

FEMALE LIBERATION NEWSLETTER

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This newsletter is composed of articles and thoughts of women in the Boston Area. We hope all of you will feel free to contribute, criticize, and work with us on future issues.

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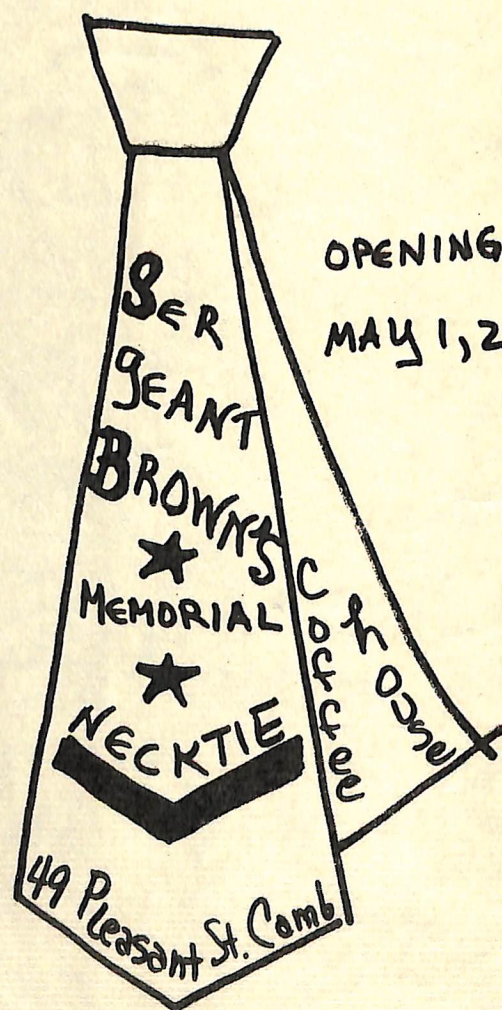
ANNOUNCING



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SOME AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS, OR: A CASE IN POINT

This is an excerpt from a longer article by
Ellen Cantarow entitled "Rage: A Definition in
Three Parts for Women's and Men's Liberation"

Growing up I may have been more fortunate than most little girls, since my mother had a profession. She didn't just wash pots. My father, too, respected her for her real talents--a fine wit and an extraordinary sympathetic intelligence. And yet our lives were shaped by two predominating facts; first, that my mother's work was understood to be a sort of high-quality diversion, and that my father's was really the work that counted--second, that my father and me were the real centers of my mother's life. This was because - for reasons I will never quite understand - my mother was terribly unsure of herself, distrusted her perfectly good mind and imagination and - albeit with frequent humor - was continually self deprecating.

Spasms of rage flooded me even as a small child. My mother's hand trembled when she brushed my hair; I was six. The routine of hair-brushing was continually infuriating-- I can remember the tense rage, which I was unable to understand or to express-- fury at an abundance of overpowering love, and at the uncertainty my mother felt at imposing her will upon me in any way, even to the trivial matter of making me stand still while she brushed my hair. The uncertainty was, most profoundly, that she had any will at all. And this communicated itself to me, potently, inspiring a certain contempt, and fear. For it defined me: I, too, was a girl, and would grow up to be a lady like my mother.

I defied that: I cut off my hair. I also learned how to pee standing up, an accomplishment I preformed with grand vindication, and out of defiance at the world for foisting upon me the definition of limited being: a timid, crouching animal in skirts. Thus, I negated, for a while, the arbitrary yet malevolent conjunction of x chromosomes that had made me what I was. I wore torn blue jeans and high black sneakers and walked with a swagger. I played football and climbed trees- this without defiance but simply from lack of inclination- found dolls intollerably boring.

