know. No more arguments about shutting up for the greater good should make us ashamed of fighting for our freedom. Even since private property was invented, we have been waiting for freedom. That passive waiting is supposed to characterize our sex, and if we wait for the males we know to give up control, our great-grand-daughters will get plenty of practice in waiting, too. We are the fastest growing part of the Movement, and for the next few years it would be healthiest for us to work as if we were essentially all the Movement there is, until we can make alliances based on our politics. Any attempts to persuade men that we are serious are a waste of precious time and energy; they are not our constituency.

There is much anger here at Movement men, but I know they have been warped and programmed by the same society that has damn near crippled us. My anger is because they have created in the Movement a microcosm of that oppression and are proud of it. Manipulation and careerism and competition will not evaporate of themselves. Sisters, what we do, we have to do together, and we will see about them.

INSTITUTIONALIZED OPPRESSION OR THE FEMALE.

Florence Kennedy

People who have trouble accepting the thesis that women are an oppressed group might be somewhat placated by the theory of the circularity of oppression. It should be noted, from the jump, that there can be no really pervasive system of oppression, such as that in the United States, without the consent of the oppressed. People who have not withdrawn consent usually deny that they are oppressed. It follows. However, although the concept of circularity fails to sug-

gest that some groups are far more restricted, segregated, boycotted, ostracized, and insulted than others, it does succeed in suggesting one reason for the uncomfortably solid basis for the male backlash.

Men are outraged, turned off, and wigged out, by threats that women might withdraw consent to oppression, because they—men—subconsciously (and often consciously) know that they—men—are oppressed. Women, as they loudly proclaim their rejection of further oppression, will arouse men to turn upon the established order. First, women will ignore or take care of the male backlash by any means necessary. In acknowledging their oppression, women will do well to reject their own roles in the hierarchy of institutionalized oppression.

At least one answer to the failure of any number of people, especially women, to accept as a fact the contention that women are oppressed, might lie in their experience of having been the victim of an oppressive woman, i.e., women being utilized as agents for oppressors.

Women are frequently oppressive in one-to-one situations. In those cases the oppresses tend to be their children, other family members, especially husbands, superintendents, or other domestic or nonpolitical public servants, e.g., waiters.

I see our society, however defined, as an excellent example of institutionalized oppression. Where a system of oppression has become institutionalized, it is unnecessary for individuals to be oppressive. So it is that where blacks are concerned (there we go again analogizing women and black people; it's too perfect to ignore) whites can say, "But I never feel the slightest prejudice!" So, also, a man may say, "I'd hire a woman art director in a minute!"

Even if thousands of white male personnel directors made such declarations, such is the System that the overwhelming majority of art directors in major advertising agencies would be white and male. Just by nobody doing nothing the old bullshit mountain just grows and grows. Chocolate-cov-
ered, of course. We must take our little teaspooons and get to work. We can’t wait for shovels.

It may be the church, the husband, the TV series, or a sister-in-law who persuade the pregnant woman that she should run for cover the second she dons a maternity dress. Surely the personnel director does not decree that she hover over the crib, the creeper, the crawler, and the cuddly until puberty. Women in their brainwashed consentual condition frequently act out their role of hovering mother without any noticeable pressure from anyone. Note “noticeable.”

Dictates, from so many sources that you couldn’t even count them, wind like soft cotton-candy fiberglass to bind the woman to the BPBP status—Barefoot-Pregnant-and-Behind-the-Plow. Although the BPBP status of peasant days now translates into various updated versions, there is little doubt that sex and the female ability to bear children is a frequent rationalization for ever so many of the (at least) fifty-seven varieties of rationale for oppressing women. What difference does it make whether the rationalizations arise from suspicion, tradition, or competition? It’s women’s job to put their power to work to slow it down or break it up.

Very usually consent to oppression is obtained by the issuance of a license to oppress. Since not all women seek a license to oppress, and since children are frequently the objects for women’s oppression and not all women have access to children, consent is sometimes obtained through the ennoblement of suffering and sacrifice. Quite often, women consent to the system of oppression in exchange for a Vaseline-dispensing franchise. The franchise for dispensation of Vaseline is not wholly distinguishable from the honor of sacrifice and suffering, but has the added dimension of giving the female a superior status. She ministers to the suffering natives in her role as missionary, nun, or nurse, in exchange for which she suffers a second-class treatment from male missionaries, priests, or doctors. But she is so superior to the natives, novitiates, sinners, and bedridden

that she glides serenely through the bullshit as if it were a field of daisies.

Coalitions of welfare spies, euphemistically dubbed social investigators, with welfare victims, called clients, is a good example of salutary coalition of the oppressed.

