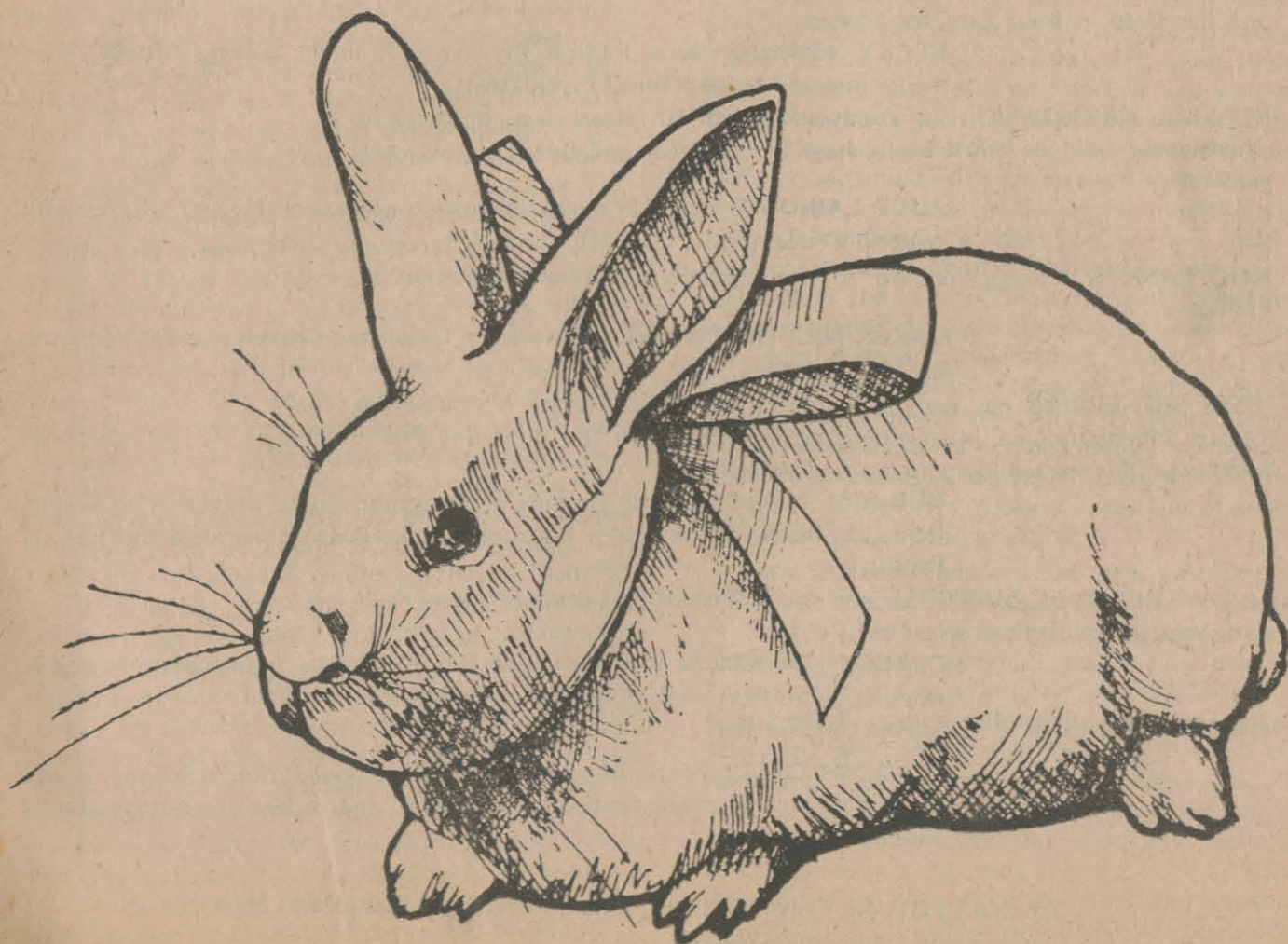


Issues in \$1.25
Cooperation & Power

Returns to Issues in Radical Therapy

Radical Therapy Multiplies



Issue 7

Fall 1981

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Workers & Authors

GARY GOODMAN is excited about expanding the ICP bookstore and continuing to work with the collective.

MELISSA FARLEY does not know how to describe herself right now but would like to hear about rituals you're doing. RR #3 Box 174, Solon, Iowa

SUE FUTRELL is an educational worker at a regional cooperative warehouse and has lived in Iowa City for 8 years.

BECKY JENKINS leads Radical Psychiatry Problem Solving Groups, does mediations and trains Radical Psychiatrists.

RUSSELL KARKOWSKI, is a woodworker with 10 fingers living in Iowa City whose main hobbies are learning how to disappear and how to grow older gracefully.

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ROZ LASH is looking forward to new directions and new work for the collective.

DARCA NICHOLSON lives and works in Ukiah and Berkeley and is happy to send the paper off.

JESSE SINGERMAN has worked in the HERA Collective for 8 years doing Radical Psychiatry and is starting a new project with the Blooming Prairie Warehouse. She started to come out 6 years ago.

BOB SIPE teaches Radical Therapy at Sangamont State University in Springfield, Ill.; he is also writing a book on Psycho-Politics, Marxism and Radical Psychiatry.

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CLAUDE STEINER is happy to send IRT/ICP on to fresher pastures and is working on his next book, *Emotional Literacy*.

JOHN TORGERSON is a woodworker/gardener.