I remember the day when I told my father: "Don't call me Ellen; I'm Ellis." There also came the morning when I quite deliberately threw away my jeans and put on a dress- (Today my father remarks, putting a cliché that places a rather wrong emphasis on the whole scene: "I never had a worry about you; you were always clothes conscious, you were always a real girl.") That afternoon I said to Andy Geddes, who came habitually and daily to my house to fetch me to play football: "I am not going to play football anymore. I am now a girl." "Gee whiz!" said Andy, his eyes widening in disbelief, "You really mean that?" He was awed, cowed: I had defeated his expectations. I don't know whether many little girls go through this business; probably I represent an exaggeration of the usual disease. But defeating expectations was through out my life until a year or so after college, a constant pattern. By turns I accepted the rejected roles society expected me to fill; when I accepted them, however, I subtly turned the tables- as in my announcement to Andy- exploiting them for their shock value. When I was "a girl", in the world's definition of that, I was "a girl" with vengeance and a twist. "You are thus and such," said the world. "Oh no I'm not," said I, or at least not in the way you think I am... Notice that this pattern is common not as a sexual trait, but is observable rather in people whose societies oppress them by means of stereotyped images of what they are expected to be. Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man includes in its last chapters a character named Rinehart. Rinehart is a figure from the ghetto: con man, lover of women, pimp, numbers racketeer, preacher, and black. He is both rind and heart; both appearance and the real thing, a master of disguises and identities as well.

This sort of double vision- realizing the world's expectations of you but cheating on them- doesn't really work outside of fiction. (And in fact it may not have worked for Rinehart; his symbolic name points more to ambiguities than to certainties). I can testify to this fact, anyway. There were basic and inalterable realities: I couldn't defy my mother's worship of my father--he was all knowing, calm, balanced in sure decisions. With the most innocent of gestures, a humorous curve of the lips, a mild wave downward of the hand--oh! ever so slightly, so mildly deprecating! He could reduce my mother in the expression of an opinion to coy confusion, to a charming gambit of childlike jokes, nonsense rhymes made off the cuff to deflect the humiliation of the moment. We all laughed, and the moment passed. I was left, however, with the sure knowledge that I must prove myself perfect in mind and understanding, that I might turn to my father and be admired for what I was--for what my mother wasn't.

WOMEN'S DETENTION²

in Greenwich Village,
the shops filled with girls' long hair,
where our class turns on,
is a square of freedom,
pastry, policemen, and costumes

from the huge jail above it
screams cross through the traffic,
the sainthood of my other sisters
driven off their streets

I, too, in my home town
loiter where I feel natural
and my sex gets picked up also
by radar--balls of a cop

they smoke under new signs
put up always for me,
stare until they have me wanton,
and warn me of some man with a gun

if we scream that we are pure of heart
they only come better

BY WENDY TOWNER

Rage continued...

Adolescence: occasional bursts of almost frenzied rage--I screamed at my mother. My hostility emerged. I was either harshly silenced, or told mildly that I "was going through a stage," at the end of which I would be "a woman". My emotion was sexualized and rationalized, boxed, wrapped, packaged and dispatched by the arbiters of my being--parents, teachers, the world of adults. There was no justification for my anger but a lot of hormones set loose in a process at the end of which was: Marriage and Family. To be sure, such a goal is not in itself intrinsically either good or bad, but merely a goal. By itself, however, with an understanding that it is the requisite for self-definition, it becomes destructive of the possibilities of freer self-exploration.

On the horns of a dilemma that could be formulated in the following way- intellect= masculinity, sexuality=femininity- I excelled at school. I won prizes. ("You take after your father," I was told by my mother.) I went to college. I won A's with a vengeance. I mastered methodologies and was rewarded with a Phi Beta Kappa key which my mother wore on a charm bracelet with my father's keys. In short: I had succeeded both in the eyes of my family and in the eyes of the world. And yet I was angry: angry that I hadn't thought my own thoughts, written my own writings, done my own work. Angry that I was caught coming and going, since, had I done things in a more explorative way, methodologies would have provided no key to real thought or feeling, A's wouldn't have come my way, jobs would then be hard to come by, and the only course open to me would be: Marriage and a Family.

