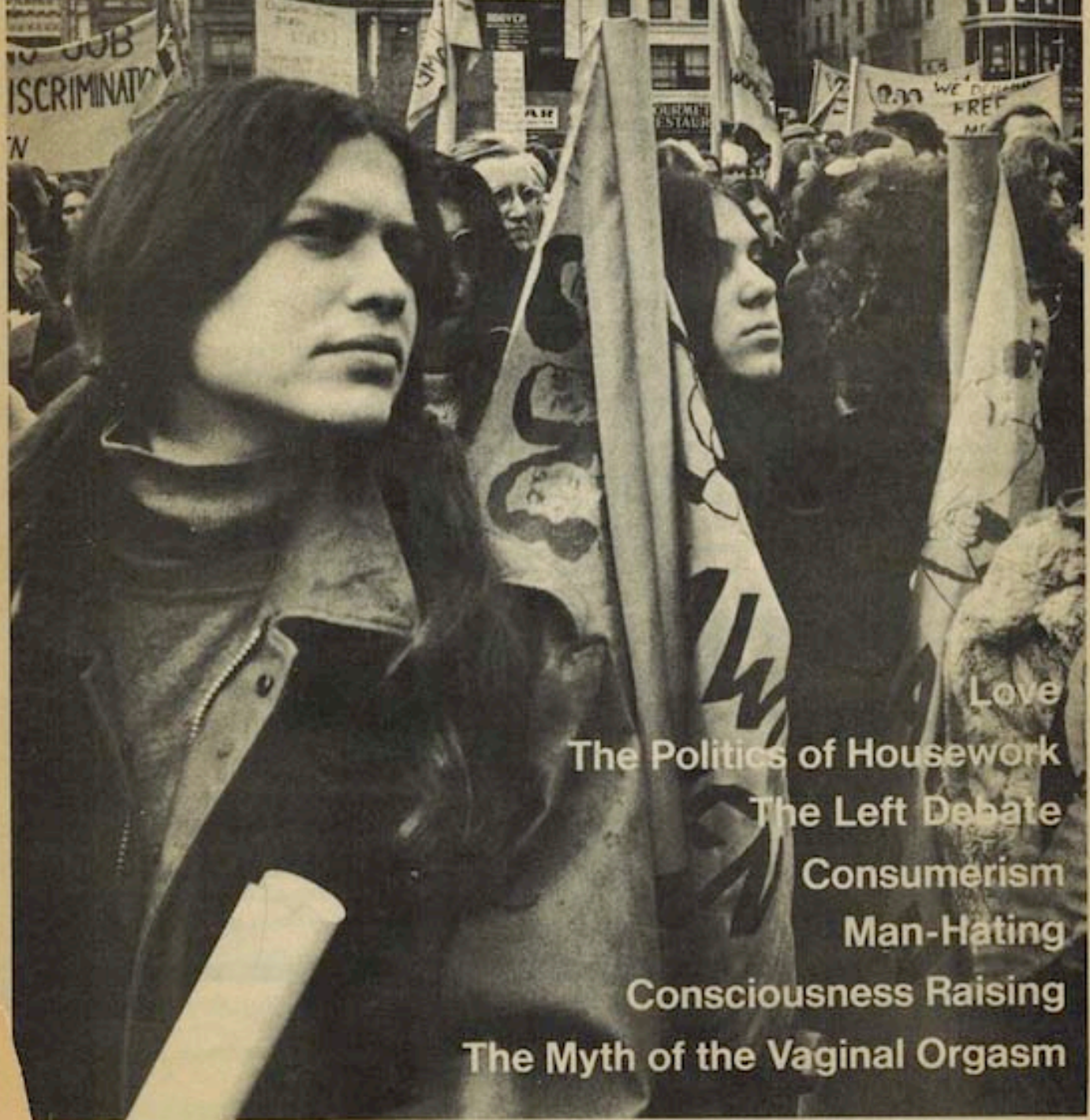


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# Notes From The Second Year: **WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

Major Writings of the Radical Feminists



Love  
The Politics of Housework  
The Left Debate  
Consumerism  
Man-Hating  
Consciousness Raising  
The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm

for everybody (else). But there is really a lot more to it than that. I can't quite articulate it yet. I think "apolitical" women are not in the movement for very good reasons, and as long as we say "you have to think like us and live like us to join the charmed circle," we will fail. What I am trying to say is that there are things in the consciousness of

"apolitical" women (I find them very political) that are as valid as any political consciousness we think we have. We should figure out why many women don't want to do action. Maybe there is something wrong with the action or something wrong with why we are doing the action or maybe the analysis of why the action is necessary is not clear enough in our minds.

# A Program for Feminist "Consciousness Raising"

by KATHIE SARACHILD

Kathie (Amatniek) is a founder of the women's liberation movement in New York and the originator of the concept of "consciousness-raising." She is now active in Redstockings. The following program was prepared for the First National Women's Liberation Conference outside Chicago, November 27, 1968.

We always stay in touch with our feelings.

Our feelings (emotions) revolve around our perceptions of our self-interest.

We assume that our feelings are telling us something from which we can learn . . . that our feelings mean something worth analyzing . . . that our feelings are saying something *political*, something reflecting fear that something bad will happen to us or hope, desire, knowledge that something good will happen to us.

Feelings aren't something we assume ahead of time that we should be on top of or underneath. Feelings are something that, at first anyway, we are *with*, that is, we examine and try to understand before we decide it's the kind of feeling to stay on top of (that is, control, stifle, stop), or the kind of feeling to be underneath (that is, let ourselves go with, let it lead us into something new and better . . . at first to a new and better *idea* of where we want to go and then to action which might help us get there).

Now male culture assumes that feelings are something that people should stay on top of and puts women down for being led by their feelings (being underneath them).