The concepts of horizontal hostility and dumping are an integral part of the circularity of oppression in an institutionalized system. Horizontal hostility may be expressed in sibling rivalry or in competitive dueling which wrecks not only office tranquility or suburban domesticity but also some radical political groups and, it must be sadly said, some women’s liberation groups. Considerable headway toward a refocussing of hostility upward can be seen in the New York State area where broad coalitions of women’s liberation groups joined with such victimized pioneers as Bill Baird and Dr. Nathan Rappaport to demand, not reform, but repeal of abortion laws. Yet upon sober consideration, horizontal hostility is most understandable. Oppressed people are frequently very oppressive when first liberated. And why wouldn’t they be? They know best two positions. Somebody’s foot on their neck or their foot on somebody’s neck. Rednecks and poor white trash have traditionally dominated the Ku Klux Klan in the South, even as racist social workers and schoolteachers have infiltrated the ranks of those assigned to babysit the black communities in the North. To avoid these destructive effects of horizontal disruptiveness, women need some minimal political and/or social awareness of the pathology of the oppressed when confronted by divide-and-conquer experts. How else would it be so easy for Jews—who have never been placed in concentration camps by black people, or kept out of country clubs by black people, or pushed out of upstate resorts by black people—to fall for the line that black anti-Semitism was a greater threat to them than the Establishment’s divide-and-conquer techniques?

Similarly, even as they huddle together in the cold, damp atmosphere of their new-found liberation, and until they
do the cozy raiment of "How beautiful we!" women who have rejected the Establishmentarian goodies (pink mops, wigs, women's magazine romances, a door-held-open and miniskirts) often clash with each other before they learn to share and enjoy their new-found freedom. Some direct their hostility understandably to male counterparts rather than vertically toward the institutions that program us all, e.g., the media and the church.

A lack of a sense of considerable worth is another reason for horizontal hostility, consent to oppression, and the circularity of oppression. Values are learned at the parents' knee, at the laundromat, at church, at club meetings, and on TV networks. One Establishmentarian device, usually resort to in newspapers and TV or other mass media is to show women sacrificing and suffering. She quits her job so that she can follow him to South America or some such place.

Women are dirt searchers; their greatest worth is eradicating rings on collars and tables. Never mind real-estate boards' corruption and racism, here's your soapops. Everything she is doing is peripheral, expendable, crucial, and non-negotiable. Cleanliness is next to godliness.

She quits her job to have a baby. Magazine articles ponder the question of whether a wife can be a mother and a career woman. Never any problem being a wife, hostess, chauffeur, gardener, cook, bone typist, nurse, seamstress, social secretary, purchasing agent, and/or baby-manufacturing machine. A woman may be discouraged from studying law, "The books are so heavy." But do they weigh more than a six-month-old baby? TV commercials reduce the female worth by depicting the young wife crying over sink spots and water marks on goblets. What will his mother say? Make a good pudding so's you'll be loved. Get a good strong deodorant! Women get so excited, they smell! Poor dears.

Men are scarcely less peripheral and irrelevant in their day-to-day or weekend activities than women. They should be prepared to join with women to force society to liberate everybody from irrelevant, peripheral, societal bullshit. But for the foreseeable future some women will act as if getting in on the corruption is more desirable than ending it.

Freud was at his most fraudulent (forgive, I couldn't help it) when he talked about women's frustrations and hostility in terms of "penis envy." One would have thought that even the most pompous and fatuous of asses would have gathered that women were less interested in standing at urinals than in standing on an equal basis before the bar of justice! As with most, if not all systems of injustice and institutionalized oppression, the law had a leading role in oppressing women. It still has.

Some considerable time ago, anachronistic laws depriving women of most, if not all, civil and property laws were rewritten or repealed. But try to rent an apartment without a husband's (or some man's) signature. I can't begin to tell how many times a woman, separated from her husband, had to get him to sign a lease or help her get a charge account. Brothers or fathers often have to co-sign or countersign auto loans or chattel mortgages. This comes as a superirony, when, as is occasionally the case, the woman in question earns more, or has a longer, and/or more impressive work record.

As a rule, of course, the men, especially if they're white, do have the better jobs and the more impressive work record. That's because of sex bigotry, the buddy system, and various other below-the-belt Establishmentarian characteristics.

Women with really good jobs and connections are often bowed to, like the "Negro" who has "made it." Women who know what's good for them lapse into old role styles when they really need or desperately want something, like an apartment, or a part in a play, or a really cool job.

The kind of female who doesn't pull punches even to get an important Precious becomes known as strident, strong, a ball-breaker, or crazy. If they survive the ridicule, sarcasm, hostility, demotions, and demerits, such women frequently
fare better than the pliables. But the casualty rate is high. Survivors of the gamut often are among those most impatient with feminism or female liberation. They scrambled their way up and why can't anybody else? Such women are gleefully quoted by the Establishment, even as the "Uncles" Roy Wilkins and Bayard Rustin are widely quoted when they take black activists to task or defend pig Establishmentarians.

I predict that the Harriet Van Hornes who sniff at such beautiful zaps as the 1968 women's liberation demonstration against the Miss America Pageant, or the hollow, bewigged, superchic Pamela Masons who seem so bright and brittle until they have to deal with the matter of women's liberation, will meet with less tolerance than the Uncle Toms and the white maggots who feed off the few edibles in the garbage dump that the civil rights "fight" turned out to be.

Just as the students bypassed some of the turn-the-other-cheek, beat-me-daddy-eight-to-the-bar bullshit that black people grooved on, so, I predict, women will begin almost where the students left off, and they are starting more fires than get into the papers.