We-I and my girlfriends-were all, in growing up, defined in some way or other by sexuality. Told in various ways-by our schools, by our parents, by the media-that our destiny was shaped by our biological makeup, we set about excelling at means to the end. Spin the bottle, flashlight, all those sex games one played in the fifties, were set-ups for mutual exploitation. We saw each other as objects: in lust, at times in hostility, we practised techniques on each other. This is not to say that I had no real male companions, but that the pressures of role definition by sex pre-dominated in such a way as to encourage us to objectify each other. Teenaged girls today, I am told, learn about birth control--so, OK- "cock teaser" isn't a phrase as frequently used as before, perhaps. Are girls, then more "honest", more "sincere", more human for that? And if so, for whose sake? Certainly not for their own, since achieving full humanity includes more than sexual identity. Having a diaphragm permits you to screw in freedom, but that freedom represents a confirmation of the sexual role society decrees as woman's essence, not a liberation from it. And until much more happens can liberal tinkering with prevailing notions of sexuality, this will remain our fate.

FUNCTIONS OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MALE CHAUVINISM

by Fran Ansley

We have all talked a lot about the material oppression of women in our society, and about the accompanying chauvinist ideology which is spread and maintained through our various socializing institutions. I have been trying recently to think about some of the functions which that sexual caste system performs for a capitalist society and in this paper I want to talk briefly about what I think some of those functions are. On the one hand, it seems to me that chauvinist attitudes have a psychological impetus and momentum of their own (just as a racist ideology has), which persist irrationally and beyond the original conditions which produced them. On the other hand, I think that the ruling classes of capitalist societies continue today to have a real and material need to keep women in an inferior and exploited position, and in fact their efforts to do that have increased rather than decreased in certain areas. Here are some of the ways I think the system uses us, then:

1) First, female oppression can simply yield a higher rate of exploitation. Obviously, if you can keep women in a special position, you can pay them less for their labor. This works in two ways:

- a) Different pay for the same work.
- b) The assigning of menial tasks to women. (A much lower pay scale for menial work is possible if those who must do it are different--sexually, racially, ethnically--from the rest of the work force. The inequity is somewhat disguised.)

2) To expand a little on the last point, this is a great way to keep the working class (or middle-class students, for that matter) divided and crippled.

- a) Working men often fail to see their non-working wives as important allies in their fight. (e.g., Salt of the Earth, a flick everyone should see if she hasn't already.)
- b) Working men fail to see working women as equal members of trade union battles, or as sisters worthy of defense. (Just as white workers often fail to recognize or fight for the grievances of black workers in their shop.) Then, predictably enough, the women (like black workers) often end up resenting the male workers more than they do the boss. A friend of mine who works in the same goddam non-union shop as her husband writes:
"Well, Fran, this plant sure likes to run things their way. Eli and all the men got a weeks paid vacation and Christmas bonus, but I didn't. Do you know why? Because I am a woman...They have the women and men fighting each other as who is going to get the most pay."

3) By keeping women in the home as housewives and babysitters, a great deal of needed tasks get done for free, that is, these jobs and the labor which performs them are kept off the market. Concomitantly, the household workers are kept atomized and isolated. Objectively speaking, of course, this form of organization is irrational and tremendously wasteful of human energies (more wasteful, even, it may be than in any primitive societies, where more of these tasks are accomplished collectively). But in terms of profit and control, I think it may be that this essentially anarchistic and individualized arrangement works out better for the ruling class.

4) Women serve as a really handy and sizeable part of the reserve army of the unemployed. Their most convenient feature is their adaptability: when they are unemployed they are completely invisible. Whenever they are not needed on the labor market, they are quietly absorbed back into the anarchic household structure I described before (that is, as long as they are attached to a nuclear family--which is, therefore, very important). But in times of emergency (e.g., World War II), they can be called into the factories, while temporary alternate arrangements are made for child care and house-keeping tasks. (In fact, during World War II for the first time American women were taught that their menstrual periods didn't have to immobilize them several days a month. They were given exercises, etc., so they could work in the munitions plants.

Male Chauvinism continued...

Of course, there had been working women all along who either found this our for themselves the hard way, or suffered.)

