
Staff: John Demeter.


Cover: Photo from the front page of the October 31, 1936 issue of ESTAMPA, a Madrid rebel publication. Women militants frequently appeared in these publications. Cover design: John Demeter.

Photos of militant women antifascists at a political reunion. From rebel publication, 1936.

Vol. 18, No. 4

Radical America welcomes unsolicited manuscripts, but can return them only if sufficient postage is included. Writers may also send abstracts or inquiries to Manuscript Coordinator, c/o Radical America.

RADICAL AMERICA (USPS 873-880) is published five times a year (bimonthly except for a single issue March through June) by the Alternative Education Project, Inc. at 38 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143 (617) 628-6585. Copyright © 1984 by Radical America. Subscription rates: $15 per year, $26 for 2 years, $10 per year for unemployed, retired, or fixed income. Free to prisoners. Add $3 per year to all prices for foreign subscriptions. Double rates for institutions. Bulk rates: 40% reduction from cover price for five or more copies, U.S. distribution by Carrier Pigeon. Typesetting by Nancy Wechsler, Gay Community News. Typos and mistakes by Alfred E. Newman. ISSN 0033-7617.

Second class postage paid at Boston, Mass. and additional post offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to RADICAL AMERICA, 38 Union Square, #14, Somerville, MA 02143.

RADICAL AMERICA is available on microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, and indexed in Alternative Press Center Index, P. O. Box 7229, Baltimore, MD 21218. It is also indexed in America: History and Life, Sociological Abstracts, and Women’s Studies Abstracts.

RADICAL AMERICA is a member of the Alternative Press Syndicate.
INTRODUCTION

MUJERES LIBRES: INDIVIDUALITY AND COMMUNITY
Organizing Women during the Spanish Civil War
Martha Ackelsberg

SPIRITS IN THE MATERIAL WORLD
Publishing, Pornography and the Gay Male
Michael Bronski

The Publishing Industry, the Gay Community and
further comments on Gay Pornography
Interview with Michael Bronski

FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE
Social Relations Among Women in the Welfare
State
Ann Withorn

SHARED DREAMS
A Left Perspective on Disability Rights and
Reproductive Rights
Adrienne Asch and Michelle Fine
INTRODUCTION

Four years ago, in response to Reagan’s election, and the wide-ranging conservative electoral mandate that accompanied it, RADICAL AMERICA published a special double-issue entitled “Facing Reaction.” In that collection, we examined the political, economic, social, and foreign policy aspects of the Right’s agenda, and probed the origins and ideology of that political animal, the New Right, that carried Reagan in from the West. RA attempted, in that edition, to critically and realistically assess the options for the Left in light of this country’s dramatic political shift.

As we go to press in the late fall of 1984, borrowing from one of the President’s many rhetorical one-liners, many people (the Left included) are not better off than they were four years ago. While Reagan was denied the conservative electoral sweep he sought, and opinion polls continue to show an “ideology gap” between voter support for his leadership and the New Right social agenda, we cannot deny the institutionalization of conservative politics signaled by his re-election. The potential impact on social policy of an escalating rightwing offensive presents the opposition with some critical challenges. In this issue of RA, three articles take up questions the feminist movement initially brought into public discourse: pornography, reproductive rights and the role of women in the welfare state. In a context,
however, in which the New Right has gained power and influence on exactly these terrains, debates have arisen, both about how to articulate the issues and about what kinds of alliances will forestall the Right’s influence. How to keep a focus on empowering women without conceding ground to the New Right or without fueling patriarchal morality on sexuality, mothering and relations in the welfare state?

In the excerpt we publish from Michael Bronski’s book “Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility” (Boston: South End Press), the author focuses on the role of pornography in shaping identity in a heterosexual culture in which expressions of gay male sexuality are taboo. With the AIDS crisis as a cruel pretext, new-Conservatives and fundamentalists are initiating the re-criminalization of homosexuality and fostering a hostile cultural climate for gay men and lesbians alike. Even within the left and feminist movements, homosexual pornography and gay sexuality is rarely discussed and often misunderstood. Bronski’s article stands as an affirmation of a legitimate sexual behavior and pushes a cultural and historical critique of its relation to society in general and American media in particular. In an interesting historical discussion, he explores the significance of the rise of the gay movement in changing the images of sexual desirability in gay male pornography from the 1950s to the present. Bronski emphasizes, however, that with the recognition of an expanded gay male consumer market fueled by the rise of the gay movement, the demands of industry continue to control images of gay sexuality.

Bronski also takes up his concerns with the feminist critique of pornography which, he argues, is based on a heterosexual model and therefore inadequate for an understanding of gay male pornography. Instead, he claims that gay men have the possibility of identifying with both the position of sexual subject and that of object of desire. It is an ability to shift identification, he adds, that breaks the male/female, power/submissive dynamic of straight pornography. Bronski’s provocative response to some of the issues in the anti-pornography literature highlights missing dimensions in both “takes.” The failure of the anti-pornography movement to take up the difficulty women have in being desirers, in being sexual subjects, both the external and internalized constraints women face, reemerges in the analyses of pornography by gay male proponents. We question whether gay male sexuality is so divorced from the construction of female sexuality. To answer this question, we need to explore the formation of gay male sexual identity, its relationship to gender and to heterosexual norms. Feminist literature on the formation of male gender-identity in families in which women mother may provide a starting point. Without an emphasis on gender, the implications for women, of the tightening of homoerotic bonds between men, will go unexplored.

The many reactions and questions which the board had to Bronski’s article led to an interview with him by two board members, a lesbian and a gay man, which is published as an afterword to the article, “The Viewer and the Viewed.”

In “Shared Dreams: A Leftist Perspective on Reproductive Rights and Disability Rights,” reproductive rights activist Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch, a disabled rights activist and a disabled woman herself, take up the meaning of disability in a woman’s decision to abort or in parents’ decisions to prevent medical treatment of newborn infants. Fine and Asch argue that a woman’s right to abortion and a severely disabled infant’s right to medical treatment are both unequivocal, essential, and compatible with a feminist perspective. The authors examine the argument against medical care for severely disabled infants (such as Baby Jane Doe) and postulate that the social construction of human disability may be more oppressive than the essence of the disability itself.

“Shared Dreams” challenges us to consider the values we bring to thinking about parenting, about what kind of child we want to have, about what we want from our children. And yet, many questions remain. By taking the decision about medical intervention away from parents to save the lives of severely disabled children, Fine and Asch downplay the fact that parents remain responsible for their care, emotionally as well as materially. Can this position avoid reinforcing the guilt and self-sacrificing ethic that has plagued women, even defined the traditional meaning of motherhood, particu-
larly considering the role of the New Right in bringing cases like Baby Jane Doe into public focus? Further, just as reproductive rights activists have challenged the so-called "pro-life" movement's definition of life, so in the case of disability, we need to think through a definition of human life that involves social and historical meaning, not just biological criteria. In subsequent issues, we hope to continue the debate about these and other questions this article provokes.

Raising cases like Baby Jane Doe out of the network of relationships that surround them, there is a peculiarly hollow and anti-social ring to the Right's rhetoric about respect for life. Upon viewing the full draft of its social agenda such as program cutoffs, lessening family rights to medical care, food, and life supports, as well as the valuing of national and international military and destructive capabilities over human needs, it is easy to see that the Right is not fundamentally about valuing life. A third area in which this dynamic appears is in the role of women in the not-yet-dismantled welfare state.

Ann Wither's "For Better and For Worse" explores new terrain on this subject. Most analyses of the welfare state, or of poor people's movements around it, ignore the fact that the central actors are women, that indeed the welfare state is centrally defined by women's roles and women's issues. Wither explores the possibility of identification and alliance between women social workers and clients based on shared female qualities—most specifically female nurturance. Yet, supportive relationships between women workers and clients in most instances do not develop. She examines the pressures which produce potential and often actual destructive relationships instead, and in the process offers insights into the welfare state itself.

Again, because this article brings into focus a crucial and neglected dimension of the politics of the welfare state, we hope it will provoke responses from our readers and lead to further discussion and debate. Appeals to nurturance as an underlying bond between women, for example, have been contested with feminism and need further exploration. For both women social workers and women clients, nurturance is at least double-edged. In social work, as well as other traditional women's occupations, identification with nurturant, care-taking roles has often hindered women's identification of themselves as workers, and served as a barrier to unionization. As for women clients, mothers on welfare are dogged by external—and internalized—images of "good mothers" and "bad mothers." The difficulty for women in separating nurturance from self-denial, particularly in a conservative cultural climate, deepens the binds that all women face.

The final article in this issue explores the buried history of Mujeres Libres, an independent women's organization within the Spanish Anarchist movement, which sought to overcome women's political inexperience, to organize women around women's issues and to challenge the male dominance extant even in oppositional politics. Drawing on interviews with participants, Martha Ackelsberg explores how the group, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, worked to meet these goals in non-hierarchical, local, autonomous, educational settings—that mirrored the overall structure of the Anarchist movement itself. As the forementioned articles probe areas of articulation of issues and theoretical consensus, the lessons from this "hidden history" of women activists, provides links to structure, organization and tactics that cannot be lost in this period of turmoil and conflict.
THE PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE

If the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Nicaragua or El Salvador, I pledge to join with others to engage in acts of nonviolent direct action at U.S. federal facilities, including U.S. federal buildings, military installations, congressional offices, offices of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, and other appropriate places. I pledge to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience in order to prevent or halt the death and destruction which such military action would cause for the people of Central America.

Name (Print)_____________________________________________________

Signature________________________________________________________

Address___________________________________________________________

City/State___________________________________________Zip________

Tel._______________________________________Do you need nonviolence training?____

Name of affinity group__________________________________________

THE PLEDGE OF WITNESS AND SUPPORT

If the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Nicaragua or El Salvador, I pledge to join others in protesting that military action by nonviolently vigiling at U.S. federal facilities and other appropriate places. I also pledge to support those who engage in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience in order to prevent or halt further death and destruction in Central America.

Name (Print)_____________________________________________________

Signature________________________________________________________

City/State___________________________________________Zip________

Tel._______________________________________Do you need nonviolence training?____

Name of affinity group__________________________________________

____ Please contact me concerning pre-invasion vigils and actions.

____ I would like to volunteer to work on the EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK.

____ Suggested donation of $2 or more to help meet the expenses involved in organizing this pledge. (Make checks payable to EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK.)

Please mail this pledge to:

EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK
American Friends Service Committee,
2160 Lake Street, San Francisco, CA 94121  (415) 752-7766
MUJERES LIBRES: INDIVIDUALITY AND COMMUNITY

Organizing Women during the Spanish Civil War

Martha Ackelsberg

Do you live in a town where women are relegated to a position of insignificance, dedicated exclusively to housework and the care of children? No doubt, many times you have thought about this with some disgust, and when you've noticed the freedom which your brothers, or the men of your households, enjoy, you have felt the hardship of being a woman...

Well, against all this which you have had to suffer comes Mujeres Libres. We want you to have the same freedom as your brothers...we want your voice to be heard with the same authority as your father's. We want you to attain—without worrying about what people will say—that independent life you have wanted.

But, realize, that all this requires your effort; that these things don't come for nothing; and that, in order to achieve them, you need the assistance of others. You need others to be concerned with the same things as you, you need to help them, as they will help you. In a single word, you must struggle communally; which is the same as saying, you must create a Group (Agrupacion) of women.

This passage comes from a pamphlet entitled, "How to Organize a Mujeres Libres Group," written in Spain, probably in 1937.

Mujeres Libres was founded by women who were activists within the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement. Between April 1936 and February 1939 they built an organization which claimed over 20,000 members (overwhelmingly, working-class women), in 147 groups throughout Republican Spain. Their goal was to empower working women. They had come to believe, through their own and others' experiences in the anarcho-syndicalist movement, that women's empowerment required a separate organization, one which would address what they called "women's triple enslavement: to ignorance, to capital, and to men."

Unlike most socialist movements, which treat economic issues (i.e., class relations) as the most basic form of subordination, on which all others depend, anarchists saw hierarchy, formalized authority, as the crucial problem. Within that theoretical framework, there was a place to treat various types of subordination (e.g. political and sexual as well as economic) as more or less independent relationships, each of which would need to be addressed by a truly revolutionary movement. And, as early as 1872, in fact, they set the overcoming of women's subordination as a goal of the movement.

Nevertheless, despite this openness on the theoretical level, women's oppression had never
been given a high priority within the Spanish anarchist movement. Most anarchists refused to recognize the specificity of women’s subordination; they assumed — if they were concerned at all — that women’s emancipation would follow either from their incorporation into the paid labor force or (more commonly) simply from the establishment of an anarchist society. At best, they insisted that the struggle to overcome women’s subordination must take place within and through movement organizations. As one woman activist stated,

We are engaged in the work of creating a new society, and that work must be done in unison. We should be engaged in union struggles, along with men, fighting for our places, demanding to be taken seriously.  

But the women of Mujeres Libres insisted that more direct action was necessary. In their view, although anarchist men may have “talked a good line” while out on the speakers’ platforms, most did not change their behavior toward women on a day-to-day basis. “It’s true that we have struggled together,” one woman recalled saying to her male comrades, “but you are always the leaders, and we are always the followers. Whether in the streets or at home. We are little better than slaves!” Mujeres Libres aimed both to overcome the barriers of ignorance and inexperience which prevented women from participating as equals in the struggle for a better society, and to confront the dominance of men within the anarchist movement itself. As Soledad Estorach, an “initiator” of the Barcelona group, told me:

In Cataluña, at least, the dominant position was that men and women should both be involved. But the problem was that the men didn’t know how to get women involved as activists. They continued (both men and most women) to think of women as assistants, accepted in a secondary status. For them, I think, the ideal situation would be to have a compañera who did not oppose their ideas, but in whose private life would be more or less like other women. They wanted to be activists 24 hours a day — and in that context, of course, it’s impossible to have equality. . . . Men got so involved that the women were left behind, almost of necessity. Especially, for example, when he would be taken to jail. Then she would have to take care of the children, work to support the family, visit him in jail, etc. That, the compañeras were very good at! But for us, that was not enough. That is not activism!
When the women of Mujeres Libres talked about their aims, they used a word, *capacitación*, that has no exact English equivalent. "Empowerment" is probably the closest we can get. For them, as for anarchists in general, changing people’s consciousness of themselves and their places in society is a crucial step toward revolutionary change.

Yet the hard question, of course — for Mujeres Libres as for any social revolutionary movement — is how does that change in consciousness take place?

Although Mujeres Libres was an organization of women, which had as its purpose the empowerment of women, it was firmly rooted in the Spanish anarchist movement. In order to understand its program and strategy, we must take a few moments to locate it in that larger Spanish context.

One of the defining characteristics of the "communalist-anarchist tradition" (by which I mean the tradition of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, on which the Spanish anarchist movement drew) is the insistence that means must be consistent with ends. If the goal of revolutionary struggle is a non-hierarchical, egalitarian society, then it must be created through the activities of a non-hierarchical movement. Otherwise, participants will never be empowered to act independently, and those who direct the "movement" will end up as "directors" of the post-revolutionary society.

Crucial to their ability to imagine such non-authoritarian order was their insistence that individuality and community are not incompatible but, rather, mutually related. The social world they envision is not one of isolated individuals. Nor is it the moral and social chaos so often associated with the word "anarchism." Rather, it is a world in which orderly human relationships are central, but order is assured via cooperation, rather than through competition or hierarchy.

Spanish anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists reflected this perspective in their commitment to decentralism and to a strategy of "direct action." Direct action means that revolutionary activity and organization begin "where people are," not through "intermediaries" such as political parties. Those local activities are then coordinated either through "propaganda by the deed," exemplary action which brings adherents by the power of the positive example it sets, or by "spontaneous organization," non-coercive federations of local groups. The point, here, was to achieve order without coercion. This Spanish anarchists accomplished through what we might call "federative networking." Under the general aegis of the movement were trade unions, affinity groups, storefront schools, cultural centers, etc. But none of these groups could claim to speak — or act — for others. They were more "forums for discussion" than directive organizations.

