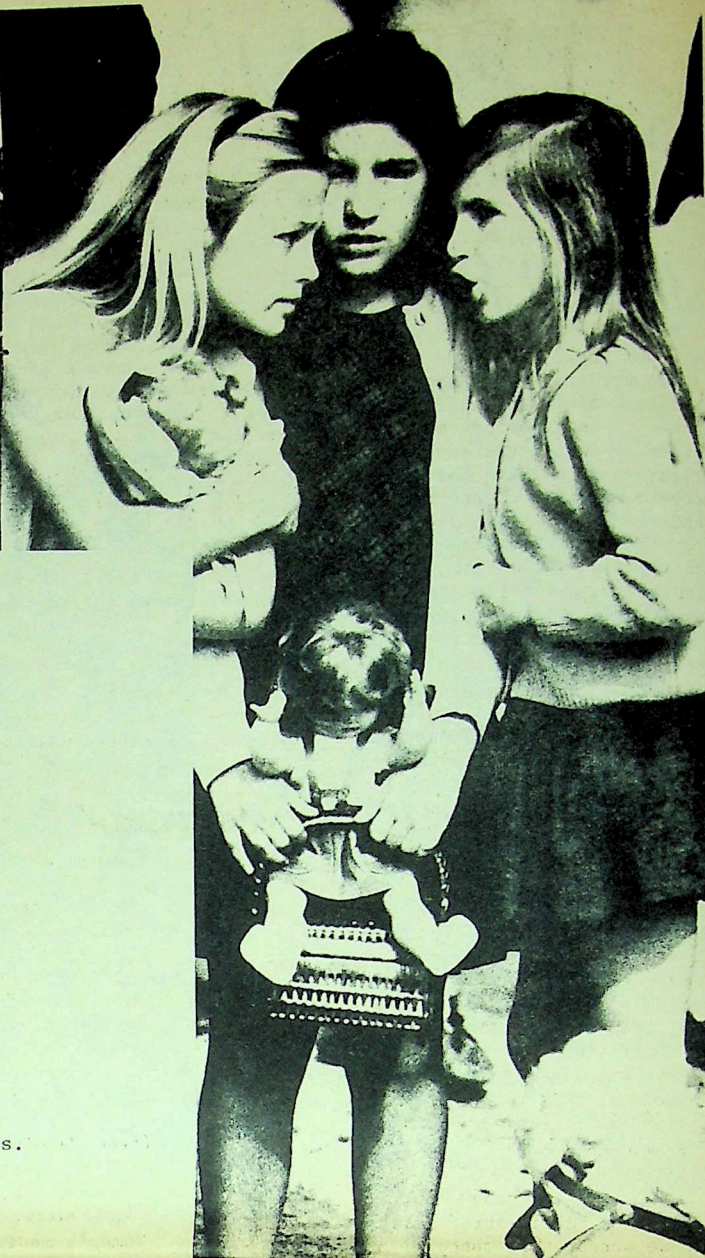
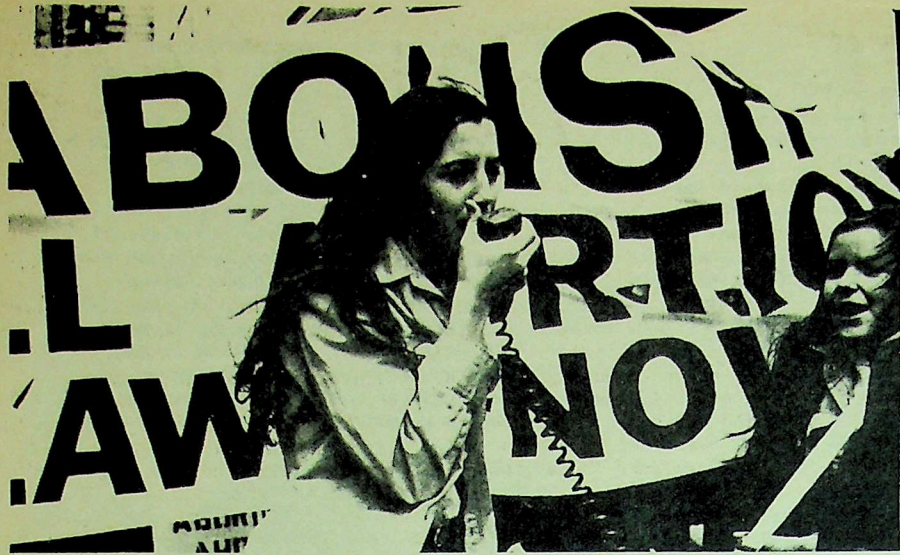
Bloomington WLF Newsletter, Nov, 1970

for comments or contributions write:  
Bloomington WLF 414 N. Park  
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

a woman?

December 11, 1970

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*Genocide is not Survival* by Laura & Pam  
-- white women

For some time now, Women's Liberation groups across the country have raised the demand for free and legal abortion as part of an overall demand for control over our own bodies. Other groups have called for extensive availability of birth control methods, legalized abortion laws and other measures to prevent overpopulation. More recently, a new demand has reached us: That we deal with the possibility that uncontrolled abortion and other methods of birth control could easily mean genocide for non-White peoples.

As a concrete example, it would be very simple to include sterilization after a certain number of children as a prerequisite to obtaining welfare payments, etc.

We already know that women in cities all over the country are being sterilized without their knowledge or consent, perhaps after delivery of a child or during some other kind of operation. This happens with regularity in New York City to Black and Puerto Rican women. This is presumably done by doctors who feel they are doing it for the good of the women themselves and for the good of the world. But which world -- the white or the non-white? White America controls over 60% of the wealth of the world and consumes over 60% of the world's raw materials. Certainly it would be to the benefit of the non-white peoples if there were fewer white people, particularly Americans.

A growing group in the United States, called "Zero-Population Growth" supports forced sterilization programs in Third World Nations. Paul Ehrlich, chief spokesman for "Zero Population" and author of the Population Bomb, commented on a proposal to sterilize all males in India with three or more children: "We (the U.S. Government) should have applied pressure on the Indian Government to go ahead with the plan. We should have volunteered logistic support ...Coercion? Perhaps, but coercion in a good cause."

Why is the advocacy of compulsory sterilization particularly directed at India? India's population per square kilometer was only 113 in 1957, while the population per square kilometer in England was 208, Belgium 288, and Holland 304. Why not direct resources into reclaiming land and making it more habitable? Or perhaps the justification was the periodic famines in India. In 1952, for example, 20 million Indians were starving, although India's Government warehouses were so full of food that the U.S. and Canada were asked to postpone shipments of wheat until the next year. After investigation, the author of a report in the New York Times concluded that, "India's current problem apparently is not a food shortage or famine, therefore, but widespread unemployment..."

The real causes of starvation and poverty is not overpopulation but the poor distribution of wealth in the world, due to man-made institutions, barriers, and social conditions. Any person concerned with the population explosion who points first to Black and Third World peoples as a prime example of "too many kids" is in reality suggesting and inadvertently supporting an already existing program of Genocide.

India is only one example. In Puerto Rico, birth control pills were tested for at least three years before they were allowed on the American market. In several Third World Nations, including Vietnam, experiments are being conducted with chemicals, to induce temporary sterilization. For some women the effects are permanent. These are subtle manifestations of the racism in this country which declares that non-white peoples simply aren't as important as whites.

Groups concerned with "overpopulation" and Women's Liberation are going to have to deal with the fact that now, as in the past, demands by white groups can very easily be converted into justification for further oppression and loss of self-determination for the non-white peoples of the world.

Racism has always allowed white people to gain "more freedom" at the expense of the rest of the world. Our demand must be analyzed in the light of our acknowledged racism. Abortions and other forms of birth control can continue to be legitimate demands of a group concerned with world liberation only if they are put forward as elective alternatives. Measures have to be found to prevent the possibility of coercion or ways in which they can be used for genocide. These measures must be included in our demands for self determination.

Otherwise, we as two individual women who are working within the Women's Liberation Movement, feel that the demand for legalized abortion should not be pushed further.

Berkeley Tribe/Liberation News Service

Berkeley(LNS)--One hundred and fifty women recently crowded into a Berkeley City Council meeting to demand a public hearing "at which all the raped women of Berkeley can finally speak, (and for which on-the-premises child-care must be made available to us.)" While the women presented their list of demands, one woman with a Winchester rifle in her hand stood at the council chambers' doors, guarding herself and the other women.

These Berkeley women have been putting on spontaneous guerilla theater skits in the streets and have made tape recordings to teach women how to deal with hecklers and rapists. They are encouraging women to pick up women hitch hikers and to attend self-defense classes.

Their demands are as follows:

1. Free, frequent public bus transportation for all women from dusk to dawn.
2. Increased, improved adequate lighting for all neighborhoods, including the dark areas around all buildings.
3. That landlords bear the total expense for effective security locks on all windows and doors of Berkeley apartments.
4. That taxpayers' money be diverted from the Berkeley police budget into a fund to hire a staff of women trained in the psychology of rape. That these women will accompany the police on the initial investigation of all rape reports. (This is done in other countries)
5. That further funds be diverted from the Berkeley police budget into the hands of all of the Women's Liberation groups in Berkeley to initiate and maintain public self-defense classes for all women in Berkeley.
6. That self-defense training for all female schoolchildren be introduced throughout the Berkeley school system.
7. That the City Council give Women of the Free Future adequate funds to draw up, print and circulate a pamphlet on How to Prevent Rape.
8. That since the Berkeley police are either unable or unwilling to protect women against rape, any woman in Berkeley who feels that her life is threatened have the right to bear concealed or unconcealed loaded weapons which will deter rape and aid in her self-defense.

Reprinted from W.L. Newsletter  
W.L. Library, 1131 So. Brook St.  
Louisville, Kentucky 40203

# RIPPING OFF IS POLITICAL

Rat/Liberation News Service -- Early Thursday morning, Nov. 6, over forty mothers who went into Macy's to get school clothes for their children walked out of the store with armloads of clothes, without bothering to stop at the cash register. They are members of Welfare Rights Organization (a nationwide organization of people living on welfare who are committed to fighting the injustices of the welfare system.)

Ten of the women were arrested by security guards at the 34th St. entrance of Macy's. Before they were taken to a nearby precinct they insisted that Macy's wrap and package all the clothes. At the precinct police officials attempted to dismiss their case quickly by serving the women with summonses and sending them home.

But the women had come prepared to make their point. They had all arranged for the care of their children so that they could stay to be heard in court. Police officers repeatedly tried to take the clothes from the women, but the women did not allow them to. They knew that the school clothes were important evidence. If they didn't have the clothes the police would charge them with stealing all sorts of things -- which would lessen the political implications of their act.

In Night Court the ten mothers pleaded guilty to reduced charges of criminal trespass and were paroled by the judge, who dismissed the case saying that their action was "political". The D.A. and the arresting officer were mad that the women were getting away too easily. They singled out one woman, Jeanette Washington,

and charged her with non-cooperation with a police officer because she refused to have her picture taken when she was booked. These charges were also thrown out.

The Welfare Rights Organization has been waging a fight to get money for school clothes for children. Two years ago the N.Y. State legislature cut back the funds for "special allowances" which included money for clothing and furniture; the only time special allowances are now available are in cases of fire and flood. This leaves already hard-pressed welfare mothers with no way of providing clothes for their children.

The WRO has concentrated on trying to obtain federal funds from local Boards of Education. Five years ago congress passed Title I, a bill designed to put funds into the education budget for the use of welfare and low income children. The money was primarily intended for school clothing and lunches. Instead these funds have been used to subsidize a drum and bugle corp in one state, gym programs, swimming pools.

The Welfare Rights Organization wants \$100 per year per child for school clothing from Title I money. They tried legal ways: demonstrations at City Hall, appeals to the mayor's office and meetings with the Board of education. Then they decided more direct action was needed. With the weather getting colder there wasn't any time left for administrative bullshit. Five hundred mothers signed up to participate in "shop-ins". Two days later Macy's was hit.

## Questions To Be Raised

Women in Cambridge, Mass. and Washington, D.C. have written to us about their plans around participation in the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention. Both groups had made lists of topics they felt would be important for women's workshops to deal with. We feel that these questions will need to be dealt with again and that they relate to our ongoing struggle. We don't see answers at this time; we expect there will be more questions raised.

(from Cambridge):

relationship of the women's movement to third world movements

What does Third World leadership mean?

Do we accept that concept? How do we deal with the questions concerning leadership that have come out of the women's movement in relationship to the concept of leadership put forth by the Panthers?

What does a new constitution mean?

a vision of a new society, demands, programs that immediately serve the people

Does a political program for the women's movement make sense? (what is a political program, what kind have we and should we develop)

What does it mean to develop anti-racist politics in the women's movement? what has been and should be our relationship to Black women?

How does the present women's movement deal with the questions posed by the Gay Movement?

(from Washington):

What skills we need to have and how we can learn them (such as automechanics, electronics, self-defense, etc)

Women's media development - films, radio, photography, publications, etc.

Women's culture - art, music, poetry, theatre

Feminist liberation of new generations: infant and child care, schools, adult chauvinism, sex-role programming, etc.

The politics of health projects and women's health care

Forward from Earth Day -- how to bring revolutionary women's consciousness to the ecological crisis (population control as imperialist, consumerism, life-style changes, etc)

Women's projects around racism - how do sexism and racism relate? what would be a new women's way to relate to the black and brown struggles at home?

Women's projects around imperialism - how do sexism and imperialism relate? what would be a new women's focus on the Vietnam war and support for the Vietnamese struggle? how can we concretely express solidarity with Third World women?

Within all our work, we are also struggling with some general questions:

Collectives -- living, working, present, future - you know, everything  
Sister love - female state, lesbian nation, feminist life force - conceptions of our future

Defense and Support of New institutions -- self defense, financial sustenance, etc.

## Change in N.Y. Women's Center

Announcement of the October 15th meeting at the New York City Women's Center.

Previously it had been decided to keep the NYC Women's Center open with a loose structure so that women of widely varying affiliations and politics within the movement could meet and exchange ideas freely. The October 15th meeting dealt with just what groups were in the movement and in what ways individuals and groups should use the center.

Motions passed at the meeting included:

- 1) No women running for political office or actively and publicly engaged in campaigning for another person seeking political office within this system can serve on the steering, speakers, forum, fund raising, financial or literature collectives of the center.
- 2) No organized political party or subdivision seeking power within this system (by election) or representation or publication of such a party can use the name of the W.L. center in any way that implies identification of the party organization or individual with the Center. Any breach of this rule will be met with public repudiation by the Center.
- 3) No member of the SWP-YSA or any party set up or controlled by the SWP can serve on any collective connected with running the Center.

For a copy of the minutes of this meeting write to: Women's Liberation Center of New York City  
36 West 22nd. St.  
New York, N.Y. 10010



SELF-PORTRAIT I

V. KENT

# Mae

Mae is eighty-six and  
The sole surviving sister of three brothers and three sisters.  
Of all of them  
only my Grandmother married.  
Nellie and Mae chose not to  
living at home, instead, to take care of their mother.  
When she died,  
they took care of their two alcoholic brothers  
and each other.  
Mae worked and Nellie kept house.

I don't remember Willie  
who used to work two weeks and drink two weeks, Mom said.  
He was a card shark  
and once when Mom was tired of losing at poker  
he dealt her four queens,  
but gave himself a straight flush.

Archie was the blacksheep.  
He drank too much and he didn't work  
which must have been hard on Nellie and Mae  
who never touched the stuff—  
except for Nellie who used to have two glasses of port a day.  
It's good for your blood, said Mae.

For fifty years  
Mae was a switchboard operator  
and supported all four of them.  
She talks about the office alot  
and how the company would almost fall apart  
when she went on vacation  
because she knew all the numbers by heart,  
and none of the executives had to look them up.

She still has all the presents  
they gave her over the years  
safely wrapped in their boxes,  
and gives them to us one by one  
as Christmases pass.

Archie died along time ago.  
Grandma two summers ago.  
and Nellie this Spring.  
While before Nellie and Mae's life was lonely  
they at least had each other.  
Now Mae misses Nellie deeply.  
Nora, our cousin in Scotland, wrote:  
"Nellie must have been all-in-one to you."

Mae lives alone in New York City  
in a two room apartment  
that is made darker  
by the eight year old paint  
than by her age.

My Mother and brother and I  
are all she has, but we live in Iowa  
and aren't much daily good.  
She says, without the television  
she wouldn't know what to do  
"I wish my mother had had it  
during the day when Nellie and I went to work."

One Christmas we came to visit  
and the TV was broken;  
Mae couldn't bring herself to spend the money  
to fix it.  
So we brought them one  
Mom said that the money was nothing  
compared to what at T.V. would mean to Nellie and Mae.



This Thanksgiving when I came  
it was working  
and we watched it while I mended my coat.  
It was a good time.  
I like to get her talking about  
what our family was like when she was young.

My Grandmother used to ask me if I had a boyfriend  
and I would lie.  
I knew Mae would get around to it  
but in thinking of her life,  
I told her, when she asked,  
that I didn't intend to marry.  
She said she and Nellie would always talk  
about how I was probably going to take after them,  
and be an independent woman.  
"Men, who needs them," she said.

But you should have seen her eyes  
when the waiter talked to us later  
in the little restaurant across the street  
or when my brother walks into the room.  
And she often talks of all the boyfriends Nellie had  
and how this or that one wanted to marry her.  
Mom told me long ago why Mae didn't have boyfriends:  
She had acne.  
"Men," she says, "who needs them."  
But she doesn't mean it.

I loved visiting her.  
She would take my arm when we walked  
and proudly introduce me to the people she knew:  
"This is my grand niece all the way from Iowa."  
But it will be different at Christmas.  
When my brother comes,  
she'll reach for his arm.

The next day I came early with the car  
so we could go for a ride,  
but the elevator was broken  
and Mae can't walk six flights.

It remains on the blink  
for the same reason  
that during the fuel strike,  
the landlords on 59th street ordered  
the heat turned down in the building to save money  
even though there was plenty in the tank.  
Nellie was sick,  
and they spent the two weeks in bed.

One time when Mae was coming home  
from visiting Nellie at the Nursing home,  
she was so entranced by a little girl on the bus  
that she missed her stop--  
ending up in hippyville  
as she calls it.  
She passed a woman

drunk and standing alone with a dress box.  
She was very refined, said Mae,  
and men were standing around  
waiting for her to pass out.  
The refined woman called to Mae:  
"I'll give you this dress  
if you'll call my family in Jersey."  
But my Aunt didn't want to leave her  
for fear of the men  
and waited until help came.  
I was surprised; Mae is scared of the city.

I took her to dinner again  
and we sat next to a woman  
with two small children  
who was very chic and drinking before dinner.  
She scolded the girl and praised the boy  
saying cute things for the benefit of  
the people around.  
But the man she was inevitably waiting for  
never came....

And after watching the pain of that woman  
And helping the refined woman,  
After supporting Archie and Willie their whole lives  
And having no elevator and no heat...

After such a capable, godly life,  
Mae, why do you still talk of boyfriends?



## To the new women

If you can see  
my suffering  
I am afraid;

Fear of  
illegitimate suffering;  
I don't deserve you.  
But you accept me.

You don't say  
Go way  
It's not important  
I can't accept concern.  
I don't believe it.

The negations live  
around the eyes.  
You search into  
the woman  
and I look away.

Help me.

# DAYCARE CAMPAIGNS AND CO-OPS

The following article was written by a sister in Bloomington:

## POLITICAL TENDENCIES IN THE MOVEMENT

At Grinnell in November midwest representatives of Women's Liberation got an oblique view of what is happening in the movement. Oblique because the political positions expressed there were not explicitly analyzed or compared. Nor was their meaning or direction shown. Differences were left in an inchoate form.

Differences there were aplenty. A basic cleavage was hinted at the first night of the conference. Marlene Dixon, Shannon of Twin Oaks, and a Grinnell woman made up a panel supposedly on "Definition of Women's Liberation." This was an open meeting, open to men despite the topic, and the one which greeted visitors who had traveled from afar to Iowa. (Some felt uncomfortable to walk into a mixed meeting as their first contact with a women's conference.) But the way the topic was handled was appropriate for a mixed audience--it was not really concerned with a definition of women's liberation. It was concerned with telling the women's movement what was wrong with it (from one point of view) or with (from another point of view) the "subversion of the women's movement by representatives of the male-dominated left," as one discussant, a woman from Iowa City, put it.

During the panel presentations Marlene Dixon had called on the women's movement to join the "anti-imperialist front." She had belabored the "middle-class" nature of Women's Liberation, called the various activities in which WL engages, such as abortion-law repeal or abortion counselling and day care programs, "counter-revolutionary." The one question from the floor that opposed her view was not answered by her, but by a woman in the audience who succeeded in confusing the issue. No one knew whether she agreed or disagreed, at that point, with the questioner. And after that question, the meeting ended. Perhaps it should be added that an earlier question, put by a visitor from Bloomington, Indiana, made Marlene qualify her statements about day care. She was willing to accept free, 24-hour child care as a revolutionary demand.

At no other point in the conference was there an opportunity to explore the political differences that these exchanges represented. On Sunday when the final panel was trashed and suggestions were made for topics for small discussion groups, the subject of political tendencies and directions in the movement was offered. But those who might have participated in and benefited from such a discussion followed Marlene into another place and another discussion. So the confrontation of different views, the study of the meaning of these differences, was avoided.

Nevertheless, during Saturday's workshops on more specific topics and issues, differing politics were clear. The workshop on child care provides a good example. The politics of child care expressed there can be reduced to two positions.

One, acceptable to Marlene, stressed the importance of free, 24-hour child care as a demand to be made on government. Child-care facilities set up by members of the middle class to meet their own needs were belittled by this position because of the class served. The nature of the care given, the nature of its organization went unregarded. In fact the idea of quantity instead of quality ruled--how many children, how many facilities, how much money. Money itself was the central quantity stressed--the cooperation of parents was rejected by one woman as a fraud practiced on the working class. "In this society time equals money," she said; "so if you ask parents to give time, you are asking them to give money." Child care campaigns started on these ideas boasted of the sums demanded: in Texas, \$100,000. Such large sums were seen as necessary for the hiring of personnel to run the centers. With the perspective of free--absolutely free--care, the need for experts to staff the centers necessarily follows. And of course the great virtue of such centers is seen as their ability to take in working-class children.

The other position on child care stressed the quality of care given, the kind of organization as the essential questions. It saw the cooperative principle as the heart of revolutionary change in the organization of life activities. Cooperative child care means that the parents themselves operate the center. It is not a matter of their attempting to control someone else who actually operates the center (does the work, makes daily decisions, has expertise, or gets a wage). Their sharing of the actual work is important not only in their own lives in that they learn to work in groups, to have enjoyment, understanding, and compassion for each other, but also for the lives of the children, who see a model in their parents for their own behavior. The children learn too that child care is not drudgery work assigned to the females of society.

To the charges that cooperative centers are a luxury that only the middle class can afford, representatives from Bloomington, Indiana, offered their experience. After a couple of years and the establishment of four cooperative centers, interest in these actual, viable centers has grown to a point where it is now possible to make demands on the university as employer. The child care campaign now initiated there is demanding release time from work for employees who want to participate in the cooperative centers. Universities as corporate employers differ little from other corporations. Already workers from Westinghouse and G.E. in Bloomington are talking of applying the cooperative principle to their child care problems.