Some of the same reasons might account for the speed with which the women's movement will take off, once it taxes the field for a season or two. Students and women, unlike black people, didn't see themselves as oppressed, therefore when they were generalized they didn't respond with a shuffle and a "S'cuse me, boss." Of course, black students are in the van-guard of the student movement. This, if my theory is right, is because they knew they were scheduled for oppression and withdrew their consent: "Hell, no, we won't go," "No Vietnamese ever called me Nigger," etc. So black students were indeed not representative of the black community, or the shit would have hit the fan a long time ago.

But women are doers, and dreamers, and activists by the nature of their permissible roles. They do most of the buying, most of the lying ("Honey, call them and say I have to see an out-of-town client on the weekend"); "Dear, say I have a virus"—Hangover Hal; "Say we'll send the rent in on Friday"; "Change the appointment 'til next week") and a major portion of the hassling: with the landlord, merchants, family, etc. Women are more ready than most for the liberation struggle. We have only to direct our hostility from the vertical down (the kids, the merchants, the family, co-workers, and other women), and the horizontal—to the vertical up. According to my modus operandi this means systems and institutions less than people.

Kicking ass should be only where an ass is protecting the System. Ass-kicking should be undertaken regardless of the sex, the ethnicity, or the charm of the oppressor's agent. As the struggles intensify, the oppressor tends to select more attractive agents, frequently from among the oppressed.

It is for this reason that I have considerable difficulty with the sisterhood mystique: "We are all sisters," "Don't criticize a 'sister' publicly," etc. When a female judge asks my client where the bruises are when she complains about being assaulted by her husband (as did Family Court Judge Sylvia Jaffin Liese), and makes smart remarks about her being overweight, and, when another female judge is so hostile that she disqualifies herself but refuses to order a combative husband out of the house (even though he owns property elsewhere with suitable living quarters)—these judges are not my sisters. And if the same pair of female Family Court judges concurred in decisions to return a three-year-old child to her mother and stepfather only a few months before the child's body was recovered from the river and her stepfather accused of her death? (Foster parents had pleaded to keep the child and had pointed to the evidences of physical abuse to no avail.) No, these judges are not my sisters. Such females, in my opinion, are agents of an oppressive System, which the Family represents without a doubt.

Every form of bigotry can be found in ample supply in the legal system of our country. It would seem that Justice
(usually depicted as a woman) is indeed blind to racism, sexism, war, and poverty.

Dean Willis Reese, a lanky man who talks with a lisping voice and walks with a switch, hastened to assure me that I was being refused admission to Columbia Law School in 1948 not because I was black, but because I was a woman. I leaned on the ethnic angle, saying that some of my more cynical friends thought I was being discriminated against because I was a Negro (we weren't saying "black" in those days), and in any case it felt the same. Law-school admissions opened the door just wide enough for me, but not for my friend Pat Jones, who was a Barnard graduate, with a slightly higher law-aptitude level and slightly lower undergraduate average, but white.

Many senior partners, or hiring partners in Establishment law firms still have the nerve to say they don't normally hire women. Some, perhaps most, firms will accept a woman if she is in the upper percentile of her law school class. (So, also, they'll accept supersmart Jews.)

Of course, the law schools assist by screening out the women and the blacks "from the get-go." Nowadays the tokens have become a trifle. Much of the clash of black students on campus and the predictable upcoming clashes involving women is due to the "expectancy gap" which prevails when a bigot decides to go straight. The crabgrass liberal-bigot anticipates a good sport, a dazzled recipient with damp hands and misty eyes near to overflowing with gratitude—but is confronted by a cool, if not coldly suspicious, potential foe—a creditor sullenly receiving a minuscule payment of an unconscionably late I.O.U. Black students now—and female students in seasons to come—will break up the bank.

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The Politics Of Housework

Pat Mainardi

Though women do not complain of the power of husbands, each complain of her own husband, or of the husbands of her friends. It is the same in all other cases of servitude; at least in the commencement of the emancipatory movement. The serfs did not at first complain of the power of the lords, but only of their tyranny.

—John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*

Liberated women—very different from women's liberation! The first signals all kinds of goodies, to warm the hearts (not to mention other parts) of the most radical men. The other signals—*housework*. The first brings sex without marriage, sex before marriage, cozy housekeeping arrangements ("You see, I'm living with this chick") and the self-content of knowing that you're not the kind of man who wants a doormat instead of a woman. That will come later. After all, who wants that old commodity anymore, the Standard American Housewife, all husband, home and kids. The New Commodity, the Liberated Woman, has sex a lot and has a Career, preferably something that can be fitted in with the household chores—like dancing, pottery, or painting.

On the other hand is women's liberation—and housework. What? You say this is all trivial? Wonderful! That's what I thought. It seemed perfectly reasonable. We both had careers, both had to work a couple of days a week to earn enough to live on, so why shouldn't we share the housework? So I suggested it to my mate and he agreed—most men are too hip to turn you down flat. "You're right," he said, "It's only fair."

Then an interesting thing happened. I can only explain it by stating that we women have been brainwashed more