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Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves: Locating U.S. Feminism through Feminist Periodicals, 1970-

1983

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Women's and Gender Studies

written under the direction of

Nancy Hewitt

and approved by

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

May 2011

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves: Locating U.S. Feminism through Feminist Periodicals, 1970-

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By Agatha Beins

Dissertation Director:

Nancy Hewitt

In 1968 the first feminist periodicals associated with the second wave of U.S. feminism appeared in the United States, and by 1973 over five hundred different feminist newsletters, newspapers, and literary journals had been published. Although these periodicals often had erratic publication schedules and rarely ran more than a few years, their proliferation during this time period shows that publishing was vital to the women's liberation movement. Not only did periodicals create a space for women to describe experiences, develop theories, debate politics, and exchange ideas, they also connected women through their circulation, producing an imagined community of feminists at local and global scales.

*Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves: Locating U.S. Feminism through Feminist Periodicals, 1970-1983* examines the U.S. feminist movement through the production and consumption of feminist newsletters and newspapers. Focusing on periodicals published in five cities (New Orleans, Louisiana; Northampton, Massachusetts; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Iowa City, Iowa; and Los Angeles, California), this dissertation tracks the circulation of ideas to explore how feminism as a collective identity was produced and reproduced. Based on archival research throughout the country and an analysis of the circulation and repetition of language and images as well as on the effects of modes of periodical production, this dissertation draws from a wide

range of literatures, including history, sociology, geography, cultural studies, visual studies, and history of the book, as well as from feminist theories about power and identity. I argue that during the 1970s feminist periodicals were vital to the production not just of feminism's present and presence but also of feminism's past and future. Periodicals additionally contributed to the discursive and material existence of the women's liberation movement, allowing feminism's past, present, and future to be imaginable as well as physically locatable.

## **Acknowledgments**

My dissertation research was a labor of love in many ways. From the first time I picked up a copy of *Ain't I a Woman?* at the Lesbian Herstory Archives to the month I spent in New Orleans almost three years later, I have experienced wondrous gifts of people's time, energy, knowledge, and care. First, thank you to the archivists, volunteers, and student workers made it possible for me to so easily find and read through manuscript and periodical collections. In addition to the Herstory Archives, I am grateful to have spent time at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, the DuBois Library archives at the University of Amherst, the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research in Los Angeles, the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA, the University Archives at California State University, Long Beach, the Iowa Women's Archives, the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Radcliffe, the Northeastern University archives, the Joseph P. Healy Library archives at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke, the Nadine Vorhoff Library at Tulane, and the New Orleans Public Library. Many thanks, as well to the archivists at the Sallie Bingham Center, the Schlesinger Library, and the Sophia Smith Collection for inviting me to give a research talk and providing lively, engaged feedback.

This labor and travel was supported by generous funding from the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, the Schlesinger Library, the Sallie Bingham Center, the Sophia Smith Collection, the Historical Society of Southern California, and the State Historical Society of Iowa. I also received the gift of a year to write my dissertation with an American Association of University Women American Dissertation Fellowship (2009-10).

People who opened their homes and hearts to me as I traveled across the country doing archival research made the different cities I visited feel like home. Yashna, first a friend of a

friend and now a dear love, let me stay in her spare bedroom in Durham. And Steve, an old friend from Tucson, helped me navigate the buses of Los Angeles, brought home avocados, persimmons, pomegranates, and other found fruit, and shared lovely evenings cooking and sitting in the back yard of your apartment in Echo Park. Elizabeth and Elliott let me wander into their house one cool evening, borrow their bikes to shop at Whole Foods, and gave me a new appreciation of New Orleans through their contagious joy and love of the city. Thank you.

It would be impossible to extol my dissertation committee in proportion to the guidance, assistance, feedback, great quantity of letters of reference, and general encouragement as I stumbled through this dissertation. Nancy Hewitt, Harriet Davidson, Joanna Regulska, and Trysh Travis are the kinds of scholars I want to emulate and their presence in the academy gives me hope for its future. I've also been fortunate to take part in interdisciplinary graduate-faculty seminars through the Institute for Research on Women and the Center for Historical Analysis at Rutgers, through both of which I was able to experience the best of academic knowledge production. And Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy—thank you for taking a chance on me as co-editor of Women's Studies for the Future, a decision that undoubtedly increased the amount of labor and energy that was required of you for this project, and for mentoring me in a way that still echoes in my daily practices.

Also incomparable is the support and joy I've experienced from family and friends. Having grown up with parents who never questioned my ability to do something and somehow never seemed to discourage me from making what may have been questionable decisions let me enter graduate school without a doubt that I'd make it through. Sara and Allison, thanks for making the places I've lived filled with love, good food, and booze. Not only unparalleled thinkers and dreamers, the people I've been able to work and live with have provoked me to find beauty in the world: Alix, Alison, Alex D., Alex W., Amber, Anahi, Andy, Ben, Caleb, Finn, Jess, Judy, Julie, Laurie, Marton, Steph J., and Temma. This list must also include the women

who were active in the 1970s and whose informal conversations with me both made feminist activism more alive and helped me more carefully craft my dissertation: Aaron, Sondra, Jill, Sherna, Karla, and Mary, thank you. And, Steph C., I already miss you but also know that we have many more conversations and tasty dinners in our future.

A version of Chapter 3 appears as the article “Sisterly Solidarity: Politics and Rhetoric of the Direct Address in U.S. Feminism in the 1970s” as part of a special issue on the history of feminisms in 2010 in *Women: A Cultural Review* (21.3: 293-308).

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### **Archives and Manuscript Collections**

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Comision Femenil de Los Angeles Papers

CSPG: Center for the Study of Political Graphics (Los Angeles, California)

CSULB: California State University, Long Beach Special Collections and University Archives

OHC: Oral History Collection: Los Angeles Women's Movement

VOAHA: The Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive

Du Bois Library: Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library,  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

VWU records (Valley Women's Union Records, 1974-76)

IWA: Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

Aaron Silander papers

Dale McCormick papers

WRAC records (Women's Resource and Action Center Records, 1960-2006 and  
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LHA: Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn NY

NCCROW: Newcomb Archives, Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, Tulane  
University, New Orleans, Louisiana

Mary Gehman Collection

Phyllis Parun Papers

Videotapes from Voices from the Louisiana Women's Movement: First-Hand Accounts from People Who Made It Happen, a conference hosted by the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women Conference

Northeastern: University Libraries, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

FL records (Female Liberation: A Radical Feminist Organization Records, 1968-74)

Sallie Bingham Center: Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina

Angela Jeannet Papers

ALFA archives (Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Archives [and periodicals, ca. 1972-1994])

Schlesinger: Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Ann Hunter Popkin Papers, 1968-1977

Fran Ansley Papers

Rochelle Ruthchild Papers

Wini Breines Papers, 1969-1974

SCLSSR: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles, California

LAWLM collection: Register of the Los Angeles Women's Liberation Movement  
Collection, 1970-1976

Joan Robins Papers

WCCSU: Women's Center California State University-Dominguez Hills<sup>1</sup>

SSC: Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts

VWC records (Valley Women's Center Records, 1971-1977)

WL collection (Women's Liberation Collection, 1959-2006)

VFOH project (Voices of Feminism Oral History Project)

#### Periodicals

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*Amherst Women's Liberation Newsletter* (Amherst, Massachusetts)

*Asian Women's Center Newsletter* (Los Angeles, California)

*Atalanta / ALFA Newsletter* (Atlanta, Georgia)

*Battle Acts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts)

*Distaff* (New Orleans, Louisiana)

*Encuentro Femnenil* (Long Beach, California)

*Feminist Newsletter* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina)

*Female Liberation Newsletter* (Cambridge, Massachusetts)

*Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta, Georgia)

*Indianapolis Women's Liberation Newsletter* (Indianapolis, Indiana)

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<sup>1</sup> I conducted research in fall 2008 at which time the collection was uncatalogued; it has since been recatalogued.

*Lancaster Women's Liberation* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

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Movement, California State University, Long Beach Special Collections and  
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- Intro.7     Front and back covers of *Sister*, January 1973, front and back covers  
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Edited by Cazz Blase, Clare Von Stokes, and Simone Ivatts, Leeds, UK

## Introduction

Zines were my first love. Zines, pronounced *zeenz*, are handmade, cut-and-paste, noncommercial, energetic, publications created for fun, as a hobby, or to support political projects, and are not for profit. My master's thesis analyzed an activist zine community in Tucson, Arizona, a project that involved interviewing people who made zines and reading the zines they made and read. This involved photocopying their zine collections (often making photocopies of photocopies of photocopies) and reading texts that covered a dizzying array of topics and genres. The politics of male body hair, menstruation, the rights of youth who have been in mental institutions, anticapitalism, sex, and the connections between universities and the prison industrial complex were placed alongside interviews with musicians and artists, parodies of popular and everyday culture, found texts, love letters, comics, recipes, and other DIY (do-it-yourself) instructions. While working on this project I wondered what kinds of nonmainstream activist publications existed before zines. In particular I wanted to locate feminist publications that circulated under the radar of popular media and that might fit into the DIY ethic. Sitting in the University of Arizona library, running through rolls of microfilm I came across four different feminist periodicals published in the 1970s: *Ain't I a Woman?* from Iowa City, *off our backs* from Washington DC, *Rat* from New York City, and *It Ain't Me, Babe* from Berkeley. Despite the forty years separating these publications from zines, they had a similar energy and affect. The authors were angry, they were trying to imagine and produce alternative ways of seeing and living in the world, and they published to call attention to injustice not to make a profit. In addition, these publications were grappling not only with gender but also with the complexities of race, class, sexuality, and globalization in a way that belies the dominant narratives about feminism in the 1970s. These publications captivated me, but they were not incorporated into my interrogation of zine production and consumption.

What I found most interesting about zines is the way that people consumed them based on their knowledge and assumptions about how they were produced. One zine maker I interviewed commented, “I’ve never seen a zine where I was like, ‘Where did this come from? Did a robot make this?’ Even ones that look like magazines, they’re still—the writing in them, the way the pictures are presented—it just seems more personal.”<sup>2</sup> The same sentiment was articulated in other interviews and in secondary sources, suggesting that a significant part of what makes a publication a zine is the mode of its production (Gross 1995; Duncombe 1997, ch. 4 and 1999; Blok and Carlip 1998, xxi; Wright 2001).<sup>3</sup> Zines come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and degrees of artfulness, and engage all sorts of topics, yet for many readers and zinesters the most important characteristic is that it is connected in a tangible way to its producer and is the result of a particular kind of labor. My dissertation has in many ways been inspired by this observation and the concomitant question: how does the mode of a text’s production shape the ways in which it is consumed and made meaningful?

To address this question I returned to those feminist newspapers produced in the 1970s. I track the formation of feminism as a collective identity through the movement of ideas through these periodicals ultimately arguing that the production and survival of feminism depends on its ability to reproduce itself—to reproduce political and cultural spaces—through time. In other words, in addition to sustaining its politics through ideas and affect, feminism needs to be locatable. It needs a *where*. Whether the women’s center, the domestic abuse shelter, the phone book, the kitchen table, the demonstration, or the newsletter, spaces of feminism must be

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Sabin, March 8, 2003, Tucson, AZ.

<sup>3</sup> Lane, another zine maker I interviewed describes the qualities that make something a zine: “It’s personal. It hasn’t gone through filters of editing. Bureaucratic editing. I think a zine should feel immediate; it should be small-scale, an intimacy to it” (Interview with Lane, February 27, 2003, Tucson, AZ). Rosemary concludes that “I guess you just have to tell that somebody made it. Whereas with a book or a magazine, or something like that, it looks—you can’t tell that there’s people behind it. I guess that’s the thing for me” (Interview with Rosemary, March 2, 2003, Tucson, AZ). And according to Lydia, “I think it’s about the labor—it’s got to be about the labor” (Interview with Lydia, March 10, 2003).

accessible to movement insiders and those who may become movement insiders, and they must believe that these spaces will exist in the future.

Scholars have recently investigated facets of feminist publishing such as feminist presses and bookstores, yet with few exceptions the production, distribution, and consumption of periodicals have remained marginal to studies of U.S. feminism. Additionally, studies of feminist organizing rarely interrogate activism in relation to processes of feminist publishing. Bringing together these strands of scholarship through the field of history of the book, my research is propelled by the interrogation of what the life cycle of a feminist periodical reveals about the theories and practices of U.S. feminism. To this end I conduct close readings of feminist periodicals, but I also examine their physical materiality. In particular I consider editorial policies of feminist collectives and their decision-making structures, the technologies of periodical production, other practices such as reprinting articles and images from other newspapers, and methods of and obstacles to distribution. This approach illuminates what enabled some ideas to travel more widely than others and why some individuals or events became symbolic of a national and international movement; they also reveal how collectives' ideas about feminism changed as they produced different issues of a periodical. My scholarship also diverges from most histories of U.S. feminism by looking at the materials of feminism in conjunction with the discourses and ideologies and asking how ideas are materialized. I thus offer an innovative methodology for studying not just feminism but a wide range of social movements. Although social movements have different structures, objectives, access to resources, and means of communication, each formulates a collective identity that has spatial and temporal characteristics. Therefore, attention to space and time—particularly what materials and ideas are repeated through space and time—can be employed in understanding social movement dynamics more broadly.

**Which feminism?**



In addition to moments in the archive that have become points of origin, this dissertation developed in relation to the discourses about the second wave of U.S. feminism.<sup>4</sup> Despite the contestation around the wave metaphor, I use the term “second wave” purposefully here, for it gets invoked often to produce a very specific kind of feminism. Consider the often-cited introduction to *To Be Real* by Rebecca Walker, in which she produces second wave feminism as an ideology that does not allow “individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories” and that “will dictate and regulate our lives, instantaneously pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose inflexible and unchanging sides, female against male, black against white, oppressed against oppressor, good against bad” (1995, xxxiii). Or the following email to the F-word website, which is affiliated with London Thirdwave Feminists: “Second wave theories never sat comfortably with my own brand of radical, leftist, feminist, queer activism. Third wave is much more open to the challenge of overlapping and interlinking concerns” (cited in Dean 2009, 339). Further accentuating this contrast, context is used to shape the different narratives of second and third wave feminism (Karlyn 2003, par 5; Dean 2009, 338). As Dicker and Pipemeier write, “we no longer live in the world that feminists of the second wave faced” (2003, 10); rather, “the third wave consists of those of us who have developed our sense of identity in a world shaped by technology, global capitalism, multiple models of sexuality, changing national demographics, and declining economic vitality” (14). In other words, because politics and epistemology do not

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<sup>4</sup> Although scholars and activists articulate the meanings of the terms “second wave feminism” and “third wave feminism” in disparate fashion, there is general consensus that the terms are meaningful and describe some kind of reality. Rebecca Walker’s seminal statement “I am not a post-feminist feminist. I am the third wave” (1992, 41) and Kathleen Rowe Karlyn’s claim that “in Third Wave feminism, popular culture is a natural site of identity-formation and empowerment, providing an abundant storehouse of images and narratives valuable less as a means of representing reality than as motifs available for contesting, rewriting and recoding” (2003, par. 21), make clear that the third wave exists as a political and epistemological formation. Rarely will the existence of the third wave be questioned, although its relation to the second wave is more problematized. Rory Dicker and Alison Pipemeier in the introduction to their anthology *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century* ask, “is the third wave actually an independent entity—a movement with its own identity?” This question is part of their refusal to concede that “the second wave is over and done with” (20). They are unequivocal, nevertheless, that this book is about the third wave, and they construct the second wave as a coherent entity by unreflectively describing Robin Morgan as a “second wave feminist activist” (21).

develop and are not practiced in a vacuum, it makes sense to conclude that feminist activism in the 1970s would differ from feminist activism in the 1990s.

Despite the descriptions of the third wave as having the potential to articulate a more complex politics because of a more complex understanding of identity, scholars nevertheless narrate the third wave as tending toward the apolitical (Dicker and Pipemeier 2003, 18). Carissa Showden, for example, wants to push third wave feminists to articulate more clearly how their cultural interventions are political (2009, 184) because “most third-wave work thus far has merely substituted cultural critique and consumption for political action” (183). There is also the sense that third wave feminists practice a more individualist version of politics (Showden 2009, 175, 187; Karlyn 2003 par. 6) whereas the second wave was driven by collectivity among women and the force of collective actions. Second and third wave feminist political agendas thus are contrasted not only according to the specific issues each is described as addressing but also the methods used to achieve their objectives (see Dean 2009, 339).

As these examples show, the two waves are depicted as at best mutually exclusive and at worst actively hostile toward each other. When these distinctions are elaborated they tend to fall into three categories: epistemology, politics, and context. Because third wave feminists are narrated as coming of age in the 1980s, they have been influenced by epistemological frameworks shaped by postmodernism, poststructuralism, multiculturalism, hybridity, antiessentialism, intersectionality, and two-plus decades of second wave feminist activism (Dicker and Pipemeier 2003, 10; Karlyn 2003, par. 21; Showden 2009, 181-82). Thus, when Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake write that the third wave attempts to develop “modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the creation of a coalition politics based on these understandings” (1997, 3), they are demonstrating the relationship between politics and epistemology. And when Showden argues that third wave feminism’s critique of essentialism can facilitate a move away from identity politics (2009, 183, 189) she reinforces an

epistemological distinction between the waves: the second wave is seemingly less effective because it perpetuates an identity-based (read: woman-based) politics rooted in a less complex understanding of identity formation, whereas the discursive, deconstructive modes of late twentieth century thinking facilitates a more complex third wave politics. This distinction may also be understood through the assumption that the second wave was focused on women's issues and the third wave on issues around difference more generally (Dicker and Pipemeier 2003, 5). Additionally, the third wave gets credited with reclaiming more conventional paradigms of femininity and heterosexuality, along with sites of popular culture and media, as empowering (Showden 2009, 176; Garrison 2003; Karlyn 2003). In other words, according to those who identify as third wavers, the third wave is better: it more racially and sexually diverse, it international, and it is epistemologically and politically sophisticated. The second wavers, however, were essentialist and provincial, and they were too focused on reform or were too utopian in their unsustainable separatist communities. The repetition of this narrative stood in stark contrast to what I encountered in the University of Arizona library where I first read *off our backs*, *Ain't I a Woman?*, *Rat*, and *It Ain't Me, Babe*. While gender had a salient presence, the writers and artists present in these pages were thinking about gender in relation to imperialism, labor issues, capitalism, and classism, race and racism, the medical industrial complex, other revolutionary movements, sexuality, day care, ageism, and spirituality. They were angry and hopeful as they imagined and worked toward a world based on feminist principles. How and why, I wondered, has U.S. feminism in the 1970s ended up being depicted through such a different narrative? Although my dissertation does not attempt to find an answer, this question is nonetheless a formative one. From the start I approached the women's liberation movement open to its complexities and inconsistencies, to its idiosyncrasies and richness.

### **Why periodicals?**

Television, radio, and print publications exposed a large audience to the concept of feminism, which helped make “feminism a major topic of national debate” (Evans 2003, 40). In fact, such coverage was critical to exposing movement outsiders to the concept of feminism. Even if the attention was negative, women who were open to the message of feminism were given a way to start narrating their daily experiences of being gendered female and, importantly, were given a way to locate other women who shared a similar narrative. However, sensationalizing the movement led to misrepresentation and oversimplification of the ideas and ideals of U.S. feminism.<sup>5</sup> For example, in the well-publicized 1968 demonstration against the Miss American Pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, women threw away bras as a symbol of their resistance to traditional norms of femininity. Although there were no fires that afternoon, “the phrase ‘bra-burner’ was sufficiently provocative to make headlines, and, with steady usage by the media—television, radio, magazines, newspapers—it assumed an historical reality” (Hole and Levine 1971, 230). Feminists additionally experienced ridicule and trivialization from mainstream media and popular culture in a way that other revolutionary movements (civil rights, antiwar) did not. Because of this Kim Fridkin Kahn and Edie N. Goldenberg conclude that mainstream media attention was so “unflattering” that “the movement grew in spite of the media attention received” (1991, 112).

Nevertheless, women carved out and seized media spaces for the purpose of producing feminism by feminists, such as the eight-page supplement in the *Ladies Home Journal* in August 1970 (see Lichtenstein 1970, 51; Hole and Levine 1971, 255-58). The underground press also contributed to the visibility of the women’s liberation movement, albeit unevenly (Evans 2003, 108-9). Frustrated with the limited access women had to the press, they took the means of production and thus the process of publishing into their own hands. One of the most widely cited examples of women’s dissatisfaction with publications from the New Left counterculture is the

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Hole and Levine (1971, 266-70), Freeman (1975, 111-14), Echols (1989, 209-10), Kahn and Goldenberg (1991), and Dow (2003, 144-45 and 2004, 156).

feminist takeover of the New York City newspaper *Rat*. In its New Left incarnation the paper was as likely to print images of nude or semi-nude female figures as it was to print an article about feminist activism. It thus created an equivalence between naked women and politics while also trivializing the politics and ideals of the women's liberation movement. Consequently, in January 1970 a collective of women from different groups in the New York City area seized *Rat*'s editorial office and the means of production and began putting out a feminist version of the paper.<sup>6</sup> In the first feminist issue of *Rat*, Robin Morgan wrote "If men return to reinstate the porny photos, the sexist comic strips, the 'nude chickie' covers (along with their patronizing rhetoric about being in favor of Women's Liberation)—if that happens, then our alternatives are clear. *Rat* must be taken over permanently by women—or *Rat* must be destroyed" (1970a, 6). Echoing Morgan's claim, Carol Seajay, founder of the *Feminist Bookstore Newsletter*, says that in order to circulate information about feminism, "We had to buy the presses and print it ourselves. We had to control the typesetting; we had to do all the printing processes—the stripping, the photographing. Binderies refused to bind lesbian and feminist books, so we had to do the binding ourselves" (quoted in Onosaka 2006, 26).

Mainstream media that circulated in local markets could offer more nuanced and complex coverage, partly because some editors felt more responsible to their subscribers and because the local activists could exert more influence in the quality of coverage. Very early on in their organizing, feminists from the Pioneer Valley region in Massachusetts pushed local papers to give them publication space. In April 1970, the *Amherst Record* began providing space for a feminist column for Amherst Women's Liberation, and Northampton women were able to secure a column in the *Hampshire Gazette* in the summer of 1970 (although the former column ends by December of that year and the latter by February 1971). The *Holyoke Transcript* in western Massachusetts had a regular reporter, Gena Corea, who wrote about the local feminist

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<sup>6</sup> The first issue of *Rat* as a feminist newspaper was the issue dated February 9-23, 1970; see also Hole and Levine (1971, 273-4).

community.<sup>7</sup> Corea was not only sympathetic to women's liberation but also subscribed to the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, making her allegiances clear. This kind of relationship—between reporter and subject—was less likely to characterize the careers of journalists who covered the news nationally because such reporters did not have the space or time to be participant observers of one community over the course of months or years.

The significance of media in general and periodicals in particular to the women's liberation movement cannot be overestimated, for it was not just a few scattered groups of women that created newspapers and newsletters.<sup>8</sup> In 1968 the first feminist periodicals associated with the second wave of feminism appeared in the United States, and one study found that by 1973 hundreds of different feminist newsletters, newspapers, and literary journals had been published (Mather 1974, 82). As offset printing replaced linotype printing, publishing became accessible to people who did not have a lot of money or technical training. A group could publish and circulate a periodical with relative ease, especially in comparison with a book (see Onosaka 2006, 15). Additionally, the lack of formal structure at a national scale meant that any group could form and then produce their own periodical (see Baxandall and Gordon 2000, 14). An editorial from *Women: A Journal of Liberation* reads, "An important part of the women's liberation movement has been the many publications that have emerged from the struggle. They have been key in

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<sup>7</sup> The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* included a short editorial comment on Corea's journalism in 1973: "Gena Corea, who ran the women's liberation page in the HOLYOKE TRANSCRIPT until she moved to New Jersey, is commissioned to write a weekly column, Frankly Feminist, for the New Republic Syndicate. Gena used the Center a lot while she was in our area (and contributed in many ways) including rummaging through the archives and talking to many area activists about their work. Write on!" ("Local Woman Makes Good," May 1973, p. 2. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records. See also the daily log entry for May 3, 1973. Folder 8, box 2, VWC records). In order to reflect the content of newsletters and newspapers as it appeared in the original publication, I retain the original capitalization, punctuation and emphases in my quotations throughout the dissertation.

<sup>8</sup> In a reflection on the trajectory of the women's liberation movement, Mary Gehman writes, "Essential to any socio-political movement is a voice, a place to disseminate and share ideas, news, theory and information. We could not depend on the established media to provide that - we had to make it ourselves." She continues, "Consequently there was a spate of all kinds of women's newspapers, newsletters, magazines, books, catalogues, directories, radio and TV programming, films and informal means of communication" ("*DISTAFF* Marks Special Anniversary: One Year of Publication," by Mary Gehman, *Distaff*, November 1980, p. 9. NCCROW. Note that this issue marks the one-year anniversary of *Distaff*'s return after a four-year hiatus. July 1975 was the last issue of *Distaff* published until November 1979).

providing an exchanges of ideas and bringing new women into the movement.”<sup>9</sup> Other publications iterate similar sentiments about the importance of maintaining communication, spreading information, and involving women in the movement; and many women, when describing their introduction to women’s liberation, state that reading feminist books or periodicals first propelled them to action.

Despite the number of feminist newsletters and newspapers that circulated in the 1970s and their impact on the movement, few scholars have addressed the roles they played in sustaining the U.S. women’s liberation movement. Many scholars have recognized the significance of examining feminism at a local scale.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the impact of the production and consumption of periodicals in these studies is taken for granted rather than investigated. There is, however, a growing body of work about feminist publications in 1970s U.S. feminism: media, pamphlets, newspapers, and other ephemera produced a sense of political and intellectual community (Baxandall 2001, 226), were sites of consciousness raising (Adams 1998, 122), and served “as engines of social change and cultural invention” (Meeker 2006, 15). Martin Meeker, for example, suggests that lesbian feminist communication networks formed through the periodical *Amazon Quarterly* were the ideological basis, or “the *raison d’être* of the movement itself” (2006, 243), that the political and social values that informed the production of the publication were also what the quarterly’s editors hoped to produce through the publication. Kathryn Thoms Flannery argues that because feminist publications were important for the kinds of knowledge they created and disseminated, they can be analyzed through a pedagogical lens. For her, publications were sites of learning as well as teaching through their production and their consumption (2005, especially ch. 2). And in her article about lesbian feminist publications, presses, and bookstores, Kate Adams claims that “particularly in the 1970s, the paper lesbian was

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<sup>9</sup> Editorial, *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, February 26, 1971, p. 10. Folder 12, box 7, WL collection. See also Suzanne Pharr interview, p. 37-38, VFOH project. <http://www.smith.edu/library/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Pharr.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> See Kesselman (2001), Ezekiel (2002), Enke (2007), Gilmore and Kaminski (2007), and Valk (2008).

a paper feminist; that is, lesbian women helped shape the voice and the politics of feminism by devoting their creative and entrepreneurial energies to the production of feminist alternative media enterprises” (1998, 116). Intervening in the historiography of U.S. feminism through the field of book history, Trysh Travis notes that most commonly book historians reproduce an additive approach when considering gender and publishing: studies of women writers, printers, bookbinders, and papermakers are incorporated into the historical record. Consequently, “attention to gender as a form of power has usually been limited to noting that the trades were male-dominated” but does not extend to queries about publishing norms themselves (2008, 276). Understanding publishing to be a matter of power, Travis’s argument characterizes publishing as part of a system of values and norms and explicitly connects modes of production with the production of values. My dissertation follows upon scholarship that validates publishing and publications as integral to feminist activism in the 1970s and suggests different ways to approach this vital topic.

My project is indebted to the work of the above scholars and others who in various ways interrogate the intersections of textual production and feminism as a social movement. Like Murray and Travis in particular, my dissertation explicitly engages history of the book scholarship. Rather than looking primarily at the content of feminist periodicals, this project is built around the different stages of a periodical’s production, distribution, consumption, and survival. As a result I conduct not only textual analyses but also close readings of the materiality of periodicals. Because of the processes of production and distribution, periodicals end up with paratextual marks such as addresses—handwritten and printed on labels—the cancellation and “return to sender” stamps of the post office, parts of the periodical that are handwritten, pages that arrive out of order, columns whose edges are cut off, and typos. These marks allow the everyday to interrupt what, in glossier more professional publications, would be a relatively seamless reading experience. They also hint at the technologies of production that, too, are erased in most professional, for profit periodicals. Moreover, because it attends to the paratext—the kind of



paper used; the quotidian interactions between publishers, distributors, and people who sell texts; the spaces of reading; and the conditions in which books are stored—history of the book is useful for producing a history from below.<sup>11</sup> This approach makes space for narratives about and by people whose voices are often erased from the historical record and also privileges the production of history through everyday practices, artifacts, and places.

Newsletters and newspapers, because of their content, modes of production, the qualities of the genre, and materialization of politics, offer a useful nexus for thinking about feminism as an identity, community, ideology, practice, and social movement. From their production to their consumption, periodicals provide information about feminism at different scales and in different spaces: locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. On a local level, women collaborated to publish a newsletter and had face-to-face interactions with their coworkers. Examining these dynamics offers insight into some of the concrete practices of feminism: how ideals of sisterhood and egalitarianism were translated into action. Junko Onosaka suggests that the concept “the personal is political” “would be realized through books by and for women” (2006, 27), a claim I would argue applies even more powerfully to periodicals by and for women. And exploring more geographically dispersed connections and networks reveals significant insights about who and what was imagined to be feminist, as well as about the circulation of ideas (e.g., what parts of the newsletter are reprinted from other publications) and bodies (e.g., in the Northampton-based *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter* women often reported about conferences they traveled to).

Periodicals additionally contributed to the formation, sustenance, and growth of U.S. feminism by linking activists through their circulation, conveying information and producing an imagined community of feminists (see Anderson 1991), all of which were integral to the way that the movement was produced and reproduced. Jo Freeman describes these connections and gaps at national and local levels:

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<sup>11</sup> See Radway (1991, 11), Price (2006, 13), Chartier (2007, 510), and Darnton (2007, 496, 505).

The thousands of sister chapters around the country are virtually independent of one another, linked only by numerous publications, personal correspondence, and cross-country travelers. They form and dissolve at such a rate that no one can keep track of them. With time and growth the informal communication networks have partially stratified along functional lines, so that within a single city participants of, say, a feminist health clinic, will know less of different groups in their own area than other health clinics in different cities. (1975, 103-4)

Feminist groups tended to be small, informal, uninstitutionalized, and not part of a pre-existing organizational network, so the movement consisted of “scattered organizations and groups of women all over the country” (Allen 1970, 41). Even groups that incorporated or filed 501c3 forms to become nonprofit organizations were not guaranteed access to or inclusion in a particular network. As a result information traveled unpredictably, and might not be easily accessible. Recognizing the importance of consistent sources and pathways of information, a member of the collective that worked on the *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter* writes to the publication’s readers, urging them to contribute to its production:

A year ago I (Nancy Robinson) initiated the Women’s Center Newsletter. I’ve been working with it ever since. I feel it’s now time to enlist a group of women to carry it on. The newsletter performs a vital task in the female liberation movement, i.e., it informs us all of the current and future events of the Movement. It provides the means to report on the actions of groups so that we can know what each other is doing.<sup>12</sup>

Pointing to their seriality, Robinson recognizes that the significance of periodicals is related to the expectation that future issues will appear: periodicals produce a feminist present and a feminist future. According to Robinson a feminist future is dependent on the circulation of information, but as Freeman makes explicit this future depends also on the interpersonal networks they reinforce.

As serial publications, newsletters and newspapers contain information that is considered relevant for only a brief period of time. Articles cover current events and breaking news and events calendars rapidly become obsolete (except perhaps in the minds of historians and archivists), so feminist periodicals offer a snapshot of the “right now” of a place and a movement

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<sup>12</sup> Nancy Robinson, “Important Notice...Important...Please Read.” *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, July 1971, p. 1. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

and locate feminism's present. Benita Roth captures this aspect of their significance: "looking at grassroots journals and underground publications is essential for understanding how feminists viewed things on the ground" (2004, 18). Unlike the anthologies *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (Morgan 1970) and *Sisterhood Is Global* (Morgan 1984) or widely circulating periodicals like *off our backs*, and *Ms.*, the periodicals analyzed here did not have as their primary goal to encompass feminism on a national or international scale. This is not to say that these periodicals focused only on the local. Through reprints and excerpts from other publications, contributions from women who were geographically distant, and coverage of events in a wide range of places it is clear that editorial collectives were concerned with people, events, and issues that reached far beyond their own city's limits. Nevertheless, what the collectives chose to include reflects the social, cultural, historical, economic, and emotional topographies of their experiences and communities. The content of periodicals thus indexes not only the events, issues, and people that were salient for a specific community but also the feminist values and ideals that characterize that community.

For my archival research seriality meant that there were potentially many primary sources to examine. Some periodicals lasted only a few years, but because they tended to be published monthly or semi-monthly, a large number of discrete primary texts exist. Being able to look at a number of publications across the span of a few years enables me to track concepts, terms, events, ideas, and images, following their development and reproduction across time and space. This approach opens up a space to consider how feminist periodicals are both effected and affected by a feminist interpretive community, within which "meanings are constructed, shared, and reconstructed by members of social groups in the course of everyday life" (Berkowitz and TerKeurst 1999; see also Radway 1984a, 1984b). For reading is both an individual and social process, and meaning is shaped by a variety of factors that may not be specific to the actual physical text being read (Pawley 2001, 2002).

Most issues of these publications contain a combination of textual genres: editorials; announcements about events, resources, and services; advertisements; journalistic articles

(written by local women, copied from alternative news services such as the Liberation News Service and KNOW, Inc., and reprinted from both feminist and other print media); opinion pieces; calls to action; creative writing; photographs; drawings; letters from readers; comics; and informative pieces (such as the page in *Ain't I a Woman?* that instructs readers in fixing a record player (see figure Intro.1<sup>13</sup>). These different kinds of writing and imagery—their polyvocality and multitextuality—depict feminism differently, presenting more “objective” and descriptive views as well as more “subjective” and narrative ones. Different women wrote and submitted the many texts that appear in one issue, providing a diversity in writers, writing, and viewpoints. In the publication *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, for instance, a plurality of voices was manifested through collaboratively-written pieces, group interviews, and editorial processes (Blanchard 1992). Different kinds of writing and imagery thus produce a multivalent feminism through descriptions, arguments, emotions, and narratives. At the same time what is not included in these publications can also illuminate what is considered outside the purview of feminism and/or what aspects of feminism were not salient to a particular editorial collective. Absence too demonstrates the boundaries of a social movement and its collective identity.

Polyvocality is a factor at every stage in the production process—because the voices of other texts shape writers as they write, because of the revision and editorial processes, and because the meaning readers create is influenced by other texts and voices. For many periodicals a disproportionate percentage of the writing was produced by a small number of women in the editorial collective, and even if collective members were not writing the text themselves they still chose what to excerpt from other publications and which submissions from outsiders to accept. The inclusion of different voices, therefore, is far from random. Nevertheless, there could be significant turnover in editorial collective members, so a single periodical—even one that was

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<sup>13</sup> The page is titled “Sisters Smash Sexism, Technology, and Planned Obsolescence,” *Ain't I a Woman?*, March 12, 1971, p. 10-11. IWA.

irregularly published—comprises a number of different issue and therefore a number of different editors' desires.

Periodicals additionally tend to have a certain transparency about their publication. Whereas the published copy of a book may conceal the processes of production, the feminist newspapers and newsletters analyzed here include information about how they came to exist. For example, the Iowa City Women's Liberation Front (WLF) writes in their first issue of *Ain't I a Woman?*, "We want no hierarchy of editor, assistants, staff, etc. All the people working on the paper should be involved in the decisions and policy. . . . We want new structures that do not allow people to fall into leader/follower. We don't want to work in any situation in which we are oppressed or in any situation in which we do oppress."<sup>14</sup> The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* announces to readers that the newsletter "has much unused potential and is a lot of work. It is mailed to about 300 women once a month. It would be good to have a permanent staff to work on it each month—gathering news somewhat aggressively editing, typing, running it off on the mimeo, addressing and mailing[.] The women on the staff of the newsletter should be able to work on it at the VWC [Valley Women's Center], since things change all the time and it's easier to keep up with current news. HELP!"<sup>15</sup> In a later newsletter we learn that the VWC has applied for a grant to buy a mimeograph machine "so that one of these days we may be able actually to read the newsletter without a strong light, and we are still actively searching for a way to get a good electric typewriter to replace this one. It has become increasingly clear that the VWC must have this equipment in order to continue to get information and newsletters out to women in this area. (There are now over 700 on the mailing list!)."<sup>16</sup> These excerpts hint at the kinds of processes used to produce the newsletter as well as the challenges the staff faced.

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<sup>14</sup> "Editorial," *Ain't I a Woman?*, June 26, 1970, p. 2. LHA.

<sup>15</sup> Announcement, *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, April 8, 1971, p. 4. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>16</sup> "A Note from the VWC Workers," *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, March 1972, p. 11. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records.

For the above reasons, feminist periodicals are an incredibly rich body of texts. They offer information about feminism on a number of geographic scales, through the breadth of different issues, voices, and kinds of text published, and through the tensions between feminist ideologies and practices that they explicitly and implicitly reveal. The situation of these periodicals in the local makes my focus on repetition of ideas, language, events, and bodies meaningful because the appearance of the same ideas, language, events, and bodies in different locales signifies their salience on a local scale.

### **Which periodicals?**

Los Angeles. Iowa City. New Orleans. Northampton, Massachusetts, and Cambridge, Massachusetts: cities of different sizes, different geographies, and different histories. To find one common thread look to the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. Each city was home to a vibrant feminist community, feminist organizations like women's centers, coffeeshops, bookstores, and referral services, and least one local feminist periodical documenting it all. This dissertation examines one periodical in each community: *Ain't I a Woman?* in Iowa City, the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, briefly renamed the *Women's Center Newsletter*, and finishing its life as *Sister* in Los Angeles, *Distaff* in New Orleans, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* in Northampton, and *Female Liberation Newsletter* in Cambridge. Feminists published periodicals in hundreds of cities across the United States—Durham, North Carolina; Anchorage, Alaska; Austin, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; Tucson, Arizona; Tampa, Florida; Seattle, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Bloomington, Indiana; and many, many more. In theory, a variety of periodicals published in these cities would have been appropriate for my dissertation. In practice, there were objectives and material constraints that shaped my selection. Geographically I wanted to maintain a certain kind of diversity and to make central cities that are not usually part of the national narrative of U.S. feminism. Most studies of 1970s U.S. feminism focus on large cities and on urban centers often in the northeast, such as New York, Boston, and Washington DC;

therefore, analyses of U.S. feminism have been rooted in these regions (Pearson 1999, 159). Keeping the focus on feminism more generically also motivated my choice of periodicals; therefore I excluded from my sample periodicals created to address a particular issue such as women's health or lesbian feminism.

In addition, access to resources narrowed the range of periodicals available for research. Feminist periodicals were published in hundreds of U.S. cities in the 1970s, yet many have not been kept and of those that still exist many have not been donated to archives. Therefore, the scope of this dissertation is circumscribed by the periodicals accessible through archives and that had been published for a span of at least several years. The Schlesinger Library, for example, has only four issues of the *Women's Liberation of Rhode Island Newsletter* (November 1972, January 1973, May 1973, and December 1977), the time span of which suggests that more issues were published. So despite the multiyear publishing run, I chose to not focus on the Rhode Island newsletter not because of particular characteristics of the city or the periodical but because of a lack of primary sources.

I also selected periodicals that did not fall in the subcategory of journals (or periodicals that are published four or fewer times a year) because such publications were less likely to be addressing current events and more likely to include longer essays and academic writing. This does not mean that they, too, did not produce a feminist imaginary for their audience, but their status as ephemera is different than that of newsletters and newspapers. Newsletters and newspaper were meant to be read immediately and then discarded because another issue would soon arrive, whereas journals like *No More Fun and Games*, although serial, were more durable and offered a different picture of feminism's present.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Most feminist periodicals did not attempt to attract a national audience, and those that did so were anomalies. Large, nationally circulating, long lasting periodicals like *Ms* and *off our backs* aren't the norm, whereas small local often erratic periodicals are. For this reason, the periodicals focused on here are representative of the women's liberation movement. See the following section for additional information about Female Liberation and the periodicals *Female Liberation Newsletter* and *No More Fun and Games*.

The feminist periodicals studied here also had relatively small subscription lists—*Los Angeles Women's Liberation Newsletter* at one point mailed over 4,200 people an issue of their paper, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* writes that over 700 addresses were on the mailing list, *Female Liberation Newsletter* in late 1970 was mimeographing 500 copies of each newsletter, and *Distaff* circulated to about 3000 at its peak.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that these numbers are an effect, in part, of the limited resources of editorial collectives. In the same editorial statement that includes the number of subscribers, the Valley Women's Center staff write, "Money is still—and will doubtless always be—low. The need is constant." They then explain that they have written a grant to help fund the purchase of a new mimeograph machine because "it has become increasingly clear that the VWC must have this equipment in order to continue to get information and newsletters out to women in this area." Such constraints will affect the kind of audience that may and will be reached. Because most feminist periodicals did not have the funds or womanpower to distribute many issues free of charge or to leave issues in public places for unknown people to pick up.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of the material forces that facilitate and limit the production and circulation of feminist periodicals, most readers of these publications were already movement insiders to some extent. Readers may not have been active or constant participants in women's liberation—for example, attending CR groups or public demonstrations, or contributing time or money—but if they received the periodical it is most likely that they actively sought it out, which means that they already had some contact with the movement.

A call to readers in *Female Liberation Newsletter* points to the ephemeral character of the newsletter:

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<sup>18</sup> Editorial, "Important" *Los Angeles Women's Liberation Newsletter*, September 11, 1970, p. 1. Folder 1, LAWLM collection; "A Note from the VWC Workers" *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, April 1971, p. 11. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records; "Budget – 9/24/70 to 11/28/70." Folder 7, box 1, FL records; informal conversation with Mary Gehman, November 10, 2009, New Orleans, LA.

<sup>19</sup> Lack of resources, however, did not prevent editorial collectives from trying to ensure as many people as possible received their publication for as cheaply as possible. Despite the suggested subscription price, collectives send issues to women for less or no money; and many collectives explicitly stated that they send issues to women in prison at no cost. In fact *Distaff* includes in the masthead the following statement: "We send free copies to women in prison and other institutions" (I first read this in the July 1975 issue, p. 2. NCCROW).



NEWSLETTERS NEEDED - Back issues! We are currently trying to complete our collection of Female Liberation Newsletters. We have a lot of them going back to September 1970 but there are gaps we would like to fill. If you have any of the following newsletters, please send them in to us. FROM 1970, we need: Nov. 16, Nov. 23, Nov. 30, *all of December*; FROM 1971, we need: Feb. 12, March 24, April 26, July 19, and Nov. 15. FROM 1972: Jan. 3, Feb. 14, Feb. 28, March 6, March 20, April 10, and April 17. . . It's possible that there was no newsletter some of these weeks.<sup>20</sup>

Female Liberation did consider the importance of maintaining an archive and documenting their history as evidenced by the fact that they sent copies of the newsletter to the Women's History Research Center in Berkeley to be microfilmed and also maintained an archive at their office. Yet in order to maintain a full archive the collective had to appeal to readers for their copies of the newsletter, and because the group did not keep a record of the published issues they could not be sure if they had a complete run.

Mode of production also reveals the way in which the newsletter was considered ephemeral. Compare, for example, the difference in resource distribution to *Female Liberation Newsletter* and the journal *No More Fun and Games*. The former was a bimonthly serial and the latter comprises six issues spanning 1968 through 1973.<sup>21</sup> Female Liberation allocates \$5200 to reprint 10,000 copies each of their first and fifth issues of *No More Fun and Games*, an amount that is almost fifty percent of their budget for September 24–November 28, 1970.<sup>22</sup> In this budget the newsletter receives \$394.10 for ten weeks of publishing (this includes money for two

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<sup>20</sup> "Newsletters Needed," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, May 22, 1972, p. 4. SSC (emphasis in the original). I was unable to locate a number of the issues they were missing. From 1970: November 23 and November 30; from 1971: April 26, and July 19; from 1972: January 3, February 14, March 6, April 17. It is not until the April 9, 1971, issue that Female Liberation starts dating their issues, so I used the postmark stamps (when legible), dates listed for the issue's calendar, and archivists' penciled dates to determine chronology. Nevertheless, because pages are not numbered consistently, and because many of the issues' pages are different colors (see figure Intro.2) it is difficult to determine which pages are part of a single issue, and when that issue was published. Therefore, I assume that the March 24, 1971 is the issue that has been postmarked March 22, 1971 and did not count that issue as missing. Moreover, the February 28, 1972, issue of *Female Liberation Newsletter* announces that the periodical will now be published every other week because of lack of funds and "womanpower" (Editorial *Female Liberation Newsletter* February 8, 1972, p. 6. SSC). Because there are issues for March 13, March 27, April 10, and April 24, it is likely that the March and April 1972 issues they list (except for April 10) were not published.

<sup>21</sup> The issues were published in October 1968, February 1969, November 1969, April 1970, July 1971, and May 1973.

<sup>22</sup> "Budget – 9/24/70 to 11/28/70." Folder 7, box 1, FL records.

reams of paper, three stencils, postage for five hundred newsletters, mailing labels, Xeroxing labels, and mimeograph ink). In order to produce additional issues of *No More Fun and Games*, Female Liberation needs only to allocate money for its printing (nonetheless, money that cannot necessarily be taken for granted), which suggests that they did not discard the templates needed to produce additional issues. However, the collective must ask readers for issues of the newsletter, indicating that they do not save the stencils they used for printing them on the mimeograph machine.

These differing processes of production reveal differences in the life cycles of the two periodicals and how their consumption is imagined. The journal, which is published less frequently, is meant to be read over a longer period of time, and its contents are less time sensitive. “Female Liberation as the Basis for Social Revolution” by Roxanne Dunbar (1969) appeared in the second issue of *No More Fun and Games* was reprinted a number of times—in anthologies and as a freestanding pamphlets—reflecting its salience in the early 1970s and the continued perception of its significance.<sup>23</sup> Also important is the fact that issues of the journal ranged from 80 to 192 pages. Putting out periodicals of that length at a greater frequency would not be sustainable with the resources the collective had. The newsletter, in contrast, is produced weekly and then biweekly and contains information that becomes obsolete more quickly (such as calendar items, event announcements, and information about boycotts and election campaigns). Furthermore, the calendar lists almost exclusively events occurring in the Cambridge/Boston area, and other materials focus predominantly on concerns in the Massachusetts/New York area. This characteristic is not unique to Cambridge or to periodicals in this format. Excluding certain campaigns that expanded beyond their locale, such as those to support political prisoners (Angela Davis, Joan Little, Susan Saxe), pass the Equal Rights Amendment, or encourage boycotts (Farah Pants or produced picked by non-union workers), the periodicals in this study are local centric.

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<sup>23</sup> It appears in the anthologies *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (1970), *Notes from the Second Year* (1970), *Voices of the New Feminism* (1970), and *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* (2000) and is reprinted as a pamphlet by the New England Free Press and the Nashville Student Organizing Committee.

And importantly, this local must be considered in terms of both geography and temporality: it creates a specific kind of feminist space as well as a feminist present, since periodicals provide information about the region (meetings, demonstrations, legislation, etc.) that often becomes quickly obsolete.

This local is produced not only through content and time but also through audience. The circulation of *No More Fun and Games* was over 10,000 in 1970 while in 1970 and 1973 the *Female Liberation Newsletter* mailing list included only 500 addresses.<sup>24</sup> As a locally distributed publication the newsletter both imagines and produces a different audience than a periodical that is likely to sell nationally. The more sales a periodical requires in order to be sustainable, the more it must create content that will appeal to a wider audience. Female Liberation's other publication, (which they call a magazine) *The Second Wave*, was first published in March 1971 and required 7000 sales in order to be profitable.<sup>25</sup> The collective is clear that these two periodicals serve different purposes and audiences. A pamphlet put out by the Speakers Bureau of Female Liberation describes additional services offered by the group, such as orientation meetings, CR groups, a lending library, a Saturday morning radio show, and their periodicals. In the pamphlet they note, "Our quarterly magazine, THE SECOND WAVE, serves nationally as a forum for feminist writings and discussion," while the newsletter "serves as an information exchange for women throughout the Greater Boston area."<sup>26</sup> In social movement texts, the imagining of audience is interconnected with the collective identity produced through the movement and with the kinds of people who are perceived as potentially available for mobilization (B. Roth 2008). For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, naming a reader a sister contributes to the production of a feminist collective identity, but an address need not be direct, or even explicit, in order to create a reader. The choice of topics to discuss, events to cover, and

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<sup>24</sup> See "Budget – 9/24/70 to 11/28/70" for the 1970 statistics and for the 1973 statistic see *Female Liberation Newsletter*, February 26, 1973, p. 3. SSC.

<sup>25</sup> "Feminutes," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, August 30, 1971, p. 6. SSC.

<sup>26</sup> Pamphlet titled "The Speakers Bureau of Female Liberation," n.d. [ca. 1972/1973]. Folder 14, box 1, FL records.

voices to include in a publication are factors in the way an audience is perceived and produced by editors.

### **Periodicals and places**

Editorial decisions like those noted above shape the form and content of periodicals. Although certain factors put editors in communication with women throughout the nation and internationally, these periodicals were nonetheless very local publications. The content of a periodical depended on the women who worked on it, their priorities, and readers' priorities. Local politics, resources, populations, geography, and networks gave each periodical a specific texture and are useful for understanding the presence and absence of certain ideals and practices in the pages of an issue. This section thus offers brief sketches of the periodicals and the cities in which they were published. By no means exhaustive, the descriptions are meant to provide an introduction to the local contexts shaping periodical publication.

*Ain't I a Woman?* was published in Iowa City, Iowa between June 1970 and May 1974 (see figure Intro.3). The editors of the first issue are listed after their editorial, each handwritten in distinct script: Vicki, Pat, Debbie, Lori, Linda, Dale, Penny, Carole, Julia, Anne, Carol, Pat, Sue, and Linda. The visibility of these fourteen names suggests that the editorial was collectively written, and the content of the editorial indicates that the authorial practice was part of a larger effort to work as a collective.<sup>27</sup> Although it is not made explicit through the pages of *Ain't I a Woman?*, I learned through informal conversations with women who worked on the paper and lived in Iowa City that the editorial collective was also a living collective. Not all women who worked on the paper always shared living space, but this facet of their collectivity meant that their office was also their living space and that there were possibilities for pooling resources to ensure the paper's continued existence. For these Iowa City feminists collectivity—and its concomitant qualities like shared labor and consensus building—occupied a significant amount of the

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<sup>27</sup> "Editorial," *Ain't I a Woman?*, June 26, 1970, p. 2. LHA.

analytical and practical energy.<sup>28</sup> The editors identify their closeness as a strength and, in contrast to the other editorial collectives portrayed here, quite carefully guard the boundaries of their group: while they actively solicit contributions from women and feminist groups across the Midwest, they do not in the newspaper include open calls to women for help in publishing.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the collective first reaches out to readers for such assistance in their 26th issue (volume 3, issue 1), after a flash flood submerged their office. The editors write, on the back page, “We lost a lot of production materials, precious volumes of back issues, a large portion of our library and furniture. Also, the delay has resulted in a bottleneck in the mailing of orders and correspondence. We still have to re-locate and re-organize, so we ask you to bear with us, and to help us out if you can, it’s been a hard-licks birthday.”<sup>30</sup> This incarnation of collective publishing makes *Ain’t I a Woman?* unique among the periodicals analyzed here.

*Ain’t I a Woman?* appears in the midst of an already politicized university community. Issues such as the civil rights movement and racism, tuition hikes, and the Vietnam War mobilized University of Iowa students to engage various forms of resistance: the alternative paper the *Iowa Defender* in 1965 started listing the weekly body count of soldiers killed in Vietnam, in 1969 there was a three-day boycott of classes to protest increases in tuition, starting in the late 1960s the university’s Action Studies Program offered courses in women’s studies, African American studies, human rights, and Vietnam, and, notably, after the Kent State shootings hundreds of Iowa students were arrested for a protest that involved burning campus buildings. As a result of these demonstrations university President Willard L. Boyd moved his office temporarily off campus and “offered students the option of leaving campus. They could make up

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<sup>28</sup> “More Thoughts on Structuring a Revolution,” *Ain’t I a Woman?*, May 19, 1972, p. 2. IWA. The somewhat cryptic notes by one of the editors, Dale McCormick, reveals the ways that issues around collectivity dominated their meetings (folder “Dale McCormick; 1970s; Notebook, 1971-1973,” box 2, Dale McCormick Papers, IWA).

<sup>29</sup> In an editorial they write, “we occasionally request that articles be written, we request that people subscribe or buy issues but we don’t need steady volunteers like a daycare group needs or women to show up in large numbers for a public action” (“Who We Are: Carol, Trudy, Linda, Dale, Pat, Jeannie, Vickie, Ann,” *Ain’t I a Woman?*, April 30, 1971, p. 2. IWA).

<sup>30</sup> Editorial, *Ain’t I a Woman?*, August 8, 1972, p. 12. IWA.

the work later, accept a grade of pass or withdrawal, or take a grade based on course work completed through May 3. The option to leave was taken by 11,796 students, effectively closing down the university early that year” (Yanney 1991, 49-50). This radical climate included a number of specifically feminist activities. The Iowa Women’s Liberation Front (WLF)—part of which involved a living collective—was the larger organization supporting the publishing cell that worked on *Ain’t I a Woman?* Other cells making up the WLF included a day care cell, gay women’s cell, medical cell, revolutionary art cell, political study group, and speakers bureau. These groups reflect the broader focus of the local feminist community. In the 1970s Iowa City was also home to the Emma Goldman Clinic for Women (a feminist health clinic, and its 1970s publication *Emma’s Periodical Rag*), the Iowa City Women’s Press, Grace and Rubies (a women’s restaurant project), Plainswoman Bookstore, a women’s coffeehouse, a lesbian alliance and its publication *Better Homes and Dykes*, the Women’s Resource and Action Center (WRAC), and lesbian and gay pride conferences and events.<sup>31</sup> These establishments were for the most part short lived; however, remarkably the Emma Goldman Clinic and WRAC are still in existence, indicating the local, long-term commitments to sustaining feminist community, activism, and politics.<sup>32</sup>

*Ain’t I a Woman?* was published by a collective that called itself variously the “Publications Collective of the Iowa City Women’s Liberation Front,” “the Angry Independent Amazon Women,” and “a collective of 8 (plus one travelling sympathizer) functioning as a world-wide conspiracy of Radical Lesbians.”<sup>33</sup> For this group the importance of building networks and systems of communication was manifest in the first issue’s editorial, in which they refer to a “special need to increase communication between sisters in the Mid-West.” This need is

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<sup>31</sup> See Silander (1996) for a useful analysis of the Iowa City Women’s Press and the Jo Rabenold papers at the Iowa Women’s Archives for a wide range of information about Iowa City feminist and lesbian activism.

<sup>32</sup> For more information on the Emma Goldman Clinic, see <http://www.emmagoldman.com/>, and on WRAC, see <http://www.uiowa.edu/~wrac/>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ain’t I a Woman?*, September 11, 1970, p. 3. IWA; *Ain’t I a Woman?*, March 12, 1971, p. 12. IWA; *Ain’t I a Woman?*, January 7, 1972, p. 12. IWA.

based, importantly, on geography. The spatial contours of the Midwest lead them to claim that “women in the mid-west, with the exception of the few large urban areas, find themselves working in their city’s only women’s liberation group.” To this end, the editors ask other women’s liberation groups in the Midwest (conceived broadly, from New Mexico to Ohio) to take responsibility for a page in the paper.<sup>34</sup> They conclude: “We hope that AIN’T I A WOMAN will serve as a forum of communication between women in the mid-west about ideas, actions, and events. This issue is mostly by and about Iowa City Women’s Liberation Front – we hope that won’t happen again.”<sup>35</sup>

At first a new issue of the paper could be found twice a month.<sup>36</sup> By the eighth issue the collective announced that they have to publish the paper every three weeks because the original schedule was too “grueling.”<sup>37</sup> In early 1972 the publication schedule was more erratic, and by May 1974—the last extant issue—the publication no longer had volume or issue numbers and offered no explanation of the erratic publishing schedule nor did it indicate that this would be the final issue.

*Distaff*, produced in New Orleans, Louisiana, appeared as *Ain’t I a Woman?* was nearing its final issue. The first issue of *Distaff* in some ways was really the third issue. According to a 1980 editorial, *Distaff* originated with New Orleans resident Barbara Scott’s political campaign for state representative in 1972:

To publicize her feminist platform she put out an 8 page tabloid called DISTAFF, a word meaning women’s work. The campaign was not successful, but Scott became the impetus behind getting women together to seriously plan the publishing of a newspaper. She left town in 1972—now runs a restaurant in Biloxi—but her friends carried through with the idea, and in January 1973 the first issue of DISTAFF appeared.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Editorial, *Ain’t I a Woman?*, September 11, 1970, p. 3. IWA.

<sup>35</sup> “Editorial,” *Ain’t I a Woman?*, June 26, 1970, p. 2. LHA

<sup>36</sup> Every issue except for one appeared in this format. Volume 4, issue 1, dated April 1973, differed both in appearance and content and, apparently, process of production. It was published as a small booklet titled *Academic Feminists and the Women’s Movement*, and the masthead lists three women as authors, Ann Leffler, Dair L. Gillespie, and Elinor Lerner Ratner. While this form of collective authoring is consistent with previous practices, it is unprecedented that only three people author an entire issue and that an issue comprises only one essay.

<sup>37</sup> Editorial, *Ain’t I a Woman?*, October 30, 1970, p. 2. IWA.

<sup>38</sup> “DISTAFF Marks Special Anniversary: One Year of Publication,” by Mary Gehman, *Distaff*, November

The January issue of *Distaff* was labeled a preview issue, and then in February 1973 we see volume 1, issue 1 of the newspaper (see figure Intro.4). As the editorial explains, Scott was an inspiration for continuing the paper but was not materially involved in its publication beyond her campaign tabloid. Mary Gehman, instead, was the paper's backbone. A journalist by training, Gehman pushed to institutionalize a feminist periodical because of her experience of sexism in mainstream media, her desire to give women a voice and medium for communication, and the momentum created by her work with other local women to publish Scott's initial version of *Distaff*. Unlike most feminist periodicals from this era, then, *Distaff* was very much the creation of a single person. It was common for periodicals to become dependent on the labor of a small group of dedicated women, but rarely did one person figure so prominently and consistently throughout a paper's lifespan.<sup>39</sup>

Also unusual is the frequency with which *Distaff* was published. Between January 1973 and March 1974, issues of *Distaff* appeared almost monthly. Then, after a short break, Gehman and Donna Swanson collaborated to publish ten issues between September 1974 and July 1975. Swanson and Gehman, former coworkers at the New Orleans welfare office, formed New South Feminist Press, Inc., hoping it would allow them to work full-time on the paper as "co-editors and co-everything."<sup>40</sup> This collaboration is noteworthy not only because of the business model the women developed but also because Gehman is white and Swanson is black. Although one example does not overturn the dominant narrative of U.S. feminism as an oppressively white movement, it does nevertheless provoke a closer look at the dynamics that facilitate and prevent the building of cross-racial feminist coalitions. As Swanson recalls, the women's liberation movement was predominantly white but, still, she experienced the feeling that "we're all in this

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1980, p. 9. NCCROW.

<sup>39</sup> Gehman has continued her work as a publisher and remains committed to giving voice to underrepresented and marginalized communities. She started Margaret Media in 1981 (<http://margaretmedia.com/index.php>) and gives women's history tours of New Orleans.

<sup>40</sup> "Distaff Is Back" by Mary Gehman, *Distaff*, September 1974, p. 2. NCCROW.



together.”<sup>41</sup> Following the period when Swanson and Gehman worked as co-editors, the paper experienced a four-year hiatus, reappearing triumphantly in November 1979 with the observation that “*Distaff* is like the proverbial cat: they say it has nine lives, but no one keeps a close count. The important thing is that it does come back, and always to a warm welcome.”<sup>42</sup> From November 1979 through January 1982 the collective continues to publish monthly, missing only July 1981, maintaining its optimism about the paper’s future and the importance of publicizing women’s work and activism. Other feminist periodicals publish with varying frequency, often with larger gaps between issues as they near their ends; however, I have not encountered another periodical that returns after a four-year break, something I attribute to the make-up of the publishing collectives. To have *Distaff* tied so closely to one person means that its future—both its existence and its absence—becomes intertwined with her ability to keep it on track.