The political positions inherent in these approaches to child care need to be made explicit. Twenty-four hour child care is not the ultimate in revolutionary demands even though one could not demand more in terms of hours. The time or the money (or the equation of the two) are not the essence of the question. The emphasis on money or on time as money can be seen as a bourgeois mind-set, the influence that all of us must fight in ourselves as its manifestations are revealed. But as important to theory are some of the implications of the 24-hour demand. In Iowa, cooperative child-care centers were put down because they served the middle class and therefore the "less oppressed" women. Working-class women were described sometimes as "more oppressed" and sometimes as "really oppressed." This distinction, or course, denies the validity of women's liberation as a revolutionary movement. If only working-class women are really oppressed, then what need have we for any movement of women? The working class is oppressed--so what else is new? The new seems to be that women as a sex are not oppressed: after all these centuries, after Astell, Wollstonecraft, Mott, Stanton, etc., the women's movement discovers that women as a sex are not oppressed. And this, according to its left wing, which pretends to recognize and bless each new revolutionary battalion.

If women and their self-activity are seen as non-revolutionary, how are the "really oppressed" seen? The implication behind all the patronizing work done "for" the working class is that workers are simply inert victims, incapable of self-activity, incapable of fighting their own battles or even of seeing their own needs. They must be taught, led, cajoled, or tricked into self-defense by revolutionaries, who will ride into power on the back of the hypothetical monster they have activated. The only transformation necessary for this event, this so-called revolution, amounts to a personnel change at the top of society. The good guys will be in instead of the bad guys. The good guys will decide on how to spend the money, who is to eat, who is to work, how they are to work, etc. With this vision of history, with this concept of people and of classes, the 24-hour child care demand fits perfectly.

What kind of politics is this? First of all it is bourgeois through and through. It is really counter-revolutionary. It is even worse than doing Nixon's dirty work for him--especially in the field of child care, though not only there. It is counter-revolution posing as revolution; it is the pretense of the thing in place of the real thing. It is the element of confusion which is the usual contribution of the middle class to a revolutionary situation.

What else is it? It is distinctly male. Only men (or women intellectually dominated by men) could conceive of child care in such purely quantitative terms, could fail to see the dynamics of human relations and the need for revolutionary change there, could fail to see why women will never agree to turn their children over to the state (by whomever run). It is not the aim of women simply to get rid of the kids so that they can join the men on the barricades. They want to change the relationships between adults and children, between the sexes, content and form, so that the human qualities that make life worth living--joy, compassion, understanding, and growth--can live. That is the point of their revolution; it begins with their "everyday" lives. It may end with the seizure of state power--when the bourgeois state interferes with their revolution. But seizure will be a means to an end--not the end itself.

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In Iowa City, Women's Liberation set up a child care cooperative in June. Since then there have been three other centers started as outgrowths of the first. Women's Liberation people have been involved to a great extent in only the first center. At the moment, things are going as well as can be expected considering we have no funds with which to work. The females and males have started to get together in separate consciousness raising groups after several very heated arguments about the value of separate meetings. It has been impossible to keep in very close touch with the other centers because of lack of time and energy.

With the exception of one other center, there isn't much feminist content in the centers. Among the other groups who have contacted us and expressed interest in setting up child care centers, there is little hope of anything but a typical nursery school atmosphere with traditional sex roles.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT DAY CARE

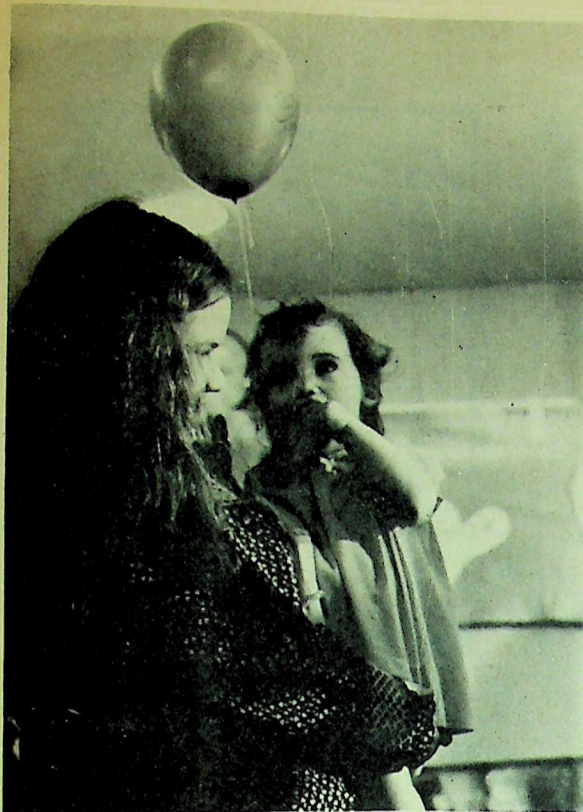
I

After having worked in child care (organizing and working in centers) only one thing is clear and that is that the issues of child care are not clear cut! There have been endless discussions in the women's movement about child care as a revolutionary or reformist demand. At this point, those discussions are useless. Child care is reformist in that we can only do so much in this society. It is revolutionary because it is a basic need of all women of all classes.

(Continued on next page)

Ain't I





(Continued from p. 8)

Any child care that women can work on now has many serious problems. Most women have been working on getting together cooperative child care centers controlled by the community (people who are involved in them). Now if these centers are really community controlled there will be very few non-sexist centers. Most of the people involved in child care coops are people who have the time and interest to devote to working in centers or at least in coming to meetings where decision-making takes place. So far, in the Iowa City centers, most of the people in that position have been students, semi-political freaks and a few feminist-oriented women.

At this point I am very skeptical of cooperative child-care centers with any connection whatsoever with industry or business. I don't know that they shouldn't exist. We should only be aware that the people could probably only have taken control--as in the state-funded child care programs for low income people that are now in existence.

In the next few years there will probably be several other types of child care cropping up. Universities, big business, and the state are all beginning to be pushed into child care by either liberal guilt or hopefully increasing power of women. They will provide child care which will begin to free women. They will fuck up a lot of children. Women must have child care. I only hope the children can be saved ... eventually.

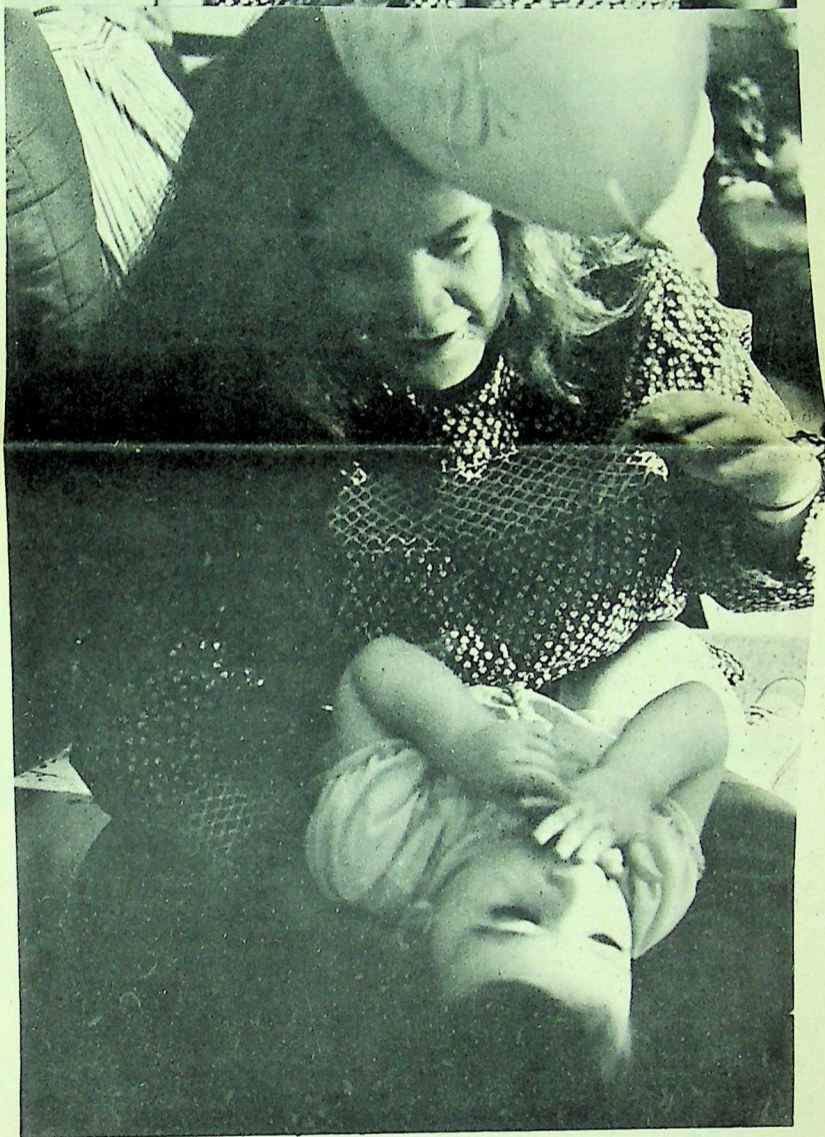
## II

In spite of all the hassles involved in child care, we should continue to work on it. I have come to several conclusions about where our time should be spent. We should continue working on establishing child care centers--at minimum as a survival tool for women. Women should devote some time to working in centers, if possible. People with experience in setting up childcare centers or coops should make their experiences available to other people who are interested in child care. (This can be done either through writing on how to set up child care or speaking with people.) We must be certain to make clear to other people and to ourselves that the limited child care controlled by the people at this time is not an end.

Through the centers we work on we will be helping women and children survive in this system that destroys so much in all of us. We can be free to learn our own ways of relating to children. Child care centers have the potential of bringing people together for mutual support and in some situations become an intermediary step between the nuclear family and some as yet undetermined living situation.

One thing women must do is beware of wasting time and energy on child care projects where the people involved will have little or no control. That includes most universities, big business, Kentucky Fried Childcare type things and state programs. The liberals are going to be involved in these programs, so they are inevitably going to exist. I just don't feel it is worth the frustration to put energy into this type of childcare. These institutions are not going to hand over any control to the people. It may be difficult, but we must learn to recognize when it is a frustrating waste of time.

It is very difficult to come to any conclusions at this point about organizing women through child care projects. The only thing to say is that it is very difficult and energy consuming. Women who have children and who are usually married have



very few alternatives. The least we can do is lend our support to the women involved in child care. We also must constantly try to raise people's consciousness about sexism and all other political issues. The ideal would be to have a radical feminist perspective at the base of the entire program, but that is not possible in most situations.

It is very early in our development to make any dogmatic decisions about what is correct or incorrect concerning child care. We have barely scratched the surface in knowing how to meet the needs of women with children of every economic class. We have yet to know exactly what we are capable of doing and what is worth doing.

I realize that we are still relatively untogether on the issue of child care. I have tried to bring to the surface some of the problems we have run into in our experiences in setting up child care centers. There is a lot more analysis that needs to be done.

# ANNOUNCE...

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Bloomington Women's Liberation Newsletter

12 issues for \$2.00

Send subscriptions to: Jane Feuer, 515 S.  
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We received the first issue of the News-  
letter of Louisville Women's Liberation.  
They state that their newsletter does not  
represent all of Louisville W.L. It is  
put out by a Communications Committee  
which will try to print anything Louisville  
women write - articles to reflect the opin-  
ions of the individual writers. Louisville  
W.L. has been in existence for a little  
over a year. They have a library set up,  
a child care group of men and women have  
set up a cooperative child care center,  
women are taking karate, they are holding  
a class of WL at the Free University and  
have a problem pregnancy and abortion coun-  
seling project.

Subscriptions to the Newsletter are  
\$3.00 ---WL Newsletter  
WL Library  
1131 S. Brook St.  
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AIN'T I A WOMAN? is published  
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52240.

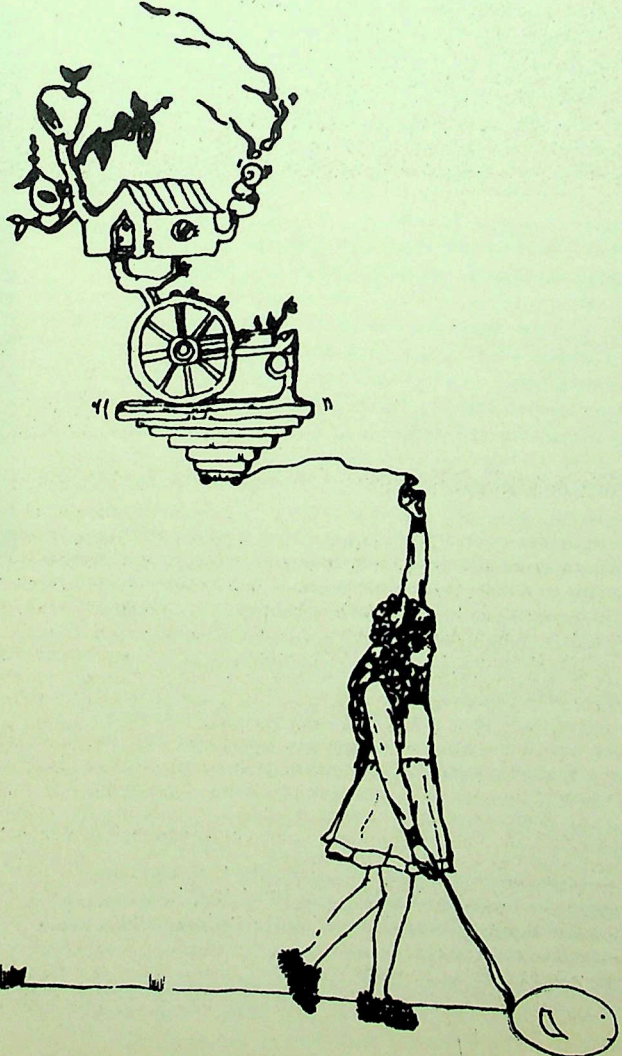
We are a collective of 10 women  
functioning either as a front  
for a world wide conspiracy of  
Radical Lesbians or the house  
cornfield of the Women's Move-  
ment.

The voice of the Midwest needs to be  
heard in the Women's Liberation movement.  
Ain't I A Woman? will print without  
editing any laid-out page from a Midwest.  
(New Mexico thru Ohio) Women's Libera-  
tion group. We would like to encourage  
other women to start working collective-  
ly to avoid elitism and destructive  
power relationships that pit us against  
each other. We will send details on  
deadlines, page size, column length,  
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If your group wants to receive bundles  
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Please address all future correspondence concerning a Journal of Female Liberation (No More Fun & Games, The Female State) to:

Cell 16  
16 Lexington Avenue  
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

We are no longer producing and distributing the Journal at the Boylston Street address because that office has been taken over and is being occupied by female members of YSA/SWP (Young Socialist Alliance of Socialist Workers Party) who had been working out of that office. Since November 14, we have had no access to mail addressed there.

The takeover last week was the climax of a long series of troubles with YSA. The following is an attempt to give the history of Cell 16 and to describe what led up to the frustrating and depressing situation created by the takeover.

After working together informally for about a year, we, along with Roxanne Dunbar (now working in New Orleans) and Jeanne Lafferty (now in YSA), established ourselves as a small group to put out the Journal and work on a feminist analysis. This was in May 1969. We took the name Cell 16 to emphasize the organic nature of the movement, of which we were just one cell. We did not wish to be the movement or have all women join us; we wished to be part of the movement, a radical and creative force in finding the most relevant directions for the feminist movement.

Because we were a small group and in political agreement, our democracy was spontaneous. When political disagreement arose with one or two of our original members, we disbanded the group as a formal entity rather than to either impose the majority will on those who disagreed or waste time in conflict with each other.

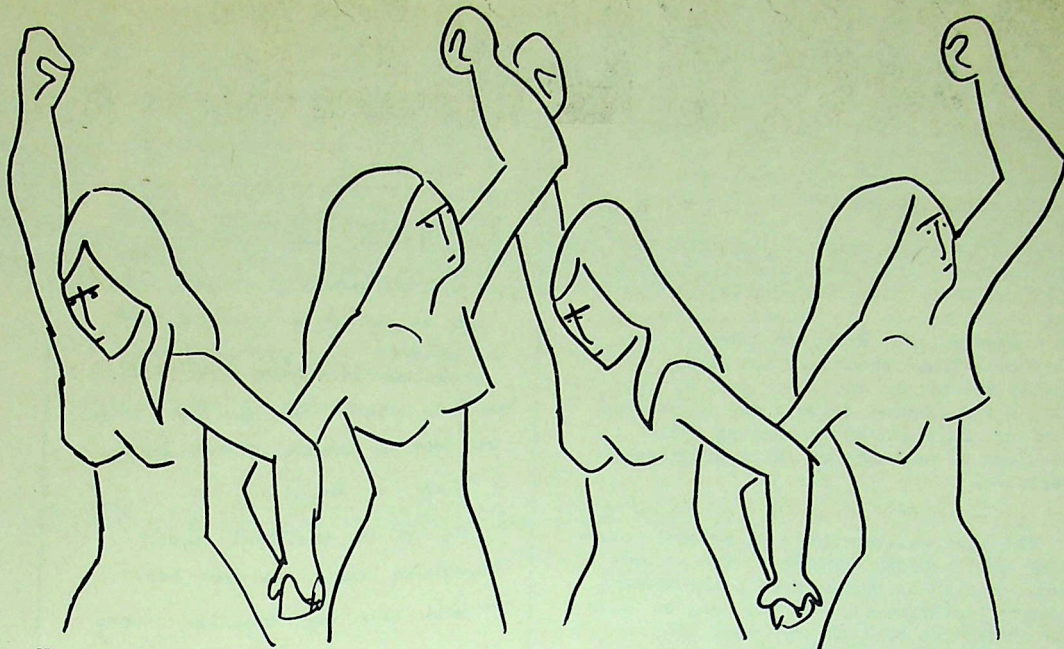
At this time we moved our office equipment to Somerville, intending that the Journal should remain, as it always had been, a strong and unified feminist statement. We formed a Committee to ensure control over the established character and purpose of the Journal and the office whose primary function was the production of the Journal. In this respect the Finance Committee, as it was called, was an attempt to replace that particular function of Cell 16.

A Journal fund (including income from sales of the Journal) supported Journal printings and reprintings, the office rent and expenses, and the salary of one person working full time.

Cell 16 having disbanded, the Finance Committee had political control only over the Journal, administrative control only over the office finances, and no control over any other activities in the office. Thus there were no longer any clear-cut or natural limits on who could use the office.

The office did begin to be used by various women with whom we were not actively associated and in whose activities we didn't necessarily want to participate. We felt that we could have no legitimate objections as long as the primacy of the Journal was respected. These other activities were being made possible through the Journal's financial support of the office.

It was at this point that some women who had worked with us previously revealed that they had joined YSA. They began to "organize" the informal office meetings into democratically run business meetings, and brought other YSA women in. The woman on salary and others working in the office on Journal distribution became alarmed since the YSA had a reputation for infiltration and takeover. They tried to keep the YSA women out of the office, finally going so far as to change the lock on the office door.



We opposed this, feeling that the action taken against the YSA women was inappropriate; that until there was an overt attempt to take control of the Journal or office we were not justified in purging people with whom we had worked comfortably in the past.

The women who had serious disagreement with the female YSA members left. We moved the office to Boston. Many more YSA/SWP women then "joined" Female Liberation.

The office became a highly organized women's center. The weekly business meetings (to which we never went because we didn't recognize their right to alter the purpose of the office) presumed to vote on all office decisions, not just decisions on their activities. This was intolerable. And our political disagreements with them on feminism as well as their general disrespect for us and our work had by this time become increasingly intolerable as well.

In many of their statements and by the action of joining YSA they indicate that they believe that a feminist movement is insufficient to accomplish fundamental social change. In their view SWP will be the vanguard of any change that comes. Women are merely one segment of the masses they will lead.

The YSA/SWP politics lends them to believe that they are justified in any intervention because their understanding of social change is better than anyone else's. Their function as they see it as leaders of the masses. These masses must be molded into movements, infiltrated and controlled in order to be directed in the correct way.

For tactical reasons they confuse the meaning of a group with the meaning of a movement. Under the guise of saying that no one should be excluded from movements they attempt to prevent the exclusion of anyone from any group. This means that any group can be infiltrated with ease.

The YSA women insisted on using the name Female Liberation as a name for their group even though we had always asserted that the name should not be used as a group name because we wanted all women in the movement to feel free to use it as the movement name.

In our office, moreover, they established coalitions with groups with which we had no political agreement, only common goals - as when they worked with anti-feminists on abortion law repeal.

Their use of coalitions has been to give them access to greater numbers of people. The effect is to neutralize the integrity and intensity of individual groups.

The Journal fund was still supporting the office and original Journal activists were still doing all the clerical work of maintaining the mailing lists and filling Journal orders.

Since the expanded activities and coalitions had made the purpose of the office confused and the functioning so diffuse that even the future of the Journal seemed

threatened, the Finance Committee met and decided that we had to re-establish the original principles by placing the office money especially allocated for future Journal printings and reprintings into a separate bank account.

This would have separated it from the account used generally by consent of the business meeting group for their various projects. (Up until then, these projects were financed largely by the Journal profits, contrary to our original intentions when we set up the office.)

We said that we would continue to pay the office expenses out of the Journal fund and agreed that they could continue to use the office provided they didn't interfere with the Journal work.

Two representatives of the business meeting group agreed to these conditions.

However, at their next business meeting they voted to dissolve the Finance Committee, to keep all the Journal money, to choose their own Journal committee to put out future Journals, and to incorporate as "Female Liberation, Inc." under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in order to protect their use of that name and to attempt to establish a legal right to the money, Journals, and mail.

The Corporation accuses us of trying to destroy the Women's movement by not permitting them to use the Journal as capital to finance their activities.

Our response to this is that they are not the movement, only one of the many diverse groups within it; nor is the movement dependent on their organizing activities. Female liberation is a response to an objective reality of oppression not a hysteria drummed up by organizers.

We have always asserted our belief that movements grow only when there are vital individuals and groups doing what feels most important and relevant and progressing as fast as they can in their analysis: developing and spreading the ideas that brought them together.

They should not attempt to become the movement themselves by bringing everyone into their group (thus impeding its efficiency and diluting its message), but offer their ideas and analysis to others through writing and talking.

The greater the number of groups which are encouraged to contribute their various perspectives to the movement in an undiluted form, the richer and more varied the whole movement will grow. It will be less likely that it will turn into a one-issue movement.

At present we are operating out of our old Cell 16 office and again calling ourselves Cell 16. Those who have been interested in or have agreed with the principles expressed in previous Journals should address future correspondence to us. It may be impossible for us ever to get the mail addressed to the office in Boston.