HOGIE WYCKOFF continues to facilitate Cooperative Problem Solving Groups in Berkeley, to do mediations and bodywork, and to lead workshops around the country.

ICP COLLECTIVE: Gary Goodman, Jude LaBarre, Roz Lash, Darca Nicholson, Claude Steiner, and Hogie Wyckoff.

CO-EDITORS: Jude LaBarre and Darca Nicholson

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Editorial

FROM BARP TO GOOF (THE END OF AN ERA)

On Sept. 10, 1981, the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective (BARP) quietly and happily dissolved and reconstituted itself as an informal group of old friends (GOOF). This decision to give up all of the organizational and leadership responsibilities of Radical Psychiatry concluded more than a decade of collective work on the theory and practice of a radical, political alternative to conventional therapy. BARP's decision coincides with a decision by the collective that has produced *Issues in Cooperation and Power* (formerly IRT) to pass on this quarterly to a group of people with fresh blood in Springfield, Ill. An era is over!!!

We are proud of many things we have done with the help of you, our like-minded friends. We have produced a quarterly magazine for over nine years with a group of workers and writers who have volunteered their labor and time. This paper has reached and influenced thousands of people in the USA and in Europe. It has contributed to forming a growing network of people struggling against the power abuses of Psychiatry and the medical model of "mental illness". People who have written for ICP have contributed to a growing body of written theory that is easily understood and available. This body of theory has been consistently practiced, tested and changed in inexpensive problem solving groups that have served hundreds of people in the Bay Area alone. We do not think it is an exaggeration to assert that we are able to heal people of alcoholism, drug abuse, and depression—the desperate wages of life in an alienated, competitive society. Our concept of "paranoia as heightened awareness" has reconnected untold numbers of people alienated from their natural, intuitive powers. We have the remarkable record of having had no suicides among the countless people who have struggled against suicide while in our problem solving groups. We have introduced and developed a technique for the mediation of conflict, a form fast becoming popular with progressive therapists and lawyers. Hundreds of couples, collective households, business and political groups are using our techniques to equalize power and live and work cooperatively. We have introduced and perfected the way to handle personal feelings in the context of a working group. We have promoted the use of constructive criticism. We have taught people how to conduct a business meeting quickly and efficiently. People have come from around the country and from Europe to be trained. They have returned to their homes with new skills and energy to continue this work. There are working radical therapy

collectives in Iowa, New York, Illinois, Oregon, Sweden, Germany and Denmark. We have helped to organize and have taught at the annual Mid-Western Radical Therapy Conference held in Iowa. We have conducted a training Summer Institute for the past 5 years here in the Bay Area. We have influenced many people who are working inside conventional agencies, trying their best to change and improve the mental health services to the poor. We are excited and proud of the part we have played in the growing political awareness about the abuses of power rampant in the field of health services.

In addition to the above, those of us who have survived these years of struggle and growth, are proud that we have been able to maintain two working collectives that have survived the ravages of personal and political conflict. All of us have grown and developed, not only as practitioners of Radical Psychiatry and/or as writers, but as people. We have grown up together, helped each other and provided the loving criticism and the nourishment which too few people get in these times of dislocation and loneliness. The love and commitment between us is strong, forged by struggle and time. There are many people who have left, gone to do other things; these folks we also love and wish to thank—too many to name. Some of you have been our critics, and rightfully so. We appreciate your criticism and could not have survived without it.

The time has come for the people in BARP and the ICP collective to move on to new tasks—making art, returning to school, raising children, or working in the new political movements against war and hunger and radiation that are beginning to stir again in these troubled times. Some of us will continue to train people, conduct problem solving groups and do mediations. All of us are anxious to take what we have learned and apply it to the new work we have chosen. Wherever we go, we are committed to cooperative, collective methods of work. We are convinced of their efficacy.

There are new questions and new problems to solve. The theory hatched in the incubation period of the '70's, when we worked to develop ways to work cooperatively in small groups, now need to be extended and appropriately adapted for use in large groups, mass organizations where people are interested in changing the abuses of hierarchical leadership that have historically plagued us all. There is a slowly dawning vision about the way to combine the personal and the political in new and productive ways. Hundreds of you are thinking the same thoughts and we are confident that together we can do it. Goodbye to the old and forward to the new. You have our love and best wishes.

Becky Jenkins
for IRT &
BARP-GOOF collective

Ritual and Survival

Melissa Farley

A few years ago on a camping trip, I was awakened in my tent at dawn by shots as a flock of ducks circled in on hunters' decoys. Something about the scene chilled me to the bone. In a flash, I saw the extinction of my species as easily accomplished as the extinction of eagles, ducks, or whales. The ducks were so easily and innocently attracted to something which spelled destruction. This scene has a frightening parallel in the numbness to danger which occurs in humans when we are faced with the nuclear prospect—the possibility of destruction of most life as a result of nuclear war or power plant accident. Some new aspect of the survival instinct needs to be developed by people: Something that will warn us when we are approaching the danger zone, and something that will ultimately teach us *how* to survive.

It is my belief that rituals can reawaken this survival instinct. Rituals can show us what the dangers are and also teach us ways to overcome our impending extinction.

In this paper, I will search for the roots of the current threat to life in dualistic consciousness. I will compare patriarchal and matrifocal philosophy. Finally, I will describe ritual as a technique to overcome dualism and re-connect ourselves with our own powers, each other, and the earth.

