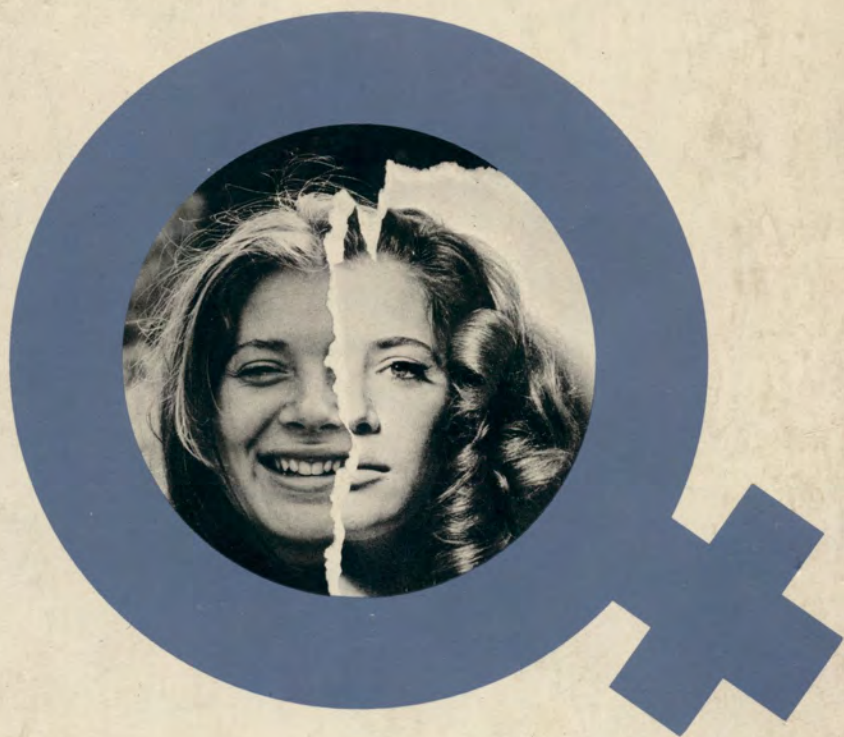


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Radical Feminism

edited by Anne Koedt • Ellen Levine • Anita Rapone



An anthology of radical feminist writings from the current women's movement. Forty-five articles ranging from the personal to the theoretical and drawn largely from the feminist annual NOTES.

Westchester Radical Feminists

“Radical feminism recognizes the oppression of women as a fundamental political oppression wherein women are categorized as an inferior class based on their sex. . . .

Radical feminism is political because it recognizes that a group of individuals (men) have organized together for power over women and that they have set up institutions throughout society to maintain this power. . . .

The oppression of women is manifested in particular institutions among these are marriage, motherhood, love, sexual intercourse, (psychiatry and consumerism)*. Through these institutions a woman is taught to confuse her biological sexual differences with her total human potential. . . .

In each case her sexual difference is rationalized to trap her within (the institution)*”

Statement of Purpose

Suburban women, in common with all women, have lived in intimacy with and dependence on our oppressor. In isolation and tightly bound to our families, we have viewed the world and our condition from the level of patriarchal ideas of money and power. We now recognize that these patriarchal concepts have and still do dominate and control our lives, but our thinking, hopes and aspirations are changing. We are analyzing our past, present and future according to new feminist concepts and are beginning to discover that there can be new ways of dealing with our problems and our lives.

As suburban women, we recognize that many of us live in more economic and material comfort than our urban sisters, but we have

* Our addition

Politics of the Ego: A Manifesto For New York Radical Feminists

come to realize through the woman's movement, feminist ideas and consciousness raising, that this comfort only hides our essential powerlessness and oppression. We live in comfort only to the extent that our homes, clothing and the services we receive feed and prop the status and egos of the men who support us. Like dogs on a leash, our own status and power will reach as far as our husbands and their income and prestige will allow. As human beings, as individuals, we, in fact, own very little and should our husbands leave us or us them, we will find ourselves with the care and responsibility of children and without money, jobs, credit or power. For this questionable condition, we have paid the price of isolation and exploitation by the institutions of marriage, motherhood, psychiatry and consumerism. Although our life styles may appear materially better, we are, as all women, dominated by men at home, in bed and on the job; emotionally, sexually, domestically and financially.

Traditionally, as women and suburban women, we have put the cause of others before our own and are now determined to uphold our rights as top priority. Because we are convinced that all oppression stems from the fundamental oppression of women by men, it will follow that men will benefit from our liberation even though they may fight, resist and not welcome the change. We want to be identified as female liberationists and not as human liberators. Those men who agree with our cause will find a way to support us and we will welcome them, but it is not our job to convince, care for or teach men what we know to be right.

Although we are, as women, united on the basis of our common feelings and experiences, we are also individuals with varied ideas, preferences and goals. These differences are not antagonistic but are an indication of the richness and variety of our ideas and contributions. We, therefore, hope to remain loosely organized to allow individual expression and freedom to work and struggle through thoughts, feelings and ideas. Total agreement is not our goal but self realization, self initiative, mutual respect and a large variety of alternatives and choices are essentially what we hope to achieve.

We believe that:

1. The notion of fixed sex roles is arbitrary and unjust.
2. That suburbia is a wasteland; a human ghetto for women minimizing their opportunity for growth.

3. That diverse forms of sexual relationships based on mutual consent are a matter of individual choice and right.
4. The institution of marriage presumes and establishes the life-long servitude of women.
5. All economic institutions subject and deprive the suburban women, as well as all women, of economic power; even her power as a consumer is a myth since she spends and buys no more than her husband will allow.
6. Women are no more inherently suited to child rearing than men and men must be held responsible also for the emotional, educational and physical development of children.
7. The mutual dependence of mothers and children is in essence an act of tyranny which serves to thwart, retard and immobilize both mother and children.
8. The adjustment theories adhered to by most psychologists and psychiatrists and their institutions perpetuate destructive attitudes towards women, undermine their self value and self esteem and are generally harmful to the wholesome development and welfare of women.
9. The fact that we live with and even support some of these institutions which are sexist does not in any way alter our basic beliefs. We presently live the way we do because there are no good alternatives.
10. Women's liberation is not human liberation and we place the cause of women above all other causes.
11. We are committed to the understanding of our condition as women so that we may create and invent new ways to live and to find both collective and individual realization and strength.

A group of 15 Westchester women
May, 1972

The WESTCHESTER RADICAL FEMINISTS is currently involved in:

1. Consciousness raising.
2. Analyzing our condition in the institutions of psychiatry, marriage, motherhood.
3. Writing about the problems of suburban women.
4. Actively supporting abortion legislation.

5. Engaging in self-help supportive counseling.
 6. Attacking sexist practices in local institutions such as schools, town clubs, local governments.
 7. Each woman is encouraged to find or organize an action which interests her.
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