Across its lifespan *Distaff* looks more and more like a conventional newspaper and, concomitantly, Gehman made various attempts to incorporate it. By the February 1973 issue the paper lists a number of sites where it can be purchased—“Books, Etc., Maple St Book Shop, UNO Campus, Tulane campus, The General Store, Sidney’s News Stand, Lazybug Shop, The Sunshine Workshop, The Mushroom, The Strawberry Patch, YOU Boutique”—and an editorial invites women to join the board of directors as they incorporate *Distaff* as a non-profit organization.<sup>43</sup> By 1980 the paper is described as a business:

Our purpose is to print on a monthly basis news and events of interest to southern women, to serve as communication between women and women’s groups, and to provide an outlet for the work of women writers, journalists, photographers and artists. The newspaper is operated as a business. We are not associated with any groups or organizations.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “Voices from the Louisiana Women’s Movement: First-Hand Accounts from People Who Made It Happen” hosted by the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, March 24, 2001. This conference was videorecorded and the tapes are available at the Nadine Vorhoff Library.

<sup>42</sup> “Why a New *Distaff*?” *Distaff*, November 1979, p. 2. NCCROW.

<sup>43</sup> The list of sites selling *Distaff* is on page 9 and the editorial is on page 12; both are unauthored.

<sup>44</sup> Masthead information, *Distaff*, May 1980, p. 2. NCCROW.

Despite the common assumption that the U.S. South lacked a substantial feminist community, New Orleans fostered a range of resources for and activism by women, including women's centers—both Tulane and Loyola had women's centers that opened in 1975, and those independent of the universities—a NOW chapter, a television program occasionally hosted by *Distaff*, the nationally known Southern Female Rights Union, feminist art exhibits, a Women's Work Collective, guerrilla theater group, the New Orleans Women's Caucus for Art, a Free University based at the main public library branch, and other local feminist and gay periodicals. Since the mid-1970s women have also participated very publicly in the local political machinery, working to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, to dismantle sexist legal codes (particularly those related to reproductive rights and marriage; notably, Louisiana was the last state to repeal the Head and Master Laws, which gave a husband legal authority over household matters and all jointly-owned property), and to produce parity in the political process itself by fighting for basic resources like a women's bathroom in the state capitol building.<sup>45</sup> It was within this context that *Distaff* lived its somewhat rocky life.

Los Angeles, California, produced a periodical that also experienced significant shifts in the ten years of its publication. From summer 1970 – spring 1972 (through volume 2, issue 9) it was published as the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, then from summer – fall 1972 (volume 2, issue 10 – volume 3, issue 2) it was the *Women's Center Newsletter*, and it finished its life as *Sister*, published from January 1973 – summer 1979 (volume 4, issue 1 – volume 10, issue 3). Aligning itself from the very beginning with a specific place, the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* defines its connection with a local women's center in the first editorial :

The Women's Center is a non-partisan organization whose primary purpose is to serve all the women of Los Angeles. All women are invited to share in our activities and to avail

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<sup>45</sup> Kim Gandy recalls that Diana Bajoie, who in 1976 was the first woman elected as a Louisiana State Senator, made a particularly poignant statement by entering the bathroom in the state capitol building marked "Senators"; of course, the bathroom was for men. Gandy told this anecdote as a speaker on the "Women in Politics" panel at the conference "Voices from the Louisiana Women's Movement: First-Hand Accounts from People Who Made It Happen" hosted by the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, March 24, 2001.

themselves of our services, and to use the Women's Center as a springboard from which to explore the various women's liberation groups.

The Women's Center Newsletter is published to inform the women of Los Angeles of Women's Center programs and activities of interest to women's liberation. Material from all women and women's liberation groups is welcomed. Viewpoints are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent an endorsement on behalf of the Women's Center.<sup>46</sup>

This center, located at 1027 Crenshaw Boulevard, was affiliated with UCLA. Although over 8 miles from the campus, a number of women who founded the center were associated with the university and were able to secure funds from the Associated Students of UCLA.<sup>47</sup> The center offered a range of services such as abortion and contraception resources, legal referrals, self-defense and auto mechanics classes, emergency housing, psychological and vocational counseling, and through the center women sold literature, published the newsletter, developed a speakers bureau and hosted nine different women's liberation groups (including Socialist Women's Organizing Project, Working Women's Group, National Organization for Women, and a theater group). As the proportion of students active in the center's activities decreased, the center began to depend more on literature sales, money they received through the speakers bureau, and donations, and women struggled to accommodate and respond to the growth of the center and to stay afloat financially. After closing on December 31, 1972, feminist energy and the newsletter shifted to the Westside Women's Center at 218 Venice Boulevard in Venice, CA.

At first glance, the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, the *Women's Center Newsletter*, and *Sister* appear to be three different periodicals (see figures Intro.5, Intro.6, and Intro.7). There is, first, a change in form. The *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* is mimeographed on legal-

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<sup>46</sup> "Women's Center Policy," *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, [October/November] 1970, p. 1. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

<sup>47</sup> Information attributed to Joan Robins is from her oral history interview (Joan Robins interview, Los Angeles Feminists Series, Women's History Collection, VOAHA. <http://saltcid.nmc.csulb.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/OralAural2.woa/wa/project?ww=1280&wh=562&pt=109&col=a1000&bi=1&ser=a1004&nww=1280&nwh=562>). For information about the Crenshaw Women's Center, see the document titled "Los Angeles Women's Center" (folder 3, LAWLM collection), which is undated, but describes the center's history from the initial planning in 1969 through the March 1971 International Women's Day march.

size paper, stapled in the top left corner, and folded in half for mailing. Announcing their new format the *Women's Center Newsletter* editors write,

The newsletter staff, after months of searching, finally found a printer who would print our newsletter for what it cost to run off the newsletter ourselves. Bless the Mother-Goddess! What a relief it is not to have to struggle with the mimeograph machine which each month found a new way to break down and became quite unreadable.”<sup>48</sup>

This means that the periodical began being published in tabloid format, on newsprint about 14x10 inches (when folded in half, so a full spread would be 14x20 inches). *Sister* continues in this format, and elicits its connection with the *Women's Center Newsletter* with the subtitle, “a monthly publication of the Los Angeles Women's Center.” Despite not naming the specific center with which it was affiliated, the women's center to which this subtitle refers is no longer the Crenshaw Center. In the second issue of *Sister* (volume 4, issue 2) there is an editorial by Joan Robins about the Crenshaw center's closing with a call to readers to offer their input about what should come next. And a small announcement on page 10 reveals that the newsletter is being distributed from the Westside Women's Center.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, *Sister* is affiliated primarily with the Westside Women's Center while the other two newsletters were published from the Crenshaw Women's Center.

Because many different periodicals are connected with different women's centers, linking these Los Angeles periodicals leads us to Nancy (Dara) Robinson and Joan Robins, both of whom worked as editors for these periodicals. California State University has compiled a Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive (VOAHA), and one series of interviews in this incredibly rich resource is with Los Angeles feminists. The description of the series notes that Robins and

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<sup>48</sup> Joan, Sherry, [Janet?], big donna, Barbara, Stephanie, diane, Sue, Z.B. [Z Budapest], “WOW: Look at Us,” *Women's Center Newsletter*, June 1972, p. 7. Folder, “Women's Union,” OHC.

<sup>49</sup> Joan Robins-Hoffman Ghia, “There Must Be Some Way Out of Here,” *Sister*, February 1973, p. 1. SCLSSR. One announcement reads, “Sisters – Hawk the newspaper! Keep 15¢ on each copy you sell. See Donna Cassyd and/or pick up a bunch at the Westside Center” and the other is, “Newsletter general meetings are the first Thursday of every month, at the Westside Center, 218 So. Venice Blvd., at 7:30 P.M.” In her VOAHA interview, Robins refers to a tension between the Crenshaw and Westside centers, describing the latter as “siphon[ing] off some energy” from the former (Joan Robins interview, Los Angeles Feminists Series, Women's History Collection, VOAHA. <http://saltcid.nmc.csulb.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/OralAural2.woa/wa/project?ww=1280&wh=562&pt=109&col=a1000&bi=1&ser=a1004&nww=1280&nwh=562>)

Robinson “began the [Crenshaw] Center Newsletter, which eventually became *Sister* newspaper.”<sup>50</sup> Both women are also identified as editors for the *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter* and *Sister* and Robins (but not Robinson) worked on the *Women’s Center Newsletter*. The continuity provided by the connection with a women’s center and with specific people thus leads me to treat these three periodicals as part of a decade-long serial.

As suggested by the different interview series that make up the VOAHA—in particular the Asian American Women’s Movement Activists, Chicana Feminists, Feminist Health Movement, and Los Angeles Feminists—there was a rich and diverse community of women activists in Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s. A detailed analysis of these political and social movements exceeds the scope of this project and the breadth and depth of this activism is only starting to be catalogued. Nevertheless, two aspects of the Los Angeles women’s liberation movement are significant to my analysis: the feminist self-help health projects and the array of feminist periodicals. Carol Downer was an important figure in the local community for her work establishing the Feminist Women’s Health Center and promote the self-help health movement, and she became a nationally renowned figure in the feminist health movement after she and another clinic worker were arrested on September 21, 1972, for practicing medicine without a license.<sup>51</sup> Through their own publicity efforts, feminist and mainstream news media provided updates about the trial and the eventual not guilty verdict on December 5, 1972.<sup>52</sup> Also noteworthy is the breadth of feminist periodicals published in the Los Angeles area during this decade. There were local NOW newsletters, *Lesbian Tide*, *Everywoman*, *Woman Worker*, the *Free Angela Davis Newsletter*, the *Asian Women’s Center Newsletter*, *Sisters United!*, *L.A.*

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<sup>50</sup> This description can be found by going to the following URL and clicking on the “details” link for the Los Angeles Feminists series: <http://salticid.nmc.csulb.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/OralAural2.woa/wa/series?ww=1280&wh=562&pt=109&col=a1000&bi=1>. An undated flier titled “Workshops” tells readers to “Come and learn how we put our newspaper together. How *Sister* grew out of the Crenshaw Women’s Center newsletter, how *Sister* relates to the Women’s Union. Join us and be a part of the newsletter staff” (Organizations section, box 2, Joan Robins papers).

<sup>51</sup> For a history of the Los Angeles self-help health movement, see “Victory!” *Sister*, January 1973, p. 6, 8. SCLSSR.

<sup>52</sup> The Feminist Women’s Health Clinic is mentioned in each of the periodicals I focus on in this dissertation, indicating the extent to which the clinic and its work was known.

*Women's Liberation Union Newsletter*, the *Chicana Service Action Center Newsletter*, *The Lesbian News*, *Women West*, *Born a Woman*, and *Encuentro Femenil*.<sup>53</sup> Some had a specific focus—about labor, welfare, sexuality, a particular community—and others like the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter-Women's Center Newsletter-Sister* had the goal of promoting feminism more generally. What this list highlights is the range of activist project related in some way to gender and suggests the local projects and networks of which that the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter-Women's Center Newsletter-Sister* editors and writers were a part.

Similar to the Los Angeles paper, the newsletter associated with the Valley Women's Center in Northampton, Massachusetts, gained a new identity during the seven years of its publication. Starting as the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* in April 1971, it became the *Valley Women's Union Newsletter* in 1975 before ending in early 1977 (see figures Intro.8 and Intro.9). In 1969 a group of women started meeting at a woman's house in Amherst, Massachusetts.<sup>54</sup> Calling themselves Amherst Women's Liberation (AWL), this group began putting out a newsletter in June 1970, which served primarily as a space where the smaller action groups reported their activities and local events could be announced. Having publishing it every few weeks, AWL announced in the October 16 issue, "VALLEY WOMEN'S CENTER – A REALITY. . . . AT LAST. . . . A PLACE OF OUR OWN!!!"<sup>55</sup> During the next few months the center becomes more prominent in the newsletter. By February 1971 the content of periodical and the fact that it is typed and mimeographed at the center suggest that it has become a center newsletter, and the following month the newsletter starts with an announcement asking women to "please keep sending money for the support of your women's center and the sending of this

<sup>53</sup> The records of the Comision Femenil de Los Angeles are held at the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA, and the records of Hijos de Cuauhtémoc are held at the California State University-Long Beach university archives.

<sup>54</sup> The valley to which the newsletter and center refer is the Pioneer Valley. Made up of Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties in western Massachusetts, the valley is bisected by the Connecticut River (so sometimes it is referred to as the Connecticut Valley) and is home to the well-known five colleges consortium (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke College, Smith College, and University of Massachusetts, Amherst).

<sup>55</sup> Announcement, *Amherst Women's Liberation Newsletter*, October 16, 1970, p. 1. Folder 1 "Women's Liberation - Massachusetts: Amherst Women's Liberation," box 9, WL collection.

newsletter.”<sup>56</sup> Finally, the April 8 issue takes the title *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*.

Published on legal paper, this issue is anomalous, for almost without exception this periodical was mimeographed on 8 1/2 by 11–inch paper and stapled in the top left corner.

Because of its association with a specific place the Valley Women’s Center is a main character in the newsletter. The editors published minutes from the various administrative meetings (general, staff, and business) and from the action group that used the center, they publicized these meetings as well as events (study groups, and resources (feminist literature, the library and archives, counseling) that women could find at the center, and they of course frequently printed announcements about the center’s needs for funds, equipment, and volunteers. A mid-1972 call to readers is typical:

This last page looks terrible because itz typed on a 1910 typewriter. Jeez, folks, dontcha wanna get your news in legible form? Dont anybody out there got a good typewriter? Money for one? Money for the mimeo machine? . . . Women who work here dont get paid, we need your support.  
the rev keeps going, fueled by love.....<sup>57</sup>

Late 1973 – early 1974 represents a time of flux for this activist community. The first newsletter of 1974 begins, “this issue of the newsletter is a report on the January 13th meeting of the Valley Women’s Union (VWU). Several months ago some of us who had noticed that the Center was no longer functioning as it had in the past began to meet regularly to evaluate and reorganize it.”<sup>58</sup> Seeing the center as “apolitical” and viewing the Everywoman’s center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, as drawing women away from the VWC, the group became determined to “form a more structured, committed [*sic*], principled political union.”<sup>59</sup> In the January newsletter the group uses six of the eight pages to outline their proposed structure, their working principles, and their socialist-feminist philosophy. Despite the changes this

<sup>56</sup> Announcement, *Amherst Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, March 1971, p. 1. “Women’s Liberation - Massachusetts: Amherst Women’s Liberation,” box 9, WL collection.

<sup>57</sup> Editorial, *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*, [May 1972], p. 6. SSC.

<sup>58</sup> Editorial, *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*, January 1974, p1. SSC.

<sup>59</sup> “Structural History of the Valley Women’s Union,” VWU information packet. Folder 12 “Valley Women’s Union Administration: Valley Women’s Union Memoranda and Minutes of Staff Meetings, Nov 1973-Jan 1974, n.d.,” box 2, VWC records.

collective wishes to make, their commitment to producing a newsletter remains, and they identify its production as the job of a work group:

This work group would be responsible for the production of a monthly VWU newsletter(paper?). We feel that the newsletter must be more than a collection of news items and should reflect our philosophy and principles, and be an organ of education and communication between Union and area groups, as well as providing commentary on national issues. Members of this work group would coordinate articles from the workgroups as well as research articles on their own, and from other publications.<sup>60</sup>

Although the newsletter very clearly becomes a project of the union in early 1974, it does not change in format and it is not clear that the publication's title has changed until October 1975.

The first sentence that issue reads, "This is the first issue of the latest version of the Valley Women's Union Newsletter," suggesting that it is already a union newsletter but not indicating when this occurred.<sup>61</sup> Because of lack of clarity regarding the periodical's name I thus refer to the publication as the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* throughout the dissertation.

The center was a vibrant site of feminist activism in the Pioneer Valley.<sup>62</sup> Although open only four months, by the first issue of the newsletter, the center already hosted sixteen action groups, including sexism and imperialism, the free store, archives, automechanics, orientation committee, family planning, and the newsletter. The kinds of action groups vary throughout the center's existence, but the newsletter indicates that the center was an important locale for activists. The staff kept a daily log for the center, which gives insight into the incredibly wide variety of services for which women asked. Figure Intro.10 shows a small slice of this activity, and women came to the center also for help with welfare, personal, vocational, and legal counseling, and they called the center for help locating housing, babysitters, dentists, and feminist literature. The center additionally provided space for a feminist film co-op whose lending

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<sup>60</sup> "A Working Structure for the Valley Women's Union," *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, January 1974, p. 7. SSC.

<sup>61</sup> Editorial, *Valley Women's Union Newsletter* October 1975, p. 1. Folder "Newsletters + Publicity," VWU records.

<sup>62</sup> For an overview of the valley's political activism see Cline (2006, especially the introduction) and a class paper by Patric A. Whitcomb ("Forging a New Political and Cultural Identity: Socialist Feminism in the Valley Women's Union, Northampton, Massachusetts," May 11, 1998. Folder "Letters Sent," VWU records).



program distributed films throughout the country. In addition to the specifically woman-centered spaces and resources, the mimeograph machine (despite its constant state of near disrepair) was part of the center's heart, as suggested by the number of references to the mimeo in the daily logs and the newsletter—about acquiring a new one, using and maintaining it, and repairing it. Used primarily for the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* and other center groups, it was nonetheless a resource for other groups, including the United Farm Workers, the food co-op, the Greenfield Women's Center, antiwar activists, and McGovern supporters.

These groups make up only part of the local community of activists. The University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Smith College, and Mt. Holyoke College all started women's center in the early 1970s, and the feminist collective at Smith published their own newsletter. There was also a strong network of antiwar and peace activists, and the range of people involved in reproductive rights activism indicates that this issue was a political priority (see Cline 2006). Proximity to New York City and Boston also shaped the kind of activist community that developed, for not only did women from those cities—Robin Morgan, Florynce Kennedy, Jill Johnston, for example—travel to the Pioneer Valley, women from the valley could access these urban hubs fairly easily.

*Female Liberation Newsletter* also existed as a project of a women's center. From September 1970 through Spring 1974 it was published by Female Liberation at the women's center they coordinated (see figure Intro.11). There is an undated issue of *Female Liberation Newsletter* from spring 1969 (it announces a conference held in May 1969), but the next extant issue of the newsletter is from fall 1970 and according to Female Liberation the newsletter was first published in 1970.<sup>63</sup> After September 1970 the newsletter was published on a weekly basis until February 1972, when the editors announce that they voted at the business meeting to make

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<sup>63</sup> Pamphlet "The Speaker's Bureau of Female Liberation," n.d. Folder 14, box 1, FL records. For a copy of the 1969 issue, see Wini Breines papers, uncatalogued box (2007-M114, 78.2.2, carton 1).

the newsletter biweekly because of lack of funds and womanpower.<sup>64</sup> The collective sustained this schedule until late 1973. The December 1973 newsletter referred to their financial crisis and listed several actions the group was taking to try to sustain Female Liberation, one of which involved publishing only one newsletter in December.<sup>65</sup> The next extant issue was also the final one, published March 4, 1974. Starting this issue, an editorial explained the current state of Female Liberation:

This is the final Newsletter from Female Liberation. It is so late getting out because it took time for us to clear up the business of disbanding F.L., moving out of our office and the Second Wave [the quarterly journal] moving to a new office in Harvard Square. We also spent a lot of time writing up the Press Release, which is the main body of this Newsletter, in which we have attempted to present an honest analysis of the major factors leading to our disbanding in the hope that other women and women's groups can use what we learned through our struggles to avoid or recognize similar situations.<sup>66</sup>

In the following press release they characterized the disbanding as the effect primarily of a kind of revolution/separatism debate—"between those who wished to circumvent the power structure and those who wished to attack it directly"<sup>67</sup>—which was exacerbated by other points of contention such as the relationship between the personal and the political, group leadership, and group structure. Such a statement is rare, for among the periodicals I looked at an issue would likely be published without any indication that it would be the final one. The existence of this issue, then, reflects not only Female Liberation's

In addition to the centrality of the women's center and various negotiations of policy, politics, and practice, the Female Liberation/Cell 16 split shaped the trajectory of the collective and thus the newsletter. In July 1969 Female Liberation and Cell 16 jointly authored a statement designed to introduce and recruit women to feminism in which they refer to the range of women who have come together to organize on their own behalf, and their collaborations also involved

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<sup>64</sup> Editorial, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, February 28, 1972, p. 6. SSC.

<sup>65</sup> The October 1973 issue refer to the potential dissolution of Female Liberation (letter from Marge Fentin to *Female Liberation*, October 22, [1973], p. 1-2. Folder 1 "Newsletter: Female Liberation, 1973," box 2, FL records).

<sup>66</sup> Editorial, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, March 4, 1974, p. 1. SSC.

<sup>67</sup> Press Release, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, March 4, 1974, p. 3. SSC.

sharing office space and finances. According to Cell 16 members Betsy Warrior and Lisa Leghorn, however, “Cell 16 was taken over by SWP [Socialist Workers Party] in 69-70,” a takeover that Cell 16 detailed in a statement that circulated as far away as Iowa City, suggesting that this event reverberated nationally.<sup>68</sup> As narrated by Cell 16, the division was primarily a structural one. Cell 16 described itself as organic, in contrast to the “highly organized women’s center” that Female Liberation (the socialist group) was attempting to create. Ideology, however, played a role and was reflected in Cell 16’s reference to political coalitions that Female Liberation made “with which [Cell 16] had no political agreement.”<sup>69</sup> In the December 2 issue of the newsletter Female Liberation published an apology, responding to the allegations made by Cell 16, agreeing with some and challenging others. In particular, they emphasize their efforts to support coalition building: “Very few individuals have total ‘political agreement.’ However, we feel we have ‘common goals’ with most women and therefore seek to form coalitions for specific actions aimed at these ‘common goals.’”<sup>70</sup> Subsequently, the two groups parted, Cell 16 continued to publish *No More Fun and Games* and Female Liberation ran the women’s center while publishing *Female Liberation Newsletter*.

For those familiar with feminism in the 1970s, Boston and Cambridge need almost no introduction.<sup>71</sup> Cited as one of the earliest locations of the women’s liberation movement, along with New York and Chicago, this area is probably most well-known as the place where the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective first published *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and as home to feminist groups like Cell 16 and Bread & Roses, which have become archetypal examples of

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<sup>68</sup> “Women’s Section: Lisa Leghorn and Betsy Warrior,” June 26, 1976. Folder 1, uncatalogued box (2007-M114, 78.2.2, carton 1), Wini Breines Papers. *Ain’t I a Woman?* publishes it in December 11, 1970.

<sup>69</sup> Cell 16 Statement by Dana Densmore, Lisa Leghorn, Abby Rockefeller, Betsy Warrior, and Jayne West, postmarked November 25, 1970. Folder 50, box 3, Ann Hunter Popkin Papers. Folders 5-7, box 1 of the Female Liberation records at Northeastern University contain additional materials detailing this split. See also folder 8, box 1, Rochelle Ruthchild Papers.

<sup>70</sup> Statement approved at the November 30 business meeting, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, December 1970, n.p. [3 pages total]. SSC.

<sup>71</sup> Northeastern University’s Archives and Special Collections Department has an online exhibit of local feminist activism with a number of primary documents: <http://www.lib.neu.edu/archives/voices/w-intro.htm>.

radical (Cell 16) and socialist (Bread & Roses) feminist collectives. Like Los Angeles, there were a range of feminist periodicals published in this community—including *Bread & Roses Newsletter*, *On Our Way* (from the Cambridge Women’s Center), *The Second Wave*, *No More Fun and Games*, *Hysteria*, the *Boston Area Socialist Feminist Organization Newsletter*, the *Women’s Liberation Newsletter* (a Boston/New England newsletter), and *Battle Acts* (published by the Women of Youth against War and Fascism). The New England Free Press

The Cambridge/Boston area, for example, is often presented as a hub of U.S. feminism. Home to the internationally renowned publication *Our Bodies, Ourselves* first compiled by the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, the area was host to numerous feminist groups and organizations as well as to a variety of periodicals, including the nationally circulating *No More Fun and Games* and *The Second Wave*. Moreover, the politics and struggles of the local group Cell 16 is often used as a quintessential example of radical feminist politics (Hole and Levine 1971, 164-65; Echols 1989, 158-66; Evans 2003, 105-8), and the Cambridge group Bread and Roses is mentioned in most national histories as a classic socialist-feminist organization. *The Feminist Memoir Project*, an anthology that, in the words of the editors, “sets out to capture memories from the early days of the contemporary United States women’s movement” (DuPlessis and Snitow 2007, xvii), also centers the Boston/Cambridge area. This important collection presents a variety of political perspectives and projects, commitments to feminism, and critiques of the movement. Nevertheless, of the twenty-seven contributions over half (fifteen) focus on feminism in New York City and the next largest group (five) on the Cambridge/Boston area.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, Los Angeles, a city widely noted for activism around race and racism and as a significant site for the production and dissemination of popular culture, is rarely written into U.S. feminism’s history. Los Angeles and Iowa City are mentioned in Sara Evans’s *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century’s End*, in a list of journals that demonstrate the growth of

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<sup>72</sup> Two contributions focus on two cities each: New York/Cambridge and New York/New Jersey, both of which are included in the final tally I present.

the women's liberation movement (2003, 31). Here the two very different cities are viewed as equivalent sites of U.S. feminism in that each receives only a brief reference, whereas New Orleans and Northampton are fortunate to be mentioned at all. Except for the Boston/Cambridge area, the sites that are the focus in this dissertation are incorporated into the metanarratives of U.S. feminism either to illustrate a particular characteristic of U.S. feminism (such as the gay/straight split) or demonstrate the diversity of the movement.

Making a wider array of cities central to the production and consumption of U.S. feminism, this dissertation highlights the decentralization of feminism's practice and the implications of this structure for the construction of a feminist collective identity. Specifically, the practice of feminism in the early 1970s was "deeply embedded in the local even while simultaneously influenced by connections across region and nation" (Enke 2007, 12). Location, then, is critical. Even though some campaigns, such as those to pass the Equal Rights Amendment and to ensure women's access to safe abortions, galvanized women from different locations throughout the country, women's energies tended to be influenced predominantly by the local geography, politics, and needs. For example, *Ain't I a Woman? And the Valley Women's Center Newsletter* is published in relatively rural areas, but the qualities of their ruralness differ. Northampton is only a few hours from New York City and Boston, and the center was connected to both cities, especially Boston/Cambridge, from and to which people traveled fairly easily. In fact, Amherst Women's Liberation, the group that started the VWC and its newsletter, was in contact with women from Boston from the start. In an interview Pat Sackrey remembers that "right away, we had contacts with Boston feminists and women from the other area" and that "A woman from Boston, if I recall, helped start a support group out here and gave us technical assistance on that at Mel [Heath's] house one night" (2). This connection was reinforced through the circulation of texts and ephemera to which Sackrey refers as she continues to describe the group's inception: "we read underground papers on feminism, primarily from the New England [Free] Press in Boston through all the papers weren't written there. They had a very radical

political view, which fit in with a good many of our politics already, personal politics, working in the radical movements of the time” (2-3).<sup>73</sup>

Iowa City feminists, despite being 230 miles from Chicago, did not appear to travel to this feminist hub regularly or feel connected to the people or issues there. In fact, *Ain't I a Woman?* mentions Chicago specifically to contrast it with Iowa City: “In the first place, women from smaller cities can easily fall into feeling that they are less obvious than sisters and groups from big cities. Usually the national media features groups and actions which are happening in places like New York, Washington, Chicago, etc.”<sup>74</sup> Indeed, there is a stronger bond connecting Iowa City with Minneapolis, a smaller city, farther away (300 miles), and also falling outside the metropolises most often cited in national narratives. This connection reveals, in part, the idiosyncrasy of feminist networks in the 1970s. *Ain't I a Woman?* contains several articles by the Minneapolis group RF-28 (Radical Feminists 28) and prefaces one with “we (the AIAW Collective) have been discussing the issue of organizational structure within the Women’s Movement prompted and influenced by the article below. There are some things that the RF 28 talk about that have not been our experience within our own group nor with other groups in Iowa City and some things they say that we agree with and have experienced. We hope to have an article in the next AIAW on this subject.”<sup>75</sup> In the May 1970 issue the collective publishes “More Thoughts on Structuring a Revolution,” which they write is “Printed and influenced by the RF-28 structure article in the last issue.” And there is an additional article from a counseling service in Minneapolis titled “Reflections on Collectives” in the October 9, 1970 issue.

Further shaping the distinctions between *Ain't I a Woman?* and the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* is the fact that the Iowa City group was a living as well as publishing collective. Members shared a house in Iowa City and pooled their resources, and their living

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<sup>73</sup> Transcription of an interview with Pat Sackrey and Gayle LeTourneau, n.d. Folder 1 “Women's Liberation— Massachusetts: Amherst Women's Liberation,” box 9, WL collection.

<sup>74</sup> “Big City, Little City,” no author *Ain't I a Woman?*, July 24, 1970, p. 10. IWA

<sup>75</sup> Editorial Preface to “On Organization in the Women's Movement” by Radical Feminists 28, *Ain't I a Woman?*, March 30, 1972, p. 8. IWA.

space was also the production space. Clearly, the members of the *Ain't I a Woman?* collective had a more robust connection with feminists in Minneapolis than Chicago because they were more engaged by the analyses of collectivity emerging from that city. This connection also suggests that the hubs of U.S. feminism that dominate national narratives were not necessarily the first places to which women outside those hubs looked for political guidance. However, material from periodicals in metropolitan hubs appears regularly in periodicals produced in smaller cities. For example, *off our backs* is referred to in *Ain't I a Woman?*, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, *Distaff*, and the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, even if it does not appear with great frequency in each one. Of course periodicals reveal only one part of the workings of a feminist community in a city, so putting periodicals in conversation with other sources is necessary to determine the robustness of the connection between feminists in Iowa City and feminists in other locations.

Situating specific feminist communities within a national context, recent studies of U.S. feminism have employed the case study to reveal the complexity of particular places, institutions, or issues. They highlight a specific place (e.g., Judith Ezekiel's [2001] work on Dayton, Ohio) or a specific phenomenon (e.g., Simone Murray's [2004] work on feminist book publishing), or a combination of the two (e.g., Kristen Hogan's [2008] work on feminist bookstores in five different U.S. cities). Also eschewing the objective of a comprehensive national history, my research contributes to this growing conversation among various locals and locales. The challenge in negotiating this proliferation of historical, sociological, and literary analyses of U.S. women's liberation is to avoid aggregating them through an additive approach. Such a method suggests that history is incomplete because it excludes X city or Y topic, but all histories are exclusive and fragmentary. Therefore, while not unproductive, drawing attention to and filling in gaps in the historical record does not necessarily lead to interrogations of methodology, source material, or disciplinary norms—and thus does not necessarily intervene in the way knowledge is produced. The more challenging academic approach thus involves an integrative practice, one

that lets data and methodology open up spaces in which new questions can be asked and traditional questions can be asked differently. This approach does not invalidate prior scholarship but rather ideally provides new lenses through which we can understand it.

Location is therefore important, but this dissertation does not provide a comprehensive study of distinct locations, comparing and contrasting how women who lived in each imagined and practiced feminism. Instead, periodicals are the central characters in this story. Thus, factors such as the cost of rent and availability of space for offices and women's centers, the kinds of printers in the area, the proximity to other cities and feminist groups, and how immediate political concerns affect the production of periodicals both materially and ideologically are equally significant. Indeed, location is significant to the extent that it shaped the life cycles of periodicals. The foundational question is, then, how did feminist periodicals create spaces for feminism?

### **The materiality of the archive**

The first time I encountered *Ain't I a Woman?* I was sitting at a microfilm reader. I had threaded the film through the various slots and spools and skimmed through pages of different issues. I printed out pages from several issues on letter-size paper knowing that they were not the same size as the original pages and carried them around in a manila folder with a paper clip holding each issue together. Several years later while preparing a fellowship proposal I visited the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York, to look through their collection. The first time I held issues of *Ain't I a Woman?* I felt the difference. On the cover of the first issue Sojourner Truth really was larger than life. Feeling the fine grit of the paper's surface and the edges' perforations, smelling its age, and reading its history through the postmark created a profound emotional experience and changed both my affective understanding of the women's liberation movement and also my understanding of the movement's affect. *This is what they created*, I thought to myself. How the pages carried anger and energy changed with in the issue's material presence.



History of the book scholarship, which is premised on the assumption that the form of the text interacts with content in the meaning-making process, influenced my desire to look at paper issues of periodicals rather than microfilmed ones. Although the content of periodicals is critical to my argument, the material particularities of the publications reveal important information that cannot be garnered by sitting at a microfilm reader or reading print outs of microfilmed periodicals. This facet of my research limited the range of periodicals on which I could focus. Getting to archives requires both time and money, so the archives that offer research grants—the Schlesinger Library, the Sophia Smith Collection, the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, and the Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s Culture and History—are the ones I was able to visit, and the historical societies from which I received funding (the Historical Society of Southern California and the State Historical Society of Iowa) facilitated research trips to archives that fell within their geographical purview. It is true that many feminist periodicals have been microfilmed and made available through local libraries. *Distaff*, *Ain’t I a Woman?*, and *Los Angeles Women’s Liberation Newsletter* include announcements that their publication is filed at the Women’s History Research Center in Berkeley, California.<sup>76</sup> And *Female Liberation Newsletter* publishes a letter from Laura X, one of the founders of the archive, in which she thanks the editors for sending copies of their publication and outlines the archival process.<sup>77</sup> A publication in its original manifestation is not more meaningful or more truthful than that same publication in digital form or microfilm or letter-sized paper, but it does offer a different kind of meaning. Moreover, not all periodicals made their way to the Women’s History Library or were transferred to microfilm or digitized, and periodicals are not accessible through interlibrary loan. Traveling to archives thus was critical to my primary source research.

Because I am reading not only the content of feminist publications but also the modes of their production my project depended upon access to the records of feminist collectives, which

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<sup>76</sup> *Distaff*, August 1973, p. 12. NCCROW; *Ain’t I a Woman?*, October 15, 1971, back page. IWY; *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, December 1971, p. 4. SCLSSR.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from Laura X, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, February 28, 1972, p. 5. SSC.

contain information about processes, successes, and challenges related to publishing as well as background information about the local feminist community and the local community in general. Each periodical focused on here has a different range of supporting documents kept by the editorial collectives and local feminists, from the breadth of records from the VWC to the one notebook only partly filled and with cryptic notes taken by Dale McCormick about *Ain't I a Woman?* This unevenness of information is not unexpected, but it does mean that for some periodicals I rely more on the periodical itself.

The Valley Women's Center, in contrast, kept substantial records. The Sophia Smith Collection includes three years of daily log entries, meeting minutes, correspondence, photographs, administrative documents, position papers, and public relations documents. Such primary sources situate the periodical within the center by revealing how frequently it was a topic of staff and business meetings (albeit not always accompanied by much detail). Documents such as the "Valley Women's Union Revision of Principles Working Paper" reveals the VWC's socialist underpinnings and their understanding of women's oppression: "The structures of class and race only alter the expression of patriarchal oppression. They do not change the nature of that oppression. We recognize that all women share a common oppression under patriarchy."<sup>78</sup> Although it is not clear to what extent this statement reflects the views of the women who publish the newsletter, insight into the organization's socialist feminist perspective helps me contextualize the content of the newsletter and their processes of publication.

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<sup>78</sup> "Valley Women's Union Revision of Principles Working Paper," p. 3. Folder 12, box 2, VWC records.

## Chapter 1

### Repeating the Movement: Finding Feminism's Tactics and Strategies

Looking through the records of the Northampton-based Valley Women's Center at Smith College I came across a folder of negatives and photographs of the center from April 1971. Images of women working at the center, someone's child climbing the furniture, and different rooms and spaces brought the center to life. Several photos display a wall of posters, including one that contains a graphic representation of Sojourner Truth accompanied by text from her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech.<sup>1</sup> The image is stark and strong, and I had seen it before, six and a half years earlier, when I scrolled through microfilm looking for feminist precursors to zines. It was the image on the cover of the first issue of Iowa City's *Ain't I a Woman?* In fact, I had printed this issue to read more closely, and kept it as part of my personal archive, carrying them from Tucson, Arizona, to Spokane, Washington, and then to Highland Park, New Jersey.

This photograph with the cover of *Ain't I a Woman?* tacked to the wall of the Valley Women's Center created a direct line connecting Iowa City to Northampton. The unlikeliness of the connection made it memorable: ties from Northampton to New York, Boston, or Washington, DC would have been less surprising. It was the fact that feminists from a small town in western Massachusetts were imagining feminists in Iowa City that led me to start thinking about how feminists formed relationships across such distances and how periodicals materialized these relationships. This kind of emplacement, produced through a periodical's circulation, is not dependent on the specific content of the publication. Rather, what is important is the periodical's material existence and its ability to travel across space. The vectors of this travel not only indicate feminism's location in terms of a line between two places on a map but also help to produce feminism as material in the sense that readers in one place can imagine feminism practiced by

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<sup>1</sup> I discuss these photographs and representations of Sojourner Truth's body and words in Chapter 4. See this chapter also for images of the wall of the Valley Women's Center.

people in another place. Periodicals, then, were sites through which it became possible to imagine and feel connected to other women on local, regional, national, and international scales. And connectivity was a kind of labor performed by periodicals that was intertwined with the production and reproduction of feminism. Facilitating communication among feminist groups, periodicals gave feminism visibility and location by circulating ideas and information and connecting women in political, social, and affective ways.

The diffuseness of feminism in the early 1970s underscores the importance of being able to locate the women's liberation movement. Anne Enke begins *Finding the Movement*, her study of the women's liberation movement in the Midwest, with the story of a woman literally trying to find feminism in 1971. The woman tells Enke,

I remember being twenty-one and looking in the *phonebook* in Minneapolis, and I was looking through it trying to find the *woman's movement*. . . . I couldn't find it in the phonebook: What do I look under? Where do I go? There's no way to find the women who understand. (quoted in Enke 2007, 1)

Enke writes of this seemingly paradoxical situation, one in which women's liberation was a concept that had begun to circulate widely but that was not necessarily easy to locate and asks, "How does one locate a movement that could reach a woman in her home and at the same time seem utterly inaccessible to her? A movement that was 'everywhere' and yet nowhere the same?" (2007, 2). This structure—a panoply of disconnects, gaps, and breaks in the flows of information—is evident in Betty Peters Sutton's recollection of why the Chicago lesbian feminist publication *Lavender Woman* was launched: "Basically it started because we felt there was no line of communication anywhere. There was no way for new women to find out about what we were doing. That was one of the main reasons that we did it, for communication" (1986, 26).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For people invested in activist and zine communities there is a similar practice of using publications to locate a particular community. Veronica, one of the people I interviewed for my Master's thesis, comments, "I mean that's the first thing I do, when I went to London we'd go to record stores and we'd check out what zines were there. . . . I'll look for the woman zines and find out where's the bookstore, where's this. . . . And the stories of the town, what's the dynamic here; what protests just happened and what happened, and what are the weird politics. I mean, if you're going to a new town, it's a great way—it's at least something to seek out; you might not get all the answers, but it's a really cool way to get connected" (personal interview, March 17, 2003, Tucson, AZ).

Feminist texts, therefore, not only express the content of the movement but also give it a physical presence. They give the movement not only a *what* but also a *where*.

The significance of being able to find women's liberation is reflected in the reaction to feminism's appearance in mainstream media (Carden 1974, 32-33). For example, New York Radical Women (NYRW) received considerable media attention in the late 1960s. After initiating the 1968 protest against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, an event that was covered by television stations and national newspapers, they were inundated with prospective members, to such an extent that the group had difficulty negotiating this infusion.<sup>3</sup> NYRW member Rosalyn Baxandall recalls that when the women's liberation episode of the popular New York talk show, the David Susskind Show, was re-aired, "New York Radical Women and I would receive hundreds of letters from women all over the country, telling their stories and wanting to join" (2007, 213; see also Hanisch 2001, 83). The fact that highly visible events, which garnered mainstream media attention, triggered large outpourings of interest from previously uninvolved women further supports the idea that the movement may have been difficult to find.

Letters to the Cambridge-based Female Liberation suggest that even in sites that might be considered hubs of feminism, the *where* of women's liberation was not necessarily evident. Shirley J. Anderson from Portland, Oregon, writes, "Please do a great favor for me. While in Boston over Christmas (also in New York) I tried to find you and could not. Will you please send a copy of your Journal of Female Liberation to each of my daughters?"<sup>4</sup> Elisa, who was active in Female Liberation, recollects of being introduced to the movement:

I have been waiting all my life for this type of thing—a woman's movement. In 1963 I read Betty Freidan's book. I heard her at BU. It was unbelievable. There were only a few women there. I thought she was the greatest thing alive. . . . The next time I heard about women's liberation was about two years ago when I was in Nassau on vacation. I heard about the WITCHES, tried to contact someone to find out what was in Boston. I saw Roxanne [Dunbar's] articles in the "Old Mole." It took me about six months to find anyone in Boston.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an account of NYRW's activism and dissolution see Echols (1996, 92-101).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Shirley J. Anderson, January 7, 1970. Folder 9, box 1, FL records.

<sup>5</sup> "Transcript of Emergency Business Meeting of Female Liberation," June 20, 1970, p. 2. Folder 8, box

Women who did not have any apparent connection with Cambridge/Boston also wrote to *Female Liberation* to find where women's liberation was. The group received a letter from a woman in Ontario asking if there was a library in Toronto where she might be able to browse and borrow women's liberation literature, and a Cleveland woman asked the group for "any names of women I can contact in the Cleveland area—possibly any organized women? What (if any) women's revolutionary anti-imperialist groups are there in Cleveland?"<sup>6</sup> That women had to contact *Female Liberation* from hundreds of miles away to find out what was happening in their own cities reflects in part the structure of the women's liberation movement and the idiosyncrasies of the circulation of information about feminism and by feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In order for feminism to be sustainable, and indeed to grow, feminist ideas needed to circulate, as a letter to *Female Liberation* indicates:

Dear Sisters: We are a working group of the recently formed Feminist Collective. We have chosen as a project researching the state of the Women's Movement with particular emphasis on directions being taken to formulate long-term strategy to accomplish revolutionary change. Unless the ideas emerging in different places are shared, their effectiveness is lost. The need to establish communication among feminist groups is paramount. . . . Because of poor communication, it is easy to get the feeling that nothing is happening and to be unaware of any continuing growth or conscious direction in the movement.<sup>7</sup>

However, the number of editorials and announcements referring to struggles the challenges of maintaining these places and feminist publications points to the fact that breaks and hiatuses in communication were not merely the effect of an idiosyncratic editorial collective. There were also internal and external material constraints. Obstacles to finding feminism could be the effect of a disconnected phone; the women's center having moved because the group was evicted or being closed because a volunteer couldn't make it in; or a periodical's delayed production because of

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1, Rochelle Ruthchild Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Rina Szajman (Ontario), August 23, 1970. Folder 9 box 1, FL records; letter from Gini di Oliviera (Cleveland), December 5, 1969. Folder 8, box 1, FL records.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Nancy Davis, Nancy Rolf, Michele Schaal, and Mary Jo Van Hook, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, May 14, 1973, p. 3. SSC.

lack of funds, issues around the bulk mailing process, or a publisher's conservative politics. The

*L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* refers to these ongoing material struggles in an editorial:

Sisters Please Help! If we don't receive your support, we're NOT going to be able to pay the rent which means –NO place to get literature, NO place to meet, NO bigger Women's Center, NO one to answer your questions, NO newsletter to inform you about Women's Liberation activities in L.A.

Only a small staff is doing ALL the work, for free. We are all going through difficult financial times. Many of us are on welfare or unemployed. It's hard, SISTERS, but we'd be much further behind in the movement if we didn't have a CENTER. Those who have a little more: we're asking you to contribute more for those who have less. No contribution is too small.

These are the financial facts—as of March 24 we have only \$177 in the bank. When the proceeds of the feminist theatre are dispersed, we will receive \$200 more. April's rent is over \$250 and this newsletter will cost \$100—which leaves less than \$25, not enough to pay the phone bill.

Please make YOUR contribution TODAY to the Women's Center.<sup>8</sup>

The hard work women were doing on a daily basis to keep these places of feminism open and accessible reflects the significant role feminist space played in sustaining the women's liberation movement. And the emphasis on money and labor power point to two of the more salient factors that shaped the emplacement of feminism. Periodicals, because they are often associated with feminist places, are thus useful sources for investigating the desires, challenges, successes, and politics around the formation and reproduction of these spaces.

Not only did feminist periodicals locate the movement and give feminism a place by directing readers to relevant spaces, periodicals also located women. *Female Liberation*

*Newsletter* published a letter with an editorial note just below it:

Dear Freedy Freda: Just read about you in FL Newsletter (1/8/71). We would appreciate it if you would send us a copy of your paper on the Chastity Laws in Mass. when you have finished it. Our library is being used by more and more people, and I'm sure they would be interested in reading your paper. We will also list your paper in our catalogue. Thank you. Laura Murra, Women's History Research Center [in Berkeley, CA]

Note to Freedy Freda from the Editors: We've lost your address card, but we know you still receive the Newsletter through your roommate. Please get in touch with us, so that we can make another card for you.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Sisters Please Help!" *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, April 1971, p. 8. Folder 1, SCLSSR.

<sup>9</sup> Letter exchange in *Female Liberation Newsletter*, [postmarked January 29, 1971], p. 1. SSC.

This letter and editorial demonstrate several different ways that bodies occupy space. First, the letter materialized Murra herself and Freedy Freda, whom Murra was attempting to contact. *Female Liberation Newsletter* offers evidence that these women occupy space in the world. That Murra is associated with the Women's History Research Center and that Freda receives the newsletter additionally marks them as feminists. Each is not only produced as a subject but also as a subject that reproduces feminism, ensuring it has a continued place in the world, so their emplacement as individuals gives feminism a material existence.

Despite the materiality of the newsletter and the concrete ways in which both women are represented, Murra and Freda are, in the moment of reading the newsletter, only discursive entities. Chapter 3, however, demonstrates that this abstraction was a necessary and important one for the women's liberation movement. An individual is unlikely to encounter the full extent of any social movement in a material or concrete way, and the fact that women experienced feminism through very personal transformations and on a very local scale means that imagining other movement actors was a central part of the movement's reproduction. In the case of feminism, women were less likely to interact with the movement through a formal, national organization on a consistent basis and because consciousness raising challenged understandings of normal, common sense, and the boundaries of one's public and private spheres. Therefore, knowing that they were part of a larger community whose members shared a similar vocabulary and philosophy for interpreting the world was vital. Benedict Anderson's (1991) concept of an imagined community and Michael Warner's (2002) elaboration of publics and counterpublics offer a theoretical lens for understanding the ontology of a political community as discursive, and, importantly, both scholars connect the formation of a community/public to texts. For Anderson, the increased circulation of print publications in the same language allowed people to see themselves as part of a community that not only extended beyond their specific locales but that extended beyond that which they could ever experience. Warner's interest focuses less on the expanse of a group (in his case, a public) and instead centers on the productive labor of the text



itself.<sup>10</sup> Describing a public as “a poetic world-making” (82), Warner understands a text as producing the world in which those it addresses exist. Through language, rhetoric, citations, and idioms “public discourse says not only: ‘Let a public exist,’ but: ‘Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way’” (82). This approach to the relationship between a text and its audience foregrounds the productive and prescriptive nature of a publication.

That the periodical is the medium of communication indicates that Murra—and indeed the newsletter’s editors themselves—did not have another way to locate Freda. As I show in Chapter 5, periodicals commonly served as spaces of conversation between readers and between readers and editors, so this phenomenon is not unusual. Nor is it unique to feminist periodicals, for letters sections in a wide range of periodicals create these conversations. However, the function they served for the women’s liberation movement—because of the movement’s structure and because of the ways women grappled with feminism and injustices in a deeply personal way—is a political and politicized one.

### **Locating feminism**

Periodicals located feminism because they are manifestations of the movement. They were physical evidence that feminism existed, so wherever there was a feminist periodical there was feminism. The presence of a periodical in a particular place also marks that place as a space of feminism. Walking into someone’s living room, a business, or a community space and seeing an issue of a feminist newspaper or newsletter suggests that that at least in some small way, it is a space of feminism. Because feminist literature was such a clear way to mark a space, it could be found in bookstores, women’s centers, coffeehouses, and bars, where people wanted to create a politicized environment. As a result feminist publications, in their very presence and independent of particular content, can turn a place into a feminist location and act as a signal to those who enter.

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<sup>10</sup> For Warner a text ranges from a periodical to a speech to online media.

Periodicals locate feminism in a very pragmatic way: they tell readers where feminism can be found. Most had a calendar page or listings of events (see figures 1.1 and 1.2) as well as announcements about new CR groups, study groups, and activist collectives. Advertisements in periodicals also materialize feminism.<sup>11</sup> Figure 1.3 from *Sister* includes ads for a travel company, Sojourner Bookstore, a synagogue, housing, classes in sensory awareness, and the Fox Venice theater. Many of the ads are for feminist businesses and services, so readers can call a phone number or show up at an address and find the movement. And even though the establishments may not be run by women or feminists, there is still a sense of community made possible through such ads because, as *Sister*'s policy explains, the businesses have been vetted so that patronizing them is understood as a feminist act. Thus, those places may also become sites where feminism is practiced. Through ads the movement expands to include stores, services, and commercial goods and as a result space is made for feminism to be produced in such locations. These ads give life to women's liberation, multiplying its locations and providing additional evidence of its existence.

Furthermore, periodicals produce feminism by giving it an ideological location. They are the site where debates about issues, instructions about one's politics and daily practices (from "how to" pieces to announcements that urge women to boycott certain products or places to information about how to retain one's given name upon marriage). More explicitly, periodicals often presented self-reflection, exposing readers to the editorial processes, struggles, and values, as does this editorial from *Ain't I a Woman?*:

After three issues of *Ain't I A Woman?* the publications collective decided it was time for self criticism. The politics reflected in the paper have been less than we hoped they would be but, because we have been so busy learning the technical end of publishing a newspaper we had not taken the time to discuss the political meaning behind the articles we've written and published. We then discovered we really didn't know where each other's heads were at so we went off together to talk about class, the media, The Red Women's Detachment's position on the Gay Liberation Front, the relationship of Women's Liberation to the Third World, and what it means to live in the heart of the monster.

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<sup>11</sup> Not all periodicals printed ads and, of those that did, not all listed only those for feminist endeavors. *Distaff*, for example, accepted ads from a wide variety of local businesses.

We are sure of two things; (1) that we need nothing short of a revolution to end the oppression of poor women (2) that the subjects we deal with (day care, lesbianism, karate, etc.) are not middle class by nature but in our failure to see them in revolutionary terms, in relationship to all women, in relationship to class and race. We have been too concerned with personal accounts of what has been happening in pretty Iowa City and how important it is to us. We have to learn to speak from our own needs but constantly question the limits of our vision. We must try harder.<sup>12</sup>

And appearing in the first issue of *Distaff*, thus suggesting its salience to the women who created the newspaper, is an essay on collective living. The authors (collectively) write,

This was written so that we would have the opportunity to tell other women how we formed the women's collective we are now living in, the various practical problems we came across, and the solutions we discovered. It is by no means meant as a guidebook to collective living, but as an introduction to one, and as far as we know the only, women's collective now functioning in New Orleans.

Living in a women's collective is something else. something else than living "at home", be it with parents, husband, lover or roommates. To understand the difference between living with female roommates and living in a women's collective, one must understand the difference between girlfriends and "sisters". For the woman who is serious about reassessing her identity as a human being and wanting to increase her involvement with the Women's Movement beyond the purely intellectual stage, a women's collective offers a good environment.<sup>13</sup>

Although this piece explicitly disavows a prescriptive role—it is not telling women how to live collectively—it is nonetheless implicitly producing collectivity as a feminist way to live. Later in the issue the editors' statement about *Distaff* describes it as "the collective effort of a large group of women." Through its repetition, then, the concept of collectivity is given ideological prominence within the women's liberation movement.

Louis Althusser in his formative essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" describes ideology as, on the one hand, an "imaginary representation of the real world" (1971, 164) and, on the other, materially manifested (1971, 165-66). These two axes of ideology, for Althusser, are brought together by ideological state apparatuses, such as religion, the law, and economic systems, for they are the fields through which an ideology is given existence and a subject's practices (e.g., praying, voting, consumer purchases, how leisure time is spent) are made

<sup>12</sup> Editorial, *Ain't I a Woman?*, August 21, 1970, p. 2. IWA.

<sup>13</sup> "Introduction to Ourselves" by Ann Wakefield as told to by Ann Wakefield, Phoebe Walmsley, Suzanne Pharr, Kris Potthorst, and Veronica Mullin, *Distaff*, January 1973, p. 6. NCCROW.

meaningful. Within this framework the ideal (as opposed to material) qualities of ideas have receded: “Ideas have disappeared as such. . . to the precise extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus” (1971, 169-70). So, how then do feminist periodicals materialize feminism? How do these texts manifest feminist ideas and ideals?

If ideologies are enacted through practice, then decisions about periodical production and content are effected by women’s beliefs and values, by their understandings of how feminism is and should be. The messages periodicals offer, implicitly and explicitly, are the results of decisions by editors. However, these decisions are not neutral nor are they made without constraint. Rather, they are effects of the interplay of material and ideological conditions. Editorial collectives produce feminist publications while negotiating, for example, their financial resources, their access to other resources and the means of production, the range of women helping with the production process, and the range of people contributing to the publication. Minutes from the Valley Women’s Center’s general meetings reflect the continued attention to their newsletter. “There will be a new system for getting the newsletter done more efficiently. Watch the log for details. Also we saw the need to define what the newsletter is and what we want to accomplish with it. We’ll talk about this at a staff meeting in the near future.”<sup>14</sup> This statement neatly encompasses the attention to ideas and practices: efficiency intersects with objectives, the labor of production with the labor of definitions (see also Blanchard 1992, 93). Such a discussion risks reifying the ideal/material binary, yet ideas do not exist in a pure state but are made meaningful in their materiality. They are produced through and embodied in speech, acts, affect, thoughts, institutions, and things. An exploration of ideas and ideologies therefore necessarily involves considering their manifestations.

Periodicals, of course, were not the only way to locate feminism. Feminist texts in the forms of books, anthologies, literature, academic scholarship, pamphlets, broadsides, art, and

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<sup>14</sup> “Minutes of Staff Meeting” October 29, 1972. Folder 4, box 1, VWC collection.

speeches were becoming more and more visible and accessible. As the introduction explains, periodicals nonetheless offer unique insight into the production and reproduction of the women's liberation at the scale of the local and the quotidian. To develop a theoretical framework commensurate with the complexity and richness of these primary sources requires drawing from a wide range of literatures, including nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, social movement theories, geography, cultural studies, and visual studies as well as feminist theories about power, economy, and identity. What ties this motley range of literatures together is the history of the book, a field that explores facets of the social and cultural history of print communication through materials such as books, pamphlets, and periodicals. Historians of the book have constructed a particularly helpful framework that foregrounds the intertwining of discourse and materiality, of ideas and things.

### **Histories of the book**

The history of the book, a field of scholarship that coalesced in the 1980s, offers “a social and cultural history of communication by print” (Darnton 1982b, 65). The field's formation has been influenced primarily by scholars involved in the study of bibliography, history, and literary and cultural criticism, so its investments tend to be in historicizing texts both through the materiality of their production, distribution, and consumption as well as through their interpretations and meanings. The trajectory of book history is often narrated in relation to the French *Annales* School, the publication of *The Coming of the Book* (*L'Apparition du livre*; [1958] 1990) by Lucien Febvre and Henri Jean Martin, and D. F. McKenzie's work on the sociology of texts and history of printing. As a point of origin, in the 1960s the *Annales* school produced a form of book historiography that moved away from the study of rare books and the avant garde and toward the study of “ordinary books” and the “experience of ordinary readers.” Its approach led to the formation of journals, centers, and conferences so that by the 1980s book history had become a

rich and growing field.<sup>15</sup> Not only were structures established to physically house scholarship on history of the book, but ideological spaces opened up in which scholars could reframe their questions about print texts and expand the archive of primary sources from which they could draw. For example, Darnton notes that it was only by reading correspondence between book publishers that he was able to discern the impact of an order from a foreign minister to customs officials that mandated all imported shipments of books pass through Paris for inspection by the Parisian booksellers' guild. He writes,

With one stroke of the pen, this measure destroyed most of the book trade between the provincial booksellers and foreign publishers. Letters from the provincial dealers prove that it produced a crisis that lasted until the Revolution but had never been noticed by historians of the book trade, because they had confined their research to printed documents and administrative sources. (Darnton 2007, 501)

Darnton does not appear to question the veracity of or motives behind those who penned these letters, taking their claims at face value. Still the kinds of documents and ephemera Darnton employs are now commonplace among book scholars. This imperative to look beyond traditional primary sources has provoked contemporary print historians to push the boundaries of their archives.

Bibliography is the study of the material qualities of a text, specifically aspects like spelling, imagery that accompanies text, how different editions of a book change, and how many copies of a book are produced, sold, and preserved. Attention to these qualities of printed texts has primarily served the objective of locating what is essential about a text, or that which is inherent to a text (Sutherland 1988, 580), a project based on the assumption that a pure text exists regardless of social/political context and material form. Consider D. F. McKenzie's claim that "the essential task of the bibliographer is to establish the facts of transmission for a particular text, and he will use *all* relevant evidence to determine the bibliographical truth" (1969, 61). In other words, bibliography is based on the assumption that there is an essence to a book that is reproduced through different editions and the objective is to uncover that original, or pure, text

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<sup>15</sup> See also Burke (2007) for a history of history of the book scholarship.

(Chartier 1994, 25; Adams and Barker 1993, 7). The history and trajectory of bibliographic scholarship is more complicated than this outline; however, I want to emphasize the focus of bibliographers on the physical features of a text as well as on the modes of its production, circulation, and reception. Even if bibliographers have dismissed misspellings as errata and different typefaces as irrelevant, they nevertheless placed these features of texts within the frame of analysis, features that previously fell outside the scope of historical, literary, and cultural scholarship.

Attention to the material in relation to aesthetic, symbolic, and political aspects of printed material bridges the fields of bibliography, history, and literary and cultural studies. Historical studies of printing are rarely integrated into general historical studies (Eck, Enright, and Ringrose 1990, 12-15), and studies of literature have a complex relationship with figures such as the author and the reader (Chartier 1994). This is not to say that book historians have reached consensus about how best to study printed texts or processes of interpretation. However, these scholars frequently base their approaches on Chartier's claim the materiality of a text is not subtextual or ancillary to the text but is a significant historical matter.

### **Textualities**

Julia Kristeva and Mikhail Bakhtin helped create the intertextuality as a mode of textual analysis that takes into account the multidirectionality of meaning and remains open to "reconstitution and reinterpretation" (Gray 2006, 34). But this model also must remain vigilant about power: all texts do not have the same impact or cultural capital (Gray 2006, 38)—for an individual, an era, a culture—nor are all interpretations equally valid (39) so sites of struggle over meaning are part of intertextuality. Focusing on processes of encoding and decoding allow for the slipperiness of language and the endless deferral of meaning associated with poststructuralist theoretical lenses, as well as the reader's experience of "determinate moments" (34) when consuming a text. This is the crux of the issue of meaning making: how to negotiate the potentially infinite ways a text can

mean something and also the limitations that foreclose certain meanings for certain people, certain times, and certain places. Although reading is, at one level, an irreducibly individual experience, nonetheless readers do produce consensus and consistency when it comes to meaning.