We're saying that women have all along been generally *in touch* with their feelings (rather than underneath them) and that their being in touch with their feelings has been their greatest strength,

historically and for the future. We have been so in touch with our feelings, as a matter of fact, that we have used our feelings as our best available weapon—hysterics, whining, bitching, etc.—given that our best form of defense against those with power to control our lives was their feelings toward us, sexual and otherwise, feelings which they always tried to fight themselves.

We're saying that for most of history sex was, in fact, both our undoing and our only possible weapon of self-defense and self-assertion (aggression).

We're saying that when we had hysterical fits, when we took things "too" personally, that we weren't underneath our feelings, but responding with our feelings correctly to a given situation of injustice. I say correctly because at that time in history (and maybe even still), by first feeling and then revealing our emotions we were acting in the best strategical manner. And this may be the reason we learned how to be so in touch with our feelings to begin with.

In our groups, let's share our feelings and pool them. Let's let ourselves go and see where our feelings lead us. Our feelings will lead us to ideas and then to actions.

Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to new theory and then to new action.

This is a consciousness-raising program for those of us who are feeling more and more that women are about the most exciting people around, at this stage of time, anyway, and that the seeds of a new and beautiful world society lie buried in the consciousness of this very class which has been abused and oppressed since the beginning of human history. It is a program planned on the assumption that a mass liberation movement will develop as more and more women begin to perceive their situation correctly and that, therefore, our primary task right now is to awaken "class" consciousness in ourselves and others on a mass scale. The following outline is just one hunch of what a theory of mass consciousness-raising would look like in skeleton form.

I. The "bitch session" cell group

A. Ongoing consciousness expansion

1. Personal recognition and testimony

- a. Recalling and sharing our bitter experiences
- b. Expressing our feelings about our experiences both at the time they occurred and at present
- c. Expressing our feelings about ourselves, men, other women
- d. Evaluating our feelings

2. Personal testimony -- methods of group practice

- a. Going around the room with key questions on key topics
- b. Speaking our experience -- at random
- c. Cross examination

3. Relating and generalizing individual testimony

- a. Finding the common root when different women have opposite feelings and experiences
- b. Examining the negative and positive aspects of each woman's feelings and her way of dealing with her situation as a woman

B. Classic forms of resisting consciousness, or: How to avoid facing the awful truth

1. Anti-womanism
2. Glorification of the oppressor
3. Excusing the oppressor (and feeling sorry for him)
4. False identification with the oppressor and other socially privileged groups
5. Shunning identification with one's own oppressed group and other oppressed groups
6. Romantic fantasies, utopian thinking and other forms of confusing present reality with what one wishes reality to be
7. Thinking one has power in the traditional role--can "get what one wants," has power behind the throne, etc.
8. Belief that one has found an adequate personal solution or will be able to find one without large social changes
9. Self-cultivation, rugged individualism, seclusion, and other forms of go-it-alonism
10. Self-blame!!
11. Ultra-militancy; and others??

C. Recognizing the survival reasons for resisting consciousness

D. "Starting to Stop" -- overcoming repressions and delusions

1. Daring to see, or: Taking off the rose-colored glasses

a. Reasons for repressing one's own consciousness

- 1) Fear of feeling the full weight of one's painful situation
- 2) Fear of feeling one's past wasted and meaningless  
(plus wanting others to go through the same obstacles)
- 3) Fear of despair for the future

b. Analyzing which fears are valid and which invalid

- 1) Examining the objective conditions in one's own past and in the lives of most women throughout history
- 2) Examining objective conditions for the present

- c. Discussing possible methods of struggle
  - 1) History of women's struggle and resistance to oppression
  - 2) Possibilities for individual struggle at present
  - 3) Group struggle
- 2. Daring to share one's experience with the group
  - a. Sources of hesitancy
    - 1) Fear of personal exposure (fear of being thought stupid, immoral, weak, self-destructive, etc. by the group)
    - 2) Feeling of loyalty to one's man, boss, parents, children, friends, "the Movement"
    - 3) Fear of reprisal if the word gets out (losing one's man, job, reputation)
    - 4) Fear of hurting the feelings of someone in the group
    - 5) Not seeing how one's own experience is relevant to others, or vice versa
  - b. Deciding which fears are valid and which invalid
  - c. Structuring the group so that it is relatively safe for people to participate in it
- D. Understanding and developing radical feminist theory
  - 1. Using above techniques to arrive at an understanding of oppression wherever it exists in our lives—our oppression as black people, workers, tenants, consumers, children, or whatever as well as our oppression as women
  - 2. Analyzing whatever privileges we may have—the white skin privilege, the education and citizenship of a big-power (imperialist) nation privilege, and seeing how these help to perpetuate our oppression as women, workers
- E. Consciousness-raiser (organizer) training—so that every woman in a given bitch session cell group herself becomes an "organizer" of other groups
  - 1. The role of the consciousness-raiser ("organizer")
    - a. Dares to participate; dares to expose herself, bitch
    - b. Dares to struggle
  - 2. Learning how to bring theory down to earth'
    - a. Speaking in terms of personal experience
  - 3. Learning to "relate"
    - a. To sisters in the group
    - b. To other women
    - c. Friends and allies
    - d. Enemies
  - 4. Particular problems of starting a new group

## II. Consciousness-raising Actions

### A. Zap actions

- 1. Movie benefits, attacks on cultural phenomena and events, stickers, buttons, posters, films

### B. Consciousness programs

- 1. Newspapers, broadsides, storefronts, women's liberation communes, literature, answering mail, others . . .??

### C. Utilizing the mass media

## III. Organizing

### A. Helping new people start groups

### B. Intra-group communication and actions

- 1. Monthly meetings
- 2. Conferences