Dualism as the Root of Alienation

For the past few thousand years, patriarchy has taught us to ignore or destroy those things which are the sources of life on this planet. We no longer see except in quite rigid, educationally programmed ways. Visionaries who *hear* voices or see spirits are labelled "crazy" and locked up. Our body smells are defined as bad and covered up chemically. In short, we have been taught to ignore many dimensions of our physical experience. At the most basic level, the power of our common senses has been denied us. We've also learned to discount mental/psychic powers such as dreams, self-hypnosis, clarity, foresight/prophecy, and the powerful use of words in poetry and metaphoric speech. (I'm using a lot of slashes and "or's" in writing this and still most of the words I'm using are inadequate to describe the phenomena I'm referring to. Our language was not designed to describe different realities.)

Ignoring or discounting these physical and psychic powers cause people to feel disconnected from the earth and alienated from the awareness that all of us are part of the same everchanging reality. Dualistic thinking is the specific means by which we are kept mentally and physically disconnected

from each other and from our connection with the earth. Examples of this dualistic split include the notion that male is absolutely different from female, black from white, life from death, good from evil. Dualistic thinking sets up opposition in the world. It has paved the way for unequal power relationships, for the notions of hierarchy and class structure. This dualism affects every facet of our lives, including leftist political theory. I find it difficult, for example, to accept an analysis which artificially separates peoples' economic history from their spiritual history. As I see it, there is both an economic *and* a spiritual aspect to most of our behavior. Early religious activity, for example, had to do with people's daily needs such as food gathering and medical care. It had a practical, material basis and was not at all "other-worldly" (Rich, *OF WOMAN BORN*, p. 86). When people were more in tune with the earth, they were more knowledgeable about crops than we are today. One report in *Science*, 1978, states that around 3000 B.C. barley cultivation yield was 20-to-76 fold. Modern barley cultivation methods yield only 10-fold (Nelsen, *The Origin*, p. 61).

The root of all dualism is the mind-body split. According to the patriarchal world-view, the mind should control the body while experiencing itself as something separate. This separation causes an incredible fragmentation and alienation both within ourselves and in our relationship to the rest of the world (Sjoo and Mor, *The Ancient Religion of the Great Cosmic Mother of All*, p. 70). Dualistic consciousness is a means by which we are kept powerless and obedient in the patriarchy. We are made vulnerable to someone else's authority if we cannot rely on our own senses.

Having been disconnected from sensual perceptions and from connections with other humans, we are also then alienated from the earth. Many of us have lost touch with our bodies' reactions to such basics as the phases of the moon, or the seasonal changes in the energy of all growing things. We have lost the ability to communicate with non-human life forms.

A physical example of the dualistic split I'm referring to is the apparent antagonism which exists between the two hemispheres of our brains. Verbal, rational, linear thought patterns occur in the left hemisphere; and creativity, holistic thinking, and non-verbal perception take place in the right hemisphere. Research shows that the left side of our brain in this culture is so dominant that it often must be "kept occupied" with busy work in order to reduce its influence if we want the right side engaged. Our right hemispheres have also been



shown to be physically smaller than peoples' who live in "primitive" cultures (see Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*). The right brain, because it reflects stereotypically female mental powers, could be described as the "matrifocal brain." The left brain, the "patriarchal brain," employs stereotyped masculine modes of operation.

The process we've endured for the past several thousand years may be described as the oppression of powers which promote life, connect people with each other, and with the earth. These powers which have been defined as female include: intuition, apparent and immediate emotional response, nurturing, compassion, trust, tenderness, use of the will to effect change, cooperation, relationship-centered or holistic perception, celebration.

Matrifocal and Patriarchal Philosophies

Western culture today is the final flowering of patriarchy, a multi-faceted institution which may well terminate human existence on earth within the century. The patriarchal world-view took thirty centuries to establish itself, starting about 10,000 B.C. It was a dominant force by 2000 B.C. As native and aboriginal cultures were destroyed by patriarchal culture, a distinct set of philosophical and religious beliefs evolved which reflect the dualism I've been describing. Most of us do not realize the magnitude of this dualistic world-view. Different groups fight against different manifestations of patriarchy without dealing with patriarchy as a whole entity. Various left groups focus on capital-

ism, religious bigotry, education, reproductive rights or ecology, but fail to see that each is only a tip of the patriarchal iceberg.

I propose a return to *matrifocal philosophical principles*, some of which remain today embedded in Native American or other "primitive" religious tradition, and in some Marxist ideology. I find value in the following principles because they offer direction for our own survival and for the healing of the earth. I want to point out how each of the matrifocal principles differs from its patriarchal counterpart.

In matrifocal cultures, the nurturing relationship between mother and child was the primary ethical obligation. All other relationships were seen as secondary to this one, and as necessarily supportive of the mother-child relationship. This central relationship led to communal/tribal living units which consisted of the extended family of the mother. In patriarchy, the relationship of everyone to the father was of primary importance. The control/ownership exercised by the father over the rest of his domain led to the formation of hierarchical power structures in society, beginning with the