Cell 16: Dana Densmore, Lisa Leghorn, Abby Rockefeller, Betsy Warrior, Jayne West

In our fifth issue we did a page called Things Men Can Do. It was a smashing success. Not surprising. Men are a smashing success -- writing about men, having a man, or the ultimate smashing success of being a man. What made our page even more successful than it might have been was the liberal, easily digestible content. There was nothing we suggested for men to do that was difficult. We suggested they discover, they think, they cry, they remember. Men could easily follow the advice we gave by setting a few minutes aside a day in between fucking their chicks or running THEIR movement to meditate on their privileged position.

The page was reprinted in several movement publications (Movement with a capital M not to be confused with the Women's Liberation Movement). It was hung on walls of student or radical newspaper offices. But very conveniently the bottom part of that page was left off. Underneath our suggestions we excerpted a part of Robin Morgan's "Goodbye To All That" and an inch square block for men who want to write in our paper was provided suggesting that they sharpen their crayons. Conveniently we had drawn a thin line to divide the type (which was the bottom section) from the handwriting of our suggestions so movement papers could easily cut off the top -- the palatable from the bottom. We even realize that they probable thought the two were separate. But they weren't. They merely represented the schizophrenia involved in women (the oppressed) relating to men (the oppressors).

We didn't give that page the time or the thought that we have given to most other pages we have printed. We didn't talk together to iron out the differences that we had among us over the subject. We threw it together the night before the paper came out. The stuff that we have worked hard on has been about women and what women can be doing because it is

women who need the changes we are talking about most desperately. And now as women we can only struggle to relate our experiences and muddle through a seeming mirage of complexes to find a direction in which to work. It is not easy to find the ans-

### Things for Men to do:

- Discover what your privileges are as part of a privileged caste
- Discover why you can't give someone else your privileges
- Think about what you feel when you look a woman up and down.
- Kiss a brother.
- Try to be emotional about something close to your heart.
- Hold your legs together every time you sit down for a whole day. *Cry*
- Remember all the times you felt like crying when your dad played with you too roughly.
- Discover what it's like to be called irrational when you are just expressing strong feelings on an issue that's important to you.
- Think about the difference between a relationships of two women and one of a man and a woman.

wers we need but we need them and should not be wasting time supplying copy to a male mutilated and yes -- a still male dominated movement or supplying suggestions for men -- it is women with whom our concern lies.

The things we have written about women have mostly been reprinted by women, for it is women who are concerned about their lives -- not men. Movement male papers cannot seem to assimilate the stuff we write unless it is about them (nicely about them) or unless it is written in male movement rhetoric -- unless it is good agit prop for the (their) revolution. The personal experiences about women would not be political enough for their presses and the criticisms women have of movement macho is too divisive for them. Ask them to cry and they'll print that. Ask them to print what Seattle women have to say about the macho maneuvers of the Seattle Liberation Front and that's another story altogether. We women are probably pretty lucky that how and what we write does not interest the male left for we need time to determine where we should be moving and the male left has never cared let alone had much to offer in terms of constructive analysis for anyone but white radical males.

We were really sweet and they loved us but we were not really being us -- we were not really being honest. We said, "Discover why you can't give someone else your privileges", but that is to say the opposite of what it is really all about. Those privileges they hold that are decent we want and must determine how to take. That is if they cannot discover how to give them to us. And those privileges that are indecent -- the privilege that comes by being a male in a system that denies the value of being female unless you are filled with a prick most of the time -- those privileges have to be removed by any means necessary. If men are holding on to those privileges, they're going to be in the way. They can deal with that as best they can -- we have no suggestions.

But we do have the following -- another successful episode of:

# THINGS FOR MEN TO DO

## PART II

Wrap yourself in  
dynamite, walk into the  
Pentagon and  
LIGHT UP

# Aint I A Woman?

A MIDWEST NEWSPAPER OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

vol 1 no 11 JAN 29 1971 25¢

PUBLISHED BY THE PUBLICATIONS COLLECTIVE, IOWA CITY WLF

whiz, whir, spin  
 flow, melt, fly  
 float  
 blend  
 become  
 be... but not until  
 the people are free  
 not until there is time  
 to take time to be free  
 if that makes sense  
 free to exchange energy  
 communicate  
 productively create

i must not forget that i can  
 not love everyone now, that putting  
 the real truth into practice now will only  
 disillusion those who take it for its  
 verbal value  
 i must wait to really smile inside and pass  
 it on  
 i must reject the silly feeling to jump, scream,  
 enjoy the cosmos  
 disoriented as it is now -- not until we have all  
 evolved more  
 not until there are no more incarnations of  
 hitler unevolved  
 not until the racism/oppression that has raped  
 our souls  
 has been destroyed then we can all whiz, whir, spin  
 flow, melt, fly  
 float  
 blend  
 become  
 be...

ERICKA HUGGINS, dec. 21, 1970  
 niantic state prison

# NOTES ON CUTTING MY HAIR

Until a month ago, my hair grew down to my waist. I wore it tied up or in a braid, and only let it down when I wanted to hide behind it or run my fingers through it. Long hair is really sensual to touch, to look at, to smell when it's clean, to wriggle naked shoulders under. Now, I thought, what is oppressive about sensual enjoyment of one's hair? I stopped using it for ornament, I stopped swinging it lasciviously in mixed company. But when I started to think about chopping it off, my stomach contracted in terror. So I kept it long and in the back of my mind wondered what was going on, what was in this fear of losing part of myself. Then, when Cindy came downstairs one night and said "Cut my hair!", I stopped thinking and cut mine off too. One of the braid strands went, and it was just very strange. The second came off, and all of a sudden I wanted to keep the last--a third of one's hair is better than none.

This first haircut came below my ears; I thought it was radical. A lot of the sensuality was gone, but I could still flick my hair across my face. I could put my hat on backwards and look like Rita Tushingham. It was still perfectly clear that I was not only a female, but an attractive female at that. Which is a nice thing to be, especially when you're still insecure about roles and models.

At the Grinnell conference I walked into a room on Sunday morning, and Ann's hair was really short! Linda from Iowa City was trimming it up, and all the other Iowa City women, all with Iowa City haircuts, were kibbitzing and commenting and taking turns with the scissors. So when Ann got out of the chair, I sat down--because I sort of knew that medium length hair was a transition point. Now my hair does not cover my ears, it does not swing in my face, it doesn't swing at all. It just sits on my head, and all I can do with it is push it out of my face or run my fingers through it when I'm frazzled.

Considering that at most only three inches were cut off, the changes I went through were surprisingly extreme. The first thing I noticed was that in classes I didn't have to bother about how I was coming across. I have talked to one professor outside of class, and met him at various social functions, and had felt that although I really didn't like him, and didn't like the way he taught, still there was a bond between us that had to be acknowledged. In class I had to forget that I didn't like him outside of class. I should not attack him in class, because I knew him when he wasn't being a teacher. Anyway, I went to class on Monday with short hair, and just sat and took notes and didn't look and didn't catch his eye and didn't feel involved at all (which meant I didn't feel threatened, which meant I didn't spend my energy attacking him) that a ~~as~~ ~~take~~ ~~not~~ and try to understand the subject matter.

This non-involvement occurs in a lot of different situations. When I walk through the commons, I feel much less on display. I'm freer to look for people I know, walking through is now more my business than the business of people who are looking at me. I'm doing it, and if people watch me, I don't care. I'm not touched by it. Whatever I do, I'm starting to look at from my own perspective and not as other people see me. I see the external world; I feel what I want from it; I feel my relationship with different parts of it. Much less now do I see myself as others see me, and operate either in agreement with that image or defensively against it.

I think that has something to do with no longer looking like

an attractive female. It's a contradiction to look distinctively feminine and to act naturally. I was acting tough so that men wouldn't come on to me, while their response to my appearance was to come on. I was concerned with looking nice, at the same time I was actively trying not to act nice. I enjoyed relating to my hair, but refused to let men relate to it. (The rhetoric to that is: I was acting like a sexual object, and kicking people when they reacted to me as that.)

So now when I look in the mirror I see a person who really doesn't look like a girl. She doesn't look like a boy. Really, what she looks like hasn't been labelled yet. She looks like ME.

This refusal to act an established role has caused two rather heavy realizations to hit me in the face. First, the question of how seriously do I actually take myself. How much is my taking aikido based on learning to defend myself in actual, real, dangerous situations, and how much is it tied into seeing myself (from the outside) as a tough female taking aikido? There is a real difference between showing people the armlocks I have learned, and knowing those armlocks well enough to defend myself. All this talk about stomping people--when it comes down to it, will I actually be able to do it? I think it's time to stop playing around with being different images, and to start deciding what we want to do, and learning the skills we need to be able to do it.

The other bomb is related to my habit of making nasty comments to men. A friend of mine pointed out that verbally kicking them in the balls doesn't do a whole lot of good. It doesn't make me feel better. It doesn't make them think about anything except what a bitch I am. She said: figure out if you want to relate to people, and if you do, how you want to do it. Being a bitch is not relating to people. It's merely putting up walls which wouldn't be necessary if I would just stay away from them. Since I now feel much more in control of both whether or not I relate to men, and on what terms, I can see that it is my choice a lot of the time to relate to them or not. I don't have to listen to them. I can choose to listen to them, and choose to interact with them. If they are oppressing me, I can leave, or I can tell them how they are doing it. Instead of listening to them talk for a half hour and then knifing them between the ribs, I can object immediately. Which is a lot better for both of us. It also takes a lot of guts, a lot of confidence. So right at this time I'm choosing for the most part not to talk to them. (I can feel the nasty comments bubbling up inside me, and I know that the interchange will not be productive.)

All of this really does have to do with not having hair that I can objectify. Unfortunately, I can feel myself doing the same thing with my body. Admiring my biceps, becoming strong, dig the image, instead of thinking of strength in terms of ways I can use it. There's a difference. A woman can be physically capable of doing a lot of things, and still have a mind-set that makes it impossible for her to do them. I can see it now: a woman doing pushups in one room while five people struggle to move a chest in another. One's strength is a tool. All of one's physical attributes are tools, and one reason why I cut my hair is that it was a tool for a task I had rejected. Teeth are to chew with, muscles are to lift with, eyelashes are to keep the dust out of your eyes with, mouths are to kiss people with. And once you realize that, you spend a lot less time admiring and cultivating your teeth and your muscles and your eyelashes and your mouth, and a lot more time doing the things you can do with them.

*The smell of me  
reminds me of  
the smell of you*

*you touched me  
having touched yourself  
and I feel good  
to you,  
to me.*

*now sometimes people  
tell me  
I'm down on myself  
not naming  
my indulgence  
not knowing  
how I love you.*



My physics teacher told me that Women's Liberation would pass as an issue in two years when enough people were put out of work. I got mad and told him I didn't care about the University community and its layoff problems, (mostly men anyway). He said I was a middle-class woman who had "the time" to worry about women's rights, (as opposed to women on farms who are laboring from morning till night, not noticing their oppression he says)- I was going to hit him then. He is subtle, chauvinistic, he makes me fall apart because he is totally oblivious to the issue.

A feminist perspective is unreal to me in the university community because everything here is male-identified. My teacher believes it's the wife's fault since she lets her husband support her and where do I go from there- he doesn't understand statistics and why defend myself to him- except that he gets me into a rage, by his naivete about my power, which seems non-existent until I take his wife from him.

I am so mad at men who leave their wives after draining all their beauty, and leave their daughters deserted. Men who call homosexuals pansies for fear of their manhood and how much "fucking" you can do in one evening or whether you can "make it" with your friend's woman. The world of men is disgusting and I have no sympathy for any man, for any reason.

I am a woman. I have no desire to be a man. I want a revolution of women leaving their men, of women loving other women, of women really castrating their men (since manhood seems to be determined by sexual prowess). Of beautiful women. I want to be strong enough to believe I can leave the man I live with. That the woman I love will stop laying her ideals of love determined by a male relationship on me. I want to eliminate men, because they are murderers and destructive and fucked up. I want to eliminate men because of how misused and misguided my self-conception was, due to my definition

of myself as a woman in a man's world. I hate men for making my friend want to leave WL because we women are not yet strong enough as a group to give her the strength and support she needs, to stand with her, to not want reform but revolution, to be willing to change our life-styles.

I'm mad because I still tell of my oppression instead of acting, instead of killing them even if it's one by one.

I'm mad because every time I become a person (woman) some man tries to make me, like I was something to conquer (I suppose dreaming of the days when the white man conquered the world). I'm mad because men rape women all the time yet call something "prostitution" and make it punishable by jail. My revolution is one where women rise up and kill men, for all the murders they have perpetrated, for every insult, for every hurt.

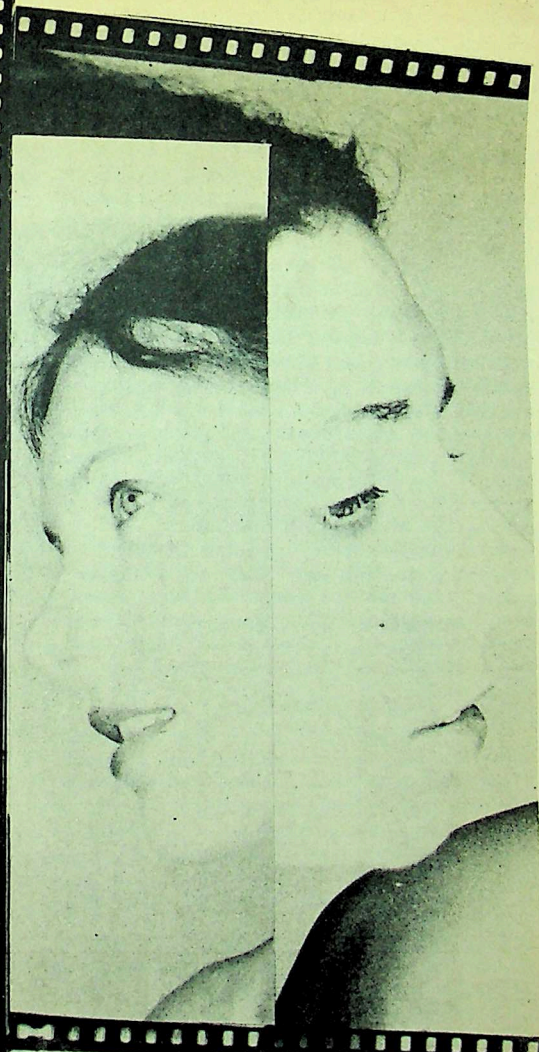
My problem in making an objective analysis is that I excuse some men for their piggishness, when they are all responsible. I see women being treated as a class, and I must make myself see men that way. Of what possible use are men? We can reproduce without them and can achieve sexual pleasure without them.

History is man and his misuse. Future is woman and her power. I think my sisters are tired of the phrase "sisterhood is powerful" because they haven't seen it demonstrated. I think the time has come for each of us to take a part in the destruction of our oppressors, thereby destroying the system that keeps us there. The time has come to be really powerful- by destroying the fathers who are fucking up their children, the husband their wives, the brothers their sisters.

Sisterhood is not just a social gathering, but a political force, that we are willing to use our bodies to free ourselves, to free our sisters from the prisons where men put them. Women's Liberation means the destruction of the power of men. Women's Liberation is the only revolution that is meaningful to me because only in the world of women can I exist as a whole person.

"Diary of a Mad Housewife" seems to be another example of a genre of movie-making where men try to show what it's really like to be a woman. I realize that a woman had something to do with the adaption, but she must have been trying to please the male audience which backs the film. After all, to see Carrie Snodgrass up there on the screen, suffering so, in her chores of being a slave to her husband and children, crying out to be loved, yet not once did the film-makers ever show the politics behind her enslavement. That they never did portray her as a person I object to, as a person by herself, for herself. I object to film-makers using women (though it should not be surprising since they are men, and the art world is no different than the real world). What this film was about, in fact, was the subtle reaffirmation that there is such a thing as an ordinary housewife, who is content or discontent with her role as a housewife, but is really not suited to be anything more than an extension of a man. I objected to every insinuation that this movie, which defines women in masculine terms was to be taken seriously by me. What it seemed to be saying was - yes, women are difficult to handle but if you play to their prince-in-shining-armour-mystique or their sadistic-male-fantasy hang-up, they can be satisfied. I resent that they played upon that part of myself that is idealistic and made it into something that is petty and stupid (as all real emotions are, defined by men).

I think I also felt betrayed, because I was led to believe that this was a movie about women and though I should have known better, I let myself believe that this one was different. I'm sick of all this pseudo-serious understanding by men of "our problem" in the form of art, of the misinformation it offers, and that it gives women the image of a Carrie Snodgrass to identify with so that they will think that their problems are not politically motivated but personally caused.





In issue # 9 we printed an article by Martha Shelley entitled "Subversion in the Women's Movement: What Is To Be Done?". In response, we received a letter from Ruthann Miller, long time member and official of the Socialist Worker's Party. We decided to print the letter because of our profound disagreement with Ruthann Miller.

We need a theory about how to make a women's revolution, about how to assure that this time there are no oppressed groups told to wait until after the revolution. We need a radical theory of how to end our oppression as women and Martha Shelley pointed that out.

Lacking that theory, women in male organizations cannot conceive of the notion that women can and must liberate themselves. Falsely believing that the structural roots of racism and sexism are in capitalism and failing to see that racism and sexism have predated and outlived socialist revolutions, women still in male-dominated socialist organizations can only have a liberal attitude toward women's liberation - a good place to organize but they wouldn't want to live here.

Following Ruthann Miller's letter are three responses by members of the Ain't I A Woman? collective

## What Road To Revolution ?

An article by Martha Shelley called "Subversion in the Woman's Movement: What Is To Be Done?" has been printed recently in several women's liberation newspapers. I feel that this article contains many untrue statements and distortions, as well as some ideas which can be very damaging to the women's movement. I am sending this reply to Martha Shelley's article in the hopes of contributing to an open and fruitful discussion of these differences within the movement.

The main point of Martha Shelley's article is to attack all other women in the movement that Martha Shelley defines as "male-oriented" and urge that such women be "cast out" of the movement.

Included among the women Martha Shelley condemns as "male oriented" are women who are part of various social struggles, such as Angela Davis, Black Panther women, women from the Socialist Workers Party; women who appear in the mass media; and women who support male politicians.

It is important for us to be aware of the logic of this approach because if the various categories of women which Martha Shelley defines as male-dominated were excluded from the movement, it would mean the destruction of our movement.

Martha Shelley refers to Angela Davis and Leila Khaled, the Palestinian woman commando, as "women fighting for male causes." Not only is it wrong for feminists to consider other struggles against oppression as "male causes" and exclude women who are involved in these movements; but if all women who are involved in other struggles than women's liberation were excluded from the feminist movement, there would be little movement left. Such a policy would exclude all Black and Third World women who participate in the Black liberation movement, the Chicano liberation movement, and other Third World liberation movements. Such a policy would exclude all women who want to build the movement to end the war in Vietnam. Such a policy would exclude all working women who are fighting against their oppression as workers. These struggles can only strengthen the feminist movement. We should welcome women involved in these movements to join us. They can provide strong fighters for women's liberation. Also, we want to bring the women's liberation movement into these other movements; for instance, working women will be organizing within the trade unions to make them fight for the needs of women.

Martha Shelley also says that women who belong to organizations that include men should be excluded because they are supposedly "male-oriented." Again, if this policy were carried out, it would destroy the movement by excluding the vast majority of women in this country. Such a policy would mean excluding all women who registered or voted for candidates of the Democratic or Republican parties, which I would agree are certainly male-dominated. It would exclude all women who are members of trade unions. It would exclude women from such groups as the Phoenix Organization of Women. POW is a group of mainly Black and Puerto Rican women who live in Phoenix House, a drug rehabilitation center for both men and women in New York City. POW women have become very active in the New York Women's movement since August 26.

Actually, if Martha Shelley really wanted to throw all the "male-oriented" women out of the movement, she would not stop with women who associate with men in organizations only. What about all women who live with men? Should they be excluded because they are by definition "male-oriented?" This would exclude the overwhelming majority of American women. We could obviously never hope to build a mass women's movement if these women were all treated with automatic distrust when they began coming around the movement.

The reality is that our entire lives are circumscribed by men. Even women who don't live with men or join organizations with men still more than likely must work for a male employer; they must read newspapers published by males; they must live surrounded by, and relating to, sexist institutions, from the school system to the courts, to the hospitals.

The central goal of women's liberation is to end this whole system of sexist oppression. But we can only do that if we are able to involve all women who are ready to fight against their oppression as women. And we will not be able to reach out and involve new women if the atmosphere in the movement is one of hunting for "subversives" and "male-oriented" women and "casting them out" of the movement.

One of the organizations singled out for special attack by Martha Shelley is the Socialist Workers Party. Since almost all the statements she makes about the Socialist Workers Party are simply untrue, I would like to briefly correct these errors for the benefit of women in the movement who want to know the truth.

First of all, she says "The Socialist Workers Party is highly attractive to male-oriented women who have swallowed the line that a socialist revolution will automatically bring about the liberation of women." This is not the position of the SWP.

The SWP believes, along with many other women in the movement, that in order to lay the economic and social foundations for winning our total liberation, we must change the whole system -- we must eliminate capitalism and build towards a socialist society. But we do not think that "a socialist revolution will automatically bring about the liberation of women." A socialist revolution will not be completed until women are totally liberated.

The SWP believes that women must begin to struggle now, we must build up the power of women, through a mass women's movement which will continue to exist through and after a socialist revolution. Only by building up our own independent power will women be able to assure that our needs are satisfied.

Here is a quotation from the position of the SWP, adopted almost a year ago:

"The most important basic characteristic of the emerging women's liberation movement, the key factor which gives it such revolutionary implications, is its independence. The movement, of course, is related to and interconnected with other struggles--youth, Black and Brown liberation, antiwar, working class -- but it has its own demands, its own organizational forms. It is not simply the women's wing of an antiwar committee, a union, or a Black organization, and its fate is not directly dependent on the evolution of

other struggles. For the first time in decades, women are saying that they are not willing to wait for anyone else to take up their struggle; they will do it now, in their own way, and they are not willing to subordinate their demands to the needs of any other struggle."

The SWP does not support the policies of the present regime in the Soviet Union, as Martha Shelley implies. We are for the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy. One of our strongest criticisms of Stalin and his successors is the fact that they reversed many of the gains women won in the first stages of the revolution and reintroduced reactionary laws and practices which strengthened the family and the oppression of women.

The whole section in Martha Shelley's article on the SWP sounds like it could have come directly out of "I Led Three Lives" or out of the mouth of J. Edgar Hoover. She says the SWP "has moved with frightening success to infiltrate and take over sections of the women's movement."

Another paragraph says the SWP has a "handbook" on how to infiltrate the movement, which is given only to "loyal party members." When I was reading this part to a group of SWP women, we all burst out laughing at this section, because it is so ridiculous.

The policy of the SWP is to build the women's movement, to participate in it, to learn from it, and to contribute what we can to it. We support and help to build all struggles against oppression. What Martha Shelley objects to and calls "infiltration" seems to be simply the fact that SWP women participate fully in the movement and try to build it into a mass movement.

Martha Shelley says that the SWP has "moved full-time workers into the women's centers of New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Los Angeles..." First of all, neither the SWP nor the Young Socialist Alliance, a youth organization which generally agrees with the SWP, have any members who live in Baltimore. In the other cities she mentions, SWP and YSA members have simply participated in the women's centers very actively, trying to help them grow.