Using intertextuality as a framework for the analysis of texts presents a challenge related precisely to what extent meaning is deferred. Although text *A* is influenced by text *B*, text *B* has been influenced by additional texts that have been influenced by additional texts, and so on. Returning to the analogy of a text as woven, Gunther Kress points out that we must then attend to “the issue of what precisely are the threads of which this woven thing is made up” (137). Not only does a thread connect to myriad other texts, it itself is not a bounded, coherent entity, for each thread-that-is-not-a-thread is made up of other threads-that-are-not-threads. Jonathan Gray writes, “any text can potentially connect with any other text, leaving the analyst trying to unravel a mess of tangled wires. . . in order to work with the concept of intertextuality, we must focus it” (36). Rather than attempt to excavate points of origin or definitively map the intertextual conversations produced through periodicals, intertextuality is something I presume in my analysis. The various pieces in periodicals reflect and produce conversations that are always already imbricated in previous conversations. As a frame for my project, history of the book scholarship brings my attention to the material facets of intertextuality, in the sense that the physical properties of a publication and the production process shape the kinds of conversations that can occur. Chapter 2 discusses how feminist politics and policies affect the published incarnation of a periodical. Commitments to sharing labor, consensus building, anticapitalism, and building community all contribute to the content. Unraveling all these threads and conversations would be impossible, so what is most important in my analysis is not where an idea or image or debate originated but how and where it moves, how it gains different vitalities in different incarnations.

The following *Female Liberation Newsletter* editorial offers a glimpse of the kinds of intertextual conversations that periodicals facilitated. The author of this piece explains why the



group decided to support the United Women's Contingent that would march in an antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., rather than appear as its own, separate organization:

I would like to try and explain to the sisters who wrote in from Rhode Island why we have backed the United Women's Contingent rather than stage "our own" march on Washington. . . . Rather than try and organize the antiwar movement ourselves, we will join with these other forces when it is possible, to express ourselves as women against the war. The Contingent seemed to us the best way to reach women who are not already in the female liberation movement with our ideas. Thousands of church women, working women, third world women, gay women, campus women and others will be out there on the 24th and we want to be there with them.<sup>16</sup>

The editorial ends with an address to readers: "We would like to encourage women to write in their ideas on how they thing we should relate to other movements. Send articles or letters to the Newsletter." Not only does this essay point to a prior text that it is engaging—a letter from Rhode Island feminists—it also urges others to continue the conversation. Chapter 5 discusses a series of letters published in *Female Liberation Newsletter* between July and September 1971 about female sterilization. The first letter is written by a woman describing her experience navigating the hospital's policies that she reads as sexist. She ends the letter with "Comments, anyone?"<sup>17</sup> The collective structures within which many feminist groups operated produced an intertextuality in which multiple voices would, in the same textual space, grapple with specific issues or ideas. *Ain't I a Woman?* frequently included series of pieces about a particular theme, such as daycare, the process of putting out the periodical, the concept of collectivity, the relationship between class and women's liberation, and sexuality. In one such cluster the editors write that the contributions were written in response to several theoretical questions about the power dynamics between gay and straight women and the politics of sexuality. They continue: "The first article following is a response by a 'bisexual' woman to the original question, and her feelings about the label. We felt it was important to print her response. The others are statements by a few members of the AIAW collective reflecting their personal feelings about the 'gay/bisexual/straight' issues."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "The United Women's Contingent," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, March 21, 1971, p. 6. SSC.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Mary, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, July 26, 1971, p. 1. SSC.

<sup>18</sup> "Sexual Politics," *Ain't I a Woman?*, January 7, 1972, p. 2. IWY. See also Blanchard (1992, 88-91) for a

If there are potentially infinite nuances in interpretation and if semiosis is ceaseless—meaning endlessly deferred and remade—then it becomes important to pay attention to moments of coagulation, moments when interpretation appears to congeal. Kress (2000) uses the terms punctuation (referring to its etymological root *punctus*, or point) to describe the condensation of potentially infinite meanings into a bounded range (if momentary and unstable) of meanings. Punctuation happens throughout a text’s life cycle—at moments of writing, layout, printing, and reading, since at each of these stages decisions are made that will limit the range of meanings that can be produced from the text. Punctuation is also related to the physical parameters of the finished product, as Kress shows in his analysis of a British poll tax flyer from the early 1990s. He argues that one sheet of conventional letter-size paper will frame a text differently depending on whether it is left flat or folded in half. For example, folding allows there to be a front page and creates a linearity to reading a text that may not occur when a reader is confronted with one sheet (Kress 2000, 143-44). These two forms offer examples of different punctuations, as are constraints like the social occasion in which the text is consumed, genre, paragraph breaks, sentences, and phrases.

Many of these moments of punctuation are paratextual, or are related to that which falls outside the text proper (Genette 1997). Paratextual features can be discursive, including titles, publisher information, and testimonials from other writers and readers, and they can be material, such as the size of the publication, how it is bound, the typeface used, and how many pages it contains. In this sense the paratext is auxiliary. Its purpose is to ensure that the text is “read properly according to the author’s designs” (McCoy 2006, 156), so the paratext guides the reader—implicitly and explicitly—by fitting the text into a certain genre of writing and by instructing how the text could or should be consumed (see also Santana 2000, ch. 3). One may also regard the paratext as that which occupies a different temporal space than the text proper, for

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discussion of the how the editorial collective presented different perspectives in the Baltimore periodical *Women: A Journal of Liberation*.

page numbers, authors' dedications, and the kind of paper used are generally added subsequently to the words the author wrote (Chartier 2007, 513). Book historians have taken up the paratext as a concept but not without critique, specifically regarding the boundary between text and paratext. For a conventional book the "text proper" (McDonald 2006, 223) may be more clear: it is that which is written by the author. However, McDonald notes that the while paratext does serve as a frame for writing, writing is also excessive and not fully containable within frames. The genre of periodicals further blurs the point where the text ends and paratext begins because there are so many different kinds of writing and a frequent lack of clarity about the authorship of a text (either because pseudonyms or no name is used or because a text is collectively written).

On the one hand, the paratext works the way it does because readers draw upon an already existing framework in order to make it meaningful. For example, certain presses have reputations regarding books related to specific themes or topics, and some testimonials on the back cover of books will carry more cultural capital than others; therefore, interpretations of books will be shaped by such paratextual aspects. In other words, a text's meaning will always be constrained and that the forces of constraint are only partly related to the meaning of the words or images. On the other hand, analyses of the paratext implicitly suggest, there is no "text proper," no pure text, because the text cannot be separated from the paratext and there is no immaterial text (Chartier 1992, 53). With so many different kinds of texts in a periodical—letters, articles, poems, advertisements, announcements, calendars, photographs, drawings—it is even more difficult to identify a text proper. Therefore, it is not my intent to make an argument about where the text ends and the paratext begins but to use the paratext to as a guide in my analysis of feminist periodicals.

The paratextual features of feminist periodicals can be read for the ways they prescribe feminism as well as the ways they challenge mainstream media. Extensive letters sections imply the dialogic interactions on which feminist encounters are based. The valuing and authorizing of nonexpert knowledge implies that one need not fit into a certain identity category to make

valuable and necessary contributions. Teaching women skills related to reporting, page layout, and printing implies that all women could learn such skills in contrast to the patriarchal narratives that deemed women appropriate for only certain kinds of labor. In fact, women *should* learn such skills in order democratize knowledge and prevent some people from getting stuck doing the same task or doing “shit work.” Because the paratext offers insight into beliefs, values, and norms it is important to read the messages embedded in it as well as the labors of production it reveals.

### **Collective identity formation**

Scholars have created models for understanding a political group in terms of collective identity formation and in relation to a social movement, which highlight the importance of a shared sense of purpose that congeals around goals and practices. As Alberto Melucci contends, a collective identity “ensures the continuity and permanence of the movement over time” in part by providing “criteria by which its members recognize themselves and are recognized” (1996b, 49; Melucci 1996a, 75). In other words, the identity of a social movement needs to have closure, to have a proper discursive, material, and temporal space.

Without boundaries that demarcate “us” and “them,” as well as between “us” and “not-us,” there is no social movement. Importantly, though, the boundaries between these groups are not monolithic, static, or transparent. Within second wave feminism there are, for example, liberal feminists, radical feminists, socialist feminists, Marxist feminists, cultural feminists, lesbian feminists, lesbian separatist feminists, third world feminists, women of color feminists, Chicana feminists, black feminists, and so on. Within each subgroup further demarcations can be made, and many women formed coalitions across such subgroups. Identity is complicated also by its extension into affective and material realms, for an identity is not only a name, and is not only the cognitive recognition that I have something in common with you (Berezin 2001; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Tarrow 1998, 111-12-emotion and mobilization). Contemporary scholars of subject formation, identity formation, and collective identity formation generally agree that an identity’s

meaning is dynamic across time and that different, likely contradictory, understandings of it exist simultaneously. One challenge for social movement actors, then, is to control the meaning of their collective identity. These struggles occur both within the boundaries of the movement (among insiders) as well as across these boundaries (between movement insiders and outsiders).

Approaching collective identity from this perspective allows us to analyze it by asking what, how, when, where does closure occur? Under what conditions is the term “feminism” or “women’s liberation” reified momentarily, and what makes some meanings more durable than others? Periodicals are a particularly useful source for addressing questions such as these because they offer a wide range and variety of moments of reification. In each issue there are a number of different voices represented and different genres of writing. For periodicals that were published over a number of years, dozens of different issues exist for each publication. Therefore, periodicals allow us to track the movement of ideas in three different ways: across space, time, and author. This approach thus considers collective identity formation as an accumulation of moments of reification (or punctuation), moments in which an idea about feminism is articulated and becomes solidified. Although the effect of punctuation differs in different contexts, the repetition of language, images, and practices nonetheless demonstrates what editors and contributors found meaningful.

### **The practice of feminism**

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau offers a cultural analysis of the below, the everyday, the underside, and the micro. He argues that we need to pay attention to practices of use by those who are not the makers of what they use (1984, xiii) and analyzes certain modes of inhabiting space—reading and walking in particular—as interruptions and creative uses of places and tools that reproduce the “proper” (*propre*) and elaborates his project as “[bringing] to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of ‘discipline,’” forms that constitute an “antidiscipline” in

the process (xiv-xv). He explains, “If it is true that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also ‘miniscule’ and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what ‘ways of operating’ form the counterpart, on the consumer’s (or ‘dominee’s’?) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order” (xiv).

De Certeau shows that place (the proper) is turned into space through a multitude of practices and at innumerable moments throughout a day. He writes, “the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs” (117). A street and a text are grids, laid out according to a particular logic. They are places. But through use—walking or reading, or doing something not necessarily pre-inscribed (e.g., some forms of public sex, writing in the margins of a library book)—they become unpredictable. Walking and reading show that the interruption of proper places and the concomitant creation of (tactical) spaces is not necessarily the effect of progressive (antisexist, antiracist, antiheterosexist. . .) practices. For de Certeau myriad everyday practices are “victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’” (xix). They disrupt the dominant order through “use,” making places liveable, “reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires” (xxii). In other words, simply by cooking a meal or stepping into a store one is turning place into space, interjecting something unpredictable by moving through or occupying a place.

In many ways feminist practices reflect a reliance on the tactical, on temporally and spatially ephemeral practices that locate it, albeit without much security: “The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety. . . . It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to its circumstances. . . . Whatever it wins it does not keep” (1984, xix). According to de Certeau through tactics such as storytelling

“things *extra* and *other* (details and excesses coming from elsewhere) insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order [and the] surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve order” (de Certeau 1984, 107). This very clearly describes the work that feminism did and the (non)places from which women chose and were forced to work. The assemblage of practices that is feminism attempts to locate and grow the cracks, fissures, and interstices of certain norms. Feminism—understood as tactical—has made visible the constructedness and violence of norms by altering and resisting their reiteration.

Existing precariously, feminist collectives sustained themselves by making do (de Certeau 1984, 66), using what tools they could grasp at a particular time and place and with what financial resources they could garner. The repetition of calls for assistance in feminist periodicals reflect their struggle to sustain places of feminism. Within the eleven (extant) issues published during its first year, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* appeals to readers seven different times for assistance, including,

The women on the staff of the newsletter should be able to work on it at the VWC, since things change all the time and it's easier to keep up with current news. HELP! (4/8/71, n.p.)

If everyone on the mailing list paid but \$1 a month we would have \$450-\$500 a month to work with, WHICH WE NEED! There was also a suggestion that everyone who works at the center should submit a statement of monetary needs, and a priority list could be developed (in case we get enough money to pay staff . .). (12/15/71 p. 1)

HELP!!! We need contributions. as of Jan. 20, we have only \$120. in the treasury. It costs approximately \$240/mo. to run the center. So we/you definately [*sic*] need our/your support. Especially considering the big phone bill that is soon expected. we are also looking for an electric typewriter and another, really and truly functional this time, mimeograph machine. Help? (1/72 p. 5)

These excerpts show that a considerable amount of feminist time, energy, and resources were devoted to and necessary for establishing feminist places. I use the term place purposefully, informed by de Certeau's distinctions between space and place, because feminist periodicals reveal the importance of establishing places where feminism could exist: by creating women's

centers and bookstores, taking over public and private spaces through zap actions, marches, and demonstrations, having phone numbers women could call for information and referral, publishing books and periodicals, making music and art, and advocating for antisexist, antiracist, and antihomophobic legislation. As the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* suggests, though, tactics do not necessarily offer many opportunities to produce a sustainable movement. Chapters 2 and 5 discuss the materials and materiality of feminism by foregrounding practices of production and the periodicals themselves. However, the main focus of this dissertation is the circulation of discourses and how the repetition of text and images shaped the ideas and practices of feminism.

One way to think about how tactics work, is provided by Butler's theory of performativity. Performativity relies on the "power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration" (1993, 26) through the continuous citation and reiteration of norms. Rather than describing an action that is done by a subject, performativity refers to the repetition that ontologizes the subject because it also produces what it declares (107). Through performativity a body becomes a subject—becomes intelligible—as identity categories are effected on, or performed through, that body's surface. Through constant reiteration, norms can be naturalized, allowing performativity to gain an act-like status and concealing the fact that identity categories are not original, but are produced as they are declared (12). Some norms (including categories of gender and sexuality), through their seemingly ubiquitous citation and their relationship of mutual constitution with other norms, gain a solidity and inevitability. They are naturalized. Consider Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's claim that heteronormativity not only is produced through more explicitly sexual moments but also is found "in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture" (1998, 554-55). They continue, "Heterosexuality involves so many practices that are not sex that a world in which this hegemonic cluster would not be dominant is, at this point, unimaginable" (557). The hegemony of norms, which are secured through proper



(repetitive) operations, effects the illusion that there is no other—no other way of being, thinking, or doing. It then becomes vital to ask how to imagine something different, or how, in fact, to imagine differently? Or, to frame the question in terms of repetition, what are the possibilities for enacting repetition with a difference?

This question is one that activists, artists, thinkers, and dreamers have answered in myriad ways, and even within the women's liberation movement there were innumerable attempts to imagine and materially produce a different kind of future. These ideas and practices are an attempt to interrupt the repetition of ideologies such as patriarchy, capitalism, homophobia, imperialism, racism, and classism. Repetition although working in service of reproducing norms also exposes their instability because they must be repeated in order to be discursively naturalized and constituted as original or real. Moreover, norms never fully contain a subject, and a subject can never fully embody a norm, so repetition is always tinged with failure: norms are never completely secured. There are slippages and excess between the signifier and the signified, so subjects performatively attempt identifications, only to never fully achieve them (Butler 1993, 105). This opens up the possibility for subjects to work within discourse and power to effect resignifications. For Butler this ontological instability—"the possibility of a failure to repeat"—makes transformation possible (1990, 179) and is part of a liberatory politics:

The incompleteness of every ideological formulation is central to the radical democratic project's notion of political futurity. The subjection of every ideological formation to a *rearticulation* of these linkages constitutes the temporal order of democracy as an incalculable future, leaving open the production of new subject-positions, new political signifiers, and new linkages to become rallying points for politicization. (1993, 193; emphasis in the original)

In many ways feminism can be understood as a project of making visible the incompleteness of the ideological formation of identity categories by rearticulating and resignifying them. Interrupting the repetition of norms about what women could and should do indeed made possible "new subject-positions, new political signifiers, and new linkages to become rallying points for politicization."

Repetition has been a powerful trope, for through repetition it is possible to examine both openness and closures in the women's liberation movement. And periodicals, because of their seriality, are ideal media to use in this context. Repetition allows meaning to appear solid, so, for example, when figures of Indochinese women and the term "sister" appear widely and consistently, the potential range of meanings associated with that term or image narrows and certain connotations will be reinforced as the dominant (or proper) ones. They thus constitute a discourse that produces and reproduces a proper feminist ideological space. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault explores the various ways that sex has been transformed into a discourse. Through institutions such as the law, medicine, religion, and the state, sex becomes a discursive practice, by which the truth of sex becomes an effect of "statements, terms, categories, and beliefs" (Scott 1988, 35) constituting and constituted by each field. Discourses, then, frame feminism in a way that lets the repetition of acts be seen as a pattern, as coherent. For example, feminist discourse understands a woman's refusal to take the last name of a man she marries to be an act that resists legal and governmental patriarchy, interrupting the repetition of conventional state-based practices that produce "woman" or "wife" as an identity category. Making an act meaningful, thus, is not just a cognitive process but is also an enactment of power, for discourses are imbricated in power, whether they transmit, produce, reinforce, undermine, or expose it (Foucault 1978, 100-101). Even though feminists were a minority and struggled in many ways to seize and keep resources and to challenge dominant discourses, they also developed their own feminist discourses—such as the discourse of sisterhood—which need to be interrogated and deconstructed. this dissertation does so by considering how discourses are formed through repetition. Chapters 3 and 4, for example, examine not just the fact that certain terms or images are repeated but also the discursive and historical contexts in which they are invoked. In addition to examining the discursive parameters of terms and images, I use chapters 2 and 5 to offer insight into the material conditions of repetition.

Putting performativity in conversation with social movement literature and feminist periodicals suggests that there must be a balance between openness and closure, that contingency can be both a liability and revolutionary. To make an analogy between gender identity and collective identity, if we presume that “woman” is a kind of “false stabilization” (Butler 1990, 172), then feminism too is an illusion and must be sustained through the repetition of acts, the effect of which produces feminism as coherent. In this sense, understanding a social movement as the repetition of ideas, materials, and affects exposes it as an unstable phenomenon, one that must continually be reinforced, reproduced, and reiterated on micro, mezzo, and macro scales. If this repetition must continually occur through tactics—through guerrilla acts, making do—then there will be a limited set of possibilities for reproducing the movement through time. These possibilities are different than the ones available when one has access to a “proper,” to a place, to the kind of security that comes with knowing next month’s rent and phone bill can be paid. Because a social movement is more than its ideas and discourse—it comprises people, offices and office supplies, leaflets and periodicals, events, money, and media coverage—numerous and varied resources are necessary to produce and sustain political activism. A social movement therefore needs such discursive and material solidity—or at least the appearance of both. Social movement actors need to know that what they believe in and the places they associate with these beliefs will exist tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. At the same time, there needs to be flexibility and the ability to accommodate a future that is different than the one imagined through the social movement discourse. Elizabeth Grosz insightfully urges us to “think the idea of direction or trajectory without being able to anticipate a destination” (1988, 41) and to understand “the processes of production and creation in terms of an openness to the new instead of a preformism of the expected” (53).

Heeding Grosz’s call to navigate the present (and past) with a sense that the future is radically open, this dissertation considers temporality through repetition and asks specifically what parts of a social movement need to be fixed or closed and what parts need to remain open

and flexible in order for the movement to be sustainable? What factors shape this open/closed dynamic? Framing this question temporally, this dissertation investigates how repetition enables a feminist present to become a feminist future.

### Chapter 3

#### Spaces of Feminism: Bodies, Practices, and Modes of Production

On the back of the last page of the January 1974 issue of the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* the editors provide some instructions:

well folks!!! to spice up this newsletter - we have made this a real test of skill and fortitude. The following are directions on how to read this newsletter.

1) the Valley Women's Union (VWU) article comprises 8 pages.

a. read first four pages

b. go to back side of first page, turn upside down, and read (numbered 5)

c. next read the backsides of 2, 3, 4, right side up, in that order (numbered 6, 7, 8)

2) CHCP [Community Health Care Project] article on health insurance are the fifth and sixth pages going forward again - meaning it comes after the first four pages of the VWU article.

3) News items are on the back side of page 4 of VWU, and the back side of the first page of the CHCP article.

GOOD LUCK!!<sup>1</sup>

When I first encountered this issue in the archive at the Sophia Smith Collection it appeared similar to the dozens of issues I had read previously: mimeographed on 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper, stapled in the top left corner, a crease down the middle because it had been folded in half to be mailed. As soon as I turned the page, though, disorientation emerged. The pages are out of order, some page numbers have been handwritten, suggesting they were added after the page's stencil had been typed for the mimeograph machine, and one page is upside down. And because the directions for how to read the issue "in order" are at the end of the issue the issue borders on illegibility—until encountering the last page, after which it becomes possible to return to the first page and reread the issue according to the new parameters, in a way that produces coherent parts of a coherent whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial, *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, January 1974, p. 8. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

What interrupts comprehension is not simply disorder but disorder produced by human bodies. The disorder is evidence of people who labored to produce this text: five pieces of 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper translucent enough that traces of the inked words on the other side of the page appear, stapled in the top left corner of the first page, with page numbers handwritten (apparently by different people, some numbers appear in brackets, “[5],” at the bottom of the page, and others in a circle placed at the top right corner), with typos, and with that crease down the middle from being mailed (see figure 2.1). Machines may reproduce some of these marks, but they are nonetheless effects of human intervention, of people whose idiosyncrasies are manifest in the textual and paratextual effects that distinguish feminist periodicals from mainstream, for-profit serials as well as those from the nonfeminist underground. These distinctions both reflect and produce feminism. Errata, handwriting, ink unevenly spread over the mimeograph machine’s drum causing lighter and darker shades of text on the periodical page, and nonparallel lines of text, for example, are realizations of a certain production ethic and process. Any publication contains paratextual marks that reveal publication values and processes of production. However, understanding these marks as the effect of feminist politics and practices gives both them and feminism meaning. Modes and politics of production are thus more than material facets of a publication. They are an accumulation of ideas, ideals, feelings, and desires manifested through access to money, laboring bodies, access to other resources, and the materiality of the text being published. This chapter offers a close reading of the publication process in service of analyzing feminist spatiality, asking how feminist periodicals produce spaces and places of feminism. Pulling the concept of repetition through the chapter is attention to that which is repeated and that which needs to be repeated in order for feminist spaces to exist. I start with an exploration of the importance of producing and sustaining the *where* of feminist places and then examine how specific production values changed the order and organization of conventional places.

### **Cartographies of feminist space**

Spaces of feminism are potential and imagined spaces as well as those that can be experienced materially. On the one hand, spaces must be imagined before feminism can be practiced there. People had to be able to imagine that a women's center was needed for the community and then imagine that a storefront, office, or house could become that space. Someone had to imagine a newsletter or newspaper before it could exist as a space for feminist news, ideas, experiences, and debates. On the other hand, places in which feminist activism, publications, and ideals could be imagined and then practiced were needed. The women's center, the periodical, the bookstore, the street where a collective is demonstrating, the living room where a consciousness raising collective meets must exist in order for women to do material and ideological work to produce and reproduce feminism. Both kinds of spaces, therefore, are interdependent.<sup>2</sup>

Space is not neutral. It is not something that exists out there, in which bodies and objects live and move. Nor is it a homogenous empty container that then becomes filled with bodies and objects. Rather, as feminists, geographers, and cultural studies theorists have argued, space is produced through the circulation of power and social interactions, it is also productive of power and social relations, and it is varied, variable, symbolic, material, imagined, bounded, porous, ordered, and in tension with other spaces, among other things. Space, importantly, is also imbricated in identity, as subjects and identities exist in space, and spaces themselves become gendered, raced, classed, nationalized, etc.<sup>3</sup> Nor is space a new theme for feminist activists, theorists, or scholars, whether they offer critical examinations of the production of space or express the need to access it.<sup>4</sup> But claiming space for women and feminism and analyzing the

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<sup>2</sup> Trysh Travis notes that the women in print movement hope to "create a space of freedom for women" and "ultimately changed the dominant world outside that space" (2008, 276).

<sup>3</sup> These literatures are vast and varied, and it is beyond my project to present a thorough listing of each. However, my argument in this chapter is influenced by Martin and Mohanty (1986; Massey (1994, 2005, 2006, 2009), Kirby (1996), Hetherington (1997, ch. 1), Sánchez-Eppler and Patton (2000), Barad (2001), Enke (2003, 2007), Ahmed (2004), Jackson (2005), and Hengehold (2007).

<sup>4</sup> I would be remiss if I did not refer to Virginia Woolf's well worn phrase "a room of one's own," also the title of an essay, which refers both to the importance of women having a physical space as well as psychic and intellectual space in order to write. In feminist scholarship examinations of the

norms of spaces was only part of the feminist battle. As Enke notes, the women's liberation movement "depended on taking over and re-defining public spaces, and on challenging sexist geographies" (2003, 636).

The structure of the women's liberation movement—as primarily informal, grassroots, diffused, provisionally interconnected—meant that much of the activism was occurring at a very local scale and also in places that might be considered part of one's everyday. Even grander actions like marches on Washington DC, the Miss American pageant protests in Atlantic City, the production of *Ms.* magazine, and the campaign to pass the Equal Rights Amendment can be distilled to everyday practices, or, rather, to a rethinking of such practices (see French 2004). Such actions emerged from and commented on the way women's bodies do, could, and should occupy space, drawing connections between what happens in our supposedly private lives and the spheres of politics, law, economics, medicine, etc.

Of course it is not only in spaces of feminism that feminism has been reimagined and cultivated, but such spaces were implicitly (and often explicitly) designated for the purpose of ensuring feminism's existence. This chapter examines the existence of feminism through the production of spaces as feminist, building on Michel de Certeau's distinction between tactics and strategies. The language de Certeau uses indicates the significance of both space and time to determining what is tactical and what is strategic. Strategy, he claims, is the "victory of space over time" (1984, xix; see also 36). He describes scientific writing as that which, falling into the disciplinary realm of strategy, "ceaselessly reduces time. . . to the normality of an observable and readable system" (89), whereas tactical movements are "unpredictable," "heterogeneous" (34), and surprising (37). Therefore, it makes sense to understand tactical unpredictability as both spatial and temporal. Occupying space tactically relies on the conditions of an open future. If something is uncertain its temporal and spatial trajectories are unpredictable: we cannot know its

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public/private binary have been particularly prominent, regarding, for example, what gets demarcated as domestic space and work space and how bodies are made meaningful within those spaces.



manifestation or effects in a place from moment to moment. The implications of de Certeau's argument are that strategies reproduce dominant relations of power whereas tactics interrupt these relations. In fact, his proposal that tactics are "determined by the absence of power" (38) suggests that a tactic can exist only as an interruption or as resistance.

### **Tactical Feminism**

In September 1973 *Sister* reported on a demonstration in support of Farah (a garment company) employees:

Sponsored by the National Organization for Women and coordinated nationally by Arlie Scott and locally by Margaret Handy, one of many demonstrations against the Farah Mfrg Co. was staged at Bullock's downtown, 7th & Hill, at 11:00 A.M. on August 25th. Members of local feminist groups such as: The L.A. Women's Union, L.A. N.O.W., The Feminist Women's Health Center, Sister Newspaper and the newly formed Hollywood Chapter of N.O.W. came together to show their support to their Chicano sisters, and to protest Bullock's refusal to stop carrying Farah's products.

A good feeling prevailed [*sic*] the action, and a strong desire to stand united against injustice remained with us after it ended. Female and Chicano labor must no longer be equated with *cheap labor*. The struggle will continue, and *it will be won*.<sup>5</sup>

With this description feminism is given a location. Women—feminists—are marching through the streets, taking up space that is conventionally reserved for other uses, and making feminism visible, audible, and, if one is in the area, unavoidable. These kinds of public, mass events gave feminism a physical place. In addition to producing it as a particular political practice and a force to be reckoned with for both movement insiders and outsiders, demonstrations made the group and its claims public—to those who witnessed it firsthand, through reports by media sources, and

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<sup>5</sup> "¡Viva La Huelga!" by Maria Chardon, *Sister*, September 1973, p. 1. SCLSSR. In May 1972 workers—who were primarily Chicanas—at the El Paso, Texas, Farah factory went on strike until March 1974, when they won the right to union representation. Their efforts were recognized in part by a national boycott of Farah pants, a boycott that received coverage in a wide range of feminist periodicals (e.g., the *Asian Women's Center Newsletter* [December 19, 1973 and May 1974], *Triple Jeopardy* [November-December 1973], *Female Liberation* [October 23, 1972], *Distaff* [October 1973], *Feminist Newsletter* [Chapel Hill, North Carolina, August 5, 1973].) Note that the title of the article in *Sister* is the title of the strikers' newsletter.

through word of mouth—reinforcing the group’s solidarity and pushing those in positions of authority to take the group seriously (Sewall 2001, 58).<sup>6</sup>

Marches and demonstrations also frequently characterized the way feminists celebrated International Women’s Day. The *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter* describes the events in Northampton in 1976:

On Monday, March 9, Northampton women continued the tradition of International Women’s Day Demonstrations with a march on Main Street. The march began at 4:30, gathering between the 100 and 150 women as it moved from the Bridge St. School, through the center of town, up to Smith College, and back to the Unitarian Church for refreshments and music.

Women from 16 community groups including the VWU, Mother Jones Press, Lesbian Gardens, Emma Goldman Brigade, Women’s Health Collective, Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee and P.E.S. participated with other community women to make their presence and struggle known.

Everyone agreed that they had a great time and that the march was a success. Thanks go to Beth and Blue from the [Valley] Women’s Union for the time and energy they put into organizing the march, and also to the Communications and Outreach workgroup for our beautiful new VWU banner.<sup>7</sup>

In Los Angeles for the 1971 International Women’s Day March “women, with arms linked, joyously sang a feminist song, each one of them overpowered by the growing sense of sisterhood and strength the successful demonstration had given to each of them.”<sup>8</sup>

Framing these events in terms of the tactic/strategy dichotomy I offer two readings: First, despite the success of a demonstration, it was ephemeral, temporally and spatially. And, second, a demonstration was successful because it was ephemeral, temporally and spatially. The last paragraph of the article about International Women’s Day in Los Angeles reads,

Sojourner Truth [a statue of whom they had carried while marching] no longer graces Pershing Square (the L.A. Park Development removed her within one hour after the demonstration had ended) but the Women’s Liberation movement in L.A. will remember her as a symbol of courage and strength in demanding freedom for women and an end to

<sup>6</sup> Alice Echols describes the 1968 Miss America Pageant protest in Atlantic City, New Jersey, as “[marking] the end of the movement’s obscurity because the protest—the movement’s first national action—received extensive press coverage” (1989, 93).

<sup>7</sup> “International Women’s Day,” *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*, March-April 1976, p. 6. Folder 2, box 4, VWC collection.

<sup>8</sup> Ethel H., “March 8th International Women’s Day Celebration Rousing Success,” *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, April 1971, p. 2. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

male supremacy. If you too are interested in joining with your sisters in the struggle, contact the Women's Center for information.

The event was a momentary interruption in and of space: As a specific social movement strategy, events are designed to be temporary, so for a short while there may be a carnivalesque eruption of feminism, a “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (Bakhtin 1984, 10). Therefore, the transience of an event is related also to its relationship with the established order. The events I describe above were likely sanctioned by the city so that the women were given official permission to, for a prescribed period of time and within particular spatial boundaries (i.e., women were allowed to march only along a particular route and occupy only a particular space for the demonstration), transform the city streets and square into feminist spaces.<sup>9</sup> The dominant conventions of the city, however, return quickly after the event's end, reappropriating the space and returning it to its regular functions: only one hour after the march in Los Angeles an official government body came to take the statue of Sojourner Truth down, erasing traces of the demonstrators (except discursive and perhaps affective ones) and reinforcing the impermanence of an event's materiality and the temporal boundaries of its spatial presence.

On the one hand then, these International Woman's Day marches and Farah demonstration were successful *despite* their impermanence, because of the affect and energy experienced and perceived by the articles' authors, the fact that feminism was given a real, material presence, the productions of feminism as a diverse political movement, and the galvanizing effect of the dozens of hours of organizing by multiple actors. Such an atmosphere, though, cannot be sustained, both because the city—the assemblage of institutions that occupy the space “properly” and strategically and gave women permission for the interruption—would not allow it and because the group organizing the event would not have the resources to do so. The frequent, persistent requests in periodicals for readers' time, money, and other assistance shows that most collectives were far from having access to the resources they needed to secure their

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<sup>9</sup> On the temporality of the event see McAdam and Sewell (2001, 101-2).

material means of existence. On the other hand, the event is successful *because* of its impermanence, because of the way it changed the space of the city, drawing attention to the space precisely because it is being used differently, unusually. To hold this kind of event in a pre-existing feminist space (if such a space existed) may have similar effects, such as joy, an affirmation of feminism's continued existence, and the feeling of being part of something bigger than oneself. However, then the event would not be a tactical interruption of dominant relations of power but, rather, an affirmation of the dominant relations of feminism. According to de Certeau a tactic is a "calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. . . . Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power [and] vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers" (1984 36-37). The International Women's Day event is tactical thus because it is a feminist takeover of a proper place, a place in which capitalism, patriarchy, racism, imperialism, etc. are reproduced without thought and as part of people's daily practices. Women are inserting themselves into a place where feminism does not belong, where they—as feminists—do not belong.

Imagine experiencing the marchers' approach. In the middle of your daily walk or work you can first hear them in the distance, singing and chanting. The sound grows, and then you see the first marchers. And then more women are filling the street, until you are almost surrounded. Transforming the streets and the square in this way is a practice that turns place into space. According to de Certeau, in a place "the law of the 'proper' rules," while a space "has none of the univocality of a 'proper'" (1984, 117). Place is stable while space is ambiguous. Place is a product while space is produced. Place is closed while space is open. Therefore, space is what can emerge through the interruption of the laws that govern a place. The International Women's Day march consequently shows the potential to use and think about a place differently.

As de Certeau implies tactics can meet only immediate needs; they are not adequate to plan for the future or to accumulate resources. Rather, they "make do" (1984, 66). While tactics

may be useful for short, explosive acts that undermine and destabilize dominant epistemologies and reorganize (albeit briefly) the uses of and relationships in a particular place (as the International Women's Day Marches and the Farah demonstration did), a sustainable social movement needs a proper space. Feminists produced this proper by establishing women's centers and women's studies departments, as well as feminist bookstores, coffeeshops, art spaces, record labels, news services, health clinics, and, of course, publications.

Drawing from de Certeau's space/place framework, I first look at how feminists occupied places and turn them into spaces and then discuss the ways that women worked toward and in fact needed a feminist proper (although none use the language of the proper). Through feminist actions women politicize places by making visible and challenging the epistemological assumptions through which these places were knowable, normal, and functional. Such practices expose the limits and interrupt the singularity of a phallocentric economy, an economy that encompasses the production and reproduction of sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia.<sup>10</sup> Feminists, by disrupting the "placeness" of places, suggest that there is more than one epistemology through which we may know the world.

Spaces and places are not just the streets or the city squares, or even the women's centers. As evidenced by the hundreds of periodicals that circulated in the early 1970s, texts were vital to the production and reproduction of the women's liberation movement, and thinking about texts spatially allows us to investigate a text as a space and the ways texts occupy and move through space. In all cases, women struggled to maintain access to and control over them. Sometimes women took over places of publication, demanding and often achieving interventions into conventional practices of periodical production. In March 1970, for example, women occupied the offices of the *Ladies Home Journal* for eleven hours demanding that editors let them

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<sup>10</sup> According to Luce Irigaray, phallogentrism is an epistemological economy of the same, one that only recognize "the *one* of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning" (1985, 26). Therefore, through a phallogentric logic we are taught how to know in only one specific way.

put out a “liberated” issue (Lichtenstein 1970, 51). Taking on the underground press, which women criticized for its marginalization of women in the production process and for its portrayal of women and feminism in periodical content, a collective of women in New York City in January 1970 seized the editorial space and tools of the leftist newspaper *Rat* and began publishing it as a feminist newspaper.<sup>11</sup> The *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter* reports on the takeover of the *L.A. Free Press*:

The Free Press belongs to women! (For the Aug. 27 issue). The women on the staff of the Free Press will have total control of editorial policy. They will have women covering the news and will feature articles of special interest to women.

They need artists, photographers, and writers. Here’s your opportunity to get published and paid for it!

Aug. 20 is the deadline. Contact Sue Marshall at YES 1970 if you have something to contribute.<sup>12</sup>

Also effecting a temporary takeover of the alternative press, women who worked on the Atlanta paper the *Great Speckled Bird* formed a women’s caucus and demanded “a ‘women’s issue’ of the *Bird*” in which they would control the entire production process: “We would prove ourselves to the men. We would write, type, layout—everything.”<sup>13</sup>

These actions occurred in part because institutions produce proper spaces and because, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s, women’s liberation activists had to carve their own spaces from within these proper places. They diverted spaces they had regular access to, such as kitchens and living rooms, from their proper domestic uses. And they appropriated existing proper spaces. Marches, demonstrations, and zap actions thus became part of the repertoires of

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<sup>11</sup> On the takeover of *Rat* see the February 1970 issue of that newspaper. LHA. Jo Freeman also mentions that in 1969 a group of women “held hostage an editor of a new underground newspaper, *Dock of the Bay*, until he agreed to stop publication of a special ‘sextra’ issue planned to raise money for the new paper” (1975, 113n18).

<sup>12</sup> “Freep Take-Over,” *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, [ca. August 1971], p. 1. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

<sup>13</sup> “Even a Woman Can Do It: Bird Women’s Caucus” by Becky Hamilton, *Great Speckled Bird*, October 11, 1970, p3. Folder “Bird’s Coverage of ALFA 2.21,” box 2, ALFA archives. This article goes on to describe the challenges and tensions that resulted from this intervention, pointing to the ways in which feminist collaborations and interventions were not always joyful and accompanied by “good feelings.” However, Hamilton does refer to subsequent structural changes in the paper’s production process, such as reorganization of the divisions of labor and women’s increased demands for salaries for their work.

action of the U.S. women's liberation movement.<sup>14</sup> They served an important purpose and still do for feminism and other social movements. Such tactics are available (albeit not only) to organizations and actors with limited access to resources because they do not necessarily require sophisticated or expensive tools and they build upon an important resource that insurgent movements often have—numbers (Sewell 2001, 58). Although periodicals reflect the challenges feminists faced in rallying their numbers on a consistent, material, and quotidian basis (for example, to volunteer at the women's center, to help out with the newsletter, to donate money or send in their subscription checks, or to join study and CR groups), numbers nonetheless gave the movement a physical presence. Feminists thus overwhelmingly occupied spaces provisionally, contingently and tactically.

### **A feminist proper**

Let us return to Los Angeles, to March 1971, to the Pershing Square, which has been physically emptied of feminism. Perhaps some traces remain: some certificates of sisterhood crumpled in the trash or left on the sidewalk, the echo of bodies and the pulse of their collective energy, or a lone participant whom the casual observer might not recognize as an activist. This public space, however, has served its purpose as a temporary destination for the International Women's Day marchers. Although the statue of Sojourner Truth has been removed from the square, indicating that that space is no longer a feminist one, the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* offers another space for readers at the close of the article: "If you too are interested in joining with your sisters in the struggle, contact the Women's Center for information." The author juxtaposes Pershing Square and the Women's Center in the last part of the article. The square hosted an important public moment of feminism, but feminism cannot permanently and visibly occupy this civic area. Therefore, it is important that there be a women's center, a more consistently locatable space of

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<sup>14</sup> See Hole and Levine (1971, 294-98), Carden (1974, 74), and Freeman (1975, 126). On repertoires of action see Tilly (1977).

and for feminism. There needs to be a place where readers know they can find feminists, participate as an activist, get information, or concretely experience being part of a like-minded community (see Enke 2003, especially the introduction).

In order to reproduce itself as a social movement, feminism needed to be locatable not just in the present but in the future. The importance of sustaining a feminist space through time cannot be overestimated, for such stability—the repetition of a place in time—allows the formation of a feminist proper. Feminist periodicals make clear that creating such potentially permanent spaces is vital, as a feminist practice and as a practice that sustains feminism. The editors of *Distaff* write,

Primarily we feel it is essential to have some central place in the city that women can call our own, where we can touch base with other women and where we can buy the literature, posters, jewelry and other items made by and for women. We hope the initiative Distaff has taken in providing such a place will encourage other women's groups to create similar bases around the city and throughout the South"<sup>15</sup>

Expressing a similar attitude toward the significance of place is an article in the *Female Liberation Newsletter* about establishing a Boston-area women's center:

Here's what the women have in mind who have been working on finding a center already (any other programs anyone wants to set up are welcomed): Basically, we hope to have a center open to ALL women 24 hrs. a day where we can work on the things that matter to us as Feminists and as sisters responding to the needs of other sisters in all aspects of our lives. The center should be a place for learning, teaching, sharing and partying. . . and, most importantly, a place where we can get to know each other and find out where we want to go and what needs we have not yet even explored. WE NEED A CENTER for students, housewives, black and 3rd World women, professional women, gay women, activists, welfare-mothers, young and old, where we can come together informally and BE SISTERS.

Some money has been obtained, but there's a long way to go. Please don't leave it up to a few sisters to do all the scrounging for funds.<sup>16</sup>

The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter/Sister*, and *Female Liberation Newsletter* all were published through women's centers, and the centers often figure prominently in the newsletters. A statement about the activities and purpose of the Valley Women's Center describes it as "a base for action against discrimination and a base for

<sup>15</sup> Editorial by Mary Gehman, *Distaff*, April 15 – May 15, 1975, p. 2. NCCROW.

<sup>16</sup> Editorial, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, April 10, 1971, p. 4. SSC.



community. It can be a place out of which we will do and live the most important work of our lives” and notes that “one of the most important functions of the Women’s Center is to provide a place for women to get to know each other and to gain confidence and strength from this knowing.”<sup>17</sup> And the Los Angeles newsletter describes the center with which it was affiliated: “The women’s center, located at 1027 So. Crenshaw Blvd., was originally conceived by members of various Women’s Liberation groups in Los Angeles. They believed in the necessity for a visible structure which could operate as a forum for the new feminist movements, and as a resource center to serve a variety of needs of women from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds.”<sup>18</sup>

An essay by the founding editor of *Distaff* reveals the importance of having a place where feminists can be found as well as the potential obstacles to finding it:

A person new to New Orleans has a hard time making contact with women’s groups and understandably concludes that women’s liberation simply hasn’t infiltrated the southern swamps.

Look in the phone book under W: nothing but Woman’s Clinic and Woman’s World Beauty Salon. The yellow pages offer women’s apparel as their sole listing. And calls to the YWCA or the City Hall Answer Desk yield little helpful information. The guided tours and tourist bureaus of the city do not list any women’s organizations. People on the street might vaguely remember having heard of the National Organization for Women (NOW) but have no idea how to contact them. . . . That is, however, only one side of the coin. On the other side is evidence of a lively, persistent effort by local women to organize and make their presence felt. *Distaff*, now in its tenth month of continuous publication, exists because of it. Though women’s groups are not able to pay the \$50 or more for a business phone listing, they are very much alive and well.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “The Valley Women’s Center,” July 9, 1971. Folder 2 “Valley Women’s Union Administration: History,” box 1, VWC records.

<sup>18</sup> “Definition of the Women’s Center,” *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, Summer 1970, p.3. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

<sup>19</sup> “Analysis: N.O. Women’s Movement: A Comprehensive Herstory” by Mary Gehman, *Distaff*, October 1973, p. 8. NCCROW. See also a letter to the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance: “For some time now, ever since I first heard about your group when I came to Atlanta, I’ve wanted to find out more about you. And for the last few weeks, I’ve had a kind of desperate need to talk to somebody, and the more I thought about it, the clearer it became it was you people I should be talking to. After a lot of hesitation, I finally tried calling you yesterday, but the number I rang, which I got from THE BIRD, was out of order. So would you please contact me some way and tell me where your place is and what your phone number is and when is a good time I can come and who I can talk to. I feel lost and I think I need help” (Letter from Elaine Fiedler, n.d. “1973-1974 Correspondence 3.2,” Box 3, Box 2, ALFA archives. “The Bird” refers to the Atlanta Leftist newspaper the *Great Speckled Bird*).

Offering a “comprehensive herstory” of the women’s liberation movement in New Orleans, this essay highlights a tension between presence and visibility. For author Mary Gehman there is no doubt that feminism is alive, vibrant, and making a difference in New Orleans, but this impact may not be visible to those who do not know where to find it, where the spaces of feminism are, and how to read the spaces that have been changed by feminist activism. Importantly, one obstacle to finding feminism is the lack of a telephone number, which is both a material absence and a symbolic one. Women’s centers and feminist organizations often had phones but did not always have the funding to make those phone numbers public.

The phone was an important tether linking women’s centers and the rest of the world. In addition to serving as a means for people to connect with and find a feminist group and for activists to maintain their political networks, information and referral was a significant service of many women’s centers. Therefore, maintaining phone service was a priority. At a staff meeting for the Valley Women’s Center the first agenda item is “Phone Business”: because the center’s most recent bill was high—\$103—they are considering getting a WATS (Wide Area Telephone Service) line, which would reduce the cost and allow the center to “keep in closer touch with other women’s groups and the Women’s Institute [and] people wouldn’t make so many long distance calls on their home phone.”<sup>20</sup> And *Ain’t I a Woman?* reports on the local women’s center, letting readers know that they “need lots of support. our rent is \$68 a month and we will have a phone bill. we have enough of a staff right now to keep the phone covered from 12 to 8 p.m. daily and we’re hoping that women will come over on friday and saturday nights to rap. but we can use as much staff help as we can get. . . . it’s our place, sisters, and it’s O.K.!”<sup>21</sup> Feminists who worked to keep a women’s center afloat realized quickly the great number of things that needed to be sustained through time, most of which required continuous monetary income and bodily commitments. While navigating their precarious existence, feminists

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<sup>20</sup> “Minutes of Staff Meeting” taken by Nancy, Annie, and Celia, April 12, 1973. Folder 4, box 1, VWC records.

<sup>21</sup> “Women’s Center,” *Ain’t I a Woman?*, April 30, 1971, p. 3. IWA.

attempted to produce these places and locate feminism in a more permanent, stable, and, ideally, sustainable way.

There were grassroots attempts to provide contact information and let people know where to find feminism, but, as with much of the women's liberation movement, the results are idiosyncratic and unpredictable. The Minot (North Dakota) Women's Collective asks feminist groups—especially those in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, Wyoming, and Iowa—to “help us end our feelings of isolation and help us establish a means of getting in touch with each other to share ideas” by sending contact information and a brief description about the group for a directory that will be available to those who wish to receive the publication.<sup>22</sup> While this was an important attempt to build community and communication networks, in order to be successful someone must decide to contribute her group's information and then hope that the directory appears. And *Sister* includes a series of “brief descriptions of many of the women's groups, organizations, and services in the Los Angeles area,” groups whose politics “range from radical feminist or socialist to moderately liberal, and their structure ranges from collective to traditionally hierarchical. All define themselves as feminist.”<sup>23</sup> Such lists and directories were important not only because they reinforced communication networks but also because they gave feminism a place, both of which were necessary to reproducing the women's liberation movement.

Feminist periodicals mapped out a feminist topography within cities and across the nation. Some interventions involved listing names and contact information, such as the aforementioned directories or the Valley Women's Center's announcements about boycotting nonunion lettuce in support of the United Farm Workers.<sup>24</sup> This boycott, which asked women to

<sup>22</sup> “Coming Together: Upper Midwest WL Directory,” *Ain't I a Woman?*, February 19, 1971, p11. IWA.

<sup>23</sup> Editorial, *Sister*, December 1975, p. 8. SCLSSR. The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* also offers information about a national directory of women's groups titled *Women's Organizations and Leaders---1973 Directory* (August 1972, p. 6. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records).

<sup>24</sup> See the following issues of the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*: July 1972, p. 1; July 1972, p. 7; March 1973, p. 1; October 1973, p. 2.

avoid purchasing certain items and even to avoid stores (like A&P) that sell these items, could reroute readers' quotidian movements through space and also change their relationships with what they encounter: lettuce, for example, takes on a different meaning, in the grocery store or on a sandwich. Other interventions were more explicit cartographic reorganizations of a place, such as *Sister's* feminist map of Los Angeles, which includes various women's centers, the Chicana Service Action Center, the Copy Spot, and the Federal Feminist Credit Union. The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* provided a similar map of the Pioneer Valley (see figures 2.2 and 2.3).

Texts have been important for providing alternative maps of places for a wide range of marginalized populations. Martin Meeker (2005, 2006) writes about the ways that space became coded through lesbian and gay publications in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Meeker, Ann Aldrich's books about being a lesbian in New York City, *We Walk Alone* (1955) and *We, too, Must Love* (1958), were important contributions to the body of nonfiction writing about lesbians because the author is a self-named lesbian and writes from her own experience moving through New York City and because it allows lesbians to exist in space, specifically in public space. Hungry for information about where to find lesbians and lesbian-friendly places, women Meeker writes, "came to [New York City] with images and expectations in their minds that had been shaped in part by the words of people like Aldrich" (2005, 125).<sup>25</sup> Because Aldrich does not hide the fact that the books are based on her experiences, the publications emplace lesbians and lesbianism. Even the title *We Walk Alone* suggests the occupation and potential queering of space by lesbians. These books thus offer evidence for the existence of identities because they locate such identities and at the same time allow an identity to exist as an imagined community—that is, a person could imagine other gay women in these places thus situating this community in a particular place and possibly letting her locate herself as part of it. Fiction, too, can be read as a

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<sup>25</sup> Meeker (2001) also examines the genre of gay guidebooks, such as *The Gay Girls Guide* and *Le Guide Gris* (The grey guide) for the ways they produce knowledge about, and thus change, the space of cities.

map of identity and a place, as Michèle Aina Barale shows in her close reading of a cover of the lesbian pulp novel *Beebo Brinker*. Barale (2000) describes the novel in material terms as a guide to the city (207) and in figurative terms as illuminating a cartography of desire (208). In different ways, then, texts are spatiotemporal maps: they identify and name places to visit and avoid, they set up boundaries and produce relationships, they draw the past and connect it to the present, they create space in which the future can be imagined and possibly materialized, and they populate the world. In a metaphysical sense they are part of the ordering of space (they turn space into place) by serving as guides that implicitly and explicitly make bodies, objects, ideas, fantasies, feelings intelligible.

The metaphor of friction has been a helpful lens for understanding the ways that texts from underrepresented populations and social movements might abrade and disrupts the proper place—of sexism, heterosexism, racism, capitalism, and imperialism. In *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* Manuel De Landa describes friction within a U.S. military context:

On the one hand, it refers in transportation and communication networks to the physical friction responsible for delays, bottlenecks and machine breakdowns. But more generally, it is used to refer to any phenomenon (natural or artificial) that interferes with the implementation of a tactical or strategic plan. In this extended sense the word “friction” refers to everything from bad weather to the independent will of the enemy. (1991, 60)

In other words, anything that slows, disrupts, or blocks flows—of bodies, data, objects, ideas—can be a source of friction. Such interference ultimately produces uncertainty, and according to De Landa it is possible that friction aggregates to the extent that “it can generate a feedback loop, like a runaway explosion, in which uncertainty multiplies, flashing through the nervous system and short-circuiting the war machine” (78).<sup>26</sup> The effect of uncertainty and uncertainty as an

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<sup>26</sup> De Landa borrows the concept “machinic phylum” from Gilles Deleuze, a term Deleuze uses to describe the phenomenon in which disparate elements act together in a process of self-organization (De Landa 1991, 6-7). Therefore, the term “war machine” refers to an assemblage of human and nonhuman entities that become connected and organized for the purpose of waging war (see especially De Landa’s “Introduction”). Although there are many differences between military machines and other machines that reproduce dominant ideologies (patriarchy, capitalism, racism, etc.), they are nevertheless systems of ordering whose reproduction depends on flows, of money, goods, bodies, and information.

effect make friction a potential characteristic of tactics and a tool available to marginalized, and resource-poor populations..

Friction is a useful concept because of the way it spatializes and temporalizes resistance. First, friction must take place somewhere. In fact, its ontology is based on being located in relation to something else, since it is the effect of (at least) two surfaces rubbing against each other.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, it causes a kind of slowing down, producing delays that interfere with the reproduction of a proper place. This schema, then, opens up the possibility of framing resistance in general and feminist activism in particular as an assemblage of practices that enact a deceleration. Friction moreover is transformative. Think of what happens when two sticks are rubbed together: friction's heat produces sparks, possibly fire. Therefore, as a metaphor, friction productively encompasses both resistance to the existing status quo and potential for an interaction to produce something new. The metaphor of friction deters us from constructing feminism as absolutely different from that which it abuts and resists. That is, the tactical and the proper are imbricated, with boundaries that are always provisional and porous, so there is distinction and tension, but a specific line of demarcation between one and the other cannot be located.

An essay published in the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* considers feminism to be a transformative project:

As feminists, we are called upon to respond in a new way, with a new attitude to the specific relationship we find ourselves in. We respond not by argument, but by caring – by seeing and encompassing the other person's actual situation. . . . Our sense of who we are, our actions must be grounded in this, our sense of history, of evolution. We are moving towards new ways of relating, of being, that we are creating even as we are modeling it. We do not yet have a theory. We are forming one out of our daily practice, our feminist process.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Michael Warner's characterization of counterpublics involves a kind of consciousness of its oppositional-subordinate status in relation to the (general) public, which he frames through the metaphor of friction: "Friction against the dominant public forces the poetic-expressive character of counterpublic discourse to become salient to consciousness" (2002, 86).

<sup>28</sup> Untitled essay by Susan, *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, July-August 1976, p. 2. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

A speaker at a 1971 International Women's Day event in Los Angeles also emphasizes feminism as an act of creative change, of imagining a new world that can then be incarnated: "Rita Goldenberger, from the Lesbian Feminists concentrated on the destructiveness of the male supremacist society all around us and urged us to create a society in which all women would have the opportunity of making real choices in every aspect of their lives."<sup>29</sup> And *Female Liberation Newsletter* in the third month of publishing articulates a position about female oppression, noting that "women have begun to voice their discontent with society. We have begun to talk about new alternatives. We are demanding complete control over our own lives and are beginning to act on these ideas and decisions."<sup>30</sup>

These alternatives must occur somewhere and in some way, and making them sustainable and repeatable requires a feminist proper. Periodicals, by facilitating the imagining of new feminist places aids in the creation of a feminist proper. As the above examples show, through their content periodicals described and prescribed feminism, gave readers access to an imagined community of women throughout the country, and gave voice to feminist debates about politics, culture, economy, family, law, etc. Processes of publishing, too, give insight into the frictional qualities of feminist periodicals, and the rest of the chapter looks specifically at how periodicals transformed a dominant patriarchal and capitalist proper through their modes of production. Feminist editorial and publishing practices displace the conventional capitalist relations of production: through transparency in modes of production, the ways in which the editors and contributors are represented and made visible, attempts to work collectively and collaboratively, challenges to expert/layperson hierarchies, and the prioritization of politics over profit.

### **Interrupting capitalism**

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<sup>29</sup> Ethel H., "International Women's Day," *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, April 1971, p. 2. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

<sup>30</sup> "A Statement about Female Liberation," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, December 2, 1970, p. 1. SSC.

Trysh Travis (2008) analyzes the U.S. women in print movement as a way to look closely at the assumptions that support the publishing status quo, offering an analysis of the ways that feminist publishing diverges from conventional notions of the publishing industry. Travis highlights the patriarchal and capitalist foundations on which the reproduction of the publishing industry rests and that feminists explicitly challenged in many areas of culture and politics. The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* published a description of, Mother Jones Press in May 1974. This piece states that the press's primary challenge has been "trying to run an anti-profit, socialist business with paper companies, supply companies, landlords, utilities etc. which are organized in a totally different way from us."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the *Ain't I a Woman?* collective lists the reasons for its publication in its first issue: "Until now there have been no underground or peoples papers in Iowa City. There have only been the usual commercial town paper and the University paper. Neither can be trusted to function as a service for the people who read them. Both subscribe to the good journalistic 'professionalism' thus being written for the people not by the people. Both are controlled by capitalist interests and concerns. Both, as most newspapers, display unmitigated sexism."<sup>32</sup> One may argue that intent is manifested unpredictably and that the reasons the collectives provide for starting their project are not seamlessly translated into practice. Nevertheless, it is productive to examine how the rhetoric around feminism translates into practice to determine whether or not these collectives are cultural allies with mainstream media.

Eliciting this connection involves looking for the traces of the production process in the print text. The labor of periodical production is made explicit (purposefully and incidentally) by the ways the bodies of contributors and editors are foregrounded. Much of the writing in these periodicals is personal, written in the first person, and about emotional and bodily experiences. Some papers also have handwritten text, and editorial workers may write about the process of creating the issue, all of which hint at the presence of bodies behind the text. In addition to

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<sup>31</sup> *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, May 1974, p. 4. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>32</sup> "Editorial," *Ain't I a Woman?*, June 21, 1970, p. 2. LHA.



written content, the materiality of the periodical can be used to infer the labor that went into producing it. Before being mimeographed, for example, a newsletter's stencil had to be typed, and the mimeograph machine had to be cranked. Disarray in particular can reveal the imprint of human labor. The example I cite at the start of this chapter is a vivid demonstration of this, but crooked lines, lines that get cut off in the printing process, typos, or the address label that is not quite centered also indicate the energy and imprecision that accompany human labor, and in the case of feminist periodicals, often nonexpert labor. An editorial in *Sister* recognizes the effect of this mode of production: "When we started only Joan and Sue had ever worked on a newspaper before. In this year the rest of us have learned the skills of lay-out, paste up, editing and jiving with the post office. We have lost copy, left off the return address, had crooked columns, failed to proof read, and committed about every journalistic error possible."<sup>33</sup> This representation of working bodies and of labor itself in feminist periodicals helps to defetishize the periodical as a product in two ways: through the imprints of the laboring bodies on the finished products and the revelations about the production process that we can read through the text and materiality of the publication.

According to Karl Marx, the fetishism of commodities is tied significantly to two phenomena. One is the distinction between use and exchange value and the other is the relation between workers and products. Marx outlines the characteristics of use and exchange values: the former is a thing's utility, which becomes apparent when it is consumed (1978, 303), and the latter is what a thing is worth in relation to something else—to another product (such as in a barter system) or to an abstract standard of measurement like money (304). Use and exchange values are independent in that it is not possible to quantify use value except through exchange. However, the price (exchange value) of commodities is not necessarily commensurate with the importance of their use. For example, water, which is necessary to human survival is quite inexpensive whereas many costly items are only luxuries. When commodities become fetishized,

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<sup>33</sup> "Sister Staff Notes" by Dy, *Sister*, July 1973, p. 13. SCLSSR.

their exchange value comes to represent the whole of their value, and in a monetary system this value is further abstracted and distanced from the producer. Marx explains,

it was the analysis of the prices of commodities that alone led to the determination of the magnitude of value, and it was the common expression of all commodities in money that alone led to the establishment of their characters as value. It is, however, just this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labor, and the social relations between the individual producers. (1978, 324; see also Joseph 2002, 37)

Consequently, value appears to be an intrinsic quality of the object itself, rather something that is related to the labor of its producer, its utility, or the cost required to produce it (see Joseph 2001, 55-60). The process of assigning exchange value to a commodity alienates producers from what they produce because they do not own the tools of production, do not determine the value of their labor, do not control the conditions of their work, and often do not get to use or consume that which they produce. Such a model of production in a capitalist economy importantly is used to maximize profit. By minimizing expenses through low wages, through structures such as assembly lines, and through the mechanization and export of labor, capitalists realize as much profit as possible and in the process often increase the distance between workers, products, and consumers.

