

GLF WOMEN

GLF women welcome all women. In meetings and activities we maintain a flexible way of doing things to encompass our sisters of different social, economic, racial, religious, and political interests, and to permit individual freedom in actions and activities, both inside and outside of GLF.

We provide an opportunity for women to relate to other women through political activities and community social activities, beginning with dances and moving out to new forms of socializing and communicating with our sisters.

Gay Liberation Front was the first group in New York to come together specifically to fight homosexual oppression. GLF Women, a caucus of GLF, are lesbian activists fighting oppression on two fronts: As homosexuals, we work with our gay brothers to fight oppression based on society's exclusion of individuals who love members of the same sex. As women, we work with Women's Liberation to fight the oppression of all women.

Our strongest common denominator and greatest oppression lies with society's injustice against us as homosexuals. We are discriminated against as women, but lesbians who live openly are fired from jobs, expelled from schools, banished from their homes, and even beaten. Lesbians who hide and escape open hostility, suffer equal oppression through psychic damage caused by their fear and guilt. With this understanding, we focus on Gay Liberation, giving priority to gay issues and gay problems. We are part of the revolution of all oppressed people, but we cannot let the lesbians issue be an afterthought.

GLF Women are dedicated to changing attitudes, institutions, and laws that oppress lesbians, using all or any methods from reform to revolution. Actions and consciousness-raising achieve this goal. Gay Liberation is a movement and a state of mind challenging history's basic legal and social assumptions about homosexuality. Openly proclaiming ourselves lesbians is a revolutionary act and a threat to the prevailing society, which excludes people who live outside the norm. We work for a common understanding among all people that lesbianism is the most complete and fulfilling relationship with another woman and a valid life style.

Gay consciousness-raising is a primary interest:

(1) So that our lesbian sisters understand our oppression and fight against it. To be effective the lesbian movement must be a grass roots effort. We denounce the fact that society's rewards and privileges are only given to us when we hide and split our identity. We encourage self-determination and will work for changes in the lesbian self-image, as well as in society, to permit the "coming out" of each gay woman into society as a lesbian. The new self-image or "gay consciousness" refers to our sense of pride, unity, life style and community.

(2) Raising consciousness of people in all movements, so that they become aware of their sexism.

(3) Raising the consciousness of our sisters active in Women's Liberation to openly acknowledge and actively support lesbians, with the attitude of solidarity and not reciprocity. We denounce the use of the word lesbian to divide us from our sisters who should be united with us in our common struggle for the liberation of all women. We feel that the core oppression of women is the lesbian's oppression and the ultimate liberation of women is through the liberation of lesbians. Real freedom for lesbians will mean the end of all oppressive relationships based on male dominance and the compulsion women feel to seek male approval and support.

Women's Liberation groups must undertake consciousness-raising on lesbianism. They must accept among their leadership admitted and publicly known lesbians. They must make explicit their acceptance of the lesbian life style now implicit in their analysis.

a) Feminists speak of rejecting role-playing, but fail to see the pressures in society during children's formative years to love men over women.

b) They say that women should be free to govern their own bodies, but fail to grant the freedom of sexual preference.

c) They denounce stereotyped male and female attitudes and characteristics, but fail to accept as natural the so-called masculine female and so-called feminine male.

d) They talk about being independent of men, but do not see that the lesbian life style is the ultimate form of independence.

e) They talk of love among women, but do not include physical expression of that love.

(4) Education of the public to recognize homosexuals as an oppressed minority and to destroy stereotyped images based on and perpetuated by society's hostility. To fight prejudice with reason and love. "Gay is Good." Sexuality is basic to all human beings, and homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. To teach children from the earliest years about homosexuality without bias. To effect change, we advocate an open media policy, with media defined as lectures, demonstrations, leaflets, consciousness-raising, dances, and rapping in bars, as well as the press.

GAY LIBERATION FRONT WOMEN MEET SUNDAYS, 6-8 P.M., BERUBE GLF GENERAL MEETING, Community Center, 300 North Avenue, New York.

RADICALESBIANS 10.

The radical lesbian movement is growing and changing; selecting would probably be the best word. Lesbians from Gay Liberation Front, Women's Liberation, the bars and the closets are beginning to get it together. Many women have been meeting informally, but regularly, for several months as a group, now called Radicalesbians.

It began during the dreary months of a dying winter. A nucleus of GLF women, with a growing woman's consciousness, began to feel the need for an all-woman's GLF dance. We had previously been working in and attending the GLF dances which were overwhelmingly male...an overcrowded, dimly lit room, where packed together subway rush hour style, most human contact was limited to groping and dryfucking. Earlier attempts by both men and women at encouraging group dancing and space for conversation were nullified by the "puck 'em in" attitude of the GLF men running the dances. And there were so many men, that the women were lost to each other in a sea of spaced-out men. It was intolerable to most women, but we put up with it, hoping it would change. Finally, when it was obvious it was only getting worse as the weather grew warmer, we decided to have an all-women's dance. The first dance was so successful, it has been followed by several more. An environment of women rapping, drinking, dancing...relating with fluidity and grace, is beautiful. And most important, to plan and set up these dances we had to meet and work together...weekly meetings of GLF women became routine. This proved a fine opportunity to work collectively and get to know one another.

Simultaneously with this, something else was happening. Some GLF women together with independent women from the Women's Liberation Movement had formed a consciousness-raising group. Out of our meetings, two things developed: the writing of the paper, "Woman Identified Woman" and a plan to confront the upcoming Congress to Unite Women with the issue they had been avoiding for so long - Lesbianism (that old lavender menace). The Lavender Menace action is history now...we stole the show and had an audience of 400 women relating to lesbianism as it affects the women's movement. This was followed up by two days of workshops attended by over 200 women.

