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## Women's Liberation



The resurgence of the women's struggle in the form of Women's Liberation is a young movement. A few small groups of radical women began forming in 1967 and 1968 to discuss their common problems made conscious to them by their experience in the civil rights movement and in the urban white organizing undertaken by white radical youth after the collapse of the civil rights movement.

Marlene Dixon, a nationally prominent woman in Women's Lib, who spoke at the UK Midwestern Women's Liberation Conference, elaborates on such experiences:

"Young women and girls risked their lives in the struggle to create a just and humane society. They were beaten in demonstrations, they were arrested and they were often sexually mistreated. They served time in jail, staffed the freedom houses, cranked the mimeograph machines, washed the dishes, loved the men, and cared for the children. Only to discover themselves absent from the steering committees, silent during meetings, and ridiculed when they protested that they worked and risked their lives in organizations in which they had little power to make decisions."

These women found that in a freedom struggle they were not free. They developed an understanding of male chauvinism, i.e., male supremacy.

Through a coalition of these women, Women's Liberation was born. Women's Liberation supports the fight for equal job and educational opportunity, repeal of abortion laws, and establishment of parent-controlled day care centers. But its main focus is against male chauvinism and the social and economic exploitation of all women.

However, the women's movement began as, and remains, a grass-roots movement. There are no national officers of Women's Libera-

tion and no officers within local groups. There has been a conscious effort to avoid leader-follower authoritarianism which women found so oppressive in New Left "participatory democracy" organizations.

Women's Lib has developed a new consciousness among the radical movement in general, as well as proliferating to high school women, working class women, middle class women, black women and poor women. Each group is autonomous. Even within the same city there may be several groups which differ somewhat in philosophy and tactics.

In Lexington the Women's Lib group meets every other week for a plenary session which is broken down into small groups for general discussion. The Lexington group is further divided into action groups—abortion counseling, legal rights, radical caucus and study groups. There is no one "platform" that women must subscribe to in order to participate in Women's Lib.

Women's Lib has spread to every major city in the United States and almost every university.

Women's Lib became a social movement as women began to realize that they were not alone in their personal problems.

A woman in Atlanta's Women's Lib describes the importance of the small group as a means of organization:

"Liberation is a constant process—and for a woman whose liberation involves in great part an end to her loneliness and isolation from other women, it would be both agonizing and impossible without their support. And to provide this support, women have organized the "small group"—the strength of our movement, through which women reach out to each other, grope together, grow together. It is our best means of raising consciousness, our most effective organizing tool, and, at the same time, our most human structure."

## A Female Revolution