**Don't Tell Anyone We Did It!**

Faith Wilding

On May 7, 1971, *Everywoman* magazine ("Everywoman is our sister") published a special issue. Designed by Sheila De Bretteville in a tabloid format sporting a gigantic set of hot pink lips across the entire cover page, the magazine announced: "This issue was done completely by a woman's collective in Fresno––Miss Chicago and the California Girls"(1). The text next to the lips on the front page proclaims:

> "Miss Chicago and the California girls:
> Sixteen women with a lot of cunt.
> Sixteen bitches.
> Sixteen witches.
> …….
> WE ARE FREE WE ARE FREE WE ARE FREE
> And Sister You Had Better Believe It!"(2)

*Everywoman* encapsulated many of the issues, images, and attitudes that became signatory for 1970s feminist art education and activism (both collective and individual) on the West Coast: The bold, contemporary tabloid format rather than messy, hippie psychedelia; the sharply printed text overlaying blowups of

each woman's face featured on her own page; the representation of intimacy and individuality within a collective whole; the pink lips as an icon of a newly assertive and sexual femininity—all were indicators of a radical new moment of feminist consciousness. Further, many of the texts boldly declared the primacy of female sexual liberation, including the assertion of desire and the demand for sexual satisfaction, as the basis for a new-found female subjectivity and self valuation: "As long as we could not make demands for sexual satisfaction, we would not be able to break through more rigid taboos to obtain satisfaction in any other parts of our lives. Not being able to make demands to fulfill our needs is deeply rooted in our psyches as women and constitutes the greater part of our damage."(3)

Primary among the issues discussed was consciousness-raising (CR). Borrowed from the model of "speaking our bitterness" used to organize peasant groups during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, CR became a key organizing and activist tool of the women's liberation movement in the U.S. beginning in the late 1960s. Since it was based on describing and analyzing individual lived experience, CR was seen as a process that could be used equally well by women from different classes, races, levels of education, backgrounds and interest groups. Many early feminist publications, educational projects, women's clinics and health projects, labor union and equal rights actions, and the like first sprang from CR group discussions. CR's fundamental importance to feminist

organizing, education, art, and action was articulated by Suzanne Lacy in the *Everywoman* issue: "Putting forth your experiences, individually and collectively, in the context of work is at once individually life-giving and also vital to the building of a feminist culture. Consciousness-raising is necessary to prepare us for the magnitude of the task of the complete reconstruction of our culture." (4)

CR was notable for countering the authoritarian patriarchal voices of religious tradition, psychoanalysis, and sociological theory by eliciting and validating women's personal experience, intensity, and subjectivity. Quickly moving beyond expressing bitterness in CR sessions, women began to speak about the direct experiences of female embodiment in heretofore unprecedented ways: Sexual acts and feelings, orgasm, motherhood, reproduction, lesbianism, pleasure, food, body image, rape, domestic labor, and the like were given a new vocabulary of expression. This taught women more clearly than could any theoretical textbook how we adapt our bodies to the dictates of culture, and how our bodies become signs of gender. I believe many of us *experienced* subjectivity consciously for the first time in CR, just as we taught each other about orgasm. Such intimate revelations often uncovered the immense amount of internalized insecurity, pain, and self-loathing that many women harbored in secret and alone.

As well as creating great solidarity among women personally, such confessions also had their social dimensions: On one hand they resulted in much powerful (though admittedly often crude and naïve) art that expressed anger and outrage about women's collective pain; on the other hand, they prompted the desire to honor and celebrate women's bodies and bodily expression in new cultural and social formations. Boldly, women declared the old definitions of gender roles oppressive and tried to perform new ones, or they tried to transcend them altogether, declaring that they could be anything they wanted to be. It was a short-lived utopian moment when every aspect of female experience, whether negative or positive, seemed an important object of exploration and experiment, as it added to the knowledge of that which had been unspoken for so long. It was a moment in which the complexity of lived interactions of the personal, political, and social became increasingly palpable, a moment of intensity and collective delirium that is hard to recapture in description now. Ultimately it was from this outburst of speaking "the truth about the body"(5) and examining the phenomenology of becoming woman that much of the impetus and subject matter for feminist theorizing in the 1980s developed.