Finally, Spanish anarchists believed that direct action takes place only within a context of "preparation"; "spontaneous order" emerges only from processes that empower people. "Preparation" was the key to the success of a strategy of direct action. While they rejected the role of a party in laying down a blueprint for the revolution, Spanish anarchists also denied that fundamental social change could take place in a vacuum. People needed to develop confidence in themselves and in their comprehension of the world. But such preparation, if it was not to take a hierarchical form, could take place only through people’s experience of new and different forms of social organization.

The anarcho-syndicalist trade union movement (CNT) had been developing for close to seventy years by the time the Civil War officially began in July, 1936. Non-hierarchically structured union organizations, growing up in both rural and urban/industrial Spain, served as arenas within which workers could develop a sense of their ability — when united with others — to take control of their work, and of their lives. And unions drew on, while also nurturing, age-old traditions of collective action. Whether in nineteenth-century declarations of "comunismo libertario" in rural Andalusia, or in twentieth-century antia war demonstrations and "bread riots" in Barcelona, thousands of men and women throughout Spain had had experiences of "direct action." They had taken to the streets to demand that their needs be met and, more to the point, had sometimes used their power directly, as in "liberating" meat markets and stores of coal.

Rationalist schools and *ateneos* provided yet
other contexts for “preparation.” These schools, which grew up in many working-class barrios in Barcelona during the early 1930s, were supported by local unions, and staffed by a few dedicated teachers who had managed to get some training in an educational system otherwise totally dominated by the Church. They were models of participatory education, non-hierarchically organized, which attacked illiteracy and built self-confidence and class consciousness at the same time. The cultural centers which usually operated out of the same building provided much-needed recreational opportunities — but always with a message. Trips to the mountains or the seashore, for example, were always accompanied by charlas. As one woman said of her experiences with the group, “ideas got stirred up, they created a sense of being compañeros and compañeras. . . . That’s where we were formed, most deeply, ideologically.” Most ateneos had libraries, as well — which opened the doors for many young people who had no other access to books: “When I saw the library at the ateneo, I thought all the world’s knowledge was at my fingertips.”

Thus, by the time of the Civil War, there was already an extensive network of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations and activities, especially in Cataluña, Aragon, and the Levant. What is less well-known is that the Spanish Civil War was not simply a war of “democracy” against “fascism.” Within the territory “controlled” by forces local to the Republic, a social revolution took place. Somewhere between 7 and 8 million people are estimated to have taken part in collectivizations of rural or industrial properties. The anarchists were among the groups most central to these efforts. Mujeres Libres was to operate in that larger revolutionary context — its 147 local groups were clustered in areas that were also major centers of the anarcho-syndicalist movement (in Madrid, Cataluña, the Levant, and Aragon).

Of the various “preparatory” activities I described, the schools and cultural centers, in particular, were especially important to women. Spanish society at the time was extremely sex-divided. Most men and women kept to a society almost exclusively of their own sex. Beyond that, the subordination of women — both economic and cultural — was much more severe than that of men. Rates of illiteracy were higher among women than among men. Those women who did work for wages outside the home (predominantly unmarried women), were relegated to the lowest-paid jobs in the most oppressive work conditions. But these educational centers and youth organizations were sex-integrated, and they provided young women as well as young men an opportunity to enrich themselves culturally and to meet people of the opposite sex as equals. Finally, they could speak to the needs and experiences of women — and of unorganized workers — as unions could not, since they operated in an arena much broader than that of the workplace. Not surprisingly, virtually all the women with whom I spoke reported that their experiences in the ateneos and youth organizations were essential to their own development, and a critical component of their “preparation” for Mujeres Libres. Some women, then, did find a place for themselves within the community provided by the anarcho-syndicalist movement and, in particular, by its youth organizations. But many also recognized the limitations of those groups. On the one hand, as women, they were not always treated with the seriousness, respect, and equality they felt they (and all women) deserved. And, on the other (and I think this weighed even more heavily for many of the founders, since they were so committed to the anarchist movement and its project), they were all too aware of the inability of the anarcho-syndicalist movement to attract many competent women to its ranks, let alone to move them into positions of leadership. They attributed that failing both to the sexism of the men and to the “lack of preparation” of sufficient numbers of women.

I want to give you a very brief introduction to a few of those women. They captivated me completely when I met and interviewed them in Spain and France a few years ago. Some sense of who they were and how they lived their lives may also help to put what follows into perspective.

Many of the activists were young (though, of course, it should also be mentioned that it is the ones who were young in 1935–36 who are most
likely to be alive now to tell their stories!) and unmarried. While many of them (as most working-class girls) had begun work somewhere between the ages of 8 and 12, their unmarried (and, more significantly, perhaps, childless) status allowed them a certain amount of time to engage in movement-related activities. Some of the women who were to be active in Mujeres Libres came from long-standing anarchist families, and talked about absorbing “the ideas” almost with their mothers’ milk.

Enriqueta Rovira, for example, is one of seven children of a dedicated anarchist couple, and the granddaughter of Abelardo Saavedra, one of the early anarchist travelling teachers who had been forced to leave the country at the turn of the century for having committed the crime of teaching field hands in Andalucía (rural Southern Spain) how to read. She cannot even describe how she “became” an anarchist — the ideas were there from the beginning. “These ideas came to us without any imposition. . . . It’s almost as if she [our mother] didn’t teach them, we lived them, were born with them. We learned them as you would learn to sew, or to eat.” Even for Enriqueta — who came from a family which not only shared, but had nurtured, her beliefs — the association with others in an ateneo was crucial. It provided her with a strong sense of community which lasted over time: friendships she established there provided entree for her to do important work during the years of the Civil War.

Others came from families which had some leftist (or at least republican) leanings, but which did not define themselves as “anarchist.” Sara Guillén, for example, was about sixteen when the war broke out, and had had little to do with the movement before then. She became acquainted with the CNT through attending union meetings with her father, and became involved with Mujeres Libres — despite feeling, initially, that it was wrong, to have a separate organization for women — when she found herself defending the women’s right to meet against the taunts and jeers of her male peers.

Soledad Estorach’s father — a teacher, and a republican — had imbued her with a love of learning (and taught her to read — no small feat for a young woman in those years) before he died when she was ten. By age fourteen, she left home — to avoid a marriage that would have “confined me to inside the four walls of a house.” She went to Barcelona to find work which would enable her to support herself and her mother and sister. There she eventually joined a union, and became involved in an ateneo which, as she reported, opened a whole new world to her: “It was an incredible life, the life of a young militant. A life dedicated to struggle, to knowledge, to remaking society. It was characterized by a kind of effervescence, a constant activity.”

Still others came from families which seemed to have no connection with these “ideas.” Pepita Carpeña, for example, learned about the CNT from underground anarchist organizers who came to “proselytize” at the dances she attended as a teenager. In response to her father’s reluctance to allow her to attend meetings at night, she told him, “I am only doing what you should have been doing in my place: fighting for the emancipation of the workers!” and in-
vited him to join her at a meeting. Convinced by the dedication he saw among the people at the meeting, he never bothered her again.

What all these women had in common was that all of them had been involved either in union activities or, more commonly, in ateneos and/or youth organizations. These experiences energized them with the vision of a new way to live and to interact with others. The networks created there provided important ongoing support which was both emotional and material: many women made life-long friends whose mutual support was essential during those times when (in the words of Soledad) "it seemed we lived on air alone." Pepita Carpeña, for example, received a small stipend from the metalworkers union (where she had many friends) so she could do her organizing work full-time for Mujeres Libres.

Others — particularly the Madrid founders — were older. And some of the activists were married with children. Pilar Grangel was in her late thirties when the War broke out, and had been the co-director (with her compañero) of what we would call an "alternative school." When she heard about Mujeres Libres, she began to work with them, offering classes in teacher training (as well as in basic literacy, etc. for adult women) to try to further the work she and her compañero had started on their own. Lola Iturbe was already thirty-four. She had started work at age nine and a half, and been introduced to anarchist ideas when she was about fifteen. Together with her compañero, she worked on the anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* and participated in Mujeres Libres as something of a "cultural worker."

Mercedes Comaposada illustrates yet another route to activism. She was the daughter of a socialist father, and had little or no contact with the anarchist movement — or its ideas — until she was a law student in Madrid. Then, in 1933, a friend asked her to give some basic education classes at a CNT union's center, which she gladly agreed to do. As she reported, "They wanted me to teach....But it was impossible, because of the attitudes of some 'compañeros.' They didn't take women seriously. They thought all women needed to do was cook and sew....Women barely dared to speak in that context." From that moment, she — and

Lucia Sanchez Saornil (who, together with her and Amparo Poch, a physician, was to found Mujeres Libres) — came to an immediate understanding:

We had one million people against us. The great revolutionaries — Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg — all tried to do something with women. But they all found out that, from within a party, within an existing revolutionary organization, it's impossible. I remember reading, for example, of a letter from Lenin to Clara Zetkin in which he says to her, "Yes, all this you're talking about the emancipation of women is very good. A very fine goal. But for later." The interests of a party *always* come before those of women.¹⁰

So, beginning late in 1933, they sent out letters to women throughout the country — both in the CNT and outside — announcing that they were thinking of starting an organization for women, and asking people to respond with issues they would like to see addressed. "Our great joy," Mercedes told me, "was the response: they were incredibly enthusiastic, and there were always more."¹¹

Meanwhile, in Barcelona, other women were having similar experiences, and developing similar responses. Soledad Estorach, who was one of the initiators of that group, described its beginnings:

Mujeres Libres (or what was to be Mujeres Libres) began to form in Cataluña starting in around 1934, building on the experiences that many of us militants had had with activism in mixed groups. Women would come once, to a Sunday excursion, perhaps, or to some discussion group — sometimes they would even join — but they'd never be seen again. In Barcelona, you know, the movement was very large and very strong.... And there were lots of women involved in some industries — textiles and dressmaking, in particular. But we noticed that, even in that union, there were few women who ever spoke. We became concerned about the women we were losing, and thought about creating a group to deal with these issues. We sent out a call to all women in the libertarian movement in 1935, and, with those who responded, we formed a group and called it "Grupo cultural feminino, CNT."¹²
John Heartfield, Liberty Fights in their Ranks (after Delacroix, 1936).
Initially, these groups existed more or less under the auspices of the CNT. Their purpose was to develop more women as activists within the anarcho-syndicalist movement. But within a short time, they came to the conclusion that developing women activists was complex, and that they needed autonomy if they were to reach the women they wanted to reach, in the way they wanted to reach them.

Eventually, those in Barcelona heard about the group in Madrid, and, in September of 1936, they “joined forces” under the name that the Madrid group had chosen — “Mujeres Libres.” Meanwhile, in April 1936, the Madrid group had published the first issue of the magazine of the same name; 13 issues were to appear by the time publication had to be stopped at the end of the War.

The founding of Mujeres Libres is a good example of “direct action,” or “spontaneous organization.” And it points out the rootedness of Mujeres Libres in the anarchist movement which so insisted on the need for self-organization to meet people’s self-defined needs. Soledad captured well their own sense of what they were up to:

There were, of course, people who said this was wrong, that we should work only in mixed groups, and that we were in danger of falling into “feminism.”

Now I — and most of us — had never heard of “feminism” before. I didn’t know that there were groups of women out there in the world organizing for women’s rights. There were one or two within our group who had heard of feminism — they had been to France. But I didn’t know such things existed in the world! What I’m trying to say is that we were operating within our own situation, on the basis of our own experiences. We didn’t import this from elsewhere. We hadn’t even realized it existed!13

(It’s important to note here that they — and virtually all anarchists — had a very negative reaction to “feminism,” which they identified with middle-class women’s struggle for the vote and/or professional privileges. As an organization, primarily, of working-class women, dedicated to the emancipation of working-class women, they saw individualist feminism as irrelevant, if not contrary, to their entire project.)

They argued that women had to organize independently of men, both to overcome their own subordination and to struggle against male resistance to women’s emancipation. They based their program in the same commitments to direct action and preparation which informed the broader Spanish anarchist movement, and insisted that women’s preparation to engage in revolutionary activity must develop out of their own particular life experiences.

The element of autonomy was crucial to them — it was what made possible that self-definition essential to empowerment. As Lucia Sanchez Saornil wrote in 1935, “I believe it is not the place of men to establish the role of women in society, however elevated that might be. The anarchist way, I repeat, is to let the woman act on her own freedom, without either guides or enforcement; to let her move in the direction that her inclinations and abilities direct.”14

Or, as Enriqueta Rovira says she used to try to explain,
I used to say to the compañeros, “We don’t want to be free to take away your jobs, or to take your spades or your hammers, or the bread from your arms. We want to be free to reclaim our rights. Who gives you the right to have four or five women, when we have to make do with one [man], even if we have desires for other things. Why do we have to limit ourselves to being cleaners, when we have the ability to be a secretary, or a director, or… who knows what? No, this is what you have to realize about women: that women… are capable of everything. Equality is everything.”

They aimed to provide a context within which women could overcome their subordination and develop a new consciousness of themselves. Mujeres Libres’s programs addressed problems of particular concern to women — those which, according to their analysis, constituted the main components of women’s subordination — i.e. illiteracy, economic dependence and exploitation, and ignorance about health care, child care, and sexuality. Meanwhile, the structure of the organization — namely its autonomy from existing male-dominated organizations — was designed to build up, and protect, that newly developing sense of self.

While they did not officially set priorities among what they saw as the sources of women’s subordination, most of the organization’s activities focused on overcoming ignorance and economic exploitation. They mounted a massive literacy drive to provide the foundation necessary for an “enculturation of women,” with classes given in towns and villages wherever they had organizations. In addition, they set up major centers in the cities where they were strongest — “Mujeres Libres Institutes” in Madrid and Valencia, and the “Casal de la Dona Treballadora” (Institute for Working Women) in Barcelona — which offered elementary literacy classes; more advanced classes in languages, typing, stenography; “professional courses” such as nursing, childcare, craft skills (electricity, mechanics, etc.) education, and health care; and courses in what they termed formación social: union organization, economics, and general weekly meetings which provided opportunities to meet and talk with other women (paving the way for political activism). They saw literacy as a tool to develop women’s self-confidence as well as to facilitate their full participation in society and social change: “It was almost like a school for activists… We didn’t exactly indoctrinate people, but we did more than just technical training… We encouraged them to pay attention, to become activists.”

Mujeres Libres saw women’s economic dependence as rooted in an extreme sexual division of labor, which assigned women the lowest-paid work under the most oppressive conditions. To overcome it, they worked closely with CNT unions, sponsoring training and apprenticeship programs in many factories. As Mercedes Comaposada described them, these programs had multiple functions. “The work section was probably the most important. We started in that arena immediately, because it was essential to get women out of the house. Eventually, there were Mujeres Libres groups in almost all the factories. Many of these probably focused on issues that had little to do with women’s emancipation, but still provided a context for women to talk about work-related concerns. In rural areas, they sponsored agricultural training programs. They also advocated and supported childcare facilities, both in neighborhoods and at workplaces, to make it possible for women to work. And they fought to equalize salaries between men and women. Nevertheless, it is important to note that they directed little attention to the sexual division of labor, itself, or to the implications for sexual equality or the stereotyping of some work as women’s and some as men’s.

The organization, as a whole, had no clear position on the cultural subordination of women. Some of its members (including Ampara Poch and Lucia Sanchez Saornil, two of the founders) strongly criticized “bourgeois morality” (and, particularly, notions of marriage and monogamy) which, they said, subordinated women and limited everyone’s potential for relationships. They argued against the definition of women solely as mothers. “We wanted to make clear that the woman is an individual and she has value and worth even apart from being a mother. We wanted to get rid of the myth of ‘THE MOTHER.’ At the very least, we wanted madres conscientes [mothers
by choice). People should be able to choose whether, when, and how to have children.” But most members were probably committed to the ideal of monogamous relationships, even if not to legal marriage. And, with rare exceptions, the ideal of “free love” (even in the sense that people should be free to enter and leave monogamous relationships when they pleased, not according to church- or society-related criteria, seemed to apply more to men than to women.

There was greater agreement on other aspects of cultural subordination. One of Mujeres Libres’s most innovative goals (though one they barely were able to put into practice because of the demands of the War) was the creation of liberatorios de prostitución, centers where former prostitutes could go and be supported while they retrained for better lives.

Another major focus was health care. Up until the outbreak of the War, the Church had undertaken the provision of whatever health care was available in Spain. Mujeres Libres trained nurses to replace the nuns, and developed educational and hygiene programs for maternity hospitals and neighborhood centers. These aimed to overcome women’s ignorance (perpetuated by the Church) about their bodies and their sexuality — an ignorance which Mujeres Libres saw as another root of women’s subordination to men.