Whether she is aware of it or not, the type of language and charges Martha Shelley uses to describe the SWP are all the standard charges of right-wingers against all socialists. This type of thing reached a high point during the McCarthy period in the 1950's when not only communists and socialists were persecuted, but anyone who dared to struggle at all was charged with being a communist or a "dupe" of communists.

The new movements of the 1960's have so far rejected the reactionary practice of red-baiting and purges against socialists. These new movements have set the policy that the most important thing is to unite the broadest possible forces in struggle on various issues, no matter what views people may have on other topics.

The charge that SWP women would try to "move out" feminist literature from women's centers is also false. We think that the literature that has come out of the movement, from women awakened to their oppression, is one of the most important accomplishments of the movement.

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Ain't I





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We believe that all feminist literature should be available at women's centers, including socialist views concerning women's liberation. Does Martha Shelley think that the views of feminists who are socialists should be excluded from women's centers?

She also charges that the "SWP has considered gay people to be counterrevolutionaries." Again, this is completely untrue. We think that homosexuals are unjustly discriminated against and oppressed in this society, and we fully support the struggle of homosexuals to eliminate all laws penalizing them and all oppression of them.

I believe it is an insult to the intelligence of women in the movement to say that they are being "co-opted" or "infiltrated" by socialists. Rather than making such charges, it would be more fruitful and beneficial to the movement for Martha Shelley to deal instead with the political ideas that the YSA and the SWP have stood for in the movement.

In the New York Women's Center, Martha Shelley voted with about 30 other women to exclude YSA and SWP women from all leading bodies of the Center on the grounds that they were "male-dominated."

A Black woman from the Phoenix Organization of Women also left the Center meeting, feeling that she was excluded too.

It became clear in New York that the YSA and SWP and the Phoenix women were excluded from full participation in the Center because a small section of the movement who worked around the Women's Center disagreed with the ideas that the YSA, SWP, and POW women have concerning what the New York women's movement should do.

In the New York movement at this time, women from a broad spectrum of around 30 organizations, from the YWCA to campus women's liberation organizations to the SWP, have decided to unite to form an action coalition, to plan demonstrations and other actions that could bring to bear the weight of the whole movement. Women around the Women's Center disagreed with the perspective of building such an action coalition, and disagreed with the first action projected by the coalition: a mass march of women and their children on Mayor Lindsay's home demanding public abortion clinics and childcare centers. Many of these women opposed building any demonstrations at all, and felt that August 26 accomplished nothing.

But rather than discuss these two perspectives openly within the movement, the

women from the Women's Center, including Martha Shelly, resorted to the charges of "male-domination" and "infiltration" by the people they disagreed with, in an attempt to discourage women in the movement from even considering the ideas held by the so-called "male-dominated" groups. Their ideas on mass action--when they did present them at a meeting of 300 women to form the women's coalition--were not accepted by the vast majority of women. Neither were their ideas on exclusion of women accepted. The coalition decided to welcome the participation of all women.

The question of what is the best and most effective perspective for the women's movement is very important, and must be seriously discussed in an atmosphere of free exchange of ideas and democracy. This cannot be accomplished in an atmosphere of purges and "casting out" any "unpure" women.

Only with the full participation of all women who want to fight against their oppression can our movement grow and be strong.

Ruthann Miller

Socialist Workers Party  
Young Socialist Alliance

## Too Little Too Late

Martha Shelley was asking how to build a revolutionary women's movement. If we're interested in answering that, our theory must come from our practice, not from the practice of officials of any party. Quoting resolutions of support for the struggles of women and gay people from the SWP is about as meaningful as Richard Nixon calling for the 2nd American Revolution. I can hardly get excited about the fact that a party which is 75% male and whose leadership is mostly male has decided to grant women's liberation revolutionary potential. That Ruthann Miller is a socialist is beside the point, so is Martha Shelley by any reasonable definition. That Ruthann has a liberal attitude toward the women's movement because she's primarily interested in building socialism is directly to the point. The kind of all purpose organization she wants W. L. to be best serves the interests of those who are not motivated out of any special sense of oppression other than the general issue of living in an oppressive society. How much can one want to end the whole system of sexist oppression while working in an organization which is 75% male, not having risen up and taken control of that organization?

To say that a socialist revolution will not be completed until women are free is to put a priority on working for socialism and to keep women from gaining a consciousness as women. To want to build a mass movement without ever questioning marital institutions, domestic relationships and the whole system of patriarchy is the most reformist of politics. Building a mass reformist movement is the surest road to single issue politics where everyone can be united on the most meaningless reform with the least struggle.

To what end, this mass movement? "To end this whole system of sexist oppression." But that level of abstraction is a sham and for SWP sexual oppression is an afterthought. How could it be otherwise? Women and gay people didn't just start being oppressed - it's that we finally got together and made enough noise that the obvious became recognized. Now the SWP resolves to fight laws which oppress gay people, but not to re-examine their ideology which allowed them to expel gay people for years from membership. Now the SWP supports the Equal Rights Amendment for women because their attitude toward women's liberation is so liberal they compete with NOW for their constituency.

If we want to broaden our understanding of what it will take to make a women's revolution we'd better start building a theory that has some understanding of the history of women organizing in America before. We'd better understand that women have worked in many ways against oppressive conditions and avoid the pitfalls we can.

We must also look at our own time, at the roots of our new consciousness which came out of the condition of living in the heart of the monster at this time.

Tentative thoughts on these things:  
First things first -- The women's movement in the 19th century started to make a radical analysis of the condition of women. Radicals like Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony questioned the domestic institutions and marital relationships - questioned how

women could ever be free until these relations were radically reconstructed. They knew that so long as most women were economically and emotionally tied to men the struggle would be inadequate. They were the radicals of the time when Karl Marx was being published in the N. Y. Tribune. But their radical analysis was never completed. Many women who did not share that perspective joined the women's movement when suffrage became the goal. It was so much easier to work for what men had assumed as their right.

A mass movement was built around the issue of suffrage and women got what they asked for - the vote - precisely at the time when the vote was becoming meaningless in America's so-called democracy. Suffrage was no victory for women - it was a long pause in our struggle for freedom and it was a meaningless reform. Having failed to raise women's consciousness of their oppression as women - appealing to women to ask for only what men assumed as a right - the suffrage movement never prepared the ground for women to ask the revolutionary questions about the condition of women. In part, that failure left generations of women who have labored to keep from asking those questions until now. Radical feminists in women's collectives, in women's publications and in consciousness raising groups are asking those questions. Socialism to us is as the vote was to radical women in the 19th century - too little, too late. Of course a sane society operates on socialist principles - those same principles of sharing and concern for other human beings that women have always been taught. Men should learn them - we were born socialists. But we don't get that society by voting in socialism. We become a single issue movement when we see socialism as a precondition to freedom as women - the precondition becomes the end.

We can find little comfort in the history of socialist movements per se. They can be racist, sexist and imperialist, especially when they see legal reform as their road to power. We should look to Rosa Luxemburg for an example of revolutionary consciousness to alert us to the dangers of organizing a mass movement for legislative reform. "The true dialectic of revolution is not through a majority to revolutionary tactics, but through revolutionary tactics to a majority -- That is the way the road runs." That must be the road of our practice - our collectives, our thoughts, our groups.

We must read and understand Stanton, Anthony, Gilman and all those women who labored while suffrage became the single issue and death of feminism. Radical women lost not because they were less reasonable and less fair minded than the women who created a mass organization around suffrage. Every woman lost because a mass movement was built on shoddy politics. Everywoman will lose again if we refuse to take risks and are afraid to work for a radical reconstruction of the patriarchal system.

Something about the new consciousness of movements in the last decade. Those movements which grew - SNCC, SDS, 3rd world liberation movements - were not formless, open and fair minded the way Ruthann Miller would have you believe

continued on next page

to Woman?

January 29, 1971



# Developing our

CON'T FROM PAGE 5 ...

(Remember how they treated women?) These movements did not red-bait because they generally considered socialist and communist groups out-dated and irrelevant. Socialist theory as understood in America did not define the needs of youth, students, blacks, or 3rd world people - and that goes double for women. These movements grew by ignoring and at times throwing out the ideologues of a moribund American Socialist tradition. With no disrespect intended, no movement ever grew around the theories of Herbert Aptheker or Bayard Rustin. Those struggles that took place grew by adopting a ruthless slogan, behind which was a reality we must recognize. Remember "Don't trust anyone over 30" - blacks and whites in their growing insurgent movements adopted that slogan because it was based on a reality - that the accommodations people make to survive can be damaging and the more vested interests in the established order one acquires, the less one's experiences can be trusted.

The notion that we should seek out and become women-identified women is something of that same kind of awareness: that some experiences can be damaging, that marriage, a family, good jobs, male approval and all those things individual women have accepted in this system can make them less willing to risk an analysis that goes to the heart of the woman question. That does not make us elitists or man-haters any more than not trusting anyone over 30 made those young movements "over 30 haters". It did mean those movements found out their own possibilities.

We intend to find out our own possibilities, not those possibilities defined by the SWP. How touching that they formally resolved to recognize the revolutionary potential of our independence and try to do all they can to undermine that independence. Kind of makes you wonder why they passed their resolution.

Anyone seeking independent power for women will be accused of red-baiting - an accusation made of no other oppressed group which challenges the organizing principles of SWP.

You don't get independent power for women by working in a mixed party and reporting back to your male counterparts on how good your organizing has been - how obscene those body counts must be. We know the effects of party members trying to help our movement grow and the truth of Martha Shelley's claim that feminist literature has been moved out where party workers have moved in -- we've seen it with our own newspaper.

While trying to regain control of our lives and knowing we must do for the sexual struggle what Marx did for the class struggle, while working everyday for changes so profound that a genderless society will finally be realized -- what can I care about resolutions of support stamped, signed and approved by any party's membership. Too little, Too late. I'm a woman.

The assumption that building a mass movement is what women should now be doing, I feel, has to be questioned. When the priority in political work becomes that of involving as many numbers as possible there becomes no way to avoid liberalism and ultra-democracy or the lack of ideological struggle that occurs; there becomes no effective way of working except single issue organizing.

We have not as yet come very far in an analysis of how we end our oppression. We have recognized our position and concluded that we must have a revolution and have come some way in defining what that revolution must accomplish. What we have not been able to do is form any kind of analysis on how we get there. To engage in the ideological struggle to fill the gap between our recognized position and the revolution we envision, we see as crucial-- more crucial than the number of women we involve.

It is the political content and the political accomplishments we have to be concerned with and this leads us to question everything we do in terms of our goals. We can't afford the stifling of ideological struggle that occurs when our main objective becomes involving as many women as possible. The tendency to try not to alienate too often leads to shutting out all ideological struggle, to altering a radical analysis lest we offend. To want to involve all women at whatever level on whatever they are willing to work on puts us in the position of not being able to engage in self criticism, to not be able to criticize projects and actions in terms of a radical analysis. To engage in this sort of criticism there must be some agreement on our ultimate goals. To question legislative reform in terms of how it fits into a revolutionary perspective we must agree on some revolutionary goals. We can't engage in this kind of struggle with women who see reform as a goal in itself.

To form the analysis we need we will have to be able to question everything and to gain any real political change (to dare to struggle; dare to win) there will be risks to take. Unless we can recruit women around a political theory that will lead them to question and struggle with their class privileges and the heterosexual norm, the analysis we collectively reach could easily reflect the middle class, heterosexual, and racist thinking of the society we want to fight. Avoiding this reality under the guise of ultra-democracy will enhance our societal image but it will do little to achieve our liberation.

As the women's movement has grown, so have the contradictions in our theory and practice or at least they have become more apparent. We used to talk about the stigma the single woman suffers in this society, about how difficult it is to remain alone. We saw the oppression of women as closely tied to our position in marriage and the family and seemed to conclude that women must get out of that position they are forced to hold. When individual women put that theory to practice - when some women choose to remain single and others choose to end their marriages they are seen more as a threat, accused of being elite and privileged. If we believe the theory we have voiced then the practice that should follow would be to support these women, not to isolate them or treat them with jealousy and suspicion. If we recognized that marriage is an oppressive institution for women, why do we attack women who are not married and why do we work on reforming the institution of marriage to make it more bearable? We allow single women to be crit-

## THE WRONG WAY

A socialist woman is a socialist first and a woman - a feminist - second. Her priorities are to a socialist revolution first and then to a feminist revolution. Implicitly she has an allegiance to a party, which in this country is upholding and legitimizing this form of government, and the illusion that people participate in it.

Socialism has not dealt with the Woman Question. A class analysis deals with workers, and in not dealing with their families, the women in their families, cannot deal with the existence of the institutions of marriage and the family. Socialism only offers women the chance to work for a feminist revolution once they have a socialist state. Women don't have to work for socialism; the society we want includes it.

The feminist movement is composed of those women whose goal is the liberation of all women, those women who work towards meeting the needs of the most oppressed

women. Any other women can not, must not, be included. Ruthann Miller talks about us casting out Angela Davis and Leila Khaled. They have chosen to work in another movement, seeing their oppression differently. To include these women, to speak as if they included themselves, is to use them.

A different matter is to include those women who say they do want to be in the feminist movement, but have no place in it. You can call yourself a feminist, and use the rhetoric, yet still be working to uphold this system. The oppression of women is grounded in the oppression of other minorities - blacks, third world peoples, and homosexuals - yet Ruthann Miller seeks to organize women "no matter what views people may have on other topics," that is, dealing with single issues.

We must not confuse groups fighting for liberation with those working for change. To speak of them in the same breath is to

see all those working for change as similar. Socialist Workers Party cannot legitimize itself that way, nor legitimize their criticism of us in that way.

Women have come to understand that support has both psychological and material parts to it. "We think that homosexuals are unjustly discriminated against and oppressed in this society, and we fully support the struggle of homosexuals to eliminate all laws penalizing them and all oppression of them." This statement is not grounded in practice. SWP has expelled gay people from its membership.

Their statement on women ends, "they will do it now, in their own way, and they are not willing to subordinate their demands to the needs of any struggle." That is true. Yet SWP-YSA are working to prevent just that.

This is the perspective from which Ruthann criticizes us.

# our Theory and our Practice

icized for their life style, thinking we are combating elitism, while they cannot question or criticize women attached to men without being accused of trying to exclude the majority of American women.

Ultra democracy draws no boundaries. No matter how many women meet together their decisions are seen as elitist because there are so many women they haven't reached or so many women not present who do not agree. Ultra democracy gives no one any power over their own lives but gives everyone power over everyone else.

For single women to be able to survive with the social attitudes and the material conditions they must live with, they must be supported. In Iowa City a group of women formed a living collective. For some of the women involved, this living situation was imperative for their financial and psychological survival if they were to remain single and politically active. The collective instead of being supported as an attempt to set an example of women committed to living together, was attacked as elitist. The pressure from women outside the living collective made those of us involved consumed with guilt over attempting to change our lives, and caused us to spend all kinds of energy trying to make other women feel welcome at all times. (Something few married women have to do -- be pleasant and sisterly at all hours of the day or night to any woman dropping in or hanging around). To try to assure other women that we were not critical of their lives, we constantly hid the fact that we did choose this way to live -- that we do think it is a better way than being married or living alone. While bending over backwards to not interfere or put down women who lived with men or women who weren't politically active we accepted their assertions that our collective was affecting their lives, affecting the women's liberation organization, or intimidating newly involved women; therefore, that they could have some say in how we lived and how our life style fit into the whole organization. Our energies were consumed with justifying our existence rather than with working out the problems we had internally or with influencing other women to do the same.

Ultra democracy is valued only for the numbers who agree on a decision, not for the content of the decisions made. Majority rule has always hurt minorities. Independent women are a minority and will always be held down in this way unless we base our actions on sound political theory not just how most women feel -- most women are not yet ready to break the ties.

The concept of ultra democracy has also limited large groups to practice that could be agreed on by the majority which always turns out to be practice on liberal issues. Radical women are put in the position of gaining support for only liberal actions and are isolated and unsupported on any action that threatens the system.

Building a mass movement on a sound political analysis is quite different from building a mass movement simply for the sake of a mass movement. Masses of people can be united around anything from waging a socialist revolution to waging genocide on Black Americans. Organizing masses of women around one single issue they can agree on "no matter what views people may have on other topics" offers nothing more than the hope of winning a single issue. It offers no hope of support for other issues along basic political lines. It does offer the possibility of an organized mass with amazing fascist and racist potential. This is my fear of what women's liberation could become were it to continue to recruit on nothing other than sex lines. I keep remembering the following which

came out of a movement that developed this way:

"Consider what it (the electorate) has received during the past thirty-five years from the majority of negroes, Indians and immigrants who have been enfranchised during the time, and then judge whether women as a body, could not bring something to offset these last acquisitions. Those who fear the foreign vote and the colored vote should remember that there are more native-born women in the United States than foreign-born men and women; more white women than colored men and women."

Ida Husted Harper, "Would Woman Suffrage Benefit the State, & Woman Herself?" North American Review 1904.

Our practice has been to work in small groups where we have been able to achieve some amount of collectivity in work and decision making and have come closer to a situation where all the members of a group have power in that group. We felt the need to work this way partly so we could work with other women with similar politics, not having to compromise our beliefs or water down our analysis to meet the approval of some mass organization. It is in the isolation of the small group that we have been able to begin an analysis -- to examine our ideas and practice without the fear of alienating potential new members.

The politics we have developed in our small groups have not however been carried over to our organizing practices. We have developed the beginning of radical theory in our small groups but we tend to feel isolated and alone in our beliefs, only finding support and agreement within our own group. Thus the small group which we maintain for support has caused us to feel isolation and a lack of support from women outside of our particular collectives. But when we try to organize other women we don't organize them along our political beliefs or to support us. We appeal to them as women with any range of politics. We organize around lines that don't offer the possibility of support.

We feel the reasons we formed small groups were and are still valid. To go back to a mass organization would cancel all that we have gained. When Ruthann Miller talks of the destruction of the movement she refers to a mass movement based on single issues with no basic political theory. Since we cannot see this kind of movement in any radical perspective, why should we care about its destruction? The mass organizing of women with grave differences in political theory will be the destruction of women's liberation because (1) women's liberation will have no political basis, and (2) we cannot develop any analysis when new or potentially new members are so powerful in determining the politics and actions. By constantly having to justify our ideas and practices, we always are looking backwards - never moving forward.

But we must solve the problems of how we avoid isolation without compromising our political theory; how we can influence other women to be in small groups (if we think that is valid); how we can facilitate ideological struggle between small groups; how much of a mass organization do we need, and how can small groups relate to a central organization without diluting their theory and practice.

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*socialist revolution*

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Dayton, Ohio is getting together a Regional Women's Center. Its purpose is to provide better communication within the woman's movement in SW Ohio. The address for their newsletter is:  
Dayton Women's Liberation  
1721 Burroughs Drive,  
Dayton, Ohio 45406

The new Gettin on Women Collective's newsletter announces a woman's house in East Lansing, Michigan - women are always welcome. The address of both the house and the newsletter is:  
Gettin on Women Collective  
358 N. Harrison  
E. Lansing, Michigan 48823

A Woman?

# WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY PHYSIOLOGY OF SEX AND HYGIENE AND HEALTH

Much of the misunderstanding about sexuality in men and women stems from incomplete and frequently incorrect knowledge of sexual physiology. This article will deal with the physiology of sex and with sex-related hygiene and health care.

Virginia E. Johnson. 1966, Little, Brown & Co. or An Analysis of Human Sexual Response, Ruth & Edward Baker, eds. 1966 Signet Books, 75¢ in paperback.)

## I. Sexual Excitement

Many of the myths about the physiology of sex are very old: vaginal orgasm myths, clitoral stimulation myths, penis size myths, and all have contributed to unnecessary tension and unhappiness for men and women.

Sexual response in general is very much alike in men and women. In both, sexual excitement causes physical reactions over the entire body: flushed skin and muscle tension with hardened nipples and flow of blood to the pelvic area. In women the vaginal walls begin providing lubrication. Orgasm brings involuntary muscle contractions and a (usually rapid) flow of blood away from blood-engorged body areas. Usually, in men, ejaculation of semen accompanies orgasm; in women, the minor labia may turn bright red. The pattern of male orgasm varies from person to person, mostly in duration of the various stages of excitement (plateau prior to orgasm, orgasm, and resolution). In women three main types of orgasm are common: (1) rapid excitement to orgasm with almost immediate resolution, (2) excitement to plateau stage which continues for awhile then rises rapidly to orgasm with slower resolution, (3) excitement to plateau with a series of "smaller" orgasms and slow resolution. If you don't seem to respond any of these ways, don't worry about it. Whatever feels good to you is good.

After orgasm for men there is a refractory period (which varies with different people) during which you cannot be re-excited to orgasm. For many women, if stimulation is continued during the resolution phase of one orgasm, you can again have orgasm. Orgasm, although frequently assumed to be mainly pelvic in nature, is in both sexes total body response. Many women prefer continuation of stimulation during orgasm; many men prefer deep vaginal penetration and cessation of movement during his peak of orgasm. When a man and a woman with these preferences get together, it throws new light on the unrelieved marriage-manual glorification of "mutual orgasm." Find what's best for you; that's right for you.

For women, our sensual response is, thank God, usually closely linked with our emotional response to whoever we're in bed with. If all your sexual excitement is concentrated in your pelvis and breasts, it may be because you're resisting making love with that person and should more closely explore how you're feeling about him or her and the situation you're in.

Now to the common myths:

Myth #1: Vaginal Orgasm. Masters and Johnson's research proved interesting on this Freudian mainstay: There ain't no such animal. The clitoris serves the express purpose of receiving and transferring sexual stimuli, regardless of whether it's applied through intercourse, masturbation, or any other means. There is no physiological difference between orgasm which results from either direct or indirect clitoral stimulation.

Myth #2: Sexual excitement is concentrated mainly in the pelvic area, and the breast in women. Experimentation is beginning to show that all areas of the body are potentially equally sensitive. Also, Masters and Johnson argue that there is no physiological reason why men's breasts are not usually proclaimed to be as sensitive as women's. Remember what it was like when you were very small and enjoying your body was not so frowned upon. We all have bodies capable of good feelings. Your body is enjoyable and knowing and enjoying your own body are prerequisites to being able to give pleasure to others and enjoying them.

Myth #3: Intercourse during menstruation is (choose your own) dirty, unhealthy, unsanitary, taboo. As long as both people want to, there is no reason not to have sexual activity during a woman's menstrual period. Menstrual blood is as "clean" as semen or vaginal lubricants. For some women who have temporary swelling of the pelvis intercourse might be uncomfortable. However, many women enjoy sexual activity then because the swelling increases pleasure and the uterine contractions which accompany orgasm help expel the menstrual flow and relieve cramps.

Myth #4: Breast and Penis size are important; there is also a "correct" penis shape. Size and shape are important only in so far as the people involved are prejudiced one way or another. There's more to making love than "correct" bodies and if two people like each other and what you're doing you'll find out how to play together happily regardless of common notions about bodies and sensuality.

Myth #5: Circumcision makes a difference. Circumcised and uncircumcised men are equally sensitive and have equal ability to control orgasm.