The centrality of CR to feminist process began to fade during the late 1970s when much public feminist debate and activism also began to become fragmented by internal factionalism and by media and market pressures. As a result of the institutionalization of feminism, feminist theory grew rapidly as an academic

field in the early 1980s, and theory reading groups began to supplant CR groups. By the late 1980s, women were most likely to encounter feminism through academic feminism, reading groups, gender studies, and more rarely through activist participation in feminist organizing and participation in experiential feminism such as CR. Consequently many young feminists now have a strong theoretical background rather than one rooted in the lived experience and activist practice in which CR had been such a liberatory tool for an earlier generation of feminists.

**Consciousness Raising and Contemporary Feminisms**

In September 1998, Mira Schor, myself, and several other original Feminist Art Program (FAP) members were invited to participate in a "working symposium", The F Word: Contemporary Feminisms and the Legacy of the Los Angeles Feminist Art Movement, organized by a group of students and alumni calling themselves FAWS (Feminist Art Workshops) to be held at CalArts in October 1998. As described by FAWS organizer Andrea Richards, one goal of the symposium was "to better establish the original participants' legacy, foster understanding of contemporary feminism, and create a dialogue between different generations associated with feminist practice"(6). As part of the events leading up to the symposium, I was asked to facilitate a consciousness-raising session at CalArts for any woman who wished to participate. This request both

surprised and excited me, although I was also skeptical. I hadn't been in a classical CR session myself since the late 70s—although I'd been in several reading groups. I wondered, was CR a form that could still have any viable function in contemporary feminism? Could the ironic modes prevailing today be put aside to allow for the intensity and personal vulnerability CR demanded? However, it seemed that FAWS was genuinely committed to understanding as much of the histories of the feminist (art) movement from an experiential point of view as possible. For them, doing CR entailed a certain amount of risk; for me it meant a chance to engage with a different generation of women artists in a feminist process. So I agreed to facilitate a CR meeting, and to keep to the rules of confidentiality that CR demands as a basis for trust and honesty among the members (7).

On the appointed night, about fifteen women (mostly white) representing quite a range of ages, gathered in an austere room at CalArts. We sat in a circle on rather uncomfortable chairs. (I thought nostalgically of the comfortable "rap room" we had created at the original Fresno studio, with piles of big floor pillows on a colorful carpet quilt.) The atmosphere was somewhat cautious, though friendly. We broke the ice by going around the room and introducing ourselves. Next we tried to agree on a topic to discuss. Nobody suggested discussing sex, mothers, money, power, men, or our bodies (the hot topics we usually pounced on first in the 1970s). Many of the women wanted to address

practical problems, such as working together for the first time, and the conflicts between private artistic ambition and political work. I formulated some of the different issues mentioned into the CR topic for the evening: State your desires and ambitions for yourself in terms of being an artist, an activist, and a feminist. How do these identities intersect in your life? What are your problems, or obstacles, in realizing your desires?

To provide some background, I spoke about the historical experience of CR and discussed the classic "rules" (see side-bar). They wanted personal history, anecdotes, and experiences, and listened with great interest as I recalled some of our more incendiary sessions (including the one about physical appearance after which several of the Fresno students cut off all their long, beautiful hair). They raised questions about CRs' contemporary viability—could it act as pragmatic theory to be put to use in artistic and activist practice now (as it had often been in the past)? What about CR as a strategy for building coalitions and practices across generations, races, and classes? Can CR be an organizing tool outside the context of a visible, socially and politically grounded, active feminist movement? Can it be updated as an organizing tool now, and if so, how?

In classic CR fashion each woman in turn then addressed the topic, speaking uninterruptedly about her own experiences and feelings. As they spoke it became clearer to me how differently the challenges and risks of being feminists

were experienced by these women compared to my own experience. I was moved by the complexity of their positions and choices. These women had grown up enjoying many of the "benefits" feminists had struggled for in the past. And yet they often found themselves groping for ways to individually confront the real issues of sexism still operating in their school, home, and work environments. They were sensitive to the privileged positions they occupied as educated (mostly white) middle-class women, yet they felt alone again––perhaps even silenced by this awareness of privilege––bereft both of a feminist support network and of viable new strategies to organize group action. Until organizing FAWS they had not realized their desire to work together for common goals, and now they were wondering how to build on this experience. Past decades of turbulent feminist activism, and all the mechanisms and strategies that had been developed and practiced then, had to be rethought in the light of new conditions now. They felt they had to reinvent feminist action and being for themselves on their own terms. Thus they had begun in the time honored way by looking back at feminist history—specifically that of their own institution (CalArts)––that had pretty much been purged from institutional memory. This prompted more questions: How and why does this loss of feminist history continue to happen? To what end do we want to recuperate this history now? How can this history help us as artists grappling with contemporary issues of embodiment, difference, and the new technologies?