As part of this general strategy, women are kept in a marginal and precarious position in the hired work force. They are often fired first. ("They don't have to support a family"). They are often encouraged or forced to accept part-time rather than full-time work (with no fringe benefits, of course). This arrangement guarantees a certain helpful fluidity in the labor force for the men who hire and fire.

5) Women serve as consumers, too, and the preservation of traditional sex-role differences helps boost domestic consumption. This function becomes increasingly important as the capitalist economy advances and suffers a growing pressure to find new markets.

a) Sex differentiation in consumer products can help increase consumption (e.g., perfume, shampoo, deodorant, cigarettes, razors, must be bought twice by most couples). People of both sexes are encouraged to elaborate their differences externally in stereotyped, sex-linked ways, through consumer goods.

b) In an automating society with a surplus of consumer goods, large numbers of women are off the job market and responsible primarily only for household chores-chores which have been rendered less exhausting and sometimes shorter by technological changes. With increased leisure time, these women are good targets for advertising. Concomitantly, in an effort to stave off boredom and the feelings of uselessness which result from this diminished and paltry responsibility, women (in proportion to their income level) eagerly seek and acquire appliances and products which will complicate, elaborate, and glamorize the household chores they've been left with. It is easy to see how an ideology of woman's place is in the home helps to perpetuate and support these patterns of wasteful and frustrated-but profitable--consumption. Women who do work part or full time, feel pressured into these same consumption patterns precisely to prove that they are still adequate as women in the home.

c) Women consume in their role as sex-object as well as in that of homemaker. I think one of the main reasons for the increasing stress on achieving and maintaining traditional "femininity" is the increased consumption this stress produces. (You are not born being a woman--you achieve it--if you can afford the price.) Many industries have a concrete stake in increasing female narcissism and neurosis, in intensifying women's anxiety and absorption with their own appearance. To liberate women from this mind-set would be to destroy the market for a growing sector of the economy.

6) Perhaps another way that women as a group prove useful in capitalist society is in their function as symbol for the society at large. I see two main ways this happens.

a) It seems to me that increasingly people are urged to release their creative energies in asocial and privatized ways, and that in fact the primary way which is suggested, allowed, and encouraged is simply that of fucking. This narrowing and channeling of drives, what Marcuse calls "repressive desublimation of libido," focuses in on the bare sexual fact, and allows people to attain satisfaction, and release of potentially rebellious energies and emotions through a harmless and individualized outlet. Now the image of Woman becomes an important tool in the process of this energy-channeling. If you are going to leech all the criticism and challenge out of the environment and out of general human activity, and then satiate those drives in the straight-out fuck, you need more than ever a repository and a single symbol for that focused energy to move toward. That repository is the woman-as-cunt.

An important side-effect of this process, and one which Marcuse fails to deal with, I think, is the difference between men's and women's experiences of what is going on. The people who control and direct the means for this narrowing of focus are men. They conceive of women solely as sexually felt, never as sexually feeling. Therefore, it is only the female body which is portrayed as sex symbol. (Who would want to look at a man that way anyhow? Only a queer.) This means in turn that women's sexuality is often encouraged to turn back upon itself in the form of narcissism--naturally, because the only sex-objects women are shown are images of themselves. (If women helped direct that process and introduced suggestive, dehumanized pictures of men, the process would

Male Chauvinism continued...

still be repressive and lousy. But my point is that women get an especially raw deal in the situation as it now stands.)

b) The second way I see women being used in a capitalist symbology is less as the lush vagina than as the inviolable maidenhead; and in this manifestation they usually occur in more straight political propaganda. We should think more about this, but it seems to me that the successes scored in stirring up pre-war sentiment by all these gory World War I postcards of Austrians raping helpless Italian virgins, demonstrate something of the power of this concept. Phrases like "the flower of Southern white womanhood," and even "home, mother, and apple pie," are no mistake. They carry ideological weight. In these situations the purity of woman becomes the private property of the (male) defenders of the nation; it must be defended with religious fervor against whatever enemy the ruling class is fighting this week (Austro-German, Negro, Commie, whoever).

The corollary to this kind of image, of course, is that women are socialized precisely to want and need that kind of protection. They are most definitely not taught how to defend themselves.