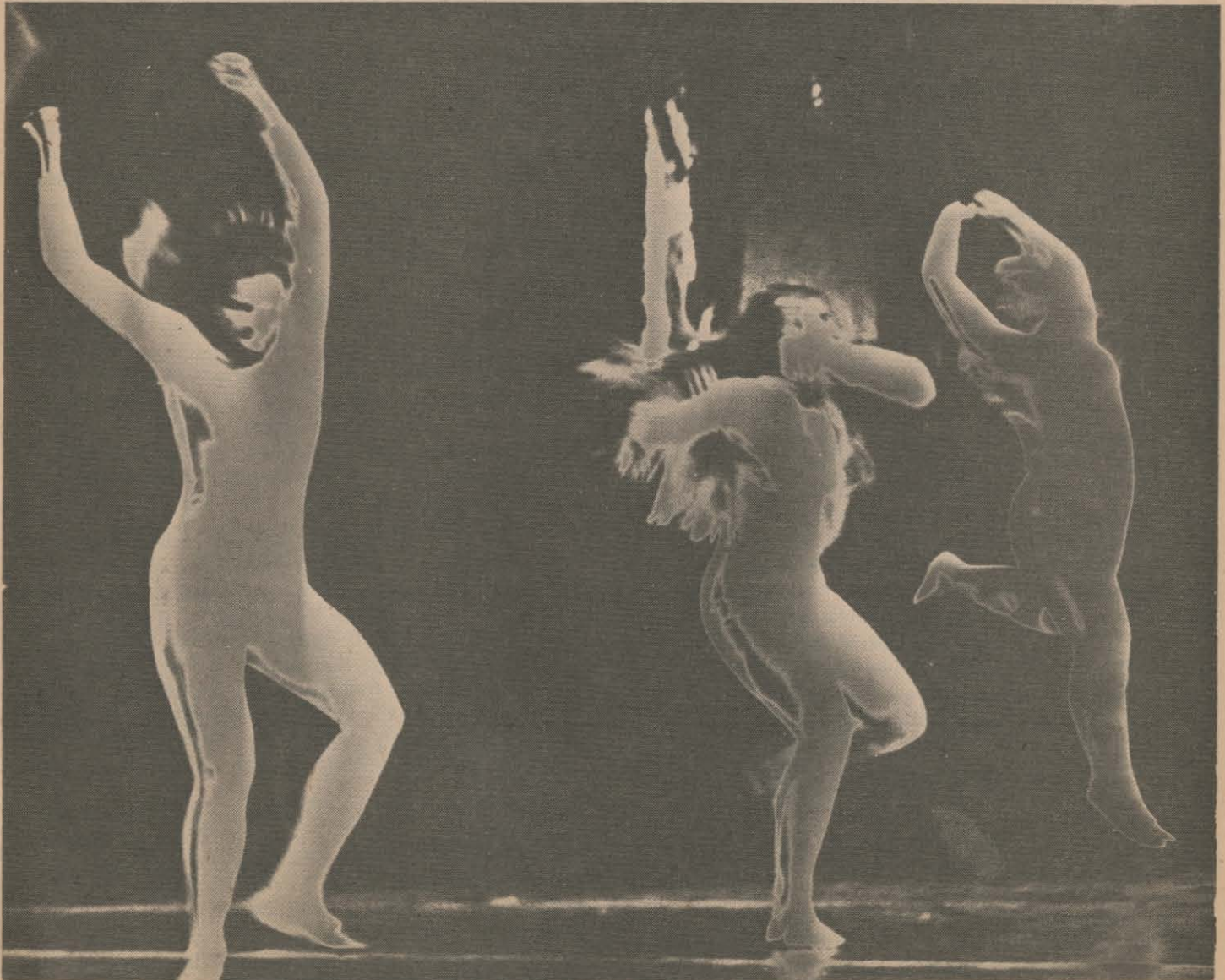
MATRIFOVAL	PATRIARCHAL
Mother-child relationship is primary ethical obligation	Fatherhood and what father owns/controls is primary
Social power arises from extended family living units, social groups = fragmented, non-hierarchical, anarchist	Hierarchical social power structures
Tribal/communal living	Nuclear family
Home-centered technology, production mainly for immediate use	Mass production
Nature viewed as sacred, the earth is living entity, environmental conservation	Nature = consumable products
Focus on creativity, the arts, pleasure, play as vital elements in life	Emphasis on work, "good" behavior
Focus on ecstasy, connections, "oneness"	Focus on control, individual accomplishments
Sexuality relatively unrestricted, a pleasure	Sexuality relatively restricted, sex viewed as means of production
Respect for experience that comes with advanced age	Age seen as factor which diminishes productivity
Primacy of the body, earth, things which are lower (caves, snakes, swamps)	Primacy of the mind, sky, things which are higher (mountaintops, eagles)
Polytheistic	Monotheistic
Moon/night/left/female = symbols	Sun/day/right/male = symbols
Mother goddess = deity; motherhood sacred	Father goddess = deity; fatherhood sacred
Son adores mother/lover	Mother worships her son
Form of goddess = fluid, She = you, me, trees, rocks, all life	Form of god = fixed, always human
Power exists in all living things	Only god has power; he may or may not give us some
Evil and death do not exist separate from the rest of reality	Evil projected as devil which we must guard against. Death = the ultimate negative experience
Emphasis on material/concrete reality; spirituality seen as eminent in this world	Emphasis on "soul" or mind separate from body, spiritual existence transcends worldly reality
Time = cyclic	Time = linear
Everything changes and change is cyclical	Some truths never change
Reality filled with contradiction and paradox	World is logical, rational
Everything is connected; all acts affect everything else in the universe	Some things exist separately from others, some things are so important it does not matter what else happens

nuclear family. Social structures in matrifocal cultures were non-hierarchical and anarchist in nature.

Technology and production in the matrifocal society was home-centered and geared to immediate use. In the patriarchy, the mass production of goods and the profits from that, have become the culture's reason for existence. The whole of nature, to the patriarch, is considered in terms of how consumable a product it is. In matrifocal society, all forms of life were considered sacred, with the earth seen as a living entity. This philosophy led to environmental conservation on all levels: Land and people were not seen as "resources" but as a manifestation of divinity (Nelsen, *The Origin*, p. 6).