I have mentioned that the CalArts women felt they had taken a risk by doing CR and organizing the F Word symposium. On the last day of the symposium, several of them approached me privately to thank me and tell me that the CR session had been the most significant event of the week for them. They also begged me not to tell anyone that we'd done it because they were afraid of being ridiculed by other students or colleagues. When I began this essay I considered honoring this request, but the more I thought about it, the clearer it became that the question of risk was central to many of the conflictual questions that the CR session and the symposium had raised; consequently it seemed crucial to address it here directly. What exactly were these women risking by doing CR and thus being associated with 1970s feminism? And, more crucially, what price were they actually paying for their risk? These were talented, educated, articulate women in one of the country's elite art schools. They had enlisted the institutional support of a strong feminist provost, the wife of CalArts' president (also a faculty member), and the president, as well as many faculty and a considerable number of both male and female students. True, they had had some difficulty persuading the student activities committee to divert a small amount of the considerable sums usually reserved for the all-important CalArts Halloween bash toward a cause that was not deemed to have sufficient general interest and benefit to merit funding; and there had been some incidents of sexist sniping by students and faculty. Thirty years ago, the Feminist Art Program had also received much initial support from the institution and from then Art School

Dean, Paul Brach (husband of Miriam Schapiro). We had been given our own studio and funding, as well as graduate assistantships and scholarships for several of the original Fresno students. The FAP had used this support to help pioneer a highly visible, groundbreaking feminist art movement on the West Coast, as well as to take a confrontational and institutionally critical position at CalArts. The FAP had been separatist in the strategic feminist fashion of the early 1970s, and as such had attracted quite a bit of hostility during its tenure at the school. As we've seen, most of the program's traces were quickly buried once it was discontinued. It is worth noting that Judy Chicago, Sheila De Bretteville, and Arlene Raven, who cofounded the Feminist Studio Workshop, an alternative feminist art program in the Woman's Building, all left CalArts because they felt that the institution undermined their radical pedagogical and cultural ideas.

In the 1980s, feminist art generally became something that one should be catious of being associated with, as it was considered an essentialist practice, yet it had a lasting (if unacknowledged) influence in both art schools and the art mainstream––as was attested to by several of the women faculty who had been active feminists in the 1970s. It seems that as long as it could be located in 1980s-sanctioned feminist theory studies, feminism was institutionally tolerated. In retrospect, it's clear that the Feminist Art Program, which was activist and social in nature, was not assimilated into the school in ways that would continue to provide a generative and visible legacy for women students to draw upon. The

institution itself does not advertise its feminist legacy––to my knowledge it has never been used as a recruiting or fund-raising focus, for example, nor has CalArts made any effort to properly archive the FAP. Clearly, this all contributes to the sense of risk that contemporary women students feel there when they identify themselves as feminists. Fundamentally they are afraid that overt feminism will count against them in the cultural marketplace that the institution represents, and for which it is preparing them. After all, none of the program's graduates went on to become bigtime art stars like some of their CalArts contemporaries such as David Salle, Ross Bleckner, Eric Fischl, and Matt Mullican. By attempting to keep one foot firmly in the institution, these young feminists are trying to straddle a difficult divide. Hence their conflicts about the F Word, secrecy, and being identified as outspoken feminists. Yet the F Word Symposium was a hopeful gesture; perhaps as a result of this experience these relatively privileged young women will be inspired to use their positions to become active feminist leaders at their institutions and in the art world. To do this they must be willing once again to question the models of individual success and achievement still presented as the norm in art schools today.

Herein lies another point of risk; the women students repeatedly voiced sensing that there are conflicts between making their own work and working collectively or collaboratively. Does one have to work collectively to make feminist art, they asked? To be feminist, does the work have to be about women directly? Can you

be a feminist and not make feminist art? How does one translate feminist theory and ideas into art works? In the Fresno Program and in *Womanhouse,* CR had been the principal tool for arriving at subject matter for our work. Our collective process had often generated collaborative work, but it had also fueled and supported individual work. Currently, the lack of a shared experiential or social feminist process (such as CR) *among feminists* means most contemporary feminist art is no longer produced in the context of a visible political/social feminist movement. This calls for tactical changes in both the conditions of creation and of distribution of feminist art. How can feminist projects be shaped to address these new conditions and the new relations between artists, audiences, and feminism?

