

LIBERATION IS FULFILLMENT

All women have been oppressed at one time or another. The nature of the oppression has significant common factors such as girls being programmed in school to conform to what society says a girl must be (she can't take industrial arts; she must not get angry or swear; if there is a choice, her brother's college or career takes precedence over hers). Later we are assigned "roles" either by patriarchal church doctrine (think about the marriage ceremony: who gives this woman to this man) or by male dominated psychology. Both systems of thought attempt to exert power over women's minds, to keep them in their places, to diminish their sense of self-worth.

The movement represents the collective efforts of all women to see the nature of oppression from the general point of view and from the personal point of view. The term "raising consciousness" may be defined simply as women coming together to talk about their personal experiences which might include the fact that their grand-mothers had to have abortions furtively. What happens is that we rely on each other in a trusting relationship rather than to pay thousands of dollars to a "professional". What we have discovered is that we all have classic stories of being brutalized, mishandled, kept down, abused, underpaid, over-worked, unappreciated, and slapped around in a variety of ways, some openly hostile as is society's denial of women's love for other women; and some terribly subtle ways such as a husband telling a wife she is "over-reacting" or that she is being "emotional".

One of our purposes is to create an atmosphere in which women can see the abuses. Once aware that we are not alone, we begin to care about all women and then to implement effective methods of change. The movement is remarkable because it encompasses a wide variety of dissatisfactions and solutions, ranging from the radicals who distrust all aspects of a system which fosters violence, to women who want clean, safe streets for their children to play in.

Fundamental to the movement is the belief that women have not realized their potential. Liberation is fulfillment, and inherent in the individual's development of potential is the desire and the collective will to see that all women get out from under, that "your grievance is my grievance", that what I want you too may identify with.

I want the right to control my body, its reproduction processes, and that means free abortion on demand. I want 24 hour free day care centers which are community controlled. I want equal job and educational opportunities for women. I want to see more women doctors, lawyers, broadcasters, interviewers, teachers, professors, and university presidents. I want the media to stop exploiting women, to cease the denigration of women in pornographic magazines. I want to see women in plays and movies who are as fine and decent and remarkable as the women I know. I want young women to know that they are valued as people and need not marry to achieve the status they deserve. I want an end to war; clear air and water and parks. I want integrity from public officials half of whom should be women.

Anne Brady