In matrifocal cultures, pleasure, creativity, play and the arts were primary. In contrast, the patriarchal emphasis was on work and productive behavior. This focus on "productive" social behavior has particularly affected our sexual behavior. Mass pro-

duction of goods and hierarchical power relations are *only* possible if people are taught to deny themselves feelings of body pleasure. *Hustler* and *Playboy* notwithstanding, we live in an age which diminishes our sexual pleasure, as well as all other pleasures. In patriarchal sexuality the focus is on control and individual accomplishment, and of course on producing people. The pleasure emphasis in matrifocal cultures promoted ecstatic feelings and *loss* of control which ultimately lead to a connection with others and with the cosmos. Sexual pleasure in matrifocal cultures was relatively unrestricted. People felt that the intense energy arising from sexual pleasure and orgasm had a powerful balancing effect on the individual and the community. Bisexuality rather than heterosexuality was the rule. Lesbianism and male homosexuality were accepted modes of sexual expression. Sexual acts were often considered a gift from and act of ritual thanksgiving.



ing to the goddess. When sex is seen as a joyous, holy act, mutual consent is taken for granted. Sex and violence were not connected in matrifocal societies. Rape was unthinkable. (Nelsen, *The Origin*, p. 9) Unlimited access to contraception and abortion was the rule in matrifocal cultures—the quality of life rather than the quantity was what counted. Children were often raised communally and the decision to give a child to the care of someone besides the mother was respected. The concept of “illegitimacy” did not exist since all children had mothers.

With respect to philosophic and religious symbols, matrifocal culture stressed the primacy of the body, the earth, of things which were *lower* in the world—such as caves, snakes and swamps. Patriarchal symbols emphasized the mind, sky, and things which were *higher* up in the world—such as mountaintops and eagles.

Matrifocal religions tended to be polytheistic, with a multitude of divinities. The form assumed by the goddess was fluid. In some cultures, every hillside and river was a differently-named manifestation of the goddess of all life and death. Patriarchal religions are usually monotheistic with a fixed, always human, divinity. Matrifocal deities were mother goddesses; motherhood was considered sacred; the son adored his mother/lover. Patriarchal deities were father gods; fatherhood was considered sacred; the mother worshipped her son.

The two cultures have vastly different views as to the source of power/energy/life. In the patriarchy, god is seen as the only source of power, and it is his choice to give us some of that or not, often merely according to whim. In matrifocal cultures, power is manifest in all living things. Evil and death did not exist apart from goodness and life. In the patriarchy, however, evil is projected as a separate entity which must constantly be guarded against. Death is seen as the ultimate negative experience.

The philosophical emphasis of the matrifocal religions was on life here-and-now rather than life in the next world. There was a focus on material, everyday reality. Spirituality was seen as an integral part of material reality. Patriarchal religion viewed the soul or mind as separate from the material body. In fact, the goal of patriarchal spirituality was to utterly transcend the material world, the latter considered separate and inferior to spiritual existence.

Finally, a crucial area of differences between matrifocal and patriarchal philosophy had to do with concepts about time, relativity, and the way in which things change. Time was seen as cyclic or circular in matrifocal cultures whereas patriarchal time was linear. A basic notion in matrifocal cultures was that everything changes and that change occurs in cycles. Reality was contradictory and paradoxical, and not merely logical and rational as the patriarchs implied. The belief that some things exist above and beyond others and are so important (for example, national boundaries) that it does not matter what else happens, provided the basis

for the hierarchical structure of patriarchal culture. On the other hand, the notion that everything is connected and that any one act affects everything else, reflects the egalitarian matrifocal attitude toward other living beings.

If these last few matrifocal concepts sound like the principles of dialectics, don't be surprised. Engels noted that Marxists owed a philosophical debt to matrifocal culture in *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Marxism did attempt to rid us of patriarchal religion. Marxism, however, like other patriarchal philosophies, discounted other contributions of ancient matrifocal cultures (such as technological advances) and denied the basic unity of economic, mental, emotional and spiritual power which was the essence of those cultures (Sjoo and Mor, p. 8).

Relationship between Radical Psychiatry and Ritual

How do we counteract thousands of years of training to deny the magical/intuitive/sensual powers in ourselves? How do we learn to think through our bodies and connect our bodies with our minds? How do we develop and train the intuition?

In the practice of radical psychiatry, significant contributions have been made to the answering of these questions. We have developed ways of teaching people to express feelings, say what they want, work cooperatively with each other, check out and validate each others' intuitions, to support each others' disobedience even when obedience is demanded of us by those with power over us. In body work, we have learned how to release pain and tension and feel the energy in different parts of our bodies. We have begun to work intensively with the body—teaching people where the power centers are and to release that energy. Then of course there is the endless political organizational work which we all do to combat patriarchal institutions: Organizing workers, blockading nuclear power plants, fundraising, political theorizing, mailings, putting out newspapers.

I plan to continue my work as a radical therapist and political organizer the rest of my life. And yet, there is something in this work that falls short and leaves me restless. I am in need of a bigger leap than these provide, I need acts which promote, as quickly as possible, integration among emotional, mental, spiritual and physical aspects of myself: Those connections which have been so viciously split apart by the patriarchy. I want access to powers that have been denied me for thousands of years.