In *Everywoman* I had written, "We are finding a body of work created by women which uncovers and expresses a world of values which is very different from the male world of values which has been supreme for thousands of years. Our task is to expand, cultivate and promote our female values until they change the world as it now exists"(8). While this statement would be branded as naïve and essentialist today, it speaks of a central early feminist strategy—that of using past feminist tactics and women's histories as sources and models for new feminist work. Crucially, it also incorporates the recognition that a new subjectivity—a new consciousness—and its active cultural and social expression *will* change the world eventually. In *A Room of One's Own*,Virginia Woolf points to the importance of women writing their own histories as one among several strategies

for women artists. She suggests women create female histories by "writing" the work of other women artists and practitioners into their own work through quotation, reference, appropriation, and fictional reconstruction. I suggest that this tactic is more viable than ever today, and has the possibility of producing more radical social and political effects than the parodic and ironic appropriations of the work of male artists and media images so widely practiced by many women artists in the 1980s. For one thing it revitalizes and elucidates an often hidden history of female dissent and subversion that is found in many different cultural traditions. Rather than focusing solely on the oppressions of women (which tends to reify patriarchal hierarchies and gender division), it seeks out tactics of resistance, strength, and selfinvention. For another, it interrupts the often uncritical repetitious flow and recirculation of media(ted) images on which most appropriation rests and introduces new images, knowledges, and skills, and proposes subjectivities not based on reaction but on desire and invention.

**Grrl Culture and Feminist Subversion**

Conflicts between personal success, ambition, and committed feminism were mentioned repeatedly in the CalArts CR session: Can you be a feminist and still read *Vogue* magazine? Do feminists have to be outsiders? Shall we work inside or

outside the art world? Should we engage dominant art ideologies and trends, or do we critique them and try to create our own?

These questions speak to the complex issues of gender stereotyping, gender performance, difference, and separatism in feminisms and feminist art making. In the early 1970s it was an important tactic of feminist education, activism, and solidarity to create separatist groups and institutions in which women could be independent of men and learn the uses of power and self determination. Contrast this to the 1990s when many young women with feminist sympathies are afraid of being publicly identified as such. Instead of being outspoken feminists, young women are offered the role of the (cool) bad girrl, who is very much in the mainstream of culture and fashion. Although in the past, the bad grrl may have been seen as subversive in her parody of traditional female roles and subjection, currently this image is so overcoded as to be virtually useless as a figure of resistance. One need only surf some of the grrl sites on the Web to understand how profoundly the bad grrl image is rooted in stereotypes that recirculate female transgression under the sign of commodified sexuality, violence, and supposed female superiority. Furthermore, voluntarily playing the role of bad grrl is a privileged position, considering the punishments meted out to classes of women who are societies' (usually) involuntary bad girls, including sex workers, prostitutes, welfare and unwed mothers, innercity black teens, illegal aliens, lesbians, and the like. I suggest it is more subversive to make common cause

with them, and to search for radical models for feminist action and becoming in unpublicized, uncommodified, and unpopular places where women are resisting various economic, social, and political oppressions, than to continue to excavate the same narrow trove of western cultural representations. To do this one must be willing to find allies and forge coalitions across territories heretofore little explored.

The CalArts CR session raised further crucial questions: Can one be a feminist (artist) without being engaged in group action or activism? What counts as activism? What are possible new feminist formations both locally and globally? In this gloomy moment of capitalist market saturation and stock market liberalism, I am struck by the utopian desire expressed in the declarations of the ultimate goals of feminism and feminist art in the *Everywoman* issue: "Our task is to expand, cultivate, and promote our female values until they change the world as it now exists," and "Consciousness-raising is necessary to prepare us for the magnitude of the task of the complete reconstruction of our culture." Granted, this was in another time and in a very different social climate. Nevertheless, we fervently believed that cultural transformations induced by deploying new feminist consciousness and practices produced new subjectivities and desires for liberatory, creative, and variant modes of living in the world.

I suspect that much bad grrl posturing may act as a protective personal smokescreen for tremendous ambiguity among many younger women, and that it masks the absence of an activist feminist philosophy adequate to Guattari's Age of Planetary Computerization. It is crucial for feminists to address the question of how to reorganize and revitalize feminist action within a global culture that is being radically reconstructed by the worldwide introduction of interactive telecommunications and the accompanying consolidation of pancapitalist power. In light of this consolidation and the increased economic and social stratification it produces, it would seem that there is a greater need than ever for communication, solidarity, and creative sociopolitical movement among marginalized, disenfranchised, and minoritarian segments of the population. The irony—and perhaps also the seed of radical possibility—lies in the fact that the livelihoods of middle= and workingclass first world women are now inextricably linked to those of third world (rural) women and (urban) sweatshop/factory workers by a network of global marketing, communication, and production forces that still hold profit to be the master goal of life.