It is important to note that its program and organization were quite different from those of other women’s organizations in Spain at the time, most of which were the “women’s auxiliary” of various party organizations. Mujeres Libres constantly reminded members, “In the midst of all the sacrifices...we are working to find ourselves, and to situate ourselves in an atmosphere which, until now, has been denied to us: social action.” In an important parallel to the anarchist movement’s position about social revolution, they argued that women’s emancipation need not await the end of the war, and that women could best help both themselves and the war effort by insisting on their equality and participating as fully as possible in the ongoing struggle.
Overcoming women’s subordination, however, and incorporating them fully into revolutionary struggle, required more than an attack on the sources of subordination. Women’s sense of self had to change, so that they could begin to see themselves as independent, effective, actors in the social arena.

Consciousness raising was an essential aspect of their program, and the organization lost few opportunities to engage women in the process. They set up talks and discussion groups, to let women get used to hearing the sound of their own voices in public. What they called "preparation social" became an element of every project they undertook. In cooperation with unions, for example, groups of women from Mujeres Libres visited women working in factories, ostensibly to get them more involved in union activity. In groups of two or three, Mujeres Libres ‘‘organizers’’ would visit up to fifty factories a day, stopping the assembly lines for fifteen minutes or so to talk with the workers. While they were there, they gave little ‘‘pep talks’’ to the women about the significance of their participation as women. In some areas (e.g. Terrassa), they arranged for women unionists to meet independently of men, both so that they could talk about issues of particular concern to them, and so that they could support one another to participate more actively in the union meeting. In Barcelona, the group set up “flying daycare centers,” to provide in-home child care for women to enable them to attend union meetings.

The separate organization allowed them the freedom to develop independent programming that appealed to the specific needs of women, and to address, directly, the issue of their subordination. In addition, as a number of women were quick to point out, it forced them to take responsibility in areas where, otherwise, more “experienced” men would “naturally” take over.

Conclusions

Clearly, the women of Mujeres Libres drew not only on their own experiences within the anarcho-syndicalist movement, but also on the perspectives on society and social change which animated it. Their goal of empowering women through participation in groups which responded to the specific realities of their day-to-day lives followed directly from the anarchist commitment to direct action. Neither individual male anarchists nor the major organizations of the Spanish anarchist movement were necessarily as enthusiastic about (or even supportive of) their programs and accomplishments as Mujeres Libres might have wished. Nevertheless, they attempted to put into practice an orientation toward social and political life to which anarchists had long been committed, at least in theory: a respect for diversity.

The women of Mujeres Libres were thoroughly rooted in anarchism and in the goals and strategies of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement. Yet, in insisting on the need for separate organization, they apparently moved beyond the bounds of where the movement, as such, was willing to go. While their own accomplishments may have been limited—most dramatically because of the wartime situation in which they were operating—their programs suggest a vision of the relationship between individuality and community from which there is much we can learn.

Consciousness raising is essentially a process of empowerment. Recognizing that others share concerns and difficulties which we assume to be “personal” is an important first step toward the development of a “political” consciousness—a sense that our lives are socially constructed and that the world can be changed. So, although it takes place in the person of individuals, consciousness raising is, fundamentally, a collective endeavor. Its success is rooted in—and, in fact, helps to create and cement—a sense of community. And it is that sense of community which, in turn, empowers its participants.

That insight is an important one—but one which has often been lost in the claims that feminism is about “personal advancement” or “equal opportunity.” The classical liberal per-
pective (to which those of us who are citizens of the US are heir), is that community and individuality are necessarily at odds. More accurate, I think, is the perspective from which Mujeres Libres acted: that people achieve their full personhood not in conflict with, but in the context of, a community — but one which, of course, values and respects them.

Let’s look at that in a bit more detail. As citizens of “liberal democratic politics,” in particular, many of us tend to equate “community” with sameness. Hence, the common assumption (often leveled against anarchists or other egalitarians) that community is incompatible with creativity and individuality (because creativity is stifled by it). That claim is the source, I think, of some significant problems in American politics, feminist or other. For we seem to operate on the assumption that truly democratic politics, respectful of individuality, is rooted in contract and based on interests — interests which (in us) as individuals, divorced from any race, class, or cultural connections. Much of liberal democratic politics seems based on the assumption that organizing around differences (especially those based in race, class, gender, or culture) undermines the unity of the whole.

As members of non-dominant groups in the US have been pointing out for some time, however — most recently, within the context of the women’s movement — such an approach to politics (and personhood) in fact disempowers people, and can well serve to deny our individuality. We are coming to see, for example, that there is probably no such thing as “woman” — each of us is rooted in the particular cultural, ethnic, religious, etc. communities in which she grew up and to which she is, to some extent, connected. To ask of one another that we discard those identities (and the connections in which they are rooted) in the name of some abstract “womanhood” is to deny the richness of our particular lives — in much the same way that men’s reticence to acknowledge women’s particular experience in the name of “humanity” denies us the fullness of our personhood and history.

We need to begin to think about “community” in other ways — which explode its alleged incompatibility with personal development. And here is where I think anarchist notions can be of some help. First, there are, surely, aspects of ourselves which we can realize only in relationships with others — and some of these require networks of others, i.e. community. We must begin to see communities not just as a means to allow each of us to pursue our self-defined ends, but as the contexts within which we realize, and express, the fullness of who we are. Conversely, since virtually all of us will have roots in more than one of these contexts, any community which is to nurture our wholeness must not only recognize, but actively welcome, diversity into its very definition.

What I find so appealing about the women of Mujeres Libres is that, in some way, they were struggling with these same issues. With all their commitment to the goals of the anarchist movement — and their rootedness in its community — they recognized that something was missing for them, as women. That was a painful realization for most of them. Some of those who were to become activists even opposed the idea of a separate organization when they first heard about it, because the anarcho-syndicalist movement in which they had been nurtured was so important to them that they feared anything which might undermine its unity. Yet, over time, each of those women came to insist that, both for the sake of her own and other women’s development (as persons and as anarchists) and, in fact, for the sake of the movement itself, a separate organization, devoted to women’s emancipation, was essential.

Their experience can, perhaps, point us toward a different way of thinking about our reality. In their view, women could be empowered — and active — in the anarchist movement only if they could at the same time acknowledge and build on their ties of common experience with other women. Although many men in the anarchist movement saw their program as divisive of unity, these women most certainly did not. Rather, they seemed to insist, it is not only the acceptance, but the nurturing of such ties within the context of the larger movement which, ultimately, makes possible an empowered unity.

Mujeres Libres had little time to turn its vi-
sions into reality, so we cannot know how much they might have accomplished. Nor, so far as I can tell, did they have a clear formula for how to make it all work. But their own organization was a federation of autonomous local groups; and the relationship they wanted (but could not have) with the larger anarchist movement was also that of an autonomous set of units operating within the larger, federated, whole. Perhaps that model (and a sense of anarchist commitments to direct action and spontaneous organization) can provided us with some clues.

I think there is much we can learn from their efforts — from their recognition that, if we are truly to respect and nurture individuality, we must provide not only “small communities” to empower, but larger communities which respect and welcome that diversity (and the diversity embodied in each of us). Rather than assuming that we must sacrifice the full development of our personhood for the good of the community, or sacrifice the rewards of community life and action for individual ends, we can begin to imagine — and strive for — a world where creativity is nurtured through connection, and communities can truly empower their members.


Martha Ackelsberg teaches in the government department at Smith College and is active in the women’s movement. She has been exploring how insights from the women’s movement about friendship and community can contribute to and challenge traditional political theory. This article is part of a book she is writing on Mujeres Libres.

Footnotes

8. Interview, January 4 and 6, 1982.

HAS YOUR SUB EXPIRED?

If you have received a renewal notice recently, please don’t hesitate and send it in with your payment right away. You won’t miss an issue of RADICAL AMERICA and we’ll get some financial resuscitation! Here’s what your mailing label looks like:

11/30/94 C0184 001 100000
Neil Kinnock
14 Surrey Estate
London E4 England

The circled number is the last date of your current subscription. We have kept longtime subscribers on beyond the end of their subs. So, when you renew, please include enough payment to cover the issues you have been receiving since your last payment. If you have any questions, call or write the office.
Sour Cream.
SPIRITS IN THE 
MATERIAL WORLD

Gay Publishing, Pornography and the Gay Male

Michael Bronski

Bob had turned about on the bed, seeking out Jack’s trembling flesh, now pointing out at him strongly. As he shifted into position he felt Jack reaching for him in a like manner, and soon they were engaged — one on the other — their joint actions becoming more feverish by the second. They began at the exact same time, and now they knew no holding back. Their lips crushed together, then hands sought flesh, and they were sweating, grasping, and slamming together and finally moaning until their throats burst into shrieks of shattering ecstasy. Then they lay back, breathing heavily, limp. They cuddled together, holding one another without embarrassment and it seemed obvious to Jack that he had never been so satisfied before in all his life.¹

In the late 1950s, mass production of pornography for gay men began. This passage from Gay Whore #1 (1964) is indicative of the important political function of gay pornography. In A Room of One’s Own, Virginia Woolf talks about the importance of the sentence, “Chloe liked Olivia” in a popular novel.² Until then, women in literature had related to each other primarily through men. Similarly, “it seemed obvious to Jack that he had never been so satisfied before in all his life” was for many people, gay men especially, a revelation and an essential statement.

There has never been any hard and fast rule for defining pornography. Generally presumed to be some depiction of sex, either in pictorial or written form, the limits of what is or is not pornographic change across culture and history. What for the Restoration was perfectly permissible, the Victorians considered highly immoral, and to us seems unexceptionable. Even the current categories of “hard core” and “soft core” are arbitrary social and semi-legal classifications. Whatever the specifics of a definition, it is impossible to separate any pornography from its social context. In a sexually repressive culture, any depiction of sexuality is unusual. In a society which has a distinct heterosexual bias, any depiction of gay male sexuality is, for gay men, a breath of fresh air.
Until ten years ago, most pornography was restricted, homosexual pornography even more so. It was difficult to obtain, and often, illegal to possess. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a gay artist named Blade left his pornographic drawings and stories in unmarked packages in bars or secured in bus terminal lockers, passing the key from one viewer to the next to insure safety. Pornography, like the sexual lives of gay men, had to be kept quiet out of fear of persecution or arrest.

In a world that denies the very existence of homosexuality and homosexual desires, gay pornography performs two vital functions. It depicts sexual desire, bringing it out of the mind and into the reality of the material world. Porn becomes a sexual object. The sexual identity of the viewer is consequently reinforced, bolstered by the fact that the viewer has been engaged by, and responded to, a sexual object.

For many gay men, pornography was one of the few ways to assess and affirm their sexual feelings and desires. Pornography, by presenting the male body or male sexuality in a glorified form — went beyond depicting and defining desire. It attempted to compensate for the generally negative and oppressive social position of gay sexuality. Because homosexuality was taboo, gay male pornography — or indeed, any writing about gay men — was considered more dangerous and was prohibited more strictly than its heterosexual counterpart.

Until just 30 years ago, the legal definition of pornography was so broad as to include any material on homosexuality which did not conform to specific scientific perspectives. In 1953, the Postmaster General of Los Angeles held up the distribution of the August issue of ONE for two weeks. A year later, he seized the October 1954 issue and demanded that ONE show cause that it was not "obscene, lewd, lascivious, and filthy." ONE brought the decision to federal district court and after a long delay, the trial began in early 1956. The defense argued that ONE was "serious, responsible" and that its overriding tone was "with all its imperfections and amateurism... one of sincerity." Both the court and the appeals court refused to view the case as freedom of speech.

The two offending articles were "Sappho Remembered," a short story about a lesbian's coming out, and "Lord Samuel and Lord Montague," a satiric poem about aristocratic homosexuality in England. The court was very specific in its objections.

This article is nothing more than cheap pornography calculated to promote lesbianism. It falls far short of dealing with homosexuality from a scientific, historic, or critical point of view... The poem is dirty, vulgar, and offensive to the moral senses. An article may be vulgar, offensive, and indecent even though not regarded as such by a particular group... because their own social or moral standards are far below those of the general community... Social standards are fixed by and for the great majority and not by and for a hardened or weakened minority.

The language of the court makes it quite clear that the basic issue was the power of the "great majority" over the "hardened or weakened minority." Despite the noises about "social standards," the real battle was about freedom of speech, access to information, and most importantly, freedom of the imagination. Existing social standards precluded any depiction, graphic or written, of homosexual love or relationships. The opinions of openly gay people did not count because they had, by their very nature, "social or moral standards... far below those of the general community." Thus defined, any homosexual writing was ipso facto pornographic.

Although ONE lost its original case, it appealed to the Supreme Court and on January 3, 1958, the court ruled that the issue of ONE in question was not obscene, and that it was a matter of free speech. The legal battle had been won.

Thus for the first time in American publishing history, a decision binding on every court and every public agency in the country now stands: a decision affirming in effect that it is in no

This article is excerpted from a chapter in the forthcoming book Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility by Michael Bronski. (Boston: South End Press, 1984). For information on the book, you can contact the Press at 302 Columbus Ave., Boston, MA 02116.
While it is true that the viewer, sexually aroused, lusts after the object, it is equally true that he may also want to be that object. This element of identification with as well as desire for the sexual object distinguishes gay and straight porn. This is perfectly illustrated in the 1976 porn film *Heavy Equipment*. In an old magic book, a meek young clerk finds a formula which will transform his physical appearance. Looking through porn magazines, he finds a picture he likes, mixes his elixir, and, reciting the incantations, becomes the magazine image. The fact that identification exists simultaneously with objectification transforms the power relationships which some have presumed to be inherent in the viewing of sexual images.12

Although pornography today is easily available, arguments against it are as widespread as the product itself. Religious, legal, right-wing, left-wing and even gay liberation fights have raged over the meaning, effect, and worth of pornography. The power of sexual images is strong, generating high feelings on all sides. These debates often go beyond pornography to examine the sexual images prevalent in many aspects of our culture: advertising, television, the record industry, theater. The dissemination of sexual images in the mainstream media — especially the male image over the last 15 years — is closely connected with the emergence and growth of the gay liberation movement.

Gay male pornography is twice forbidden. It is clear from the lower court’s decision in the *ONE* case that the very depiction of homosexuality in anything other than a negative context was at one time considered dangerous and subversive. In our culture, all sexual images are suspect. Heterosexual pornography is tolerated because it is thought to reinforce “normal” sexual and power arrangements within the culture. Homosexual pornography, however, does not fall into this category and is generally considered threatening. Gloria Steinem’s hetero-sexual analysis of gay male pornography is misguided, and Kathleen Barry’s assertion that homosexual pornography “appeals not only to gay but straight men”13 is unsubstantiated. Homosexuality itself is such a threat to the prevailing social/sexual power structure that its pornographic representation terrifies people. Homosexuality and pornography are both unacceptable forms of behavior and expression; they are twice as potent when linked together. It is because the power and force of the sexual image is so heady, so potent, that there is such fear of it. One of the most common complaints against homosexual pornography (or any homosexual writing or imagery for that matter) is that it will “cause” people, especially young people, to become homosexual. In a sense this is true. Pornography is powerful because it represents sexual desire. In a culture which is determined to keep all sexuality — and especially non-reproductive sexuality — under tight control, the depiction of sexuality is a real threat. The women’s movement has always fought for women to control reproductive sexuality. The issue of total sexual freedom was not addressed fully at first, but gay liberation has had the effect of making it an integral debate within feminism. In a society that desperately pretends that homosexuality does not exist, gay pornography tells the truth. It also represents an enticing yet dangerous promise. There is a direct correlation between the social repression of an object or idea and the power that object may carry.

Another powerful, threatening characteristic of pornography is that it blurs the lines between fantasy and reality. While there are definite rules which govern our sexual behavior, imagination is not understood and not controllable; it is also boundless. Because the sexual imagination can and does respond to all sorts of stimuli, it is not possible to protect and shelter it. Sexual images, however, because they are both blatant and suggestive, play a large role in sparking the imagination. Pornography may present us with images, ideas, or feelings we have never experienced before, or it may ignite dormant feelings and desires which needed affirmation.