I see ritual as a way of making the leap: A way to make these connections come alive and powerful again, as a way of raising our consciousness about connections with the earth, with each other, even as a means of making better connections between the two halves of our brain. In rituals, the healing, protective, and survival strategies of the right brain can be experimented with. The therapy/healing work which we do is often excessively intel-

lectual. We need to consciously focus on the non-intellectual aspects of the work we do. As Adrienne Rich puts it: We need to "begin, at last, to *think through the body*, to connect what has been so cruelly disorganized—our great mental capacities, hardly used; our highly developed tactile sense; our genius for close observation; our complicated, pain-enduring, mutipleasured physicality." (Rich, *Of Woman Born*, p. 290)

For example, a person with a stomach ulcer certainly needs to be given nutritional and herbal and psychological information. She may also need to be touched in a healing way—perhaps to lay down in a circle of friends and have each person touch the afflicted part of her physical body or massage her aura (that energy field about 2-5 inches surrounding a person's physical body). Some people are particularly gifted at this kind of touch. Others are especially good with words. Assuming a receptivity on the part of the person receiving the healing energy, words can be said in a way that promotes healing. They may rhyme or not, they may be affirmations of health, or the words may invoke Hygeia, a healer-goddess from within or outside the person. There is not a formula to follow here. What is crucial is the conscious intent of the person who recites the words and the concentrated focus of all present. If the touch, or the words, or the invocation works, a physical, as well as a psychic and mental effect is felt immediately. Sometimes people see a change in the aura, sometimes a temperature change can be felt, sometimes a nearby animal makes a sudden noise, often people feel a tingling sensation in different parts of their bodies.

I want to emphasize that it is *simple*. It is so simple that people don't want to believe it, because we've been taught that it is complicated or impossible to do things like heal an ulcer. People who are attuned to the earth take "supernatural" phenomena for granted. The Australian aborigines, for example, know whether a storm is approaching or where a herd of deer is located and have been observed to communicate telepathically over great distances. Psychic energy/magic techniques are everyday practical tools which we can use to create material change in the world. They are also survival methods in these waning years of the patriarchy. We can never match the violence of those in power, nor should we hope to. What we can work with is changing peoples' patriarchal ways of thinking and relating to each other (using radical psychiatry) and re-connect our physical and mental selves with our sensual/psychic/spiritual powers (through ritual work). Here are some examples of ways to use psychic power in the patriarchy. We can trust our intuition as precognition to warn of danger to ourselves or to the earth. We can use our sexuality in creative ways to overthrow patriarchal institutions. We can use other aspects of our body functions—such as menstrual blood—in powerful, magical ways. We can learn techniques to mesmerize or disarm attackers (Nelsen, *The Origin*, p. 50-51).

The political organizing work we do seems to be in need of balance: much of it is exclusively mental. Rituals can be a way to emotionally/psychically/spiritually complement the intellectual side of our political work. On two different occasions I have been involved in rituals used to shut down nuclear

On Ritual

Ritual is an art. Its purpose is to create action that will effect change. This change is brought about through the ease of dramatic ceremony in which we are both actors and audience. The ceremony, or ritual, becomes a focusing device for our personal energies either as a group or as individuals. Any action, given conscious attention to its implications, may become a ritual.

As participants in a ritual, we become active agents of the desired changes. The patterns set forth in the ritual work through us long after the ritual has taken place. In a manner so profound to be called magical, our lives unfold along the lines of our ritual. We may get an unexpected phone call bringing us a job we want; or we may witness a sudden change in circumstance, seemingly coincidental, that keeps a power plant from opening, or that effects the operation of an oppressive system.

Just as our parents' daily rituals impressed patterns upon our own minds, our ritual actions impress ideas upon the consciousness of others. Others then become inspired by the force of power focused in the ritual and this force is carried through each of us, transforming all that we come in contact with, until our goal is achieved.

Ritual is a profound and powerful tool for transformation. In this way our destiny becomes our choice and the destiny of our planet becomes controllable through the use of understanding and action. Only *we* can prevent forest fires. Only *we* can create the power and means of transformation.

by Anodea Judith

power plants. I'll describe them both because they involve the use of two very different kinds of energy or power.

The first ritual was a public one—an attempt was made to change peoples' consciousness about nuclear power while we were at the same time energizing ourselves for continuing the struggle to remove nuclear power and weapons from our lives. A group of 19 women were arrested for trespassing onto the grounds of a nuclear power plant and planting a rosebush. We carefully chose the day (Mother's Day) and a plant to symbolize our action: women/mothers wanting to foster life rather than destroy it. We called ourselves the Wild Rose Affinity Group after the Iowa State flower. We had an energy-raising rally of about 200 people who played musical instruments and chanted "Shut Duane Arnold (the name of the plant) down! we want our Mother safe, shut Duane Arnold down, we want our children safe". The women who were to be arrested then focused together in a circle. We each then cast spells or made affirmations about nuclear power. Examples of these were: "The people who live near and work in nuclear power plants will join together to protect themselves and shut this plant down." "We will change this society to one in which all of us can live safely and in which we all have enough clean water, food, shelter and health care, instead of just some of us having these essentials." One spell, "Within three years this nuclear power plant will be closed down and wild roses will be growing here," was published in the newspaper the next day, a helpful way for a spell to gather power.

Another group of us did a ritual recently in support of friends who were participating in the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant blockade. Nine women came together around a blazing fire in the woods at night. We raised energy by dancing and singing around the fire. When the time felt right (timing of spells is like the timing of giving permission in psychotherapy—it is an art which comes with experience), we began to recite the following spell, each person beginning and ending at her own pace. Some read it loud and slow, others whispered. As the last woman finished, the energy peaked in a cone above us and drifted toward southern California.