7) Women serve as "lightening rods" for men's frustration at other factors in their environment. This can be especially serviceable for the ruling class. Often it is the man of the family who experiences most directly the real power relationships in the society. (He sells his labor to a capitalist who then exploits him; he has a direct relation to industrial production; etc.) When wives play their traditional role as takers of shit, they often absorb their husbands' legitimate anger and frustration at their own powerlessness and oppression. With every worker provided with a sponge to soak up his possibly revolutionary ire, the bosses rest more secure. Chauvinist attitudes help to maintain this asocial system of tension-release.

8) Aside from this generalized diversion of anger and hostility onto the woman, sometimes women become the recipients of specific male grievances whose basis is actually more in the society and the economy than in the male-female relationship. A WCOP song says:

"Judy, your biscuits are good,
I'd have me some more if I cou'd...
You treat me just like a king.
BUT
Sometimes I wish I was
Thumbing my way back to Denver..."

The guy sees his wife as what's tying him down, not the fact that he has to show up for work on Monday morning. His wife may be in fact trying to tie him down too (the worse for her), but the point is that women, along with a whole series of sex-defined roles and responsibilities, are often made to appear as if they are placing crummy restraints on guys, when in actuality, it is the economic arrangement that is definitive. Traditional definitions of sex-roles (female dependency, child-care patterns, male responsibility, etc.) help to tie both men and women more tightly into the system than they have to be now, while at the same time they distract the victims from seeing who it really is that has a stake in their "stability" and "responsibility" and staying away from Denver.

I want to say just a couple of more things now. First, we should all keep thinking--this ain't all of it. Even the things that are down here already have confusions which point out some areas we should discuss, I think. One is the whole problem of social class; how is the experience of womanhood different for women in different classes? Who are our allies? (All women are oppressed but not all women are potentially revolutionary). How do women's demands relate to class demands? Another area is the whole question of the nuclear family, only mentioned obliquely here. What is women's potential relationship to mate(s)-friends-children? What role does the nuclear family play in supporting capitalism? Of course, there are lots of other things too.

Anyway, these questions point up a second thing, which is that there is a whole lot this paper doesn't even try to do. It doesn't talk about a strategy for a women's movement. It doesn't talk very much about the complexities of the chauvinist psychological apparatus we all carry around in us, or about what it takes for a person (female or male) to start growing out of that. We need to know all of these things.

WITCH ♀

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In a recent issue of the East Village Other, there was a question for the "Emanations" column about "some women in New York calling themselves witches and how the writer could get to be one. The EVO columnist replied with a lot of stuff about the history of Satanism, astrology, etc., but we think we have a more concrete answer for the questioner who, we suspect, was inquiring about W.I.T.C.H. (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell).

W.I.T.C.H.'s "visible" actions have included zapping HUAC hearings (for daring to have a witch-hunt) with guerilla theater and spells Halloween offenses against Up Against the Wall Street (casting hexes on the Stock Exchange, declaring "You have a Fiend at Chase Manhattan".) and hits against all-male bars, girlie burlesque houses, beauty parlors, etc. W.I.T.C.H.'s "invisible" actions are just that--invisible. Yet rumor has it that W.I.T.C.H. is responsible for a wide range of occurrence, ranging from the snuffing of Lurleen Wallace to the nation-wide conspiracy that has so many people Flying.

WITCH is an all-woman Everything. It's theater, revolution, magic, terror, joy, garlic flowers, spells. It's an awareness that witches and gypsies were the original guerillas and resistance fighters against oppression--particularly the oppression of women--down through the ages. Witches have always been women who dared to be: groovy, courageous, aggressive, intelligent, nonconformist, explorative, curious, independent, sexually liberated, revolutionary. (This possibly explains why nine million of them have been burned.) Witches were the first Friendly Heads and Dealers, the first birth-control practitioners and abortionists, the first alchemists (turn dross into gold and you devalue the whole idea of money!) They bowed to no man, being the living remnants of the oldest culture of all--one in which men and women were equal sharers in a truly cooperative society, before the death-dealing sexual, economic, and spiritual repression of the Imperialist Phallic Society took over and began to destroy nature and human society.