The feminist periodicals studied here, in contrast, were likely to decrease, and in many cases erase, this distance. They circulated locally and regionally, so it would have been more common for the people reading an issue to know the writers and editors. The practice of feminist ideals also blurred the boundaries between producers and consumers. Because editorial collectives prioritized giving as many women as possible the chance to develop writing, editing, layout, and publishing skills, readers could try their hand at editing without prior experience, as evidenced in the call to readers in *Distaff's* first issue:

It looks now as if we can plan to publish monthly on a long term basis. But before we do that, we want to invite all women to join us in this venture. DISTAFF is a feminist newspaper collective, open to any woman who wants to participate. There are currently

six women sharing editorial responsibilities and many other working in capacities of reporting, typing, lay out, graphics, printing, advertising, distribution, and finances.<sup>34</sup>

And *Sister* in 1974 offered a one-day news writing workshop led by professional journalists as part of their efforts to expand its staff. Attendees were asked either to contribute funds to defray the cost of the workshop or to write at least two stories for the newspaper.<sup>35</sup> These examples offer insight into the openness with which editors invited readers to participate in the publishing process. The dynamic nature of these editorial collectives also increased the potential that a reader would be (or had been) at some point someone who helped in the production or distribution of the periodical. Because the work of publication was in almost all cases volunteer labor, the composition of collectives was thus based on who had the time to offer her labor for the upcoming issue. *Female Liberation Newsletter* lets readers know, “Anybody out there who will come in Wednesdays or Thursdays, every other week, to help with the newsletter will be received with shouts of hosanna. We need typists, contributors, and people to collate and bundle.”<sup>36</sup> And, after a number of attempts to increase the number of women working to put out the newsletter, Joan writes the following editorial in apparent frustration:

Sisters! Putting out the newsletter is a job which now falls on less than a half dozen women. Were you one of the people who wanted to join the newsletter collective but forgot about it? We mail (and address) 2200 newsletters. It’s hardly fair to make 6 women do all the work for you. I feel bitchy all the time we’re working because we have so little help. I’m asking all sisters to get out and help (the dates are in the calendar). Sisters who submit an article for publication: whether you come from a group or not, we now expect you or someone from your group to help with production—it’s the price of publication. Signed, Joan the Bitch<sup>37</sup>

Editorials such as these not only name the people who are giving their labor but also make the labor itself visible. Workers and work are not anonymous, as they are for most products available for purchase. These editorials thus make it difficult for readers to maintain distance from the production of the text they are holding in their hands.

<sup>34</sup> “Editorial,” *Distaff*, February 1973, p. 12. NCCROW.

<sup>35</sup> “News Writing Workshop” by Cheryl Diehm, *Sister*, August 1974, p. 4. SCLSSR.

<sup>36</sup> Announcement, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, December, 1972, p. 6. SSC.

<sup>37</sup> Announcement by Joan, *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, May 1971, p. 3. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

Also insisting on the fact that a periodical—a finished product—was the effect of embodied labor is the presence of handwriting in feminist publications. In the first issue of *Ain't I a Woman?* each collective member's name is handwritten, presumably by the collective member herself since the scripts are distinct. Writing their names by hand personifies the collective and provides evidence of not only their existence but also of their labor, for not only did they work on the periodical, each member physically wrote out her name. Consider also the Los Angeles collective's inclusion of five hand-drawn faces that are captioned in cursive handwriting (see figure 2.4): "We're the Newsletter regulars. D., S and I did the editing. We ran out of energy to give you the news—so help us next time to edit and we'll include your picture here. . . like the rest of us."<sup>38</sup> It is the representation of collective members imagistically as well as the form of their representation—drawn by a person who appears to be a nonprofessional artist—that invokes real people who have done real work to make sure the paper ends up in your hands.

Looking for the modes of production in periodicals requires attention to the paratext, or the part of the periodical that is not the text proper. According to Beth McCoy (2006) the paratext is a site affected and effected through the circulation of power, and what often gets overlooked in studies of texts is the ways that power moves through paratextual spaces, even the seemingly innocuous markings like page numbers. Consider the fact that a number of feminist periodicals do not include page numbers, appear with pages out of order, or have page numbers handwritten rather than typed. The disordered pages in the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* (cited at the start of this chapter), for example, can be read as an effect of the center's attempts to enact a feminist process of production and of the resource-related challenges that social movement activists face. On the one hand, any interested woman could work on the newsletter and learn skills such as editing, layout, and working the mimeograph machine. On the other hand, those on the newsletter committee were constantly asking readers for their time and money so that the

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<sup>38</sup> *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, October 2, 1971, p. 4. Folder 2, LAWLM collection.

newsletter could be published on a regular basis. The combination of these factors produces exchanges such as the one found in a 1972 Valley Women's Center daily log:

Pages 1 and 2 of the newsletter are done and runoff (copies on the table). Part of pg 3 typed on top of mail cubbyholes. what a pleasure the new machine is! cleo

CLEO we run page 2 on the back of page 1. No harm done--we can create a bunch of stuff for the back of page 1 if necessary.

Page 1A?

appendix to page 1?

CLEO Page 1a is a good idea. I will leave a note for Trish to see if she can edit material for thurs. night. MLA [Michele Aldrich]<sup>39</sup>

These log entries indicate that Cleo mimeographed pages one and two of the newsletter on two separate sheets of paper, whereas, as the second message reveals, the newsletter is usually printed double sided. Regardless, the collective will find material for the back of page one and will label the back of page 1, page 1a. This exchange allows me to revise my understanding of the disorder of the page numbers (paratextual marks) of the August 1972 newsletter, which ended up with page 3, instead of page 1a, on the back of page 1.

This pagination was not a simple clerical error but can be traced to specific technologies and practices of production. Making the newsletter committee open to all interested women meant that women who had no previous experience as editors, writers, or printers were editing, writing, and printing. Other daily log entries hint at this inexperience through instructions about how to do tasks like run the mimeograph machine. For example, Michele Aldrich instructs women how to deal with paper jams with written text and drawings:

when the paper jams as it starts thru the machine, the roller under the drum hits the stencil just as if the paper was going thru and picks up ink on the roller instead of the paper. Then when the paper does start to go thru, the roller under the drum prints ink smearily all over the next 15 to 20 sheets before it cleans itself. The repair person warned that just the self-cleaning process is not adequate--one must prevent the paper jams in the first place.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Daily log entry, July 5, 1972. Folder 15, box 1, VWC records.

<sup>40</sup> Daily log entry by Michele Aldrich, March 12, 1973. Folder 6, box 2, VWC records.

The daily logs were available to all women at the center, so listing instructions there is based on the assumption that any woman might be operating the mimeograph machine and that those who use the machine may not know much about mimeo machines in general and the idiosyncrasies of the center's machine in particular. Such an assumption can be read as part of a feminist praxis, in which skills are seen as resources that not only should be but must be shared with others.<sup>41</sup> As a result, women with little experience in publishing might contribute their time and energy to produce newsletters, which inevitably led to misunderstandings about procedures set up by the editorial collectives and newsletter committees. Consider the confusion surrounding the bulk mailing process as listed in the April 5, 1973, daily log of the Valley Women's Center:

This note is about the mailing labels. Some misguided soul began retyping them from the old labels instead of from the zip code box like you are supposed to do. as a resi;t [*sic*; "result"] some new people are added in later. There is a longer note about this on top of the zip code box. roz

sorry, it was me--we need a procedure card [no author listed]

The Newsletter was mailed by MLA [Michele Aldrich] today. It is one page and didn't go out to everyone because some of the labels were missing. c'est la vie. roz<sup>42</sup>

Once the center got a bulk mailing permit, the newsletter editors struggled regularly to figure out a process for labeling the newsletters so that they would be organized according to the post office's requirements for bulk mailing. As with Aldrich's mimeograph instructions, they must be situated within beliefs in of skill sharing and opening the movement to all women as well as the constraints imposed by the material conditions of publication.

The occasional misnumbered, mislabeled, or late issue of the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* can be understood as part of a feminist praxis and a result of the resources found within the center. An example from *Ain't I a Woman?* points to the consequence of external forces on periodical production when the newspaper apologizes to readers. The editors write, "The page numbers in the last issue of AIAW were messed up because we had some trouble

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<sup>41</sup> It also results from the center's attempts to be a resource for a diffuse group of women and activists (the center's mimeograph machine was used by a variety of activist groups in the Pioneer Valley area).

<sup>42</sup> Daily log entry, April 5, 1973. Folder 7, box 2, VWC records.

getting the medical supplement printed. Sorry if it was confusing.”<sup>43</sup> As readers learn, the medical supplement consists of four pages of photographs and descriptions of the process of menstrual extraction. What readers will not learn from the periodical, but what I learned through formal and informal discussions with women involved with *Ain't I a Woman?*, is that the printer refused to print these pages because they included the pictures of a naked woman with her legs spread performing menstrual extraction. In this case disordered page numbers reflect the text's illegitimacy. Page numbers, in order, without pages missing, can be a sign that a text fits norms sufficiently so that a printer is willing to publish them. Readers would not necessarily have known the reasons for missing pages in the case of *Ain't I a Woman?*, and if the confusion about the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter's* mailing labels prevented some subscribers from receiving their newsletter, then the effect of paratextual markings would be irrelevant. However, a close reading of the modes of production of feminist periodicals makes clear the some of the differences between a feminist mode of production from a capitalist one.

Forming a feminist space was a process that inevitably engaged, battled, attempted to circumvent, and strategically navigated capitalist systems of production. With profit as its goal and relying on formal editorial hierarchies, mainstream media publishes what it can in a manner that supports money making, whereas these feminist editorial collectives prioritized the reproduction of the paper itself and published in a manner consistent with participatory democracy. Attempting to put their theories into practice, these collectives challenged the categories “reader” and “writer” and made process a part of their product (Blanchard 1992; Murray 2004, ch. 1; Onosaka 2006, 30).

### **Interrupting authority**

As the previous section shows, periodicals frequently described the steps involved in publishing and named those who assisted in its production. The *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*

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<sup>43</sup> Editorial, *Ain't I a Woman?*, January 2, 1972, p. 11. IWA.

expressed gratitude for this assistance: “Thanks! Our thanks to Betty and Loretta at the Commit office for their patience and assistance they have given us with the mimeoing of our newsletter.”<sup>44</sup> And a Valley Women’s Center staffer slips into the newsletter: “annebowen [*sic*] did this newsletter’s typing.”<sup>45</sup> The physics of publishing was manual and analog also for periodicals that went through the offset printing process (which is how newspapers are printed).

A departing editor of *Distaff* writes in her farewell editorial about the labors of production:

All copy in and now it comes down to the wire. This is layout weekend, time for counting pennies, biting nails, and placating a suddenly active ulcer. Measuring copy down to the tiniest fraction of an inch, spending hours over the dummy and trying to ease everything in. And oh those harrying decisions of what must be cut when it gets down to the final squeeze. Then you spend long hours bent over the layout table, sometimes hot as summer, sometimes cold as winter, waxing, stripping in, straightening, squeezing, finding the right graphic, making last minute corrections and additions, racing back and forth from the typesetter for headlines and then suddenly, miraculously, you’re ready to print. . . . Each and every one of us has had to do considerable soul-searching before making the commitment to this paper, and to collectively assume the awesome responsibility we have towards our readers, supporters, and collaborators. And periodically, when the horizon looks rather dim, we have to reaffirm that decision and forge ahead. And, somehow, we find the time and energy to follow through.<sup>46</sup>

Editorials such as this reveal to readers not only the fact that this labor is necessary to the periodical’s production but also the ethics informing production. Making the labor explicit challenges the fetishization of the product and making the ethics explicit challenges the fetishization effected by capitalism in general. Thus it also interrupts the hierarchies that women see as supportive of patriarchal power relations, the ones that marginalize and exclude women from the production process.

As part of the a feminist process, collectives negotiated authorship in various ways, so it is difficult to generalize about this practice, other than to claim for most periodicals there was flexibility in the ways that women could identify themselves. This flexibility did not necessarily

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<sup>44</sup> Announcement, *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, Summer 1970, p. 3. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

<sup>45</sup> Announcement, *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*, [April/May] 1972, p. 4. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>46</sup> Connie Dorval-Bernal, “*DISTAFF*: A Labor of Love,” *Distaff*, November 1980, p. 7. NCCROW.



result from a refusal to develop a policy but rather reflected feminists' analyses about the meaning of both naming and authorship. As an editorial in *Sister* explains,

Sister's Staff and contributors are encouraged to use their first and last names in the paper. If you want to use an adopted pen name or feminist name, fine—we understand not wanting to use your husband's or father's surname. But women—like children, servants, and pets—are traditionally called by first name only, to minimize their importance; whereas men are “Mr. A, Dr. B, Professor C.” The boss and secretary address each other as “Mr. Twitchell” and “Suzie” respectively. The name game reflects and reinforces their comparative status. As we all know, early women writers and artists had to conceal their identities with male pseudonyms in order to get serious exposure. If you still prefer first name only, or initials when you contribute to *Sister*, we respect that choice. But, please give our point of view some serious thought.<sup>47</sup>

This brief statement raises a number of issues. First, it is important to note that the editors refuse to have the final say about how a woman chooses to identify herself. This decision is left in the hands of each contributor; each woman is given the authority to determine how she will be named and thus, to a certain extent, how she will be represented. Second, it offers insight into the imbrication of patriarchy and capitalism. We see that both first and last names inflect the identity of women: they are subsumed under a male relation—father and husband—through surnames and are devalued through the use of their first name. Because women are more often relegated to subordinate positions in the workplace, calling them by their first names is symbolic of their locations in society in relation to men and capital. In fact, names that connote a feminine gender were detrimental enough in many times and place that women attempting to succeed as writers used masculine pseudonyms to get their work published. As the editorial points out, naming oneself is not without political implications, yet a woman is also in a bind: if she uses a pseudonym, no name, first name, or initials, she may be read as disavowing the patriarchal systems that give her name meaning, but to do so also reproduces a system in which women are not given credit for the work they do and the skills they have. Echoing part of *Sister's* editorial policy, the editors of *Ain't I a Woman?* write, “People keep writing us nice letters and we want to

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<sup>47</sup> Nancy Victoria, Editorial, *Sister*, February 1974, p. 14. LAWLM collection; emphasis in the original. For a similar analysis, see “Report on the July 3 Collective Newsletter Meeting” by Laura (*Feminist Newsletter*, July 8, 1973, vol 4, no 1, p. 1), a publication from Chapel Hill, North Carolina (Schlessinger).

print them. It would save us a lot of time if you would indicate whether or not you want us to print it. we never use anyone's name unless we know she wants us to."<sup>48</sup> Again, what appears to be important is articulating the concept that women have power to decide how they want to be identified. Even hinting at the possibility that a woman need not see or represent herself as "Mrs. husband's-first-name husband's-last-name" or with a surname that symbolizes her relationship to her father reflects the "personal is political" approach many feminists had regarding the everyday and suggests that the everyday, indeed, can (and should) be reordered. In contrast to the relative anonymity of using only first names, initials, or no name, *Distaff* in its eighth issue offers brief biographies of contributors. Clay Latimer describes herself as "ERA co-ordinator for National Organization for Women and a student at Loyola University" and Mary Gehman writes, "Mary Gehman is a free-lance reporter and has been on the DISTAFF editorial staff since the paper's origin. She is the mother of a young son."<sup>49</sup> A regular contributor to *Distaff*, Latimer nonetheless does not identify as a journalist or writer, creating the paper as a space in which women do not need professional credentials in order to be included. And Gehman juxtaposes her professional career in journalism with her identity as a mother. Further emphasizing the presence of the personal in the public, when Gehman and Donna Swanson partner to resume publication of *Distaff* after a six month hiatus they accompany their first editorial statement with a photograph that includes them and their children (see figure 2.5). The caption reads: "Donna Swanson with Gregory, Trina and Renard and Mary Gehman with Ney Jan."

Consistent with this practice of identifying contributors, of the periodicals studied here *Distaff* was the most likely to recognize authors and editors with first and last names. Reflecting this approach to publishing is a 1973 editorial:

DISTAFF invites its readers to submit articles, stories, poetry, photographs and graphics for consideration by our staff. These materials must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope if return by mail is desired. All contributions should include the name,

<sup>48</sup> "Our Printing Policy," *Ain't I a Woman?*, May 19, 1972, p. 12. IWA.

<sup>49</sup> These bios appear in *Distaff* September 1973; the biography for Clay Latimer is on page 2 and the biography for Mary Gehman is on page 3. NCCROW.

address and phone number of the person submitting them, as well as a few facts about yourself to be used in introducing you to our readers.

Graphics: to insure proper credit and return of art materials, the reverse side of *each* graphic must include the artist's name, full address, telephone number, title (if any), and brief, descriptive text if desired.<sup>50</sup>

How women chose to be recognized and the intentions behind their self-interpellations are not important here. Rather, looking at patterns in naming elicits the discursive and practical structure that was part of an alternative mode of organizing meaning. Therefore, the end choice is less relevant than the ethical approach of editorial collectives and contributors. In other words, I focus on articulating a frame within which decisions about naming were made and were made meaningful. Part of this involves a consideration of the proper spaces of patriarchy and capitalism, for it is these spaces against and within which feminist periodical production occurred. Feminist approaches to authorship were often based on different presumptions of authority, that authority came from one's lived experience and not just from expertise that an institution accredited. Although writing about oneself and one's body does not necessarily reveal the labor that enabled those words to end up as printed text, and although paratextual marks can be missed and differentially interpreted by readers, practices of authorship and the paratext nonetheless remind readers that there are in fact bodies connected to the words on the piece of paper one is holding and it is the specific kind of presence of these bodies that interrupts the capitalist and patriarchal proper.

Feminist periodicals moreover removed the work the consumer had to do to access the labor behind the product. Written text such as articles, essays, editorials, and announcements reveal some of what was needed to produce the periodical, and paratextual marks such as handwriting, errors, and authorship suggest implicitly how a periodical came into being. The visibility of these bodies helps to defetishize the periodical as a product because it becomes more difficult to disarticulate the product from its labor. These facets of production are part of a system of repetition that enabled feminism's future, which this chapter examines through the materiality

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<sup>50</sup> Editorial policy, *Distaff*, September 1973, p. 2. NCCROW.

of feminist spaces and publishing practices. Including women in the production process and giving them control over their self-representation created spaces of feminism and feminist spaces that increased the possibility of producing a feminist proper in material terms. The next two chapters offer different insight into the repetition of feminism by examining the discursive structures of repetition. Chapter 3 focuses specifically on the use of the term “sister” as a direct address and Chapter 4 at the circulation of images of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women. Language and imagery reveal the ways in which periodicals produced a discursive space for feminism, a space in which women were negotiating the boundaries of feminism as a collective identity.

### Chapter 3

#### Sisterly Solidarity: Politics and Rhetoric of the Direct Address

The periodicals examined here represent distinct geographical areas that, with the exception of Cambridge, are frequently glossed over in histories of U.S. feminism.<sup>1</sup> Three were associated with women's centers (*Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter-Women's Center Newsletter-Sister*, and *Female Liberation Newsletter*), one was independent of any organization (*Distaff*), and one was affiliated with a women's liberation group but not a women's center (*Ain't I a Woman?*). In terms of format, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* and *Female Liberation Newsletter* were mimeographed, while *Ain't I a Woman?* and *Distaff* were the size of a tabloid and printed on newsprint, and the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* started as a 8 ½ x 14-inch mimeographed paper and then became a newspaper when it was renamed the *Women's Center Newsletter* and then *Sister*. Their circulation ranged from a few hundred to a few thousand. Despite the different formats, affiliations, and locations of these papers the concept of sisterhood is affirmed in them all.

In the early 1970s, the terms “sisterhood” and “sister” could be found seemingly everywhere: in feminist books, pamphlets, periodicals, correspondence, and song lyrics, on bumper stickers, t-shirts, jewelry and watches, posters, and key chains, and in the names of feminist businesses and organizations (see figures 3.1 and 3.2). Because the concept of sisterhood permeated the movement and because it was used to demarcate an identity, a relationship, and an organizing praxis, it presents a useful lens for analyzing U.S. feminism. In fact, for a movement that was so decentralized—composed primarily of small collectives that did not have an official relationship with a national organization or with each other—the fact that the terms “sister” and

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<sup>1</sup> Recently a number of local histories of U.S. feminism have been published, decentering the place of the Northeast and large cities as the sites from which U.S. feminist history is told. See, e.g., Pearson (1999), Kesselman (2001), Ezekiel (2002), and Enke (2007).

“sisterhood” were used so widely and consistently merits attention. This chapter focuses on the term “sister” as it was used in feminist periodicals as form of direct address, a rhetorical structure that appears in publications produced by collectives across the United States in the 1970s, from Massachusetts to Texas and from North Carolina to California.

Activists and scholars have rightly grappled with U.S. feminism’s understanding of “woman” and demonstrated how the concept that women are sisters can erase a range of inequalities. These critiques, whose significance is indicated by the number and variety of interlocutors producing them, have also served to reproduce a master narrative about what sisterhood meant to the feminists who used it. Without dismissing critiques of sisterhood, I want to suggest that through a close reading of the direct address it becomes clear that sisterhood was not a category that automatically included all women. This is because the term “sister” refers not only to women but specifically to women who engage a particular praxis, and periodicals make it clear that naming women as sisters does not necessarily lead women to self-identify with sisterhood. The direct address, then, points to the different boundaries around this identity category and thus around feminism as a social movement. Not only will an inquiry into its uses complicate the place of sisterhood within feminism and allow us to reimagine the significance of the term within the women’s liberation movement, it will also allow us to explore processes of identity formation within U.S. feminism as well as within social movements more generally. This is because a close reading of the direct address “sister” foregrounds the labor and material conditions required to construct and maintain a collective identity.

My analysis builds on Benita Roth’s claim that “looking at grassroots journals and underground publications is essential for understanding how feminists viewed things on the ground” (Roth 2004, 18). Periodicals in particular are a productive site from which to ask questions about the way feminism was imagined and experienced because as a genre they offer both breadth and depth regarding the circulation of the term “sister.” From their production to

their consumption, they provide information about feminism at different scales and in different spaces. Although most periodicals were published for only a few years, the multiple issues in their lifespan provide a wealth of distinct primary sources. Moreover, these newsletters and newspapers contain a variety of texts written by different kinds of authors as well as articles written by both individuals and groups. Therefore, through periodicals we can track concepts, bodies, events, and ideas, and consider how they change or stay the same across time and space.

### **Do we dare to be sisters?**

In the 1970s, sisterhood encompassed a relationship between women and characterized feminist practices; the frequency of its use implies its central role in producing the boundaries, practitioners, and goals of U.S. feminism. As a 1971 article in *Ain't I a Woman* notes,

Sisterhood is not just a social gathering, but a political force, that we are willing to use our bodies to free ourselves, to free our sisters from the prisons where men put them. Women's Liberation means the destruction of the power of men. Women's Liberation is the only revolution that is meaningful to me because only in the world of women can I exist as a whole person.<sup>2</sup>

And a 1970 issue of the *L.A. Women's Center Newsletter* includes an article about collective leadership. The authors write,

At this stage in the growth of the Women's Liberation Movement here in L.A. we face a particular critical turning point—that of fostering unity inside our Movement thereby building collective leadership in order to achieve continuing victory in our overall struggle for the liberation of women. . . . Unity simply means sisterhood in our common fight for common goals.<sup>3</sup>

The first excerpt imagines forging a feminist identity by describing what feminism is (or should be) against, and the second by describing what is (or should be) the power of internal cohesion among women's liberation activists. Of course authors describe the interconnectedness of women's liberation and sisterhood in various ways. Additionally, writers occasionally argue

<sup>2</sup> "Sisterhood Is," *Ain't I a Woman?*, January 29, 1971, p.3. IWA.

<sup>3</sup> "Getting It Together: On Collective Leadership" by Francine Parker and Nancy Robinson, *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, Summer 1970, p.3. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

against the manner in which sisterhood is practiced, as is evidenced in another article from *Ain't I a Woman?* in which the author suggests that “until middle-class women recognize their place in the class system, really face it and not claim a phony powerlessness by always measuring their power against their male counterparts, sisterhood is a sham.”<sup>4</sup> Even though this article recognizes some incarnations of sisterhood to be shams, the use of “until” maintains the possibility that sisterhood is and will be manifest legitimately or correctly. And nowhere in these feminist periodicals does anyone argue that feminism does or should exclude sisterhood (in its ideal, or “correct,” manifestation).

Whereas the concepts of sister and sisterhood galvanized women in political, social, and emotional ways, critiques of sisterhood have challenged its effectiveness in forging feminist solidarity. These critiques have explicitly demanded that women recognize and take responsibility for their privileges, highlighted the need for feminists to build coalitions across differences, and argued for the recognition of difference within individuals as well as groups. A comprehensive summary of all the critiques of sisterhood is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is possible to characterize and categorize them.

First, the homogenization of women through sisterhood was predicated in part on the notion that solidarity must result from sameness (Lorde 1984, 116) and required unconditional support (Polletta 2002, 154). Understanding women as sisters/the same/equal leaves privilege unquestioned (Lorde 1984, 119; hooks 1995, 296, 299, 304) and allows certain women to reproduce their privilege at the expense of others. And as Lynet Uttal observes, “the experiences of Anglo middle class women have defined what these commonalities are in the contemporary women’s movement” (1990, 318). Homogeneity also relied on the centrality of patriarchy and the claim that womanhood was the most fundamental of one’s identities (Dill 1983, 136). According to Pat Alake Rosezelle, “white women forgot what they learned and began using the term ‘sister’

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<sup>4</sup> Essay, *Ain't I a Woman?*, July 20, 1970, p.8. IWA.



as if all women were alike; they began to erase Black women. White women came to embrace the racism that they were fighting when they learned to call each other ‘sister’” (Lugones and Rosezelle 1995, 141). And bell hooks argues that “white women liberationists were not required to assume responsibility for confronting the complexity of their own experience” (1995, 295) or take responsibility “for their role in the maintenance and perpetuation of sexism, racism, and classism” (1995, 296). Discussions of uninterrogated privilege also arise, albeit less frequently, in reference to the presumed middle-class basis of sisterhood. According to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, concepts central to feminism such as the personal is political rely on a capitalist public/private binary to such an extent that “the possibilities of even the most generous and inclusive sisterhood cannot extend much beyond the dominant social conditions” (1979, 109).

Feminist attempts to negotiate difference through sisterhood were also limited by a narrative of progress whereby feminism moves from singularity to diversity: feminists were once a monolithic, white, middle-class, heterosexual group, but with attention to difference will become more inclusive (Jakobsen 1998, 65; Wiegman 2001). Such a framework enables women to engage with difference in a way that does not deal with the complexity, contradictions, and possible pain that such engagements may evoke (Carrillo 1981, 64) and suggests that women of color are expected to join white women’s organizations on white women’s terms (hooks 1995, 303). Recognizing such inclusion as potentially superficial, Tasha Petersen puts quotation marks around the “we” when describing her experience with feminism: “they included me in the ‘we’ when they would talk about how ‘we’ in the women’s liberation movement are white middle class women and ‘we’ have to begin to relate to lower class people” (1974, 31). In these circumstances, sisterhood relies on a process of inclusion that reduces difference to autonomous characteristics that one needs merely to add to feminism.

Although the critiques cited above were produced primarily by women of color, the concept of sisterhood nonetheless figured prominently in their activism. In the first issue of *Triple*

*Jeopardy* (published in New York City), the Third World Women's Alliance writes that one of their objectives is to "create a sisterhood of women devoted to the task of developing solidarity among the peoples of the Third World, based on a socialist ideology of struggling for the complete illumination of any and all forms of oppression and exploitation based upon race, economic status, or sex and to use whatever means are necessary to accomplish this task."<sup>5</sup> The mission statement of the Chicana feminist group at California State University, Long Beach, includes the statement: "LAS HIJAS DE CUAHTÉMOC has manifested their concerns and efforts by adopting as its basic philosophy a most innate and humane concept – HERMANIDAD."<sup>6</sup> And the *Asian Women's Center Newsletter* (published in Los Angeles) printed an article about the Pilipino Youth Services sisters group, in which the author describes the participants: "The sisters, all born in the Philippines, attend Belmont High School and have expressed a need to be together, rap and be involved in constructive experiences"<sup>7</sup> (see figure 3.3). The ubiquity of sisterhood indicates that the term was not the sole property of white women and also that many women recognized its powerful rhetorical force; however, this does not mean that it was used in the same way by all groups, nor does it mitigate the violence the concept could and did effect.

While making important interventions into the theories and practices of U.S. feminism as well as more general understandings of identity and power, critiques of sisterhood tend to reify the dominant connotation of sisterhood—one that relies on "woman" as a universal, monolithic category—and reproduce it as the only meaning of the term. Consider, however, the imperative "Sisters pick up sisters," which circulated widely as part of the campaign encouraging women to

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<sup>5</sup> "Goals and Objectives," *Triple Jeopardy*, September-October 1971, p. 8. SSC.

<sup>6</sup> "Hijas de Cuauhtémoc," mission statement, [ca. early 1970s]. Los Angeles Women's Movement, (Chicana Student Publications), box 1, OHC.

<sup>7</sup> "PYS Sister's Group," *Asian Women's Center Newsletter*, Summer 1973, p. 4. Folder "Asian Women," box 2, CSU Dominguez Hills.

pick up female hitchhikers.<sup>8</sup> A close reading of this phrase suggests that the two uses of “sisters” have potentially different connotations. The women who pick up female hitchhikers become sisters when they offer a ride because their acts keep women safe. However, the second use of sisters refers to all women, not only to feminists, for this imperative is not asking women to pick up women who are feminists but to pick up any women they see on the side of the road.

Based on close readings of a range of feminist periodicals and the records of collectives who published them, there are at least three ways that the term sister was deployed. First, sister is used as a synonym for woman, a usage that is portrayed as the dominant one in the early 1970s. In the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* an article about abortion and medical care ends with the statement: “We shall not be able to secure these freedoms [reproductive rights] and realize our goal, unless we take the initiative in the abortion movement, to plan a program of care for all women with complete repeal of all birth control laws. Free our sisters; Free ourselves.”<sup>9</sup> Here “sisters” is used to refer indiscriminately and universally to woman, as suggested by the use of “all women” in the first sentence. Implicitly referring to all women as sisters, the following announcement suggests that the terms “woman” and “sister” are synonymous: “*Distaff* is in touch with some of these women at the La. Correctional Institute for Women at St. Gabriel, La. Call us. . . for information on how you can send a card and/or a gift to a sister behind bars. Your thoughtfulness could make a world of difference to someone.”<sup>10</sup>

Second, the term sister is used to symbolize an identity that is the product of feminist activism and struggle. For example, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* published an article about a secretary who was fired from her job. The author encourages women to take a stand in

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<sup>8</sup> Figure Intro.6 offers an image of woman and a girl hitchhiking; the woman holds a sign with their desired destination (Washington DC) and the girl's sign reads “Sisters pick up sisters.” The phrase “stop rape” in bold and all capital letters turns picking up female hitchhikers into a feminist act.

<sup>9</sup> “Abortion Taxpayers Suit: Unite with Sisters in a Joint action for our Constitutional Rights to a Free Choice and to Medical Care for All Women” by Mary M. Petrinovich, *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, October 1970, p. 5. LAWLM collection.

<sup>10</sup> “Christmas in Prison,” *Distaff*, December 12, 1980, p. 2. NCCROW.

support of this woman and asks readers, “Do we have the courage? Do we dare take the obvious risks? WE might find ourselves risking our husbands’ jobs, our own jobs, and the reemployability of us both. I think that it is worth knowing, in the privacy of our own minds, do we *dare* to be sisters?”<sup>11</sup> And a letter to *Female Liberation Newsletter* asked the editors, “Do you know you have sisters in Hyannis?” and goes on to describe the women’s liberation group’s activism to desegregate classified ads by gender.<sup>12</sup> Here, rather than being an a priori identity based on common oppression, biology, or psychology, sisterhood is a relationship that either emerges or does not emerge out of certain actions and activist commitments. Thus, in these examples, it does not make sense to replace the term “sisters” with “women”; instead, “feminists” seems more appropriate.

The third connotation of the term sister is informed by the previous two in that it does not trouble the coherence of the category woman but also does not presume all women to be sisters. Consider the following examples. *Distaff* published a letter that criticizes it as lacking consciousness about politics, class and race. The letter ends with, “I love you all, and we have struggled hard together. But, Sisters,—‘How many times can a woman turn her head and pretend that she just doesn’t see—?’”<sup>13</sup> Describing one of their reasons for publishing *Ain’t I a Woman?*, the editorial collective writes, “Ain’t I A Woman and many other publications by sisters around the country began as we felt a need for alternative media. We have to communicate without the constraints of the pig press where we’ve always had our page for recipes, fashions and advice on how to please a man.”<sup>14</sup> And dozens of letters published in *Female Liberation Newsletter* begin with the salutation “Dear Sisters” and end with the phrase “In sisterhood.” In these examples, meaning is created through a negotiation of the sister = woman trope and sisterhood being the

<sup>11</sup> “Some Thoughts of a Sister,” by Priscilla J. Warner, *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*, October 8, 1971, p. 4. VWC records.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Ellen Lynch, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, December 16, 1971, p. 1. SSC.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Phyllis Parun, *Distaff*, June 1973, p. 12. NCCROW.

<sup>14</sup> Editorial, *Ain’t I a Woman?*, July 10, 1970, p. 8. IWA.

result of a certain praxis. On the one hand, “sisters” could be replaced with “women” here since the writers appear to be referring not to men and women but only to women (albeit not necessarily to a clearly demarcated and already established group of women). On the other hand, the sisters being referred to are indeed a specific group of women—they are readers of the publication and women producing the periodical—women who are implicitly constructed as feminists and, therefore, are sisters not only because of their identity as women but also because of the forms of activism they are assumed to practice or the theoretical perspectives they are assumed to advocate.

### **Support our sisters**

As a concept that is connected with shifts in consciousness, emotional investments, and relationships, sisterhood was a significant force in the formation of a feminist collective identity. In fact, for many social movements identity is the site around which activism occurs, to such an extent that much of the energies and resources of their members are devoted to resignifying that identity. The late 1960s and early 1970s was a critical time for the formation of a feminist collective identity, since during this period women started distinguishing themselves from the Old and New Left and the civil rights movement and developing an activist identity in relation to issues about gender. The number of publications that came out of the women’s liberation movement—from books to periodicals to pamphlets—reflects the importance of media within and to this movement, so it makes sense to conclude that media was integral to the way that the boundaries around what was and was not feminism manifested themselves.

Appearing repeatedly in feminist periodicals across the United States the concept of sisterhood was part of the feminist imaginary, providing a name that made it possible for a woman to think of herself as part of a community of women. Consider an entry in the Valley Women’s Center daily log for January 27, 1972: “celia called to say that a woman was in the

other day who had not thought of herself as a woman until someone here turned to someone else here and said, 'this woman has a question. . .' Had a strong, positive impact on her."<sup>15</sup> This entry makes clear that not all women thought to name themselves as women and reminds us of what could not be taken for granted in the 1970s. A woman might not see herself as a woman, much less a sister, so at a very basic level being named through the address "dear sister" let an individual start seeing "woman" as an identity not solely defined through relationships with men.

Political and legal structures also worked to erase "woman" as an identity since wives, daughters and mothers were often subsumed under a male relation.

Every year 10's of thousands of women disappear in this country. . . . When a Female marries, her name is taken away from her and replaced with his name. . . . Even if you keep your "own" name, no one bothers to look for you under it. This was brought home to us last week when Evelyn tried to locate an old friend from work who had gotten married. There was no way to begin. It is this kind of realization that makes women very angry!<sup>16</sup>

For example, periodicals report on credit card companies that issue cards only to husbands or to a woman only with the signature of her husband. And the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* contains an article about a woman who needed a judge's ruling in order to register to vote using her maiden name, even though Massachusetts had no law mandating that a wife use her husband's name when voting.<sup>17</sup> Another issue of the *Female Liberation Newsletter* advises women about how to retain their surnames upon or after marriage, demonstrating the challenge a woman faced while attempting to disarticulate her identity from a man's:

Changing to the husband's name is no problem as that is what is expected, but retaining one's own surname after marriage involves a legal procedure, which is fairly simple even though the idea of it is enraging. First you must obtain a Petition for Change of Name and a "Request for Information" from the Probate Court in your County. After filling these out you must go to court and your name change will *probably* be approved.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Daily log entry, January 27, 1972. Folder 9, Box 1, VWC records.

<sup>16</sup> "Missing," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, [October 1970], p. 2. SSC.

<sup>17</sup> "News Flashes," *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, July 1974, p. 4. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>18</sup> "Women's Slave Names," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, October 25, 1971, p. 3. SSC.

The fact that it took a judge's ruling in order for a woman to keep her surname shows the extent to which a woman's identity was institutionally tied to a man's. (Of course, as one woman points out, "whose name was the maiden one but my father's?"<sup>19</sup>) These revelations are no longer new, but they remind us of the many obstacles feminists in creating spaces in which women could identify as women and with other women, something that had to happen in order for a woman to be able to align her identity with feminism.

In an effort to demonstrate and analyze the constructions and fluidity of meaning, social movement scholars have turned to framing. Building on Irving Goffman's use of the term "frame" as a "schemata of interpretation," David A. Snow et al. base their argument that "frame alignment is a necessary condition for movement participation" on the premise that frames are what make experiences meaningful (1986, 464). Whether seen as ideology, a set of beliefs system, or a cognitive structure, a frame—or, more likely, the interaction of multiple frames—is a lens through which individuals interpret and organize the world they live in. Therefore, any identity cannot become recognizable, legitimate, or desirable, without also being intelligible through some kind of frame (see Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994, 185-86). In terms of the relationship between social movement actors and social movements, framing is a process through which an individual aligns her particular consciousness with a set of more general values stipulated by the movement (Tarrow 1992, 188; Melucci 1996, 349).

In order for a collective action frame to be effective, for it to persuade outsiders to join and to keep insiders actively working for movement goals, there must be frame consistency. Without this consistency, it will be more difficult for individuals to align the movement's message, practices, and objectives with their own personal values and experiences (Benford and Snow 2000, 61-20; Dobrowsky 2008, 170). Many women who were active in the New Left experienced frame inconsistency, as they heard rhetoric about equality, participatory democracy,

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<sup>19</sup> Letter from Annis x to the Valley Women's Center, July 1971. Folder 4, Box 3, VWC records.

and the importance of consensus building, at the same time that they experienced a gendered division of labor and read underground movement publications that offered near-naked images of women and ads for pornography. These resignifications occurred through framing processes, which narrate a movement's identity, draw boundaries around and within a group, locate the movement in relation to other movements—both in terms of contemporary coalitions and the movement's lineage—and legitimate a movement's strategies and objectives. The pervasiveness of sisterhood within the women's liberation movement indicates that it was central to the framing of feminism. Because of such the importance of local contexts in the practice of feminism, it is remarkable that a coherent movement identity was produced and sustained. Repetition thus provides a lens through which we can understand this coherence. Through numerous issues of periodicals that circulated nationally and internationally, in which sisterhood was repeatedly used in similar rhetorical contexts, the meaning of concept became solidified. The frame consistency supported by such repetition was especially important in light of the structure of the women's liberation movement.

At a national scale the women's liberation movement did not have a formal organizational structure or singular, consistent political message around which all members mobilized. In fact, as Robin Morgan writes in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, "This is not a movement one 'joins.' There are no rigid structures or membership cards" since

the Women's Liberation Movement exists where three or four friends or neighbors decide to meet regularly over coffee and talk about their personal lives. It also exists in the cells of women's jails, on the welfare lines, in the supermarket, the factory, the convent, the farm, the maternity ward, the streetcorner, the old ladies' home, the kitchen, the steno pool, the bed since it is formed through informal practices such as talking over coffee." (1970, xxxvi)

In other words, this movement is, at its heart, grassroots and is produced and reproduced in sites not usually considered places of activism. During the 1970s feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Abortion Rights Action League



existed, which did provide a framework and agenda for feminist activism. However, Stephanie Gilmore and Elizabeth Kaminski note that even local chapters of NOW mirrored neither each other nor the national organization in terms of group structure and political activism (2007, 113).

Consciousness-raising groups, women's centers, and conferences were important spaces in which women could come together to start doing the work of describing and theorizing their lives as well as where they built social and political networks, and introduced other women to feminism. Nevertheless, the diffuse and informal quality of U.S. feminism in the 1970s meant that there were many small groups operating in relative geographic isolation and that not all women necessarily had face-to-face connections with other feminists (Cassell 1977, 108-10). Many formed alliances with other local and regional activists, but these alliances were predominantly contingent and temporary rather than institutionalized. In consequence, the term "sister" was an important concept for making political and affective connections both on a local scale and across thousands of miles. Consider, on the one hand, the Valley Women's Center Thursday daily log entry asking for help with the newsletter: "*Friday sisters*— please finish putting labels on the newsletter and then mail them. . . . if you need to run more sheets off—there are leftovers on the work table and the stencils on near the mimeo."<sup>20</sup> And, on the other hand, the *Female Liberation Newsletter* and *Ain't I a Woman?* ask readers respectively to support "our Asian Sisters in Vietnam" and "our Vietnamese sisters."<sup>21</sup> This term, sister, whether experienced face-to-face or as a felt connection across time and space, provided the important discursive glue within feminism; it let individuals and collectives feel connected on a local and daily level and as part of something much greater than themselves. The barriers many women faced before simply being able to identify as women, as I described earlier in this section, meant that creating

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<sup>20</sup> Daily log entry, February 8, 1973. Folder 5, box 2, VWC records.

<sup>21</sup> "Support Our Asian Sisters in Vietnam," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, April 16, 1971, p.7. SSC; Rita Mae Brown, "Hanoi to Hoboken, A Round Trip Ticket," *Ain't I a Woman?*, April 2, 1971, p. 10. IWA.

networks was vital not only to facilitate political actions but also to support women through the all that accompanies changes in consciousness.

As the name-changing example shows, feminism put one's identity into question and created spaces in which women could understand their identities in new ways. Such a shift often led women to reevaluate their bodies, jobs, relationships, and that which they had previously taken to be common sense. According to feminist activist Barbara Winslow, "The movement changed everything" (quoted in Polletta 2002, 151). And Mary Anderson writes, in response to a VWC questionnaire, "Women's liberation is not only assimilated into my whole life, but it has changed the entire way I see my life + the lives of others."<sup>22</sup> A sense of sisterhood was thus important because it created a space in which a woman could describe and name her experiences, understand that she was not the only one seeing and questioning the world in a certain way, and start viewing her experiences as the result of structural inequalities rather than individual inadequacies. The connections imagined through sisterhood allowed women to manage and analyze these new ways of engaging with and finding meaning in the world.

In addition to being symbolic, perceived, and imagined, identity is the product of interaction with a material environment. The materiality of an environment involves things like resources, structures, geographies, and social movement actors themselves. In her study of the changes in the Student National Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the 1960s, Belinda Robnett shows how after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act SNCC became more hierarchical and moved away from the group's earlier practices of nonviolence and consensus. She concludes that one effect of this structure was to "[stifle] the dialectical exchange among participants and between participants and leaders" (2002, 279), thus giving individuals less control in the production of the SNCC collective identity and giving more control to those who emerged as movement leaders.

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from Mary Anderson to the VWC, September 5, 1972. Folder 13, box 3, VWC records.

What Benita Roth (2008) notes as she traces the different points of emergence of a feminist collective identity among white women is the way a shift in perception of audience corresponded to a shift in perception of collective identity. She argues that initially these women imagined an audience of movement women, or women who already had an identification with groups in the New Left, civil rights movement, and antiwar movement, among others. However, perceived hostility from the left contributed to women forming independent groups, media, and networks (see Evans 1980, 200). Roth describes the effect of this transition as an “institutional separation” of feminism from the New Left and civil rights groups. Such a perspective belies the myriad connections that many feminist groups maintained with the Left, both through activist collaborations and through media clearinghouses such as Liberation News Service and locally and nationally circulating Left-leaning periodicals. Nevertheless, I do not want to dispute the importance of feminist groups developing boundaries around their identity in a way that prioritized issues related to gender and, thus, necessarily weakened their connections with groups from the New Left. Rather, what I find especially useful about Roth’s analysis is her argument that “part of the reconstruction of collective identity in oppositional groups is the reimagining of audience” (2008, 270) and, concomitantly, reimagining those who belonged to a potentially mobilizable feminist community (2008, 268). Therefore, the boundaries of a collective identity are intertwined with who is being addressed through social movement publications.

Consequently, the way a woman experiences and imagines those who belong to a group will shape a group’s collective identity. Although this point seems obvious, the debates around sisterhood and who was or wasn’t a sister indicate that the membership of a social movement can be far from clear. The different ways in which sisterhood was deployed point toward the possibility that all women were part of—or at least could/should be part of—the U.S. women’s liberation movement as well as to the possibility that one’s sisters were those who already evidenced those practices that were within the boundaries of what was accepted as feminism.

Moreover, those who critique the term sister for the way it reproduces hierarchies and privileges based on race, class, and sexuality then go on to use the term to refer to all women who fit into a different identity category.

Similarly, the contexts in which sisterhood is deployed suggest that structure is a significant environmental factor that shapes a feminist collective identity. Although the structures within the women's liberation movement may be informal, the emphasis on collectivity and nonhierarchy explicitly outlines a structure within which actions—whether they are consciousness raising, publishing a periodical, or running a women's center—ideally would occur.<sup>23</sup> The collective that published *Ain't I a Woman?*, for example, devoted a significant portion of many of their issues to the concept of collectivity, indicating the importance of a collective organizational structure to their perceived identity. The repetition of published pieces about the importance of eradicating hierarchy, developing a collective that is sustainable through the labor and skills of its members, and rotating tasks among members builds the foundation of this aspect of their identity. However, it becomes clear that collectivity is something that must be achieved, both materially and discursively. One statement on collectivity reveals the material challenges: “We have tried to rotate office work monthly to a group consisting of one person from each small collective. Often the work just hasn't gotten done, but we maintain that if the work to be done is decided on collectively (which it should be), it should be done collectively.”<sup>24</sup> Reflecting on a previously published editorial, the *Ain't I a Woman?* collective writes: “Our article about women's collectives concentrated more on how we were getting along with each other than on the fact that we were all driven to try a new life style by the horrible state of lives in

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<sup>23</sup> The widespread citations of Jo Freeman's “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” (1972-73), which critiques the assumption that a lack of formal structure was equivalent to structurelessness, reflect the centrality of consensus and collectivity within U.S. feminism.

<sup>24</sup> “Lest We Begin to Oink,” *Ain't I a Woman?*, September 25, 1970, p. 4. IWA.

Amerika or the fact that most women aren't privileged enough to have such a solution."<sup>25</sup> And a piece by Grinnell and Iowa City women that reflects on a living collective notes,

In the interests of bringing women together in an attempt at experimenting with communal living several sisters in Iowa City have formed an all women's collective. . . . We formed the collective hoping it would be a place where all our sisters and us could come to get ourselves together and eventually find alternative life styles and philosophies for the future.<sup>26</sup>

These three issues of *Ain't I a Woman?* published during a three-month span, demonstrate the significance of the structure through which feminist organizing occurs and thus that a feminist identity is produced through the use of this structure.<sup>27</sup> In this way, practices such as consensus building, rotation of tasks, and lack of dependence on men become part of what it means to be a feminist (see also Whittier 2002, 292-93). Structure, thus, is imbricated in a group's sense of self and shapes the range of identities that is possible.

### **Dear sisters**

The explosion of feminist publishing in the late 1960s and early 1970s demands our attention (Mather 1974). It meant that readers had access to essays, scholarly and popular articles, books, manifestoes, and poetry that named, described, and analyzed women's varied and various places in the world. Although such texts refer to sisterhood and name women as sisters, feminist newsletters and newspapers were the genre in which sister was most often used in the form of a direct address. One key question then is what rhetorical work did this direct address perform in print? Feminist periodicals print letters that frequently begin with "Dear sisters," and

<sup>25</sup> Editorial, *Ain't I a Woman?*, August 21, 1970, p. 2. IWA.

<sup>26</sup> Editorial, *Ain't I a Woman?*, July 10, 1970, p. 12. IWA.

<sup>27</sup> As Jo Reger's (2002) study of the New York City NOW chapter, evokes the narrative between liberal feminism and radical feminism (Reger uses the terms "political feminists" and "empowerment feminists"), in which liberal/political feminist organizations like NOW have a hierarchical structure and work within the system to reform it, whereas radical/empowerment feminist groups are characterized by a collectivist structure and practices like consciousness raising. Therefore, structure can also draw and reinforce boundaries between different factions within a social movement.

announcements that appeal to readers as sisters, as in, “Sisters! If you are moving, please notify us of your change of address *ahead* of time. It costs us 8¢ every time a paper gets returned. We can’t afford it. Please help out. Ya hear, now?”<sup>28</sup> In this announcement, “Sisters!” is a direct address, a speech act that interpellates, or names, the addressee. When scholars of the history of U.S. feminism refer to sisterhood, rarely do they look at the place of the direct address as a mode of deployment. This oversight seems to be a result of the primary sources scholars tend to draw from and how they are used as primary sources. Although ephemera make up a significant portion of the primary source material for historical studies of U.S. feminism, periodicals compose only a small fraction of this material. Moreover, when feminist periodicals are cited, they are most frequently used as evidence to support an argument about another topic or listed as evidence of the explosion of feminist publishing in the 1970s rather than read closely or analyzed rhetorically on their own terms.

In order to think through the direct address in feminist periodicals, I draw from Phillip Brian Harper’s rhetorical analysis of poetry from the Black Arts movement and theories of interpellation. According to Harper, the addressee and the speaker are socially and linguistically interdependent. “You” is linguistically both outside of and dependent upon “I,” in that “you” is always “not-I” and “you” can exist only in a situation that begins with an “I” (1993, 249). And in the poems he analyzes, by authors such as Nikki Giovanni, June Jordan, and Amiri Baraka, the you—although varying across the different poems—becomes filled with a black body that is yet to be enlightened, allowing the I to become meaningful as “a politically aware, racially conscious, black nationalist subject” (Harper 1993, 251). In this sense, the speaker’s identity becomes clarified by being that which the addressee’s is not and, thus, the linguistic distinction is reinforced by a social/political one.

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<sup>28</sup> Announcement, *Sister*, June 1973, back page. SCLSSR.

The primary sources Harper uses, although part of a political movement, are quite different from those analyzed here. Still, his argument offers a starting point to think about the discursive contexts of the direct address in feminist periodicals as it constructs individuals and communities. In 1973, the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* asked its readers, "Please, please sisters, our 'home away from home' looks kind of cold and barren. Do you have any nice chairs, rugs, or lamps to help us look comfortable? . . . Sisters, how do we convey to you all the urgency of our financial straits. Our rent alone is \$100mo. . . . Do you have money to give? Do you have ideas about ongoing fundraising? Do you have time to devote either to becoming our treasurer or our fundraiser?"<sup>29</sup> In this example, "you" is implicit in the address "sisters," producing an I-you dichotomy, one that is reinforced by the use of you throughout the plea. The rhetorical force of this I-you dichotomy, however, works in a manner that diverges from the one Phillips outlines. Instead of reinforcing the linguistic distinction between I and you through a sociopolitical distinction, the term sisters enables a situation in which I + you = we. This "we" develops in three ways: through the relationship between readers and speakers that is made possible in a direct address, through the material, sociopolitical interdependence of the "I" and the "you," and through the ways that bodies of readers and speakers may be imagined.

In order to address this "we" that is produced through the direct address and, in particular, through the speaker-reader relationship I turn to Althusser's theory of interpellation and Judith Butler's analysis of it. The direct address "sisters," whether spoken or written, hails the reader as a sister. To be hailed, or interpellated, according to Althusser, is to become a subject, or a being that exists within ideology. Interpellation is a useful starting point because it offers insight into the process of how bodies are shaped and made meaningful by language and, thus, how individuals may identify with collective identities that are produced through and are necessary to reproduce social movements. Althusser describes interpellation as the process of being hailed by

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<sup>29</sup> Announcement, *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, January 1973, p. 2. Folder 1, box 4, VWC records.

an authority figure (a capital-S Subject) so that an individual (lowercase-s subject) becomes intelligible in a way that conforms to dominant ideology. He offers a frequently-cited example, that of a police officer shouting “hey, you there!” to an individual who responds by turning around. According to Althusser, “By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, [the individual] becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him, and that ‘it was *really him* who was hailed’ (and not someone else)” (1971, 174). Through this bodily acknowledgment the hailed individual is interpellated and becomes an ideologically constituted subject, one whose body is made intelligible under the law.

Questioning the assumptions Althusser makes, Judith Butler rearticulates the process of interpellation in relation to the sovereign Subject as well as to the addressee, demonstrating that anyone (or anything) can interpellate and that interpellation can occur both without a clear speaker and without being addressed to a specific individual (1997, 31). For example, documents such as bureaucratic forms, the census, and employment applications, even without a clear speaker, constitute the addressee as a subject (34). Butler does not doubt the power of naming to constitute an individual’s subjectivity but, rather, offers a different perspective as to why interpellation works. For her the police officer can effectively hail an individual because of “the citational dimension of the speech act, the historicity of convention that exceeds and enables the moment of its enunciation” (33). Thus the power in naming comes not from the ability of a sovereign Subject to describe an existing reality but from the addressee’s experience of the name’s historicity, its previous usages, the context of its utterance, and the context of its reception (36).

*Excitable Speech*, where Butler conducts her close reading of interpellation, is an investigation into the ways words can injure and the effects of attempts to prevent and redress such injury. Her method exposes the way that language is a site of struggle and suggests that understanding political discourse as performative offers new possibilities for political agency.



Specifically focusing on hate speech, pornography, and homosexuality in the military she looks at the way each is constructed in a way that does what it says.<sup>30</sup> For example, a racist term not only “[relays] a message of racial inferiority, but that ‘relaying’ is the verbal institutionalization of that very subordination” (72). Similarly, the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy suggests the statement “I am a homosexual,” is not a descriptive statement but acts what is uttered “not only in the sense that [it constitutes] the speaker as a homosexual, but that [it constitutes] the speech as homosexual conduct” (107).

Butler’s deep analysis of the relationship between interpellation and subject formation has been extremely helpful in my thinking about the role that sisterhood played in the women’s liberation movement. This analysis builds on her previous work describing performativity as the continuous citation and reiteration of norms: through constant reiteration, identity norms can be naturalized, allowing performativity to gain an act-like status and concealing the fact that identity categories are not original but are produced as they are declared (Butler 1993, 12; see also Butler 1989). Also important to this theory is the presumption that bodies do not exist prior to or outside of discourse, but are an effect of it. In other words, the existence of an I occurs when a body is made intelligible through the rules of discourse. It is not that language creates our reality but that reality cannot exist except through language.

In *Excitable Speech* Butler further elaborates a subject’s discursive and ontological existence. I am primarily interested in two strands of this elaboration: the way the subject is constituted through language and the way that speech acts are bodily, acting not only on the body of the speaker but also on the body of the addressee. Early in the book Butler sets up the framework of a subject’s ontology:

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<sup>30</sup> Specifically, Butler builds on J. L. Austin’s (1965) taxonomy of speech acts as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary to make her argument about how words do or do not do what they say.

Language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body becomes possible. To understand this, one must imagine an impossible scene, that of a body that has not yet been given social definition, a body that is, strictly speaking, not accessible to us, that nevertheless becomes accessible on the occasion of an address, a call, an interpellation that does not “discover” this body, but constitutes it fundamentally. (5)

There is not a body that exists objectively or empirically that is then described through language; bodies, rather, exist through and within language so if one’s body is located “outside the domain of speakability” then one “risk[s] one’s status as a subject” (133). One must be intelligible within language to be a subject, and part of this intelligibility involves the capacity to be named.

Elaborating this point, Butler writes,

the subject is not only founded by the other, requiring an address in order to be, but its power is derived from the structure of address as both linguistic vulnerability and exercise. If one comes to be through address, can we imagine a subject apart from his or her linguistic bearing? We cannot imagine them or they could not be what they are, apart from the constitutive possibility of addressing others and being addressed by others. (30)

Supporting Althusser’s perspective, Butler’s subject does not exist prior to the hailing or naming but is produced through it (Butler 1997, 25). Furthermore, the ontology of a subject depends upon both its being nameable (i.e., being recognizable through language) and its ability to “embody the norms that govern speakability in one’s speech” (133), or to produce language. In other words, a subject must be able to speak and must be speak-able within discursive (and social) norms and conventions.

Butler’s body of work uses a variety of evidence to develop the perspective that bodies are made intelligible and subjects exist through language. In a very basic sense, then, the appellation “sister” not only reinforces the boundaries of a feminist identity it also creates a space in which bodies can exist as subjects in society. Importantly, these bodies with a social existence are readers as well as writers. On the one hand interpellation calls readers into being By this I mean that interpellation does not just call the reader into being as a sister but also provides the language through which a reader’s body may exist as a subject within ideology. “Sister,” thus,

works linguistically, socially, and ontologically: the appellation hails the reader as a “you” distinct from the speaker, it provides a framework for organizing the reader’s actions and thoughts as feminist, and it calls the reader into being. On the other hand, if, as Butler contends, “the vulnerability to being named constitutes a constant condition of the speaking subject (1997, 30), then those women whose writing addresses readers must already have been named. In these publications writers’ voices often reveal their feminist politics, which means that readers are likely to read the speakers of the direct address as already a sister, or at least that the writer could be located as within the same feminist collective identity as the reader. Therefore this direct address reveals the simultaneity of subject and community formation. In fact, the invocation of a community is integral to the interpellation of the individual. As a relational term, sister requires at least one other “sibling” in order to be meaningful, so interpellation does not just make an individual intelligible within the norms of language, it also makes a community intelligible: the process of hailing produces not only a subject but also a community. Naming is a way of making something real—that is, of making it intelligible—and since “acting one’s place in language continues the subject’s viability” (Butler 1997, 136), the use of the term sister ensures not only viability of the individual but also viability of the community.<sup>31</sup> Not only does this interpellation produce a subject among subjects but invokes a particular world that these subjects inhabit. “All discourse or performance addressed to a public,” Warner claims, “must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate, projecting for that world a concrete and livable shape, and attempting to realize that world through address” (2002, 81).

Benedict Anderson (1991) offers a useful explanation for the ways certain communities come into existence through naming. Specifically, he theorizes how the nation became an imagined political community, one crystallized partly through the circulation of different

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<sup>31</sup> See Barbara Johnson (1987) for a discussion of the way a direct address acts as a rhetorical trope that animates, or gives life to, that which addresses.

linguistic vernaculars. Based on the changing modes of textual production and consumption in the sixteenth century, he argues that the consolidation of “print languages” facilitated the constitution of national consciousnesses in three ways. First, the increased distribution of publications in the same language (publications that were identical) allowed readers to become aware of the multitude of people who shared their particular language field. Second, the rate of language change slowed as different copies of the same text became more uniform, no longer subject to the idiosyncrasies of individual scribes (1991, 44). Third, certain languages, which Anderson calls “languages-of-power,” dominated because they became the most common print-languages (1991, 45). As a result, by reading the same texts in the same language people could start imagining themselves as part of a national community, and an individual could become part of a group that was much larger than she or he could ever experience concretely. In other words, using printed texts Anderson situates a slow shift in the way that people imagined themselves to be connected to others whom they did not know and would most likely never meet.

Anderson’s work helps me theorize the importance of the circulation of printed texts within the women’s liberation movement. Through periodicals the term “sister” could circulate widely and appear in similar manners and contexts, because many copies of the same periodical circulated and because many different periodicals using “sister” in these same ways circulated. Since the term came to be used in a very consistent manner the range of meanings produced through the direct address “sister” narrowed. Women, therefore, could read the direct address and feel connected with people whom she had never met and would never meet to produce an imagined community of feminists.

### **Remember sisters. It’s your center!**

What Althusser excludes from or suggests only implicitly in the interpellative process can be illuminated through Butler’s analysis as well as by considering periodicals as the source of a

hailing. A textual hailing is not a singularity in the way that Althusser's "hey, you there" is. Although a reader will have an immediate reaction upon reading the direct address—whether or not she identifies as a sister—she can make a decision about the manner and extent to which she embraces that community over a period of time. She can revisit the text, re-experiencing the direct address, and possibly respond differently to the call. The temporality involved in experiencing a text thus gives the reader a chance to negotiate the terms of the address in a way that is different than negotiating the call "hey, you there." Furthermore, the speaker of the direct address need not be a singular "I." Feminist periodicals almost always were the product of collectives, and many collectives explicitly strove for a non-hierarchical editorial process, one in which any member could be an author and pieces could be collectively authored or contributed by nonmembers. The speaker, therefore, is embodied potentially by an empty signifier (an unnamed "I" [see also Rooney 1996, 4]) and a collective signifier (the group of editors, which, for many periodicals, was constantly changing). A textual hailing is distinct from Althusser's example also because there can be a situation in which a subject is simultaneously a speaker and a reader: the person (or people) from whom the address originated is likely to be a reader of the periodical in which the address appears.

Not only does this direct address acknowledge the reader's presence it calls out to the reader, making her aware of her position in relation to the text and the speaker. Since there are many different possible terms of address, it is important that the one commonly used in U.S. feminist publications is "sister," bringing with it social and political connotations. Within feminism, sisterhood emerged from the political spaces that women shared, the affinities that often accompanied small-group interactions, and the imagined connections women had with other women across time and space. Its meaning has also been influenced both by the attempts women made to reconceptualize familial and kinship relationships and by the circulation of the terms

“sisterhood” and “brotherhood” through other political movements, such as the old left, the new left, and the civil rights movement.