Our resolutions (we hope) became part of the report of the conference. WOMEN'S LIBERATION IS A LESBIAN PLOT...WE ARE ALL LESBIANS!!

But the aftermath of the Congress coup is not so well known. We called for consciousness raising groups and 50 interested women met on call. Four groups were set up, new women from the Congress action and Lavender Menace participating in each group. Many of the women in these groups were straight women who wanted to confront the issue of lesbianism and perhaps the lesbian in themselves. But a very large majority of these women turned out to be active lesbians, latent lesbians, closet lesbians, one-beautiful-experience lesbians, freaked-out lesbians, spaced-out lesbians... from the ranks of women's liberation, they responded.

After having related for months and years to the broader women's issues at the sacrifice of their own identity, these women were ready now to come out, to use their own energies to meet the needs of a lesbian community and to see that the concepts of primary value and commitment between women, developed in the paper "Woman-Identified Woman," were dealt with by the women's liberation movement. These sisters started coming to our weekly GLF women meetings and as the word spread through the grapevine, more and more unaffiliated women began attending these meetings.

Finally, the various groups of women had so thoroughly merged that the name GLF women seemed inappropriate... It was obvious we were an independent, autonomous group and while some women in the group continued to relate to GLF, there were many from the ranks of Women's Liberation who felt that they could not affiliate with a male-dominated organization that was in large part sexist. We decided to drop the name GLF women (we recently chose the name Radicalesbians) and begin our own journey to relate to the needs of our sisters. The money was taken from the GLF community center fund...that portion that had been contributed by the many women who had attended GLF dances...enough to fund our first independent dance.

So a movement of radical revolutionary gay women has organically coalesced, not artificially out of rhetorical political necessity, but through the natural flow of our experience and changes in consciousness.

The trip will probably be difficult but extremely rewarding. Our priorities differ. Some sisters feel themselves to be an arm of the Women's Liberation Movement...feel that the struggle is between women and male supremacy, and experience their primary identity as women (with a difference). Others feel themselves to be in close affiliation with GLF, continue to relate to GLF and view the struggle primarily as one between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Still others see their position as unique...a struggle against sexism whatever its guise. Some women have not snapped or articulated their politics...they only know that they like to be together with their sisters and want to help. With these differences we have been meeting and working together, respecting if not always loving each other.

We hope our policy and ideology will assume the shape of our collective needs. We are against hierarchical structures because as women we have experienced firsthand that hierarchy is a fixed status system (those with power and privilege, i.e. men, assume leadership and use it to perpetuate their advantage). We want an organization that encourages growth and fluidity. Therefore, we do not have "leaders." We experiment with focus that promote the participation of everyone in decision-making and actions. Some of these are consensus (sense of the meeting) instead of the vote, the lot system of assigning responsibilities, and a preference for meeting and rapping with small groups of women, rather than speaking at them in auditoriums and lecture halls. The quality of our exchanges with women is more important to us than reaching large numbers with stale rhetoric. We believe that we must live by revolutionary forms while we struggle against sexism, racism, and imperialism; that part of the revolution is our anti-authoritarian life style; that the revolution is process not goal. Small action-oriented collectives seems to be the direction in which we are headed.

It is important to Radicalesbians that sisters in the N.Y. area join us in our struggle. Lesbians whose lives are a struggle against the straight patriarchal supremacy; women who desire revolutionary primary relationships with other women, relationships that offer strength, support and solidarity, are radical lesbians. Join us in the struggle to smash sexism.

GAY SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL
Radicalesbians

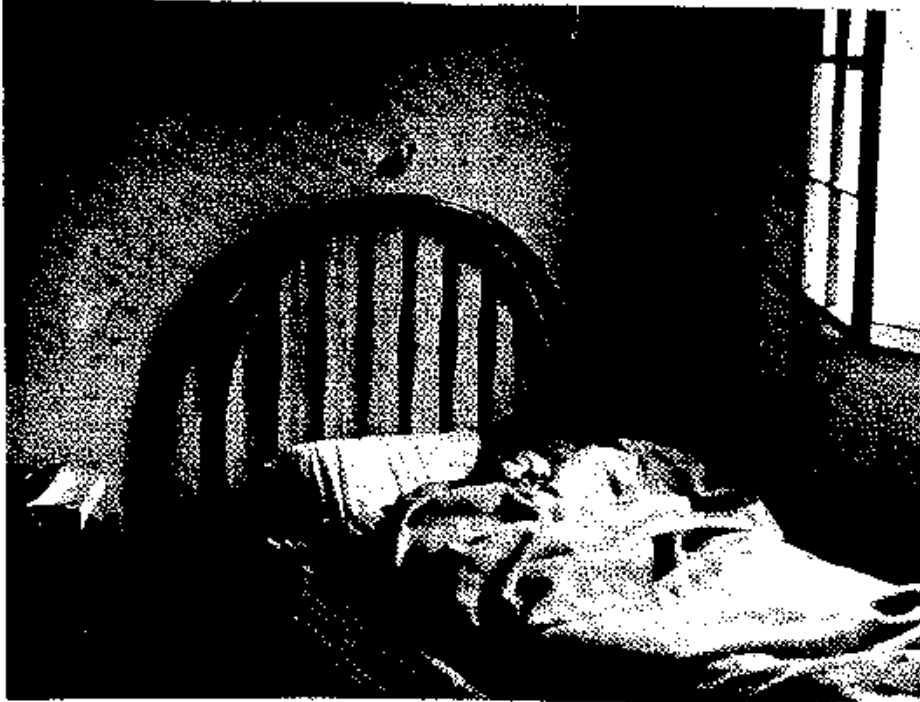


photo by Dennis Guttman/K

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limerick, Pa. oct. 24 -25, 1970



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