WITCH lives and laughs in every woman. She is the free part of each of us, beneath the shy smiles, the acquiescence to absurd male domination, the make-up of flesh-suffocating clothing our sick society demands. There is no "joining" WITCH. If you are a woman and dare to look within yourself, you are a witch. You make your own rules. You are free and beautiful. You can be invisible or evident in how you choose to make your witch-self known. You can form your own Coven of sister witches (thirteen is a cozy number for a group) and do your own actions.

Whatever is repressive, solely male-oriented, greedy, puritanical, authoritarian--those are your targets. Your weapons are theater, satire, explosions, magic, herbs, music, costumes, cameras, masks, chants, stickers, stencils and paint, films, tambourines, bricks, brooms, guns, voodoo dolls, cats, candles, bells, chalk, nail clippings, hand grenades, poison rings, fuses, tape recorders, incense--your own boundless beautiful imagination. Your power comes from your own self as a woman, and it is activated by working in concert with your sisters. The power of the COVEN is more than the sum of its individual members, because it is together.

You are pledged to free our brother from oppression and stereotyped sexual roles as well as ourselves. You are a witch by saying aloud, "I am a Witch" three times. You are a witch by being female, untamed, angry, joyous, and immortal.

Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell
New York Covens: P.O. Box 694
Peter Stuyvesant Station, NYC 10009

Male chauvinism continued....

One last comment. If, as it appears, capitalist societies need us to be inferior, to help maintain division and deception, it is also true that people are showing us that liberating societies, societies that are fighting to free and build themselves collectively, need us to be precisely the opposite. It seems that a country like that can't survive unless its women become liberated. I think that should tell us something about where our loyalties lie.

THE MARY ANN BAKING COMPANY

7

BY JEAN TEPPERMAN

In the factory in Chicago
she had a knife to cut bread.
She laughed-"I will kill you.
You have mornings.
I will kill you for your mornings."
She came from Greece
we worked the night shift in the bakery
her lover is married; she is thirty.
Friday.
She is working tonight
in the factory in Chicago
in a white dress with an apron
running a machine,
calling the foreman
the foreman is putting his arm around her.
The other girls say
she acts like she owns the place
she knows everything
ask her.
Powder brush
hide the dark circles
where is the sky at night?
She just had her hair done
pay day is Tuesday
two dollars and forty cents an hour
I like living alone.
Diane.
She said
"You have mornings"
Jo said
"I think she's really thirty-two"
Kathy said
"She's a cold-hearted person"
She said
"I would like to go to California."

one place for women

After having talked for several months about how great it would be for us as women to have a place of our own, we have found one such place. And we think this place really would be great!

It is a three-story house between Harvard and Central Squares in Cambridge that we would rent from good people who have bought several houses in the area and are eager to build up a community there. The house needs work, but the owners are willing to have us work with them so we can reshape the house to our needs. We conceive of the house mostly for children in playgroups during the day and for women in the evenings. For women to come together and meet and work and read and rest and eat and just be together--one place for building and solidifying the growing sense of community among us as women.

This is one place for women that is happening. There will be others--if only because this particular house has limited space. (In our conversations just with women we know the house would have to be larger than it is to include all the things people want. Thus we might want to think right away of getting more space in the same neighborhood (there may be other houses or apartments to rent or buy) or of going to other areas of Boston depending upon whether we want one or several different areas for women to get together.).

We are thinking of a monthly fund to which women would pledge five or ten dollars to support the house (rent, utilities, phone). We hope there will be some leeway in a pledge fund for buying various equipment and supplies. (For instance, stuff

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for children, books, records, bulletin boards, furniture and decorations, type-writers, record players, mimeograph machine, etc.) in addition to donations we can solicit. And initially we might try to get other money (fund raise a lump sum) to get the house going. Maybe another way we could keep funds coming in to support our activities is to charge nominal fees for use of space for meetings, for dinners, etc.