This relationship of sisterhood both reflects and produces not only a political kinship but also a sense of horizontality among women, which was manifest prominently in the efforts of feminists to work collectively and non-hierarchically. The numerous announcements in which editors ask women to contribute to the publication—as writers, artists, editors, printers, and distributors—suggest that the editorial collective imagined their readers also as collaborators and blur dichotomies such as reader/writer, expert/layperson, and producer/consumer. In engaging readers, collectives often emphasized that they were not just consumers of feminism and collaborators with other women but also owners of the movement and its products and projects, and the variety of voices published in a periodical as well as the frequency with which editorial collective members changed indicates that many readers responded to these announcements. What the direct address thus highlights is that readers were connected to the producers of a periodical not just linguistically but also materially. Although the I authoring a text is semiotically produced by, and thus dependent upon, a reader, the community of feminists to which both the I and you belong is dependent upon the reader’s actions.

The addressee is consistently asked to donate her time and money, office supplies, energy, skills, and resources. In the newspaper *Sister*, an announcement reminds readers, “the westside women’s center needs staffers – REMEMBER SISTERS. IT’S YOUR CENTER!!!!”<sup>32</sup> And as an editor of *Distaff* notes, “Women this is your paper. Mary Gehman [another editor] and I work seven days a week in order to provide information and coverage of events that you won’t find any place else. You need *Distaff*, and *Distaff* needs your support.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, readers become necessary for sustaining feminism: their efforts and engagement produce and reproduce

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<sup>32</sup> Announcement, *Sister*, October 1973, p. 10. SCLSSR.

<sup>33</sup> Editorial by Donna Swanson, *Distaff*, December 1974, p. 2. NCCROW.

for their sisters material places such as women's centers and texts, and concepts such as sisterhood, collectivity, and consensus.

A close reading of the direct address "sister" foregrounds other aspects of the addressor/addressee relationship, namely the emotions involved in being hailed or named. Although Althusser's analysis of interpellation does not preclude such a discussion, his focus is on how a subject comes to be intelligible, not on how the subject feels about it. Thus, he offers insight into a subject's discursive, not emotional, existence. Consider the following excerpt from a letter written to *Female Liberation Newsletter*:

Dear Sisters,  
Yes, please keep sending me your Newsletter, and here's a contribution toward putting it out. It means a great deal to me--and to all the other Feminists on Cape Ann--to be getting news of the Women's Movement. We're so far out in the country, comparatively, that sometimes we feel completely isolated from the movement, and your Newsletter helps us keep going.<sup>34</sup>

When this reader writes that the newsletter "helps us keep going," she does not mean that the newsletter ensures her community's linguistic or discursive existence, or even its material survival. She is, rather, suggesting that the newsletter provides emotional sustenance and connects this emotional well being to the ability to imagine others producing "news of the Women's Movement." *Female Liberation Newsletter* frequently repeated "sister" in the form of a direct address so it is possible to infer that, in part, the newsletter sustains women by including them in a community of sisters.

It is by now widely accepted that, ontologically, texts may be considered processes rather than products and that readers actively interpret texts rather than passively absorb their truth. Different readers interact with a text in very different ways and the same reader interacts with the same text differently at different points in time. Based on the large body of scholarship supporting this perspective, we can presume that readers interact with texts and that the meaning of a text is

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from Bobby Darwall, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, 23 May 1971, p. 1. SSC.

dependent on a variety of factors, including but not limited to the materiality of the text, the reader's interpretive frameworks, and the reader's emotional relation with the text. Writers who employed "sister" in a direct address did not necessarily mean the same thing nor did all readers interpret its meaning in the same way. However, through the repetition of the term "sister" in general, and of the direct address in particular, a dominant meaning solidified, producing an imaginary (or ideal) sister-subject, for the direct address occurs within a periodical that gives readers many signs that contextualize the term.

Therefore, my argument does rely on the claim that readers must have had similar interpretations of and reactions to a direct address. But what is important is that regardless of the reader's interpretation of the meaning of the salutation "sisters," she nevertheless must respond to the call. Even doing nothing—not doing what the writer asks, not identifying as a sister—involves a negotiation of the term and its meaning, and this negotiation is intertwined with how the reader imagines what a community of sisters might be.

Interpellation, thus, is a multifaceted process, producing meaning that is inextricable from a name's previous iterations, the context of its utterance (including its material form), the addressee's affective reception of the name, and how the addressee imagines herself to be similar to, different from, and connected with others who might share the name. Looking at iterations of the term "sister" in feminist periodicals demonstrates that it was used both universally and specifically, which presents certain challenges for those who are employing it to mobilize women around feminism. On the one hand, its force as a universal term allows a wide variety of addressees to feel included in political, social, and affective ways. This inclusion, however, is perceived by many as superficial and actively rejected. Also working against the term's power to mobilize addressees is the fact that one can feel included without actively engaging the movement. Despite the scale and pace at which feminism in the United States grew, the repetition of calls for help—asking women to contribute articles, volunteer their time, contribute money and



resources, attend meetings and demonstrations—suggests that on a grassroots level and on a daily basis feminist groups were struggling to reproduce the movement in a material way. Therefore, the potential universality of sisterhood created a situation in which any woman who is hailed could, figuratively, turn around and become part of the community, which enabled the discursive or imaginary reproduction of the community, without working to ensure the material contexts of its reproduction.

On the other hand, sisterhood connoted a community of women who had already committed their time and energy to change the world in a feminist way. The direct address in periodicals also presumes an audience of feminists, of women who had contributed and would contribute to feminism in the form of activism, which clearly does not include all women. Investigating the rhetorical force of interpellation thus points to the importance of the direct address, the challenge of negotiating and producing one's audience, and the obstacles to the formation of a community identity that produces subjects who are also activists. A close reading of the language used by social movement actors as well as attention to the rhetoric within quotidian texts allows us to ask questions about identity, collective identity formation, and how people respond to being named. Attention to the rhetoric of the direct address thus demonstrates the tension between the promise or potential of inclusion and how inclusion is practiced and experienced concretely.

As this chapter shows, not only did discourses of sisterhood not generate a practical inclusion of women of color, sisterhood did not necessarily mobilize women who embodied the conventional feminist—white, middle-class, American, educated—to contribute her time, energy, and/or money. Measuring the actual success or failure of sisterhood, however, is not the objective of this dissertation. Instead, I am interested in thinking about sisterhood as a frame that organized women's relationships, practices, politics, and desires. By tracking the circulation and repetition of this concept, it becomes possible to piece together the frame and consider how it is made

consistent. Similarly, images tell a story of collective identity and framing of feminism. Also demonstrating this tension of inclusion and exclusion and telling a story of boundary formation, images reveal what feminism is, as well as what it could and should be. In the following chapter the figures of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women are the main characters, offering additional insight into the production of feminism and how its practitioners imagined feminism's past, present, and future. As radical others Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women symbolize that which feminism strives to be: a revolutionary movement that overthrows the status quo. Borrowing words from a third-century Vietnamese woman warrior and placing them in verse, an International Women's Day booklet from Cambridge offers readers words of resistance:

I want to drive the enemy away  
to save our people.  
I will not resign myself  
to  
the usual lot  
of women.<sup>35</sup>

Feminists' desire to refuse "the usual lot of women" is amply evident in the pages of periodicals, and the fact that images of women of color as revolutionaries are repeated and circulate widely suggests that they embody such resistance.

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<sup>35</sup> Trieu Thi Trunh, Untitled poem, International Women's Day Publication by the Cambridge, MA, Women's Center, March 10, 1973. Folder 19, box 1, Rochelle Ruthchild Papers.

## Chapter 4

### Radical Others: Women of Color and Revolutionary Feminism

It is spring 1971 in Northampton, Massachusetts. An article in the newspaper, the *Valley Review*, describes the writer's trip to the local woman's center:

A small, inconspicuous sign, fastened to the door, invites the visitor inwards and upwards. I went in, climbed the stairs, passing a second floor beauty shop, and found the first of three rooms that serve as the Valley Women's Center office. The walls are painted a pristine white, with the exception of a handsome purple one at the far end of the room, and are liberally covered with bulletin boards, posters, and women's liberation stickers of various sizes and persuasions. A gaily colored davenport sits in front of a low black table; here too lie stacks of pamphlets, newsletters and communications from other women's groups around the country.<sup>1</sup>

A month later someone took a series of photographs of the center, one of which offers a glimpse of this handsome purple wall and its array of posters (figure 4.1). Near the top right corner of the photograph is the image of a figure whose arm is extended and raised, and whose hand forms a fist. The blurriness of the background makes the image difficult to discern, but it would have been familiar to many feminists across the country. It was familiar to me because I had seen it before: this poster was the front cover of the first issue of *Ain't I a Woman?* It is surrounded by other images and posters, some demanding peace, women's equality, freedom for Angela Davis, and reproductive rights. One celebrates of the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment (August 26, 1970). Another reimagines the narrative supported by Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* by captioning it "And god created woman in her own image" and replacing god and Adam with female figures. Still another proclaims, "The women's liberation movement is gonna get your mama. . . and your sister, and your girlfriend."

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<sup>1</sup> Pamela Hafner, "The Valley Women's Center," *Valley Review*, February-March 1971, p. 6. Folder 6, box 1, VWC records.

Out of all the literature received by the Valley Women's Center, some of which is visible in a magazine rack in the bottom right corner of the photograph, someone who was in charge of decorating the wall chose the image of Sojourner Truth as a centerpiece. Looking at it now I am struck by its force, so it is not surprising that it caught someone's eye, that someone found it symbolic, perhaps of women's work to overcome male domination and to disrupt the norms of femininity, or as evidence of the strength women possess. Giving it such a prominent position in the center indicates that someone thought it would also appeal to a broader audience. Of course, viewers of this image would not have interpreted it in only one way. Rather, the portrayal of Sojourner Truth needs to be situated within a historical and political context and also within a series of textual valences. Taking into account these different vectors of representation, this chapter contributes more broadly to analyses of women of color in U.S. feminism and specifically to inquiries about how their bodies were central to the production of a feminist mythology (Barthes 1972), one that was, in turn, integral to the production of feminism as an identity. In addition to offering a close reading of representations of Sojourner Truth this chapter focuses on Indochinese women and the way they are depicted in newspapers and feminist ephemera.<sup>2</sup> The portrayals of these two sets of figures I argue are part of white feminists' attempts to control and demarcate the affective boundaries of a feminist collective identity. In their review article, Francesca Polletta and James Jasper define collective identity as "an individual's cognitive, emotional, and moral connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is

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<sup>2</sup> I am troubled by the term Indochinese because it is was so named by French colonists, but I am not sure another term would be as apt. It refers to a specific geopolitical formation that includes Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and would have had a particular salience to antiwar and anti-imperialist activists in the 1960s and 1970s. "Indochina" is used in feminist periodicals, so it reflects the language being used in that moment. Additionally, scholarship on feminism in the 1960s and 1970s uses the term, reflecting its continued usage in critical contexts (see Wu 2010). The perhaps more politically correct term "Southeast Asia" comprises—in addition to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand, which does not accurately depict the region demarcated as Indochina.

a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity” (2001, 285; and Young 1997, ch. 5; see also Melucci 2003). In other words, people become involved with a social movement not solely because of rational motivations or perceived disparities in resource distribution. Rather, there is a constellation of intellectual, material, and emotional factors that affect how people perceive and engage a social movement. This chapter diagrams and analyzes how figures of women of color contributed affectively to the discursive structures that made feminism as an identity meaningful. Images are a productive way to analyze the structures of affect because they illustrate the revolution, demonstrating its necessity and creating a visual mythology that can reframe readers’ interpretations of their experiences and encourage them to reimagine the possibilities for change (Gaiter 2005). The newspapers that form the core of my primary sources were edited primarily by collectives whose members were white. Therefore, when I refer to feminism and a feminist collective identity I assume a certain level of whiteness embedded in the term “feminism.” Numerically there are more publications (and especially periodicals) from the 1970s produced by white women than by women of color, so the patterns that become visible are more likely to be an effect of white women’s editorial decisions and values.

Not all feminist collectives had the same approaches to self-representation and to challenging mainstream and trivializing representations of feminism. Publications like *Female Liberation Newsletter* (and the *Valley Women’s Center Newsletter*), because of their mimeographed format, were more likely to provide rebuttals and self-representations through text. The intervention I focus on in this chapter, however, is the portrayal of bodies of women of color. These women—their bodies—lent weight and validity to the work that feminists were

doing, both in their mere presence and also in the specific ways they were portrayed. Therefore, representations of Indochinese women and Sojourner Truth performed different kinds of labor for the women's liberation movement: they pushed the boundaries of feminism as a collective identity temporally and geographically, they identified women of color as feminist bodies, and they shaped affective understandings of feminism.

As I discuss more fully below, this chapter maps an ideological matrix of one facet of U.S. feminism's collective identity through the patterns found in the repetition of these images. This methodology lets me bypass questions about the specific context of each image because, influenced by Stuart Hall's analysis of communication and meaning making, I understand encoding (the process of composing a unit of text) and decoding (the process of interpreting a unit of text) to be linked but "relatively autonomous" moments in a communicative event (1980a, 129). That is, although the process of encoding along with dominating ideologies can prefer, privilege, and limit the range of possible meanings, "there will always be private, individual, variant readings" (Hall 1980a 135). From this perspective, the actual moments of production—the editorial decision about where/when to place an image, editors' intent, and the history of the image itself—are only partly related to the ways that a reader will interpret the final product. Therefore, a close investigation of the materials and motivations of production will not reveal the true meaning of an image or text because meaning is made through the consumer's interaction with a publication and is, to a certain extent, idiosyncratic. I also do not offer definitive meanings of images but take one more step back from the process of interpretation and offer a metacommunicational analysis of representations of women of color published in feminist periodicals.

Images of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women circulated widely through feminist publications and other ephemera. Regardless of the specific context of each iteration, the numerical frequency and visual ubiquity of these portrayals demonstrate the significance and power of the figures—a significance that goes beyond denotation—for women publishing at this time. Reflecting ideas and values and, in the case of photographs, “real” scenes and people, the features of these images, as well as the textual context of their deployment, open and constrain possibilities for interpretation. Moreover, the features that tend to be repeated accumulate, which shapes possibilities for interpretation as well.

Focusing on the circulation of images of women of color is critical because discussions of U.S. feminism’s racism have been such a prominent part of the narrative of its history. As the previous chapter explained, the significance of women of color to U.S. feminism is most often analyzed in terms of identity and politics. These critiques overwhelmingly focus on the ways that feminists’ political and identitarian practices keep gender, whiteness, heterosexuality, the United States, and the middle class as central to the foundation and origins of feminism. Such practices allow some feminists to reproduce their privileges at the expense of others and reinforce a narrative of progress in which women of color start outside of and then gradually are included within the movement.

I want to reframe the narratives used to historicize the women’s liberation movement by examining how representations of women of color were embedded in an affective mapping of U.S. feminism. The revolutionary, antiracist, antisexist, and anti-imperialist struggles of women of color lent U.S. feminism a weight that countered the ways movement outsiders—particularly mainstream media—trivialized and devalued their activism. So rather than arguing whether white feminists were or were not racist, I want to move this debate forward by taking a more structural

approach. What were the semiotic structures that shape the range of possible and preferred meanings that are attached to images of women of color in particular and to feminism in general? This chapter, thus, elaborates more specifically one mode through which women of color were included in feminism and considers how such inclusion affected and effected feminist collective identity formation.

The default of feminist identity is presented as and presumed to be white, so when feminism is criticized for being racist, the term “white” is implicitly attached to the term “feminism.” Early studies of the women’s liberation movement confirm this characterization. Joan Cassell writes explicitly about black women on only one page in *A Group Called Women: Sisterhood and Symbolism in the Feminist Movement*, noting that “feminism has reached a group of women who were formerly peripheral to the primarily white middle-class women’s movement” (1977, 180). Maren Lockwood Carden devotes only a few pages to race and racism in her book *The New Feminist Movement*, in which she suggests that black women are difficult to recruit because they prioritize activism around racial and socioeconomic injustice and because they experience a smaller gap between expectation and experience than do white, middle-class women (1974, 29-30). In her survey of the range of feminist organizations Jo Freeman offers a more nuanced analysis that challenges the relative deprivation theory reproduced by Carden (39-43) and discusses the National Black Feminist Organization, which was formed in 1973 (Freeman 1975, 156-57). Still, most of the study focuses on white or white-dominated organizations. These passing references to black women not only erase other women of color but also produce a feminist collective identity that places black women on the outside. They are moreover based on



the assumption that because black women hover at the periphery they, thus, must be brought into feminism's fold.<sup>3</sup>

The methods of this inclusion also offer insight into the processes through which feminism has been racialized.<sup>4</sup> The rhetoric of sisterhood, particularly the concept that sisterhood is universal, has been soundly refuted because of the way it tends to disavow the forces of power and privilege that position different bodies differently. Texts that include writings from women located in a variety of distinct positions, such as *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, may nevertheless produce difference in a way that does not challenge or question the center and margins of feminism (see Jakobsen 1998, ch. 2) and that, in fact, reifies the center and margins. Questioning the dominant conception of race within (white) U.S. feminism, Kimberly Christiansen (1997) argues that "the definition of racism prevalent among white feminists. . . focuses almost exclusively on the individual or attitudinal aspects of racism while virtually ignoring its historical origins and institutional components" (621). Such a definition, she argues, dehistoricizes race and racial identity categories and obscures the ideologies that have reproduced economic and political inequality based on skin color on a structural level.

Christiansen's insightful analysis is provocative in two ways. First she proposes that white U.S. feminism reproduces racism as a problem of individual consciousness (621). The difficulty of destabilizing the individual as the site of racism is manifest not only in Christiansen's examples (about how consciousness raising produces knowledge about white women that they then generalize to all women [619]) but also in her proposals for antiracist political engagements. Consider, for example, her suggestions that "white feminists need to be

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<sup>3</sup> Numerous studies are taking on this narrative and demonstrating its limitations, a few of which are Cade (1970), Chow (1987), Springer (1999, 2005), Breines (20002, 2006), Thompson (2002), Blackwell (2003), Roth (2004), and Valk (2008).

<sup>4</sup> Because "race" often connotes "color" in a way that excludes whiteness, I want to clarify that racialization is also a processe through which feminism is whitened.

studying and coming to terms with the personal, historical, and theoretical works by people of color” (620; see also 637), “to come to terms with the real and painful divisions among women” (633), and “to begin the discussions that would lead to feminist, antiracist positions and actions on current economic tactics” (638). This attention to the individual—individual consciousness, will, and choice—is an important reminder of the quotidian and material ways that we can interrupt our own privilege and the structures that maintain the status quo. However, when Christiansen writes that “racism is not primarily about ‘how we feel about each other’” but “is about the unequal distribution of economic wealth and political power in this country (and around the world) along lines of color, class, and culture” (621). Her assertion separates the objective and structural conditions of injustice and oppression from our feelings toward others. It reinforces the presumption that emotions are a micro-level experience and that they are the product of individuals’ decisions about what or what not to feel. Sara Ahmed’s notion of affective economies is useful here, since she locates the power of affect in its movements, its circulations, which provides a structural analysis of affect. Building on the money-commodity-money formula, Ahmed articulates a “theory of passion. . . as that which is accumulated over time.” She explains, “Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs (= the accumulation of affective value). Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become” (2004, 45). Ahmed demonstrates the work that words do to assign certain affect to certain bodies through their circulation and repetition. Therefore, although Christiansen’s observation that racism is much more than how we feel about each other is important, her juxtaposition of “how we feel about each other” and “unequal distribution” of resources presumes a disjuncture between the two that is not necessarily accurate or useful. This chapter builds on Ahmed’s work to develop a

structure of feeling (Williams 1977) that gave feminism as a collective identity political and affective valences.

### **Metacommunication**

Roland Barthes describes the image of a young black soldier saluting the French flag on the cover of *Paris-Match*: “On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on the fold of a tricolour.” He goes on to explain that “all this is the *meaning* of the picture” (1972, 116). The aspects of the image (the signifiers) and their associated concepts (signifieds) combine to form a literal, or denotative, meaning: “a black soldier is giving the French flag a salute” (Hall 1997, 39). The same decoding process applies to figure 4.2, for example. There are four women standing outside, they are marked through the caption as Vietnamese, they are outside, and one of them holds a gun. This literal meaning, though, interacts with a connotative meaning since an utterance’s meaning is never only denotative (see Veron 1971, 64). Thus, a close reading of the images of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women as well as a close reading of their patterns of representation reveals part of the discursive field that shapes and constrains the possibilities of their encoding and decoding.

My analysis of visual representations of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women builds on theories of the communication process developed within cultural studies. Drawing on this work I understand my project here as a process of analyzing feminism the way one might diagram a sentence. Take, for example, the sentence “I eat an apple.” From it we learn something about the speaker, about apples, and about an event. However, the sentence produces meaning also on a grammatical level. We learn something about subjects, verbs, and objects, and how their relationships to each other produce meaning. An analysis of grammar is an analysis of structures

of meaning. An ideological, or metacommunicational exploration of the circulation of images of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women also reveals both structures of meaning. Rather than trying to unearth and record the moments of encoding and decoding, this analysis looks at patterns of representation to map the metacommunicational facets of an utterance. As Eliseo Veron proposes, “Any message determines its connotative meaning in a given situation in relation to other messages that could have been transmitted instead, and in relation to different combinations of the same elements integrating in the message” (1971, 66). Therefore, the utterance of an image is meaningful because of the material, rhetorical, and textual aspects of its incarnation, because of the broader discursive field in which it appears, and because of what is not visible or explicit (see also Heck 1980, 124). All three categories of meaning production are relevant here because they interact to form patterns that are both prescriptive and descriptive.

A focus on the rules that make certain utterances (a unit of text or an image) meaningful and that shape the possibilities for encoding and decoding messages demands attention to repetition. Sara Ahmed’s concept of stickiness is especially influential in this regard. She uses this concept to explain how signs gain certain meanings at the expense of and in tension with others. What meanings, she wonders, tend to stick to a thing whereas others will just slide off? According to Ahmed, one way in which signs become sticky is precisely through repetition: “if a word is used a certain way, again and again, then that ‘use’ *becomes* intrinsic” (91). Meaning becomes a part of the sign itself, rather than being contingent—on time, place, or source of the utterance. In addition to being productive, repetition is also reductive. It results in blockages that prevent some meanings from attaching themselves to signs, so it is important also to notice what meanings do not stick (91-92; see also 97-100).<sup>5</sup> In these processes of signification, Ahmed deftly

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<sup>5</sup> Another facet of concealment for Ahmed is the way that the process of meaning making is made invisible. When meaning sticks to a sign so thoroughly that this meaning is understood as intrinsic, “the

demonstrates, a sign's intelligibility is also based on the way it makes us feel, for "language works as a form of power in which emotions align some bodies with others, as well as stick different figures together, by the way they move us" (195). In other words, meaning and affect are intertwined. Although noting particular textual manifestations of ideas and bodies, Ahmed's method of close reading focuses on the discursive circulation of meaning (194). In the context of feminist periodicals, however, the material, physical facets of a sign's usage and repetition are also important aspects of its historicity and meaning. It matters not just that an object is made visible but where, how, and through what means of production. The materiality of a sign's manifestation matters.

Judy Wu points to just such affective investments when writes that figures of Indochinese women acted as a kind of mirror for the West, "representing an image of revolutionary hope that contrasted [with] oppressive gender roles in North American societies" (2010, 194). In her study of the 1971 Indochinese Women's Conferences in Toronto and Vancouver, she elaborates the ways that women from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia formed "idealized projections of otherness" (2010, 194), projections that represent a "radical orientalist sensibility." The title of this chapter was inspired by Wu's analysis, and her discussion of feminists' revolutionary investments in certain bodies helps us examine the images here.

In order to think through the repetition of figures of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women it is necessary to travel beyond the five publishing communities that are the focus of this dissertation. The periodicals from Los Angeles, New Orleans, Iowa City, Northampton, and Cambridge are still central, but a variety of other periodicals make clear that the images in papers from these five cities are not unique. Feminist newsletters and newspapers from a wide range of

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association between words that generates meaning is concealed" (Ahmed 2004, 92).

cities demonstrate the extent to which particular images circulated throughout feminist communities in the United States. Knowing that images of and references to Truth and Indochinese women appear ubiquitously indicates their significance on a national scale and makes visible patterns that allow us to uncover the grammatical structures that produced and encouraged this significance.

### **Women of color**

How did the text about and images of Truth and Indochinese women circulate through feminist periodicals to produce meaning—about them and about feminism? In tracking how the bodies of women of color were deployed and represented in feminist periodicals repetition is crucial. For, although semiosis is ceaseless and dynamic, repetition can nonetheless help to fix and sustain meaning. Therefore, the persistent presence of certain bodies of women of color, which appear with certain qualities, offers insight into the U.S. women's liberation movement's relation to race and the narratives that have formed to explicate that relation.

Many bodies of women of color and historical figures appear in the pages of these periodicals, so why select Sojourner Truth and the Indochinese woman for special consideration? In addition to the frequency with which they are found in feminist newspapers—and are made visible elsewhere in the U.S. women's liberation movement—they open up spaces for thinking through the temporality and spatiality of U.S. feminism. Although a significant part of the U.S. feminist project involved creating the discursive and material conditions through which a better, feminist future could be realized, feminist periodicals hint at the ways that women were also oriented toward the past. Revisiting the lives of prominent women and excavating the women whose lives had been erased created a lineage of activism into which U.S. feminism could narrate

itself and offered historical evidence for the pervasiveness of patriarchal practices. Analyzing the figure of the Indochinese woman, on the other hand, can untangle the ways that U.S. feminists created a kind of spatial lineage into which they could narrate their activism. Moreover, according to Judy Wu, the depictions of Indochinese women “assisted American activists in imagining the possibilities of new political identities and new ways of organizing society” (2010, 579-80).

These depictions thus mapped coordinates of space onto time. Sojourner Truth creates a kind of historical feminist space, which is then used to give meaning to contemporary activism.

Indochinese women, however, are taken from a particular geographical space and then are placed into a feminist present and future. In both cases, by taking up the image of an other and bringing that other into the envelope of feminism, periodicals contribute to the demarcation of feminism’s inside and outside. Importantly, these boundaries are both spatial and temporal.

Some bodies and images circulate more widely than others, based on the political figures in the local area where the periodical is published, on the periodicals that an editorial collective reads and cites, on the political and affective commitments of the collective, and on the material constraints of publishing—such as the format and size of the periodical, the mode of publishing, the financial resources available, and the time and skills editorial collective members could offer. The figures that are made visible in this way have a particular salience, even if the presence of these bodies is not necessarily the result of an editorial collective’s or member’s calculated decision to make a particular person symbolic of the women’s liberation movement. Nor can we know exactly how readers consumed the images they encountered. And if someone read only a few issues of a periodical or did not read a variety of different periodicals, she would have uneven and unpredictable exposure to these figures. For example, the *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter* refers to Sojourner Truth only twice—in their March and April 1971 issues—both in

relation to International Women's Day events taking place on March 8. If someone missed those two issues, she might not encounter a citation of Truth's image or name in this periodical. Regardless of an image's specific meaning for each reader and editor, it is significant that these figures appeared over and over again. In exploring how a feminist collective identity emerged and was made meaningful, it is useful to think about those images that appear to have greater symbolic weight for this identity.

Such repetition is noteworthy also because of the structure of the women's liberation movement. Since 1970s feminism was largely a grassroots movement without a stable network connecting different local groups with each other and with regional or national organizations, there was not a single platform that local groups were asked to support. Nationwide mobilizations, such as that for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment or the campaign to free Angela Davis, did galvanize women through a singular goal, but there were few structures of accountability that ensured that each group used the same material or used material in the same way. Leon V. Sigal's study of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* between 1949 and 1969 reveals that over half of the stories published drew primarily from routine channels. The channel from which almost half of those stories cited were U.S. officials (1973, 124), which illustrates that news media tend to produce stories informed by few sources and so-called official sources. Feminists drew on institutionalized sources such the Liberation News Service, and editorial collectives also reprinted excerpts from mainstream media. However, the women's liberation movement had no such explicitly feminist structures that circulated information on a national scale or based on an official movement position.

### **Indochinese Women**



The term Indochinese is appropriate for an analysis of the alternative press in the 1970s for two reasons. First, it describes a geopolitical area with a particular salience in this period. Second, images of women who appear to be Asian are often printed in feminist periodicals without captions, so there are no explicit markers that identify them as being from a particular country (or from a particular region of a country). This is also the case for hand-drawn graphics. Because Vietnam garners the most attention, it is likely that the inclusion of such images is supposed to guide readers to think of Vietnamese women. Yet consider the cover image of *Womankind*, a Louisville, Kentucky, periodical (figure 4.3). There is no text on the cover to contextualize the figure of the woman, smiling, with a gun resting on her shoulder. The editorial on page 2 tells readers that this is a “Special Indochina Issue,” which includes an article about the Indochinese Women’s Conference in Vancouver, images from the U.S. G.I. training book, and personal histories of Vietnamese women. Yet readers still are not given specific information to help them read the national, regional, or local specificity of the woman on the cover. The image of this woman appears in other publications (figures 4.4 and 4.5), both of which suggest that she is Vietnamese but neither gives specific biographical or geographical information to confirm her identity. In fact, the only clue to the photograph’s provenance is found in figure 4.5; below the bottom right corner is “LNS photo,” giving credit to the Liberation News Service for providing it.

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 offer additional context for understanding the significance of these photographs and the connotations associated with Indochinese women, suggesting that the particularities of identity and location are less important than a figure’s legibility as Indochinese. Cumulatively, figures 4.2–4.7 give Indochinese women certain characteristics. First, they are visible as women of color: they look Asian. Second, they are most often shown outdoors, surrounded by scenery that connotes rural and pastoral locations. Third, they carry guns. This

particular combination gets reproduced in various ways and the photographs thus mark these bodies not just as revolutionary bodies but as revolutionary *women*. Portraying women in this schema explicitly and implicitly embodies them as subjects who quite literally become freedom fighters.

These characteristics seem especially salient when situated within the broader discursive field of representations of women of color. Figures 4.8 through 4.10 present different (but strikingly similar) images repeating the trope of the woman and the gun. The way guns appear as quotidian accessories—women have them when they are standing around talking—additionally emphasizes the way a revolutionary femininity breaks the molds that define the roles by which many white women felt trapped and that framed their representation in popular media. In figures 4.9 and 4.10 women's bodies take up an unusual amount of space, a facet of these images that continues in the following series. In such portrayals, women's arms are extended fiercely, and the figures depicted do not just exist in space, they are physically taking it.

Figures 4.11–4.15 further this trope by integrating the image of a child and adding another dimension to revolutionary femininity. The juxtaposition of the child and a weapon emphasizes that revolutionary women are indeed women, that revolution need not mean one disavows all things associated with womanhood and, that motherhood in fact is part of a revolutionary movement. In “Why Women and the War” (figure 4.6) the author writes,

the U.S. as self-proclaimed protector is consciously attempting to mold the lives of the Vietnamese by imposing American standards on a people with a historic cultural identity. Since it is women who are the bearers of future generations and the mainstay of the home it is they who receive the brunt of the attack. . . . Knowing only the traditional peasant skills many women turn to prostitution as the only way to feed themselves and their children.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Why Women and the War,” *Sister*, January 1973, p. 1. SCLSSR. This confluence of symbols—a woman, a gun, and a child—carries important revolutionary affect for nonwhite-identified activists. In the article “Soy Chicano Primero” Enriqueta Longeaux Y Vasquez writes, “Sometimes we hear the whisper that if you are a radical Chicana you may lose some of your femininity as a woman. And we

This article ends with a discussion of the local group Women and the War, whose members have developed a media packet to educate people about the conflict. Included is “a slide show on Vietnamese women, describing the role of women in resisting the U.S. attempt to destroy the fabric of Vietnamese culture.” The metaphor of woman and their bodies standing in for nation or culture is not new. But the images here and the references to domestic labor both reinforce the ways that women are characterized through their practices of social reproduction and point to the revolutionary aspects of such labor. Audre Lorde observes in her poem “Litany for Survival,”

it is better to speak  
remembering  
we were never meant to survive. (1978, 32)

This suggests that it is not just an individual’s survival but the survival of a community that can indeed be revolutionary and can be a form of resistance.<sup>7</sup>

Just as it is useful to consider the patterns of repetition that emerge through the photographs and graphics, we can also explore the boundaries of a feminist collective identity by looking at that which distinguishes one image from another. For example, let us consider the way that the graphics diverge from the photos. There are photographs of Panther women with their fists raised in the air and photographs of Indochinese women with guns. However, the actual photographs do not show Indochinese women raising their gun-wielding fists, nor do the

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question this as we look at the world struggles and know that this question as to our femininity doesn’t make much sense. After all, we have seen the Vietnamese woman fight for survival with a gun in one hand and a child sucking on her breast on the other arm. She is certainly feminine. Our own mothers and grandmothers still recall how many of them fought with the men in the revolution and they were brave and beautiful, perhaps more human because of the struggle they fought for” (in the archive this article is a photocopy without information about its original publication; this manuscript is located in a collection accompanying the California State University, Long Beach, Oral History Collection and is in the subsection “Los Angeles Women’s Liberation Movement [Chicana Student Publications].” This collection is not catalogued).

<sup>7</sup> Lorde also claims that “to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call america, we have had to learn this first and most vital lesson—that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings” (1984, 42).

photographs depict the anger or suffering that is more apparent in some of the graphical representations of women of color. The graphics, in their representations of women, suggest that feminists are imagining revolutionary bodies in very particular ways. As creations that are generically distinct from a photograph, graphics offer insight into the affective investments of U.S. feminists in revolutionary women and women of color. These imaginary/imagined women seem to bring together elements of the Vietnam War and the black power movement in particular to signify the kind of women that feminists wanted to include in the movement and also that some feminists wanted to become.

Such interchangeability cultivates a kind of repetition that turns bodies of women of color into signifiers to which certain meanings and affects stick. In thinking about how the bodies of others inspire “new political identities” and “new ways of organizing society,” consider that the feminist media coverage of the event tended to focus on “the women who either suffered traumatic abuse or could testify to wartime atrocities” (Wu 2010, 211-12). Such attention is not unsurprising, and my intention is not to dilute the unimaginable experiences many Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian women survived; nevertheless, such repetition in the depiction of Indochinese women turns their bodies into sticky signs. Through such narratives about their revolutionary spirits and practices as well as the hardships and torture they endured, Indochinese women “assisted American activists in imagining the possibilities of new political identities and new ways of organizing society” (2009, 579-80). The affect connected to such revolutionary womanhood can be found in a January 1973 issue of *Sister*, which is themed “woman and the war.” An untitled editorial states,

We rise up together with our Vietnamese sisters who realized they had to unite and organize. They established day care centers and schools. They formed women’s battalions to fight their enemy. The tremendous work of Southeast Asian women in

factories and on the battlefields has shown us American women that we must follow their example and liberate ourselves.”<sup>8</sup>

Consider also the text that accompanies figure 4.13:

We must reject the individualistic ethic that society forces on us and replace it with a collective effort to change those institutions into ones which encourage a revolution in personal fulfillment and human relationships.

The women of Vietnam, for example, realize that their personal and political liberation are inseparable. While fighting for self-determination of their country they are also fighting for their own self-determination within that country. These women have broken out of their traditional “feminine” roles and now assume significant political, economic, and military positions. . . . The Vietnamese people realize that a democratic, socialist, humanist society can only be achieved through the active equal participation of all the people. They see the vital connection between democratic socialism and the liberation of women.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the explicit reference to Vietnam in the article, the figure of the woman does not carry the markers of a Vietnamese or Indochinese (or even Asian) woman: her facial features, her clothing, the blackness of her body, and the book she carries with “Black Studies” on its cover accumulate to produce this body as a black woman (likely of African descent). Note also the artist’s name, “Emory,” written by the figure’s feet. It is not possible to determine how many readers would notice the name and, if they did, if they would know that it refers to Emory Douglas, the artist and Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party. Nevertheless, the composition of this page produces an intertextual conversation between image and words, one that potentially collapses the distinctions between different women, different revolutionary struggles, and different geopolitical formations. Through the repetition of a certain visual configuration that is accompanied by a particular affective investment, the body of a woman who appears to be a woman of color becomes reified as revolutionary. And U.S. feminism, by aligning itself—visually and politically—with these women, becomes revolutionary as well.

<sup>8</sup> Editorial, *Sister*, January 1973, p. 3. SCLSSR.

<sup>9</sup> Harriet Spiegel and Arlynn Robertson, “Revolutionary Women,” *Women’s Liberation* Cadre publication from Urbana, Illinois [Spring 1970]. Folder 5, box 1, Fran Ansley Papers.

This interchangeability is manifest also through the full-page article, “Interview with a Sandinista,” in *Distaff*’s May 1980 issue (figure 4.14).<sup>10</sup> This interview with Olga Aviles, a prominent actor in the revolutionary efforts, takes place soon after the new government had been established. According to the interviewer, Connie Dorval-Bernal, Aviles’s “experiences are foreign to most of us, who are not part of the Third World struggles, but her courage, strength, and fierce belief in her ideals cross the borders of experience and touch us all.”<sup>11</sup> This characterization of Aviles exemplifies the structure of affective economies. Importantly, it is not just the text of the interview that conveys Aviles’s “courage, strength, and fierce belief in her ideals” but the figure of the woman that demands attention. Placed prominently below the headline, a hand-drawn woman wearing a white dress holds a child with one arm and raises a gun with the other. To see this image without a caption or outside the context of the women’s liberation movement might produce confusion about what the woman is holding in her left hand; since the object is long and narrow, it could be a stick or staff, and the small protrusion in the middle of the right edge of the instrument likely signifies a trigger. But the feminist conventions of depicting women of color with rifles in their raised hands no doubt informed readings of this image. It makes sense to conclude that the artist (who is unknown) and editors understood the symbolic value of the image in relation to the third world, black, and/or feminist liberation movements. Additionally, readers (then and now) are likely to place this image in the same revolutionary tradition.

These images and the ways they are juxtaposed with text demonstrate the potential for women of color to become conflated with revolution itself. On the one hand, this positioning acknowledges the institutionalized racism and imperialism that has produced a quotidian for

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<sup>10</sup> The Sandinistas were Nicaraguan guerrillas that overthrew the dominant political powers in 1979.

<sup>11</sup> “Interview with a Sandinista,” by Connie Dorval-Bernal, *Distaff*, May 1980, p. 9. NCCROW.

many women of color in which they must fight to meet their basic needs and the needs of their communities, in which white women in the United States fear their children will “grow up to join the patriarchy” while black women fear their children “will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street” (Lorde 1984, 119). The lives of women of color are crucially distinct from the lives of white women in the United States. However, this positioning also may produce women of color as a homogenous other: any body with certain markers can invoke the connotations of revolution. This interchangeability, importantly, is also an affective interchangeability. In fact, it is precisely the interchangeability of affect that allows these bodies to be materially/textually interchangeable. They all represent the revolutionary present of their own liberation battles and revolutionary future/potential of the women’s liberation movement.

At the same time, the aspects of the photographs and graphics that contextualize the figures as Indochinese and/or revolutionary work precisely in a way that reinforces their otherness in relation to Western feminists. The fact that they are outside separates these women from the conventional spaces of Western middle-class white femininity—namely the domestic space and the private sphere. Their surroundings, including tall grass or trees in the background (figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, and 4.7) and a lack of visible signs of “civilization” (buildings, roads, vehicles, etc.), further distance the women pictured from the trappings of the West and modernity. The otherness of these women is thus affirmed by the factors that distinguish them from their sisters in the United States, distinctions that are both spatial and temporal. The fact that they are Indochinese creates them as geographical others; they are not of the West and indeed are engaged in a guerrilla war against military and imperialist forces of the West. Temporally, they embody the third world woman “out of time with the West” (Ong 1994, 376). Aihwa Ong calls attention to such a temporal disjuncture in part to critique the narratives of progress that feminists produce

when they analyze struggles for justice among non-Western communities within Western standards of justice and equality. These photographs, however, suggest a different tension in the temporal location of Indochinese women. On the one hand, their traditional, pastoral existence evokes and invokes a time of colonialism, a premodern time when white Western men forced their values and way of life onto a brown subaltern population.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Indochinese women stand in for the future of U.S. feminism. The full inclusion of these women in the feminist project signifies feminism's approach to being a true revolution, one that can potentially liberate all women, everywhere. In this sense, Indochinese women (and women of color in general) become feminism's ideal and objective. For example, Rachel Lee, in her discussion of the way women of color tend to be framed in academia, writes that "the narration of Women's Studies' critical progress inheres in the field's ability both to incorporate the 'outside' and to substitute itself for the outside." Thus, Women's Studies imagines itself as having, in the past, omitted a race-full perspective in its initial primary focus on gender, and, in the present, working toward a more inclusive analysis" (2001, 88). Women's studies does not have the same trajectories, challenges, and successes as the women's liberation movement—although the two are interdependent and intertwined—yet feminism located outside the academy is critiqued in a similar manner.<sup>13</sup>

Indochinese women become valued also for the ways they symbolize gender identity and gender relations; this facet of their identity, however, is most visible when the images are read in conjunction with surrounding text. The article "The Baltimore Conference" in *Battle Acts* (published in Cambridge, Massachusetts) describes a conference panel whose members discussed

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<sup>12</sup> See Zillah Eisenstein's discussion of women's bodies in particular being symbolic of the temporal location of a community (2004, especially chapter 8).

<sup>13</sup> See Hewitt (2010) for a discussion of the dominant narrative describing the trajectory of U.S. feminism from the 1970s to the present.



their visit to Budapest, Hungary, to meet with Vietnamese women (figure 4.5). One of the panelists, before she became active in the women's liberation movement, had traveled to Vietnam with a group of antiwar activists. During this visit she met separately with Vietnamese women and described this experience as "tremendously inspiring." In fact, the author writes, "It was the Vietnamese women who actually raised her [the panelist's] woman's consciousness and recruited her to the cause of women's liberation," finding this to be evidence of "how very conscious the Vietnamese are of the oppression of women."<sup>14</sup> Consider also the poem accompanying an article in *Sister*, "Why Women and the War" (figure 4.6). A direct address "To the Women of Vietnam," it begins

You are the ones  
who made us realize  
what is happening to us now

and continues by collapsing the two liberation struggles into one:

your  
fighting has revealed  
  
your enemy as ours  
your lives as ours  
your brothers as our own.<sup>15</sup>

Here women in Vietnam are the ones whose presence is both the present and future of women's liberation. That is, the struggles and battles of Vietnamese women against the United States and North Vietnam represent a future manifestation of women's liberation: the women of Vietnam, because their actions are seen as part of a real revolution, because their consciousness regarding issues of inequality and imperialism are more acute, and because they have more successfully

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<sup>14</sup> "The Baltimore Conference" by Neomi Cohen, *Battle Acts*, November 1970, p. 13. Folder 3, box 1, Fran Ansley Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Franklin, "To the Women of Vietnam," *Sister*, January 1973, p. 1. SCLSSR.

advocated for gender equality, indicates where the U.S. women's liberation movement strives to be.

### **Sojourner Truth**

The patterns that emerge when looking at images of Indochinese women help us think through the portrayal of Sojourner Truth on the cover of *Ain't I a Woman?* In this image only some of the features of the highly stylized, carefully posed photographs that Truth commissioned between 1863 and 1875 appear. Truth posed in seven different sittings for what became *cartes de visite* that she sold to support her traveling and speaking, as well as to provide her with income. Truth's embodiment in these photographs is ambiguous but is intended in part to highlight her ties to middle class respectability, a radical claim for an illiterate former slave (see Peterson 1995; Painter 1996; Zackodnick 2005). Items such as the white hair cover and collar, spectacles, tailored dress, unfinished knitting projects in her lap, an opened book on a table beside her carried meanings related to gender, class, religion, and race (Painter 1994, 483-85). But these meanings would likely not be common knowledge to the generic mid-twentieth century periodical consumer even as they offered clear indicators that this figure indeed was Sojourner Truth. In *Ain't I a Woman?*'s depiction of Truth, her middle-class respectability is superseded by her embodiment as a deeply gendered subject, in which the raised fist appears as a symbol of resistance and power.

The fist emerged as a potent symbol of the women's liberation movement and was often placed within the circle of the woman's symbol (see figure 4.16) in feminist ephemera and publications. Its connotations of resistance and power in the Black Power movement suggest that

the imagery was present in feminism's conscious and unconscious.<sup>16</sup> Shirley Weber connects this iconography specifically to the desire for power, and not mere inclusion—socially, politically, and economically—that women's liberation and black power movements shared. She refers to the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, when sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their gloved, clenched fists when standing on the podiums during the medal ceremony for the two-hundred-meter dash (1981, 495-96).<sup>17</sup> The fist, thus, cannot be separated from its association with the Black Power movement and revolutionary meaning because of the way it, reinforces the militancy and violence of that movement. This portrayal of Truth, putting into conversation the nineteenth century markers of class and gender with mid-twentieth century markers of revolutionary liberation movements, indicates another way feminists sought power and claimed revolutionary status. The revolutionary nature of this embodiment, as with the graphics of Indochinese women, relies on its distance from the conventions of white Western femininity.

Similarly, the radical affect related to Truth gains its power from the visual and political distinctions from the figure of the woman-turned-women's-liberation-activist. The photographs associated with the 1968 protest of the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey reveal a group of white-looking women marching on the boardwalk, carrying signs, and placing undergarments in a freedom trashcan. Underestimating the radical and revolutionary impact of this action, the images that circulated most widely did not construct women's liberation activists as a threat or as dangerous. Figure 4.17, for example, appears in Sara Evans's national history of

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<sup>16</sup> See Nachescu (2008) for a discussion about the various ways that radical feminism in the 1970s drew from and was affected ideologically the Black Power movement, Shirley Weber (1981) and Lisa Gail Collins (2006) each compares the women's liberation's and black power's similar organizing, mobilizing, and aesthetic strategies. Collins describes the two movements as paralleling, rather than influencing, each other, and although I cannot speak to the impact of feminism on Black Power my reading of feminist periodicals suggests that feminists were indeed aware of the politics and activism of the black power movement. Weber's analysis suggests a unilinear relationship between the two movements, in which feminism borrows from black activists and not the other way around.

<sup>17</sup> See Peterson (2009) for an analysis of the media coverage of this event.

U.S. feminism. This photograph, which is attributed to the Associated Press, also appears in two articles published in the early 2000s (Jervis 2004; Berkinow 2005), suggesting that it is both easily accessible and that it has become more broadly symbolic of the U.S. women's liberation movement (see also Redstockings 2000-2009).

However, *Ain't I a Woman?*'s depiction of Sojourner Truth is anomalous. The image most frequently used more closely resembles the photographs from the 1800s (see figure 4.18). But that graphic does not visually reflect the power and energy that we see on the cover of *Ain't I a Woman?* Nor does it manifest the raised fist that signals the influence of the Black Power movement on women's liberation. Nevertheless, the Truth of the *cartes de visite*, also relies on important distinctions from conventional Western, white, middle-class femininity.

Truth's image was deployed by feminists beyond print publications. The April 1971 issue of the Los Angeles newsletter describes the International Women's Day event in which Truth figured prominently:

Preceded by a life-sized statue of Sojourner Truth, a leading black feminist of the 1850's, the women joyfully marched down Broadway singing, chanting and issuing Certificates of Sisterhood to non-marching women along the parade route. . . .

The official rally began at 1:00 with original feminist songs sung by Ruthie Gordon. Renee Harding from the L.S. Committee to Free Angela Davis, told of Sojourner Truth's life and the hardships and degradation she endured as a black woman slave. After gaining her freedom, Sojourner committed herself to fighting for the rights of women and blacks just as, today, Angela Davis has made that same commitment. . . .

As Renee Harding read the speech Sojourner Truth gave before the Women's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851, popularly known as "And Ain't I a Woman?", the statue of her was chained to the center flag-pole in the middle of Pershing Square. The women, with arms linked, joyously sang a feminist song, each one of them overpowered by the growing sense of sisterhood and strength the successful demonstration had given to each of them.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "March 8th International Women's Day Celebration Rousing Success" by Ethel H., *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, April 1971, p. 2. Folder 1, LAWLM. Figure 4.19 is an image of one of these certificates.

Other bodies were represented at the demonstration, as evidenced by the article's references to speakers from the Women's Liberation Labor Committee, the Asian Women's Collective, and a lesbian feminist group. Such representation indicates the varied groups of people who were included in a feminist collective identity; however, Sojourner Truth becomes a highly visible protagonist in the narration of an international feminist history. A black woman, who grew up as a slave in upstate New York hundred years prior to the celebration, has become symbolically central. In fact, a re-creation of her body led the parade of women marching through downtown Los Angeles and became a kind of boundary marker, distinguishing women—feminists, sisters—who were participating in the women's liberation movement from those who did or could not participate, although distributing "certificates of sisterhood" defined the boundary between insiders and outsiders as porous.<sup>19</sup>

Just as the figures of Indochinese women could help feminists draw an affective line connecting their fights for justice and the lives of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian revolutionaries, the figure of Sojourner Truth links the women's liberation movement to another antiracist and antisexist struggle. Giving an International Women's Day speech in Los Angeles in 1974, a member of the Los Angeles Women's Liberation Union told the crowd,

It has been 121 years since Sojourner Truth spoke the following words, but it is appropriate, I believe, for them to be repeated again:  
 "We'll have our rights, see if we don't and you can't stop us from them, see if you can. You may hiss as much as you like, but it is coming. women don't get half as much rights as they ought to, we want more and we will have it." (Sojourner Truth, 1853, New York)<sup>20</sup>

Truth's persona places the political agenda of the U.S. women's liberation movement within the lineage of black women's struggle, which was, among other things, a praxis of resistance against

<sup>19</sup> The significance of who could/did and could not/did not participate actively in events such as these merits closer examination, but such an analysis falls outside the scope of this project.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Rabinowitz, International Women's Day Speech, Los Angeles, CA, March 8, 1974. "International Women's Day" section, box 2, Joan Robins papers.

gender, racial, economic, and sexual dehumanization. And surely no one would have disputed either the horror of slavery or the necessity of an abolitionist movement. Truth, thus, serves as a figure whose historical actions give political and affective meaning to feminists' contemporary actions.

Teresa Zackodnik locates this distinction within the historical context of the representations of Truth by white women's rights activists in the nineteenth century. She focuses in particular on Frances Dana Gage's article recounting Truth's *Ain't I a Woman/Ar'n't I a Woman* speech given at the 1851 Akron women's rights convention. Below is a description of Truth's speech recorded by Gage:

"Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place;" and, raising herself to her full height, and her voice to pitch like rolling thunder, she asked, "And ar'n't I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm," and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing its tremendous muscular power. "I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ar'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man, (when I could get it,) and bear de lash as well—and ar'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chillen, and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and ar'n't I a woman? When dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head. What dis dey call it?" "Intellect," whispered some one near. "Das it, honey. What's dat got to do with women's rights or nigger's rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have me little half-measure full?" (quoted in Painter 1996, 167-68).

The plantation dialect that authenticates Truth's status as a once-enslaved person and gives her the authority to speak from her experiences incorrectly locates her, for she lived the early part of her life in New York with a Dutch family. The accent with which Truth would have spoken does not get depicted in Gage's version, nor does it survive the century between Gage's accounting of the speech and the version accompanying Truth's image in women's liberation publications. Feminists would have avoided this dialect because it was seen as caricaturing black people. However the image from *Ain't I a Woman?* suggests that feminists did not wholly abandon the affect and energy produced through Gage's rendition.

Patricia Hill Collins places Truth in a lineage of black women's struggle and activism infused with feeling and spirituality. Such an ethic gains moral authority not because it is the product of rational deliberation but because activists "*believe* that achieving it is the right thing to do" (Collins 1998, 244). Understanding moral authority as not just informed by but as dependent on one's embodied experience and feelings is consistent with the modes of knowledge production within women's liberation. Women write about the click of recognition, a moment when an everyday event suddenly is repeated differently, in that its sexist, racist, heterosexist underpinnings become visible (see, e.g., Farrell 1998, 161-62), and discussions in consciousness raising groups were likely to be rooted in women's everyday experiences and in their emotions (see, e.g., Carden 1974, 33-37). As I briefly discuss in the previous chapter and as the term "consciousness raising" suggests, allying oneself with the women's liberation movement also involved allying oneself with a new epistemology. Through an analysis of mainstream media's portrayals of feminism, it becomes clear that a feminist epistemology is not only de-authorized but is actively disparaged and trivialized. For this reason, images of strong, revolutionary women are affectively meaningful. This widely circulating image of Truth depicts her speaking as a laborer, as a mother, and as a woman, and the authority she has been given to speak for and about marginalization shapes feminists' speaking as laborers, mothers, and women. Depictions of Truth in feminist periodicals thus allow the authority of her experience to authorize what is written about in the pages of a newspaper from the 1970s and, by extension, the lives of readers. Women's experiences matter and in fact must be a basis for realizing the revolution.

Truth circulates in a kind of vacuum. Images of her often appear without any historiographic information, and her likeness accompanies text unpredictably. In *Distaff's* November 1979 issue a graphic of Truth appears embedded in an article titled "Our Very Own

Bureau In Baton Rouge” and that, according to the editorial preface, is excerpted from *WRITES*, a newsletter from the Women and Employment Program (figures 4.20 and 4.21). The bureau described in the article has been developed to address needs and issues of working women, such as training programs for women, a talent bank that matches women with available employment, and assistance finding emergency shelter. Prominent (but not as prominent as the advertisement for the Metro Women’s Center in the bottom right of the page) is an image of Truth and the accompanying text: “I have done a great deal of work, as much as a man, but did not get so much pay. We do as much, we eat as much, we want as much.”<sup>21</sup>

From the hand-drawn cover of *Ain’t I a Woman?* to the mass produced women’s rights calendar (see figure 4.22), there is a visual formula in which the words from her speech are accompanied by Truth’s name and the date of the Akron convention.<sup>22</sup> The date confirms Truth’s historical presence and also the veracity of her statement in the sense that it emerged from an actual event. The image from *Distaff* is small, so it is difficult to discern the accompanying text. However, it appears that the date here reads 1853. In my research I have not encountered a speech made by Truth in this year, so because the Akron speech circulates so widely through feminist publications and because the language in *Distaff* so closely resembles in spirit the words attributed to Truth at Akron, it is most likely that the date is listed incorrectly here. What this error suggests is that the artist was familiar with the formula of representing Truth: Truth = image + excerpt from her speech + name and date. This formula further suggests that Truth is interchangeable with herself.

<sup>21</sup> *Distaff*, November 1979, p 8. NCCROW.

<sup>22</sup> The calendar uses language directly from Robinson’s report of Truth’s speech but is not faithful to the exact order of the words. The first two excerpts are in the order Robinson writes. The order of the next two, however, are mixed. Robinson writes: “The poor men seem to be all in confusion and dont [*sic*] know what to do. Why children, if you have women’s rights give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won’t be so much trouble.” And in Robinson’s version the last sentence on the calendar is also the last sentence of Truth’s speech (see Painter 1996, 125-26).



### The affect of language

A 1970 statement in *Female Liberation Newsletter* attends to the effect of language on perceptions of the women's liberation movement:

The word liberation signifies to us freedom from oppressive social relations, sexual humiliation, fear and the daily outrages and indignities which are our lives. The word liberation, because of its reference to all oppressed peoples, Blacks, Orientals, Chicano and other Third World and Working Class people, constantly relates our movement to these others. It shows lack of respect and seriousness about the Female Movement not to use this word in all its strength and dignity.<sup>23</sup>

A comment in one of the earliest issues of *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* echoes this sentiment: "Using the diminutive 'Lib' for Women's Liberation serves to make the movement smaller, less important, perhaps more palatable. . . . Let's not demean our movement by shortening liberation to LIB. Have you ever heard of Black Lib? Or Chicano Lib?"<sup>24</sup> In an editorial following this statement, Joan Hoffman asks readers to write to the *L.A. Times* and complain, suggesting that the paper's depiction of feminism reproduces it as diminutive and, thus, robs the movement of its power. *Ain't I a Woman?* further supports this portrayal as characteristic of mainstream media in an editorial about two articles reprinted from the New York-based feminist newspaper *Rat*. They write,

So how do we get out of the Step-'N-Fetchit era with the media? (Because that's just where we are.) Surely not by working through the pig media. We work in other ways,

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<sup>23</sup> "Lib or Liberation?" by Jeanne, *Female Liberation*, October 1, 1970, p. 1. SSC.

<sup>24</sup> Untitled statement by Nancy Robinson, *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, fall 1970, p. 3. Folder 1, LAWLM collection. Consider also that the first issue of *Distaff* was published by a woman running for political office in New Orleans because, as she writes, "the media refused to take me seriously. When I called a news conference, few reporters came, and the coverage they gave me quoted statements out of context and didn't give me a fair chance for rebuttal" ("It Doesn't Hurt to Try" by Brenda Daviler, *Distaff* [January] 1973, p. 3. NCCROW). Note that this issue is not printed with an issue and volume number and is described as a "preview issue" in the subsequent issue of the periodical (Editorial, *Distaff* February 1973, p. 12. NCCROW).

through local WL groups, through our own media, until the pigs like [Hugh] Hefner and [Dick] Cavett are afraid to enter the same room with WL women in the same way pig racists fear the very presence of Black Panthers.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to note that these authors connect feminism to other revolutionary movements, in these examples through the word “liberation” (see also Breines 2002, 1119). And the *Ain't I a Woman?* editorial specifically refers to the power the Black Panthers had to command attention through fear, an emotion not often evoked in response to women's liberation.

Collette Gaiter captures the popular imaginary of the Black Panthers: “Beret-wearing, gun-toting, angry young black men in black are the most persistent icons representing the Black Panthers from the 1960s and 70s. According to mainstream media accounts, their mission was essentially to scare white people about armed revolution in retaliation for discrimination” (Gaiter 2004). She further notes that this “carefully cultivated” portrayal contributed to J. Edgar Hoover's declaration that the Black Panthers were “the greatest threat to American national security.” Ask yourself, thus, what feminists of the 1970s would have had to do to cause such a reaction from the FBI?<sup>26</sup> The connections women articulated between feminism and other revolutionary movements, therefore, are significant for their affective value. For not only were feminists attempting to build a movement that was taken seriously as a force for revolutionary change, they were also responding to the dominant affective narratives that formed in relation to feminism through the popular imaginary.

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<sup>25</sup> Editorial, *Ain't I a Woman?*, July 10, 1970, p. 8. IWA. It is noteworthy that the editors invoke Stepin Fetchit in this piece, another stereotype, specifically referring to the caricature of black people as lazy, dull-witted, and deserving of the demeaning treatment they received.

<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that the FBI were not interested in women's liberation activities. Undercover agents infiltrated women's liberation groups, recording activists' activities and at times attempting to break up the collectives. For this reason, some collectives were very cautious about what they wrote and archived. During my research I came across a copy of one activist's FBI file, which she had included with her papers (Phyllis Parun Papers, NCCROW; see also Salper 2008).

Consider the way that “bra burning”—a phrase that started circulating through popular media after the 1968 Miss America protest in Atlantic City, New Jersey—has become inextricable from the identity of U.S. feminism in the 1970s. No bras were actually burned at the protest (they were deposited, along with other items of patriarchal femininity such as girdles, high heels, and issues of *Ladies Home Journal* into the “freedom trashcan”), but the ubiquity of this characterization is, according to Ruth Rosen, “a symbolic way of sexualizing—and thereby trivializing—women’s struggle for emancipation” (2000, 160-61). Bonnie Dow astutely notes the contrast in the characterization of bra burning and draft card burning. “It is a difference,” she writes,

between a critique of an established system that oppresses women—much as the burning of draft cards was a critique of the military industrial complex—and a trivial gesture that dominant media used as evidence that feminists had so little of substance to complain about that they were concerned with undergarments. (2004, 131)

It is quite striking—the different affects connected to bra burning and the burning of draft cards—and the affect produced in relation to feminism defuses the political agendas of the women’s liberation movement. Thus the desire of some feminists to create their own media and establish real connections between their movement and those that were seemingly taken more seriously by American commentators and the public. These comments point to the ways that women’s activism was dismissed and seen as trivial, despite the very profound changes feminists were fighting for in legal, medical, political, domestic, and academic arenas.