Diablo he weakens
cracks, crumbles, falls.
Earth's children assemble
She sends out her call:

I am the rage
of the earth in pain;
I am the cunning
of the west wind gusting;
I am the strength
of hard winds to the north
I am the curse
of the witch who foretells:

Diablo he weakens
cracks, crumbles, falls.
Earthquakes and high winds
defeat the four walls.

Later we celebrated and feasted. Most important, we were energized by this ritual, not exhausted. At the moment, Diablo Canyon is closed. The energy in the Mother's Day ritual was positive, intense, mothering, protective. The energy in the Diablo Canyon ritual was intensely angry, aimed at destroying something which was harmful to life.

Another purpose of contemporary rituals is the exorcism of patriarchal attitudes, a purification which paves the way for re-acquainting ourselves with our natural powers. One witch describes a ritual which she does upon entering a public bathroom:

I often notice that the mirror reflects an image which makes me question myself, feel critical or dissatisfied with my appearance. I don't ignore it as trivial, because I recognize that the mirror is infested with a very common political poison, virus hollywoodius or televisioniensis, subtle pressure to measure up to a pattern designed to enslave. Just to free myself of that pressure isn't a magical operation. But hundreds of other women will use that mirror. So after I have cleared my own image of that false cloud, I usually perform some sort of magical activity to neutralize the poison. I pour suggestive energy into the mirror, encouraging anyone who might look in it to see herself in her true beauty. I reinforce the suggestion with all the power of my will and call on the Goddess of Beauty Herself, blessed Aphrodite, to banish that which would deny Her, as She exists in all of us. (Margi Gumpert quoted by Kay Turner in "Contemporary Feminist Rituals")

Ritual fosters those female powers which have been discounted and punished for thousands of years. Rigid, dualistic ways of thinking are invalidated by the experience of ritual. The five senses and feelings in general are ultimately valid. Body awareness and experience are a crucial part of ritual, the means by which peoples' attitudes are later changed. As in body work, ritual involves a release of spontaneous feeling from the deepest part of ourselves. But ritual differs from body work in that this spontaneous feeling is then





focused by the group for specific use such as healing, protection, neutralizing negative energy, or creating a positive self-image. In a ritual, but not in body work, emotional/psychic/mental energy is *invoked* as well as *released*. In body work, spiritual and psychic connections sometimes spontaneously occur along with the physical experience, but in ritual, these connections are deliberately fostered. For example, in a ritual, the grounding energy generated by stomping and dancing is connected to the group by joining hands, and connected to the universe by dedicating the energy to a particular goddess.

Ritual is also similar to effective performance art. There is an intense channeling of creative psychic and physical power, and a connection is

made between performers and observers. While the artist has traditionally obtained power by manipulating the materials and enabling others to experience the art passively, the ritualist defines her powerfulness by her ability to empower both herself and others (Turner, p. 25).

I'd like to describe in some detail a ritual I participated in recently which exemplifies this power sharing. Bonnie Marzlak and I planned a ritual and named it "A ritual in which the goddess energy you need will be invoked to overcome your binding in the area of _____ to achieve _____." Our goal was to channel healing energy to radical therapists who needed it in order to continue their political work. The theme of the conference which we were attending was "Confronting the New

Right." When we asked, people found it easy to tell us what part of their bodies' energy was blocked. We then suggested to them that at the end of the ritual, they would be able to tell us what specific goal they wished to achieve using this new unblocked energy. It was important to us that there be a direction, a focus for the released energy. We also asked people to agree to write us a letter in 9 months telling us what the outcome of this ritual was. Again, this was an attempt to make it clear to participants that we fully expected a change in their lives as a result of the ritual. The letter also served the purpose of returning some of the energy put out doing the ritual.

The setting for the ritual was right: it was dusk, outside, nice weather, a semicircle of pine trees behind us and friendly observers on steps in front of us. Another group of people surrounded the ritual participants and played rhythm instruments. This raised and maintained energy throughout the ritual.

We took strips of cloth and bound the person, slightly snugly, in the area which they had described as being blocked. We told them to take several deep breaths, intensifying the feeling of the binding. We then walked around the person with incense and bell, focusing energy on the essence of that which restricted the person, and said:

"I bind you with the
knowledge of your enemy.
I invoke conversations
packaged and bound,
memories of woe." (Bonnie Marzlak)

The second time we did this ritual, it became clear that patriarchal oppression binds each of us in similar ways. Patterns of bindings began to appear: shoulders weighted down with overwork, hearts tight and fearful of not getting enough strokes. So the words we used were sometimes modified to describe the specific binding which we saw in the participant:

"I bind you in the name
of overwork, Rescues,
tension in your chest
and shoulders."

What is important here are not the specific words but the intent behind the words and an active receptivity to psychic energy on the part of the participant. After a minute or so, we slowly unwrapped the binding, saying:

"I unbind you in the name of
Isis
she who sets hearts free."

or

"I unbind you in the name of
Hygeia
she who heals old wounds."

We felt comfortable using these words because we identify with different goddess energies. If someone else performed the unbinding, different words could be used. After the binding was taken off,

each person made a statement out loud as to what she or he would do with this now-unblocked energy. After a while, many different people began to perform the ritual. There was no one "in charge." Eventually, there were as many as 15 people participating at any one time.