We want ideas from other women who are turned on by this and who want to be involved in making this place a reality soon. Please call:

NANCY HAWLEY (491-8184)
NANCY MANN (547-7254)

Welfare Organizing: Its Goals & Methods

Separate and equally important criticism of National Welfare Rights Organization organizing comes from mothers unhappy with the present organizational structure and the side-effects of some of the campaigns.

One mother said recently: "I don't understand why there are all guys running it.. Wiley and Pastreich. It's guys who messed us up in the first place. Why aren't mothers running their own organization?" Other mothers, arrested recently at the State House demonstration for clothing grants, felt they had been manipulated into a confrontation. They weren't sure it was worth going to jail for more clothing. And many mothers are confused about NWRO's relationship (i.e., lack of relationship) with black militant community groups. White East Boston mothers who had fought with the Roxbury Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAWs) were shocked to hear Pastreich tell Dorchester mothers that they didn't have to worry about any crazy things Roxbury mothers might do because they would have their own autonomous group.

These complaints reflect the fact that NWRO's kind of organizing may help change one small economic part of a mother's life--but never gives her tools or analysis to deal with her other problems and confusions. (These problems are often dismissed as her personal hang-ups to be solved by her social worker or her therapist.) This fragmented approach is especially devastating to NWRO mothers since the NWRO strategy, based on public confrontation, makes welfare mothers into public targets without giving them any kind of personal or political support.

Welfare women feel incredible personal pressure because of how welfare is perceived in this country now. Being on welfare means that you and your children are seen as failures. Being on welfare means that you're seen as a lazy, immoral woman--that the many hours of hard work that you put in as a mother and housewife are pictured as a romanticized series of good fucks performed to get a little more on your welfare check. And since you probably haven't finished high school, or learned to like to read much, you discover that most of the bureaucratic experts running your life think you're stupid. (This becomes especially obvious when they start classifying you as an exceptional person if you start talking back and forcing them to respect you!) Finally, being on welfare means that you know that your children will also probably grow up to be on welfare.

Many welfare women partly accept society's judgement on them--and don't know how to fight this self-concept until they begin to question it with other welfare women they like and respect. It is this part of being on welfare--the self-hatred and loneliness of dependent women--that is most used (probably unintentionally) by NWRO.

NWRO organizing implicitly states that all that is wrong with being on welfare would disappear if women had a slightly higher, steadier guaranteed income--and that it doesn't matter too much how that higher income is won for mothers (i.e., whether middle class people win it for mothers through lobbying for new legislation.)

But welfare mothers know this is not the extent of their problems. They may be quite right that it is not worth it to them to be arrested for a slightly higher clothing grant--especially since they might be able to hustle the money somewhere else anyhow. That doesn't mean they would not be willing to put their lives on the line for a fight that would be working concretely towards ending their poverty and their powerlessness permanently, towards ending their female dependence and unpaid lonely role as childbearer and childraiser, towards fulfilling their potential as full human beings.

by Marya Levenson

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The following two leaflets were written and distributed in Kenmore Sq. at the movie Faces and in Harvard Sq.

WHAT WAS FACES ABOUT?

All these people are unhappy in their middle class comfort. Is there any difference in the positions of the men and women in the movie? Where are they headed at the end? Is it any accident that the man is happy and cheerful throughout the movie and that the wife is miserable, nervous, neurotic, and frigid? We think not; it is typical of the American couple--even among the younger generation.

Look what happens to the hero. The movie begins with him having a good time partying with his cronie and the prostitute. He doesn't seem like a bad guy. He is righteously angered when his cronie puts Genie down for being "just a prostitute". He is modern enough to know that a high-class prostitute can be a "nice girl", too. From there on he is happy-go-lucky through to the end when he comes home whistling, expecting his wife to be waiting meekly and apologetically. He can hardly believe his eyes.

What is this woman's problem anyway? Why is it so terrifying a prospect for her to be left by a man with whom she obviously has no communication? Why is the thought of divorce so terrifying for her and so easy for him? Is it because she loves him and he doesn't love her? Obviously, in this case, it is not a financial consideration. Clearly it is not a matter of love (as with most American couples), and yet, she does need him--and he needs for her to need him.