Delegitimizing feminism in a different way is question, “How can you justify a demonstration around strictly feminist issues when there are so many other important issues that need attending to, i.e., war, racism, poverty, pollution?” Nancy Williamson of *Female Liberation*

responds with her 1971 statement “Why Is Feminism Revolutionary?”<sup>27</sup> She acknowledges that it might not be clear why, in fact, feminism can bring about a revolution because “on the surface our demands to not appear revolutionary.” Yet, she continues, the core goals of feminism—reproductive and sexual rights, free child care, and equality in labor and educational opportunities—cannot be attained through other “so-called” revolutionary movements. In this statement Williamson presumes feminism’s priority: freeing women will result in the freeing of all others because the oppression of women is “the first and most universal form of human oppression.” Such a position was not unique—in fact it has been quite pervasive—and drew some of the critiques I outline in Chapter 3 about how sisterhood produces women as a homogeneous group in a way that obscures differences between women, for to consider sexism and misogyny to be so fundamental assumes that all women have something in common. Not engaging in an intersectional analysis of identity, this stance places feminism as the most important revolution and led to the voluntary and involuntary exclusion of many women for whom gender was not the most salient identity (e.g., poor women, lesbians, women of color) and who were invested in other social and political projects. It is important, though, to see feminist positions as responses to specific incarnations of patriarchy. *Female Liberation Newsletter* asks readers in one of its earliest issues to weigh in about one of the questions the women in its public speaking group receive:

This group would also like to pose some questions to readers and have the answers printed in the Newsletter. The question for this week is as follows: “I’m all in favor of women’s liberation, but why are all the women in the movement so ugly?” (and why don’t you have any sense of humor?).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “Why Is Feminism Revolutionary?” by Nancy Williamson, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, May 2, 1971, p. 5-6. SSC. Signaling its significance, Female Liberation published this essay as a stand-alone position paper (see folder 10 “Position Papers, 1968-1972,” box 2, FL records). The question in the previous sentence is taken from Williamson’s paper.

<sup>28</sup> Editorial, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, October 26-November 1 [1970], p. 4. SSC.

Outsiders would not have questioned the revolutionary potential of women's liberation or the appearance of feminists if this movement did not present some sort of threat to the status quo. Therefore, such responses to women's liberation were very much a reflection of the social and political challenges made through the movement. Nevertheless, these characterizations trivialize feminists in a way that is particularly gendered and, thus, does not reflect the popular response to other revolutionary movements.

Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women not only extended the temporal and geographical boundaries of feminism and a feminist collective identity but also affectively shaped this identity. Representations of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women have produced a limited range of meanings that have stuck to their bodies. If, as Ahmed, indicates, stickiness is transferable, then perhaps revolutionary affect can become intrinsic to the women's liberation movement through repetition of the fist or the raised arm and the juxtaposition of the child and the gun. Thinking about representation grammatically demonstrates that images can be understood not just through the often-cited narrative of political progress: U.S. feminism, which began as a white women's movement, was becoming more diverse through the inclusion of women of color (and women outside the United States). These representations can also help us analyze the ways that feminists attempted to legitimate their activist practices and identity. The trivialization of feminism, sexism, and the valorization of heterosexism by the New Left and U.S. culture more generally resulted in a climate in which the existence of autonomous feminist organizing did not guarantee its status as revolutionary to movement outsiders.

The figures of Sojourner Truth and Indochinese women resonate with what Judy Tzu-Chun Wu describes as radical orientalism. Such an East-West distinction is not only geographical or racial but also temporal. The idealization of Indochinese women places U.S. feminism's future

in the presence of Indochinese revolutionary women as well as in the bygone era of Sojourner Truth. Recuperating Truth as part of feminism's history realigns the narrative of progress that is deployed to highlight the ways that contemporary realizations of feminism are always already lacking: it is not revolutionary enough, not inclusive enough, not radical enough. This does not necessarily contradict critiques like Lee's, that women of color are positioned as a "pure space" and a "triumphal end point" (2001 95), thus occupying both a space and time outside of feminism yet toward which feminism attempts to move. At the same time bodies like Truth's and those of Indochinese women are narrated as part of feminism, through the language of sisterhood in particular, as *Sister* does through its full-page image of four Asian women with the caption "We salute, with love our sisters of Vietnam" (figure 4.2). Furthermore, the lack of explanation that accompanies many of the references to and depictions of Truth suggests that editors did not feel the need to justify their use of her as an icon for feminism. She is not explicitly labeled as a feminist, but it is the very lack of context that includes her within feminism's circumference.

This conclusion is not necessarily surprising. It makes sense that symbolic figures are both laden with significance and also semiotically spacious. That is, Truth and Indochinese women are marked by certain political and affective investments: they are seen as leaders in the fight for social justice, as those who stood up for what they believed in, as women who risked their own personal safety to do what was right for the people they stood for. They are models for how to fight the revolution. However, these figures have enough distance from the specific context of the everyday lives of the women they represent that they can be filled with rhetoric and meaning of the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. For example, the image of a brown or black woman with a gun can be deployed in different situations to signify a revolutionary spirit or the struggle of an oppressed minority that is symbolic of a David and Goliath contest.

Representations of women of color, then, are part of white feminists' attempts to legitimize women's liberation. Women of color lent weight and validity to the work that feminists were doing, both in their physical presence and also in the specific ways they were portrayed. An analysis of how women of color are represented in U.S. feminism is also an analysis of how U.S. feminism struggled against mainstream forces to produce a collective identity that movement outsiders would take seriously. Although meaning making is ceaseless and dynamic, repetition can nonetheless help to fix and sustain it. And since meaning is both cognitive and emotional, we must attend not only to the materials and rationales of activism but also to the production and organization of feelings. Therefore, attention to the repetition of bodies of women of color and the modes of these representations, lets us interrogate the narratives used to explicate the U.S. women's liberation movement's relation to race and racial formations but also to the media and the culture more generally.

## Chapter 5

### **“We Are Being Evicted!!!!” Versus the Future: Producing a Place for Feminism’s Survival**

If women of color heralded the future of feminism, marking it as a potentially more inclusive, radical politics and practice, they seem to be part of an always elusive future, a future that exists only in the future. Having recognized this absence, the Valley Women’s Union planned a forum on racism in fall 1976, “which would include a discussion of our relations to Third World women and how those of us who are white deal with our white skin privilege and the racism of other white women.”<sup>1</sup> The October newsletter reported, “On Sept. 25, the VWU held its first forum on racism. Discussions focused on the connections between racism and patriarchy, and future areas of work and discussion for the Union. Another forum was planned for Oct. 28, with some suggested readings. There will be a report of the 2nd forum in the newsletter for November.”<sup>2</sup> And as predicted the following newsletter offered a summary of the events, describing the texts women read (by Angela Davis, Pat Parker, and Helen Merriweather) and the discussions about gendered and racial stereotypes and then offered questions motivating women in the union to take on racism:

In what ways does our struggle against patriarchy imply and demand a struggle against racism? How can we most effectively confront racism in a white community? What are the dimensions of our white skin privilege? Do we only confront racism when there are conflicts between white [and] Third World communities, or is there other forms of anti-racist work? Does anti-racist work by definition mean working in coalitions?<sup>3</sup>

The author of these notes admits that they were “compiled in great haste” and thus we cannot take them to represent the entirety of the forum’s content. What appears in the newsletter, however, is

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<sup>1</sup> “VWU Forum,” *Valley Women’s Union Newsletter*, July-August 1976, p. 1. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>2</sup> “Forums on Racism,” *Valley Women’s Union Newsletter*, October 1976, p. 7. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>3</sup> “Forum on Racism” by Cheryl, *Valley Women’s Union Newsletter*, November 1976, p. 5. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.



what resonated for the person who attended the forum and is what she decided would be important for readers to know. Debunking stereotypes occupies well over half of the report and the questions posed above are listed in the final paragraph, providing a framework for future antiracist activism and coalition building. Members of the Valley Women's Union identified racism as an issue, one that exists on individual and institutional scales. They thus explicitly identified a "what." Implicit in this forum series is the need for a "where," a site from which this work can be done, a place where women can be pushed to interrogate their privileges, where they can hold meetings, study sessions, and consciousness raising about these issues.

Despite the political and financial struggles Northampton women regularly experienced, at this point in its history the Valley Women's Center had existed for seven years and seemed to be a stable part of the local feminist community. However, in the January 1977 issue, placed much more prominently as the first item below the periodical title, is the announcement: "Emergency general meeting Sunday, January 16th at 12:30 pm at the VWU. All women are urged to attend. We are being evicted!!!!!"<sup>4</sup> The minutes of the center's steering committee meeting, also published in this issue, further explain the reasons behind the eviction and urge readers to come to the general meeting to make a plan. The staff's forward- and future-looking forums and interrogations of white privilege and racism suddenly have an uncertain future because the "where" of this work can no longer be presumed.

In addition to framing the precarity of future, this example is noteworthy because January 1977 appears to be the last issue of the newsletter (it is the last extant copy I was able to locate).<sup>5</sup> Ties to the women's center intertwine the newsletter's fate with that of the center's. As a voice

<sup>4</sup> Announcement, *Valley Women's Union Newsletter*, January 1977, p. 1. Folder 2, box 4, VWC records.

<sup>5</sup> "Forging a New Political and Cultural Identity: Socialist Feminism in the Valley Women's Union, Northampton, Massachusetts," May 11, 1998. Folder "Letters Sent," VWU records. This time line also reflects the chronology offered in Patric A. Whitcomb in "Forging a New Political and Cultural Identity: Socialist Feminism in the Valley Women's Union, Northampton, Massachusetts" (May 11, 1998. Folder "Letters Sent," VWU records).

for the center the newsletter's pages were filled with announcements about events there, debates about center policies and logistics, and calls to readers to contribute their time, energy, and/or money. Letting readers know about events, study groups, meetings, and volunteer opportunities not only made the center visible as a feminist space but also brings people to the center, both of which can contribute to its future existence. The newsletter additionally depended on the center's existence for its own. If a particular place is the site of the labor of production and stores the means of periodical production (a mimeograph machine, stencils, typewriter, space where women can layout the contents), then the loss of that place affects the possibilities of publishing the periodical. Chapter 2 explores how the material and political conditions of periodical production enabled the production of a feminist present. This chapter returns to the production process to ask how periodicals created spaces in which a feminist future was both imaginable and realizable. I hint at the challenges of producing a future for feminism at the end of Chapter 3 when I show that a discursive inclusion and commitment to feminism (through identification as a "sister") is important but not enough to reproduce the movement as a whole. Here repetition is put into conversation with the concept of survival to articulate the relationship between the survival of periodicals and the survival of feminism. The production of dialogue through periodicals has been a productive way to enter this relationship, for characteristics of periodicals like seriality and the multiplicity of voices and forms of authorship materialize dialogue in a variety of forms. Methodologically, the history of the book offers the communications circuit, which I use to examine the material and discursive facets of dialogue and, by extension, the survival of print texts and the social movement they support.

### **Communications circuitry**

Despite the complexities of analyzing printed matter, it is possible to offer the general conclusion that studies within the field of book history address one or more of the following questions: "How

do books come into being? How do they reach readers? What do readers make of them?” (Darnton 2007, 495). One attempt to provide a conceptual framework for addressing these questions is Robert Darnton’s communications circuit, a model for the interdisciplinary and international analysis of the ways that books come to exist and circulate (see Darnton 1982b, 67, 81; see also figure 5.1). An attempt to provide coherence to “the entire communications process” (1982b, 67), which Darnton characterized as a “tropical rain forest” rather than as a field of knowledge production (1982b, 66), this circuit encompasses the various phases of textual production and consumption through the figures who participate in this circuit: author, publisher, printer and supplier, shipper, bookseller and binder, and reader. These figures, and thus the processes they engage, are variously shaped by intellectual influences and publicity, economic and social forces, and political and legal sanctions, as indicated by the direction of the arrows. Reflecting on this model twenty-five years later, Darnton reiterates his intention to create a heuristic for organizing the “fissiparousness” of the field, one that links the different aspects of a text’s production and consumption and that gives scholars from different disciplines and areas of study a framework for conversation (2007, 495).

Encompassing the range of activities, people, and processes in the print cycle, Darnton’s model highlights the materials of a text: producing a text is based on one’s access to certain materials, and the textual product itself is material. In his article about the contemporary digital revolution, history of the book scholar Roger Chartier describes the Council on Library Resources’ practice of microfilming newspapers, which has been in effect since the 1960s. One result of this digitization was the British Library’s decision to get rid of all their American newspapers published after 1850 that had been microfilmed. Chartier perhaps hyperbolically calls this event “the great massacre of newspapers,” reinforcing his position that the form of a text and a reader’s understanding of that text are inextricable (2004, 147). According to him the British Library’s belief that the actual physical newspapers were expendable suggests that “a text is still

the same regardless of its form: printed, microfilmed, and digital.” This perspective, though, “is fundamentally wrong since the processes through which a reader attributes meaning to a text depend, consciously or not, not only on the semantic context of the text but also on the material forms through which the text was published, distributed and received” (2004, 147).<sup>6</sup> Therefore, understanding how meaning is made requires “a morphological analysis of the materiality of texts and a social and cultural analysis of readers and reading” (2004, 149).

Through the different stages of textual production, the communications circuit also spatializes and temporalizes a print publication. Writing happens somewhere. Printing happens somewhere. Distribution starts from somewhere. And the text is an object that exists in, travels through, and produces space. Leah Price, for example, notes that “the history of the book is also a geography of the book” (2004, 308), David Livingstone (2005) proposes a geography of reading as a way to study the different dialogues that take place between readers and texts to produce knowledge, and Seth Lerer calls canonization an act of “space management,” in that the process of forming a canon is “as much a process of selecting space as of selecting value” (2006, 232). Consuming a text, moreover, is a spatial practice. In her study of romance novel readers, Janice Radway addresses reading as an activity and takes seriously “the event of picking up a book,” and “the act of romance reading” (1984b, 86); readers also describe reading as a form of escape that has the effect of allowing them to “deny their physical presence” by getting lost in the book and producing a space in which they are free from their daily duties (1984, 93). Space, therefore, becomes important to the history of books in all phases of a text’s life. Occupying space is an occupation of time, as well. The arrows connecting the stages of the communications circuit highlight the temporal movement of a text: writing happens before printing, which happens before distribution. Even the arrows pushing outward from the central social, political, and

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<sup>6</sup> Chartier makes this claim frequently in his writing, and in fact, this imbrication appears to be a fundamental assumption shaping his analyses of texts. See, e.g., Chartier (1992; 1995, 18; 1997, 82; 2007b, 510). See also Tanselle ([1981] 1998).

economic forces suggest a temporal relationship between these forces and production, that these forces produce opportunities and constraints for those involved in any aspect of publishing (i.e., they are temporally prior to publishing labors).

### **The space and time of book history**

Nominally, history of the book prioritizes books, a priority that is reflected for the most part in the kinds of studies that are undertaken.<sup>7</sup> Although scholarship on very early printing practices or the history of printing practices often notes the existence of other printed matter, and although the temporal and geographical range of these studies is extremely broad, the book as a form and text receives the most scholarly attention, so even when scholars acknowledge the usefulness of including other textual forms the book is clearly the default.<sup>8</sup> For example, Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Barker note the limitations of the term “printed book” as one that “conjoins up an image of the codex, the bound volume of printed and folded sheets sewn along the folds and usually (but not always) put between two covered boards.” In its stead, they propose the term “bibliographic document” as a way to more inclusively name the object of study of book historians, and they define it as anything printed or handwritten, that is copied, and that is designed for consumption by someone other than the author(s) (1993, 13). Yet, the rest of their essay uses only the term “book” as it outlines a methodological structure for the study of printed texts. In their discussion of the distribution of texts, Adams and Barker write in the beginning of the section,

In its simplest form the process of moving consists of moving a book or shipment of books from one place to another. It can be as straightforward as buying a book, or borrowing it and taking it home. . . . Amongst the people who may be involved are the bookseller, the shipper, the propagandist, or a librarian. . . . The form in which the books

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<sup>7</sup> For studies that use history of the book methodology to analyze texts other than books see McCoy (2006), Johnson (1999), Atton (2002), and Flannery (2005).

<sup>8</sup> There has been a bias, however, toward texts produced in Western Europe and prior to the twentieth century.

are sent can be fully bound, folded but unbound, or in sheets. (Adams and Barker 1993, 22-23; see also Gaskell 1972)

Yes, the term “bibliographic document” is unwieldy, but at a very basic level the language used in this field reinforces bound book as the center. For this reason it is useful to call attention to the ways that assumptions about the book as the default object of study might shape the ways scholars formulate and answer questions about texts, processes of writing and reading, and concepts such as intertextuality, paratext, and dialogics. In this chapter the limitations about presuming a book as an object of study are further illuminated by looking at how feminist periodicals fit (and do not fit) into the Darnton’s communications circuit.

As with most models or categories, the communications circuit represents an ideal, but for most texts it is probable that, at some point, they did not fit exactly into the model. Despite Darnton’s openness to the complex effects of intellectual, economic, social, political, and legal forces on the different actors in the publishing process, this circuit belies the messiness of the processes involved in print publication. On paper, the circuit is contained, neat, and coherent. The location of the cultural, economic, and political vectors within the circuit pushing outward, reinforces it as hermetically sealed (Murray 2004, 16) and unidirectional (Johnson 1999, 120). The circuit, then, starts to resemble those photographs made popular by *Life* magazine of the fetus within a woman’s necessary but invisible uterus. The context in which the circuit itself is possible becomes invisible.

The coherence of the circuit presumes a certain coherence regarding texts, specifically what counts as a whole text. John Sutherland attributes this to Darnton’s attention to the micro, especially as that which can stand in for the macro (1988, 578; see also Johnson 1999, 118-19). Sutherland refers to Darnton’s book *The Business of Enlightenment: A History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800*, whose title suggests a broad study of a genre of publications but in which Darnton uses as his object of study only one reprint of one text (1988, 578). This approach

is consistent with Darnton's understanding of history of the book as a form of knowledge production from below. In order to study reading patterns in eighteenth-century France, for example, Darnton shifts away from quantitative studies of massive numbers of books and instead relies on a few publishers' records and case studies (1982a). And he begins this book by looking downward: "The summit view of eighteenth-century intellectual history has been described so often and so well that it might be useful to strike out in a new direction, to try to get to the bottom of the Enlightenment, and even to penetrate into its underworld, where the enlightenment may be examined as the Revolution has been studied recently—from below (1982a, 1). In his critique of Darnton Sutherland does not suggest that such studies not be undertaken; rather, he questions Darnton's movement from the particular to the general, namely that Darnton too easily takes one example or text and makes it representative.

The structure of Darnton's circuit also erases the conversations among authors and readers through texts. David Livingstone uses the metaphor of bleeding to describe the relationship between texts (2005, 393), and Gillian Beer writes that "books do not stay inside their covers. Once in the head they mingle. The miscegenation of texts is a powerful and uncontrollable force" (1995, 548). These analogies with biological processes imply the messiness of producing and consuming texts. Textual interconnections, or intertextuality, are not the province only of feminist periodicals, but the number of issues published and the widespread practice of reprinting and excerpting from other feminist periodicals demonstrates the limitations of Darnton's conception of textual production. The "author" and "reader" boxes are connected to the "intellectual influences" that press from the circuit's innards, a paradigm that can encompass intertextuality. However, intertextuality implies not just that figures in a circuit and other texts are interconnected but that different communications circuits are interconnected.

The networks created by periodicals and technologies of their distribution have an impact on a periodical's movements through space and time and, thus, its ability to reproduce the form of

feminism found through its pages. Although the movement of one issue of one periodical will not likely have a significant effect on the women's liberation movement on a national or international scale, there are patterns that emerge from paying attention to these networks. *Ain't I a Woman?*, as a newspaper from Iowa City, represents a site of feminist activism that has remained marginal to the narratives that historicize feminism. The editors of this paper publish a letter from Rita Mae Brown that they read in *off our backs* (published in Washington, DC), in which Brown criticizes "white, middle class, straight bias" within women's liberation.<sup>9</sup> *Ain't I a Woman?*'s editors admit they felt "a little hurt" that Brown had not sent the letter to *Ain't I a Woman?* (implying that it was an open letter that Brown had mailed to different periodicals) and then elaborate why they are not surprised she did not:

1) Rita Mae Brown is from the East and most people in the East wouldn't think that the Midwest (if they ever do think about the Midwest) has heard of Women's Liberation and therefore probably don't know about *Ain't I A Woman?* 2) If they have heard of AIAW then they probably don't listen to what we are saying. In other words we are invisible. We certainly were invisible to Rita Mae Brown when in the article she accuses the Women's Press of slighting the less glamorous issues such as lesbianism, class and race in the face of the easily handleable topic of anti-imperialism. We began in our first issue thinking about lesbianism and we are still.

Rita Mae Brown's criticism [*sic*] of the women's media in regard to the issue of lesbianism will continue to be valid if papers that do consistently deal with it, such as *It Ain't Me Babe* and *Ain't I A Woman?*, are ignored. Most of the feedback we've gotten regarding our continual struggle with that issue has been negative, and some encouragement from people like herself who agree with us as to its importance would help keep us going.

The editors go on to note that "none of the writing we have done on lesbianism has been reprinted. Ironically, we have only had one article we've done deemed good enough for reprint by eastern and western newspapers. It was our Men's Page (predictable) containing things for men to do to raise their consciousness. It was probably the most frivolous thing we have ever done and definitely the worst politically" (see figure 5.2).<sup>10</sup> What this editorial makes apparent is that

<sup>9</sup> Rita Mae Brown, "Hanoi to Hoboken: A Round Trip Ticket," *Ain't I a Woman?*, April 2, 1971, p. 11. IWA.

<sup>10</sup> Editorial preface to "Hanoi to Hoboken" by Rita Mae Brown, *Ain't I a Woman?*, April 2, 1971, p. 10.



publishing circuits are not uniformly recognized by larger publishing fields (either feminist or mainstream) and that different circuits do not always have a comparable impact on each other. Two publishing circuits may intersect, but the actors within each circuit are not affected in the same way or to the same extent. *Off our backs* has a clear presence in the pages of *Ain't I a Woman?*, yet the editors of *Ain't I a Woman?* do not see their publication having an effect on feminists on the East coast, at least substantively.

The uneven vectors connecting different periodicals' publishing circuits and inter-collective communication reflects the fact that different periodicals carried a different political weight. Peter McDonald (1997) notes that such hierarchies are invisible in Darnton's communications circuit. Social, legal, economic, and political contexts of course affects a text's production and consumption, but, as McDonald points out, Darnton's paradigm relates the different facets of publishing only horizontally and thus "fails to reckon on the other ways in which a literary culture is structured," namely through status and principles of value (1997, 111). For example, some authors have more literary and cultural capital and some publishers are more esteemed than others, both of which affect if or how a text will end up with a consumer and, once that happens, if or how it will be read. Therefore, these actors "are not only functionaries in the circuit but 'symbolic brokers' in the hierarchy. They write, print, publish, distribute and read literary works, but, in the process they also assert and defend specific principles of cultural legitimacy and generational imperatives" (1997, 120).

Disparity can be found in relation to the political and cultural capital of different feminist periodicals through empirical data such as circulation numbers and the number of times a periodical is cited. However, we can use feminist periodicals to explore unevenness also in terms of affect. As the *Ain't I a Woman?* collective shows, groups of women end up feeling strongly connected to certain periodicals. The collective writes,

We get an enormous amount of mail and are strongly affected by reading other papers and articles that women not publishing a paper probably don't see. It is exciting to get a good, new paper of publication and we want to share those with other women. When crises happen elsewhere--as when *It Ain't Me Babe* (published in Berkeley, California) stopped--it affects us.<sup>11</sup>

This statement can be read in two ways. First, *Ain't I a Woman?* would be affected materially, in that the chance of dialogue between the two periodicals will no longer be contemporary (*Ain't I a Woman?* can still refer to and cite older copies of *It Ain't Me Babe*) and the networks touched by *It Ain't Me Babe* would be altered. Second, the context of this statement suggests that these inter-periodical conversations are not merely intellectual but affective as well. Readers and writers care about these periodicals for their information—about events, legal issues, politics, feminism around the nation and globe—and for their affective value. A letter to the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* from a woman named Kathy reinforces this role for periodicals:

The newsletter is definitely wonderful—informative, and interesting and it always cheers me up a lot to know that somewhere other people are working too (I am a member of the Long Beach Women's Liberation). I am interested in becoming a lawyer (and hopefully, being able to do something for the movement in that way) and I was very disappointed in missing the law series (I was away in Oregon). I am going to contact some of the women on the list however. Keep up the good work.<sup>12</sup>

The affect that shapes periodical publication may also be seen through *Ain't I a Woman?*'s editors' comments about the open letter Rita Mae Brown wrote to the women's liberation movement. Their disappointment at being overlooked by Brown—coming across the letter in *off our backs*—and their frustration with Brown's generalizations about homophobia within feminism prompted their preface to their reprint of the letter. They printed the letter because it evoked not just a political response but also an affective one, indicating that affect shapes editorial decisions regarding newspaper content, which in turn shapes readers' imaginings of feminism.

<sup>11</sup> “Who We Are: Carol, Trudy, Linda, Dale, Pat, Jeannie, Vickie, Ann,” *Ain't I a Woman?*, April 30, 1971, p. 2. IWA.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Kathy, *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, October 2, 1970, p. 6. LAWLM collection.

Because producing and maintaining lines of communication were central to women's liberation groups and motivated the decision to publish a periodical in particular, groups received ephemera from throughout the United States. *Ain't I a Woman?*'s editors were explicit about wanting their paper to be "a forum of communication between women in the mid-west about ideas, actions, and events" and recognized the geographical and cultural landscape particular to the Midwest, including the low population density, dearth of urban centers, fewer women of color, and less visible and smaller "targets to attack."<sup>13</sup> In the same issue they write,

You can also contribute by committing your women's liberation group to a page, either in each issue or in every other issue. This kind of committment [*sic*] is the best way to make a mid-west paper of AIN'T I A WOMAN? The page can be articles (or any kind of printed material), pictures, drawings, cartoons, poems, etc. Fill it; it's yours! Write if your group is interested. We'll send details, deadlines, etc.

Various groups responded to this call, and the paper printed updates and information from Minot, North Dakota; Wooster, Ohio; Bloomington, Iowa; Grinnell, Iowa; Kansas City, Missouri; and Cleveland, Ohio. Consider also the periodicals mentioned in the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, either through an announcement of their publication, an excerpt, a reprint, or a brief citation: *The Women's Journal*, *Women's Studies Abstract*, *The Law & Women*, *The First Revolution*, *Women Today*, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, *Ramparts*, *The Register*, *Full Moon*, *Media Report to Women*, *Amazon Quarterly*, *Sojourner*, *American Journal of Sociology* (there is a special issue titled *Women in a Changing Society*), [Connecticut] *Valley Women's Studies Journal*, *Association of Women in Science*, *off our backs*, *Quest*, *Sister Courage*, *Socialist Revolution*, *Ella Ellison Support Committee Newsletter*, *Women and Art*, *Women's Legislative Review*, and *The Second Wave*. And a photograph of the Valley Women's Center in 1975 reveals the first page of the first issue of *Ain't I a Woman?* tacked on the wall, hinting at the many other periodicals that the center's library housed and, thus, the many other communications circuits crisscrossing the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*'s. These forms of intertextuality suggest that

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<sup>13</sup> "Editorial," *Ain't I a Woman?*, June 26, 1970, p. 2. IWA.

communication circuits were constantly reforming and creating new readerly and writerly connections. As new periodicals emerged and as new issues of existing periodicals were published, new conversations as well as conversations with new interlocutors developed.

In contrast, Darnton's circuit, in its structure—the oval punctuated by boxes with roles such as reader, bookseller, and publisher—presents the life cycle of a printed text as always already complete. Therefore, a communications circuit is inherently a successful communications circuit: the text conceived by an author ends up in the hands of a reader. This form of success, however, relies on additional assumptions that privilege presence over absence, about where the circuit begins and ends, and about what the text communicates. Offering a forceful critique of this concept of success, Simone Murray remarks that the communications circuit “has little regard for what founders in the system, for what remains unwritten, for that which is rejected for publication, or for books refused retail space or denied distribution outlets.” Therefore, a feminist communications circuit could usefully look for “the hiatuses, disruptions, and silences” in the process of publication and for the ways that the structures of publishing are also “an instrument for *non-communication*” (2004, 16).

The genre of feminist newspapers, newsletters, and journals published in the 1960s and 1970s is evidence of structural and ideological barriers in both mainstream publishing and the nonmainstream literature from the New Left and other countercultural movements, all of which led to misrepresentations of feminism in the pages of publications and the marginalization of women in the publication process. *Distaff* emerged from a broadside published by Barbara Scott, a candidate for political office, a publication that served as a space for Scott's political platform because she was not given space elsewhere. The first issue of *Distaff* recognizes this phenomenon through the words of Brenda Davillier, a New Orleans woman who ran for U.S. Senator in 1972:

The worst thing was that the media refused to take me seriously. When I called a news conference, few reporters came, and the coverage they gave me quoted statements out of context and didn't give me a fair chance for rebuttal. Channel 4, for example, showed me

saying I was a mother and that I cooked for my family myself, because I couldn't afford a maid, but they didn't give one second of time to air my views on the important political issues that the campaign was about.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, feminist publications themselves had editorial guidelines—whether said or unsaid—that created a new body of unpublished literature. Although the language of *Distaff*'s editorial objectives changes through the different issues, the editors portray the newspaper as a space in which a range of feminist activism was reported. In the first issue (1973) they write: “The Distaff is a new journal dedicated to serving Women as a forum for their creativity. We ask for your contributions and participation - Biographical sketches, Illustrations, cartoons, Articles about economics, politics, etc. concerning women, essays, poetry, short stories, reviews.”<sup>15</sup> And seven years later the editorial statement reads: “Our purpose is to print on a monthly basis news and events of interest to southern women, to serve as communication between women and women’s groups, and to provide an outlet for the work of women writers, journalists, photographers and artists.”<sup>16</sup> Such generic language and the phrase “New Orleans monthly feminist forum” that appears on the first page of the first eight issues (February 1973–September 1973) implies that the paper serves feminism and feminists in general and is not focused on a particular issue such as reproductive rights or lesbianism. The editors, though, were not without particular beliefs about feminism. Those beliefs, along with the shape of local and state politics, the desire to make the paper sustainable (which led them to include advertisements), and the audience they wanted to address affected what submissions they would publish. The lack of an explicit organizational structure did not mean that structure did not exist (Freeman 1972-73). Similarly, if an editorial collective did not outline a specific agenda, other than to provide a space for women’s voices or promote feminism, it did not mean that they published everything women submitted. In an informal conversation I had with Mary Gehman, who worked on each issue of

<sup>14</sup> Brenda Daviller, “It Doesn’t Hurt to Try,” *Distaff*, January 1973, p. 3. NCCROW.

<sup>15</sup> Editorial, *Distaff*, January 1973, p. 2. NCCROW.

<sup>16</sup> Editorial, *Distaff*, May 1980, p. 2. NCCROW.

*Distaff*, she referred to a local activist and friend who wanted *Distaff* to publish her Marxist leaflets and communist articles. Gehman, however, had to keep reminding this woman that space limitations in the newspaper meant that the editors had to be strategic about what they printed.<sup>17</sup> Thus, knowing that a number of essays on Marxism submitted by one woman were ultimately not published helps to contextualize the kind of feminism described and prescribed through *Distaff* and also reveals the presence of Marxist feminism in the city. In this sense, feminist periodicals affirm that a publishing circuit is necessarily exclusive. It is not only the boundaries around the editorial collective's understanding of what feminism is but also material constraints (e.g., the number of pages the collective can afford to print, the time limitations that determine if and to what extent women can contribute, and biases that shape what a printer will and will not publish) that contributed to the form of feminism produced and sustained by a periodical. Attention to what is not published can thus help demarcate the boundaries of a feminist collective identity. If something or someone has a significant presence in one periodical (e.g., Sojourner Truth in *Ain't I a Woman?*), asking why it is not the case for another periodical (e.g., the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*) reveals the differentials in local topographies of feminism and also in the periodicals themselves. As the previous chapter indicates, Truth was a powerful symbol for women, but her power resides primarily in the visual depiction of her body. Rarely did periodicals publish an essay or article about her or include the text of one of her speeches without an image. Because mimeographed periodicals could not depict graphics in as easily as newspapers that used offset printing techniques, the presence and absence of certain figures was related to printing practices and constraints and not only to politics or affect.

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<sup>17</sup> Informal conversation with Mary Gehman, November 11, 2009, New Orleans. See also the video recording of the panel "Spreading the Word: The Distaff: New Orleans' Monthly Feminist Forum," which was part of a symposium titled "Voices from the Louisiana Women's Liberation Movement: First-Hand Accounts from People Who Made It Happen," which was held at the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, March 24, 2001 (tape 2 of 4).

The communications circuit, in describing the successful life cycle of a book also offers a prescription for how to successfully publish. For example, according to the circuit, a text begins with an author and ends with a reader.<sup>18</sup> This is not surprising since objects of study are extant texts, and it would be difficult to research the text that has not been written or the reluctance of writers to publish their work. However, feminist periodicals hint at the fact that people do not enter the circuit based only on the desire to be published or to make a profit. In fact, these periodicals can be used to ask what brings people to their positions in the circuit. What are their motives? Northampton-based Mother Jones Press, for example, describes its approach to publishing in the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*:

Mother Jones Press was started about a year ago with several goals. We wanted to provide printing to women's groups and community groups at a cost they could afford. We wanted to teach women (starting with ourselves) printing skills which they usually don't have an opportunity to learn. And we wanted to do this by working in a collective, non-hierarchical way. With each of us learning all the various processes involved in printing. We also hoped to publish material that we and other groups in the area developed.<sup>19</sup>

The press, in another issue of the newsletter, identifies itself as feminist and socialist, further contextualizing how its members see printing as a political practice.<sup>20</sup> Although having their publications read and making enough money to keep the press in existence are indeed ways feminist publishers measured success, success was also determined by a collective's ability to develop collaborations among activists, share skills, and recruit new members to the press.

At the consumption end of the communications circuit, critiques of Darnton reveal that consumption of a text may be understood in ways other than reading.<sup>21</sup> In their revision of the communications circuit Adams and Barker use the category "survival" as one of the phases of a

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<sup>18</sup> Darnton complicates the reader-writer relationship by noting that although a reader "completes the circuit," writers are necessarily readers in that their writing is informed by other literature they read and they read their own words as they write (1982b, 67).

<sup>19</sup> *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, May 1974, p. 3. Folder 2, box 4, VWU records.

<sup>20</sup> *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, February 1974, p. 2. Folder 2, box 4, VWU records.

<sup>21</sup> See Chartier (1992, ch. 1) for a discussion of readers and reading.

text's life cycle. For them survival occurs through traditional sites like personal and public libraries, yet it may also occur through the disaggregation and recycling of parts of a text. Newspapers can be used as padding in a package (Adams and Barker 1993, 31), photographs of movie and music stars can be cut out of magazines and taped on a teen's bedroom wall or in a locker, and feminist periodicals can be packed up in boxes and stored instead of being discarded (as ephemera is expected to be). Ritual functions, such as the process of putting a hand on a Bible when making an oath, and gift giving (Price 2004, 305) also can be understood as indices of textual survival. Recall that the Valley Women's Center hung the cover image of the first issue of *Ain't I a Woman?* on the wall among other posters and flyers. And *Ain't I a Woman?*'s June 1972 issue includes only two different pieces: a reprint of "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" by Jo Freeman and the contents of the booklet *Anti-Mass* (part of which can be found in figure 5.3). The latter text is presented in such a way that readers can cut it out of the newspaper and re-create the booklet, as the following instructions indicate:

To assemble the pamphlet *Anti-Mass*: cutout all the pages on the solid black lines. These will actually be two pages, to be folded in the middle at the final step. Pile one page on top of the other, following the numbered pages (for example, 4 and 53 on top of 2 and 55, etc.) pages 28 and 29 will be at the top of the pile; the front and back covers will be at the bottom. Fold in half. Staple. (see figure 5.3)<sup>22</sup>

Offering readers such a text and instructions potentially extends the life cycle of the periodical (as well as what it reprints) and complicates its status as ephemera.

Survival is most often discussed as physical survival, and book historians tend to be focused on the survival of a text in two main ways: They privilege studying the survival of the text proper, asking how a text appears in different editions or reprints, as McCoy (2006) does with Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, or how a singular physical entity survives (e.g., a book that circulates through a book-of-the-month club [Radway 1997], is smuggled across national borders), or is catalogued in an archive. Rarely

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<sup>22</sup> *Anti-Mass* in *Ain't I a Woman?*, June 16, 1972. IWY.



do scholars of book history make central the discursive survival of a text, through, for example, citations or reprints of fragments of a larger text, or through people talking about it. Such discursive acts instead seem to fall within the purview of literary scholars studying topics like intertextuality or reception theory, where they—the discursive acts—are rarely looked at in connection with the materiality of their production, distribution, consumption, and survival. Feminist periodicals, in their explicitly dialogic function, are particularly useful sources for considering survival to be more than the existence of a singular text contained between a front and back cover.

### Dialogue

The possibility for dialogue exists because many feminist periodicals prioritized developing communication and conversation among women.<sup>23</sup> *Ain't I a Woman?*'s editors explain, "Our structure evolved because we wanted the paper to function as effectively as possible in a public dialog that would have an effect on revolutionary and feminist thought and activity in this country."<sup>24</sup> Periodicals were important because they broke the isolation many women felt after their shifts in consciousness. Activist Margaret Blanchard, who was part of the Baltimore, Maryland, collective that published *Women: A Journal of Liberation* recalls that "for many isolated women . . . as letters from readers poignantly reminded us, the Journal was their only contact with the women's movement" (1992, 85). Additionally, the diffuse, grassroots structure of the U.S. women's liberation movement and the informal organization meant that there were few institutionalized communication networks.<sup>25</sup> Periodicals became an effective mode of communication because they could travel easily and with little expense, the frequency of their

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<sup>23</sup> See Meeker (2006, ch. 6), Enke (2007, 67), and Onosaka (2006, ch. 2).

<sup>24</sup> Editorial, "More Thoughts on Structuring a Revolution" *Ain't I a Woman?*, May 19, 1972, p.2. IWY.

<sup>25</sup> Some notable exceptions were KNOW, Inc., WIND (Women in Distribution), and *Feminist Bookstore News*.

publication meant that information was often current, and they enabled many different voices to share the same physical and temporal space. Therefore, dialogue occurred within a single issue of a periodical, across different issues of the same periodical, and between different periodicals.

Periodicals produced communication through their material circulation. Most periodicals also were associated with a physical space—often a women’s center—where literature that the center subscribed to or received through an exchange agreement could be housed and made available to those in that space. A *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter* announcement titled “Feminist Magazines and Newspapers” tells readers that “everyone is encouraged to come down and see our new supply of literature. Keep yourself informed about the movement. Learn from the ideas of our sisters in all parts of the country.”<sup>26</sup> Through periodical exchanges and feminist libraries women became connected, learning what others are doing and how they were doing it. This form of communication does not necessitate dialogue in the sense that one party communicates something and another party replies. However, meeting minutes, position papers, and articles in periodicals indicate that dialogue did occur. For example, in the *Ain’t I a Woman?* article cited in the above paragraph, the writers preface their statement with, “Printed and influenced by the RF-28 structure article in the last issue.”<sup>27</sup> And the *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter* in one issue contains “a rebuttal to Nancy’s rebuttal to Jean Stapleton’s editorial in the June, 1970 N.O.W. Newsletter.”<sup>28</sup> These editorial comments reveal that the Iowa City and Los Angeles collectives have consumed texts from other feminist groups and are responding to other groups’ perspectives about and methods of organization in the women’s liberation movement (*Ain’t I a Woman?*) and regarding “the enemy” of women’s liberation (Los Angeles).

<sup>26</sup> Announcement, “Feminist Magazines and Newspapers,” *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, September 11, 1970, p. 2. LAWLM collection.

<sup>27</sup> RF-28 stands for Radical Feminists 28, a Minneapolis, MN, group. *Ain’t I a Woman?* published two articles by them, “On Organization in the Women’s Movement” (March 30, 1972, p.8-9) and “On the Significance of Class to the Revolutionary Feminist Movement” (August 18, 1972, p.6-8). IWY.

<sup>28</sup> This text is an editorial preface to a statement written by Ellie Stein and Adele Wallace, *L.A. Women’s Liberation Newsletter*, summer 1970, p. 8. Folder 1, LAWLM collection.

Within an individual periodical one could find a space, or forum, for dialogue and communication.<sup>29</sup> An advertisement for *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* describes itself as “[providing] a national forum for long-term, in-depth feminist political analysis and ideological development.”<sup>30</sup> *Distaff* addresses readers at the end of its second issue: “When the preview issue of DISTAFF appeared last month it was greeted by many people as a positive addition to the press in New Orleans; a chance for women of the city to control their own media, to be heard on common issues and to communicate with each other.”<sup>31</sup> And in a document from early 1974 titled “A Working Structure for the Valley Women’s Union” the newsletter is described as “more than a collection of news items and should reflect our philosophy and principles, and [also] be an organ of education and communication between Union and area groups, as well as providing commentary on national issues.”<sup>32</sup> *Ain’t I a Woman?* also attempted to foster communication and build feminist community by offering one page of their newspaper to women’s liberation groups around the Midwest. If the group organized the content and layout, and then sent it to *Ain’t I a Woman?*, the editorial collective would publish it at no cost to the other group.

Readers, too, perceive periodicals in this manner. The Cambridge *Female Liberation Newsletter* published a letter from women in Brighton, Massachusetts, that reads,

We finally got together enough extra after rent and food etc. to send some for the newsletter. It is excellent because it serves a purpose that pamphlets and magazines don’t touch. It is a dialogue--comments and questions in the letters, last-minute calendar events, news from women outside of the charmed circle of the Northeast. Hopefully it will keep some of this informal dialogue quality and at the same time extend its coverage.”<sup>33</sup>

Dialogue is fundamental to feminist periodicals also in their production. Meeting minutes from a Valley Women’s Center staff meeting reveal that “there will be a new system for getting the

<sup>29</sup> See Flannery (2001, 114-15), McDermott (1994, 26), and Farrell (1998, 153). For the importance of print in maintaining communication networks outside women’s liberation, see Pawley (2001).

<sup>30</sup> Announcement, *Sister*, July 1974, p. 12. SCLSSR.

<sup>31</sup> “Editorial,” *Distaff*, February 1973, p. 12. NCCROW.

<sup>32</sup> “A Working Structure for the Valley Women’s Union,” 1974. Folder 12, box 2, VWC records.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Polly Gould, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, April 19, 1971, p. 1. SSC.

newsletter done more efficiently. Watch the log for details. Also we saw the need to define what the newsletter is and what we want to accomplish with it. We'll talk about this at a staff meeting in the near future.”<sup>34</sup> Conversations, because they involve practices of citation—referring to something previously published—allow for the cited text to survive. Its prior incarnation and present existence are affirmed for the reader, and the power of writing and communication contributes as well to an imagined future. Lorde in 1977 gave a paper at the Modern Language Association annual meeting that has since been published as her essay, “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action.” In it Lorde urges her audience to use the power of language to speak and name the truths they know, because, she writes, “in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing” (1984, 43). Conversations can thus be understood as a practice of reclaiming and scrutinizing language to reveal the unnamed and hidden truths of our lives. Both forms of textual survival—discursive and material—contributed to the survival of the women’s liberation movement.

Letters are a particularly rich site for understanding the ways that women, in effect, conversed through different issues of a periodical and across different periodicals, so it is to this feature of feminist periodicals to which I now turn. *Female Liberation Newsletter* introduced almost all the issues of the newsletter with letters from readers. One epistolary exchange begins with Mary from Brookline, Massachusetts (she does not include a last name). The extent of this series of letters is unusual in the number of issues it spans and the number of voices heard. Most dialogues of this type may contain a number of different voices within one issue of a periodical or continue for several issues after the initial provocation; however it is rare that editors will publish this number of letters across several different issues.

In her first letter, published July 26, 1971, Mary writes, “Dear Sisters, I am about to get myself sterilized, and would like to share my findings with you.” She goes on to describe her

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<sup>34</sup> “Minutes of Staff Meeting,” October 29, 1972. Folder 4, box 1, VWC records.

experience regarding the forms she had to sign in order to receive this surgery. The form requires her husband's signature, and although the forms men must fill out in order to get vasectomies also ask for the "wife's permission," Mary wonders if both requirements are enforced comparably.

She concludes with,

I am still considering leaving the [husband's signature] line blank, or writing his name myself, or making up a crazy name just out of spite. But that might delay things, and perhaps I should spend the time and energy on more important issues, or at least more clear-cut issues. Comments, anyone? Yours in Sisterhood, Mary.<sup>35</sup>

In the following issue (August 2, 1971) the editors print a response, from another woman named Mary:

Dear Sisters,  
In reply to Mary of Brookline about sterilization: my state senator, John F. Aylmer, is currently working on the first draft of a bill that would make it illegal for a doctor to refuse sterilization to any person desiring it unless there were medical contradictions . . . . Here's hoping this brings some good results. . . . I'll keep you posted on what develops. In sisterhood,  
Mary McDermott<sup>36</sup>

And in the August 9, newsletter Sandy Kent writes:

Dear Sisters: This is mainly to Mary who is about to be sterilized. I was sterilized in June and it was a positive experience except for the 'husband's permission' hassle. . . . Mary, I hope you are not going the old major surgery route. I had a laparoscopy. It's so much quicker, cheaper and less traumatic for your system.

Sandy then goes on to describe the procedure in more detail and recommend doctors. She closes with: "Call me if there's [*sic*] anything else I can tell you" and provides her address and phone number, both of which are printed in the newsletter. Also in the August 9 issue is a letter from Karen Lindsey: "Dear Sisters, This is in response to the letter from Mary on page [*sic*] 1 of your newsletter. I don't know anything of the situation in Mass, having just gotten here from New York. But now that I'm settling in Boston (Cambridge), I'd like to check it out." Karen describes New York feminist activism around women's health and then offers:

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<sup>35</sup> Letter from Mary, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, July 26, 1971, p. 1. SSC.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Mary McDermott, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, August 2, 1971, p. 1. SSC.

Anyhow, if Mary, or any other woman, would like to get in touch with me, I can be reached at [she provides her phone number and address]. I've never done any kind of organizing, but if there were a few of us, maybe we could begin to do something. Also, I'd be interested in helping out on *Second Wave* please let me know what I could do.

Sincerely,  
Karen Lindsey<sup>37</sup>

An additional letter is published on August 16; it begins with: "Dear Mary, I saw your letter in the *Female Liberation Newsletter* of July 26, and because I, like you, am interested in having myself sterilized, I thought I might try to answer some of your questions and ask some of you."<sup>38</sup>

Then we hear from Mary from Brookline, who wrote the first letter:

Dear Sisters,  
Thank you for your letters and support concerning my projected sterilization. I learned that many were interested and more information in this area needs exploring. [She gives a report on the operation: it went well, and she announces that she got some nurses to write ERA postcards]  
I did this extra politicking [regarding the nurses] because I felt guilty about not challenging the husband's signature. You see I had been bleeding for ten months. (Two different pills and an IUD.) The world used to make me feel as though this were my fault somehow. Being a woman, with these extra problems, I should be ashamed and beg everyone's pardon. But I'm not anymore. Reading your letters, and all the other *Female Liberation* literature has made me believe that we also have a right to complete medical care. A better right, in fact, since without us they have no people at all.  
I only feel guilty that I didn't forge my husband's signature. Let us all work on the legal aspect. And anyone who wants to call me to find out more about the operation, please call [phone number]. I have heard that there is even a simpler operation, an afternoon job, that will be available in Mass. sometime after Nov. As soon as I know for sure, I'll let you know.  
In sisterhood,  
Mary<sup>39</sup>

The conversation started by Mary's letter, however, has additional verbal reverberations. Four months later the newsletter publishes a letter from Mary McDermott that offers an update on her political work related to sterilization laws:

<sup>37</sup> The letter from Sandy Kent was published in *Female Liberation Newsletter*, Aug. 9, 1971, p. 1, and the letter from Karen Lindsey was published in the same issue on p. 2 (SSC). The *Valley Women's Center Newsletter* published excerpts from these letters in their August 20, 1971, issue (p. 1) titled "Notes on Sterilization" (folder 1, box 4, VWC records).

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Louise, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, Aug. 16, 1971, p. 2. SSC.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Mary, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, Sept. 20, 1971, p. 1. SSC.

You probably remember that I had my state senator, John F. Aylmer, working on a bill to make it illegal for a doctor to refuse anyone sterilization. . . . There's no legal reason why a person can't be sterilized, *if* a doctor or hospital willing to do it can be found. It would be a great thing if someone could compile a listing of Boston-area hospitals that will do sterilizations regardless of a person's age or childlessness, including a note as to whether or not the spouse's permission is required.<sup>40</sup>

Then, almost a year after Mary from Brookline's query to newsletter readers, the *Female*

*Liberation Newsletter* editors print the following announcement:

\*\* Last summer, there was a series of letters in the newsletter about the difficulties women, particularly childless and unmarried women, have in getting voluntarily sterilized. Recently Beacon Press has put out a book, FOOLPROOF BIRTH CONTROL, by Lawrence Lader, which has a number of fine essays about voluntary sterilization and, most important, a list of hospitals around the country with liberal sterilization policies, and also hospitals that do laparoscopies, the newer simpler operation for women. It also lists vasectomy clinics. The book will be on loan at the F.L. library.<sup>41</sup>

This lengthy exchange is worth citing because it reveals the commitment to communication and conversation that the editors and readers of this newsletter had. Not only were the editors willing to devote a number of pages to this discussion about sterilization but readers/letter writers also offered their contact information (being newsletter readers they would likely know that their contact information would be published and thus accessible to all readers), indicating that their interest in more communication and information was not only rhetorical. It also reflects readers' assumptions that one purpose of this forum was precisely to converse with other women. In her initial letter, Mary describes her concern about the requirement that her husband sign a form before she could go through with the sterilization procedure and then asks, "Comments, anyone?" This question reflects an understanding that this newsletter differs from mainstream or nonfeminist periodicals. First, most letters written to periodicals are in response to or directed at an article or writer previously published. As a result, any conversations usually occur between periodical writers and readers. Mary's letter, though, is written with the explicit purpose of informing readers about her own experience and its possible political implications, and

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Mary McDermott, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, January 17, 1972, p. 5. SSC.

<sup>41</sup> "Late Notices," *Female Liberation Newsletter*, June 19, 1972, p. 6. SSC.

she writes with the explicit desire to receive feedback. Therefore, the periodical becomes an intermediary that connects different readers and promotes conversations among them. Second, this question assumes that readers' knowledge is important and reinforces the blurriness of the boundary between author/reader and expert/layperson by validating women's personal experiences as a source of knowledge, expertise, and authority. By asking for readers' feedback, Mary challenges the logic that only already-designated people may be sources of information.

How does dialogue relate to the survival of a text? In a very basic sense, the issue of the newsletter in which Mary's first letter was published survives by being referenced, both explicitly and implicitly, in the series of letters. When Mary McDermott writes, "In reply to Mary of Brookline about sterilization," the issue that contains Mary of Brookline's letter is reanimated. Its existence is made real for those who had not read that issue (perhaps encouraging them to locate a copy) and is revitalized for those who already read it (perhaps encouraging them to reread a copy). This kind of survival differs from the physical preservation of a text because it is possible that someone who reads the issue containing Mary McDermott's letter will never have access to the hard copy of the issue with Mary of Brookline's letter. Thus, despite my emphasis on the importance of materiality and the interactions of form and content to produce meaning, survival of a text need not be achieved only if someone can hold that text in her hands.

Dialogue offers additional insight into discursive modes of survival. Several of the letter writers refer to future actions. Mary McDermott writes, "I'll keep you posted on what develops" and Mary from Brookline in her last letter refers to a simpler sterilization operation that may exist and tells readers, "As soon as I know for sure, I'll let you know." Thus far, survival has been characterized by the existence of a text as temporally present (a copy of the text can be accessed) or as having had existed (its existence is referred to subsequent to its publication). However, the anticipation produced through dialogue cultivates a space in which part of survival involves the imagining of a future text. The publication of dialogue, therefore, is especially important for



social movements because part of what makes a collective identity mobilize people to become social movement actors is individuals' ability to imagine this identity persisting. Because these periodicals were central to the growth and reproduction of U.S. feminism, the fact that readers imagined a periodical's next issue also helped them imagine a future for feminism. And philosophers Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida point to a name's iterability—its having been iterated in the past and the potential for it to be iterated in the future—as one force that makes interpellation work; a name, in order for it to hail an individual, must be iterable. Consider, then, the importance of naming a social movement. Its interpellation is meaningful both because of the connotations associated with prior interpellations and usages of the name and, for those active and invested in the movement, because of the promise of its future existence. This future, as well, is a discursive and material one.

Imagining, naming, and desiring a future, of course did not necessarily ensure its realization. *Distaff*, for example, included an editorial on the back page of its January 1982 issue that ends with,

\*DISTAFF: 1982\* will carry regular columns on women in the ARTS, in BUSINESS, in POLITICS, and in SPORTS. The DISTAFF DIGEST will recap the month's major local, state, national and international issues affecting women. OPINIONS, both yours and ours, will take greater prominence. The PEOPLE, RESOURCES, and SERVICES important to YOU will be close to you through DISTAFF's pages. The NEWS in the next decade is ours for the making. The NEW DISTAFF is ready to tell the story.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the editors' optimism this was the last issue of the newspaper. On the one hand, discourse is not sufficient to provide a material future for a periodical, and as the chapter about sisterhood demonstrates, a name can discursively reproduce a collective identity but women also need to actively contribute their time and energy to the material reproduction of periodicals, women's centers, and activist events. On the other hand, without someone (or many people) imagining the

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<sup>42</sup> "New Distaff," *Distaff*, January 1982, p. 12. NCCROW.

next issue of a periodical or the first issue of a new periodical, it is unlikely that one will exist in material form.

Feminist periodicals demonstrate how “success” in publishing is temporally extensive—backward and forward looking—and both material and discursive. Darnton’s communications circuit, however, suggests that a text ends with a reader and, thus, that the act of reading successfully completes the circuit. In deconstructing Darnton’s communications circuit I do not intend to set up a straw person (or in this case, model) that I then tear down mindlessly. Darnton himself recognizes the limitations of what he produced almost thirty years ago, and the number of scholars engaging the circuit suggests that it has been a productive intervention into the field history of the book. This model, nonetheless, has served a productive purpose. It offers a rubric to connect different aspects of a text’s life cycle and facilitates interdisciplinary approaches to the study of texts, and also gives history of the book scholars a base from which to develop different models. For my analysis a communications circuit foregrounds as well the spatiality, temporality, and materiality of a text by suggesting the movements through space and time that comprise a text’s life cycle.

## Conclusion

For a project whose seeds began with zines and that was motivated by the apparent antagonisms that have produced “second wave” and “third wave” feminism, it is perhaps appropriate to return to these publications and this dynamic. At the 2008 conference organized by the History of Feminism Network in London I gave a paper based on Chapter 3, in which I offered exploratory comments about the different deployments of sisterhood in feminist ephemera. As an example of one of the many deployments of the term “sister,” I showed the cover of the July 1973 issue of *Sister* (see figure 6.1). After the panel, scholar-activist Red Chidgey approached me because she had seen that image before, but in the context of riot grrrl publications and not 1970s U.S. feminism. She then sent me this image (figure 6.2).

What does it mean that twenty-five years later this image appears on the cover of a riot grrrl zine? Does it imply continuity or discontinuity in feminism? Into what genealogy can we narrate this pair of images?

The zine image is a reproduction of a reproduction of the cover of *Sister*. Fragments of text in the bottom left identify it as “figure 5” and as a “newspaper of the Los Angeles Women’s Center.” This caption suggests that the initial reproduction was for a publication whose readership wouldn’t have been familiar with its origins and whose publishers required a citation. However, the riot grrrl zine cover offers no such information, and in fact covers up the previous citation through the graphic arrangement. This practice of using parts of other publications as if they were common property is a characteristic of zines that reflects the production process for many feminist periodicals (see Baxandall 2001, 226). It is in many ways a reflection of tactical modes of publication, seizing what you can when you can, using the resources that are immediately accessible, and working according to do-it-yourself protocols. This reincarnation of 1970s feminism in a riot grrrl zine published in 1998 intersects with a number of issues that have shaped

my dissertation and has contributed to my thinking about the meanings and materials of repetition.

Well before the early 1990s, when the third wave is commonly narrated as incipient, scholars and activists note a shift in the structure and politics of U.S. feminism, a shift that had a significant effect on feminist publishing. Introducing their anthology of primary source texts from the women's liberation movement, Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon write,

The documents collected here are the flesh, bones, and spirit of the women's movement and they carried its dispatches across the country and all over the world. We feature the earliest years of the movement, from the mid-1960s to about 1977, because this was the period of the most yeasty ferment, creativity, and mass participation. (2000, 1)

Later they affirm that “the mass social movement called women's liberation did dissolve by the end of the 1970s” and attribute this shift to activist burnout, changes in women's lives related to employment and family, and the increased distance from the energy of the New Left (18).

Offering an additional reason for the changes in the women's liberation movement, Jean Curthoys draws a connection between the disappearance of a radical liberation theory from feminism and “the emergence of a powerful and bureaucratically connected women's studies movement” (1997, 56). Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy similarly articulates a distinction between the socialist feminist theories from the 1960s and 1970s and those from the late 1970s and early 1980s (2008, 510).

Ellen Willis in the introduction to *Daring to Be Bad* observes that the book's chronology reveals that “the movement took shape in 1968 and ended, for all practical purposes, five years later” (1989, vii). And Barbara Ryan (1992) calls 1975 “a watershed year.” Using this phrase as a section heading, she follows it with the subsections “The end of the original radical feminist groups” (69), “Fragmentation on the left,” and “Internal challenge in NOW,” all of which suggest turmoil within the movement. Also noteworthy is the trend in academic publishing that started with the first issue of *Feminist Studies* in 1972, and included *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (first published in 1975), *Frontiers* (1975), *Women's Studies International Quarterly*

(1978), *Feminist Review* (1979), and *Women's Studies Quarterly* (1980).<sup>1</sup> In contrast to a women's studies monograph or anthology and also to newsletters and newspapers, sustaining a scholarly journal requires greater commitment and resources in the production process and a greater pool of potential contributors and reviewers if the journal editors wish to have the publication meet conventional academic standards. Without institutionalization and its accompanying bureaucratization, such publications could not exist.

Institutionalization is one process that is both the effect and site of a feminist proper. Recalling de Certeau, the proper has a certain relationship with space, which he elaborates as an effect of strategizing: "[strategizing] postulates that a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats. . . can be managed" (1984, 36). In other words, having a place gives one control, control that produces one's environment as exterior to one's self, as able to be mastered, and thus as Cartesian (1984, 36, 134). The ability to have and have control in a space relies on repetition of the same, and as this dissertation has shown, when something is repeated in contexts with similar meaning and affect a norm is produced. While "proper" is not a synonym for "normative," it does encompass what we might consider normative or the status quo in the sense that through proper space the norms of a particular space are affirmed. Reading "Dear Sisters" over and over and over in a newspaper's letter section solidifies that salutation as a feminist one. While de Certeau might lead us to consider the proper something to be avoided, as a space of domination and oppression, where meaning is singular and fixed, this examination of feminism shows that a proper place may be necessary to social movements. How is it possible to form a collective identity without frame consistency? How can political actors recruit and mobilize movement insiders and outsiders without a place from which to do so? Can a social movement reproduce itself without consistent

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<sup>1</sup> The formation of the National Women's Studies Association in 1977 further institutionalized feminism in the academy. See also Howe (2000).

access to resources? These questions are meant to be provocative rather than definitive and to encourage new investigations of social movement practices, ideals, affects, and politics. They have illuminated this dissertation and guided my analyses of the women's liberation movement through periodicals.