In widening my focus here from the issues raised by the CalArts CR session to consider the global possibilities of feminism, I am acknowledging my own desires for personal and collective resistance and activism within an increasingly electronically networked world. If one surfs the Web, it quickly becomes evident

that there's in fact a lot of organized feminist activity in many parts of the world, although this fact is rarely advertised in any of the mainstream media (9).

As Avital Ronell, Donna Haraway, and others have pointed out, it behooves feminists to become technologically skilled and knowledgeable lest the new technologies of global communication and domination once again perpetuate and strengthen the same old male culture and power structures. In this regard, feminists who have access to technological privileges need to be particularly alert to cultural, racial, and economic differences in the way women work, live, and use technology globally––differences that are rapidly shifting and increasing with the onrush of technological "advancement."

**CR for the 21st Century: Strategies for a New (Cyber)feminism**

In recent years interactive telecommunications technologies have been causing profound changes (globally) in social and political cultures. Increasingly, globalized society is being territorialized by western aesthetic and market strategies and cultural formations. Many supposedly alternative subversive strategies have been harnessed by pancapitalism to capture new markets and consumers everywhere. This situation acts as a rallying cry for a *new* (cyber)feminism for the 21st century. A diversity of critical,

aesthetic, and cultural feminist practices are becoming more and more relevant and necessary to decode, critique, and subvert the languages and practices of global capitalist culture.

In my panel presentation at the F Word symposium, I asked: What are the possibilities offered by the new technologies for a networked feminism? What are the conditions necessary for agency and female subjectivity in a wired and globalized world? To my mind, these can be leading projects for feminist artists and activists today. Some energetic new cyberfeminists are already busy creating liberatory and empowering uses of communications technologies and attempting incursions into the masculinist culture of the Internet. As I have written elsewhere (10) we should not look to the utopian magic of a liberating technology for the hard cultural work that needs to be done. Rather, women's tactical and imaginative uses of the Internet are already bringing about new social formations and associations among very different constituencies.

For example, some female hackers and computer engineers, as well as artists and tinkerers, are acquiring technological knowledge which if used strategically—and even metaphorically––could seriously disrupt and disturb the still overwhelmingly male culture of the Internet. Such disruptions presuppose a close entwinement of political and tactical thinking and technological know-how––something that is quite possible given current international feminist

resources. One can imagine other interventions: Feminist spokeswomen and policy makers could communicate about labor, employment, and displacement issues with activists working in diverse locations with working-class and poor women (who are often not connected to on-line resources). Feminist health, environmental, and medical workers could directly monitor the effects of the new biomedical and genetic technologies on different groups of women, and the like. Instead of being subjected to the irrelevancies of Jennicam (11), perhaps wired feminists could figure out ways to become more familiar with day=to=day living conditions and the new experiences of women and girls in the global integrated circuit. When the first Cyberfeminist International met at the Hybrid Workspace in Kassel, we recorded our discussions on video daily, and also emailed a daily report to the international women-only Faces list. Perhaps this was the beginning of modeling a new feminist consciousness raising for the 21st century––a networked, pangeographical, polyvocal conversation, embodied and gathered locally and distributed globally by electronic means.

The young women I met at CalArts are in a position to become feminist leaders. Why else take the risk of revisiting feminist history, if not to be inspired by the possibilities it envisioned for women in the future? I hope the F Word Symposium was their first step toward new feminist movements.

**Conclusion**

Although it was almost thirty years ago, I have not forgotten the powerful experiences of consciousness raising. The passion and intensity of the discoveries women made in CR are still palpably communicated by the artworks made during that time. Feminism changed my life then and has shaped the trajectory I've taken ever since. While I know it is possible to become a committed feminist without a conversion experience, I also believe that feminism is an embodied knowledge and practice that depends on sociality, collective work, and shared intensity of experience—in the famous phrase of the 1970s, it demands that the personal become the political. What I missed––I think what many missed––at the CalArts symposium was a sense of affirming intensity and urgency. I am not arguing for a utopian, unitary past that never was, but I miss the anger, the excitement, the power surges coming from the recognition of shared insights and feelings in CR, the sense of becoming a new kind of creature in action. Many women have greater opportunities open to them now than ever before, yet they are dogged by seemingly intractable past formations of patriarchy and inculcated gender roles. Will these simply go away as the older generations die out? I'm afraid not, for they are being perpetuated in the global cultures of the new technologies. In analyzing and resisting this situation with passion, wit, and courage lies the hope for a new activist networked feminism.