Gay pornography often features men who are unusually good looking, or examples of a sexually desirable “type”: musclebuilder, preppy, leatherman, or jock. These are glorifications of the male figure. However, sometimes, the models fall into the ordinary realm of good looks, instilling in the viewer a sort of boy-next-door feeling. The variety of “types” in gay male porn is indicative of the impulse to eroticize
In the mid-1970s, feminists began to question and reevaluate the place that pornography had appropriated in American culture. Some theorists claimed that pornography was not just symptomatic of sexism and misogyny, but was a primary cause of women's oppression. Robin Morgan summed up this position by stating that "pornography is the theory; rape is the practice." Most feminist objections to pornography centered around the fact that women were objectified and thus dehumanized by pornography, increasing their vulnerability to rape, battering, and sexual abuse. Some feminists attacked all pornography with the argument that "where there is any attempt to separate the sexual experience from the total person, that first act of objectification is perversion."

Some writers, convinced of the universal truth of heterosexual dynamics, attacked gay male pornography for the same reasons they attacked heterosexual pornography. Kathleen Barry stated that "homosexual pornography...acts out the same dominant and subordinate roles as heterosexual pornography." And Gloria Steinem has stated that gay male porn "may imitate this [heterosexual] violence by putting a man in the 'feminine' role of the victim."

The analysis of pornography, and its misapplication to the gay male experience, raises interesting questions about the differences between heterosexuality and homosexuality and about the nature of gay male porn. When Robin Morgan stated that heterosexual pornography is propaganda for rape, she postured a dynamic in which the viewer, through his desire, becomes a predator, and the image, a victim. In fact, the relationship between homosexual men and gay male pornography is completely different.
The court ruling set a legal precedent for the production and distribution of male homosexual pornography. The heterosexual porn industry was also growing by leaps and bounds. Films, magazines, and novels proliferated over the next two decades, although the Playboy type of newsstand magazines were probably getting most of the attention. Legislating the restriction of sexually explicit material became a hot topic for the next 25 years. In 1957, the Supreme Court ruled in the Roth case that "obscenity" was not protected by the Constitution. For the next 12 years, there was endless discussion over what exactly constituted obscenity. In 1969, in Stanley v. Georgia, they declared that the individual had a constitutional right to own or view such material. For all the hair-splitting of the Supreme Court’s definition, the ability to purchase sexually explicit material in any given store in any given community boiled down to who was in city hall and whether the police had been paid off. The confusion about the precision of legal statutes and language led to generally more permissive attitudes towards such material. Publications like Penthouse, Oui, and Hustler used sexual pictures as come-ons. What they were actually selling was a "lifestyle." They used high-tone fiction and current events reporting as a cloak of respectability. The truth was they existed more for the ad content than for their features or their sexual material. In the early 1970s similar gay lifestyle magazines appeared. Mandate, In Touch, Blueboy, Honcho and Numbers featured male nudes, sexually explicit stories, and pieces on travel and middle class living. Like Playboy, they featured advertising and sales pitches for items that went with the class status. While their sale on newsstands represented a major step forward in tolerance of homosexuality by the American public (based partly upon the inroads which gay liberation had made into the public consciousness), the real key to success was cooperation with the prevailing climate of consumer capitalism. Pornography — by whatever definition or sexual persuasion — reflected major cultural and economic changes. Not only was producing and marketing sexuality profitable, but the use of explicit sexuality to sell other products caused a major shift in the consumer mentality.
many images of men as possible. While certain magazines may feature a certain style — Drummer capitalizes on the older, mature hirsute man, while In Touch is more interested in the smooth-skinned, late adolescent — a wide variety of pornographic gay images are being produced and appreciated.

This reality/fantasy split in pornography is best seen in films. There is a long standing porn tradition that all sex scenes end with a "money" or "cum" shot. The male lead must ejaculate in full view of the audience. (Although de rigueur in heterosexual films, this is even more important in all-male films.) The point is to prove to the audience that they have not been cheated. They have seen actual sex — and sexual pleasure — on the screen. While most people accept movies as strictly "made up," the "proof" of reality within a fantasy is peculiar to porn films. It would certainly be considered odd for audiences to want to know that an actor was really shot as part of a movie.14

Susan Sontag has written that photographs — because they can be created to suit a certain aesthetic as well as convey a seemingly exact approximation of reality — can be either art or evidence. But because a photographer consciously shapes reality to fit his/her vision, they are rarely both. Pornographic films seem to fall somewhere in between the two. Some of the more adventurous gay male filmmakers like Wakefield Poole and especially Peter de Rome have done away with the "cum shot" and attempted to make thoroughly erotic films without the usual trappings of the genre. However, whatever artistic merits some pornography may have, its function as "evidence" is an important part of the gay experience.

The drawings and photos of the mid-1950s Physique magazines were presented and marketed as aesthetic material. The advent of mass-marketed hard core pornography eminated the pretense of "art" and the photos stood as clear "evidence" that homosexual acts did indeed occur. Photographs have always seemed more real than other forms of visual representation: they must be true since the camera never lies. The social, cultural, and sexual impact of a picture of two men fucking cannot be underestimated.

Looking through early photographic porn now, the men seem extremely unattractive by current porn standards. They almost contradict Susan Sontag’s maxim: "Nobody ever discovered ugliness through photographs. But many through photographs have discovered beauty...what moves people to take photographs is finding something beautiful." The "beauty" of the early photographs was perhaps not slick, but it was the beauty of gay male sexuality. By 1970, a distinct market for gay male pornography had been discovered and both fly-by-night and professional studios and publishers flourished. Large scale operations like Brentwood, Target, Colt, and Arena packaged and sold 8 1/2 by 11 photobooks with quality reproductions, good paper, and clean color. But these books represented more than the discovery of a new market and the deregulation of pornography. They were a response to the acceptance of the eroticization of the male body and the gradually changing self-perception and self-acceptance of gay men.

Mainstream culture disdains sexual desirability. Before the 1970s it was (weak) women for heterosexual men and for heterosexual women it was (strong) men. For homosexuals of either gender — that was a problem: there weren’t supposed to be any homosexuals. In porn, or in the mainstream novels that dealt with homosexuality before Stonewall, there is a clear pattern. The typical gay man desired ‘straight trade’: hustlers or young boys. Anyone but another gay man. (Of course real gay men did have lovers, sex with other gay men, and gay male friends — but there was little literary recognition of this reality.)

In the 1950s the predominant stereotype of a gay man was the limp wristed swish. He was mocked by the general culture and even early homophile publications like ONE or Mattachine Review were unwilling to claim him. Most of the sexual iconography from this early period was an attempt to break away from, or modify, sexual stereotypes of gay men. If the gay stereotype was the 90 pound weakling of the Charles Atlas body-building ads, the “real” men had to be muscular and well built. Homosexual attraction to muscle magazines like Iron Man or Strength and Health was partially the simple appeal of uncovered male bodies. But
these publications were also appropriate sexual objects for gay men because they were clearly unlike the standard gay stereotype. When gay-oriented muscle magazines first appeared — *Vim* and *Physique Pictorial* — the images were slightly different. The men were muscular but they were also slightly effeminate; they had the slim waists and shoulders which were generally associated with the image of the queen, but they also sported huge arm, pectoral, and thigh muscles.

In pornographic films and photos from the early 1970s, these trends are still evident. Without social permission for self-love or self-esteem, gay men were attracted to — and bought — images unlike gay stereotypes. In a replay of the social and cultural aesthetics of John Addington Symonds or Baron von Gloeden, a great deal of gay male pornography worshipped youth. The images in this porn were clean cut, all-American high school or college types. Even when the models were obviously older — in their 20s or even early 30s — they still retained their boyish manner. Part of this was a reaction to the stereotype of homosexuals as dirty old men. Youth is also equated with innocence and is therefore not stereotypically gay.

As pornography and other sexual images proliferated in the 1970s and 80s, the number of different "types" and images in gay porn also increased. The advent of soft-core magazines like *In Touch*, *Mandate*, *Blueboy*, and *Hondo*, beginning in 1974, brought the material to the newsstands and also reflected changing tastes in attractiveness. The idea that the sexually desirable object had to be the "other" was diminishing. The straight-looking counterpart to the swish stereotype was now replaced with very masculine looking models who were also obviously gay. Over time, "types" were created which reflected gay men's self-images as well as their relationship to mainstream culture. For example, gay "clones" sported slim, but well-built bodies, short masculine haircuts, tight jeans, work boots, tee shirts, and a denim or leather jacket. The clone made his way into the mainstream and could be found selling assorted artifacts — jeans or boots, for example — to a straight market. It became difficult, in certain parts of certain cities, to tell gay men from real construction workers, or straight men dressing like gay men from gay men dressing like straight construction workers.
The average age of the models in gay pornography has risen over the last ten years. The slim hairless images of youth have gradually been replaced with more fleshy bodies. Clean shaven models gave way to bearded, hirsute men, whose demeanor and attitude spelt maturity and experience rather than innocence. Even the all-American look gave way to more ethnic models. Part of the reason for the growing differences in age was the fact that a huge number of the baby boom men were now between 28 and 45, forming the largest group of gay producers and consumers in the country. Many of them came out after Stonewall. One of the most profound effects of the gay movement upon the lives and loves of gay men is that it gave them the social permission to like and to love themselves. The burden of being homosexual was lifted. Rather than furtively seeking the “other,” gay men were finally able to enjoy their own sexuality, their own sexual images, and their own “types.”

Although pornography may be a reflection of gay men’s self-images and desires it is also an industry, which like any industry functions by selling many things to many people. Since the mid-1970s, gay male pornography has become a very profitable business — not as profitable as heterosexual porn, but a well-established, money-making concern nevertheless. As a commodity, pornography is exploited.

Hard core pornography, gay or straight, is usually sold as pornography. That is, depictions of sexual activity are sold as such: hardcore porn sells sex. Soft-core porn uses sex to sell other products. In Playboy (and its other heterosexual imitators) as well as Blueboy, Playguy, Mandate and In Touch, the sexual pictures are a come-on, a sales pitch to get people to buy the magazine. Once people buy the magazine, they can be exposed to the ads that fill in the spaces between the nude pictures. The real motivation behind the gay soft-core porn magazines is not sexual stimulation, but enticement to buy. The slick pornography, glossy covers, good reproduction techniques, and occasionally interesting articles are paid for by mass distribution and large advertising income.

Many gay business people believe that the success of these magazines is an indication of the acceptance of homosexuality in American culture. In a sense they are right. Over the past 30 years there has been a growing acceptance of more open sexuality. What made Blueboy or Mandate palatable to the public at large was not that they were presenting positive gay images, but that they fit in perfectly with American consumerist values. As a “lifestyle” gay was ok.

There is probably no way for these magazines to escape the connections between sexuality and consumerism: they don’t try to since they are turning a profit. It is not a sin to sell ads in order to be able to publish gay material, but the entire purpose of the gay soft core publications is to promote gay consumerism. Even Drummer, which began in the early 1970s as a magazine for gay men interested in S/M and leather, and eschewed much commercialism, within a few years was promoting a Mr. Leather contest (sponsored by leather bars throughout the country) and running long feature articles on gay life in Houston or Chicago, carefully mentioning all the leather shops.

There is nothing unusual about magazines existing to sell a product or a lifestyle. The New Yorker gets its readers to look at expensive li- quor, clothing, and furniture ads by presenting top-drawer fiction, intelligent reviews, and funny cartoons. But the gay soft core magazines are exploiting the positive gay identity created by the gay movement. In many people’s minds — gay as well as straight — there is little difference between being gay and having a “gay lifestyle.”
What is the effect that these magazines and their message have had upon gay and straight culture? They have made images of gay male sexuality available to a large number of people, an especially important thing for gay men who may be insecure in their identities. They have also promoted a notion of gay sensibility, and a gay community — albeit one based on consumerism — both to the straight and the gay worlds. They have insisted, by their very presence, that gay people exist and are not going away.

Gay life has always allowed and promoted fantasy because homosexuality itself is such a forbidden fantasy. Because it breaks taboos about sexuality and gender it allows and encourages sexual experimentation. It promoted the eroticization of the male, which has had a profound effect upon popular culture. It celebrates sexual experimentation and endorses sexual freedom; this too has been felt in the mainstream. Even the flexibility of gender roles, embodied in such films as Tootsie, Yentl, and La Cage aux Folles, has moved out of gay culture to influence ideas and actions in the straight world. To a very large degree, gay male culture has contributed to the increased sexualization of mainstream culture, some of this in conjunction with the feminist vision of freeing women from repressive gender and sexual roles. It has contributed to a re-evaluation of the prevailing ideologies about sexuality, gender, beauty, and art. Gays have been assimilated through economic and cultural upward mobility. Soft core gay porn magazines reflect this by combining class and culture and presenting them in a way that will not conflict with prevailing cultural attitudes.

American life, of which consumerism is an essential part, depends on the repression of sexuality. Production of any product is dependent upon the purchasers feeling that they are not satisfied with what they have. Repressed sexuality guarantees that one will never be satisfied. Therefore, it is not surprising that good pornography — open, honest representations of sexuality — is hard to come by. The commercial variety is produced to match prevailing marketability standards rather than explore sexuality and the human sexual imagination.

Footnotes
5. ONE, March 1957, pp. 16-17.
10. ibid. p. 175.
14. The mass appeal, and revulsion towards, the alleged “snuff” film of the late 1970s was partly due to the fact that this dicotomy was supposedly broken down. Because so much attention was focused upon whether a woman was actually killed during the making of the movie, few people commented the film as if this were true was also offensive.

Michael Bronski is a gay activist and writer whose film and theater criticism and innovative articles on sexuality have appeared in periodicals ranging from Fag Rag to the Boston Herald American and to the Boston Phoenix, Stallion and Gay Community News. “Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sexuality” is his first book. He is currently working with Cindy Patton on a history and analysis of pornography entitled “Dirty Pictures: A Radical Re-Visioning of Pornography.”
The following interview with Michael Bronski was conducted, and edited by Radical America editors Deb Whippen and Joe Interrante. The interview took place Oct. 24, 1984.

RA: It seems what you're saying in the article is that the feminist theories about pornography don't apply across the board to all kinds of pornography, specifically gay male pornography. Is that true?

Michael: Many of the major feminist pornography theorists have constructed or articulated theories which don't take into consideration that there are many different types of porn, not only heterosexual and gay porn, but also different forms of porn, and that one theory may work for pornographic films but not still-life photography. And certainly not for gay porn which it hasn't dealt with at all. Andrea Dworkin claims that straight men read gay male pornography, which I think is just untrue, completely. I think that maybe they want to, but they certainly would never be caught dead doing it. And Gloria Steinem in an article in Ms. magazine said that gay porn was as bad as straight porn because someone was active and someone was passive and that it was the same heterosexual dynamic. I think that she actually meant that the man who was getting fucked was passive and the man who was fucking was active, and that's such a presumptive notion for other people's sexual experiences. Generally Gloria Steinem is much better than that. And I think that I have some problems with some of the theories themselves. I can understand how viewing certain images of women can be upsetting and feel very degrading to women. Yet I think that there is a whole psychology that goes beneath the experience of just looking at the porn which people don't really touch upon. Like a friend of mine who goes out and cruises straight porno houses because after a certain time of night a lot of gay men go to straight porno houses for sex, he's experienced that straight men are more interested in watching the men in the movies than in watching the woman.

RA: Why?

Michael: Because they identify with the men, they're comparing themselves with the men.

Although porn is certainly a reflection of the current sexual politics and status of the real world I think that the relationship of the viewer and the image is much more complicated than what people end up discussing. And that's for straight porn. I think for gay porn it's even more complicated. Which doesn't invalidate the fact that women can look at het porn and feel terrible, because it is mistreating them individually.

RA: You claim that gay men can identify with both sexual roles on the screen and I want to say, yes, two roles. Where do they come from? What do they represent? And I also hear you saying that in het porn the man identifies with the man and not with the woman. But to me that doesn't argue anything. I want to know why that happens, what's on the screen in terms of power and gender dynamics. I mean something is being constructed that men are identifying with.

Michael: I think that's true. But on a basic level most men who define themselves as heterosexual would gravitate immediately toward the male image, and the construction might be a power construction between he and the woman. And that might reinforce his original identification.