(The above section contains a very brief overview of common problems, questions, and fears. If you want more detailed information read Human Sexual Response, Wm. H. Masters and

## II. Hygiene and Health (especially for women)

### Cystitis

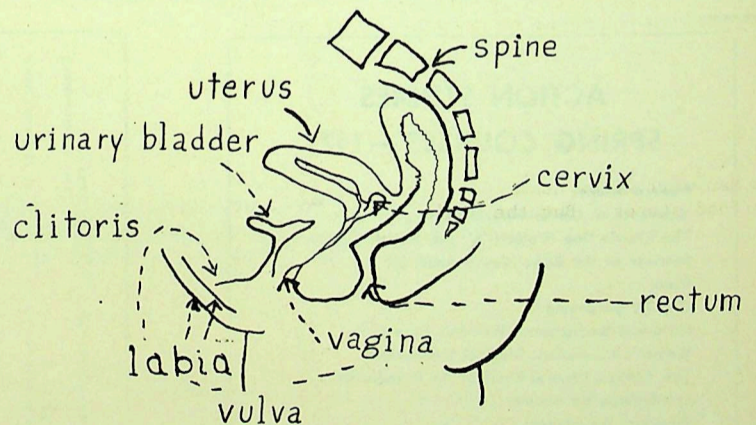
Cystitis is a painful, but not uncommon, infection of the urinary tract. Although most women will probably never get it, those few who find themselves prone to the inflammation can be forewarned by some advance information.

The major cause of cystitis is intercourse, often long and/or frequent, but it may be connected with other factors such as extreme tiredness (low resistance), alcoholic beverages or pregnancy. Some women get it so regularly that they must take medication after intercourse; older women often contract it from unknown sources which are not necessarily connected with sexual activity.

The basic problem is that the female is constructed with too many organs crammed into too small a space. Urethra, vagina and anus are all within two inches of each other, and lots of activity, like the friction of intercourse, or even the movement of an unborn child, will irritate the lower end of the urinary tract. The resultant pain may just be that of irritation or it may indeed be an infection which should not go untreated. Because the female urinary tract is only two inches or so long, such infections are not usually very serious (that is, there isn't too much of them, as compared to a similar infection in the male which is a greater problem), but will become serious if the infection is left untreated and spreads to the bladder.

How to know you've got it: first, it hurts, especially when you urinate and you feel like urinating all the time. You know the pain is down there somewhere, so try to determine if it's forward of the vagina, yet behind the clitoris. Itching & burning sensations are common. If you begin to have blood in your urine, you've got it for sure.

Get to a doctor. The inflammation is not bizzare and should respond readily to simple treatment: analysis of a urine specimen, some antibiotic for a week or so if you have the infection, then another analysis to make sure it's cleared up. The really painful symptoms should stop within four to eight hours after beginning medication--ending the pain will be your immediate concern at that point. Go easy on screwing till it's cleared up, about ten days after you begin treatment.



female pelvis: normal anatomy (lateral view)

### Douching

Douching is one of those very unclear and somehow mysterious activities that most women think they should be doing something about, but are not sure what to believe. Most doctors now take the stance that douching as a hygienic measure has been overemphasized to the point of sometimes causing more harm than it's supposed to prevent.

Under normal conditions the vagina, if left to perform its natural functions, will keep itself perfectly clean. The vaginal lining constantly secretes thin mucus which gently washes "foreign" material, such as menstrual blood, contraceptive chemicals, and semen, down to the vulva where careful washing will remove it. If this normal secretion is not removed from the foreskin of the clitoris or behind the labial folds there is a characteristic "vaginal odor," which douching won't help.

Sometimes douching is useful. On the last day of your period a douche will remove the remaining bits of menstrual flow and avoid a day or two of spotting, if you wish. If you are one of the women who develops a normal and healthy, but messy, copious mucus discharge at the time of ovulation, a douche will temporarily slow down the discharge.

For douching an enema bag with a douche nozzle (which directs the water out to the sides against the vaginal wall) is best. Bulb syringes are less desirable because the water escapes at high pressure and does not deliver a constant flow.

To douche, sit on the toilet with the bag at shoulder height. Warm water (not hot) or warm soapy water are fine solutions, but you can safely use mild solutions of drug store preparations if you wish. Insert the nozzle as far as it will go into your vagina and when the bag is about 1/2 empty slowly start removing the nozzle so that the last of the water runs over the labial area. Rinse out the douche bag with warm water. You need not sterilize the nozzle. Your vagina is tough and usually resists infection very well.

#### Vaginitis

Your vagina is tough, but it can be messed up. Douching too frequently and taking large doses of antibiotics, among other things, can cause the yeast-bacteria balance in the vagina to be upset. The result, whatever the cause, will be a copious foul-smelling, irritating discharge which must be treated by a doctor who can tell whether the condition is caused by yeast or bacteria. Douching is futile as a cure but these ailments can usually be easily treated by means prescribed by your doctor.

Another important reason for having a doctor investigate abnormal discharges, especially if they are accompanied by itching, painful urination, and/or lower abdominal tenderness, is that these common symptoms are also the symptoms for gonorrhea. A smear test will give you a sure diagnosis.

#### Cancer

And now a plug for Pap smears. All women, beginning in their mid-teens, should have a yearly Pap smear. A smear of tissue is painlessly removed from your vagina and tested for evidence of preliminary cancer stages. It's very effective, inexpensive, and easy--well worth being able to treat cervical and uterine cancer early. Most doctors understand the importance of this health measure.

You can get a Pap smear from a private doctor, or from Planned Parenthood as part of an examination for contraceptive pills. In any case you'll pay five dollars for the lab test, plus office call fee if you go to a private doctor. If you are a student, get your Pap smear from the student health center, even if you are going to Planned Parenthood for pills, so that you don't overburden PP facilities.

At the time of taking a Pap smear most doctors will also check your breasts, your other most vulnerable cancer area. Ask him/her to do so if he/she doesn't as a matter of course.

Go to a doctor immediately if you develop lumps in your breasts or abnormal vaginal bleeding. It probably will be something simple, but you need to be sure as early as possible.

Except for the section on cystitis (written out of the experiences of the females in our group), most of the other-than-local information for this portion of this article came from A Concept of Contraception, by Selig Neubardt, M.D. (Trident Press, N.Y., 1967), also in paperback as Contraception (Pocket Books, 95¢). It's an excellent and concise description of all forms of contraception (as of 1967) which includes much other useful information.

This article was prepared by the Bloomington (Indiana) Women's Liberation Front

## "there is some shit i will not eat"

--e.e. cummings, "i sing of olaf"

America's food is full of shit. Like most of its products -- war, systems of control, ideology, culture; cars, cigarettes, liquor, Coke, McDonald's hamburgers -- all full of shit. Talk is going round and round about additives in food -- the additive in my food as far as I can see, is the MAN.

Those into the freak-youth counter culture seem to think they have a line on what's safe to eat & how to get it. The Man has not only fucked up the food & told us it was cool, he has also fucked up the information as to what is good for your body & how to figure what to eat. He lies about nutrition & sells us shitty food. But the freaks put out with different (and believable) info on nutrition, then find how to get it by opening health food stores & organizing food deals --but all within the system. They still don't get rid of that food additive -- what makes it all happen --profit, the Man's thing.

The Man will allow heads to open health food stores. But the Man's media and official culture will ensure that the healthy food trip is tagged as a freak & liberal culture thing & therefore a middle-class limited side-show. It may become the "in thing" and all that shit. It will be commercialized to bits, probably, like most of the counter culture that is so within the capitalist system it doesn't necessitate revolution.

Choice of food is part of culture or subculture, part of lifestyle. But it's the range of choice that profit controls. The media reinforce the limitations on lifestyles. For the middle class people, it's a liberal thing to experiment. But, fuck it, poor people can't experiment. Rich white liberals can check out "soul food" but poor blacks can't check

out Delmonico steaks. The Man controls the menu: steaks, lobster and scotch for the ruling class; a little of everything on TV dinner trays for the middle class; brown rice and acid for the freaks; McDonald's hamburgers and polluted beer for the working class; and peanut butter & rotgut gin or heroin for the lower class. (Dope is in the class structure too. Where is that pure Sandoz LSD? I haven't seen it but I bet whoever has that control ought to die. And wouldn't the Man like to get the whole revoution on smack? Smack helped keep the ghettos down for years. It was no coincidence that right after Kent

related material:

"I want to puke my guts out!!!"  
-- Pat Edith

I wish I'd never seen your face  
or heard your lying tongue, my lord  
or heard your lying tongue  
I would not be here eating this  
cold cornbread  
sopping this salty gravy my lord  
sopping this salty gravy  
--Appalachian folk song

Heroin, be the death of me...  
Thank your god that I'm not aware  
thank your god that I just don't care  
'bout all the evils of this town  
and all the politicians makin'  
busy sounds  
and all the dead bodies piled  
on the ground  
and everybody puttin' everybody  
else down  
oh and I guess that I just don't know  
oh and I guess that I just don't know  
Heroin Heroin  
it's my life and it's my wife...  
--"Heroin", by the Velvet  
Underground

State & Cambodia there was a cheaper & easier supply of heroin around college campuses and in big cities. I could go on about the politics of heroin but I feel that sisters are less susceptible to that trip, that it's really male-oriented. Other kinds of downers (tranquilizers, etc.) are pushed at women, though; calm, passive women are necessary to the Man's system.)

Faced with all this crud in our food and stuff, some of us can make the choice to change our eating habits. But some of us want more choices than the limited pure food diet. Some of us can't afford the time to bake good bread and can't afford to buy any but cheap poisonous white bread. (Pure white flour, white sugar, white rice -- there seems to be a connection. All are terrible worthless food.) Some of us have just made enough personal sacrifices. I dig brown rice but I sure as hell dig lobster. And I'm angry and I won't forget it as long as Amerikkka makes me quite literally sick to my stomach. I could buy a Burger Shit meal, walk across the street to the bank and puke it on the bank president. Dammit, we won't eat brown rice forever! We want control over our own bodies and that means what goes into them too. When you feel like you ate something that disagreed with you, and you know what and who you disagree with, your gut reaction is a political analysis. Amerikkka is revolting.

This woman has the right idea: if it hurts, rub it. Headaches are caused



HOLD IT!  
ASPIRIN IS A RPOFF

by temporary cutting off of the blood supply to the brain; massage restores the circulation. Rub in rhythm with your pulse rate. Even scratching your head is helpful.

HEADACHE?  
PAIN?

# THREE WOMEN

The Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention was called by the Black Panther Party for November 27-29 in Washington DC and people from all over the country came. At the last minute James Cheek, President of Howard University refused to allow the people to use the buildings at Howard for the convention. Cheek had agreed to rent facilities at Howard to the Black Panther Party with a \$1,000 deposit and the balance of \$7,000 to be paid later. When Cheek received the deposit, he wanted all of the money in one payment by Tuesday morning and denied the Panthers the space.

All Souls Church and Saint Stephens Church were used as a last minute substitute, but their facilities were inadequate for holding the workshops and larger assembly meeting. The women also had a center at Trinity College, a Catholic Women's College, where space for workshops, meetings, and sleeping was provided.

LNS women went to the convention unclear about what to expect. They returned with new questions, and the realization that these questions are a long way from being resolved.

The following discussion focuses on three women's experiences at the Convention:

**BARBARA:** Friday night on the way to St. Stephens Church we met a lot of movement people we knew who seemed to be wandering around--they told us that the agenda we were looking for wasn't there. Sure enough, when we got there, there wasn't any agenda--there were old Huey movies and other Newsreel flicks. That was pretty grim, so went back to All Souls Church to register.



# REVOLUTIONARY

**SALLY:** But when we got there registration had closed so we went to eat at a fried chicken place. And at dinner we ran into other problems--of white people being in a Black community and being very unconscious of that while they were there.

Black people lined up behind us to eat. And we were sitting at the counter laughing and talking and we didn't even realize that those people were there until we turned around and they said, "We've been waiting here for 45 minutes."

**KAREN:** I think it's typical of the situation over the weekend that while we were sitting there talking about the revolution we didn't even bother to think that there was a whole room full of Black people who regularly ate there who wanted to sit down and have their meal. Same goes for all the trash people threw around the sidewalks and lawns around the church neighborhood.

**BARBARA:** Then we walked over to the rally and the first nice thing happened. We met some women who told us that there were lots of women rapping at the women's center at Trinity College. They told us to go over there. At the rally, nothing happened for a long time and then, finally, the Panther band, "The Lumpen," played. We started dancing and singing songs and continued to wonder when the convention would start. A lot of gay women and men danced in a snake dance and shouted "Ho, Ho, Homosexual, the ruling class is ineffectual."

**SALLY:** Big Man spoke finally and said we were all supposed to go to St. Stephens Church at 9 in the morning. He intimated that it might be a good idea if some buildings could be liberated; he also said we were going to stay in Washington as much as five months to have the convention. We all stared at each other in disbelief because we knew we weren't going to do that. The implication was that we whites were to liberate Howard, a Black school. That would have been a political disaster.

# TALK ON THE

**BARBARA:** I finally got over to the women's center after the rally. The atmosphere was a cheerful change. People were sitting around on sleeping bags, rapping and getting to know each other. Some women were hanging around a literature table, and others poured themselves coffee and tea, and made sandwiches in one corner of a huge meeting room. It would have been pleasant and politically productive as well to have continued the evening that way; or perhaps to have broken into small random groups to find out where other people were coming from.

Instead people decided to have a meeting to discuss "What to do about the Convention." I knew there was going to be trouble. Most of us bitterly remembered Huey's preamble in Philadelphia where he never mentioned womankind--just mankind. Lots of us are turned off to calling Huey the "Supreme Commander" especially when the whole movement is so disorganized--it sounds absurd. We remembered that women had been promised a lesbian speaker at the final meeting in Philadelphia, and that the speaker had never materialized. Some women felt that the Panthers were so hopeless we should not be part of the convention at all, but should simply have a women's conference. Though most of us agreed with their criticisms of the Panthers, still we had come to Washington to help

write the Revolutionary People's Constitution and we did want to show our support for the Panthers--200 of them are now political prisoners. Most of us were planning to go to the church the next day as Big Man requested and see what could be done to pull the weekend together.

Finally, it was decided that those who wanted to go to the church would and those who wanted to stay at the women's center would do that. Next morning most of us went to St. Stephen's church.

**SALLY:** When we got there in the morning, there was nothing to do--people were just wandering around. Black and Brown people were signing up for community organizing and leafletting but it was hard to figure out how whites were supposed to do that in the middle of a Black community in a strange town. Nothing else was scheduled until five that afternoon, when according to a leaflet the constitution we would be read. That seemed weird to me--I thought we were supposed to be writing the constitution. We went back to the women's center where people were breaking into workshops.

**KAREN:** When I got to the women's center in the afternoon, there were a number of workshops going on, as well as a lot of women milling around. There seemed to be no organized way to find out who was discussing what. I finally found Barbara at the imperialism workshop.

**BARBARA:** We were talking about specific actions women could take against imperialism which would pull out a lot of women and educate people--we had just split from a group who were into a more theoretical discussion about women and imperialism. People described their plans for celebrations around December 20, the 10th anniversary of the founding of the NLF, and a women's march against imperialism on International Women's Day.

**KAREN:** For me, the projects workshop was the best moment at the convention. I got a sense of women all around the country who are beginning to think about and plan concrete actions. In addition to the things that Barbara talked about, other people are doing work on organizing women to go to the Canadian conference in March to meet with the Vietnamese women. Some women from Chicago have been working on plans for day care and medical facilities for women and children. Some women from Vermont are working on setting up a loan company for women.

The projects workshop was just gathering steam when someone came up to our group to announce that there was going to be a mass meeting to decide whether or not to try and liberate Trinity College and give it to the Panthers. On our way downstairs we thought about how groovy it would be to liberate Trinity--a ritzy Catholic girls school on a beautiful campus--which we had gotten only because the priests thought we were all harmless middle-class white girls.

There must have been close to 1,000 women in the hall. I had never seen so many women in one place--it was an up, vis-a-vis to see throngs and throngs of us. Before most of us got any information at all about the feasibility of liberating Trinity, the discussion broke down with people shouting at each other and not letting each other speak.

Some women from Trinity tried to point out that the building was too small to hold all the people at the convention and that the Panthers had rejected it the night before. But other women felt that the Panthers might have changed their minds by now, since they hadn't been able to get any other building. This was one point where if the Panthers has sent someone over to talk to us we could have avoided a lot of hassle. But no Panthers ever came to the women's center all weekend.

# PEOPLE'S

**BARBARA:** But obviously the hostility wasn't just about tactics. Some women who were angry at the Panthers for all the reasons they laid out at the Friday night meeting didn't want to turn over the women's center to the Panthers, whether it was a practical action or not. And some women who felt committed to supporting the Panthers despite their fuck-ups weren't willing to listen to anything from these women, even perfectly logical reasons why taking the building wouldn't be cool--mainly, that it was too small.

**SALLY:** One depressing thing about the argument at Trinity was that so many women viewed it so much as turning the building over to the Panthers--not to the People's Convention. A Black sister pointed out that women tend to view the Panthers as the only group of third world revolutionaries. And then when we have disagreements with the Panthers the tendency is to feel at opposite poles from the whole third world liberation struggle.

# CONSTITUTIONAL

KAREN: The meeting really brought out the political splits in our movement, but what was even more discouraging in a way was the total chaos and confusion and lack of discipline and organization. People screaming at each other, ignoring the poor chairwoman, it turned so many women off. The only way you could preserve any sanity was to completely retreat from the discussion. A whole lot of people left. I don't think

We couldn't even get a resolution passed in support of the Panthers and other revolutionary people gathered in Washington, even though most of the women really did want to express their support. If we'd been more organized we could have gotten the resolution written up in a way that most women would have agreed with, and that would have been a positive thing we could have done as women.

SALLY: Another thing--we'd gotten the leaflet in the morning saying the constitution was going to be read. Now here was Huey talking about how we couldn't hold a constitutional convention in America because we hadn't liberated the territory yet. How come the people didn't get to decide that? Why did they call the convention in the first place then?

# CONVEN

our movement can survive too many more meetings like that. We've got to get ourselves together and provide structures for organization and leadership, and that's not a male trip--anarchy is just as oppressive as authoritarianism.

SALLY: I know for a lot of people like me it was the first time we'd been in a national gathering of women. A lot of other women from the Midwest were there also. It was very discouraging for us that the meeting was so bad. The only good thing I can remember from that meeting was when one girl got up to speak and right in the middle of a political rap she saw a friend across the room and she got really excited and stopped right in the middle of her speech and said "Hello". Everyone in the room just roared laughing because something had finally broken the tension. I know that a number of women from the Midwest were so totally discouraged they wanted to leave and not come back. They just wanted to go back to their own cities where they had organizations built up that they knew and could work with, because they felt it is just impossible to work in this kind of situation.

BARBARA: We failed to do that small thing because we were so busy arguing and getting mad at the Panthers and each other. And of course we totally failed to do the necessary work of forging a movement that would be able to present our criticisms to the Panthers and negotiate with them from a position of strength so we could all get down to the business of fighting the real enemy.

# TION

SALLY: We all felt pretty down when we left the women's center to go over to the church to hear Huey's speech. He was still talking about "mankind"--"A man is less of a man if he can't pick up a gun to defend himself, or he's not a man at all"; "It's not a matter of Marxism, it's a matter of manhood." For him to be so insensitive is really bad, even when he does criticize himself and say well it's a bourgeois fuck-up of his.

BARBARA: It wasn't just Huey talking about mankind, it was the real male supremacy of that event at the church. All the guards were men. All the speakers were men--Huey, Michael Tabor, and Robert Scheer. Robert Scheer went on a trip to North Korea on which there were a majority of women. So why was it Scheer who was picked to report on the trip? A lot of us would have been really interested in hearing from the women. Also, it would have been good to hear Panther women speak.

KAREN: I thought that it was kind of weird for Huey to lay down this hour-long abstract rap to people who were waiting to be told what the fuck was going on. I don't feel like I want to comment right now on his theory of vast numbers of unemployed Lumpen making the revolution, or about inter-communalism. I think a lot of people have serious questions about these things. Particularly the "nations don't exist any more" theory-- I wouldn't like to lay that on the Vietnamese or the Palestinians who are waging wars of national liberation. But whether we agree with them or not, these ideas don't seem to relate to the immediate problems of the movement in America. And he only briefly mentioned the Panther political prisoners, the fact that Bobby and Ericka might die.

SALLY: After Huey's speech I went back to the women's center, but not many women were there. Some women just came back and went to sleep, some of us just talked. The discussion I was in centered around our discontent with Huey's speech and our experiences at this convention. None of us felt like we had gotten any unity or strength from the weekend.

Sunday morning was better; a few regional meetings which had been planned the day before were still held, and ideas and plans for the NLF anniversary on Dec. 20 were exchanged. Women from New England made plans for a January regional meeting to exchange ideas and plans for future projects. The meetings Sunday seemed to be the most positive and concrete things that happened the whole weekend, yet they had almost no connection to the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention.

LNS

By Karen, Barbara, and Sally

Of Ann

She crossed her arms  
in sleep or wakeness,  
which, it doesn't matter.

She must have been aware  
of the decision her fingers had made;  
by the grace with which she placed them  
over the strong part of her arm.

If I lie beside her,  
will her hands forget their conclusion  
and reach out to me instead?  
Will I, sometimes, be able  
to cross them back again.  
And will she.



Closing my arms across my chest  
is an easy thing.  
I do it naturally.  
But leaning across to you  
high comedy  
I wish I could reach out  
and simply hug you;

Let go of all the crystal palaces  
the bright edges and clear corners  
of the words we live in.  
I wish I could reach across  
brush away the tinsel  
the mirrors  
So we could see each other as we are.

Ann Wagner

Dec. 26, 1970

Dear Sharon-share-alike, AIAW, Dirtbag, and Jill,

Before I tell you everything in order, let me describe what happened today. I met Tracy at Grand Central at 10:35 and we were to have lunch before her flight. While we were reconnoitering in the waiting room off 42nd street a young pimp, white (20-24) came up and leered over at Tracy "Is there anything I can do for you?" She said that there most certainly wasn't anything he could do for us and I said, "beat it". He told me that that was not a nice way for a lady to talk and sat down next to me. Well, Tracy had to call the airlines and asked if I would be sure and off him if he gave me any trouble. I said I'd be all right so she went to a nearby phone booth, but kept watch through the window while she was calling. The guy started whistling "I'll be there" very badly so as not to let me forget he was there. He had a thigh to ankle caste on his left leg so it stuck straight out. He said, "You want to make some money"? I said, "What's it to ya"? He said, "You know I'm a pimp don't you." And I said beat it or I'll beat you up. At this point he stood up and said, "ok beat me up, beat me up". But not wanting to be arrested for starting anything I let it go--he sat down again, and began badgering me. Not only was he insulting me and calling me names, but he was employed in an occupation that I despise and made his money off the backs of women. I kept getting madder and madder until I pushed him off the bench or something, (I sort of started it, but I was real fed up) and we were standing faced off, except he had me around the neck with one hand. I still wasn't taking the whole thing too seriously so I was calmly prying loose his fingers and when I couldn't, I hit him in the mouth a couple of times, but he hit me twice in the eye and knocked me down. Then, all at once out of the phone booth jumps Tracy (who, you'll remember is 5'2"), grabs him around the neck with both hands and threw him down on the floor. He hit her a couple of times too, but she said it didn't hurt. By this time people began asking what was happening so I said loudly

that the guy was a pimp and made his living by exploiting women, I called him the scum of the earth and he ran away.