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Notes:

1. This collective was the Fresno Feminist Art Program (FAP) begun by Judy Chicago in the fall of 1970 at the State University of California in Fresno. A year later, Chicago and seven students from Fresno moved the FAP to California Institute of the Arts, where it was reconstituted as the CalArts Feminist Art Program, codirected by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. The program's groundbreaking project *Womanhouse* made international news in 1972. By 1975 both Chicago and Schapiro had left CalArts, and the Feminist Program quickly became history soon buried by the institution. By 1981 the CalArts 10th Anniversary Show of Alumni included only two women (neither of them from the FAP) out of the sixteen artists exhibited. And indeed by l997 the feminist legacy had become so obsolete and cumbersome that a graduate student working in the CalArts archives found a trash can full of discarded *Womanhouse* catalogs (now collector's items) that were being thrown out due to lack of space!

2. Written by Judith Dancoff, a film student from UCLA who spent time in the Fresno studio filming the day-to-day activities. *Everywoman*, Los Angeles. Special Issue. Volume 2, Issue 18, May 7, 1971.

3. Cheryl Zurilgen "Becoming Conscious." Ibid. p. 8.

4. Suzanne Lacy, "After Consciousness Raising What?" Ibid. p. 10.

5. It must be noted that CR and much of what I'm describing here was largely practiced by middle-class white women in de facto segregated groups, even though many of the participants had been active in the civil rights movement–– indeed they were aware that second wave feminism had been initiated by black

women in that movement who were tired of "being on their backs." The discourses of postcolonialism had not yet been formulated at this time. However, there was a lot of feminist activism among black and Hispanic women, and coalitions were often made across racial and ethnic groups for particular feminist battles such as the right to paid abortions, and in working for the Equal Rights Amendment.

6. Cal Arts *current*, Vol. 11, No.1 November 1998. p 1.

7. This need for confidentiality is different from the great ambivalence many young women feel about associating themselves with aspects of the histories of feminism that is reflected, for example, in the (only partly) ironic symposium title The F Word.

8. "Women Artists and Female Imagery," *Everywoman*, p. 19.

9. When feminist opinions or progress reports are sought by pollsters and journalists, they turn almost invariably to the usual spokeswomen from NOW or *Ms Magazine*. This perpetuates a fairly homogeneous, middle-class, heterosexual, and white stereotype of contemporary feminism in the public mind.

10. Faith Wilding and Critical Art Ensemble, "Notes on the Political Condition of Cyberfeminism." New York, *Art Journal*, Summer 1998. Vol. 57, No. 2. Faith Wilding, "Where is the Feminism in Cyberfeminism?" London, *nparadoxa*, Vol. 2, 1998, p. 6.

11. *Jennicam* is an Internet project by a young white woman who continually transmits scenes from her everyday life as recorded by a surveillance camera in her home.

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(for printing in a side-bar)

Consciousness Raising

(Excerpted from "A Program for Feminist "Consciousness Raising," originated by Kathie Sarachild [Redstockings] and presented at the First National Women's Liberation Conference, Chicago, November 27, 1968.)

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

…

(This) is a program planned on the assumption that a mass liberation movement will develop as more and more women begin to perceive their situation correctly and that, therefore, our primary task right now is to awaken "class" consciousness in ourselves and others on a mass scale. The following outline is just one hunch of what a theory of mass consciousness-raising would look like in skeleton form.

I. The "bitch session" cell group

- A. Ongoing consciousness expansion
  - 1. Personal recognition and testimony
    - a. Recalling and sharing our bitter experiences
    - b. Expressing our feelings about our experiences…..
    - c. Expressing our feelings about ourselves, men, other women
    - d. Evaluating our feelings
  - 2. Personal testimony––methods of group practice
    - a. Going around the room with key questions or key topics

b. Speaking our experiences––at random

c. Cross examination

3. Relating and generalizing individual testimony

a.Finding the common root when different women have opposite feelings and experiences

b. Examining the negative and positive aspects of each woman's feelings and her way of dealing with her situation as a woman"

(For the complete article please see *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*. Major Writings of the Radical Feminists. New York: Redstockings, 1970.)