RA: I guess my question is about how it is different. I would interpret Gloria Steinem as say-
ing that the gay male relationship on the screen parallels heterosexual gender relations, which are oppressive. She's saying that it's the same, and you're saying that no, it's different, she doesn't understand the experience. So the question is: How is gay porn different, what are the types of roles on the screen, how have they evolved over time with gay liberation?

Michael: Well one thing is that all the theorists work from a very heterosexual model, which is that two people are at opposite ends and there's a power imbalance to begin with. You are taught that the object of sexual desire is the opposite of you: if you're a man, it's a woman, a weak woman; and if you're a woman it's a strong man. That analysis is totally scrambled with the gay porn. You can be either. In the 1940s and 50s gay men were taught that they weren't supposed to like themselves so that the images which appeared in gay male pornography are of young "chicken" types, or small, thin blonds; or they were straight men—the muscle builders, married men.

After the gay movement began, gay men began to like themselves more, to really love themselves. They could then relate to people who were like them. I think you begin to see a shift in the porn from the 50s to the 80s where the phenomenon of the older man began to happen eight to ten years ago. Men who were turning 30 or 40 were discovering they liked themselves and how they looked, and had real social permission for the first time to actually go off and go to bed with men who were like themselves.

RA: So you're saying that instead of being attracted to an "other," which is a heterosexual model, gay men were able to like the "self."

Michael: Yes. I think that's a direct result of the gay movement, that men are able to love themselves. There is the old joke that gay men look like clones. But it's also true that if all the clones can fall in love with each other, they must like themselves. I do think that a lot of early writing about pornography began from a real urge to alleviate the suffering of women.
One option for that was to do away with all power. But this may not be a possibility. I think that solution is naive and that recently some women have been talking about other ways of looking at these questions.

RA: What do you think of people like John Stoltenberg, as a gay man who tries to apply feminist theory to his writing?

Michael: I think that it's generally misguided. There was an early slogan both from feminism and from gay men which was that the "political was the personal, and the personal was the political." I think that Stoltenberg may be very passionate in his need to change social things, but I think that a lot of it does not come out of his own experience. One of his essays actually says that an erection is an unnatural physical state and is purely a product of aggressive feelings. One of his proofs is that it is painful if bent. Well, it's painful when caught in moving bicycle spokes and closed doors too but that doesn't prove anything. One can't negate the body and be able to have politics which are connected to experience. It's too bad that some men who have articulated feminist thinking seem to be crackpots when so many men don't give feminism any thought whatsoever. I'd like to have a middle ground where gay men can understand what women are saying and then say: 'no, actually from experience it feels like this'—some sort of dialogue. As opposed to the few gay men who might say, 'yes, you're totally right, I'm a horrible worm, destroy me'. Or the other group of gay men that say, 'they're a bunch of bitches, I can't stand them'.

In the book I disagree with what certain feminist writers have said, but I don't mean to discount them. It's a beginning and it has to go a lot further. The discussion has to be viewed from a position that there are a lot of different perspectives and experiences. The whole range of questions of sexual issues is much more complex than what people have yet discussed.

RA: A lot of feminist thought is from the position of the viewed, about how the characters are being portrayed. A reality is that these are real people working under horrible conditions.

Michael: I've been saying positive things about pornography. But it's an industry with the drawback industries have. One is that it produces a lot of junk because you have to keep producing to make a lot of money. Also you can get away with producing very poor quality stuff and keep people happy because they have nothing else to compare it to. And it exploits a lot of people. Certainly women in straight porn. But I think that the men are underpaid too. Maybe a better way to deal with the exploitation would be to call for a unionization of the porn industry, which would at least protect the people that are involved in it.

RA: You mention in the article that gay male porn was originally put out in the absence of a strong gay male community. What has been the relationship of porn to that community?

Michael: I think that the porn industry for gay men is recent. You had muscle men magazines in the 40s and 50s that became gay favorites. Yet these magazines would be attacking the queers all the time. I have one that editorializes about how they didn't want the gay men looking at their pictures. In the 50s you had Physique Pictorials and they were produced for gay men, maybe by straight men. But there wasn't a lot of mass produced porn for gay men. In the 60s there is a more cohesive community and people can get on mailing lists and buy things. I think that the growth of the porn
industry ran parallel to the growth of a nationally recognized, less isolated gay community. Which is both good and bad. It was one way for people to connect. It was also one way to sell people a lot of terrible pictures and not very well put together publications. Then at some point the hard porn/soft porn distinction began.

RA: Is that a splitting that happened at a particular time?

Michael: It began in the mid-sixties with the *Advocate* [a nationally distributed gay male lifestyle magazine]. If you read *One* [an early homophile civil rights magazine] you notice it has almost no ads. But then producers realized that there was a nationwide community which you could not only sell things to, but that was eager to have objects which they could identify with their sexual lifestyle. You could get the gay male audience to look at these ads by selling them porn and this began the commercial notion of a gay lifestyle. This sort of thinking began with *Playboy*, they sold you a heterosexual lifestyle. Men bought the magazine for naked women, but were actually being sold this philosophy, which was reinforced through consumerism. What most gay men see when they buy pornography is largely the soft porn life-

style magazine like the *Advocate*.

RA: What do you see as the relationship between gay male lifestyle porn and mainstream culture?

Michael: You have a community which is growing, which is fighting for its rights, and which to a large degree wants to be accepted by mainstream culture. In the cultural economy you can't separate that from buying, selling, and having money. It's true that putting these magazines out on the newstand was a breakthrough, but it was accompanied by a false belief that just because they'll take your money, they'll like you. People now actively go after the gay market. And I don't mean to stigmatize gay porn magazines alone with the selling of a lifestyle. For example, the *New Yorker* sells you the *New Yorker* lifestyle, which is Steuben glass and expensive furs. *Ms.* magazine has a history of horribly exploitive covers. There was one cover of a little girl pulling her panties down that was meant to sell an article on child abuse and kiddy porn. I mean if that had been on the cover of *Hustler* people would have been outraged. Clearly it was a marketing technique.

RA: The market economy that puts gay experience out there publicly is a capitalist vehicle that is not really built in gay interests. That information can then be manipulated.

Michael: The gay community always existed, people knew one another, they had little cocktail parties and got beaten up by the police. But that community began getting visible. Part of their social mobility was connected with the material world, going to classier bars, wearing certain clothes, or having nicer things. And for many of the older gay men that I know, there were certain objects that were considered very gay and yet very classy that moved them into a social sphere where they felt safer. So that gay men in the 50s would all have their statue of Michelangelo's David in the living room. But that was a way for them to say that they were gay and feel safe.

RA: It's legitimizing as well through the use of "High Art" classical image, like Van Gloeden.

Michael: Becoming visible is very much connected to the material world. A lot of the iconography in the 50s was a response to pressures from the outside. I think the kinds of typifi-
cution which exists now comes from within the community, and that it’s a reflection of how gay men feel about themselves on their own terms.

RA: I wonder if today the popular gay types reflect a better sense of self, or if they reflect a different set of problems. The new type of body is just as impossible and self-denying as the old muscle men in some ways.

Michael: You’re right, there’s a new type of muscle queen. But, I’ve found in my own bargoing over the years that new types don’t exist to the exclusion of others. Rather than focus on one right type there’s a whole array and no one type is actually getting out. There’s been an expansion of gay male imagination.

RA: There’s also the issue of safety today. In the era of AIDS many porno movies depict actions which many of us feel that we are no longer able to do. That’s a very practical educational problem, and some magazines are beginning to critique the kind of sexual practices depicted in films. But I’m not sure that if the porn depicted completely safe sex it would function as porn.

Michael: It seems to me that if you decided not to do certain sexual activities, you may want to see it in porn even more because it is a fantasy, and it can be enjoyed vicariously. To be vicarious has always been a function of porn.

RA: On the other hand, the guys on the films are doing these things, and I wonder if the people who are in these films don’t think about safety. Feminist criticism would say at this point that what’s up there on the screen is actually a teaching and that these are real people that are being filmed, that it isn’t a fantasy.

Michael: As opposed to regular Hollywood movies, in porn movies what is on the screen is what is actually happening: people are really having sex. And that’s why you have the cum shot, or the money shot, which is where the man ejaculates, because people have to be told ‘yes, he really came’. But no one really believes that Paul Newman dies at the end of the movie. We don’t really think that someone gets beaten up really badly. We know that when people fall out of buildings that it’s fake. In porno movies people not only expect, they demand, that what is happening is real. In some ways I see that as a positive thing, the idea that what people see on the screen they later act out. The general culture tries to narrow our sexual imagination as much as possible. When people see porn they are being shown other possibilities which they may not have thought they could do. With straight porn I think that the problem is that men go out and do these things to women without asking.

RA: This touches on the issue of justification—that the woman on the screen is representational of a personality-less gender and she becomes an object. How is it that pornography as a medium with these sexual characters portrayed in very little meaningful context, how does influence the portrayal and meaning of sexuality when you take it outside the cinema?

RA: There’s the criticism that rather than teaching positive things about sexuality, porn gives a distorted view in the sense that it wipes out the complexities of interacting with another living, breathing, thinking human being.

Michael: I think that criticism of porn is correct, that it is alienating. It’s an extension of what you see on television and in commercials meant to sell you something. But to criticize it I think that you can’t isolate it, I think that you have to criticize everything else.
The Gulf: A Wider War?

What's behind the Iran-Iraq war, now in its fifth year? What are the prospects for a truce or escalation? Will US forces intervene? MERIP editors and correspondents examine the course of the war, its impact on Iraq and Iran, and Washington's involvement in this special double issue. Just published, The Strange War in the Gulf is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand what's happening in the Gulf and what it means for the rest of us.

Now you can get this special double issue free when you subscribe to MERIP Reports for one year at the astounding low price of $15.95. This is a savings of more than $13.00 off the newsstand cost. For the best coverage of Middle East developments and US policy, subscribe now and don't miss a single issue.

Yes, I want to subscribe to MERIP Reports. Enclosed is $15.95 for a year's subscription (9 issues). Send me my free copy of The Strange War in the Gulf.

Name
Address
City __________________________ State ______ Zip ______

Send your check or money order today to: MERIP Reports (G) • PO Box 1847 • New York, NY 10025

The Non-Jewish Jew
by Isaac Deutscher

Isaac Deutscher’s biographies of Trotsky and Stalin have won him worldwide respect. In his book The Non-Jewish Jew and other essays he writes of his vision of Jewish life, contemporary and traditional. The essays in this book discuss the “remnants of a race” after Hitler; the Jews under Stalin; of the Zionist ideal; the establishment of the state of Israel; the Israeli-Arab war of 1967; and the perils ahead — all with great insight, and with a style that appeals to both scholar and layperson.

To order

Ask for this book at your favorite store, or use this coupon to order by mail.

Enclosed is $______ for ___ copies of The Non-Jewish Jew. (Price postpaid: $6.50.)

name__________________________ address__________________

Send with payment to:
Alyson Publications, Dept. P-35, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118
FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE:

Social Relations among Women in the Welfare State

Ann Withorn

I would rather have a man worker any day. They, at least, are more likely to listen to you and seem sympathetic. The women are meaner. They act like it's their money and you should work hard like they do.

Our office was all women, including the director, and I'll tell you, it was enough to make you hate women. Everybody fought among themselves and hated the director, who was horrible. Then they brought in this nice young man and now everything is much better.

What makes our clinic so wonderful is that it's for women, by women. There is none of that male medical bullshit. We all struggle together to work out better ways to do things. It's not easy, but it is so much nicer not to have men around, laying their ego trips on everybody.

Most social services are provided by women workers to women clients. The "problems" which clients discuss with workers are most often identified with women's traditional roles: family difficulties, childcare, "personal" problems with relatives or associates, health, housing and income difficulties. The major help most women workers can offer is that of traditional female "nurturing": listening, making general and specific suggestions, sympathizing, and, sometimes, providing money and other resources. Both social workers and service recipients suffer from the low status which comes from being involved with the "dirty work" of society. In such an environment, complex relationships arise which often serve to divide women from each other but also have the potential for engendering powerful new alliances.

Over the past fifteen years, many radicals and feminists have become involved with human service agencies, as part of a quest for meaningful, non-alienating work. In my role as a teacher of human service workers (and welfare recipients) in the Boston area, I have met many women who are frustrated by the gap between their hopes for using the human services workplace as a setting for positive connections among women, and the reality of hostility and distrust which often exists among women in the welfare state. The purpose of
this article, then, is to examine the relationships among women in the variety of human service agencies which comprise, or are dependent on, the welfare state to better understand why the relationships are frequently so destructive, and, how they sometimes can transcend this to become an arena for developing feminist solidarity.

The Nature of Human Service Work

What I am calling "human service work" takes place in a variety of settings. There are the large state bureaucracies where (often) unionized state employees act as what Michael Lipsky has called "street level bureaucrats" in providing such essentials as money, public housing, medical and mental health services, or "protective" services to people who are usually poor, and most often, women and their children. These are the settings, to which women clients come unwillingly because they have few other "private" options, that are most often envisioned when we think of the "welfare state." In addition, however, there are many other agencies, often labelled "private" even though much of their funding comes from public contracts, where human services are provided: day care, counseling, elderly services, adult education services, residential settings for retarded and mentally ill people, rehabilitation services for the physically disabled, to name only a few. And some alternative, even feminist, services remain which still provide services with explicit goals of using those services for social change.

In many ways it is difficult to generalize about such a wide variety of activity. The agencies differ in many ways including degree of bureaucratization, the professionalism of their staff and the punitiveness of their function. Both clients and workers probably view their environment differently across the spectrum from big bureaucracy to small agency. On the other hand, my experience suggests that the encounters within most human service agencies are quite similar, with the possibilities for positive and negative relations present almost everywhere. Even in the most punitive welfare setting, a woman client can appreciate a worker who "treats her like a human being"; and the most feminist battered women's shelter can witness hostile, untrusting relationships.

The unifying thread, from this perspective, is that the successful delivery of almost all human services requires that a relationship be established between workers and clients. Given the broader social functions of human service agencies, this relationship usually serves to reinforce and solidify class, race and cultural differences in the broader society. But, because of the nature of the needs women bring to agencies (and despite state efforts to disregard them), sometimes it is still possible for astute women workers to help women clients get what they need and make new, political, alliances — even if they are neither naive about the difficulties nor cynical about the possibilities.

Relationships Between Workers and Clients

Often when feminist workers first develop this analysis of the potential for human service work, they decide it should be easy to "correct" things through their own behavior. The basic feminist insight that women can identify with and support each other, as women, seems overpowering. One young radical was typical in her hopes:

I started out really naive. I thought that since I understood how we were all oppressed as women, and how the welfare department was out to screw us all, then it would be easy for me to work with clients, and with my fellow women unionists. Very quickly I found out that no one trusted me because of these ideas and, worse, that I was reproducing some of the very patterns I criticized.

And yet, most workers don’t even enter the workplace trying to alter things. Instead, they come with professional training which has intentionally distanced them from other women or simply loaded them with all the societal stereotypes about “people in need of service.” Therefore, powerful pressures exist and create a complex dynamic which limit the potential for positive relationships between women clients and women workers.

In the first place, the problem with any simple gender identification is obvious. In almost all service encounters, even in agencies that are not as punitive as welfare departments, the direct service workers is the "gatekeeper," the person who can deny or provide needed re-
sources, lessen or intensify state harassment, and in myriad ways affect the quality of life. The power relationships are direct, and even in non-punitive agencies, seldom unrecognized by clients — even if workers may seek to avoid acknowledging them.

So the personal characteristics of women workers, as well as their functional roles, provide objective barriers to solidarity with clients. This interplay of inherent role conflicts with class and race differences can be devastating, even in "alternative agencies":

With us it's intense. All our staff are women of color. The women who come here sometimes expect us to be "sisters," and they get angry when we push them. And sometimes we may expect too much of them. It's better than other places, but the problems sure aren't solved.

Sometimes such tensions would seem to destroy any hope for positive relationships among clients and workers, especially in state agencies. However, there is a contradictory nature to human service work; it has the ability to help, as well as hurt. Usually, women workers retain the potential to honestly assist other women, and, even, to build alliances based on recognition of mutual needs and common oppression. But this potential can only be recognized if the powerful barriers to it are examined and understood.