Well, Tracy and I were pretty proud of ourselves, but after all that we had to sit down and rest--anyway my eye was swelling up and I had to go put cold water on it. When I got back two police were there and we gave them a description. I wasn't sure if I wanted to deal with cops at first, but then I decided that I really would love to see that pimp out of commission. He must work Grand Central Station.

The reaction of the women around was neat. One woman who saw the whole thing smiled at us and gave the victory sign and the two matrons in the bathroom were very solicitous and kind about my eye.

I've done alot of self-cross-examination about why I didn't use the karate I know to get us out of that situation. One good groin kick or side kick to the stomach would have broken his hold on my neck and done him in as well. The only thing I've come up with is that I considered myself as starting the physical part of our encounter and I associate using karate only with self-defense. Looking deep down into the pit of my soul, however, I know that's a rationalization, and I still haven't rid myself of the passivity socialized into women. I sat there and took all the personal insults he was laying on me, and I did nothing to defend my worth and dignity. The only way I was able to respond physically was in considering his exploitation of all women. It wasn't enough that he was insulting me. I've been through that movie once before where I came to the defense of one of my friends who had just been given an insult that I had grinned and boreared through many times. It's not healthy for women to be so selfless. Each time you endure a blow to your person and don't defend yourself against it, you die a little inside.

Sorry I ended so philosophically. What I really wanted to express in this letter was how proud I am that Tracy and I beat up that pimp.

Love,

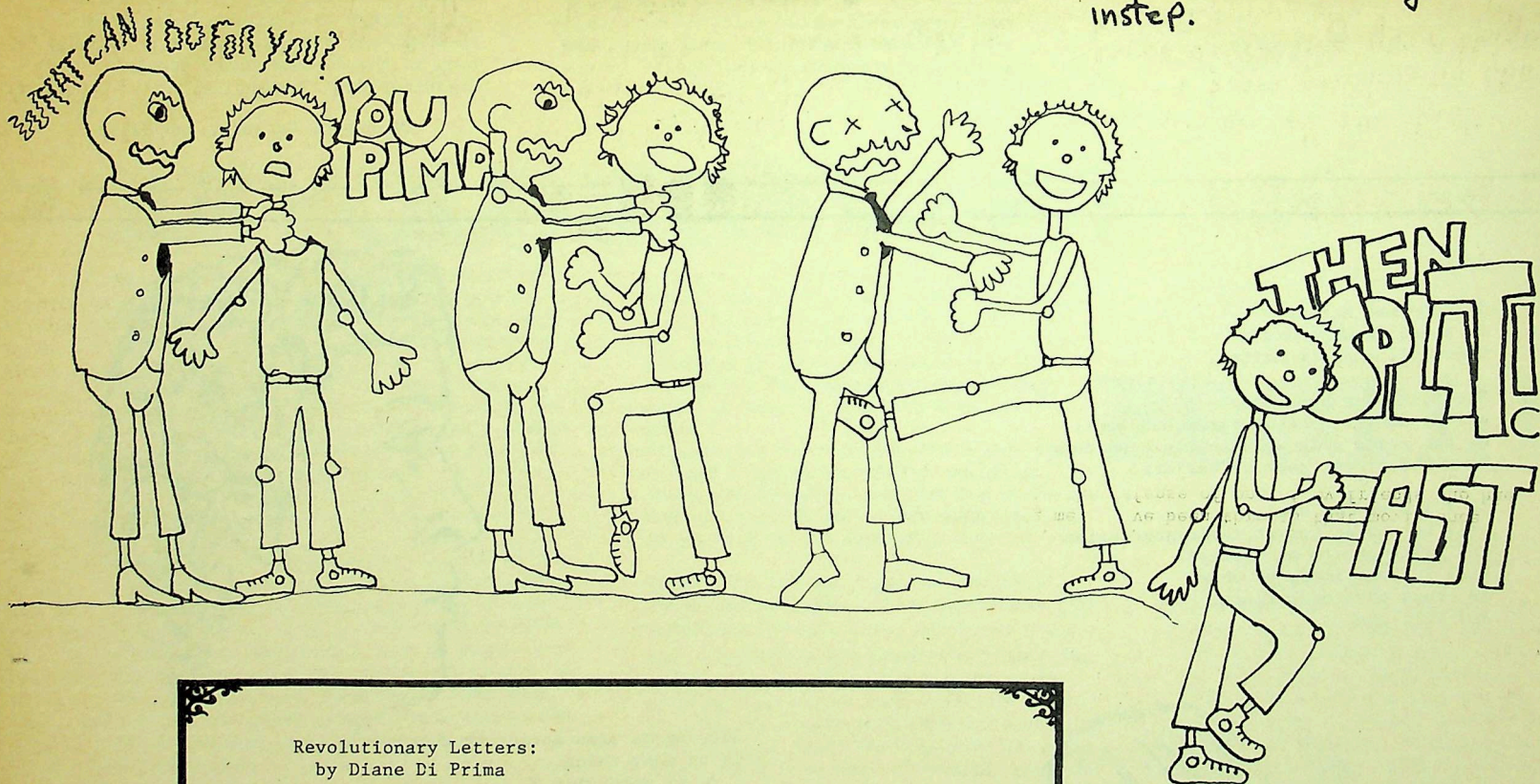
Da-Da

# what i should've done

a very good defense against an attacker is a kick to the groin. Even if sloppily placed, he will double over + be unable to move.

With force raise your thigh until it is parallel with the ground - while keeping your toe pointing down.

The power of the kick comes from continuing the force of raising your thigh by snapping the lower part of your leg out + up into his groin contacting him with the bones of your instep.



Revolutionary Letters:  
by Diane Di Prima

not all the works of Mozart worth one human life  
not all the brocades of the Potala palace  
better we should wear homespun, than some in orlon  
some in Thailand silk  
the children of Bengal weave gold thread in silk saris  
six years old, eight years old, for export, they don't sing  
the singers are for export, Folkways records  
better we should all have homemade flutes  
and practice excruciatingly upon them, one hundred years  
till we learn to  
make our own music



Do you belong to a Women's Liberation group? \_\_\_\_\_

Where and how large? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your group published a newsletter? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes would you send us a copy ? Are there things you would definitely like reprinted in our paper? - \_\_\_\_\_

Have you read AIN'T I A WOMAN? If so, where did you get it? \_\_\_\_\_

What things do you like to see covered in Women's papers? \_\_\_\_\_

How useful is a women's liberation paper to you or to your women's liberation group? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you read other WL papers? Which ones, Rat, Off Our Backs, Up from Under, Women, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your group distribute any of these papers? \_\_\_\_\_

What papers do you generally read? \_\_\_\_\_

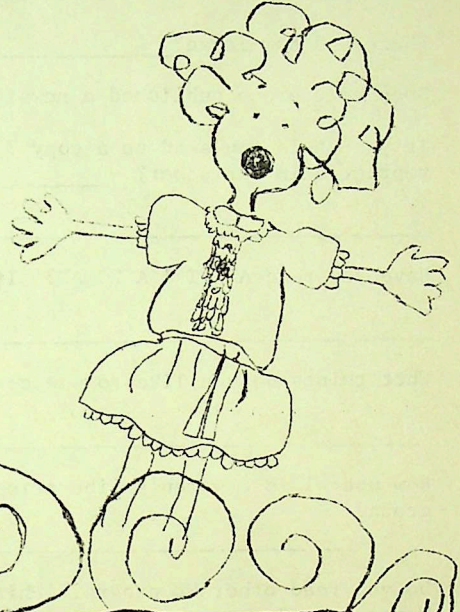
AIN'T I A WOMAN?  
P.O. Box 1169  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

AIN'T I A WOMAN? is a midwest newspaper of Women's Liberation published every 3 weeks by the Publications Collective of Iowa City Women's Liberation, a collective of 10 women.

AIN'T I A WOMAN? has three policies:

1. AIN'T I A WOMAN? is a midwest newspaper . It is to be used as a means for Women's Liberation groups through out the mid-west to exchange information and politics. It is hoped that soon more midwest groups will take pages in each issue. We will print without editing any laid out page from a midwest women's liberation group, but we reserve the right to collectively decide which individual articles submitted to us should be printed.
2. The AIN'T I A WOMAN? collective believes that the direction and theory of the Women's Liberation Movement can only be determined by women and that we must begin to write about our movement. In keeping with this AIAW prints only articles written by women.
3. The collective is an autonomous cell of Iowa City Women's Liberation. The opinions expressed by members of the collective are not necessarily those held by other members of women's liberation in Iowa City.

Publishing a paper has been really important to us as a small collective of women. It has been the project around which we have learned to work together collectively and lovingly and working together has brought us closer to a collective analysis of our oppression. But we are concerned about the paper being useful and important to more women than just us. We'd like to hear from other mid-west women & mid-west WL groups regarding what they would like the paper to be. We would appreciate women filling out the questionnaire on the other side. Thanks.

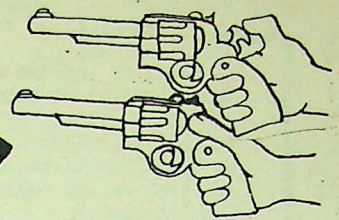


Ain't I  
A  
Woman  
name \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**AIN'T I A WOMAN?**

Volume III

Number 4

JUNE 22, 1973

**box 1169**

**iowa city, ia.**

25¢



from **A9AW**

Since we put out The Childcare Issue in February we've been through a lot of changes. The situation regarding childcare has changed considerably here and the childcare issue had repercussions in this town that were threatening to people's safety and security. We hope that in the next issue there will be more about childcare and that we can deal with some of the changes this community has been through.

This issue was originally to be one on violence and women. It really isn't. After the childcare issue we were hesitant to put out an issue solely about violence -- afraid of the repercussions it could have for women in this town. We also received Jane Alpert's article and felt that it and the responses to it warranted the space it would take since anyone underground is so limited from normal means of communication.

In between putting out the childcare issue and this issue, we sent copies of a women's poetry anthology to our subscribers. The anthology was published by a group of gay women and includes poems read at the first and second All Women's Poetry Readings in Iowa City. The same group of women have started a women's press. We're excited about both the book and the press. If you didn't get the anthology and would like one they are \$1. The next issue of AIAW we expect to print ourselves on the press. So it may take some time but should be out this summer.

Dear Sisters,

I really enjoyed your childcare issue... and found it somewhat fascinating that nothing else could get done due to all of the struggles over who's going to take care of the children. I've had fantasies myself of interrupting any and all meetings in my area with mobs of children so that nothing could get done until "who's going to take care of the children" got dealt with a little better. However, I no longer (at this moment) feel quite like that is the best approach for (where I live).

I'm getting off the track.  
Here are some of my thoughts

ON CHILDCARE

What do we mean when we say as mothers that we need help with caring for the children? And I tell a two year old who is visiting our house with his mother "no, you can't have that jar full of peanuts" and take out a few to give to him...and his mother rushes from the hall to his defense and she takes over administering what he can and can't have...not able to trust that anybody but she can truly be properly concerned for her child's welfare.

And why is it that when some children are left with other people they totally freak out and cry constantly. I don't think that it is natural for babies to be so attached to their mothers and I feel that we (as mothers) are at least as responsible as other people that children aren't more able to be raised collectively...actually I'm not trying to place blame... but too often there is a cry by mothers that nobody else sees what needs to be done in order to care for their baby/child properly...there is a presumption by everyone (including the mother) that mother-knows-best and altho' she's found out everything that she knows about what affects her child (ie why she/he won't eat; why she/he's crying; etc) has been thru trial and error... still other people aren't allowed that same process and instead if mother is around she unconsciously acts as the all-knowing regarding "her" child.

It is hard to fight the privatization of children. But first we are recognizing that they are privatized...and then we are struggling with changing that. I hope that in your future issues you will have more on "who takes care of the children."

I live in a flat with four adults and three children. There are often as many as six neighborhood children. And we have a couple of overnite switching so that who and how many children is always changing.

love to you  
and  
power to the  
women and children

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 If your group wants to receive bundles of AIAW? send 15¢ per copy in advance.


*our printing policy....*

The AIAW collective makes all decisions on what we print. We try to print articles that we agree with, and as a whole, have the paper represent the politics of the collective. We do, however, decide at times to print material submitted to us that we may have some disagreements with, but that we basically think are helpful and worth reading. We do not edit any articles, but sometimes we don't feel right about printing certain articles without commenting or responding to them in the paper to make our own views clear. If we wish to do that we will communicate privately with whoever submitted the article to be sure it's all right. To designate what articles come from AIAW and what articles come from outside, we have started signing AIAW on collective articles and articles by individuals from the collective.

People keep writing us nice letters and we want to print them. It would save us a lot of time if you would indicate whether or not you want us to print it. We never use anyone's name unless we know she wants us to.

-AIAW

*Gay women who need to talk or want info about ongoing activities in Iowa City can now talk to gay ♀ by calling GERI at 351-4582*



**AIAW?** is on file...  
 at the :  
 International Women's History Archive  
 2325 Oak St.  
 Berkeley, Calif. 94708

and is available on microfilm through:  
 Bell + Howell  
 Drawer "E"  
 Wooster, Ohio

**AIN'T I A WOMAN?** IS A PUBLICATION REFLECTING ONLY THE OPINION AND STRUGGLE OF A SMALL COLLECTIVE OF RADICAL GAY WOMEN- NOT THE WHOLE GAY/WOMEN'S COMMUNITY IN IOWA CITY.

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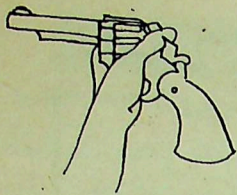
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**WOMEN'S LIBERATION CENTER**  
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There are two new services for gay women in the Philadelphia area:

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KATHY

Kathy pick up the gun  
that you're father used to kill  
your mother  
It is yours.  
It is your inheritance  
Take revenge on this putrid  
patriarchal world.  
Your mother's murder is part of  
the world-wide woman genocide.  
Your father is one of the every day  
murderers.  
Seek revenge Kathy  
Choose your weapons  
And use your anger well.  
Become a woman-loving-woman.  
Become strong and learn to resist  
men  
Men are too dangerous to be with  
And women are too beautiful to  
neglect  
Pick up that gun, Kathy  
And help us blow their world  
to pieces.

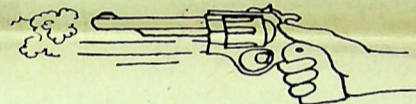
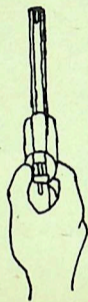
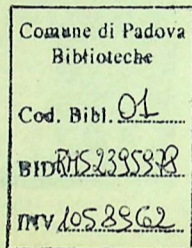
Am I being followed?  
What is that noise?  
Planning my karate attacks.  
If he's tall--kick him in the shins.  
And do an elbow punch to his stomach.  
If he's short--go for his eyes.  
If he comes up behind me smash his instep.  
I hate it  
I hate it  
I hate the need to always be conscious of  
my survival.  
In my house.  
lock the doors.  
Don't take a bath when no one else is home.  
I try to ignore the cats which sound like  
murders, rapists, intruders.  
Watching kids--doubles, triples,  
multiplies by thousands  
The caution  
The fear.  
The need to protect.  
What if something happened to one of them?  
Can I really defend them and me?  
I don't know  
I really don't know.  
This constant fear.  
I used to walk own the streets of  
Newark and NYC  
Alone  
Leading a quacking toy duck on a string  
behind me  
Pretending I was crazy  
So maybe no one would bother me.

And no one did.  
Pure luck.  
My fear of men is so deep rooted.  
So real.  
Hundreds of men everyday pass through the  
cafeteria line.  
And I think any one of these men  
Could be a murderer  
The murderer of the student nurse who was  
killed in her dorm room over spring  
break  
Almost everyone of these men  
Is a personal threat to my life  
They hate women  
want us destroyed.  
They are so helpless and stupid.  
"How do you get coffee"  
"Can I give you 3¢"  
"How does the creamer work"  
"I have the change"--and I know he hardly  
ever does.  
They spill things all the time.  
And they take their inability to function  
in this world  
As a natural expected phenomena.  
They turn their inferiority into hatred.  
Brute obnoxiousness.  
Slamming the money down.  
Throwing it all over  
When I told one of the men, half-smiling,  
he was a little slow in always having  
his money ready  
He replied  
"Oh, it's so nice you're so maternal."  
Everything of theirs is a distortion!  
I fear their stupidity.  
Their hatred  
Their envy of women.  
Their physical strength.  
I need a lesbian nation.  
As a reality  
Not as a toy in my head.  
Paranoia is one of the great contributors  
To women being half people.  
And I know that any women's paranoia is  
real.  
I would like to get a gun.

- Rowboat

PARANOIA

What I hate most about being  
a woman  
Is the unavoidable  
Almost always present paranoia.  
Everyday.  
Everyday watching  
Keeping my 6th sense of woman's  
awareness  
Alive and Alert  
Walking down the street  
Where are all the cars?  
Is anyone in them?  
What's in that alley



## "The Enormous Contradiction We Have Sold Ourselves"

The murder and suicide of Pat Cone and her ex-husband, respectively, in Lone Tree last week is too "close to home" both literally (because she worked and had friends here in Iowa City) and symbolically (because every woman has seen and/or felt violence done by a man or men to her or a woman close to her) for us to just let it go by.

It's time we saw the repeated fatal beatings, stranglings, shootings of women by men close to them (we hear/see it on the radio, t.v., and newspapers everyday) not as isolated incidents or peculiar private crimes but as the product of the values our society cherishes and promotes.

Males are socialized to equate violence towards others, especially females, as a sign of affection. Females are socialized to disarm their natural, self-protective instincts and to accept that "VIOLENCE=LOVE" double-think as truth. For males in our culture, violence serves two purposes: (1) as a defense and outlet for hostility and (2), as a love message, a way of communicating affection (or deep caring). "I can't live without you," so popular in our songs and romantic myths translates easily into: "so I'll die unless I can have you." Similarly, "I don't want you to live without me" becomes "I'll kill you if you leave me."

In school and families around the time of puberty, girls are taught to double-think when violence is done them by boys, to not react naturally and fight back, but rather to interpret a boy's hitting them as "he loves me!" This brainwashing is an important factor in preventing a woman from taking action to stop a man's hurting her. Similarly, it works as an effective stop to anyone else's interfering when a man is seen--say, on the street--hitting a woman. Onlookers assume that because it is or may be by a lover's quarrel, it's "their business" only.

Even the laws enforce that kind of mentality. In most states there has been legal support of men's violent crimes against wives

or female lovers. Men's crimes in these cases usually take a lesser penalty--manslaughter, for example, in the event of the woman's death; whereas women's slaying their husbands or male lovers often is seen as murder in the first degree. In some states, even with the same charge, a woman has gotten a stiffer sentence for her "family crime".

The enormous contradiction we have sold ourselves--that someone is beating someone else because he loves her--puts women who relate to violent male lovers (this is, sooner or later, most men in our society) in the hideous double-bind of always hoping for affection from the person who physically abuses her. How can she prevent her own harm? He might be nice tonight when he comes home, so, she reasons, she shouldn't leave or call on friends or the police to deter him from hurting her. Anticipating his violence might bring it down on her, she fears. 'And, anyway, he may beat me a little when he's upset but he's never seriously hurt me.

Violence is violence. We should not see "slapping her around a little" as different in kind (only in degree) from the violence that ends in fatal beatings, stranglings, knifings, shootings. Everything begins little. Extreme violence is not exceptional; it is the natural escalation of small violent acts.

The number and frequency of beatings and other violent crimes as a cause of women's deaths in this society are so common as to be ignored as an unchangeable part of "the way things are".

But nothing is unchangeable. We urge all women to get together with other women you know to talk about your own experiences with male violence upon females. (yourselves or women close to you). Sharing that grief and anger will help us understand what we live/have lived under, and will help us decide how to put an end to that oppression.

The story of Goldflower is well-know in China. A woman badly abused by her husband, Goldflower, gained support in "speak bitterness" meetings with other wives in her town. As a group, they warned Goldflower's husband that violence has no place in his treatment of his wife. Still he beat her. Then the women of the town went together to his house and beat him. Convinced, he changed his behavior; so did other men in the town.

Violence is no kin to loving. We must not lie to ourselves about that anymore. We must teach our children the truth, too. We must enforce our demand that violence against women stop. To do that we must begin where we are, now.

# Castrating bitches

Dedicated to Sarah Ottens

Our goal is to regain control of our own bodies and lives. Yet, I am always amused and often greatly irritated to hear claims that the women's movement seeks to emasculate men. I should like to point out the irony of it. Women's bodies have been subjected to men's imaginations and manipulations for centuries.

There were the pre-revolutionary Chinese who broke their women's feet and socialized them into believing they were more beautiful that way when in reality they had fixed it so that their women could never run away from their slave positions.

There were Moslem men who buried their women under veils and robes in the sweltering desert sun in order to inhibit their own sexual desires.

There were the American bluecoats who sliced the genitals of Indian men and women, wearing the women's genitals on their hats for sport.

There were the tortures of chastity belts, those iron girdles which not only prevented a woman's freedom of choice, but which were unbearable, cold contraptions which collected filth and disease. Women were left at home burning with disease while their christian soldiers were raping Moslem women or lying dead on battlefields, the chastity belts' keys gone forever.

Freud managed to further louse things up for women by subjecting their psyches to his male interpretations of female sexuality. Post-Freudian doctors operated on women, removing their clitorises so they would experience the vaginal orgasms that Freud thought to be more mature than the "immature" clitoral orgasms.

There were women who, because of church doctrine were burned as witches, who died or suffered from forced motherhood or in the hands of illegal abortionists because the patriarchal church banned birth control and abortion. All these, not to mention countless women past and present in all societies who have been subjected by men to beatings, rape, murder and prostitution.

Certainly when I think of all these inhuman, premeditated cruelties that women's bodies have endured due to whims of their menfolk, I must laugh in rage against some man's fear of being emasculated. When I dream of the inner rage of women collectively coming together for a purpose, and think: "Castration?"...It would be too kind.



It's really bad but I kind of have an attitude that goes along the lines of straight women who are assaulted by their boyfriends and still continue to relate to them are stupid and there doesn't seem to be much I can do about it. I mean if they continue to allow themselves to be fucked over (and I see being fucked over as a form of violence) and especially hit, then I can't see a road open for me to even begin to bring them down. I don't know how to tell someone to take that first step. I see that as essential to dealing with women and violence. Women are going to have to retaliate and I

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know if I'm putting my life on that kind of line, it's not going to be for someone who will go and do the same thing over again. I want revenge and I deserve it but the revenge I seek is (1) personal against men that fuck lesbians over (2) political i.e. maybe it will give women courage to do something about the violence they themselves are subjected to. I want men everywhere to be afraid of women in the same manner women are afraid of men. Men are not going to take this fear on voluntarily, they are going to have to be subjected to women's rage and not to one woman's rage but to women as a whole. I want the guy that I pass on a dark street late at night to be as afraid

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## The demystified Fortress

Then,  
I stole your armor,  
Your iron suit, lance,  
Face guards, epaulets,  
And put them in the Museum  
Under the Tower  
Where I secretly practiced  
Wearing them.