As I have argued, repetition is one facet of forming a feminist proper, a place in which a set of feminist ideas are consolidated as ideals, describing and prescribing the order of principles, goals, bodies, and practices. Despite the utility of this proper, in the production of a proper some things also are lost. To use an extreme example, when a group goes from being guerrilla warriors to the ruling party of a nation-state it loses flexibility, mobility, and the ability to rapidly adapt based on a changing environment. Those in power lose the underground and the potential to be subversive, and instead of a frictional relationship with the status quo they become the status quo: their labors reproduce an economy of the same (Jakobsen 1998) rather than resisting and interrupting it. Practices of resistance and revolution, then, seem to require finding a balance between a proper and an improper and between openness and closure.

Despite their attempts to produce a proper feminist place, the periodicals studied here had fiery and tumultuous lifespans, rarely lasting longer than ten years (most closer to five). Nevertheless, they formed the foundations—discursively, affectively, politically, and materially—on which a stronger feminist proper could be built. By the mid-1970s many of the community-based women's centers that provided a home for these periodicals closed down, and we see women's centers becoming a significant presence on college and university campuses. The repeated descriptions of feminism's changed character raise the question, why did this moment not become the start of a new “wave” or generation of feminism?<sup>2</sup> What is it about the

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<sup>2</sup> Nancy Whitier, providing another perspective on generations within a social movement, argues that within an organization cohorts can serve as different generations because they “are shaped by distinct transformative experiences that differ [from those of other cohorts] because of subtle shifts in the political context” (1997, 762). Therefore, for her a political generation is bounded by the experience of

early 1990s that allowed Rebecca Walker's claim "I am the third wave" (1992, 41) to be taken up so widely by those disavowing and distancing themselves from the feminism of the previous two and a half decades? It is worth noting that, regardless of the subsequent depictions of third wave feminism—by others and by Walker herself—in this 1992 article Walker is responding not to feminism of the past but to recent experiences of misogyny and sexism. In fact she articulates an explicit rhetorical connection to feminism from the 1970s by declaring, "I am ready to decide, as my mother decided before me, to devote much of my energy to the history, health, and healing of women" (41). How, then, did the third wave develop such an oppositional relationship with the second wave?

However, before re-affixing too firmly the wave structure or invoking the 1970s as the golden age of feminism in a way that romanticizes the activism during this period (see Kennedy 2008, 514, 517) I want to shift the terms of the discussion.<sup>3</sup> Feminism continues, persists, but also changes. What is more productive is thinking about how it changes and why and where. Feminist periodicals—their production, distribution, and consumption—offer an important way to conceptualize feminist practices and to think about changes.

Part of what contributes to the wave narrative and the concomitant nostalgia is that feminism has been mainstreamed. Consider, for example, women's efforts to desegregate Help Wanted ads by gender in the 1970s. A letter to *Female Liberation Newsletter* points to the real and repeated labor required to make this change:

Our group is small and young but growing every week. We've had a recent skirmish with the Cape Cod Standard Times, in particular, with the publisher, De Luca. After writing him three times requesting a change in his classified policies (presently, they use headings Help Wanted Female, Help Wanted Male, Help Wanted Male and Female), we got no response. . . .

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collective identity formation its members experience, so differences in perception and practice of a collective identity is what ultimately distinguishes one cohort from another.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Hewitt's (2010) elaboration of a radio waves model of feminism has helped me expand my thinking on this topic.

Now we plan to consult legal aid and enlist the support of womens' groups in the area. We're writing a petition this week, but we admit we're not sure it will do much good. In short, we need help and any ideas you have will be gratefully welcomed. In any event, keep in touch. We very often feel there are very few people who agree with us. Write, or call after 5 pm.<sup>4</sup>

That gender remains a factor in vocational, hiring, and promotional practices is evidence of the hegemony of gender ideologies and that such integration does not remove sexism from the workplace. However, the absence of explicitly gendered job descriptions (one can argue that now they are implicitly gendered) is so institutionalized that it is no longer recognized as feminist. The invisibility of the struggles that led to the social and legal transformations contributes to discourses that narrate the twenty-first century as postfeminist. Perhaps paradoxically, then, the production of a feminist proper space has contributed to its invisibility. As ethics and practices—like desegregated want ads—that once were explicitly feminist have become part of the popular subconscious (read: people are now able to believe that this is just the way it is), feminism becomes less locatable.

In other ways the locations of feminism have become more firmly fixed, having shifted from the realm of the tactical to the strategic. Starting in the mid-1970s women's centers, rape crisis centers and hotlines, feminist bookstores and coffeehouses, and women's studies programs and departments could be found in phone books because they had more permanent locations and consistent access to resources. Instead of precariously existing free or open universities—hosted by women's centers, local public libraries, and occasionally universities—women's studies has become an academic field comprising 661 academic programs.<sup>5</sup> Rather than wandering around in

---

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Ellen Lynch, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, December 1971, p. 1-2. SSC. See also "Notes on Twin Cities Liberation" by Sue O'Brien, *Indianapolis Women's Liberation Newsletter*, January 1971, p. 1-3. Schlesinger Library; announcement, *Lancaster Women's Liberation*, September 1973. Angela Jeannet Papers.

<sup>5</sup> "Guide to Women's & Gender Studies Programs: Undergraduate Programs," National Women's Studies Association, <http://nwsa.org/research/theguide/undergrad.php>. It is worth noting, though, that institutionalization and location do not seamlessly translate into greater access. Taking women's studies courses through a college requires some form of enrollment and most courses are offered during the



a strange (or familiar) city with only a mimeographed newsletter as a guide, looking for the places where feminists gathered, women could count on the nearest college for feminist information and information about feminism.

As the structure of U.S. feminism shifted from a primarily grassroots, extremely local movement to existing within formal institutions the communicative needs changed. Understanding feminism's trajectories through print helps make sense of the reappearance of Wonder Woman on the cover of a riot grrrl zine as well as my initial sense that *Rat*, *Ain't I a Woman?*, *It Ain't Me Babe*, and *off our backs* were in some ways in kinship with zines. The energy, anger, excitement, brilliant analyses, wit, and revolutionary commitments that drew me to activist zines permeate feminist periodicals from the 1970s. Aesthetically the two genres share commonalities: provocative imagery and language, the presence of typos and errors that sometimes are corrected and sometimes are not, and the ways in which their low-tech, DIY modes of production are made visible. Production, then, connects riot grrrls and 1970s feminism too. Although perhaps not for the same reasons, zines and 1970s periodicals are produced tactically, often collaboratively, and in tension with the mainstream, for-profit media industrial complex. Taking control of the means and resources of production allow both groups to circulate media that conventional publishers would censor and to represent themselves in their own language and with their own images. Such an approach to analyzing feminism can open up and complicate our taxonomies and histories of feminism. Looking at the stories that publications tell—paying attention not only to content but also to practices of production and distribution—alters the narrative we produce about alliances and oppositions, differences and similarities, and theories and practices.

## Illustrations

**Intro.1** "Sisters Smash Sexism, Technocracy & Planned Obsolescence," *Ain't I a Woman?*, March 12, 1971, p. 10. (IWA)

# SISTERS SMASH SEXISM, TECHNOCRACY & PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE

## HOW TO FIX CHEAP STEREOs

### Good Words

A Phillips screw has a Criss-cross groove, you need a special screwdriver with a pointy end to remove them. Phillips screwdrivers are cheap + you can get one at a hardware store.

These notes are from experience + watching + asking questions. They apply to "portable" under \$100-type record players, not compact cets like KCM, Garrard, Sony, etc. These seem to have different problems than cheap sets like I have.

Portable stereos are made to wear out + fuck up + be hard to take apart. I keep remembering how electronics is a very male thing - all these screws + sockets...

The repairs listed here are mostly mechanical + you don't have to understand much electronic shit (I don't). You learn it by doing it....

### THINGS

Scratchy sound

Underline tone arm

Scratchy buzzing sound

Only one speaker working

Static or hum

Skipping

Too fast

Too slow and/or whirring sound and/or squeaking at regular intervals

### VOICE / WHAT PART

Needle

Record

Cartridge

Speaker

Inside, lying on its front

black paper

Wires

connection plug

cartridge

power supply

Turntable

Turntable speed switch

Turntable inside

### TAKING APART THE TURNTABLE

Tools: you need small pliers, screwdrivers with short handles, (one regular, one Phillips-type), tape, and some very light machine oil - "jewelers" oil is best, but 3-in-1 oil will do. Time: allow yourself at least 1 1/2 hours. And take notes as you work; lay down parts on a piece of paper and label them or trace around them. Things have to go back together in order.

The metal platform "floats" on springs over a base of wood or fibreboard. There are usually 2 Phillips screws kitty-corner from each other. Loosen them and the metal and wood platforms will come together. If there is no wood base, find a hole near one of the 2 screws (there should be one on the right side) reach in & find an anchor holding the screw, horizontally. Snap the anchor up vertically & push the side of the turntable up. Also press the tone arm down on its arrestor so it won't dangle.

If there is a wood base, there are 4, 6 or 8 screws, usually Phillips, holding the base to the cabinet. Remove these and pry a little at the wood edge & slowly lift the whole platform up about 5 inches. Be careful. There are wires from the amplifier to the turntable which are soldered and it's a hassle if you break the connection on either end. Determine how far you can lift without straining the wires, and prop up the platform at that point with a piece of wood or something.

Page Ten

Volume 1 Number 13

Ain't I



**Intro.3**

Front cover of *Ain't I a Woman?*, September, 28, 1970. (IWA)





## Intro.4

Front cover of *Distaff*, January 1973. (NCCROW)

LATIMER & KARP ON ABORTION 15C

# DISTAFF


VOL. 1, NO. 1 NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA FEBRUARY 1973

new orleans monthly feminist forum

## MARTHA GRIFFITHS--

### we're glad you're there

By CELESTE NEWBROUGH



From a roaring hen to a rising phoenix was Martha Griffiths, Congresswoman from Michigan, most frequently mentioned name for a female Supreme Court appointment and a potential contender for the Presidency in 1976.

Armed with courage and a commitment to learn of Martha Griffiths as a person, we drove to Baton Rouge on January 26 where she spoke before the La. Association of Business and Professional Women (BPAW). Inside the posh, Golden Deeds Room of the Prince Murat Hotel, assorted business women and local dignitaries dined on steak frites awaiting Martha Griffiths, whose plane was delayed. In the rear there were chairs for those who wanted to hear but couldn't afford \$7 a plate. In the outer room we waited with a handful of male reporters and a woman friend from the STATES ITEM.

At 8:40 P.M. Martha Griffiths arrived. She was fitzyish, handsome, and tired. Waiting, as politicians always wait for the lights and cameras to be readied, she flashed an occasional smile, then played her face, almost apologetically.

Under the garish light a male reporter interviewed her. He was sleek and soft-spoken, and kept saying "woman's lib." She answered his questions without an "er," hammered out facts and exuded confidence.

Inside the Golden Deeds Room she rose, as in court, to present her case for the ERA. If she had any notes they were not consulted for she had said this before and would say it again in state after state until the ERA is modified or inescapably buried. To this Louisiana audience she alluded to Huey Long, Edwin Edwards, welfare reform and social security, using facts like most politicians use smiles-to establish rapport. Once she had everyone satisfied with at least one fact, she warned to her abiding concern. "The real battle here is between the people of the United States and the Supreme Court," she pronounced to her pin-drop audience. "They could have written women into the Constitution almost two centuries ago."

Later she slipped into a little woman's humor. "When you bury your husband you ought to cry. . . because the credit cards go with him." The BPAW cracked up.

After a standing ovation Martha Griffiths spoke with small clusters of audience while we hovered in the wings. She told reporters she'd be available for interview the next morning. We told her that we'd come from New Orleans and represented a new women's newspaper. She said OK, she'd talk with us tonight.

continued on page 6

## ABORTION: WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

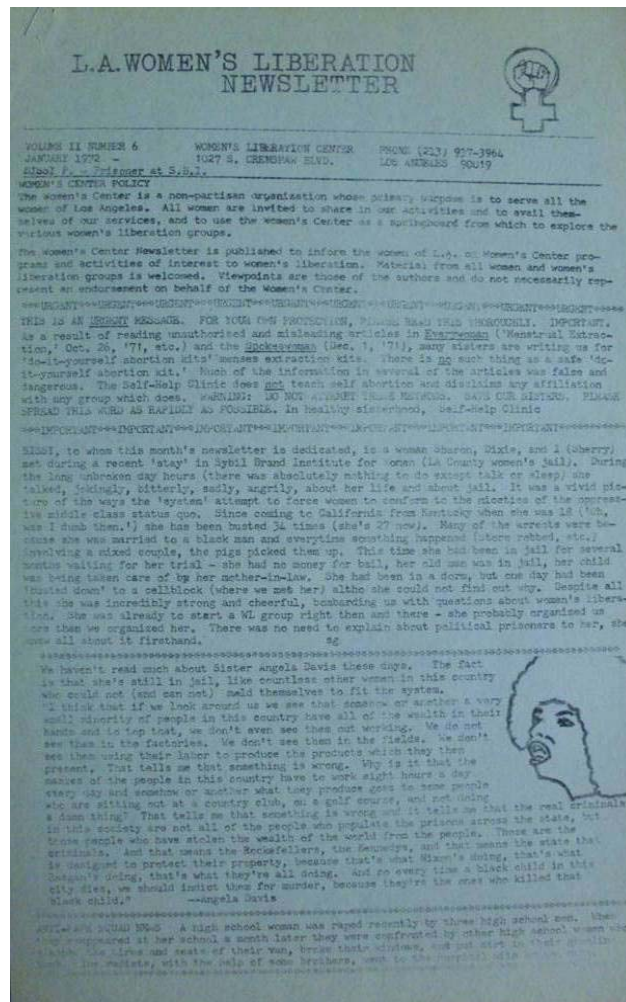
The U.S. Supreme Court's decision on abortion will have profound, long-range effects, though its immediate implications are unclear, and will remain so for months as the issue is fought to resolution in terms of current laws in 44 states.

According to local feminist Attorney Debbie Hollenson, the routes by which legal abortion may become a reality in Louisiana are several.

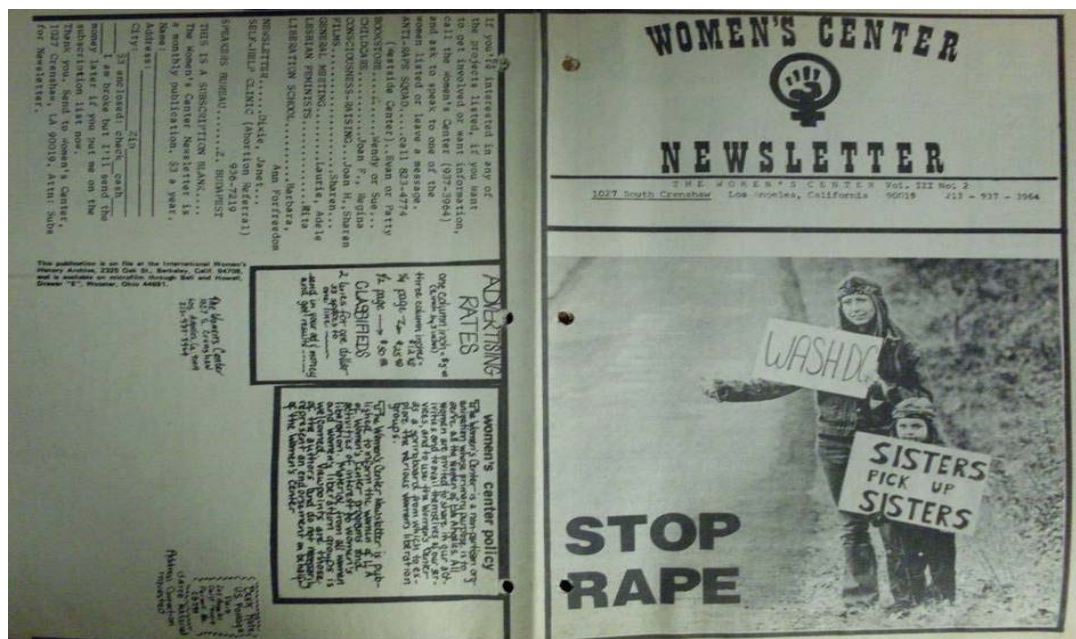
- Invalidation of current laws by Attorney General William Guste in light of the decision. This early and simple resolution of the matter is highly unlikely in view of Guste's public response to the decision.
- Rendering of a per curiam decision by the Supreme Court in the pending case of *Roe vs. LA. State Bd. of Medical Examiners*, handled by Atty. Gen. Smith. This may occur on February 20. Settlement of this case would mean that a physician's license could not be revoked in LA. for performing an abortion; however, the law concerning criminal liability would remain untouched.
- The ACLU is seeking a plaintiff (a woman or plaintiffs) ostensibly a woman and her physician) to challenge the state's criminal statute. Such a case could be quickly processed but, depending upon the presiding judge, may also drag on for some time.
- District Atty. John Manacides of Jefferson Parish states he will pursue pending criminal prosecutions against physicians accused of performing abortions. These physicians could raise the unconstitutionality of the state law in their defense.

Developments on this issue are sure to occur and change rapidly over the next month, and readers are urged to follow daily papers and other media to keep informed.

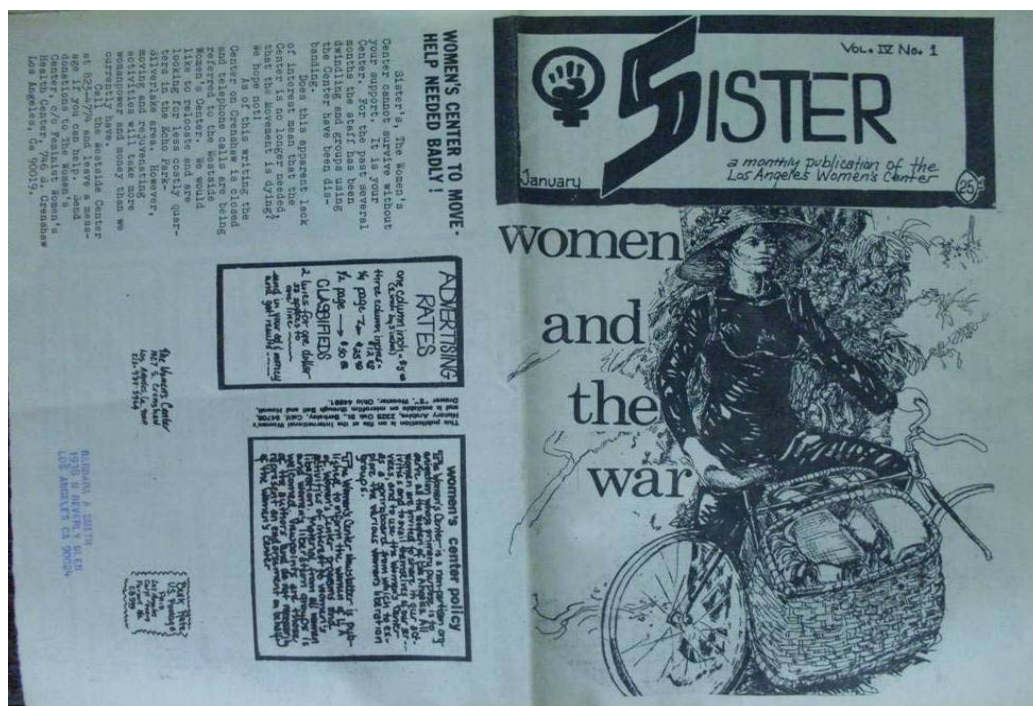
**Intro.5** Page 1 of the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, January 1972. (Folder 2, LAWLM collection)



**Intro.6** Front and back covers of the *Women's Center Newsletter*, [fall 1972]. (Folder "Women's Union," OHC)

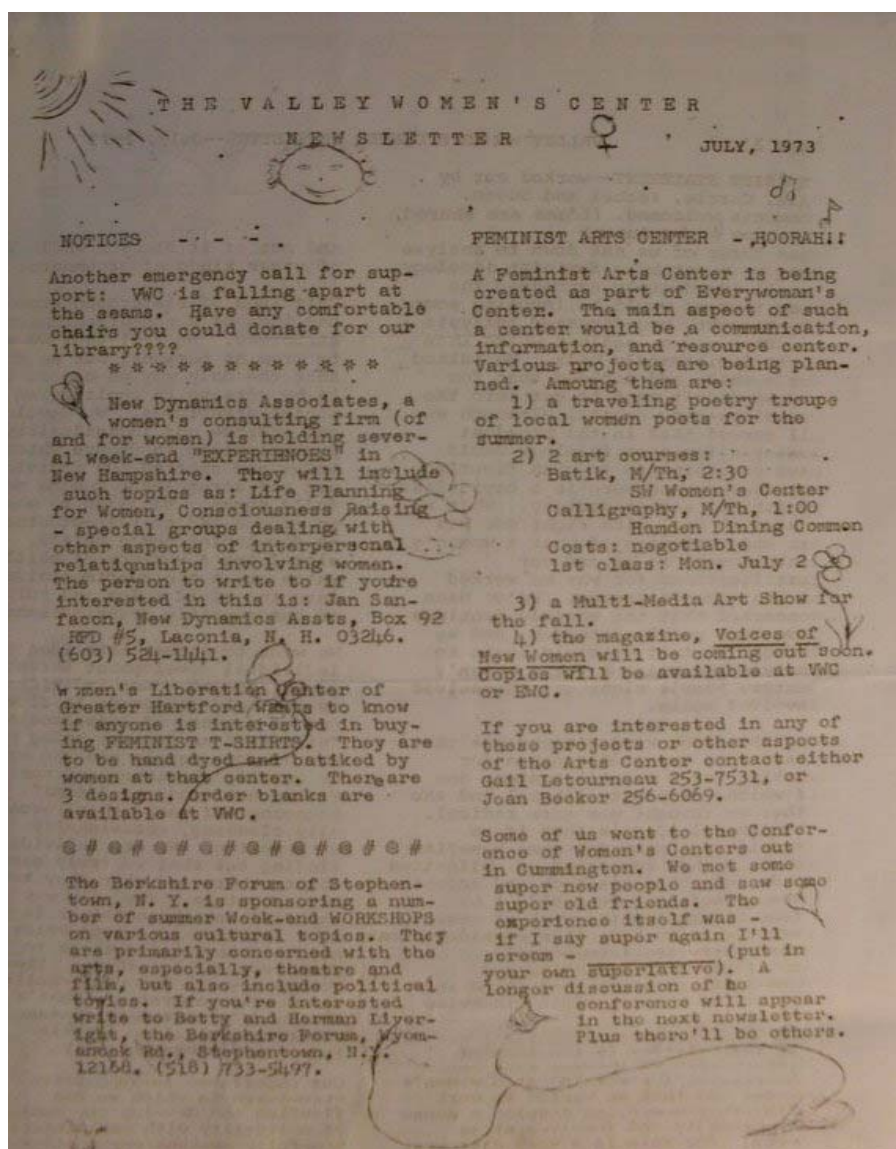


**Intro.7** Front and back covers of *Sister*, January 1973. (SCLSSR)



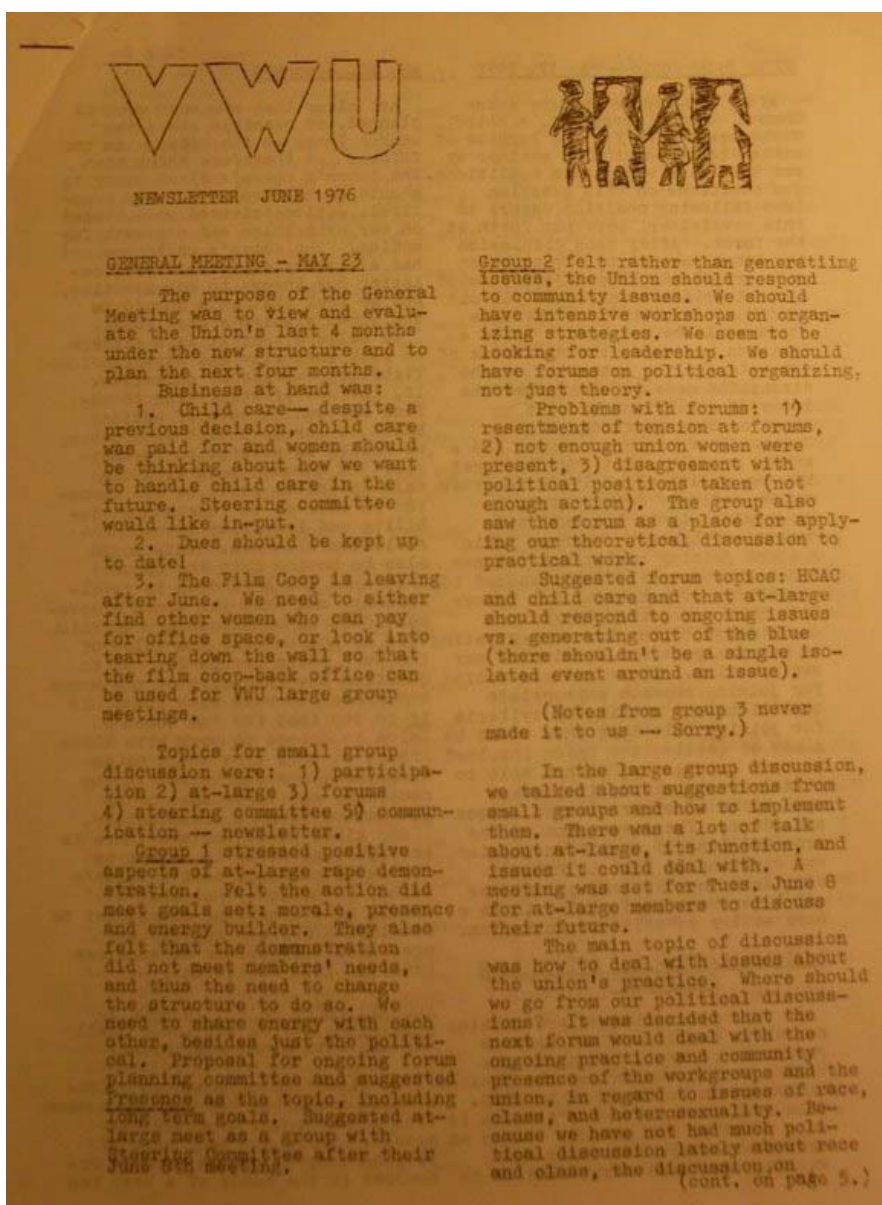


**Intro.8** Page 1 of the *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, July 1973. (Folder 1, box 4, VWC records)





**Intro.9** Page 1 of the *Valley Women's Union Newsletter*, June 1976. (Folder 2, box 4, VWC records)



**Intro.10** Page from the Valley Women's Center's daily log, February 8, 1973. (Folder 5, box 2, VWC records)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 8, 1973  
(morning)

A woman from Indiana Purdue University called requesting rental of the film "Breakfast Dance" for February 20 or March 13. She needs to know if we can rent it to her. Film co-op person should call her today or tomorrow. Her number is (219) 482-5331. The film should be mailed to K.J. Balthaser, Learning Resources Center, Indiana Purdue University, 2101 Coliseum Blvd., E., Fort Wayne, Ind. 46805. p.r. *oh Cindy*

Call from Ron Mayser of Health Education at U. Mass. Will be over today to buy 35 copies of Our Bodies Ourselves. SG

Woman called for Karen Lord's telephone number and address. I found it in index card file. She asked if Karen had hours at the WVC and I told her that she did. p.r.

People are always coming in to pick up things that are left aside from for them on a previous day. No one knows where it has been left so it results in a flurry of looking around through stacks of paper, or calling people to find out where they've left it. When possible, leave papers or brochures or information that is to be picked up on the stack for such things on the free literature shelf. Put a sign on it "not for sale or distribution" if you think someone might mistakenly run off with it.  
- p.r.

Roberta Palatnik wants to rent either "The Women's Film" or "Sometimes I Wonder Who I Am" for March 1. Film Co-Op people should return call to her in Philadelphia (215) 859-1430 today or (215) 853-1419. *oh Cindy*

- p.r.c.

Call for directions to Worthington clinic. (Is there a bus --or car-- running there from WVC every Friday?) *Maybe I will find out if I stay till 3 PM. IA*  
*Is someone making the way for contact today?*

Second call from Worcester Family Planning about film Make Out. See *February* last Friday. I found necessary info from Elana and from catalog. IA

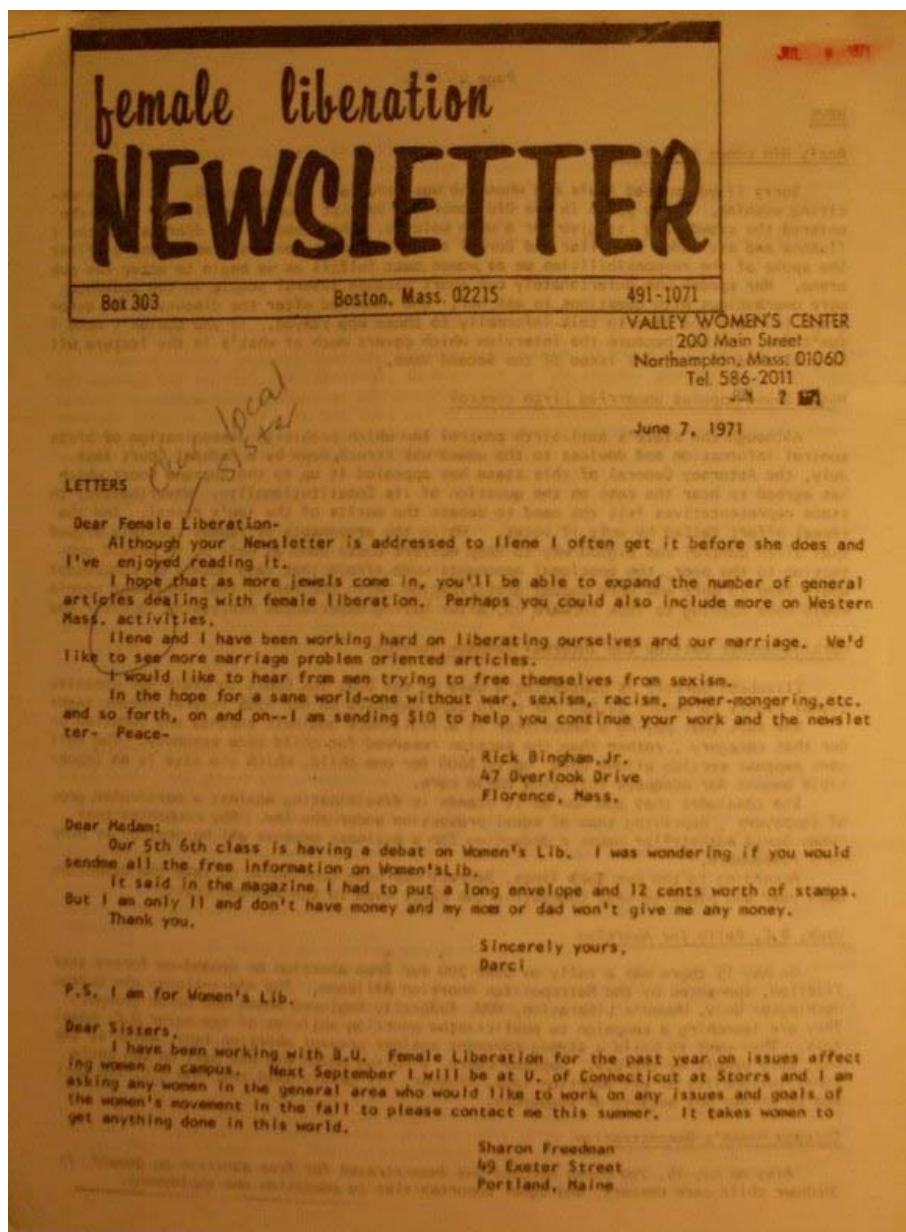
We are vacuuming the stairs with considerable difficulty--with my much-less-than-powerful cleaner. How can we get a cleaner that works better?  
IA

Margaret  
Call for abortion counseling. Is ~~she~~ still in hospital? I gave Ann K's number.  
IA

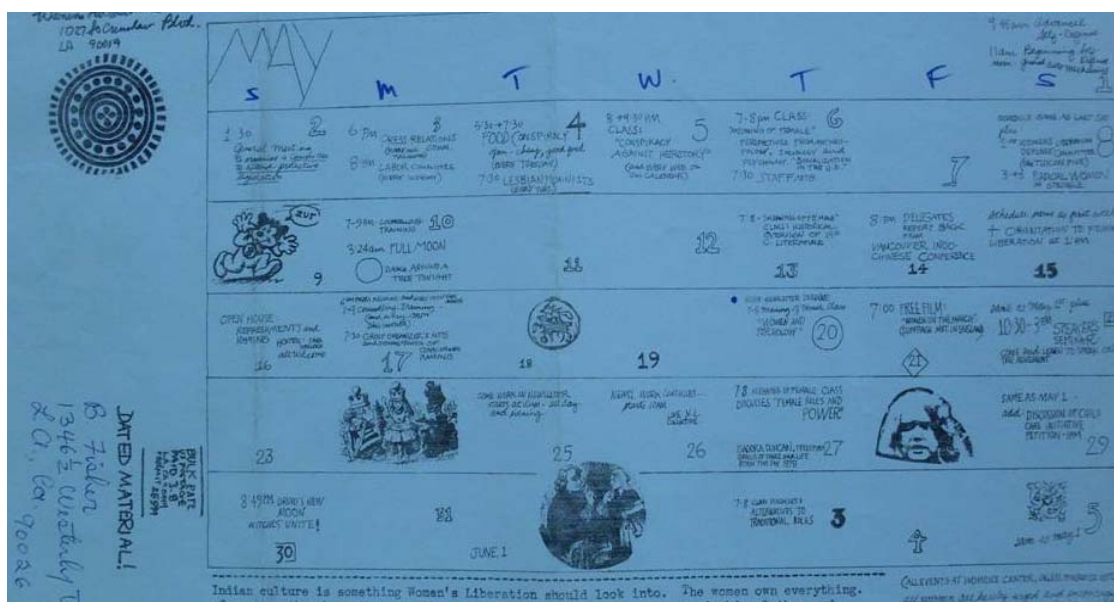
WOMMetcalfprinting called to say the letters and envelopes are ready to be picked up sandy

Dale Weinstein -trying to set up an orientation meeting for Wed. nite for new staff members. Anyone who wants to help call-1-628-3821. Diana

Also Driver ~~who~~ did come in (see Thurs) and I agreed to speak to her class on individual life and hierarchy. IA

Intro.11 Page 1 of *Female Liberation Newsletter*, June 1971. (SSC)





1.3 Ads in *Sister*, April/May 1978, p. 7. (SSC)

## LETTER: DILEMMA REVISITED

Sister,

I would like to respond to Sheila Bruth's letter which was written in response to my letter on the Dilemma of the Married Lesbian in your Feb./March issue.

Unfortunately, Sheila's letter only serves to reinforce my comments in your newspaper regarding the rigidity of thought and do it my way philosophy of many Lesbians.

I am not trying to put down other Lesbians but I am trying to create an atmosphere where ALL LESBIANS, at whatever point in their lives, in whatever place, holding any viewpoint can express themselves without feeling intimidated, harassed or bullied.

I feel as deeply as any other Lesbian does the sense of anger, rage and loss at not having been allowed to live my whole life as a Lesbian. But where does it profit me as a human being to keep from one rigid environment to another since I would become no different than the males who oppressed me.

Since you doubt my statement that married Lesbians outnumber the single and divorced Lesbian then I suggest you use logic in this matter and ask yourself, "Where did all those millions of Lesbians go in past and present generations who had no choices?"!!!!!!

Your conclusion if logic is applied can only agree with my statement since most of those Lesbians ended up married because that was the only choice made available to them in a male dominated society.

If we are ever going to reach the goal of true sisterhood without regard to sexual preference we are going to have to eliminate the strictest rhetoric and emphasize reason and logic that will result in understanding, caring and healing.

Rhetoric and ideological game playing only serves to divide us and cause deeper wounds. As Lesbians we need to ease each other pain not to intensify it.

Sheila and I will never understand each other until we are speaking on the same level and more quietly. Sheila lives in the world of ideologies and I live in the world of pragmatic realism and making sense. Try to see and cut us off from our humanity than our obsessive clinging to an ideology. I do not know how to play ideological games since I am rather simple minded and find even the simplest truths hard to come by and

absolutely impossible to come by if I am holding on to any ideology of whatever persuasion.

But I do know that the Male is not our enemy and ideologies of all kinds are our enemy and Lesbians will have to shun them (ideologies) like the plague if they are going to develop into whole human beings. How can we ever achieve the goal of true sisterhood if we as individuals are not in touch with our own humanity?

Lesbians should strive before all else to be whole human beings and if we seek anything less whatever our sexual preference, we will be striving for something far below our true potential.

All Lesbians who truly care about other Lesbians should strive to create social environments for Lesbians that are of a positive and uplifting nature not a negative and demeaning one. Bars, pot and drugs are too much a part of the Lesbian's life style and should be discouraged for their adverse effects on mind, body and spirit. Everytime a Lesbian spends money in most of those bars or on pot and drugs she is supporting the scum of the earth—THE MAFIA.

Sheila also mentioned in her letter the possibility of my getting a female lover without paying for it. I am afraid that after 5 years of trying to get a female lover I can only come to the conclusion that I do not have the looks or personality to get a lover without paying for it and there is no shame in making such a statement since many human beings have the same problem.

Connie Frankowiak

Dear Sisters:

I hope everyone read carefully Alice Spiderwoman's considerations on violence. To accentuate and support her views, I ask all Sisters to contemplate what happens in the flesh of dead animals while it is in our entrails. It stays there for several days, putrefying! Consider THAT the next time you have a Big Mac Attack!!!

Also, most animals were here on this lovely, green earth long before humans ever appeared. Do we really have more right to life than they do?

STRUGGLE - vs. - 1. to make violent strenuous efforts against opposition; 2. to proceed with difficulty or with great effort. (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary - 1965).

In order to perpetuate itself, the Woman's Movement must be comprised of internal struggle. However, I would hope that this would be done in accordance with Webster's second definition rather than the first. It saddens me to witness woman's being violent with each other, if only with words.

At this dramatic juncture in the narrative, I'll come to my point - which pertains to the conflict between Connie Frankowiak and Sheila Bruth in the last issue ("Married Lesbian's Dilemma"). I do not know Connie, but I do know Sheila, whom I consider to be one of the strongest and most together women I've ever met. I felt, therefore, baffled and threatened to see angry and impatient words written by a mellow (I thought) woman who has helped me in the past with some of my own struggles. I've also witnessed her gentle support and guidance of other women over issues such as this.

It is not Connie's fault that she is isolated and, therefore, ignorant on some issues. Sheila came stompin' down too hard. I, too, question some of Connie's "facts", but to turn on a Sister who is trying to contact her element is unfair and counterproductive. Furthermore, it supports Connie's point regarding Lesbian oppression (which I also have experienced).

Sheila, beautiful Sister, not everyone is as strong or as experienced as you. If you're gonna help fish the Sisters out of The Man's water, ya' gotta bring 'em up gently—otherwise, they will suffer "the bends" or be totally intimidated and run. Give Connie room for her marriage, which she feels is "good". There, but for the Grace of the Goddess, go you or I.

From all feminists every where, I ask for less rhetoric and more patience within the ranks. Give 'em hell Outside, but let's be soft and supportive with our own.

After buying, begging and otherwise collecting paperback books to send to the Sisters behind bars at CIW, I have learned that inmates may receive paperbacks ONLY FROM PUBLISHERS!! (Would you believe that this does not apply to hardbacks?)

I'm gonna write to the Gov about it, with a copy to everybody in the whole world (the warden, the head of the state Dept. of Corrections, the TV stations, etc.), and I'll like other people to write letters too. The Sisters say that their library sucks, and that they would very much appreciate reading material.

There are women behind bars who need our support. I am convinced that each one of us can spare a few minutes each month to correspond with a woman at CIW. The name and address of the person to contact follows.

Nickie Carpenter  
Prison Representative  
Friends Outside  
California Institution for Women  
P.O. Box 1  
Fresno, CA 93720

Ellen Freewoman

P.S. LOVE Donna Casoy's column...

Sisters,

... For me survival is made easier than the love and support that emanates from the pages of *Sister*.

Irene

SATISFIED READER

... I really enjoyed this issue of *Sister*. I appreciate the quality of the writing and the choice of subjects. A big hand for you women!

In Sisterhood,  
Nancy L. Burns



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PRIDE SERVICE 8:30 PM

MEMBER: UNION OF AMERICAN MEN'S ORGANIZATION

looking for a place to live?  
we might have what you need:



contact  
frances hill  
682-3081

2.1 *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, January 1974, p. 1. (Folder 2, box 4, VWC records)

WJ  
Saw

Sandra Smith-Corcoran

This issue of the newsletter is a report on the January 13th meeting of the Valley Women's Union. Several months ago some of us who had noticed that the Center was no longer functioning as it had in the past began to meet regularly to evaluate and reorganize it. Earlier the Center served as a headquarters for most of the activities of the women's movement in the Valley. Several factors combined to change this situation. First, many of the services the center once performed are now offered by other institutions. For example, Family Planning now offers abortion and birth control counseling. The Neighborhood Center provides welfare counseling and the EWC offers courses and counseling for women. Secondly, the movement is no longer unified around a single center and many feminist activities are conducted by people in organizations independent of the VWC. While the movement was still an exciting new phenomenon the VWC was successful as an umbrella organization which attracted many people with new ideas. Recently however, the VWC has not functioned as the source of new feminist projects, or even as a drop-in center. It became apparent to us that an umbrella organization staffed by volunteers and supported by members who have no shared political focus or well-defined goals cannot direct and sustain the energy necessary to accomplish long-term political aims.

This fall, most of the remaining staff members and other interested people met to discuss these problems and to create an organization which would direct energy toward accomplishing real political change. We believed that our organization should share a common analysis and priorities for action involving women in the Valley. Out of this belief came the position paper, principles and criteria for action which follow. This section on structure reflects our desire to assure that everyone in the organization participated in decision making and that the structure of the organization be efficient, democratic, non-hierarchical, and clear to all. We decided to call the new organization the Valley Women's Union.

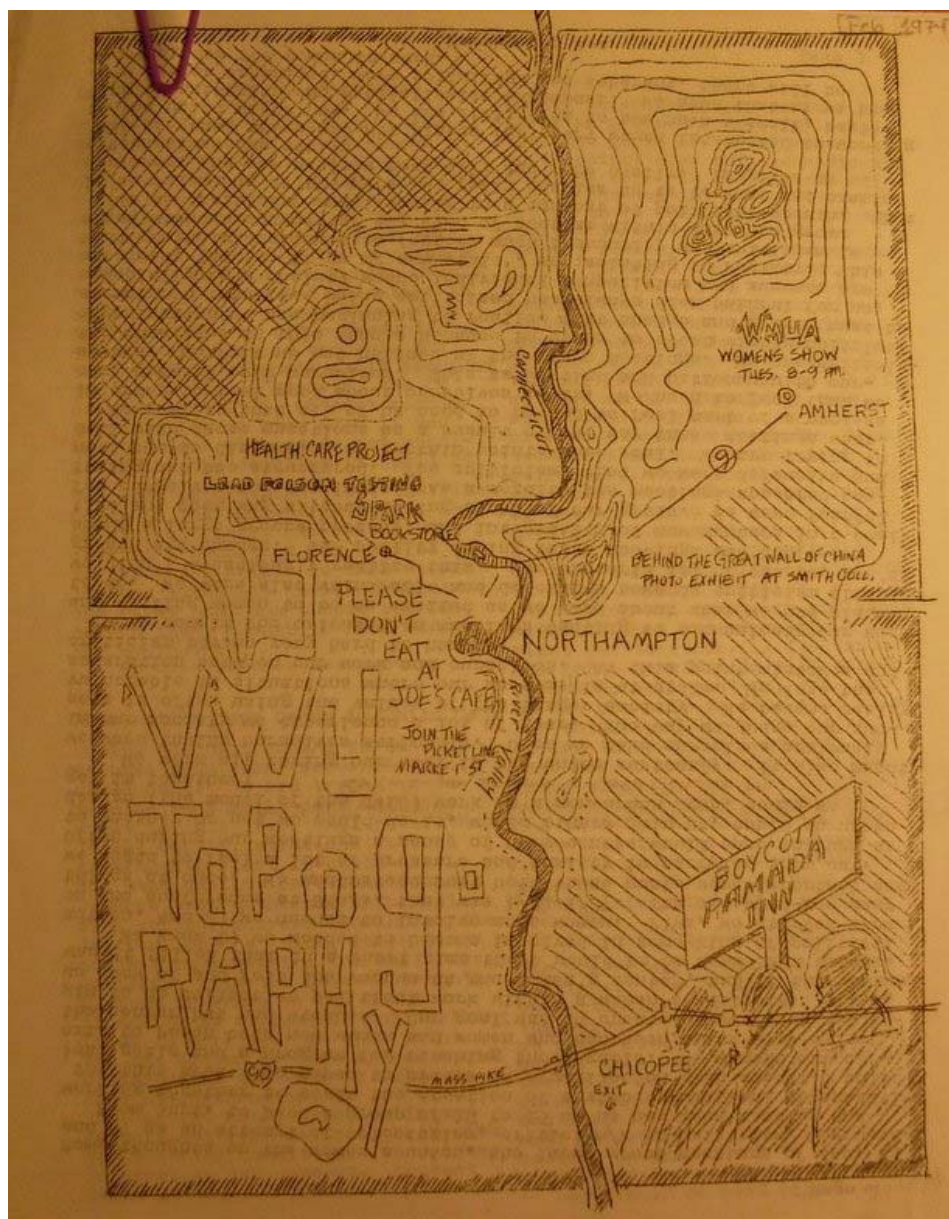
On January 13th a meeting was held in order to introduce our organization to members of the VWC. Sixty-five people came in response to our announcement in the newsletter. During the first half-hour we read and explained the papers included in this newsletter. Following that we broke up into small groups to answer questions and discuss the Union. At the end of the meeting we re-convened as a group to report on the major questions and criticisms that were raised in the smaller groups. Time did not allow for a complete discussion of all the points raised so it was decided that another meeting would be held Sunday, February 3d at 2 o'clock at the VWC to allow further discussion. Any woman who might be interested in joining the VWU is urged to come to the meeting or contact any member of the Union.

Cindy Shamban      Rox Shapiro - 256-4229      Julie Graham - 584-6479  
 Sue Crafts - 586-0946      Carol Hinchon - 586-3818      Sara Hinton - 68-3228  
 Marlene Harodon - 584-2383      Stephanie Yeager - 369-4353  
 Isabel Arnold - 584-2213      Ellen Cooney - 586-1729      Ann, Dolly - 367-2110





- 2.3 A feminist map of the Northampton area, cover of the *Valley Women's Union Newsletter*, February 1974. (Folder 2, box 4, VWC collection)





## 2.4

*L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter* with drawings of the editorial collective members in the bottom left corner, October 1971, p. 4. (Folder 1, LAWLM records)

Maud Russell, editor of THE FAR EAST REPORTER, will speak about "WOMEN WHO LIBERATED THEMSELVES", at the Women's Center, Sunday night, October 17. Question and answer period to follow. There will be pictures, books, cards and other items from China, on display and for sale. Ms. Russell has lived in China for years, and is well informed about the position of women in both Old and New China.

\*\*\*\*\*

Feminist song and poetry magazine would like literary contributions. "Thunder in the Sun", 4224 University Way, Seattle, Wash. 98105.

\*\*\*\*\*

Helen Blocker (399-6939) and several other women are doing a show every second Tuesday at 7:00pm. They'll have information, particularly on "women and labor".

\*\*\*\*\*

The Southern Calif Regional Anti-War Conference will be Oct 2. There will be a women's workshop out of which will come the women's contingent. Contact the LA Out-Now Coalition 461-3337.

JINGLE THE CAN FOR THE WOMEN'S CENTER!!!!!! TIME TO MAKE THE STREET BERNIE!!!!!! We are going to shake the cans for donations at busy downtown locations to raise money for the Center and to raise consciousness about the Women's Center and the women's movement. Volunteers to help are desperately needed. Volunteers meet at 10:30 on payday - Friday, October 8. For more info call 2 at 876-0875.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*RAPE & COURTNEYRAPE\*\*\*\*\*

The FBI says that a woman is raped every 13 minutes. They also say that the real number of rapes (many are never reported) is probably 10 times that. That adds up to over 310,000 rapes a year. \*\*\* There will be an Anti-rape Squad meeting at 4450 Lockwood, Apt. 101 (right off of Vermont across from LACC) on October 1st, at 7:30

ROOMMATES WANTED-I am looking for 3 or 4 other free women, in their 20s, who are involved in the women's movement to start a small living collective. Bea Free 821-5177.


\*\*\*\*\*

REPORT ON THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION-There were hearings held in the House in summer of 1970. A 2 volume report with terrific material-statistics-facts, etc etc.--free--just write your Congressman. In so doing you will alert him to the fact that women are interested in themselves and their condition and he will pay more attention to our demands. For the Calif. Report on Women write your senator &/or congressman-also free. Edith Green.


\*\*\*\*\*

*I Like to Think of Harriet Tubman*  
 I like to think of Harriet Tubman.  
 Harriet Tubman who carried a revolver,  
 who had a scar on her head from a rock  
 thrown by a slave-master (because she  
 talked back), and who  
 had a ransom on her head  
 of thousands of dollars and who  
 was never caught, and who  
 had no use for the law  
 when the law was wrong,  
 who defied the law. I like  
 to think of her.

Susie Griffin



We're the Newsletter  
 Regulars  
 D., S. and I did the editing  
 We ran out of energy to  
 give you the news - so  
 help us next time to edit  
 and we'll include  
 your picture here...  
 like the rest of us



"They've made exploitation a patriotic thing!"

page 3

- 2.5 Editorial with a photo of the editors Mary Gehman and Donna Swanson with their children, *Distaff*, August 7, 1973, p. 2. (NCCROW)

## editorial

# DISTAFF IS BACK

DISTAFF is back. Bigger, better and more together. "Where did she go?" people started asking last May when no more issues appeared. By the end of the summer it was assumed that she had ended up like most "female fancies"---in oblivion.

Fortunately both DISTAFF and the women's movement she covers are more than passing fancies. The paper's dusty masthead is being revived under different management in this bright, new issue. And it looks like she's back to stay.

The demise of DISTAFF last May left a lot of unanswered questions for her readers. She had struggled through sixteen erratic issues, or a year and a half of continuous publication, a better track record than most feminist papers. There had always been a sense of robust ambition renewed in each crisis-ridden issue. Usually her long skirts hid from the reader the utter chaos and frustration of her unwieldy staff. When she bowed from the city's news stands it was without warning or explanation. The women's press in New Orleans--the only one in the Deep South--was stilled.

DISTAFF was conceived as a collective of local women committed to women's rights, equality of the sexes, and the advancement of women in all areas of American life. She was born at a high point of the women's movement, January 1973, when almost every major U.S. city was sporting a women's tabloid as well as a women's center and women's studies programs. In New Orleans we had asked ourselves, why not a feminist press here?

The planning sessions for the first issues were exciting; enthusiasm ran high, volunteers responded by the dozens, and individual differences were put aside for the sake of a cohesive publication. When ads and subscriptions failed to cover printing costs we dug into our own pockets and donated the extra cash. We believed in the paper.



Donna Swanson with Gregory, Trina and Renard and Mary Gehman with Ney Jan.

That belief never really wavered, but interest and commitment did. By the fourth month the staff had dwindled from 8 to 3 key people; some had left town, others were too busy with their personal lives. The ideal of collective decision-making and the absence of hierarchy on the staff struggled bravely on for another year in varying degrees of failure.

Contact numbers 288-1893 or 866-7243

All contributions should include the name, address and phone number of the person submitting them, as well as a few facts about yourself to be used in introducing you to our readers.

Articles should be limited to approximately three typewritten, double-spaced pages. The staff reserves the right to edit any copy submitted, in consultation with the author.

Graphics to insure proper credit and return of all materials, the reverse side of each graphic must include the artist's name, full address, telephone number, title of work, and brief, descriptive text if desired.

Eventually a few responsible women ended up making on-the-spot decisions; those few of us felt overworked and grew to resent the self-exploitation that came from devoting so much time and energy to the paper for no pay and often at the risk of criticism from other feminists. We felt even worse about the shabby quality of the paper which resulted from a lack of enough time and people to get the job done well.

After the April issue, with not enough money left to pay the printer and no more pockets of our own to dig into, DISTAFF quietly went under.

I helped found the paper in late 1972 and have seen her through the past two years of valiant turmoil. As a die-hard journalist and feminist I spent the summer exploring means of bringing her back into print. Donna Swanson, a friend and formerly a co-worker at the Welfare Department, and I have arranged a financial investment that will permit us both to work full time on the paper. We have formed our own corporation, New South Feminist Press, Inc. which will do business in the name of DISTAFF. We will be co-editors and co-everything until the paper can pay for more staff.

This issue is our first attempt to revive the spirit of DISTAFF and to chart a new course for her. We've been immensely encouraged by the eager response from local women, and we look forward to support and co-operation from sisters everywhere. We plan to honor all current subscriptions, answer all correspondence and maintain the original goals of the paper.

DISTAFF has combed her hair and bought herself some new clothes. But she still can be no more and no less than we--all of us women of the South--make of her.

Let this serve as your invitation to get acquainted--or reacquainted with her.

Mary Gehman

## DISTAFF

DISTAFF is a monthly women's newspaper. Its purpose is to print news and events of interest to women, to serve as communication between women and women's groups in the city, and to provide an outlet for the works of local women writers, journalists and artists.

DISTAFF invites its readers to submit articles, stories, poetry, photographs and graphics for consideration by our staff. These materials must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope if return by mail is desired.

Deadline for receipt of materials and ads at the DISTAFF office is the 15th of each month.

Material in DISTAFF may be reprinted providing credit is given to the source and author, and contact number of the publication in which this appears, sent to DISTAFF office.

Subscription \$2.00 per year. Newsstand Price 25 cents.

Address subscriptions and correspondence to DISTAFF P.O. Box 10888, New Orleans, Louisiana 70136. For further information contact: 867-2895, or 866-7243.

DISTAFF is printed at the Women's History Library, 1535 Oak Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70116. The library disclaims ownership of women's works in libraries and internet legal-line strategies are required when writing in them for information.

3.1 A page from Woman Enterprises Catalog, 1972. (VFC)

*I dreamed I led a Revolution...*



**in my**  
Your friends will groove with Sisters of the Susan black letters. Black and the original feminist

**SISTERS T-shirt!**  
on your revolutionary gold T-shirt B. Anthony Leogue right up front in gold were chosen because they were colors.

The newest means of communication in our multi-media culture, wearing a 'message' T-shirt helps get your feelings off your chest; and by wearing a Sisters T-shirt, women can let the world know they are getting their shirts together. You're not dreaming, sister. You are leading a revolution in your Sisters T-shirt!

Washable, 100% cotton.....\$3.50 plus 70¢ for handling (add 25¢ for each additional T-shirt ordered).

# ST 101  
SIZES: S (34-36), M (38-40), L (42-44)


3.2 A page from Beahive Enterprises Catalog, fall 1972 – winter 1973. (VFC)

**cornhusk figures** *Sisterhood is Joyful!*

Old-world Cornhusk dancing figurines symbolize the joy of Sisterhood. Makes a delightful dining-table centerpiece or decoration for desk or shelf — or Christmas Tree. Dolls are handcrafted out of seasoned cornhusks and are as sturdy as the peasant women they depict.


#37 each \$5.00 ■  
or 2 for \$8.50 ■

dimensions: 3½" x 4½"  
(gift boxed)



**feminist matches**

designed by  
marsha camara  
from an idea by  
the busy



*light up the darkness . . . with these feminist matches*

Matchbooks in three cheery colors — cheery red, cheery green and cheery blue, (Equality sign in female symbol on one side, "Sisterhood is Powerful" on the other). Come packed one dozen to a 4½" x 3½" C-thru plastic box. Four of each color to a box or solid red, green or blue. Please state preference. An excellent gift item and a Beahive exclusive.

#2 \$1.50 per box ●



- 3.3 "Asian Sisters," *Asian Women's Center Newsletter*, December 1973, p. 3. (Folder "Asian Women," box 2, CSU Dominguez Hills)

#### PYS SISTER'S GROUP

As with Chinatown and Little Tokyo, the AWC has an outpost station in the Pilipino community. At the Pilipino Youth Services in the Temple St. area, individual counseling and a high school sister's rap & activities group are run by Lillian Tamoria. The sisters, all born in the Philippines, attend Belmont High School and have expressed a need to be together, rap and be involved in constructive experiences. Even though the group is new, it's already helped to reinforce a positive identity and participation in Pilipino culture and community.



#### PYC HAPY SISTERS

Lillian also does outpost work at the Pilipino Youth Center with Harbor Area Pilipino Youth (HAPY) sisters, mostly second generation Pilipino Americans from Carson, Wilmington and Long Beach. This is a strong and enthusiastic group --- anxious to raise their own self and cultural awareness and to take the initiative in organizing activities.

This summer the big project has been the Pilipino Youth Conference which took place July 23 - 25 at Camp Oak Grove. The theme and purpose was Unity of American-born and Philippine born youth. The HAPY sisters and the PYS sisters worked together to plan the conference. Both groups are also involved in the summer NYC program.

Naturally Lillian could use help, especially to be able to expand into tutoring, cultural singing, dancing and the service projects that the young sisters need and want. Contact her if you'd like more information.

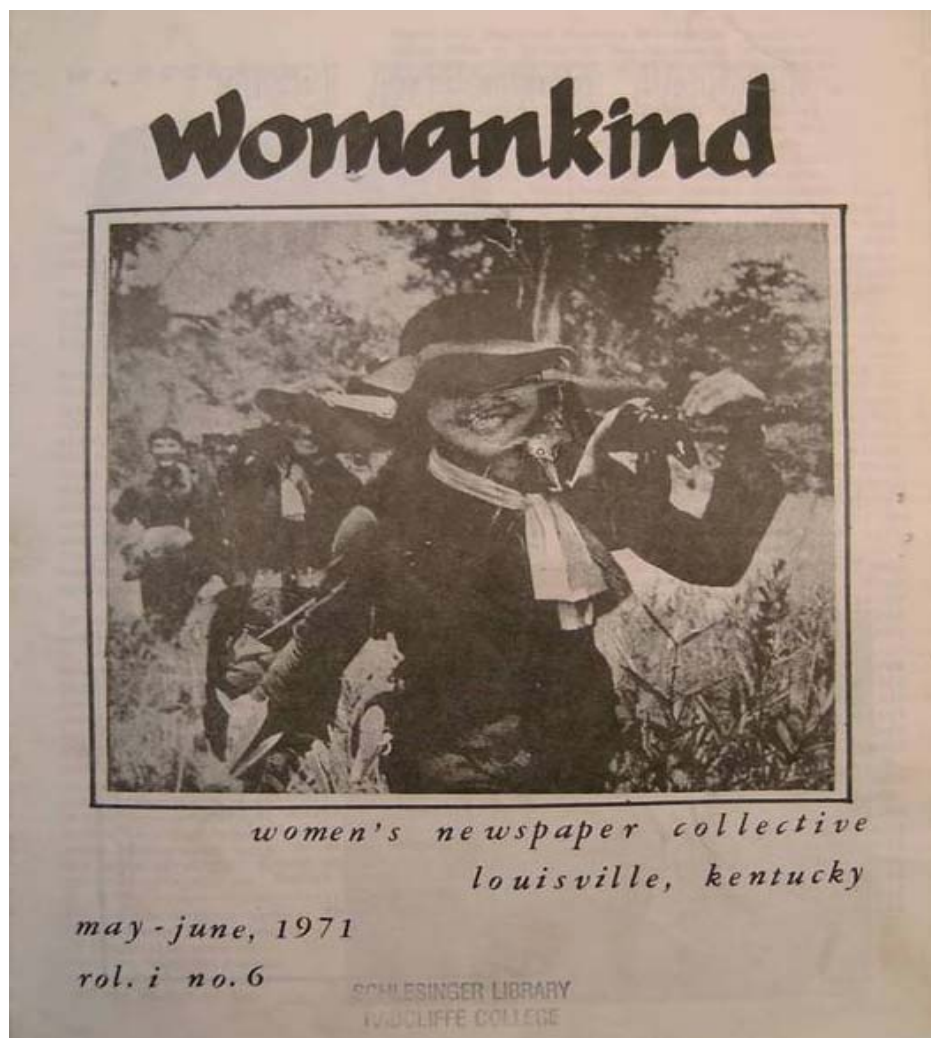
- 4.1 Photograph of the Valley Women's Center, April 1971. (Folder 5, box 1, VWC records)



- 4.2 Photograph of Indochinese women, *Sister*, March 1973, p. 8. (SCLSSR)



- 4.3 Photograph of an Indochinese woman, cover of *Womankind*, May – June 1971.  
(Schlesinger)





4.4 Photograph of Indochinese women in the Los Angeles paper *Woman Worker*, May 1970. (Joan Robins Papers)

## OUR VIETNAMESE SISTERS

For centuries Vietnam was a land of poor farming people. When a family couldn't afford to pay the taxes and rent to the wealthy land-lords, they were often forced to pay their rent in children. The landlords used these young girls and also sold them into prostitution. Girls were thought to be less intelligent, strong, and worthwhile than men.