"Woman hating," whereby women instinctively distrust and disassociate from other women, is the central ideological way in which both workers and clients defeat themselves. It allows women workers to avoid identification with women clients and to act in ways which re-inforce client distrust. Here I can only mention speculatively some of the personal, social and organizational dimensions to the problem which cause women workers either to consciously reject equal relationships with women clients or to act in ways which make such connections impossible, even when workers think they desire them.

Personally, women service workers face all the structural and psychological constraints of
other workers. They are usually working two jobs — one unpaid as primary family caretaker and the other underpaid. In addition, the woman service worker’s “second job” is so similar to her first that it can be overwhelming, even in “good jobs.” One child advocate’s response was typical:

I love my work but sometimes it is too much. When my own kids are in trouble I often think “what am I doing here helping someone else’s children? I should be home with my own.”

This “overdose of nurturance” can be extremely difficult to handle and may lead many women workers to seem cold toward clients:

Since I had my baby I just don’t have as much to give. I used to listen to everyone and be really understanding. Now it’s not just the time, although that’s part of it. It is also that I don’t have the same emotional energy to spare. I see myself getting more structured and bureaucratic and it makes me sad, but I don’t know how to stop it.

Sexual dynamics may also be at play. If service relationships become too personal then the potential for more intense personal, even sexual, interaction arises. While some male workers may welcome this possibility for undesirable reasons, many women workers may not want to face their own sexual feelings toward any women, much less women clients. Yet almost any good human service encounter involves highly personal sharing, even if it is only the basis from which to determine “eligibility for service.” As many feminist service workers have discovered, once the barriers to mutuality are discarded then sexual feelings can emerge, in both directions. In our homophobic society, this merely serves as another reason for women to fear each other in a human service relationship.

Great personal pressure, then, is on women workers to deny the very commonality which is essential to any feminist consciousness. Indeed, it can be difficult for women workers to achieve legitimacy with their peers unless they place extreme distance between themselves and their clients. This is nothing new — it is the same problem as homophobia among homosexuals or other common mechanisms of rejection in others of the most vulnerable parts of oneself.
— but it has an especially devastating impact on the human service encounter.

The dynamic is often intense and unspoken, with workers trying, consciously and unconsciously, to deal with their strong feelings about what women can and should do, and with clients feeling judged and confused. This is surely worse in welfare and mental health agencies, but even in less authoritarian contacts there can be problems, as one feminist child care worker expressed:

I’m sympathetic to the women who bring their kids here. I know it is hard for them. But I see their children and I want things to be different for them, yet I don’t want to lay a guilt trip on the mother.

Professional ideology makes all of these inherent tensions even worse. In the absence of a more political perspective it does offer some theoretical justification for avoiding moral judgments and it seems to provide standards for judging the quality of work. But, overall, professionalism serves to reinforce dominant class and race differences and to disallow the politicized and personalized sense of one’s work which is essential if the human service workplace is ever to be a ground for developing more egalitarian notions of caring.

Similarly, standard bureaucratic procedures work against the creation of a feminist environment. Here many workers are stuck again. In their need to escape from the never-ending nurturance which seems to be their lot as both
women and as service workers, many women seek needed limits and clarity in bureaucratic "efficiency." The result, however, is a withholding, punitive atmosphere which negates the very nurturance that leads many women to become service workers. The power of women workers over their women clients, no matter what the setting, makes it difficult to remember that the service encounter is a relationship, where both worker and client can have impact. For this reason we also have to consider the effects of woman-hating among women clients. I discuss this not to minimize the responsibility of workers to change the human service environment, but to emphasize that, if the ideal is a more healthy relationship as the base for human services, we must begin with an honest appraisal of the power of both parties to build such a relationship.

Here we must begin with the pressure on women clients to adopt a "client role," usually accompanied by subservient behavior, in exchange for "success" in the bureaucracy. The problem starts with the state's patriarchal role towards women needing services — indeed, most women are "ineligible" if they have a man to support them. Because of this built-in, and intuitively obvious "male role" for most service agencies, many women behave as "good clients" in the same way that they behave as "good wives": they act submissively, manipulatively, or with ostentatious gratitude. One woman put it bluntly:

I'm always playing a role when I go to the Welfare Department. It's like going on a date. I think about what I'm going to wear and how I'm going to act and what I need to do to please them with the least amount of honesty about who I really am.

In behaving this way women are reasonably recognizing their status as dependent and are choosing to act in ways consistent with that. Recently, in Massachusetts, we saw this reinforced by "job clubs" set up to help welfare recipients find jobs: people were taught how to "interview well," how to dress, and how to "act motivated" in order to please potential (presumably male) employers.

Such behavior may make sense for any individual in a specific situation, but of course it does not constitute a model militant strategy. For the purposes here, though, many women clients face special problems with their role when they confront women workers. Often they find it harder to be a "good client" with a woman worker. Sometimes women seem to resent having to play the same dependent role with another woman — "who does she think she is?" — and are personally angry with women workers in ways they are not with "natural" male authorities. Some women want to see all women as allies and are confused and angry when workers do not "act differently" than men. Most reasonably, women clients may simply be irritated because they assume that it is men, not women, who have real power, and they feel cheated by having a worker who is less potentially "useful." One older woman was clear about this:

Oh, my last worker was nice enough, but it was clear she had no power. So why should I talk with her? If I'm going to have to deal with any of them, I would rather have it be someone who can do something for me.

And, of course, this attitude has affected the appeal of feminist services since their inception.

I am not sure how to analyze all this. When I talk with a group of politically active welfare recipients about their reactions to such feelings they were torn. All felt that the reality of how women workers treated them was bad. "They are even less likely to treat me as a person than most of the men are" was the unanimous complaint. Yet all felt somewhat uncomfortable with their bias against women workers. One member of the group expressed the issue quite self-consciously:

I know it's like the old woman-hating stuff, where women don't trust other women. Sometimes I know I want a man worker so I can manipulate him in traditional sexist ways. But I haven't got much power here and I have to use what I've got. Having a woman worker may get in the way. Besides, many women workers do seem to resent us, like we're not suffering hard like they do. But I know it's harder on them too.
It's confusing. Sometimes I am prejudiced against them or have unreal expectations of them. And then again sometimes they are more difficult to deal with. One thing is true, though. When you get a good woman worker, that's usually the very best. She can really make you feel supported and able to get what you need.

Such comments reinforce the notion that the human service interchange is a relationship to which clients as well as workers bring reasonable evaluations of power constructs as well as bad habits and attitudes. One aspect of the change necessary to create a different dynamic may well be some altered expectations regarding how women behave as clients. Just as we have no obligation to accept racism among white clients, in regard to minority workers, so we have a similar obligations to oppose anti-women attitudes.

When all these factors are taken together we can see how women workers and women clients find themselves facing seemingly impossible, conflicting demands. Seldom does it seem that they can become allies, even if they are not always in opposition. The need for women clients to get what they can from the system over which women workers have little power makes the underlying similarities fade away. Therefore, if women workers are to be able to make alliances with women clients they must be able to assert some power over the work they do. This, then, implies that another set of relationships must be examined and changed, those which affect the unity of women as workers.
Relationships among Women Service Workers

Many of the same factors which make it difficult for women workers to relate well to clients also affect their ability to achieve unity with other women workers. The overload of nurturance makes sympathy and support for other workers hard to come by, especially given the standard problems facing all women workers of low pay and low status. In addition, the complicated reasons why women may become social workers can create very different job expectations among the women in a workplace. One activist in a large private agency summed up the dynamics:

Here we have a real mix of women. There are a few of the “old guard,” unmarried middle class professionals who see saving kids as their life work and moral duty. Although they are dying out, their spirit judges the rest of us. Then there are the “new breed” of assertive women who see themselves on the way up into successful management positions. They seem almost embarrassed to admit that they are really still social workers. There are also a good many women who see this as a good job which doesn’t threaten their home and family life. And there are a few of us radicals, feminists, who want to talk about unions, or abortion, or alliances with clients, and we threaten everybody else.

Feminists working in social welfare agencies seem to have an especially tough time coming to terms with the lack of easy solidarity among women workers. They are often able to understand (and seek to change) the power and class divisions between worker and client. But they find themselves just impatient and judgmental when women exhibit unfair, no-win, expectations of female co-workers. And, truly, it is exceptionally grating when male workers are praised for being warm and nurturing with clients and co-workers, while women who do so are seen as “unprofessional.” Yet when men do play traditional, negative male roles with clients and with others in the agency, they are not criticized, as women are, for being too “hard.”

There is not space here to go into a full analysis of all such divisive factors within the human service workplace. The point, rather, is to suggest that before women workers as a group can expect much trust from clients they must come to terms with such differences. And, before they can hope to work together, in unions or in other ways just to improve their own work life, they must also examine the power relationships, woman-hating and other pressures which seem to divide them as deeply from each other as they are divided from clients.

Can This Contradiction Be Saved?

Is it worth it? More often than not, politicized workers and clients within the American welfare state wonder whether they should try to do anything but bring the system down. The need for unity among workers and between clients and workers seem obvious, but the possibility of achieving it seems utopian. And worse, the daily struggle to improve things can lead to an expansive “burnout” of all activism, not just to frustration with the human service environment as an arena for political activity.

On the one hand, there is an easy explanation for why human services in the welfare state, and even services set up explicitly outside the state, are unsupportive to feminist, or any healthy, relationships. As capitalist creations of social control and social reproduction, agencies quite naturally deliver services in a manner which reinforces oppressive relationships. For women, the services have served to reinforce dependence on men as well as their role as family caretaker and primary nurturer in society.
On the other hand, the welfare state has also, historically, helped women to break away slightly from traditional roles, by providing subsistence benefits for a life without men. And, poor and punitive as they may be, its services offer institutional alternatives to some of the nurturing roles demanded of women. One woman expressed the tension with a powerful question:

"Why do they make it so hard? Lord knows I need the money and the services I get and I would like to be happier with them. But what I have to go through to get the little they give me makes me wish, most of the time, that I never heard of any of it."

And when women work in the welfare state the complexity comes around full circle. As the nurturers hired, at inadequate pay, to provide the care which other women have "failed" to provide, they are especially torn. Should they reject such roles for themselves and become male-identified managers? Should they do their job with the self-sacrifice always demanded of women, or maybe can they foist the nurturing back on women clients? The problem becomes especially complex because, in my experience at least, most workers and clients do not want to abandon totally their caregiving roles — on the job or in the home — but they do want recognition and support for performing them. And, both need options besides nurturing in their lives as well as relief from identification with their caretaking roles. While again, this mutual conundrum theoretically unites workers and clients, it does not suggest the basis for any easy alliance.

Before giving up, however, a few experiences should be mentioned which begin to suggest alternatives to this grim scenario. The first and most fully developed source of hope comes from the wide range of explicitly feminist services which grew out of the contemporary women's movement. While the course of time, and Reaganomics, have limited the growth and the political clarity of battered women's services, rape crisis centers, and other feminist services, they offer powerful reminders that new models can be conceived."

No matter what their problems, feminist services have demonstrated that it is possible for women to provide services with much greater political potential when they start from a base of shared experience and feminist analysis. All suggest that fighting hierarchy among workers and between workers and clients is worthwhile, however difficult. Most important, feminist services have given a model to many feminists and socialists that shows how services can be something valuable in themselves, not merely as organizing tools or as palliatives to an unfair society.

Since cuts and a decline in the movement have reduced the number of explicitly feminist services, many radicals have also moved into small social service agencies, or into some of the bigger state bureaucracies. Here I see them struggling to "act like feminists" and to change the dynamics mentioned above. Often this has meant building a union or engaging in advocacy to fight cutbacks for clients. In Massachusetts there have been several recent efforts where workers and clients organized together to fight Reagan's budget cuts, for example.

Here too there are many "progressives" in human service unions, even in leadership positions. So far, their major attempts to deal with these issues has been to try to reduce the stresses on workers so that they can be more sensitive to clients. One social workers' union has established a "women's committee" which has attempted to allow women workers to discuss their work with each other and to provide the support which workplace structures deny. A leader of this committee acknowledged that it has not been able to discuss relations with women clients yet, but that it was beginning to address common experiences of women workers and to fight some of the individualism and elitism fostered by professionalism:

At first, except for a concern about day care and abortion rights, we have not focused on client issues. It seemed important to build trust among ourselves and to become a force within the union. But, if the union leadership stays progressive, so that we don't have to go back to fighting internally, then there is a chance for us to do more internal education about "women's issues" which affect our work with clients. It won't be easy but we are almost ready to try.
Other women in union leadership have mentioned the same goal, and the same caution. All speak of the need to raise consciousness among women workers before better relations can reasonably be expected with clients.

A few client groups seem to be edging toward a parallel strategy, as articulated by one shelter worker:

Now we are trying to suggest that welfare mothers push women workers to see their problems as broader women's problems, that we "call the question," so to speak, by making a direct appeal to women workers to see us as having common interests.

Of course, the nature of much welfare and social service work means that welfare rights groups will still remain frustrated with women workers. But by making alliances with the progressive unions the seeds of new relationships may be born, as one advocate hopes:

When we marched together to fight the office closing, workers and welfare mothers were walking along together, laughing and joking about the department, and the governor. After that it will be a lot harder for workers to treat us like "cases," and for us to see all of them as "the enemy."

It will take such a two-pronged strategy to begin to allow both women workers and clients to understand their intertwined situation. If it can be linked with a fuller analysis of the ways in which all women are tied to both the goals of the capitalist welfare state and the underlying social "problems" which generate human services, then there may be some hope for change. As one woman commented, when asked what she thought of my topic:

I don't know what it means but it's got to matter that we're all women here, and we're always talking about women's problems. If we can figure this out we may be able to change the way we think about what we ought to do.

For better and for worse, then, the human service agency is a setting that is centrally defined by women's roles and women's issues. Whether women come willingly as clients or not, whether they come seeking help to perform traditional roles or because they are being psychologically and materially punished for rejecting such roles, the special nature of women's place in society is the fundamental context for human service activity, for workers and clients. As long as the women there are unable to recognize and consider the implications of this shared reality, then women remain divided from each other and "human services" remain associated with punitive, demeaning tasks. If they are able to do so, then whole new areas for feminist activity open up, as witnessed by the dreams of one mental health worker:

It's happening slowly, but it's happening. The women who work here are now able to support each other and to talk about work and personal problems. We've even started, and this is real slow, to acknowledge that our problems are not so different from those of the clients. A self help group of clients has started and they are beginning, through the group, to make demands on us. Maybe someday we'll be able to relate to each other, as women, and not be so caught up in all the roles. Maybe it's utopian, but is it wrong to hope for this?

Footnotes

1. My footnotes for these ideas come from a series of ongoing discussions with feminist and other service workers in the Boston area. I teach adult human service workers at U. Mass/Boston and have been formally and informally interviewing them about their activity for years. I have also recently interviewed progressive human service unionists for an upcoming issue on "labor and human services" of Catalyst: A Socialist Journal of Social Services. I am also involved in advocacy support work with area welfare recipient groups and have discussed these ideas with many of them. I am especially grateful to RA editor Gail Sullivan for help with this article.


3. I have tried to talk about this more fully elsewhere, see Serving the People: Social Services and Social Change (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).


5. Judy Gradford who now works with Boston's Transition House is the person who contributed most to my understanding of these issues.
7. An upcoming issue of *Catalyst: A Socialist Journal of Social Services* (Box 1144, Cathedral Station, NY, NY 10025) will focus on the role of radicals in human service unions, and many back issues also address the issue.

Ann Withorn is an editor of Radical America who writes about human service organization and work. Her recent book about radical service practice, *Serving the People: Social Service and Social Change*, Columbia University Press, is currently available at the outrageous price of $35. Anyone interested in alternative means of acquiring the book should contact the author c/o Radical America.

---

**Feminism and the left**

For years, the left has been telling the women’s movement what its politics should be. Now, three women who have long been active in both movements are telling the left what it must learn from feminists.

Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, in *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the making of socialism*, suggest that many progressive groups fail because of their oppressive internal structure. The women’s movement, on the other hand, has found important new ways to approach political theory and practice. These feminist methods can be integrated into political organizing, say these women. In fact, they must be integrated, and they show how it can successfully be done.

---

**To order**

Ask for this book at your favorite store, or use this coupon to order by mail.

