

...women's liberation is human liberation

male workers returned, there were no more child care programs.

Social scientists who maintained that motherhood was a full-time, all-important job were popularized. Freud was instrumental in this process as were Margaret Mead and the functional sociologists who eulogized that what existed was what should be. They, as do most contemporary behavioural psychologists, spoke of human nature or the female condition as if it were an absolute:

"... we must start with the realization that, as much as women want to be good scientists or engineers, they want first and foremost to be womanly companions of men and to be mothers."
 "... anatomy decrees the life of a woman ... when women grow up without dread of their biological functions and without subversion by feminist doctrine, and therefore enter upon motherhood with a sense of fulfillment and altruistic sentiment..."
 "... mature womanly fulfillment rests on the fact that a woman's somatic design harbours an inner space destined to bear the offspring of chosen men, and with it, a biological, psychological and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy..."

These passages were taken from the writings of several prominent psychologists whose work was used in the years directly following the war, and today, to justify the second class status of women.

The fact is that the 'woman's place is in the home' myth is a phony rationalization for paying lower wages and providing worse working conditions for women than men. Employers use the 'feminine mystique' to mold women into 'their place' in industry, the place of the reserve labour pool. They can be thrown in or out of the labour market at will, used as part time or temporary workers, kept in the lowest-paying jobs with a minimum of resistance, and their rate of exploitation is the highest.

Women, in fact, do work that is essential for the functioning of the system: we do unpaid domestic labour in the home. But, because what capitalist society values most highly is money, and because women are not paid for the work they do in the home, woman's role as child-bearer, child-rearer, and housewife carries secondary status. We are defined always through our men: what class position he holds, what work he does.

Our media, education, families, in fact our entire socialization is for this channelling in adult life.

"You are nobody unless you marry," love comics tell you that all the time. "You are a poor housewife and mother unless you buy things," magazines assume. "You are to be pretty, not as smart as men, sexy, and not compete with men in any way" or "Your job will fit into what is feminine and ladylike — it is innate, you know, that women love kids."

It should be clear that the roles we see as our only alternatives, are quite essential to the continuation of the status quo. We continue to play these roles because we have learned them from childhood. Because we have been brought up to think of ourselves as inferior, both mentally and physically, we block our minds and come to believe that we are.

Society sets women's roles

Remember the times in elementary schools when girls were the smartest in the class? Somewhere between there and high school we learned that smartness doesn't pay off for our prime goal in life — that of getting a man and keeping him, at least not the kind of smartness we learned in schools. We learned that girls with brains didn't have dates; that cheerleaders were the envy of all the girls in the school. We learned to see each other as competitors for that all-important man, and to be wary of each other. Beauty and 'personality' in another woman can only be threatening if it stands between you and a man.

The roles we have just described are functional to capitalism. The system is capable of giving us as women a token degree of integration but we must not be misled by our new supposed freedoms. We must create a new society where no one has to play these roles, and where we, as women, can all develop to the highest of our human potential.

We must meet together to increase our understanding, from our own personal experiences, of the way in which we, as women, have been programmed and oppressed, and to analyze the social institutions that create the context of our oppression.

We must create an economic revolution that will end a system that exploits most people for the good of a few.

We must create a cultural revolution in the process, that will destroy the centuries of social programming we have undergone. It has been this programming that has made us see ourselves as inferior to men, that created the institution of marriage as a property relationship, that caused us to feel completely powerless and to accept that state of being.

For almost two years, women's liberation groups have been meeting to analyze the roots of their oppression as women.

Such groups usually begin by focussing on people's immediate concerns, problems and experiences, and then dig deeper by asking how those emerged, what institutions in society caused these conditions. What each participant once thought was her personal, individual problem, is in fact a social problem, shared by most in the group. It is a problem with institutional roots.

The socialization we all have undergone becomes clear. We can then build actions around the institutions that reinforce this programming — abortion laws which deny women the right to control their own bodies and therefore their lives, low wages, hiring discrimination, Virginia Slims' ads ("You've come a long way, baby") Contessa cigarette commercials that tell us "It's a woman's world."

We must build support services so that additional women can join with us; we should develop abortion referral services, birth control information centers, day care facilities. We must reach out and talk with other women.

We must create new ways of living and struggling with each and with our brothers, as we destroy a system that will allow no growth of this kind. We must relearn how to be human beings, and we must create the conditions so that others, too, can learn.

Women's liberation is human liberation!

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