Look at the difference between their binges. The man is in control of his binge. Things "work out" so that the prostitute falls in love with him. He gives her the impression that she is special to him: he tells her he trusts her. After a night of tender love-making, he reasserts his freedom. First he criticizes her cooking, (meaning she's not marriage material). Then Genie tries to find out why, if he enjoyed the evening so much, he is now suddenly aloof. She asks, "Why do you hate me now?". And he replies, "Do me a favor, Genie; just be yourself." She says, "I am being myself, who else would I be?" Obviously such an assertion of self is irrelevant to the man. He's putting her back in her role; the good-natured prostitute. She had hoped they had a deeper relationship.

Despite all these snags, he goes away unburdened and back to his nest whistling.

The wife has a binge, too. But she has no control over it. She goes to a club and waits for something to happen to her. She is the passive receiver. Her binge ends in anguish. Why? Was she frigid? (Remember when she pitifully tells him, "I'm not a screwing machine.") Did she feel guilty being unfaithful? No, she felt disgusted with having to prove her reality by going to bed with some man. She would rather die than to live such an empty life.

So where did they go from here? Does this mean a man should be a better mate? Should the couple join an "encounter group"? Should they take LSD together? None of this would change the woman's lack of power in a couple relationship. A couple situation exists when a man takes on an appendage--a wife. The relationship is not reciprocal.

Perhaps the lesson Cassevetes intended for women is that though both the prostitute and the wife are bad off, the prostitute is at least a wage earner serving many men with responsibility toward none, and the wife is a slave to one man.

Why should we be either?

FEMALE LIBERATION

MORE SLAIN GIRLS

Antone Costa's is not an exceptional case. True, disembodied limbs and heads are not discovered daily, but they exist in nearly every man's fantasy. How could it be otherwise given the objectification of women? Constantly we see parts of her--head, breasts, legs. She is the goddess-toy, play bunny to be manipulated--a cut-out doll.

In fact it is not just fantasy. Women are attacked, raped, cut up, chewed upon, slashed in the "pelvic region", have their hearts removed (and eaten?), strangled, impaled in the vagina with brooms. And the newspapers make more money.

We hear a lot from men about how they have to protect women. From whom? Other women? And if women so much as suggest that they are going to begin defending themselves, the men accuse them of wanting to kill them, cut them up. It must be that they have a guilty conscience, recognizing in themselves the pervert they imagine to be after "their women", and who often is, in fact.

We read in the papers that there are 2000-3000 missing females in the United States, and that there are probably more dismembered bodies buried around Truro.

All this sounds like the lynching of Blacks, though it is universally regarded as merely a natural misfortune. The only lesson to be drawn from the "tragedy" is that women should not venture out unprotected--that is unescorted by a man. Which, in fact, was the rationale of the lynch mob or individual murderers of Blacks--that any "nigger" without a master was free game.

The argument usually given in explanation for sex crimes is that the assailant was probably sexually repressed, had no access to a "normal" relationship with "his own woman". Women are so hungry for love in this sick society that it's not that hard to get "normal" women to go to bed with a man. Almost any man has access to "free" "love" and all men can get it for money.

The sex criminals don't want a "normal" relationship with a woman. They want the brutality, the dismemberment, in reality, not just in fantasy.

The guilt is not on women for denying normal outlets to men. The guilt is on society for permitting the objectification of women and the cultivation in man of an attitude of brutality toward women. It is "manly" to "treat 'em rough". Pornographic movies and novels play up to men's sadistic fantasies.

This whole mystique must be destroyed. We must learn to fight back. It must become as dangerous to attack a woman as to attack another man. We will not be raped! We will not be leered at, smirked at, or whistled at by men enjoying their private fantasies of rape and dismemberment.

WATCH OUT. MAYBE YOU'LL FINALLY MEET A REAL CASTRATING FEMALE.

Female Liberation

(These leaflets were written by Roxanne Dunbar, Dana Densmore, Jayne West, Abby Rockefeller, and Sandy Barnert)

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