Enclosed is $ ______ for ____ copies of *Beyond the Fragments*. (Prices postpaid: One copy, $7.50. Two or three copies, $6.50 each. Four or more, $6.00 each.)

name __________________________________________ address ________________________________

city, state, zip ________________________________________

Return with payment to:

Alyson Publications, Dept. P-35, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118
RADICAL TEACHER

- "Radical Teacher's activist perspective confronts the real issues of classroom and community... A practical and valuable journal, based on solid research and theory."
  The Guardian


- Radical Teacher is an independent socialist and feminist magazine that focuses on three critical areas: the politics of teaching; the political economy of education; feminist, Marxist and third world perspectives in literature, history, biology, sociology and other disciplines.

Social Criticism

RADICAL TEACHER
P.O. Box 102
Cambridge, MA 02142
(please print or type)

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

Zip ____________________________

Subscription Rates (3 issues a year)

☐ $8 Regular
☐ $11 Library/
☐ $25 Sustaining

☐ $4 Part Time/
Unemployed/Retired

☐ $ Contribution

☐ Send T-shirt information

Add: $8 for airmail delivery overseas; $2.50 for surface delivery overseas; $2.50 for Canada or Latin America.
(Because of increased bank charges for foreign exchange, all checks (including Canadian) must be in U.S. dollars.)
SEX, FAMILY AND THE NEW RIGHT
Linda Gordon & Allen Hunter

American Leninism in the 1970s
Jim O'Brien

Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit
Rachael Grossman

Intel Workers' Day: May Day


To order: Send title and quantity and 25% to cover postage and handling to: Radical America, 38 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143. Bulk discount for 5 or more of same title (20% for institutions, 40% all other).
Women have the right to abortion for any reason they deem appropriate. Newborns with disabilities have the right to medical treatment whether or not their parent(s) wishes them to be treated. Both rights are unequivocal, consistent and currently protected by statute. Both sets of rights are, however, under severe attack — the former from the right and the latter from the left. And together they have been juxtaposed as a contradiction. We argue here that both sets of rights are essential to preserve, and are compatible from a leftist, feminist perspective. In fact, this compatibility forces us to struggle with the reality that in each case, with women’s right to abortion and disabled infant’s right to treatment, the institutions and services that translate these rights into realities are currently denied appropriate levels of financial and social support — often rendering these rights hollow and irrelevant for those who most need them.

Rights of women to abortion and of newborns with disabilities to medical treatment are, in fact, separate rights which have been linked by the Right in an anti-feminist and allegedly “pro-family” position, and by the Left out of ignorance of the meaning and politics of disability. In this article we review some of the recent controversies over disability rights as it relates to women’s right to abortion, amniocentesis and more generally a left politic. To make our argument, we cover three topics: (1) the bias against
people with disabilities inherent in most of the reasons offered for non-treatment of infants with disabilities; (2) the bias against women and a woman's right to control her own body inherent in the arguments against amniocentesis and abortion of fetuses with disabilities, and (3) the continuing problematic nature of the distinction between a fetus residing in the body of a woman and a newborn infant, as it relates to the question, whose body is it anyway? Because the only voices from the Left — including feminist organizations — which have spoken for the rights of disabled newborns to treatment have been those publicly identified with the disability rights movement, we turn first to the issues of infants with disabilities. Unfortunately, these voices have been relatively ignored thus far and must be given serious weight in this debate.

In our earlier writing on this subject*, we challenged the prevailing assumption in the reproductive rights movement that any woman would have an abortion if she were diagnosed as carrying a fetus with a disability. We urged that the reproductive rights movement and other feminists not presume nor prescribe any reason, e.g. "the tragedy of the 'defective fetus'" for an abortion. As we would not advocate the "tragedy for a female fetus" as a legitimate reason for an abortion — although many of us abhor the use of abortion for sex selection — activists can not continue to exploit the disabled fetus as the good or compelling reason to keep abortion, safe, legal and funded. On the basis of women's rights, alone, abortion must be safe, legal and funded — not to rid our society of some of its "defective" members.

Recently the controversy has emerged in all its complexity: Baby Jane Doe, an infant born on Long Island with a series of disabling conditions including spina bifida and microencephaly, was denied an operation by her physician and parents acting jointly. Earlier, a Bloomington, Indiana boy was born with a diagnosis of Down Syndrome and an esophagus unattached to his stomach. Routinely an infant's open esophagus is corrected by surgery but Baby Doe's parents decided against surgery based on the diagnosis of his mental retardation. Despite some dozen offers of couples to adopt him, Baby Doe died at six days old of starvation.

Even more recently and less well known, an infant girl was born in Illinois with a heart problem, and a "hand like a claw." Her father, a well known veterinarian, was handed the baby in the delivery room. On seeing the child he threw it to the floor, killing her. The community has rallied around this man claiming that everyone has a psychological threshold beyond which s/he is not responsible. For him it was the presumed tragedy of having a disabled child.

The reasons used to justify denial of medical treatment to these infants have been the reasons given by people who believe that living with a disability is either not worth living, too costly to the family, or too costly to the rest of non-disabled society. But no one ever questions the use of costly treatments to ameliorate or cure all sorts of neonatal medical problems if those procedures result in a perfect, "normal" child. The question arises only when no amount of medical treatment will relieve all of an infant's medical or mental problems, and that infant will remain throughout its life as a person with some level of disability. At that point, Leftists and feminists have, for the most part, joined in the arguments that such treatment wastes limited societal resources, harms nondisabled parents and siblings, harms society and does not benefit the child. All these arguments arise from confusing what is inherent in disability with the problems imposed on disabled people by a discriminating society — one without national health insurance, adequate financial and social supports for persons with disabilities, one which prizes profit over human needs and persists in discriminating at the level of medical treatment, education and employment opportunities and housing.

Unacknowledged by those who would deny treatment is this discrimination against people with disabilities. Such prejudice is found throughout the population and thus it is no surprise although quite dismaying to see people who decry discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or social class urging that public policy embody their fears, terrors, revulsion and ignorance of disability and people with disabilities. Millions of citizens with biological limitations would assert that their main obstacles to fulfilling lives

stem not from these limitations but from a society which stresses mental and physical perfection and rugged individualism, that often rejects, isolates and segregates them, assuming that disabled people are unpleasant, unhappy, helpless, hopeless and burdensome.

Such stereotypes lead inevitably to the first of three major arguments given for non-treatment: that the child’s quality of life will be intolerable. We ask: Intolerable to whom? How do we know? And, if that child’s quality of life is less than someone else’s, how much do we as a society contribute to its impoverishment by denying needed health care, education, independent living, rehabilitation and social supports to ensure a better life? We do not know what the lives of any children will be when they are born. People who decide that Down Syndrome or spina bifida automatically renders children or adults “vegetables” or “better off dead” simply know nothing about the lives of such people today — much less what those lives could be in a more inclusive, person oriented society.

Persons with Down Syndrome or spina bifida represent a broad range of potential. Many lead intellectually, economically, socially and sexually fulfilling lives. Others don’t. We don’t know how they would live in a society that did not systematically deprive children of opportunity if they do not meet norms of appearance, intelligence and autonomy. Some parents, who gave their children with Down Syndrome cosmetic surgery, have found that their children’s social and intellectual skills improved once they no longer carried the stigma of the “Mongoloid” appearance. We can not separate the essence of disability from the social construction of disability, and must continue to struggle to insure a life free of the kinds of oppressions we have described so that disability can refer to the physical or mental limitation alone.

Others who recommend against treatment contend that even if the child could have a “meaningful” life, its presence would unduly burden or deprive nondisabled family members. Some feminists have argued that deinstitutionalizing disabled people and saving disabled newborns constitute yet another means by the Right to keep women in their homes, bearing the “double burden” of the pathetic disabled child. Women, it is argued, are oppressed by deinstitutionalization and medical treatment to insure life for infants with disabilities, and siblings will resent the attention and emotional and financial resources given to the disabled child.

Such argument is based on the assumption that disabled children contribute nothing to family life, which even in today’s society can be denied by thousands of parents and siblings who attest to the pleasures as well as the problems of living with disabled people. Moreover it blames the disabled child and suggests eliminating that child, rather than blaming society for causing problems of inadequate resources for all. In the U.S. it is, often, quite expensive to care for a child with a disability. But sometimes it is not. When it is, we must struggle politically for funded medical, social and caretaking public programs. We can neither locate the problem inside the child with the disability nor the solution with the individual mother of that
child. In Sweden, national health care and a full range of social services enable parents of disabled children to easily partake in infant stimulation programs, integrated daycare and schools, respite care and a host of other services that contribute to their lives and their children’s lives. Adult relationships do not founder; siblings without disabilities are not neglected. A supportive context diminishes the alleged negative impact — which we contend is massively overestimated — of having a child with a disability. We would also argue, however, that a parent(s) unable or unwilling today to care for a child with a disability be offered the option of placing the child up for adoption or in foster care temporarily, and agitate for adoption agencies to recruit actively and aggressively support adults interested in adopting or providing foster care for a child with a disability.

We come to the last argument against treating newborns with disabilities: Society’s resources are limited already and should thus not be spent on people who cannot measure up to the standards of what we think people should be. Obviously this argument rests on our first point — that disabled people cannot have a valuable existence. It also takes as given that society’s resources are limited rather than misallocated. We know that under current political arrangements, military spending grossly overshadows spending for social programs. Saying that we should not treat disabled children because resources are scarce, existing services inadequate and futures uncertain is like saying that poor people and black people should not have children because society is hostile to poverty and deeply racist. No progressive would accept that. Nor should it be accepted where children with disabilities are concerned. We should all fight to transform social arrangements and allocation of resources so that needs are better met for all of us.

Progressives should fight not against deinstitutionalizing disabled people as some have, and not against treatment for Baby Janes, as many have, but for community based residential centers, independent living policies, educational and employment opportunities and the civil rights of all disabled children and adults. All these arguments against treatment rest on the assumption that disabled people are less than human. That should be questioned, and not the rights of these children and adults to the societal goods to which the nondisabled members of the community are entitled.

If we believe, as we do, that all children with disabilities deserve treatment regardless of
parental wishes, how can we support a woman's unquestioned right to an abortion if that abortion may stem from learning that a fetus being carried has a disability? We do so because we believe that abortion of a fetus and killing an infant are fundamentally different acts.

Women have won the right to abortion as a part of the right to control their bodies. As a society we have decided that women are not simply vessels to reproduce the species. While a fetus resides within her, a woman must retain the right to decide what happens to her body and her life. Otherwise we ask that women bear not just unwanted children but also unnecessary physical and psychic burdens of sexual acts which men do not. Since we have decided that each heterosexual act need not be linked in mind or fact to reproduction we must permit women to decide what becomes of their bodies and lives during a pregnancy.

When a woman decides that she wants to abort, rather than carry to term, a fetus with Down Syndrome, this represents a statement about how she perceives such a child would affect her life and what she wants from raising a child. Every woman has the right to make this decision in whatever way she needs. But the more information she has, the better her decision can be. Genetic counselors, physicians and all others involved with assisting women during amniocentesis should gain and provide far more and very different information about life with disabilities than is customarily available. Given proper information about how disabled children and adults live, many women might not choose to abort. And many will still choose to abort. While a fetus resides within her, a woman has the right to decide about her body and her life and to terminate a pregnancy for this or any other reason.

May we argue that a woman has a right to abort a fetus diagnosed with Down Syndrome but also that an infant with Down Syndrome has a right to treatment despite her/his parent's desires? Yes, we can and do. We must recognize the crucial "line" separating the fetus — residing in the body of her mother — and the infant, viable outside the womb. The fetus depends on the mother for sustenance and nourishment. We argue that the "line" of birth makes an enormous difference. Once that living being survives outside the mother, that mother cannot eliminate it because it does not meet her physical and mental specifications. As a society, our constitution accepts personhood as starting at birth. We cannot simply decide that "defective" persons are not really persons and not entitled to all the care and protection we grant other citizens.

The existing laws against murder, the recently passed Child Abuse Amendments of 1984, as well as the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, prohibit institutions and parents from withholding treatment to persons merely because those persons have disabilities. If parents and doctors would use the disability of a newborn as a reason to withhold treatment and nourishment, and if such treatment and nourishment would permit life for that infant — not a dying infant but an infant with a disability — the social collective and not the individual parent(s) bears the responsibility for that infant's protection. Parents do not today have unlimited rights over their children. Children are not their property. As state and federal laws now protect children from abuse of their parents and as courts have intervened to insist upon medical care and education for minor children when their parents oppose these for religious reasons, the federal government can appropriately intervene to protect newborns from being killed because
their parents and doctors find them inconvenient, distasteful and/or burdensome.

Some will say that the government should not intervene in this private family matter — contending that parents are suffering a tragedy, that they are already going through a terrible time and that they should be left alone. Socialist feminists have learned to be wary of such privacy of the family arguments, aware that the family as we've known it has long been abusive to women and children. Grief stricken, shocked and anxious parents who may seek to end the lives of their "imperfect" infants should be counseled, educated and told that the child will receive treatment whether or not the parent(s) agrees. We should work toward a policy in which the government picks up the medical expenses associated with such treatment; that parents be given extensive information about what it means to have a disability, have access to disability rights organizations and parents’ groups, and assured of informed consent in which they are informed that should they wish they can put their infant up for adoption or foster care. Parents therefore may be removed if they so desire from responsibility, at which point the state acts to protect the infants. If nontreatment is contemplated when treatment would benefit the child, it should be rendered. If state intervention is necessary to ensure it, then we should opt for state intervention. We already opt for state intervention in all manner of other situations where one person’s or group’s rights are infringed upon by another. Denial of treatment means denial of life, the most basic right of all.

But this argument for treatment of newborns is not the same as that of the Reagan Administration nor the "Right to Life" movement. Unlike these supporters of the disabled who care about them only when they are in the intensive care nursery and who slash budgets for needed educational programs for them and try to deny them civil rights to education, housing and employment once out of the nursery, we believe that the government has major responsibility for assisting disabled children and their families throughout life. Not only does the government have the obligation to absorb the medical and social service expenses that children with disabilities entail. It has the
obligation to provide parents with extensive information about life with a disability. Additionally, the government must assist these parents in finding alternative homes for these children if parents do not feel prepared to raise them.

Such information about disabilities must include that provided by parents of similarly disabled children and that obtained through contact with advocacy groups of disabled adults. It can not merely consist of medical, diagnostic or prognostic information without including facts of the social meaning of disability and the ways people manage it in today’s world. Disabled adults are among the most important advocates for disabled children and must participate in any decisions about the lives and policies affecting the lives of these children.

Like feminism, the disability rights movement entails a commitment to self determination and a shared sense of community, recognizing that self determination is meaningless without a sense of community. Thus as disabled adults increasingly advocate for the rights of children with disabilities they seek to ally with feminists and others on the Left to grapple with remaining questions posed and to put forward a shared dream of a just and inclusive society.

When disability rights groups and the American Academy of Pediatrics put forward a statement on the rights of newborns to treatment in November 1983, no known progressive or feminist groups signed the document. We urge that all of us on the Left rethink positions taken out of deep seated terror and repugnance of disability and out of almost equally deep seated — but in this case knee-jerk — opposition to the Right’s attack on women and the pro-choice movement. We have conceded the issue of disability to the Right. We can and must commit ourselves to the lives of newborns with disabilities while protecting our hard-won gains as women.

New political contradictions will emerge in this struggle: e.g. how to mobilize against physicians and medical researchers who systematically prolong the lives of dying infants in order to afford expensive equipment, research laboratories and sophisticated technology at the expense of the pain and finances of parent(s) involved; how to deal with late abortions, viable disabled infants who survive abortion pro-
procedures or could be kept alive with new technological interventions; or how to deal with infant disabilities which may arise because a woman refused some form of medical intervention during delivery (for example a woman recently refused a Cesarian section recommended because of an active vaginal herpes sore, producing a now blind infant)? Such questions can not halt us but must be incorporated into our political struggles as contradictions have always been. Indeed if we can create a society that supports the newborn with a disability, perhaps the most defenseless of all citizens, we can create a society humane and just for us all.

Michelle Fine is a member of the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA). She and Adrienne Asch work with the Women and Disability Awareness Project. Adrienne is also a member of the National Federation of the Blind.
"The gay movement's newspaper of record."
— The Village Voice

Gay Community News

Gay Community News is the national political newsweekly on the cutting edge of sexual politics and liberation.