I even perfected  
Your signature  
On my death warrant,  
Daddy,  
All of you aromatic,  
Robins-egg blue.

Then I sat in the glass Tower  
Wondering if you could see me  
without my iron vest  
Or red wig; like Queen Bess  
Imagined letting your severed head  
Bleed over my velvet robe.

--Barbara Unger



Due to a pregnancy I was married at 19. My groom was 22. Mentally and emotionally we were both children. During the first two years of my marriage I was slapped and knocked around quite often. Usually it happened when I could no longer keep my mouth shut and became "bitchy" about the fact that I was always home alone while he was out drinking or playing poker or with his girlfriend. Once he hit me while I was attempting to learn how to drive "because I was so stupid." The encounter that I remember most vividly occurred the night I brought my child home from the hospital. It had never occurred to me to ask his permission to breast feed my baby. It seems he had some fucked up hang up about nursing. He claimed that he didn't want anyone sucking on my tits but him. I was completely intimidated and changed immediately to the bottle method. I never even considered nursing my second child. I had a black eye for two weeks that I received after a party for yelling at him in front of his friends about having an affair.

For a long time I never said anything to anyone except my closest friend. Everyone who knew him thought him a gentle and kind person. During this time I never fought back. I just cowered and cried. I think I felt that the shame he later felt each time, was my strongest weapon. At some point I couldn't stand it any longer and started to hit back. That may have happened twice before the violence ceased for good. I told him if he ever touched me again I would leave him. It took me four more years to get my shit together to do that but it wasn't due to violence. Once during that time I confessed all this to some women who were also married. They all admitted similar experiences that they had never discussed before.

Why this is not talked about, I'm not sure. I imagine most women are trying to protect their husband, their marriages, mostly it is a real loss of face in suburban circles to admit that you are unhappy. I was never actually beat up, just knocked around. Some women are not so lucky and still nobody is talking. The taboo against admitting all this is so great that even now I find it incredibly difficult to write this article.

of me as I am of him. I want to wake up in the morning and hear on the news that a man was found castrated in an alley everytime I hear that a woman has been raped. I am paranoid and scared shitless of men because I know their violence that is directed toward women comes from a basic premise that women are lesser persons than they are and will not be able to harrass them as much as a man (an equal) can so it's no sweat - no sweat to bat them around a bit. Well, they have got to learn that we are persons, we tried the education, dissertation, kissing ass, methods and women are still getting abused constantly so everyday it becomes more and more apparent that direct physical assault is the only answer.

Ain't I

# MOTHER RIGHT: a new feminist theory

by jane alpert

Jane Alpert has been underground since 1970, just before her trial for conspiracy to bomb various buildings in New York city.

## PART I: An Open Letter to the Weatherwomen

Dear Sisters in the Weather Underground:

I am addressing this piece to you, in spite of the fact that my concern at this point is with a far broader spectrum of women than your tiny band of forgotten leftists, because it was our arguments of the past year that convinced me to publicize my conversion from the left to radical feminism. I realized after these arguments that for me to keep silence would only support the illusion that the "underground" is united around the male politics which you still espouse, and these politics and practices are too reprehensible to me as a feminist to protect them by silence. I know that seeing this letter - which you thought you would receive as a private communication - here in print will shock you and that you will regard much of its contents as a breach of the tacit code of honor among political fugitives. Nevertheless, my own politics demand that I share with all women my knowledge of the sexual oppression of the left, if only to warn other sisters against the pain that has been inflicted on us. Perhaps you personally will never open up to feminism; yet the experiences I am going to relate may speak more effectively to women involved in other branches of the left, from McGovern organizers to Socialist Workers Party members. And I have some hope that the impact of a public statement may do what none of my private arguments have succeeded in doing: persuade you to leave the dying left in which you are floundering and begin to put your immense courage and unique skills to work for women - for yourselves.

Since this is an open letter, let me summarize for other women what you already know of my history underground and as a feminist. I became a fugitive in May 1970, a few days before my scheduled sentencing for conspiracy to bomb military and war-related corporate buildings in Manhattan. I was never part of SDS or of Weatherman, and although I'd had conversations with Weatherpeople which were influential in my decision to go underground rather than to prison, I lost contact with the organization shortly after I became a fugitive. I was a serious militant leftist at that time, and the most feminist activity I'd ever been involved with was the all-women's newspaper Rat, which, despite its exclusion of men, remained thoroughly left-identified. In the last three years I have become a radical feminist. The change in my politics has not been sudden, and I want to go into its causes and its substance much more fully later in this paper. For now, I only want to set the scene of my renewed acquaintance with the Weather Underground by saying that when it occurred I was decisively through with the left and had, at least mentally, rededicated myself to the cause of a revolution made by and for women.

It was in this general frame of mind then, just about a year ago, that I was attending a public lecture and, a few minutes after seating myself, noticed a man sitting nearby who looked vaguely familiar. I would not have noticed him at all except for the fact that he was very obviously staring at me and at the same time making laughing, surprised comments to the people around him. I thought with some alarm that he must be either an agent or a dangerous fool, and I was both more and less apprehensive when I finally realized who he was.

It was Mark Rudd.

After I recovered from the shock, I became excited by this rare and un hoped-for opportunity to share experiences with a fellow-fugitive and for a short time I relished it in spite of the problems. Rudd was living with a woman I hadn't met before, whom I'll call Caroline. She seemed to be a strong and sensitive person and I would have loved to get to know her well, independently of Rudd himself. This was not possible because Rudd made it difficult for us to see each other without him, and because when the three of us were together he made a practice of interrupting her and seemed to regard himself as the spokesman for them both. Nevertheless, his obvious dependence on her combined with his frequent apologies to me for his manipulative behavior in past years (toward me in particular and women in general) gave me some hope that he had fundamentally changed and might even have become a sympathetic ally to the Women's Movement. I was soon disillusioned.

What finally woke me to the reality of this man's character was a conversation we had while Caroline was out of town. He made a special point of wanting to get together with me at this time and, as we were sitting on the front seat of a car on a rainy evening, he attempted to put our relationship on a more intimate footing by means of the following confession. He told me that approximately a year earlier Caroline had had a serious ovarian infection which made sex very painful for her. This, he said, was the root of a whole range of "problems" in their relationship, ranging from his virtually raping her (he couldn't help himself, he said) to his imagining himself in love with another woman. He described to me how titillating he found it that this other woman looked on him as a revolutionary hero, how she excited him sexually without satisfying him intellectually, how he couldn't resist the excitement of an affair with her though it was causing great anguish to Caroline. The affair ended, however, when he learned that the "other" woman was pregnant by him and that she wanted to have his child. He regarded the pregnancy as entirely her own fault, since she had stopped taking birth-control pills without telling him, and he explained that this wilful and self-destructive carelessness - as he claimed that this wilful and self-destructive carelessness - saw it - was what had proved to him that "a man can't politically educate a woman." It slowly dawned on me that Rudd was telling me this story (1) because it proved what an irresistibly highly-sexed masculine creature he was, and (2) because as a "liberated woman," not to mention a presumably pro-abortion feminist, he quite sincerely expected me to cluck a sympathetic tongue over his problems with this Dumb Chick.

I told Rudd in the strongest terms of which I was capable how appalling his behavior was to me, but though my failure to sympathize seemed to startle him, nothing I could say would convince him of the seriousness with which I regarded his crimes. "Of course I trust you," were his benevolently paternalistic last words to me. "I know you wouldn't do something like those Boston women who denounced Eric Mann (a Weatherman who served a two-year prison term) as a sexist pig who deserved his imprisonment."

While it wasn't possible for me to establish much of a relationship with Caroline given the short time we were in the same geographical area and Rudd's obtuse omnipresence, I could at least look forward to getting in touch, through Rudd, with women in the Weather Underground. I was wary about this because I knew you Weatherwomen had never given a sign, publicly or privately, of being more receptive to a feminist point of view than Rudd himself was; that you had never risked the esteem of leftist men in any statement or action; and that the few statements of your organization which made reference to the Women's Movement revealed a complete failure to understand it and an intense eagerness to co-opt it. Nevertheless, I respected - and respect - you in a way I never could Rudd. I knew it was your strength that had held the organization together when the men's desperate egomania threatened to destroy you all. I could count on the fact that as women - and specifically as women fugitives - we shared certain experiences that could bring us closer together in outlook and feelings than would be possible with even the most sympathetic and sensitive man. Finally, whatever the risk, it seemed well worth it if I could give even one woman in our situation support that would help her stand up for herself, and for all women, against our oppression in a movement that puts our interests last. Encouragingly, my very first meeting with one of you was a wonderful experience for me, and I was much moved by the warm reception and attention this woman gave me and my politics, and the genuine respect that I felt from her as well as for her. (I suspect now, in the aftermath of other meetings, that this may have been partly because she was unprepared for the radical changes in my politics and therefore responded to me openly and honestly. The rest of you had, in advance of meeting me, already armored yourselves against revealing too much of your "personal problems" as women in a male organization.) For whatever reason, I was, as it turned out, all too ready to plunge into a dialogue in which I used my own skin as wallpaper while you sidestepped and evaded every issue.

Your resistance to discussing your personal experience, your trivializing of your own pain and suffering, your insistence that the oppression of others is more important than your own - these are part of the self-contempt that has been bred in all of us women, and I understand it as I understand myself. I can even deal with your more contrived evasions, the ones that were obviously developed only after years of building defenses against the threat that the Women's Movement seems to you. I can see why you over-looked security so that, apparently by chance, I ran into one more Weatherwoman than we had agreed I would meet during the brief time we were together, a woman who just "happened to be" rabidly anti-feminist. I know what advantage you saw in circulating a vicious, unfounded rumor about a well-known feminist and then asserting she herself was not to blame for her errors because the Women's Movement was responsible for her psychological destruction. I can understand too well the reasons for your flippant claim that it "bores" you to talk about men, a pathetic way to avoid admitting your oppression.

But the wall I cannot surmount is your insistence that if I really practiced sisterhood I wouldn't make demands on you in the name of feminism, but would respect your political path as equally valid to my own. You want me to accept your claim that you are no longer dominated by men, as you admit you were when you first joined Weatherman, as in fact we all are as long as we live under patriarchy. Yet in the same breath that you claim, "Women run the organization," you admit that of the five members of the Weatherman Central Committee, three are men. And you have no shame in telling me that one of these three is Bill Ayers, notorious for his callous treatment and abandonment of Diana Oughton before her death and for his generally fickle and high-handed treatment of women; and that another is Jeff Jones, who once told that dull-witted misogynist Robert Palmer that if I thought Weatherman was a male supremacist organization, I could "suck his dick." Or have Ayers and Jones now become feminists too - like Mark Rudd, who, after a year's leave to overcome his "arrogance and insensitivity" (which you won't even call by its true name: sexism) you are admitting back into the organization?

The politico-feminist split is a real one, one that will vanish as soon as we accept ourselves as women first of all, but which will continue to divide us until we share that consciousness. It is you leftists, you male-identified socialist and liberal and pacifist and Weather-sympathizing women, who try to deny any significant difference between male politics and feminist politics. "We're all just women," you say, and we are - but to you this is a phenomenon of the most peripheral possible interest, indeed it only seems to occur to you when under fire from feminists. As long as you are working politically with men, as long as you are letting men define your attitudes, behavior and standards, then we stand on opposite sides of a line all too visible to me in spite of your blindness to it, but which I know you too will see once you have crossed it. And to cross it you need do only one thing: let your own self-interest be your highest priority. I am not asking you to stop loving men, or to break all personal and emotional ties with the men who are important to you. I know that those ties are

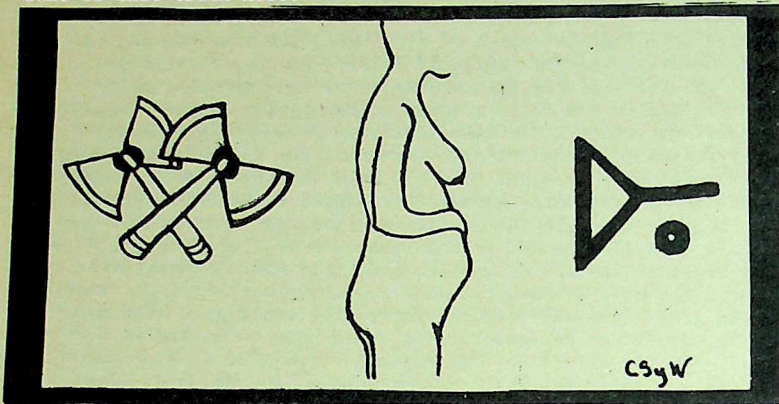
a woman?

june 22, 1973

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never broken out of a simplistic political decision but only when and if consciousness of oppression makes them so inconsistent with self-respect that they can no longer be borne. Even then it is with enormous pain and grief and in spite of an ever-reluctant part of ourselves that we separate from men we have cared for. I firmly believe that one can be a serious feminist and still live with and relate to a man and to men. The gulf that is between us is not that, but rather that you allow men to rule on your politics.

Believe me, I understand your side of it. I've been on that side - I've practically drowned on that side. Over a year ago I wrote an introduction to a book of the prison letters of Sam Melville, a man I loved and lived with who was killed in the Attica uprising of September 1971. I was already a feminist when I wrote that introduction and had theoretically rejected the politics that Melville had taught me and that he had lived and died for. Yet I had never found the courage or the words to tell him that while he lived, and especially while influenced by the powerful feelings that his murder aroused in me, I was incapable of writing the truth of his male supremacy - that underside of men's lives that only women know - in my eulogistic essay on his life. Since this is the last time I will ever write about him, I would like to tell some of that truth here.



I was very much pressured, against my own sense of tactics and timing, into playing the role I did in the group of radical bombers Melville half-led, half-dragged along with him. The pressure was of the kind peculiar and common to male-female relationships: he constantly threatened to leave me if I backed out. What he valued in me, besides having a dependable sexual partner and housekeeper, was what he took to be my "independence" and "self-sufficiency" - as he often told me. This made me useful to him as an ally, and further assured him that I had the quality he prized above all others in women: the capacity to love him devotedly, yet get along without him uncomplainingly whenever he chose to leave. The last letter I received from him exhorted me against writing narrowly-mindedly of loving and needing him, instead of writing about great social truths (the ones he was concerned with, that is). "To speak of love, especially love between one desperate man and woman, limits our vision and ties us to the past." Yet the same letter ends on an explicitly sexual note: "Yes, sweet bitch, I love you. And if they ever let me out and the wind is right, I'll find you." This was typical; he would never "degrade" himself by admitting love for a woman in any fashion not immediately tied to his sexual pleasure.

A few months before we were arrested, Sam began a secret affair with a woman friend of ours whom I hadn't seen in some time. In order to keep us from comparing notes on his behavior, he told her he was no longer living with me. He also at least hinted to her that the sabotage of military and corporate buildings around the city was the work of himself and friends. I discovered his betrayal only by the coincidence of having acquaintances in common with the other woman, acquaintances to whom she had repeated Sam's hints. To this day I don't know how many other dangerous, possibly fatal, violations of security his masculinist need to boast led him to commit.

Some will say Melville's sexism was extreme just as his politics were extreme. Yet I have seen his behavior duplicated in the most bourgeois households by males of all political persuasions, economic backgrounds, ages and skin colors. I never knew Sam to cook a meal for himself; he once wrote WASH ME in black magic marker on the side of the refrigerator as a cute reminder of my responsibilities; he threatened to leave me, and meant it, if I took up smoking cigarettes after having given them up to please him; he wouldn't allow our lease, our telephone, our utilities bill, our bank account or anything else we shared to be in his name on the ostensible grounds that he was delinquent with his income tax and didn't want to be found through public records. The real reason, it turned out, was that he didn't want his wife to find him and demand the child support he owed her and hadn't paid in years.

He was sexually impotent unless he could fantasize the woman he was with as a prostitute and she went along with his fantasy.

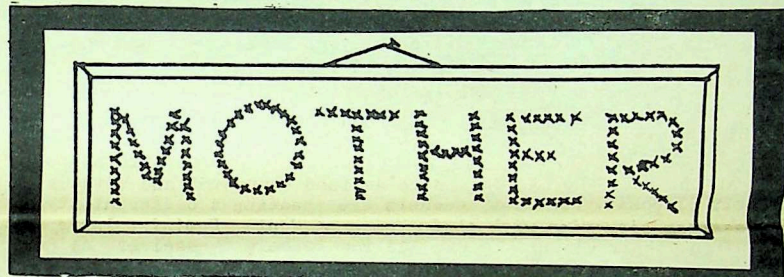
At one point Sam joined a political group headed by Rap Brown. This group's attitude toward women was bigotry itself: they didn't include any and they didn't intend to. According to Brown himself, as quoted by Melville, women would be "a distraction from serious business." When I confronted Sam on this, he seemed slightly embarrassed but wouldn't even commit himself to discussing male supremacy with his new idol, Rap Brown. Recalling this, I'm reminded ironically of the division of all-Black bomber pilots stationed out of Texas during World War II who, despite phenomenal sacrifices and heroism were forbidden the supposed privilege of being integrated with White battalions. How strange it is that not only the man I lived with but one of the most brilliant and sophisticated Black militants of the 1960's should turn out to have the same kind of crass ignorance about women.

And so, my sisters in Weatherman, you fast and organize and demonstrate for Attica. Don't send me news clippings about it, don't tell me how much those deaths moved you.

I will mourn the loss of 42 male supremacists no longer.

My first year underground was very hard. Expecting to die for the Revolution in a matter of months, I was unprepared to find myself not only alive but living a rather unadventurous and secluded existence less than a year after "disappearing." I found it increasingly difficult to get along with the friends with whom I was still in touch, especially with the men who were becoming increasingly overbearing and critical of my actions, as I was growing increasingly sensitive to their interference. Chafing at every restriction, hostile even to the one woman friend I really cared for, I finally decided to take off on my own, reasoning that it couldn't get much worse. I started to travel and for a few months just roamed, almost aimlessly, from one community to another across the country.

As I traveled, I slowly became aware that nothing was less relevant to the lives of most people in this country than the white left, with which I still identified myself. The leftist (and rightist, for that matter) distinctions between working class and ruling class, hippies and straight people, youth and Establishment, all seemed increasingly absurd to me. They seemed to determine nothing of certainty about anyone's attitude or political outlook. As I moved around I could see more clearly than ever the oppression of Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Indian peoples. Yet at the same time I was learning concretely that women existed in well-defined subcultures within each White and Third World community. Finally all my experiences kept reminding me of one fact of my own identity I was continually trying to forget: that I was a woman. Men, Third World and otherwise, young and old, hippie and straight, related to me as Woman, all my other interests or characteristics being, in me as Woman, mere modifications of that one essential. Whether I was desired, rejected, abused, admired, ignored, treated with kindness or hostility, it was basically because I was a female doing whatever it was I was doing. Women generally took their cue of how to relate to me from the way men related to me, or I to men. It occurred to me that this was no different from the way people I had known for years had related to me but because we had known each other well I had been aware of the subtleties in our relationships to the point of being blind to the underlying structure. Of course I had heard feminists express these perceptions before, and had even asserted them myself occasionally, but I had never internalized them. I now began to think that if my politics were to be based on my own situation and not on someone else's perception of reality, I would have to deal with the fact that the rest of the world thought of me as a woman first of all, before it even listened to what I had to say.



Together with these discoveries, I began to realize the astonishing impact the Women's Movement has had over the U.S. in just a few years. I could see women everywhere, White, Black, Brown, Indian, responding in their daily lives to the fact that some woman somewhere had said, "Men oppress us." I came to know Chicana women living in a barrio who were organizing women's health care programs and women's antirape squadrons to patrol their own neighborhood. A White woman, mother of three, from a poor Southern family and on welfare, talked to me with great eloquence about how she saw the courts, the police, the welfare system and her ex-husband as all part of the same male-run system, which women needed to take over and run for their own benefit. A woman I met who had been born into a wealthy and traditional Japanese family told me she was filing for divorce against a husband who physically and mentally abused her because she refused to go through life suffering from the same causes her mother and grandmother had before her. These women - all random examples - would not necessarily say or think that they were part of the Women's Movement. But they demonstrated by the Women's Movement has been more far-reaching than any public-opinion poll on Women's Liberation would seem to show. As for the World liberation but not Women's Liberation, I believe that this is true chiefly of a few women who are highly regarded by Third World male radicals and hence are considered newsworthy by the media. Among the majority of Third World women, it seems to me that the Women's Movement is spreading and its ideas are having increasing effect, just as among White women.

The turning point of my personal rapprochement with feminism came when, a year after I'd left New York as a fugitive, I joined a women's rap group composed of a half-dozen other women, of widely different economic backgrounds, ages and family situations, brought together only by our common desire - or desperate need - to talk with other women about our lives. No one in the group knew who I was, or that I was wanted on a federal warrant. I know, though, that they all sensed my unspoken inner turmoil (if not the specific causes of it) and in response gave me more positive emotional and intellectual support than I could have imagined possible from a group of strangers. They sustained me through the crisis I underwent after Melville's murder and the dramatic upheavals in my consciousness involved in that experience. Eventually, when a series of circumstances forced me to leave the area in which I'd come to know them, they gave me, as a group, the help and strength I needed to face yet another move into the unknown.

The process of the consciousness-raising group, for me and for the other women involved, was one in which we began to be able to define ourselves as individuals and as women. Some of us had previously conceived of ourselves as exceptional women, some of us thought being female necessarily meant being passive and dependent,

Responses to Jane Alpert by fine Iowa City Dukes follow this article.





and strongest in women, and as we begin to define ourselves as women, the qualities coming to the fore are the same ones a mother projects in the best kind of nurturing relationship to a child: empathy, intuitiveness, adaptability, awareness of growth as a process rather than as goal-ended, inventiveness, protective feelings towards others and a capacity to respond emotionally as well as rationally. If patriarchy means a society in which these are the qualities all human beings admire and strive to embody, a society in which the paradigm for all social relationships is the relationship of a healthy and secure mother to her child, then patriarchy means nothing less than the end of oppression.