In the cities of Vietnam, the women were mercilessly exploited. When the Japanese invaded Vietnam in 1918, the life of the working people got worse. In the silk, paper, and cotton mills, girls had to work for starvation wages and many dropped dead from exhaustion, malnutrition, and epidemics. In these mills and factories, Vietnamese girls began to organize. All the way back in 1920, secret women's organizations were formed. They grew into protective working women's unions. These unions became a tremendous force in mobilizing strikes and rebellions against the Japanese, French, and later the American factory owners.

In the future of the struggle is in the children. So men and women alike join in the care, education, and protection of their young and fear jobs are thought of as just "women's work." Women are now free from the endless chores of home and kids. The cooking, laundry and other tasks are done collectively by the village work teams.

In order to win liberation for Vietnam, all the peasant farmers and working people have to unite. They couldn't build strength and unity if the men were going to force the women to remain in their traditional role. Men and women could never unite as long as the men treated the women like inferior beings. The National Liberation Front, The Provisional Revolutionary Government, and the government of North Vietnam have all adopted the fight for full equality for women.

This has enabled the Vietnamese women to have experiences they had never had in history. Now they are leading the women of the world in showing that, in order to win - to defeat oppression and exploitation, we have to organize ourselves, share our work, and learn to defend ourselves from fascist attacks on it. Men have to give up the practice of male supremacy and stop trying to keep women down. Men have to treat women with respect.

Women are responsible for the survival of the present villages. The women of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam organized not only the women but every single person who had not gone off in the army. Women organize the military defense of the villages. It is a woman, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Duh, who is the Deputy Commander in Chief of the Army of North Vietnam. With everyone fighting for the goal of national liberation, men have learned it is no disgrace to take orders from a woman!

Vietnamese women have been subject to brutal attacks by the U.S. Army. They have been raped and tortured, beaten and burned. They have seen their own children murdered before their eyes in such villages as My Lai and Song My. 50,000 Vietnamese women are held in a concentration camp in Saigon, as "Vietcong Suspects." In a People's War - a war of all the people against a common enemy, U.S. aggression - all the people are suspects. Ninety percent of all the political prisoners in the South Vietnam prisons are women suspected of working with the National Liberation Front.

### THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIBERATION

The rulers of the United States, the class of rich men in whose interests the Vietnam War is being fought, have tried to rob the women of Vietnam of the great advances they have made for all the women of the world.

The U.S. Army generals in Vietnam have tried to promote prostitution on the Army bases. The U.S. newspapers try to picture the women of Saigon as prostitutes. The ruling class has tried to break up the new solidarity between Vietnamese men and women, and steal the dignity of the Vietnamese people. We should not be fooled, however, by these racist attacks made on the women of Vietnam.

The people of Vietnam have been fighting bravely for over 40 years to rid their country of foreign powers. First they kicked out the Japanese, then the French, and now they are doing it with the strongest military aggression in the history of the world: the U.S. Army. The Vietnamese people have been able to go on fighting and winning because they have built strong people's organizations led by the Vietnamese working men and women, uniting all the people against the invading enemy. The united Vietnamese people will certainly defeat U.S. imperialism.

### U.S. GET OUT OF VIETNAM NOW!!

### STRIVING FOR EQUALITY

The women in the small villages organized themselves into militia units and work teams. They knew that Vietnam could not win without the strength of its women. The years of struggle have helped the women to throw off all the centuries of oppression and enslavement. They are on the way to winning full equality with men in all aspects of Vietnamese life.

### FEMALE POLITICAL LEADERS



Women in North Vietnam and in the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam hold high positions in the people's government. The head of the North Vietnam negotiators at the Paris Peace talks is Mrs. Binh. The Vietnamese people sent Mrs. Binh on purpose, to show their confidence in the solidarity of the Vietnamese people, their respect for female leaders, and their unanimous demand U.S. GET OUT OF VIETNAM NOW!!

### DIVIDING THE WORK

How do the women get through their day-to-day work, like laundry, cooking, cleaning, child-care?

The main thing is that the people have organized to share everything. They share property, work, and responsibilities.

There is an understanding among the Vietnamese, that

4.5 Photograph of an Indochinese woman in the Cambridge, Massachusetts, paper *Battle Acts*, November 1970, p. 12-13. (Folder 3, box 1, Fran Ansley Papers)





4.6 Photograph of an Indochinese woman, *Sister*, January 1973, p. 1. (SCLSSR)

### Why WOMEN and the WAR

Women's oppression is not limited to our own individual lives but is woven into a pattern of oppression imposed by the U.S. within its own boundaries and beyond - as in Southeast Asia.

How does this pattern work? We as women growing up in this country have been taught the value of what a "real" woman looks like, smells like, acts like and aspires to be. To achieve this status of womanhood we must retain our youth and beauty at all costs - and it is costly. The price we pay for a limited acceptance in this society is not only the dollars we spend but the gradual undoing of ourselves to fit the image of woman as drawn for us by the media and men in our lives. We are expected to conform - much as children are expected to conform to the ideals of their parents.

Similarly, the U.S. as self-proclaimed protector is consciously attempting to mold the lives of the Vietnamese by imposing American standards on a people with an historic cultural identity. Since it is the women who are the bearers of future generations and the mainstay of the home it is they who receive the brunt of the attack. It is largely the women and children who are forced from their levelled villages into Saigon. Knowing only the traditional peasant skills many women turn to prostitution as the only way to feed themselves and their children. There are 500,000 prostitutes in Vietnam, more than one for every G.I. at the height of American involvement. Learning quickly what a G.I. wants in a woman, they dye their hair, "westernize" their eyes surgically, and inject their breasts with silicone to look like the "voluptuous American ideal".

The overall effect of this is a dehumanization of the Vietnamese woman. She is prevented from directing her own life by the American presence. In a more subtle but as effective way, we in the United States are deprived of control over our own lives and bodies.

### Women Rise UP

ANGRY BECAUSE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT INVENTS MACHINES WHICH CAN SMELL OUT PEOPLE HIDING IN CAVES AND GUIDE IN B-52'S FOR THE KILL, BUT CAN'T COME UP WITH SAFE METHODS OF BIRTH CONTROL.



Part of a U.S. warplane shot down over North Vietnam.

But the war does more than brutalize women. Through the use of chemical defoliants and biological weapons the U.S. government threatens the lives of future generations. While Nixon is withdrawing ground troops, he is unleashing the full power of America's technological through automated air war against the Vietnamese and their land. All this from a government which claims it cannot allow us to have safe abortions because of its deep respect for the "sanctity of human life."

The people who brought us toilet bowl cleaner, Playmates of the Month, feminine deodorant sprays, Fly Me to Miami, the princess telephone, Hostess Twinkies, dishwashers, and Saron Whip are proud to present Massacre from Fifty Thousand Feet starring the sons of Huntsville, Alabama, the steel of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the profits of Lockheed Aircraft and four billion synchronized electronic circuits...and we say

### NO MORE!

The oppression of women and the power of the U.S. military machine go hand-in-hand. That is why Women and the War organized to fight both at once. As women we understand oppression in a particular way. We want to unite with others who share that common experience.

Women and the War is a group of women who have been working together in Los Angeles for nearly a year. We were inspired by a Women's March against genocide that took place in San Francisco in September of 1971. A few women from Los Angeles who felt a unique kind of warmth and spirit in that march decided to carry over that momentum in creative forms that would bring sisters together in L.A. We put together a couple of slide shows, a tape and some guerrilla theatre for our first program at the Ashgrove.

Since then we have continued gathering new materials and working on new forms of presenting them. Our program has been shown such places as the Women's Center, the Santa Monica Mall, several colleges and university campuses, and the All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena. We also held an anti-war march in May of 1972 on Wilshire Blvd. that drew about 150 women and men and was entirely organized and led by women.

We have developed a multimedia program which includes: A slide shown on Vietnamese women, describing the role of women in resisting the U.S. attempt to destroy the fabric of Vietnamese culture. "The automated battlefield", a slide show expose of the electronic air war now being waged in Indochina. Our Cranky (A life size movie on paper, cranked by hand), "The Ballad of Yankee Dollie Dancy or Why Jenny Goes to War", links the present economy with women's oppression in the United States.

If you are interested in our program and know of any groups who would be interested in seeing us, please write to us at the Womens Center or call 396-3827 or 874-2922.

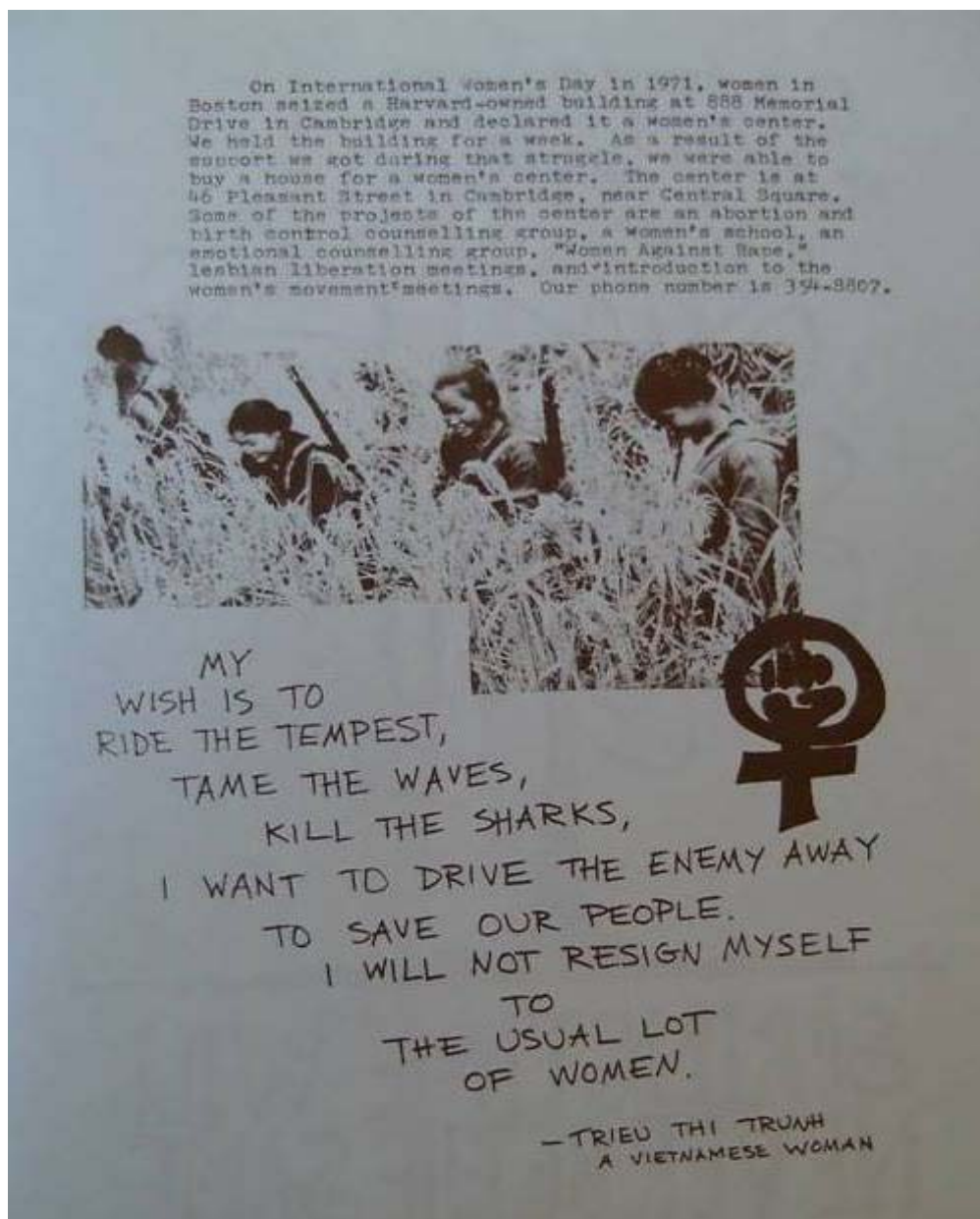
### TO THE WOMEN OF VIETNAM

You are the ones who made us realize what is happening to us now. In the heart of the fortress we aim our anger straight at imperialism's towers and guards and when fear comes with shaky thoughts we think of you-and us-and know because your fighting has revealed your enemy as ours your lives as ours your brothers as our own your children as our own your future as our own we fight to live and love with you.

Jane Franklin

page one

- 4.7 Photograph of Indochinese women in an International Women's Day publication, March 10, 1973 by the Cambridge, MA, Women's Center. (Folder 19, box 1, Rochelle Ruthchild Papers)





- 4.8 Image of Indochinese women with guns, *L.A. Women's Center Newsletter*, June 1972, p. 1. (Folder "Women's Union," OHC)

# Women's Center ♀ Newsletter

Volume II Number X June 1972  
the women's center 1027 crenshaw los angeles 90019 (213) 937-3964

## NWPC... SEIZE POLITICAL POWER

by Joan Robins

In 1920 women got the right to vote, but it was a far cry from political power. May 5-7 over 150 women from every corner of California gathered in theakersfield Civic Auditorium to discuss how to get political power and what we want to do with it. Said Kate Millet, keynote speaker at the first California National Women's Political Caucus:


"What we want is a humane society. That's why we are going into politics. Politics is not change...only the method to bring about change...a means not an end...and change is our end goal. We're not out to share the pie, but to remake it...We're not out to become paid employees of the system. Never forget why you started out to the store."

Much of Millet's speech was devoted to the war in Southeast Asia, an automated air war in which bombs are dropped filled with clear plastic that cannot be seen in x-rays of the human victim. With the stature of a feminist spokeswoman, Millet was able to raise the awareness of a diverse group of women that while we are fighting for women's liberation we are citizens of a nation bent on the genocide of the Vietnamese people. The Convention's scope extended far beyond electing more women to public office.

Resolutions passed calling for an immediate end to the bombing and the war in Southeast Asia, support for the Air War Profiteers, support for candidates who will end the war immediately, support for the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee and a boycott of non-union lettuce, support and en-

## Women March Against the War

- Sherry



The first LA Women's march against the war was held May 16. About 100-125 women (and some men) gathered at Beneficial Plaza on Wilshire. Marching behind an outstanding red banner reading Women Against the War and the War Against Women, the women sang (Move on over...), chanted (out of the offices...), and leafleted their way down "Corporation Blvd." (Wilshire). Stops were made at St. Basil's Catholic Church, IBM, Sperry Rand, Bank of America, Litton Industries, and the Sheraton West (IT), and women speakers detailed how these corporations feed and profit from the war. But while the corporations profit, we women "pay for the war involuntarily through high taxes, higher and higher prices, wage freezes and no freeze on profits."

A major point of the march was to leaflet and talk with women workers and shoppers in order to reach out to women about the war and the women's movement. A high point came when a beautiful woman around sixty clapped and shouted out "Good for you!" when handed our leaflet. Another high point came when "hardhats" high above us in a huge steel building frame yelled "Right on, sister" and raised clenched fists.

Although the march turnout was not large, it was a successful and exciting march in that it reached out to many women not previously touched by the anti-war or women's movement. If you are interested in more such demonstrations or in educational programs concerning the war and women, call Women and the war at 628-7690 or 874-2922. ORGANIZE!

### women's center policy

The Women's Center is a non-partisan organization whose primary purpose is to serve all the women of Los Angeles. All women are invited to share in our activities and to avail themselves of our services. To use the Women's Center as a springboard from which to explore the various women's liberation groups.

The Women's Center Newsletter is published to inform the women of L.A. of Women's Center programs and activities of interest to women's liberation. Material from all women's and women's liberation groups is welcomed. Viewpoints are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent an endorsement on behalf of the Women's Center.

- 4.9 This image was originally a Chinese ink painting and is now being sold as a poster by the New England Free Press. (Publication catalog, April 1971. Folder 1, box, 16, Women's Liberation Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA)

**BULK ORDERS (for re-sale)**

There is an 1/8 discount on all bulk orders. This price includes postage; you do not pay for postage. ATTENTION MOVEMENT GROUPS: We are happy to allow consignment orders, but we must require that at least 50% of the order be paid when the order is sent in. The reason for this is the huge amount of lit that has been sent on consignment and not paid for, and we cannot afford to continue taking these losses. Post-dated checks are fine with us.

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The picture above (originally a Chinese ink painting) is available as a poster from NEFP. Size: 12" x 18" on a 14" x 20" piece of paper, on heavy or regular stock. Price: \$50 on regular stock, \$75 on heavy. Regular discount on bulk orders (15 or more).

*Bibliographies*

**RADICAL LITERATURE**

from the



Dr. W. E. B. DuBOIS

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*Lit List Free - Take One*

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4.10 Image of Leila Khaled with a gun, *Ain't I a Woman?*, October 9, 1970, p. 4. (Iowa Women's Archives, Iowa City, IA)

WHY SHE IS A COMMANDO



LEILA KHALED TELLS

(Continued from the last issue.) LNS

I learnt that I was something called a "refugee" when I was six or seven years old; I was quarrelling with a neighbor's child and she said to me, "You are a refugee so you shouldn't shout at me." How could I escape being aware of the Palestine problem? My parents talked of their former life in Haifa, my friends lived in the unnatural conditions of the camp and we learnt about Palestine in school.

By the time I was 16 I was, secretly, a member of the Arab Nationalist Movement, believing in a liberated Palestine within a unified, socialist Arab world. My elder brothers and sisters had joined this party before me. We planned, we dressed, we argued. I visited the West Bank, what was left of Palestine, and travelled all over it to get to know my country.

17.25 hours. Compass bearing 070

It took June, 1967, and the loss of all Palestine and the expulsion of another quarter million Palestinians to make me decide that I had to do something positive for the cause of liberation. This is the biggest defeat that the Israelis have brought on themselves by their military victories. They brought a whole new generation of Palestinians into the battle who believe only in the armed struggle against Israel.

And so I joined the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Last summer I did the full commando training with the PFLP, after which I was selected and trained for this mission.

17.28 hours. Compass bearing 118

The Israeli Mirages stayed with us until we crossed the Lebanese-Syrian frontier. I spoke to the new Damascus airport tower in Arabic and told them we were going to land there - I didn't ask permission. He replied that we could land on the right runway but I told him we were going to land on the nearer left runway because we were very short of fuel.

On the intercom I told the cabin crew to evacuate the passengers by the emergency exits as soon as the plane had landed because it was going to be blown up. I asked the captain to switch off the engines as soon as we touched down, otherwise we could taxi too near the airport building. "I can't do it," he said. "Then I can do it," I replied. I also told him to apply the brakes slowly, otherwise I might fall and the hand grenade would go off. In fact, he made a very good landing.

17.35 hours. Touchdown at Damascus

As soon as we stopped rolling, I looked into the passenger cabin and called out, "Evacuate immediately." At this moment the crew seemed alarmed and dashed past us into the plane. They were in their shirt sleeves and my friend shouted to them, "Take your jackets." But they didn't stop. I also called, "Thank you for your co-operation." "You're most welcome," came from the co-pilot.

In two minutes the plane was empty. I only saw the last four or five persons diving through the emergency exits and I told them, "Slowly, go slowly." But they didn't know who I was and didn't listen.

I went down the length of the plane to make sure it was empty. My friend then placed his bombs in the cockpit. He dashed out and stood with me near an emergency exit and I threw two grenades into the first class compartment. As soon as we threw them, we slid down the emergency chute. My friend landed on my head with a terrific bump and I felt as if my legs were broken. We picked ourselves up and ran for twenty metres and waited for the explosion. Nothing went off. It was awful agony to think that the job would only be half done.

Then my friend rushed back to the plane to reset the explosions. Because he is very tall he was able to pull himself up through another chute. I ran after him towards the plane. After a long minute in the plane, he slid out again and we ran back once more.

Still no explosion. Only two minutes later was there a big bang and the nose of the plane crumpled. My friend fired many shots into the wing of the plane to set the fuel tanks on fire but there was so little in them that they didn't ignite.

So it was all over. "Thank God," I said to myself. I felt very relaxed and very relieved and glad that no one had been hurt.

We started walking towards the airport building when a bus came along and picked up the passengers and us. We remained in the bus for half an hour while the Syrians cleared the airport building. I noticed my Greek friend and told him, "My friend and I did this." He burst into tears, and to comfort him I told him I would ask the Syrian authorities to cable his mother so that she needn't worry unnecessarily. We offered the passengers cigarettes and my friend gave the children sweets which they took cheerfully.

Since we had to wait, I said a few more things to the passengers to explain why we had hijacked the plane: "You may think we are criminals, but we are not. We are freedom fighters. The United States has supported Israel with Phantom planes and napalm and we have to make our protest felt by the American government. We were driven out 20 years ago and in 1967 Israel took the rest of our country and drove us out again. We are fighting to regain our freedom, our country and our homes. Tell others not to come to Israel as tourists. We are not against Jews, but only against Zionists."

After I had finished speaking, a lady, who said she was from California, asked me whether I had learnt my English "in America or in England." "In my country," I said. "We are not as ignorant as the Zionists say we are."

I would have liked to have seen the pilot again to ask him whether we had done a good job on the flight, to talk to him about Palestine and to invite him to visit us in Jordan. But this wasn't allowed. I only saw one of the pursers who told me that one lady had been injured getting out. I asked him to give her our apologies.

I got engaged four months ago to another resistance fighter, but who knows when we will be able to get married.

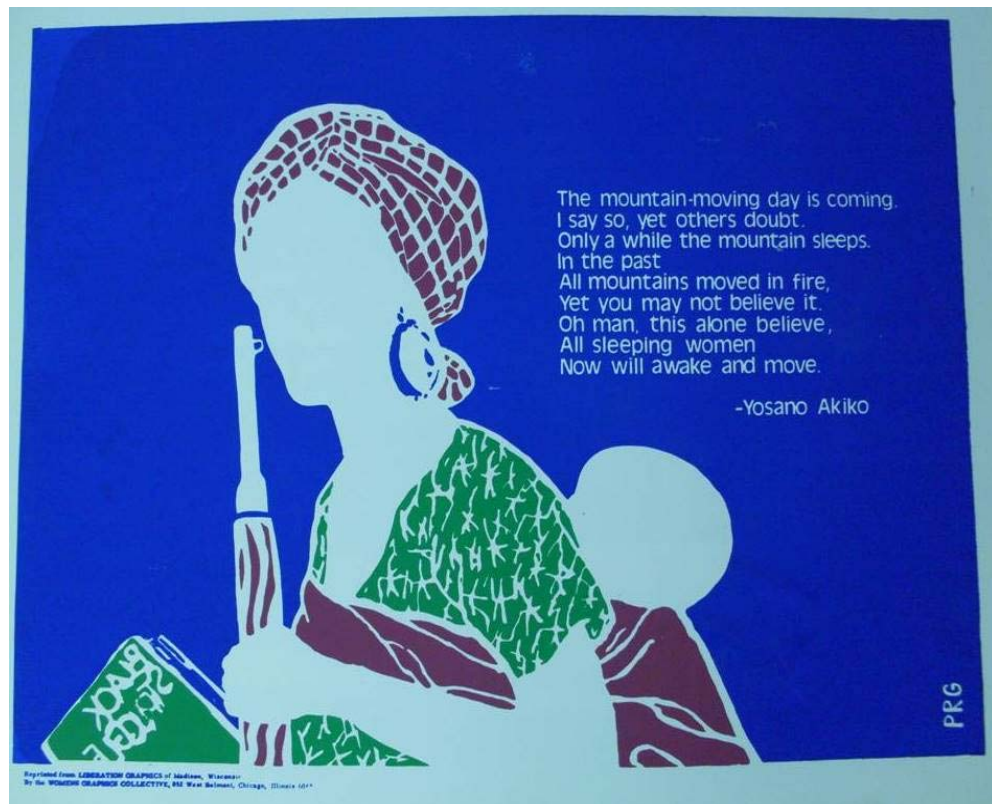
One question remains: will I have to hijack another plane to see my home town again...

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Volume 1 No 9
Ain't I





- 4.12 Image of a woman with a gun and child, reprint of the poster from Liberation Graphics of Madison, WI, by the Women's Graphics Collective in Chicago, IL (CSPG)



- 4.13 Image of a woman with a gun and child, Women's Liberation Cadre publication [spring 1970], Urbana, Illinois. (Folder 5, box 1, Fran Ansley Papers)

## Revolutionary Women

by Harriet Spiegel and Arlynn Robertson

One cannot understand the subjugation of women in merely personal terms. One trick our society plays on us, with its ethic of individualism, is to make each of us feel that her hang-ups are her own fault and her own problem. We must realize that our problems are not of an individual nature but are social--caused by the political, economic and social institutions which confront us every day. Our lack of self-confidence, our dependency on men and our emotional and physical weakness, to name a few, are programmed into us by the educational system, the business world and mass media which depict and "honor" the weaker sex. Because all women in this society are affected by these forces, none of us can be liberated until these institutions are radically altered. We must reject the individualistic ethic that society forces on us and replace it with a collective effort to change those institutions into ones which encourage a revolution in personal fulfillment and human relationships.

The women of Vietnam, for example, realize that their personal and political liberation are inseparable. While fighting for the self-determination of their country,

they are also fighting for their own self-determination within that country. These women have broken out of their traditional "feminine" roles and now assume significant political, economic and military positions. They not only began doing "men's work" but improved the methods of doing it. (see Wilfred Burdett's *Vietnam North*) The Vietnamese people realize that a democratic, socialist, humanist society can only be achieved through the active, equal participation of all the people. They see the vital connection between democratic socialism and the liberation of women.

Acting collectively, the women of our society can be a powerful political force. We must use this power to revolutionize those institutions which force us into dehumanized roles. Working together we are an essential part of the struggle for a humanistic society -- one in which all the people participate in a true economic and political democracy. Our struggle must be twofold-- for our own human freedom and for the freedom of all the world's people. Women cannot be liberated until everyone is-- no one can be liberated until women are.



## FUNCTIONS OF MALE CHAUVINISM

by Pat Gleason and Julie Jordan

Male chauvinism, at both the institutional and personal levels reinforces the commonly held myths of womanhood: she is passive, emotional, irresponsible, unreliable. Her natural place is in the home with "her" children, and her biological function prevents her from being a steady worker. Men have initiative, creativity, more physical strength and stamina, and are biologically suited to be the dominant partner in a male-female relationship. The mental and psychological as well as economic repression that institutions within this society foster in the women's mind and psyche, stifles them and at the same time stifles the men who on the surface appear to be their oppressors.

One of the consequences of a male supremacist society -- a society in which production, creativity, and dominance are attributed to men-- is the male chauvinist attitude of both men and women. The capitalist society is one that is dominated by a particular class of males who use male chauvinism to protect their class privilege. Institutional and personal male chauvinism mutually oppress men and women who are already oppressed by a culture and a heritage that mutilates the relationships between them.

Institutional male chauvinism is very blatant in our society. It began when, in the Constitution of the United States, only some white males were allowed to vote. Since that time, women have won suffrage, which actually has ended up meaning very little due to the inherently undemocratic nature of a class society.

There is a real material oppression that women in our society face, accompanied by a chauvinist ideology which is spread and maintained by the various socializing institutions. This sexual caste system serves the capitalist society in many ways and the ruling class has a need to keep women in an inferior and exploited condition. On the other hand, chauvinist attitudes have a psychological impetus and momentum of their

cont. on p. 8

3



4.14 Image of a woman with a gun and child, *Distaff*, May 1980, p. 9. (NCCROW)

## Interview with a Sandinista

by Connie Dorval-Bernal

In trying to write about Olga Aviles, I've had some real problems with my surroundings. Maybe they're just excuses for writer's cramp. Yet somehow my inelegant buy table old desk, ceramic pot with pens and assorted nibs, calendar, clamp lamp and obsessive collection of dictionaries seem to be in uncomfortable contrast with the politically spartan and streamlined life of Olga. Olga is a guerrilla, a warrior, and has been for many years. She has lived underground, carried a gun, led ambush parties, taken prisoners, developed strategies, expanded political ideologies, won a revolution. Her experiences are foreign to most of us, who are not a part of Third World struggles, but her courage, strength, and fierce belief in her ideals cross the borders of experience and touch all of us.

Aviles was in New Orleans as part of a nation-wide tour sponsored by the Nicaraguan Reconstruction Government. The purpose of the tour was to raise money and support for the literacy crusade now going on in Nicaragua, where illiteracy rates surpass 50% in the general population, 60% among women, and as high as 80% in rural areas. She, along with the hundreds of thousands of others who rose up against the harsh dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, has put aside her gun to begin the even greater struggle to reconstruct her broken country.

As I sat there watching her, small, calm, self-possessed, I wondered how she had come to be involved in the armed struggle and why. She was one of the first women, now more than 15 years ago, to take up arms against the Somoza family dynasty.

"My mother had a very definite and positive influence on me, even though she was not a revolutionary herself," she says. "We are related to Augusto Sandino (early leader of the Nicaraguan struggle from whom the Sandinistas take their name) and this influenced all of us."

"In the beginning there were very few women in the movement. Nicaragua has traditionally been a very conservative place with rigid and highly defined roles. Women's roles have been confined to keeping the home, cooking, and raising the children. Even

ful insurrection last summer, Aviles was forced to lead an underground existence, constantly evading capture by Somoza's National Guard. Her family, she says, gave her a great deal of moral support and protected her from the authorities. In 1974, she led a successful attack against 22 officials of the Somoza regime, who were held hostage until some 60 Sandinista political prisoners were released. When, somewhat in awe, I asked her if she considered herself to be a courageous woman, she responded in her lovely calm and unassuming manner.

"Fear is a very real obstacle. But when you have knowledge, and belief in your ideals, you can dominate and overcome that fear. When you are fighting for an ideal aspiration, you find ways to achieve it. Strength in your convictions gives you the self-confidence to face your fears."

I asked her if she believed that the new government would truly concern itself with women's concerns and strive for real equality among all its people. Her response was an adamant "Yes". She explained that unlike the women's movements in developed countries, which she feels operate within a social vacuum and in isolation from other struggles, the movement in her country involved an overwhelming majority of people from every social and economic level and was dedicated to restructuring the entire social framework, from the bottom up.

"When you participate in such a struggle," she says, "it can only make you extremely sensitive to each and every social problem and ill. You see and feel people's needs, sense how they've changed and how they are changing. In Nicaragua we are involved in a revolutionary process, which speaks for itself. Our purpose is to free all people, not just women."

"More than half of the population in Nicaragua is women. If women are not fully incorporated into society, the revolution will never be achieved. Women are now involved in every aspect and branch of the new government and are taking very active roles in our country's development. We must become full members of the society, the economy, the decision-making

process. And now, in the new Nicaragua, we are able to demand our rights."

Besides involving women directly in government and military affairs, the Reconstruction government is taking many positive steps toward the full integration of women into society. Of critical importance is to redevelop commerce and industry, which was left completely crippled by the Somoza regime and the insurrection.

Women must be integrated into the work force, but the process will be slow because of the devastated economy. However, day care centers have been established in work centers to encourage and enable women to work. Women in neighborhoods are being encouraged to start their own garment "factories"; the government provides them with sewing machines and fabric, and the rest is up to the women. They organize and run their industry cooperatively.

Neighborhood Committees have been established for women, in which all women's problems and issues are discussed and solutions sought for them. The Women's Association has been created by the government, its purpose being to find ways of promoting work for women, and to advocate for women and children. Women are also one of the primary targets of the literacy campaign, and not only will they be taught to read but a reexamination of men's and women's changing roles will take place as part of the education.

"The transition for many women and men is slow," says Aviles, "but it will come. We are all a part of the revolutionary process, and within that process we women have equal importance."

INDEPENDENT  
INSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE

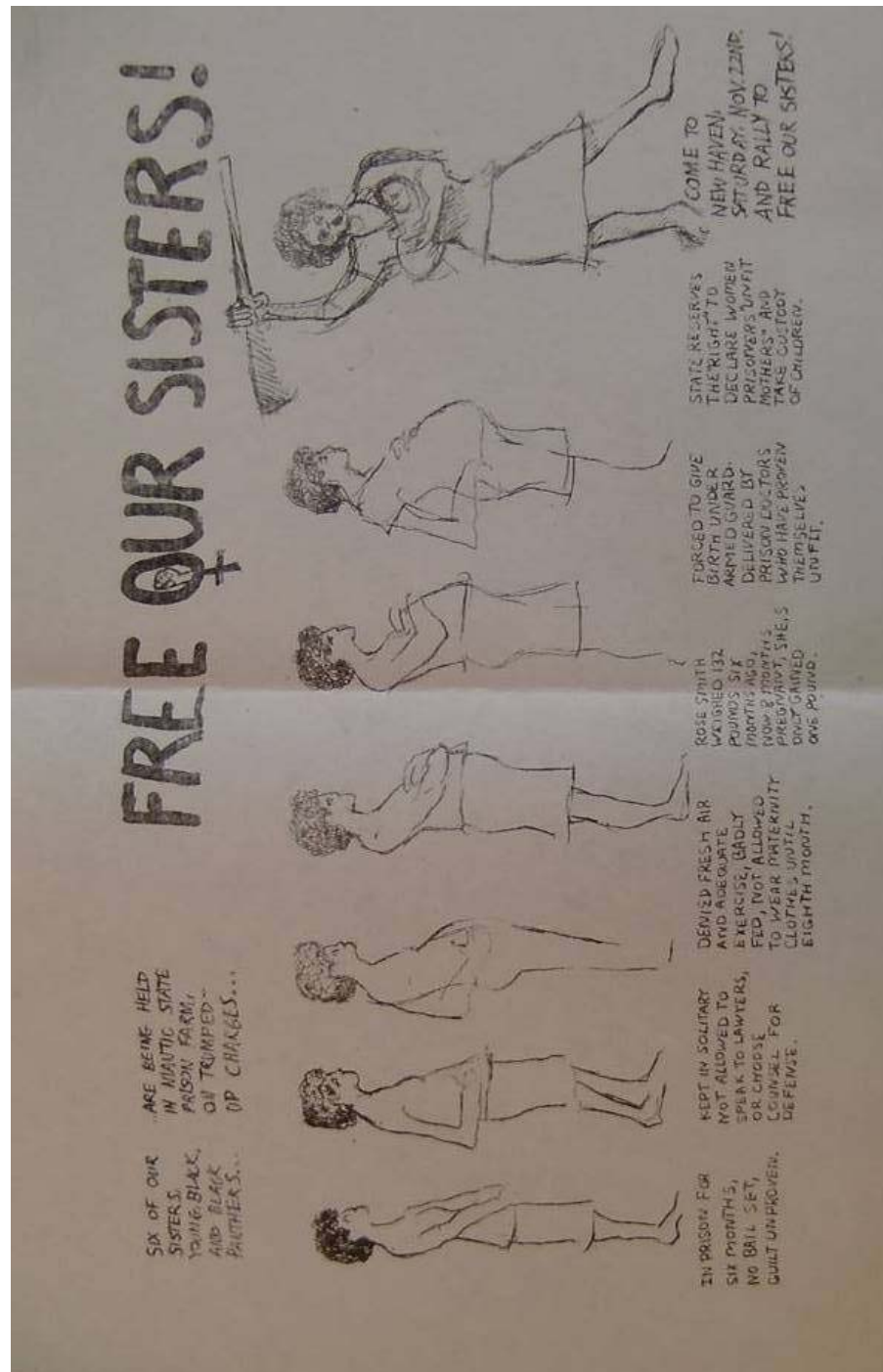
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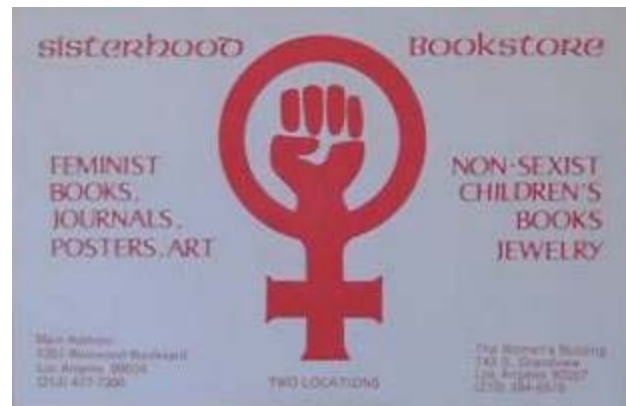
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- 4.15 Image of a woman with a gun and child, Panther Rally Flyer [November 1969]. It is likely from a New York or Boston area women's liberation group. (Folder 2, box 1, Fran Ansley Papers)



- 4.16 Sticker advertising Sisterhood Bookstore in Los Angeles, California (Folder 36, box 2, Rochelle Ruthchild Papers)



- 4.17 Image of women protesting the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1968. (Evans 2003)





4.18 Image of Sojourner Truth on the back page of *Ain't I a Woman?*, September 11, 1970. (IWA)

# No More Radical Sabbaticals

FEMALE PERSPECTIVES

The Southwestern Female Rights Union is a small collective of women interested in establishing a strong women's movement based on the struggle of the most oppressed in the Southwest. At this point we are primarily an informational office.

Because of the problems we have talked about it is especially difficult to organize here. We are in the process of developing ideas for various positive programs.

We are interested in any suggestions and help people have to offer. Some of us live together in a house where we also have our office. We are desperately in need of contributions for our rent and the first issue of our journal. Some of us are going to Cuba and our staff will be severely depleted. We are in the process of trying to catch up with correspondence. We ask that all be patient.

Struggle.

(Dorothy Adams, Martha, Mary Maxine)

## THE SITUATION IN NEW MEXICO

The situation in New Mexico, in the South, in the ghetto, demands special attention from the white Women's Movement and the Movement as a whole. It demands analysis and sensitivity on the part of all white (anglo) people. We have studied, and are still studying and reading about the problems and the oppression of the Black in her ghetto. Movement papers have analyzed the problems and establishment press, television, and films have inundated us with propaganda concerning the Black's situation. The Movement in centers like New York and Berkeley is just beginning to understand the situation and deal effectively with it. In New Mexico, however, we are just beginning to understand our chauvinism and racism because the situation demands a different analysis. Most of us were educated in "heavy" Eastern and West Coast politics. Most of the communication and information we have with other groups comes from both these areas. It is time now for the analysis of the problems of this area, by the women of this area, to reach the rest of the country. (For the beginnings of the analysis of Chicana problems we suggest you read *Enriqueta Lomax y Vasquez*' articles in "El Grito del Norte").

Racism thrives here in the form of imperialism and supremacy. New Mexico is a colony, as is the South. The government can test its bombs and missiles at White Sands and Los Alamos because it does not have to put up with the objections of an urban white middle class whose good-will it has to nurture. They build their bombs in a third world area and drop them on third world people. The atomic bomb, developed and tested in New Mexico was dropped on Japan. The government which did this continues to send missiles over New Mexico to land at White Sands. Could anyone imagine their sending it over Chicago to land in Lake Michigan?

The government comes to the Southwest and offers good, well-paying jobs to anglos. The Chicano remains unemployed - except in the low-paying menial jobs - his land is legally "stolen" in suit-claim deeds - he moves to the ghetto of the city with his family where he can be easily contained and constantly harassed by the police. (We use he in this instance because the plight of the Chicana is much worse - she usually needs no land, her jobs are worth less money, welfare is ridiculously low.)

The Chicano and Indian are people raised on the land. A hundred years before the Pilgrims landed the Chicano and Indian were fighting the harsh elements, growing their crops, and herding their sheep. They built irrigation systems to tap the precious water supply. They fought droughts and flash floods, they fought for their freedom - from Spain - the frontiersmen - and the United States government. When the railroad came the land became valuable for raising cattle to supply beef for the East. The anglos raped the mountains for minerals and stole the range lands, overgrazing them, turning the plains into a desert. With the help of "hermes" like Eli Laron they raped and massacred the Indian. They destroyed the buffalo and the deer. Worst of all they brought their capitalistic, imperialist system, the economy that turns people into leeches, parasites who live off the misery of others, that creates the Vendido and Uncle Tomcawks.

A second migration is inundating the Southwest... the salt of the commonsense, the freak, the longhair. Hollywood and "Dennis Hooper" "richies" come to escape the cities and among of the city, the people are so "real", so "genuine". They live in dirt houses, attend dirt churches, eat tortillas, chile, and beans. Tourists don't have to deal with the expense and language of a foreign country when they can visit the quaint mountain villages of the Sangre de Cristo and the "authentic" goodness of the Rio Grande. The beauty of New Mexico has created a most unlike Harlem that covers reality of extreme poverty. The tourist, imperialist hospitals for thousands, that the mountain streams - the very subsistence of the people - are polluted by mines, lumber mills and "hippies orgies". They do not see into the schools where children are forbidden to speak their own language. That the history which is taught is not their history but that of the Pilgrim... Kit Carson, is acclaimed a great American hero. The media tells them how lucky they are that the anglos came to build these good highways to the ski resort and the nearest McDonalds - the former they could not afford and at the latter they would not eat.

Movement people come through on their way to California, light up a joint, and stay because it is so beautiful... when they travel from Berkeley to San Francisco they do not stay in Oakland because it is so beautiful. New Mexico becoming the land of the Radical Sabbatical. The Mesa has a way of suspending our sense of humanity. How can hunger, disease, despair exist in such beauty? It does. We call for a boycott on travel and tourism in New Mexico. If you come - come as a true revolutionary, come with the consciousness that we have to work together and to fight together - when asked - against the oppression of the most oppressed.

Single women who were planning to come to the workshop had not been invited by Chicanas. They were coming to work and learn, but we who planned the camp did not have sufficient insight or knowledge to understand the position we would be in. Instead of arriving as sisters we would be meeting the lowest class which brings tourists; instead of achieving unity we might be splitting the ranks of the Chicano. Rather than be guilty of any of these errors in judgment we offer our apology. We offer our apology to our sisters in California who helped us but who did not participate in the decision. We, in New Mexico, were solely responsible for our ignorance and inensitivity to the problem. We feel that we have learned something from this experience and we have wanted to share it with you. Our further apology for the delay in this analysis reaching you. Sometime in the future it may be possible to have a camp where we are invited. The Cuban people have asked many North Americans to join the Venceremos Brigade and participate in the sugar harvest. When and if a group of Chicanas find it opportune to educate a group of white middle-class female liberationists then, perhaps, we can have a workshop. We feel that women should get together in workshops next summer. We must learn to work together after we have learned to talk together. We support the efforts of any who are interested in holding such camps. We welcome any correspondence, critical analysis.



**SOJOURNER TRUTH,**  
"THE LIBYAN GIRL"

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place... And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me... And ain't I a woman? I could as well and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard... And ain't I a woman?"


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

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Vol. 1, No. 5      Ain't I

**4.19** Certificate of Sisterhood passed out at the International Women's Day march in Los Angeles, March 1971. (Folder 4, LAWLM collection)

<h2 style="margin: 0;">CERTIFICATE OF SISTERHOOD</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">given in commemoration of INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, declared on March 8, 1910</p>	
<p>—Average annual wages in U.S.A. (1968):      White men: \$8047      White women: \$4687             Black men: \$5518      Black women: \$3635</p>	
<p>—75% of all working women are in clerical, sales or domestic service jobs.</p>	
<p>—Five million working women have pre-school children, but day care facilities are available for only 641 thousand children.</p>	
<p>—2 million abortions occur each year in the U.S.A., resulting in more than 5000 deaths.</p>	
<p>In recognition that          —WOMEN ARE SECONDARY IN SOCIETY          —ONLY BY UNITING IN OUR DEMANDS CAN WE REALIZE CHANGE          you are given this award in testimony to the struggle          you are forced to wage by living in society that denies          us control over our lives.</p>	
	<p>FOR FURTHER          INFORMATION CONTACT          WOMEN'S CENTER          1027 So. Crenshaw          L.A., 90019          937-3964</p>
<h2 style="margin: 0;">CERTIFICADO DE HERMANIDAD</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Dado en conmemoracion del DIA INTERNACIONAL DE MUJERES, declarado el 8 de Marzo, 1910.</p>	
<p>—Sueldos medianos en Los Estados Unidos (1968):      Hombres blancos: \$8047      Mujeres blancas: \$4687             Hombres negros: \$5518      Mujeres negras: \$3635</p>	
<p>—75% de todas mujeres hacen trabajo secretarial, son vendedoras, o trabajan en servicios domesticos.</p>	
<p>—Cinco millones de mujeres trabajadoras tienen hijos que son demasiado jovenes para ir a la escuela — pero centros para el cuidado de niños existen para sólo 641,000 niños.</p>	
<p>—2 millones de abortos ocurren año en Los Estados Unidos; mas de 5,000 mujeres mueren cada año como resultado.</p>	
<p>Teniendo cuenta que          —LAS MUJERES OCUPAN EL SEGUNDO LUGAR EN SOCIEDAD          —SÓLO SI NOS UNIMOS PODEMOS REALIZAR LOS CAMBIOS          ustedes reciben este certificado de premio en testimonio de nuestra lucha porque vivimos en una sociedad que no nos deja manejar nuestros destinos.</p>	
<p>Para mas informacion llame o venga al          CENTRO PARA MUJERES          1027 So. Crenshaw          L.A. 90019          937-3964</p>	
<p>OUR DEMANDS INCLUDE:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free community controlled and staffed 24-hour child care centers, funded by taxation of corporate profits.</li> <li>2. Passage of the Equal Rights Amendment with protective legislation extended to men.</li> <li>3. Free self defense classes for women starting at the junior high level.</li> <li>4. Free abortions on demand at community centers controlled by women. No forced sterilization.</li> <li>5. Paid maternity leave with guaranteed job security and no loss of seniority.</li> <li>6. The right to determine our own sexuality free from legal and economic reprisal.</li> <li>7. Organization of a houseworkers union.</li> </ol>	
<p>Queremos lo siguiente:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Centros para el cuidado de niños, gratuitos, abiertos 24 horas, controlados por y con personal de la comunidad, y pagados con impuestos de las ganancias de corporaciones grandes.</li> <li>2. Pasaje de la Ley de Derechos Iguales con legislación protectora extendida a los hombres.</li> <li>3. Clases gratuitas de la defensa propia para mujeres comenzando en la escuela secundaria.</li> <li>4. Los abortos gratuitos por demanda en centros de la comunidad controlados por mujeres de la comunidad. Sin esterilización forzada. Control de los nacimientos gratuitos, sencillos y eficientes por demanda.</li> <li>5. Permiso de maternidad pagado con seguridad garantizada del trabajo y sin pérdida de precedencia en el trabajo.</li> <li>6. El derecho de determinar nuestra propia sexualidad, libres de la represión legal y económica.</li> <li>7. La organización de una unión de trabajadoras domesticas.</li> </ol>	

4.20 Image of Sojourner Truth, *Distaff*, November 1979, p.8. Newcomb College Center for Research on Women, Tulane University

**DISTAFF, NOVEMBER 1979, PAGE 8**

Did you know that we women in Louisiana have our very own office in the Department of Health and Human Resources in Baton Rouge? And did you know that a small but dedicated staff works full time there to represent us and our needs? The Louisiana Bureau for Women was formed in the early 1970's. Director Pat Evans, who contributed articles to the earlier *DISTAFF*, was delighted to hear that the newspaper is beginning to publish again. She congratulates us, and sends us the following article excerpted from *WRITES*, the Women and Employment Program newsletter. For more information

carpentry program for women. The program, the only one of its kind in Louisiana, was the product of the cooperative efforts of the Louisiana Bureau for Women, the Skill Training Improvement Program (an off-shoot of CETA), and the Carpenters District Council of New Orleans and Vicinity, which runs the Carpenters, Millwrights and Piledrivers' Apprenticeship and Training Program.

The Louisiana Bureau for Women's Women Offenders' Program works with women to help them cope with the problems they face while in prison.

"We work with new admissions to help reduce the trauma of en-

News is shared via a monthly informal newsletter titled *Commissions' News*.

Providing information regarding availability of services to women is yet another goal for the Planning and Community Organization Program of the Bureau. A director of resources and services has been compiled and is an invaluable asset to service providers and agencies concerned with information and referral as well as to individuals.

The Louisiana Talent Bank for Women was created in 1977 by an executive order signed by Governor Edwin W. Edwards. Its purpose is to increase the representation and participation of women in respon-

Bureau provides office space, some clerical assistance, and supplies to the Talent Bank).

A training and education program of workshops and seminars throughout the state has also been developed and implemented by the Talent Bank. The purposes of these seminars are to enhance the job skills of women, to afford women a greater understanding of the functions and decision-making processes of state and local governments, and to encourage women to consider themselves as "decision makers".

There is a dire need in Louisiana for more emergency shelters for battered women and their children. The Bureau gave all the assistance possible in establishing emergency shelters in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. It will continue to work toward establishing similar shelters in other parts of the state.

Another Bureau goal is finding a solution to the very real and very serious problem of teenage pregnancy.

The Bureau plans to expand services to displaced homemakers. It hopes to establish a network of centers throughout Louisiana.

Pat Evans says, "It's been a struggle, an enormous struggle to keep a Bureau for Women alive and well in Louisiana. Who knows why? Our politics? Our culture? We have tried to bring our message to the women themselves."

Evans continues, "The Bureau has worked and will continue to work to improve the lives of Louisiana women and their families. Perhaps, just perhaps, one day, like all good agencies should, we will self-destruct because we have done what we were supposed to."

**OUR VERY OWN BUREAU IN BATON ROUGE**

on programs described here watch *DISTAFF* for future articles on the Bureau, or write La. Bureau for Women, 530 Lakeland Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70802.

These are new times for Louisiana women. Doors which have long been closed are now open. More women work outside the home than ever before. More women work in blue collar jobs than ever before.


The needs of Louisiana women are urgent — yet often overlooked. The Louisiana Bureau for Women focuses attention on these needs. It plans programs and services to meet women's needs and expand their opportunities.

Programs include such things as information and referral, education and training, technical assistance, a Women and Employment Program, Displaced Homemakers Centers, Program for Native American Women, a Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program, Program for Women Offenders, Humanities Program and the Talent Bank for Women. In addition, the Bureau keeps track of laws and legislation which affect Louisiana women. Louisiana was the tenth state in the nation to pass Displaced Homemakers' Legislation, the twelfth to legislatively recognize the problems of battered women and the eighth to change rape laws.

The Bureau for Women currently has two such centers, one in New Orleans and one in Baton Rouge.

Currently, it has three Women and Employment Programs. They are located in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Shreveport. Each program is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor's Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and administered by the Bureau for Women.

The Go-Getters are a group of economically disadvantaged women in New Orleans who were members of a pre-apprenticeship



tering prison life," says Program Director Eleanor Thornton Landry. "We try to determine each woman's needs on an individual basis and direct her to concrete ways to solve her problems. We also help her to identify specific areas in which improvements can be made. In addition to individual counseling, we offer sessions which allow the women to explore the way they interact with others, learn new values, and gain self-confidence."

The Women Offenders' Program also publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, *Voices From St. Gabriel* (formerly the *Society of Forgotten Women*).

During the last three years, four local Commissions on the Needs of Women have been established in Louisiana, through the assistance and support of the Bureau for Women, to serve as planning groups for local governments in their communities. In January, 1976, Mayor W.W. Dumas of Baton Rouge extended an invitation to twenty Baton Rougeans to become members of the first local Commission on the Needs of Women in the state of Louisiana. Three years later, the Baton Rouge Commission operates a shelter for battered women and a Women's Resource Center. Other such commissions exist in Lafayette, Lake Charles and Alexandria.

**METRO WOMEN'S CENTER**

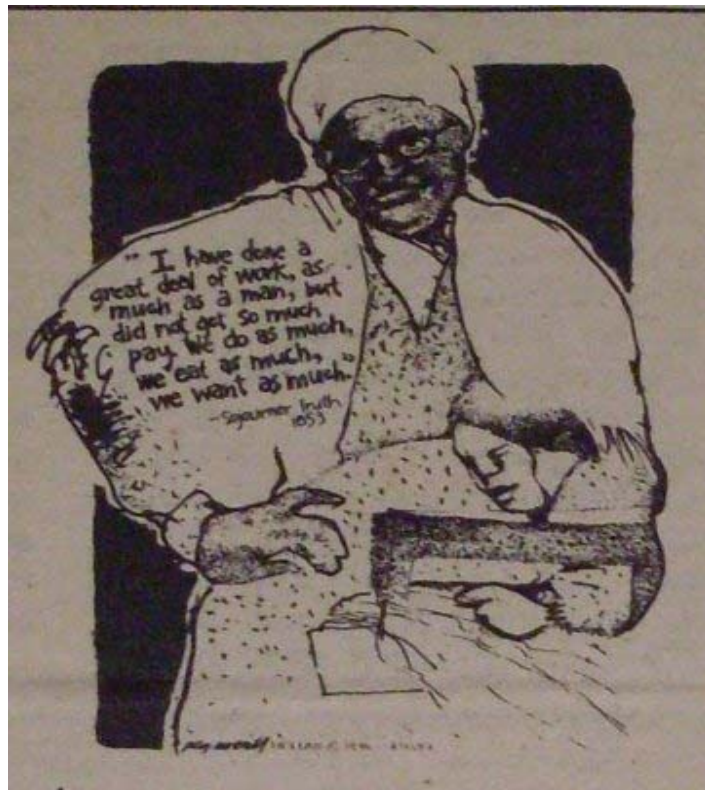
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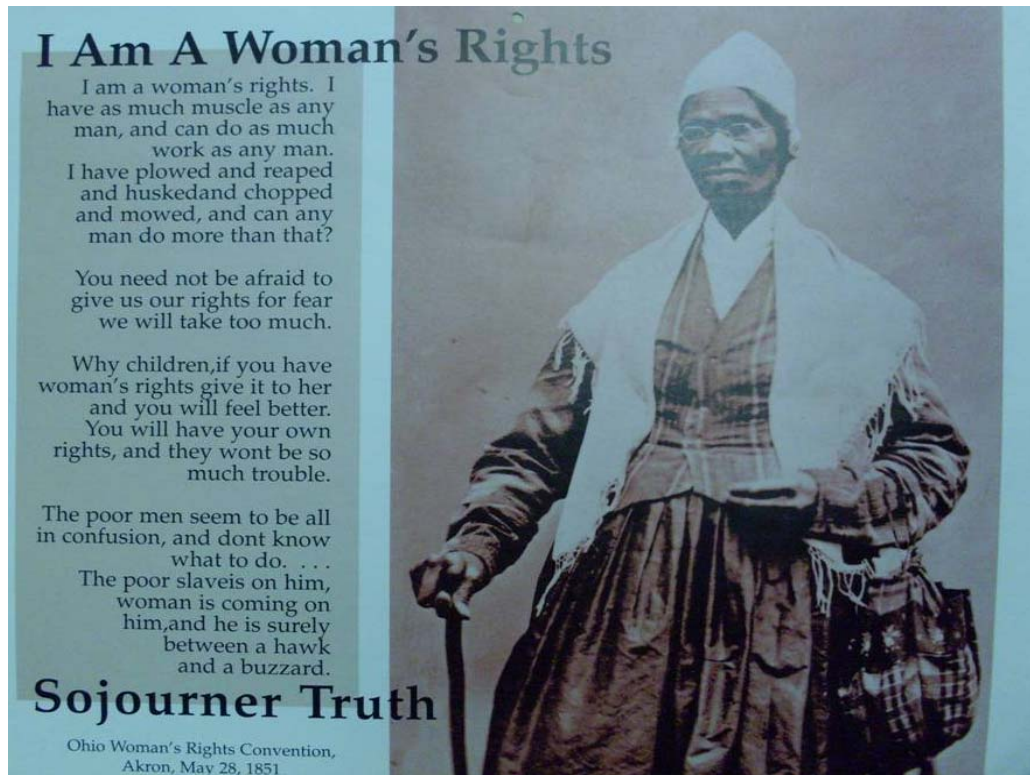
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4.21 Enlargement of the image of Sojourner Truth in figure 4.20



4.22 Image of Sojourner Truth from a 1999 calendar. (CSPG, B4.5 2000-64-12022)





**5.1** Robert Darnton's Communications circuit (reproduced in Atton 2002, 28)

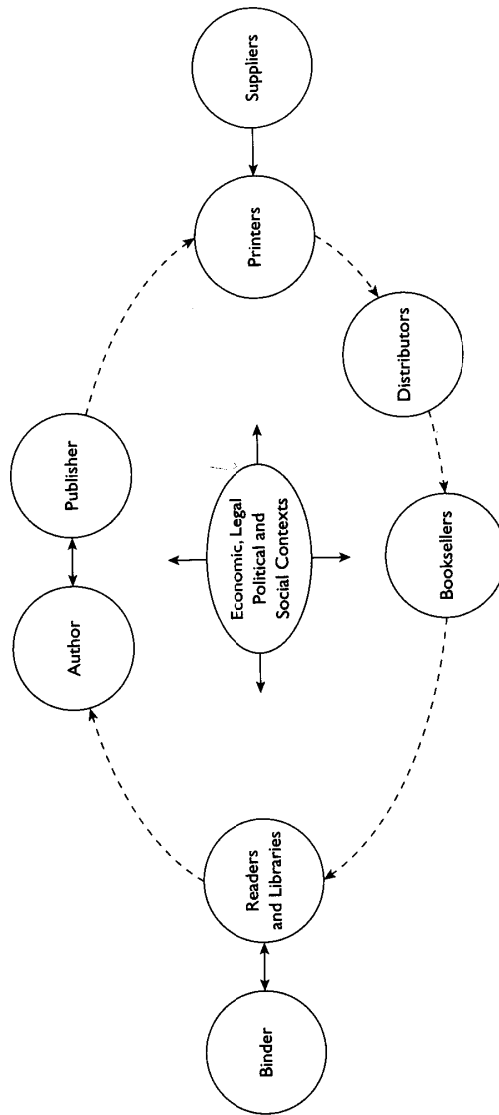


Figure 1 Darnton's communication circuit (after Darnton, 1990)

5.2 "Things for Men To Do," *Ain't I a Woman?*, September 22, 1970, p. 4. (IWA)

# Things for MEN to do:

---

Discover what your privileges are as part of a privileged caste.

Dis cover why you can't give someone else your privileges.

Think about what you feel when you look a woman up and down.

**kiss a brother.**

Try to be emotional about something close to your heart.

Think about the difference between a relationship of two women and one of a man and a women.

Think twice before you tell a woman how to run her movement.

Buy three guns. Give one to your mother, one to your wife, and one to your sister.

Hold your legs together every time you sit down for a while day.

Stare into the eyes of a salesman.

What future plans do you have for your son? ... your daughters?

Remember all the times you felt like crying when your dad played with you too roughly.

**Cry**

Discover what its like to be called irrational when you are just expressing strong feelings on an issue that's important to you.

How did your parents treat you differently from your sister?

How many times have you said "my wife" "my children"?

What did you feel like when you were little and you saw your father with another woman?

Do you feel differently about divorce now that you are a man?

---

And let's put one lie to rest for all time: the lie that men are oppressed, too, by sexism—the lie that there can be such a thing as "men's liberation groups." Oppression is something that one group of people commits against another group specifically because of a "threatening" characteristic shared by the latter group—skin color or sex or age, etc. The oppressors are indeed fucked up by being masters (racism hurts whites, sexual stereotypes are harmful to men) but those masters are not oppressed. Any master has the alternative of diverting himself of sexism or racism—the oppressed have no alternative—for they have no power—but to fight. In the long run, Women's Liberation will of course free men—but in the short run it's going to cost men a lot of privilege, which no one gives up willingly or easily. Sexism is not the fault of women—kill your fathers, not your mothers. —Robin Morgan.

This space is for men who want to write in our paper—sharpen your crayons.

4

Vol. 1, No. 5      AIN'T I







6.2 Cover of the zine *Vaginal Teeth*, 1998. (Leeds, UK)



Figure 5 Sp...ing wonder wom... newspaper of the Los Angeles...

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