In times such as these, issues such as the direction which our movement takes, its actions and reactions, who makes the decisions and for what reasons, are critical. For over ten years Gay Community News has been dedicated to the principle that an informed community is our strongest asset.

Each week GCN brings you current, informative news and analysis about lesbian and gay liberation. News of the events which chart our movement's course. News of the struggles which mark our successes and failures. News of disagreement about which road to take.

Because we are a non-profit membership corporation with a tradition of paid and volunteer staff working together, GCN has succeeded in becoming much more than a mouthpiece for any one individual or organizational viewpoint within our incredibly diverse community. We are proud that our opinion pages have won a reputation for being provocative, lively and controversial.

**GCN is supported primarily by subscription revenue. Get on the cutting edge. Subscribe today.**

$29.00 for 50 issues (1 year)
$17.50 for 25 issues
Introductory offer: 12 weeks for $8.00

Send check or money order to: Gay Community News, 167 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111.

**GCN is published by the non-profit Bromfield Street Educational Foundation.**
SPECIAL OFFER

BACK ISSUES OF RADICAL AMERICA

AS ADVERTISED ON T.V.!

ANY BACK ISSUE for $1.50!

Vol. 17, No. 5 featured The Bus Stops Here: Organizing School Bus Drivers in Boston; In the Hot Seat: The Story of the New York Taxi Rank and File Coalition; Queen of the Bolsheviks: The Hidden History of Dr. Marie Equi.

Vol. 17, No. 4 featured Holocaust: The Uses of Disaster; The Male Ideology of Privacy: A Feminist Perspective on Abortion; East Side Story: Mike Gold, The Communists and the Jews; Separatism and Disobedience: The Seneca Women’s Peace Encampment.

Vol. 17, No. 2-3 SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE ENVIRONMENT: Environmentalism as a Mass Movement: Nostorical Notes; “It Does Affect You”: Women at Love Canal and Three Mile Island; Toxic Times and Class Politics; Safe Levels, Acceptable Risks: The Accident at Seveso; The Mortality of Wealth: Native America and the Frontier Mentality; Environmental Health and Revolution in Nicaragua; History and Politics of Black Lung Movement.

Vol. 17, No. 1 with The Greens, Anti-Militarism and the Global Crisis; The Greens: Ecology and the Promise of Radical Democracy; Letter from East German Women; Voices for Peace in the GDR; Pictures of the Homeland: The Legacy of Howard Fast; Eye-witness in Gaza; The Young Ladies are Upset: Organizing in the Publishing World; Will the Real Terror Network Please Stand Up?; Ten Years After: Letter from Wounded Knee.

• OFFER EXPIRES 3/1/85•
Vol. 16, No. 6 featuring Lebanon After the Israeli Invasion; Four Decades of Change; Black Workers in Southern Textiles, 1941-1981; Mothering, the Unconscious and Feminism; Sexuality and Male Violence.

Vol. 16, No. 45 with Smile and Say Freeze; Let’s Fake a Deal: A History of Arms Control; A Cure for the Common Cold War, M*A*S*H Marches On; Fighting Union Busting in the 80s; The Politics of Welfare; The Majority as an Obstacle to Progress: Radicals, Peasants and the Russian Revolution.

Vol. 16, No. 3 SPECIAL 15 YEAR ANTHOLOGY (see ad this issue)

Vol. 16, No. 1-2 “Having a Good Time”: The American Family Goes Camping; Peace at any Price?: Feminism, Anti-Imperialism and the Disarmament Movement; Solidarity, Cold War and the Left: How to Respond to Poland; History and Myth, Real and Surreal: Interview with Carlos Fuentes; Working the Fast Land: Jobs, Technology and Scientific Management in the US Postal Service and section on recent radical history — Culture, Politics and Workers’ Response to Industrialization in the US; Blacks, Radicals and Rank and File Militancy in Auto in the 30s and 40s; The Agrarian Revolution American History; Feminist Interpretations of the History of Sexuality; “Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right” and the Current Reproductive Rights Movement; A Future for Liberal Feminism?

Vol. 15 #4 (July-August ’81): Sexual Harassment: Organizing and politics; What happened in Youngstown; Growth of the service sector; Happy times in mill city.

Vol. 15 #3 (May-June ’81): Poland and the workers’ movement, and documents of struggle; Amilcar Cabral; Hollywood blacklist.

Vol. 15 #1-2 (Jan.-April ’81): see ad this issue. Special double issue on the New Right.

Vol. 14 #6 (Nov.-Dec. ’80): Tupperware and women; Organizing clerical workers; Health and safety in a leather factory; Greensboro and the Civil Rights movement.

Vol. 14 #5 (Sept.-Oct. ’80): Draft resistance: ’60s to the ’80s; Cuban photography; Social history of City College of New York; Women’s bestsellers.
Vol. 14 #4 (July-Aug. '80): Workers' control and the press; Conversations with Italian auto workers; Prehistory of rock and roll; Utopian Socialists and Marxism; Edward Carpenter.

Vol. 14 #3 (May-June '80) Self-help movements; Battered women's shelters and feminism; Clerical workers and unionism, 1900-1930; Gramsci and Eurocommunism.


Vol. 14 #1 (Jan.-Feb. '80): Hollywood's Myth of the Working Class; Independent Film and Working Class History; Women Factory Workers in Malaysia; Analysis of the Hungarian Revolution; Reunion of Shoeworkers.

Vol. 13 #6 (Nov.-Dec. '79): David Montgomery on the Past and Future of Workers Control; Workers and Automation in the Computer Age; A Document of Black Feminism; Alexandra Kollontai, Biography of a Revolutionary.


Vol. 13 #3 (May-June '79): Andre Gorz on Nuclear Fascism; Sylvia Pankhurst; Biography of a British Socialist Feminist; the Iranian Left.

Vol. 13 #2 (March-June '79): Abortion Workers Strike; U.S. Political Cartooning; Youth Culture and Politics in Britain; Politics of Rank and File Organizing in the Teamsters.

Vol. 13 #1 (Jan.-Feb. '79): Pornography; Community Organizing in Boston; Future of the Auto Industry; Liberal Coalition Politics.

Vol. 12 #6 (Nov.-Dec. '78): Personal Accounts of Civil Rights and Farm Worker Organizing and a Rank and File Strike at GE.

Vol. 12 #5 (Sept.-Oct. '78): Black South in the Seventies; Women, Families, and Unions in Early Industrialization; Italy's Communist Party.

Vol. 12 #4 (July-Aug. '78): Sexual Harassment in Workplaces; Radical Social Service Work; Shopfloor Politics in an Auto Plant.

Vol. 12 #3 (May-June '78): Miners' Strike of 1978; International Hotel Struggle; Emergence of Auto Assembly Line 1910-1914.

Vol. 12 #2 (March-April '78): People's Art and Social Change; the Wonderful White Paper; the Clerking Sisterhood; Frank Ackerman on Reformism and Sectarianism; Judy Syfers on Organizing Paraprofessionals.


Vol. 11 #4 (July-Aug. '77): Teamster Organizing; Origins of Mattachine Society; Hosea Hudson — Negro Communist in the Deep South.

Vol. 11 #3 (May-June '77): Professional-Managerial Class, Part 2; Dorothy Healey on the CP; Beauty Parlors; Popular Power in Portugal.

Vol. 11 #2 (March-April '77): Professional-Managerial Class, Part 1; Report on Spain; Interview with Barbara Kopple on "Harlan County."

Vol. 11 #1 (Jan.-Feb. '77): Piven & Cloward on the Urban Crisis; Daytime TV; Women in the Army; Documentary Photography in the U.S.

Vol. 10 #6 (Nov.-Dec. '76): Italian Feminism; the Italian CP; Labour and Labor in Britain.

Vol. 10 #5 (Sept.-Oct. '76): Staughton Lynd on Workers' Legal Rights; Oral History of a Factory; Racism at U.S. Steel.

Vol. 10 #4 (July-Aug. '76): Wage Labor in the U.S.; the Working Class in Italy; Organizing the Unemployed.

Cut out this box and mail to Radical America
38 Union Square, Somerville, MA, 02143

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City __________________ State ______ Zip ______

ISSUE (VOL. & NUMBER) QUANTITY COST
_________________________________________________________________

SUB TOTAL ______________________
Add 25% for mailing __________________
Massachusetts residents add 5% Sales Tax __________________
TOTAL __________________

(Please include payment with order)
IS THERE LIFE AFTER REAGAN?

A SPECIAL ISSUE EXPLORING COALITION POLITICS
AND THE BLACK ELECTORAL MOVEMENT . . .

SPECIAL SECTION on the Mel King Mayoral campaign in Boston
- Political changes in Boston, 1963-1983
- Views from within the Rainbow by representatives of Boston’s feminist, black, gay and lesbian, Asian and Hispanic communities.
- Anti-racism as electoral strategy
- Neighborhood, constituency and the dilemmas of electoral organizing

PLUS

AMERICA’S NEW URBAN POLITICS:
Black electoralism, black activism and Black political protest

128 pp. Illustrated

$4.50 each

40% BULK DISCOUNT for 5 to 50 copies

for larger orders, call or write for details.

The Rainbow Coalition was first used to describe the movement that formed around the mayoral candidacy of Mel King in the Boston elections of 1983. A black radical, Mel King astounded political analysts by winning the preliminary election — the first person of color to do so in a city that continues to exhibit some of America’s worst racial strife. How did Mel King amass the largest vote total among white voters for a first-time black mayoral candidate in the U.S.? How did Boston’s disparate communities participate in this effort? What were the problems and lessons of their electoral campaign and social movement? What was the role of the Left, women, gays and lesbians and Boston’s communities of color? Was this simply a campaign of two forms of populism — one with a white, the other a black candidate? Can electoralism be directed in a democratic, decentralized campaign? All these questions and more are addressed in this special issue of RADICAL AMERICA.

Plus, commentary and analysis on the national black electoral movement and the victory of Harold Washington in Chicago. The most extensive reporting of a community and electoral movement attempted in this country. Order today. See below for details.

For course, organization or study group use: order direct from Alternative Education Project, 38 Union Square, #14, Somerville, MA 02143 or call (617) 628-6585.

Bookstores: order additional copies from your local distributor — Carrier Pigeon, Ubiquity (Joseph Massey) in New York, Homing Pigeon in Texas and Southwest, Prairie News in Chicago.
SUBSCRIBE NOW TO

RADICAL AMERICA

RADICAL AMERICA is an independent socialist-feminist journal that has published continuously since 1967. Articles feature the history and current developments in the working class, the role of women and Third World people, with reports on shop floor and community organizing, the history and politics of radicalism and feminism, and commentary and analysis of current socialist theory, popular culture, and social movements.

Name ____________________________________________ Cut out this box and mail to: Radical America
Address ____________________________________________ 38 Union Sq., #14, Somerville, MA 02143
City ___________________________ State ___________ Zip ___________

☐ $100.00 Supporting subscriber*
☐ $50.00 Sustaining subscriber*
☐ $15.00 One year sub (Six issues)
☐ $10.00 One year sub (Unemployed, retired rate)
☐ $26.00 Two year sub

☐ Add $3.00 per year for all foreign subscriptions

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

Make all checks payable to Radical America

☐ “Facing Reaction”
☐ “Dreams of Freedom”
☐ “15th Anniversary Retrospective”

□ “WORKERS STRUGGLES” $650 ($21.50)

Yes, send me □

*Checks for $50.00 or more are tax deductible and should be made payable to Capp St. Foundation and sent to Radical America at the above address.
Workers' Struggles, Past and Present

A "Radical America" Reader

Edited by
James Green

Contents
Introduction by James Green
Part One: The Struggle for Control
The Demand for Black Labor: Historical notes on the Political Economy of Racism, by Harold M. Baron
Four Decades of Change: Black Workers in Southern Textiles, 1941–1981, by Mary Fredericksen
The Stop Watch and the Wooden Shoe: Scientific Management and the Industrial Workers of the World, by Mike Davis
The Clerical Sisterhood: Rationalization and the Work Culture of Saleswomen in American Department Stores, 1890–1960, by Susan Porter Benson
Sexual Harassment at the Workplace: Historical Notes, by Mary Bularzik

Part Two: Organizing the Unorganized
Working Class Self-Activity, by George Rawick
Union Fever: Organizing among Clerical Workers, 1900–1930, by Roslyn L. Feldberg
Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Great Depression, by Ray Rosenzweig
The Possibility of Radicalism in the Early 1930s: The Case of Steel, by Staughton Lynd
A. Philip Randolph and the Foundations of Black American Socialism, by Manning Marable
Organizing against Sexual Harassment, by the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion

Part Three: Militancy, Union Politics, and Workers' Control Workers, Unions, and Class Forces, by Stan Weir
Defending the No-Strike Pledge: CIO Politics during World War II, by Nelson Lichtenstein
The League of Revolutionary Black Workers: An Assessment, by Ernest Allen, Jr.
Beneath the Surface: The Life of a Factory, by Doder Fennell
Where Is the Teamster Rebellion Going?, by Staughton Lynd
Holding the Line: Miners' Militancy and the Strike of 1978, by James Green
Shop Floor Politics at Fleetwood, by John Liptert
Tanning Leather: Tanning Hides: Health and Safety Struggles in a Leather Factory, by Andrew Rowland
Workers' Control and the News: The Wagner and Paul Buhle
The Past and Future of Workers' Control, by David Montgomery

Selected from the pages of Radical America, one of the few New Left publications originating in the 1960s to survive into the eighties, these articles are a rare combination of labor and social history written by engaged scholars for a popular audience, as well as contemporary studies of labor movement politics and workplace struggles written by worker intellectuals and activist historians. Long before mainstream scholars of American history, the writers in Radical America were focusing on the work experiences as seen from the shopfloor and on the special issues of women and blacks.

REGULAR PRICE $9.95
NOW only $6.50

with a new one-year ($15) subscription OR a one-year renewal to a present subscription.

SEND $21.50 BY CHECK OR MONEY ORDER WITH THE TEAR-SHEET ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE.
"RADICAL AMERICA: A 15 YEAR ANTHOLOGY" - Special retrospective with selection of articles that have appeared in RA since 1967: Black Liberation, Work-place Struggles, Feminism, Community Activism, American Left, Culture and Art.


"FACING REACTION" - Special double issue on the New Right and America in the 80s...Vol. 15, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring 1981)...160 pages, illustrated.

Featuring: IN THE WINGS: NEW RIGHT ORGANIZING AND IDEOLOGY by Allen Hunter; THE CONTINUING BURDEN OF RACE: a review by Manning Marable; ABORTION: WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON? by Ellen Willis; THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS by Linda Gordon; THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS: FEMINIST AND ANTI-FEMINIST by Barbara Ehrenreich; RETREAT FROM THE SOCIAL WAGE: HUMAN SERVICES IN THE 80s by Ann Withorn; also THE NEW TERRAIN OF AMERICAN POLITICS by Jim O'Brien; ECONOMIC CRISIS AND CONSERVATIVE POLICIES by Jim Campen; DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM AND SEXUAL POLITICS by the editors of Gay Left; and Noam Chomsky and Michael Klare on COLD WAR II and US INTERVENTIONISM IN THE THIRD WORLD. Plus, BILLBOARDS OF THE FUTURE!

"DREAMS OF FREEDOM" - Special double issue featuring "Having a Good Time: The American Family Goes Camping"...Vol. 16, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring 1982)...180 pages.

Featuring: Interview with Carlos Fuentes; SPECIAL SECTION: Reviews of recent Radical History on women, blacks, rural populists, auto workers and responses to industrialization; POSTAL WORKERS AND SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT by Peter Rachleff; PEACE AT ANY PRICE?: FEMINISM, ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND THE DISARMAMENT MOVEMENT by the editors; SOLIDARITY, COLD WAR AND THE LEFT by Frank Brodhead; E.R.A., R.I.P.-BUT HOW HARD SHOULD WE CRY AT THE FUNERAL? by Anita Diamant; and, poetry, movie satires and more.

$4.00 (plus 50¢ postage)
SPECIAL BULK RATE AVAILABLE:
40% Discount for 5 or more copies

Radical America (USPS 873-880)
38 Union Square No. 14
Somerville, MA 02143
ISSN 0033-7617

Second Class Postage
Paid at Boston, MA
and additional Post Offices