Interestingly enough, the materialist analysis brings us to conclusions similar to the ones I have just set forth from an idealist standpoint. In the Marxist dialectical-materialist view of history, the "vanguard" of the "revolutionary class" is that group which is not only greatly exploited by the class in power but which is also performing labor essential to the functioning of society. The ruling class is thereby forced to respond to demands which it puts forth in the name of the oppressed. A third requirement is that the class be potentially collective; each member should not be severely isolated from every other. In classical Marxism, the "revolutionary vanguard" is composed of the "industrial proletariat" who must sell their labor to the capitalists in order to eat, whose labor is essential to industry and therefore to society, and whose work process is socialized. No revolution founded on Marxist principles has adhered to the classic pattern: in Russia the proletariat was a tiny minority with no influence at the time of the Bolshevik revolution, and Mao had to rewrite both Marx and Lenin to suit Chinese conditions, defining the peasantry as the "vanguard" in that context. The industrial proletariat in the U.S. today are a larger group than in either pre-revolutionary Russia or prerevolutionary China, but are not, by and large, an exploited one. Through unions they have acquired a significant share of power, and their right-wing views do not spring from "false class consciousness" but rather from a hard-nosed sense of their own self-interest. Taken alone, Third World male industrial workers are much less privileged, and women in industry are the most exploited of all of these in respect to both wages and working conditions; but these very divisions of the "proletariat" show the obstacles to its solidarity more pointedly than anything else. However, if, with Firestone, we transfer our focus from economics to sex, that is, from production to reproduction, the Marxist terminology itself begins to make more sense. For there is very clearly a large group of women who by reason both of exploitation and importance to the society perfectly answer the requirements of the vanguard, and who are increasingly closely in touch with one another. These women are, of course, mothers.

Mothers live by their labor yet generally without standardized wages. If they have husbands who earn good money and are generous, they are amply supplied - but only as long as they can keep their husbands. Otherwise, they have little or nothing outside the necessities and whatever they do have goes to their children first. The only mothers who do earn a standard wage for the labor of child-rearing are those on welfare, and that pay is barely enough to sustain life. The job is without guarantees of security of any kind. Its workday is twenty-four hours, workweek seven days, no vacations, no holidays. Total dedication to the job is expected, and yet a woman who works "only" in the home is regarded, with some contempt, as an unemployed housewife. Women with children are the women who most frequently suffer from fatigue, headaches, listlessness, depression, insomnia, digestive disorders, loss of energy, nervous tension and other illnesses common to women. If the women who work in factories were all replaced by men, it would represent some economic cost to industry but no alteration in the power structure or the basic assumptions of society concerning sex and class roles. The labor of these same women in the home, however - and of all women who work at child-rearing, whether of their own children, adopted children or someone else's children for wages - cannot be replaced on a mass scale without cataclysmic changes in the social structure.

Mothers are a distinctly defined group. Nevertheless, their interests as a group are in no way opposed to the interests of women as a whole, but are rather intimately linked with these. For motherhood itself is only the concrete expression of that potential which defines all women. Accordingly the domestic situation of women underlies the way we are treated on the job market. But the point of Mother Right is to reshape the family according to the perceptions of women, and to reshape the society in the image of this new matriarchal family. Because motherhood cuts across economic class, race and sexual preference, a society in which women were powerful by virtue of being mothers would not be divided along any of these lines. Nor would any new division between women, such as between mothers and childless women, arise, because the root of motherhood and the root of female consciousness are, I believe, the same.

Returning to my personal experience again, my self-interest in changing society is bound up with that of women who have children much more deeply than it is, for example, with women demanding equal pay for equal work, despite the fact that I am single, childless and must work to support myself. If I had to sum up in a few words what I feel to be my own oppression in this society, I would say, "The enormous economic, social and psychological obstacles against bearing and raising children of my own." While my situation as a fugitive seems to all but eliminate any hope that I might raise a child of my own, even these unusual circumstances are only slightly more handicapping than those any other woman faces when contemplating motherhood without marriage, or at least a stable relationship to a man. These obstacles and the tools to overcome them are beginning to be studied and developed by many different women, notably by Lesbians who have or want to have children. The oppression suffered by women whose sexual preference is for other women is peculiar to patriarchy, it seems to me, and would be eliminated as soon as women cease to be pawns in male power games. If Mother Right were the informing principle of society, it would make

no difference whether a woman lived with men or women, let alone with whom she slept. A woman would be powerful and respected simply as a woman, and particularly esteemed as a mother, regardless of whom she lived with. For far from being in a position to exploit a woman because she chose to live and/or sleep with other women, a man would consider himself fortunate if a woman only chose to live and/or sleep with him.

The conditions of life in the patriarchy are such that the overwhelming majority of women in the foreseeable future will continue to marry and raise children and to regard that role as the central one in their lives. This majority includes millions of women who also have jobs outside their homes. The Women's Movement is their movement not only because they are a majority, but because feminist consciousness springs directly from the role they play in society. Many segments of the Women's Movement are now beginning to implicitly recognize this truth and act upon it. N.O.W. is making a major push to speak to the needs of housewives by agitating for an end to discrimination against married women by banks, insurance companies and credit unions. Radical feminists are demanding less that women leave men, and suggesting that it might be more effective in building a revolutionary base if women instead move to become heads of their families. Outside the consciously political segment of the Women's Movement, housewives are beginning to unite and to agitate for their common interests, starting with lower food prices. More mothers are expressing their dissatisfactions and talking about their problems, while not necessarily seeing these as related to the Women's Movement; more women within the Movement are beginning to experience their feelings as mothers as feelings which are integral to their identities as women. Demands relating to jobs, professional opportunities and electoral representation will continue to be important, partly because the unequal treatment of women in these areas makes people aware of women's overall inferior status, and partly because increasing numbers of women want and need to support themselves with jobs outside the home. But the Women's Movement must, and will, begin to focus on those demands which relate concretely to women's role in child-rearing. These more radical-feminist demands include: wages for all women engaged in child-rearing; paid holidays and vacations; collective child-care centers controlled by mothers with the participation of all members of the community, including fathers, older children and childless adults; laboratories and research facilities to be turned over to feminist scientists so that research into contraception, fertility, pregnancy and birth can be conducted in women's interests; hospital and outpatient facilities related to women's health to be run and staffed by women; self-help clinics, financed by the government but under community control; artificial insemination, sterilization procedures, facilities for extra-uterine birth, and related technology to be made widely available. Technology is a powerful tool which will free us to bear and raise our children in our own way at our own time. It must be turned over to women now, in order to prevent its becoming an even more powerful weapon against us and indeed against all life.

It is the uprising of women which will presage the end of oppression, but this uprising must be based on more than opposition to oppression and the definition of Woman as Other. It must be an affirmation of the power of female consciousness, of the Mother. The changes which it will embody can perhaps be better imagined as primarily spiritual and religious, rather than economic and social, though they will include and embody the latter. Thus a more apt analogy than the Cuban or Chinese revolutions might be the Reformation or the Christian revolution, or perhaps the revolution made by the patriarchy itself when the ancient gynocracies were invaded. I use these analogies because in each of these cases the economic and political changes were enormous, but they followed rather than preceded sweeping changes in human consciousness. The ripples spread through the institutions from the masses of people, rather than the other way around.

These were not, and never will be, gentle ripples. The oppressor is equipped with the tools of mechanized violence as never before; we are only beginning to reclaim the ancient rage that will defeat his evil. Feminism is teaching us, again, the healing power of anger trained on the true enemies of ourselves and our children, and our anger will supply us the resources we will need against the Man's weapons. Yet, from another point of view, we may remind ourselves that the violence of this cataclysm is no more nor less than the outward sign of a struggle of the human spirit. It seems very significant to me that simultaneously with the contemporary rise of feminism, there is a great rise of interest in psychic and spiritual phenomena. Because the Women's Movement gets lumped with the left in many people's minds, it is mistakenly regarded as narrowly "political." Yet feminism concerns more than political power, essential as that is. It is closely tied to theories of awakening consciousness, of creation and rebirth and of the essential oneness of the universe - teachings which lie at the heart of all Goddess-worshipping religions.

We are on the threshold of what all the ancient wisdoms, many of them handed down from matriarchal times, teach is a new age of consciousness and simultaneously on what seems scientifically to be a threshold in the evolution of the species, as the genetic code is broken and life produced in the laboratory. Could it not be that just at the moment masculinity has brought us to the brink of nuclear destruction or ecological suicide, women are beginning to rise in response to the Mother's call to save Her planet and create instead the next stage of evolution? Can our revolution mean anything else than the reversion of social and economic control to Her representatives among womankind, and the resumption of Her worship on the face of the Earth? Do we dare demand less?

Jane Alpert



# ...more letters to Jane...

dear jane,

I don't know how exactly to respond to your theory of mother right as the basis for feminist revolution. I find it to be something I very much disagree with and with increasing intensity each time I read your letter, but it is hard for me to sort out where that feeling is coming from--whether it comes from personally being fucked over by mother right or from real revulsion at the idea of motherhood being so glorified. Probably, it comes from both.

I think what hits me most about your article is its inherent heterosexuality and of the picture it paints of a post-feminist revolutionary society which gives little or no indication of not being the same entrenched heterosexual world. I think at the basis of your theory of mother right is the assumption that women are heterosexual beings. Obviously, motherhood, at least for now (and you give little indication and/or support of development of artificial reproduction techniques that can free women from their biology) implies that at some point in time in a women's life she was fucking with a man. By saying that the basis of a women's powers and the source of feminist revolution is the capacity for motherhood, you are inextricably linking women to men in this society, in any revolutionary struggle, and in the future society of matriarchy that you envision. I think such a theory comes out of your belief "that one can be a serious feminist and still live with and relate to a man and to men", a notion which I reject as totally contradictory and which I hope you will come some day to reject too. I am linking your notion of mother right so strongly with heterosexuality because you talk of motherhood in a future matriarchial society as coming from where it has come from now and in the past--through fucking with men. The change in reproduction methods brought on by technology that you only vaguely refer to, means, at least to me, the possibility of an essentially motherless and fatherless society; that men and women would play an equal role, or perhaps even no role, in the creation of a human being and that society would collectively be responsible for the embryonic development and upon birth, the nurturing and raising of the child.

Another sort of major disagreement I have with your letter is that the whole idea of motherhood and the values of motherhood as you see them--protectiveness, intuitiveness, adaptability--sort of makes my stomach turn. I do not feel and cannot relate to my oppression as a woman in this society as being one of an inability to raise children. Rather, I feel my oppression at

least partially as being because of that ability and my attempts to reject the glorification of motherhood that is foisted on me everywhere and now even with the women's movement. Where does your idea of motherhood as the moving force of the revolution leave women, particularly lesbians, who cannot fit into the role of mother--who both emotionally and intellectually abhor the thought of bearing and raising children? Where is our place in this new society?

I want to say something too about the importance of women's history. The knowledge of the position of women in ancient matriarchial cultures I find very exciting because it gives me a sense of a history of women as being strong and powerful and controlling--how I envision women in a future society. I think this knowledge is very important in building a women's movement because it gives women a sense of where we have come from. What scares me about books like *The First Sex* is the reaction to it--that feminists are turning to the concept of matriarchy as being the new vision or goal of feminist revolution. I think it is a mistake and even reactionary to transform the basis of ancient women controlled societies to that of post revolutionary society of the twentieth or 21st century or whenever and to see the same source of power in ancient cultures as being the source of women's power today. It scares me because it is coming dangerously close to accepting values which have been the source of women's oppression for thousands of years and at a time in which we are on the very brink of being able to do away with that very fact which has oppressed women for so many years--our ability to bear children. It is that which you idealize and which I reject. I want to live in a society in which women are totally free to determine their lives. I don't want a society in which I am a mother, in actuality or not, first.

These are some of my thoughts on your article, Jane. I hope they are of some help to you in thinking out your ideas. Take care of yourself.

In sisterhood and struggle, B.

\* \* \* \* \*

MS FIRE

When the rage spreads above my eyelids  
in that debilitating form  
for awhile I don't recognize that  
weeping is the last turn inward for my heat.  
I forget that it has crept by then  
from my community to myself  
without burning even the fingers  
of those who are the cause of it.

It isn't the tears so much I mind,  
but the fact that not long ago  
when anger against the women  
with whom I work and sleep  
was hotter than anger against the cop-callers,  
queer-baiters and fuckers of every description,  
I flared at the careless word of a friend.

In a cold spring night I fumbled,  
Learning finally that if I loosen the teeth of a malicious woman  
or if I choke, until her eyes pop,  
the neck of a slippery-mouthed woman,  
I hurt them for our mutual enemies;  
learning that if I smoulder into a night that burns back  
because of a woman I love,  
the cop-callers, queer-baiters and fuckers of every description  
gather in soft victories.

And so this spring, almost this very day  
I kicked the first fucker who passed on that street  
and before I was finished  
I knew what I needed to know.

April 1973  
Iowa City



The fat lesbian bitches  
ugly lesbian whores  
filthy bull dykes  
who fight to clear a living space  
that all women will occupy  
are freeing us  
from the touches and pokes,  
the small indignities  
we suffered as girls.

Young women will no longer sulk  
when little boys pull their hair  
or smile when bigger boys  
pinch their asses.  
They will not make the mistake  
of thinking nuisances will go away  
if they are ignored.

On your own street  
if you do not know  
on whose head to bring down  
a tire iron,  
if you do not, if you cannot  
stand with the fat ugly filthy  
whores and lesbians  
who are drawing overdue blood  
then defend them  
against the mind bending that  
tries to discredit them  
for taking offense where  
offense was intended.

When even small lines are drawn  
give praise to women  
who are clearing ground  
on which we will all live.

June 1972  
Iowa City

Dear Jane Alpert,

One of the claims that your letter makes is that mother right cuts across many important lines, including sex preference. Obviously there are lesbians who have children, some who want to have children, some who long for them if only the world wasn't the way it is, and some who do not now and never have wanted children. I am a woman from the last group, and I want to try to tell you why your analysis is offensive to me and why I think it is incorrect in general.

The religious fervor of mother right as described in your letter sounds no different to me than the ruling class propaganda about the myth of motherhood. It takes the ideology which grows out of "biology is destiny" and attempts to glorify it into "biology is power". That is my first gripe. It has a familiar ring--all women want to be mothers, or should be mothers, or failing to respond to all hints, are at least capable of being mothers. You could as well and as truly argue that all women are potentially lesbians. Maternal function and sex preference are both descriptions that limit possibilities for women, especially when you are talking about a post-revolutionary vision. At present your analysis neglects to mention the enormous complications that mother right presents regarding institutionalized heterosexuality, men and male children.

It is idealistic to talk about methods of impregnation without men before women have seized power. I am stunned by your statement that "Radical feminists are demanding less that women leave men, and suggesting that it might be more effective in building a revolutionary base if women instead move to become the heads of their families." (p. 22) Further, the demands that you enumerate, about wages, vacations, holidays, research facilities, hospitals and clinics "financed by the government" no less, are idle dreams. In this country

Dear Jane,

There are many things in your article that disturb me and make me angry. As I read it, I question these areas of your thought: your concept of revolution, your concept of children, and your concept of womanhood.

To start with the last one first, it is probably obvious that I would have to disagree with you about your projected concept of womanhood because you evidently are still straight and I am a Dyke. There are subterranean hints in your article that indicate a sympathy toward lesbians, and maybe you are moving toward that place yourself, just as you moved from old left heterosexuality to radical feminist (heterosexuality? celibacy? I don't want to guess or try to define you without more words from you). The most glaring example of our differences arises out of your definition of feminist culture's base: "...feminist culture is based on what is best and strongest in women, and as we begin to define ourselves as women, the qualities coming to the fore are the same ones a mother projects in the best kind of nurturing relationship to a child." I would agree with the "based on what is best and strongest in women" part, but as for the rest I strongly take exception. To use as a prototype a mother/child relationship, even the best kind as you describe it, is miles from my experience of valuable relationships with women. As I see it, the only working definition of "best kind" that we can come up with in this society (including counter-culture living arrangements of all kinds) is still distant, powerful, one-sided and oblivious to the deep struggle/love mutuality that can exist between women. Because you rely on the mother/child relationship as basic you have to take into account the necessary age difference that also exists, and I think it is safe to say that we haven't been able to even begin to bridge the age differences and chauvinism that exist in social relationships today. If you mean some kind of post-revolutionary vision of a mother/child relationship, I still think you are misguided because I seriously question whether post-revolutionary conditions will even embody a mother/child relationship as we think of it now. Later in that same paragraph you say: "the paradigm for all social relationships (will be) the relationship of a healthy and secure mother to her child." I contend that "healthy and secure" in your statement can only mean some kind of psychological prescription that is already part of the idealistic status quo. (In fact, it sounds a lot like Freud.)

That last quote also brings me to my second point about our differences. What is your concept of children? As reflected in your article (and you don't discuss it, so I can only infer from your usage of words and discussion of motherhood and Mother Right), I would say that you assume something of a children-as-property attitude toward young people. You use the phrase "a healthy and secure mother to her child" in the paragraph I mentioned above. To me this whole idea is one we have to work against, as we do the concept of the nuclear family, even with the mother as the only nucleus. I don't believe biological mothers should be the pivot point for their biological child's upbringing, and to predicate a theory for revolutionary change on that notion is, I think, a dangerous one. You also say that in your analysis, the source of your personal oppression (do you generalize this?) is: "the enormous economic, social and psychological obstacles against bearing and raising children of (your) own." Here again, the mother is defined

white ruling class males are not going to give us anything we ask for or turn over to us anything we demand. Because we will have to take by force the space to build our world, it is cruel and impractical to encourage white middle class females--who I believe are most susceptible to mother right, especially the way you argue for it (religion, anthropology, scholarship, science)--to bear children. Since mothers as a class, because of their proximity to men and their vested interest in their male children, will not be the ones to take by force the necessary space, it strikes me as unlikely that the mother-child relationship will serve as a useful model in a post-revolutionary society.

In spite of your attempt to apply a materialist buttress the article unsettles me by its individualistic approach that often tends to be insensitive or indifferent to class differences. (pp12-13 for starters). I also feel that what you say about the "few options for meaningful participation" available to childless women that aren't available to mothers points up a big gap in our experiences. First it is clear you are not talking about lower class women with or without children. Second women without men and without children are outside of "meaningful participation". Women who make it in this pig pen generally do so after they pay their dues as wives and mothers. This apparent difference in our experiences is also the reason I am completely baffled by your statement about what you feel to be your own oppression in this society. Bearing and raising children is like being a Black who worked in the master's house--no picnic to be sure (though even there you are talking about the pressures that keep you from choosing that), while some of us have been in the field all our lives.

It seems to me a little off handed to say that "If Mother Right were the informing principle of society..." sexual preferences wouldn't matter because "A woman would be powerful and respected simply as a woman, and particularly esteemed as a mother." (p. 21) So all a person like me would have to do in order to have full access to all channels of power (I assume some power is connected to being "esteemed") is to voluntarily, after seeing its obvious advantages, become a mother. Thanks anyhow, but I'll stay in the field. What you're telling me is exactly what Big Daddy told me; Big Mommie's version is just as oppressive and it does not take into account what must be done.

I have a kind of nightmare of the ruling class holding their breath to see if feminists are now going to voluntarily take themselves out of the public hair by opting into an exploitive dynamic that will return to them just enough crumbs of privilege, especially if they have sons, that they will not know how to fight after their fifteen or twenty years of service to the status quo. The way I see it Mother Right analysis attempts to reform Motherhood ideology without dealing with the structures that oppress women without children, except to umbrella them as potential mothers, and without dealing with the structures that make the oppression of women with children necessary in a capitalist society.

## in Sisterhood

as having power and control over the biological child. I know it is shit to have kids in this society, for all the reasons that were pointed out to you by the women you met while travelling around the country. But you are not having kids because you have the power to decide not to put up with that shit, and for that you should only be thankful. If you aren't, then I agree with another writer that you are a victim of the glorification of motherhood myth.

Finally, I question the concept of revolution as suggested in your letter. First, it is only suggested, and aside from a couple of references to violent struggle your strategy seems to lie in basically reformist tactics -- change (by demand) the center of the nuclear family, magically take over scientific research and practice, etc. The system will kill us before anything happens if we rely on that route. Your analogy at the end of your article to the Reformation, rather than the Chinese or Cuban revolutions, as being the process we should think of is again, I think, wrongheaded. (I don't know what you mean by the Christian revolution, and I'm not arguing that the Chinese or Cuban revolutions can give us a pattern either because they were male-dominated.) But you say that the change in consciousness predated the changes in economic and social organization, and will in our struggle too. I can only conjecture about the changes in consciousness that men went through before they smashed the gynocracies that probably existed in prehistory, but I doubt that they came first. As they got more power, they became more piggy, and on and on until the whole shit pile that exists today evolved. But I don't need conjecture to contradict you; both you and I are good examples of the ways our material conditions changed our consciousnesses. It wasn't until you began living in a culture that contained ideas about women's liberation and radical feminism that you were able to deny and contradict the lip service that you were paying to the male left even when you knew it was a sham, as you describe in the account you gave of your distrust of Sam Melville that you submerged when you wrote the introduction to the edition of his prison letters. My example is that I have been having gay relationships since I was 19, ten years ago, but I lived heterosexually in society, even got married, while I was having that constant gay experience, because everything around me reinforced the heterosexual society and the only lesbian I knew was my lover. It wasn't until I met a lot of other Dykes and saw that the life-style I was submerging was correct and good that I had the strength to quit the heterosexual world. And I don't think the rest of society is all that different from you and me in that sense...except that they may realize a whole lot quicker than us because of our various privileges that stand or stood in the way of our perception of our self-interest.

Love in the struggle,  
Martha, from the AIAW collective

## and struggle.

June 22, 1973

page 11

A Woman?

# RAPE

RAPE is an act of aggression in which the victim is denied her self determination. It is an act of violence which always carries with it the threat of death. And finally, rape, is a form of mass terrorism, for the victims of rape are chosen indiscriminately, but our male dominated culture tells us that it is women who cause rape by being immoral or in the wrong place at the wrong time-- in essence, by behaving as though we were free.

(VIETNAM: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS (A.I.A.W. - August 18, 1972)

A 24-hour Rape Crisis Line is being started in Iowa City. We are in need of volunteers to help staff the line. Women involved in the Rape Crisis Line will give information to women about police and hospital procedures, provide transportation, and accompany the woman to those places if she wishes. Any woman who is harrassed by a man in Iowa City can also phone for assistance. This is an independent woman's support group and all information and names will be kept confidential. Weekly meetings are held at the Women's Center, 3 E. Market, every Wednesday night at 7:30p.m. Any woman interested in volunteering may come to the meetings. For more information call 353-6265.

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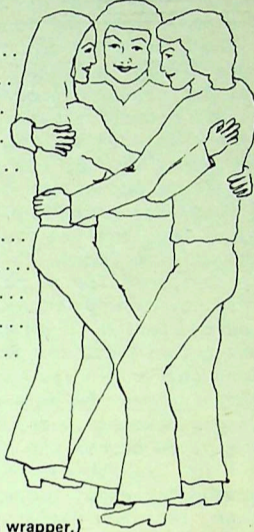
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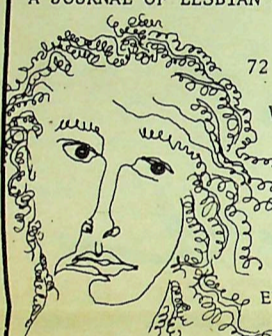
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El otro día me daba cuento de que soy latina. Mi papa es cubano y mi madre es americana y ellos me daban un nombre anglo. He cambiado mi nombre a Rosa y estoy tratando de descubrir mi lengua y mis origenes. Quiero comunicar con unas mujeres homosexuales o feministas latinas o chicanas. Qualquier mujer que quiere escribirme en español lo lebe hacer. Estoy sola en mi lucha. Escribame, Rosa, a No Soy Una Mujer? Box ]]69, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.