Hogie Wyckoff describes an exercise called "off-ing the Pig" or "exorcising the demon" which involves using the "right words, the right emotion, and the right action" to rid a group member of oppression which has become internalized. (Wyckoff, p. 230) This exercise may be described as a ritual, and the emphasis on integrating verbal and nonverbal parts of oneself make it a particularly effective one. It could be performed in a therapy group or it could be done around a fire in the woods. In the woods, the energy might be enhanced by choosing an auspicious phase of the moon as a time for the ritual, and adding to it whatever else the right brain feels to be right (for example, inviting certain people to attend, wearing magical jewelry).

The right words, the right emotion and the right action can also be used effectively in other areas of our lives: specifically, in our political work. In ritual, we teach ourselves and each other not to obey, not to submit to patriarchal authority—or any authority but our own knowledge of what feels right. At a conference on feminism and militarism, a member of the War Resisters' League described a ritual in which women entered Army recruiting offices with magnifying glasses, dusted files with face powder and announced "the Army is under our surveillance." The focus is on doing and experiencing things rather than thinking about them or believing in them. Often actions like this which integrate mind and body, have the effect of blowing the minds of observers and of changing their attitudes.

Rituals are a way to train the intuition. Like anything else, intuitive strength increases with practice and discipline and good teachers. From intuition come techniques described as magic—those techniques which lead to an awakened, attuned, attentive sense of being in the world (Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*). Intuition is trained by "repeated involvement in experiences which are felt to be beautiful... [and by] engaging in spontaneous actions which custom generally inhibits but which seem intrinsically right and good... [and] by joining with other people in mutual experiences of joy..." (Fritz, *Thinking like a Woman*, p. 25) As

Continued on page 28



THE PHOENIX RISES AGAIN

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT RESPONSIBILITY is proportionate to opportunity. And so it is with a great sense of responsibility that we of the Illinois Radical Therapy Collective accept the opportunity to publish this journal. While carrying on the tradition well established by our comrades from the Bay Area, we relish the opportunity to help infuse a new spirit of unity and direction into the Radical Therapy movement.

At an hour when the new right is stepping up their near-sighted campaign of fantasy and deception, it is more critical than ever that we have a vehicle to further the cause of physical and psychic freedom. To this end our next issue will bring forward a multifaceted array of articles relating to the underpinnings of Radical Therapy; an overview of psychiatric oppression; an examination of the connection between everyday life oppression, exploitation and Radical Therapy from a socialist-feminist perspective; the first in a series of articles on techniques in Radical Therapy; and a larger view of the political basis of Radical Therapy as it relates to Marxism, late capitalism and psycho-politics. In addition, features such as Burning Questions (an opinion column exploring controversial issues in the movement today), Red Alert (news stories of recent psycho-political events around the world), and Psychopower (relating uplifting, real life accounts of people gaining personal power through Radical Therapy) will appear regularly, as well as book reviews, classifieds, and poetry.

We're both excited and awed as we look at the responsibilities and opportunities before us. We are asking you for as much input, support, and constructive criticism as you are willing to give us so that we can tailor the content to meet your needs, and truly make this *your* journal. Please address future correspondence to: Issues in Radical Therapy, R.R. #1, Springfield, Illinois 62707.

Yours in Unity,
Bob Sipe
for the Illinois Radical Therapy Collective

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UNLEARNING RACISM

A Working Definition of Racism

1. Human beings are members of the same species. The term "racism" is useful as a shorthand way of categorizing the systematic mistreatment experienced by people of color and Third world people both in the United States and in many other parts of the world. But this term should not mislead us into supposing that human beings belong to biologically different species. In this sense we all belong to one race, the human race.

2. The systematic nature of the mistreatment experienced by people of color is a result of institutionalized inequalities in the social structure. Racism is one consequence of a self-perpetuating imbalance in economic, political and social power. This imbalance consistently favors members of some ethnic and cultural groups at the expense of other groups. The consequences of this imbalance pervade all aspects of the social system and affect all facets of people's lives.

3. At its most extreme, systematic mistreatment takes the form of physical violence but it occurs in many other forms as well. Pervasive invalidation, the denial or non-recognition of the full humanity of persons of color also constitutes the mistreatment categorized as racism. Putting the matter in these terms may clear up the confusion which is generated by thinking of racism as a matter of treating people of color "differently". If we examine the facts, we will see that what is often called "different treatment" is in reality "inhuman treatment", i.e., treatment which denies the humanity of the individual person.

4. The systematic mistreatment of any group of people generates misinformation about them which in turn becomes the "explanation" of or justification for continued mistreatment. Racism exists as a whole series of attitudes, assumptions, feelings and beliefs about people of color and their cultures which are a mixture of misinformation and ignorance. Just as "the systematic mistreatment of people of color" means "inhuman treatment", so "misinformation about people of color" designates beliefs and assumptions that in any way imply that people of color are less than fully human. I will call these beliefs and attitudes "*impacted misinformation*"—by which I mean that these ideas are glued together with painful emotion and held in place by frozen memories of distressing experiences.

5. Because misinformation about people of color functions as the justification for their continued mistreatment it becomes socially empowered or sanctioned misinformation. It is recycled through the society as a form of conditioning that affects everyone. In this way misinformation about people of color becomes a part of everyone's "ordinary" assumptions.

6. For purposes of clarity it is helpful to use the term "internalized racism" or "internalized oppression" to designate the misinformation that people of color may have about themselves and their cultures. The purpose of this term is to point out that this misinformation is a consequence of the mistreatment experienced by people of color. It is not an inherent feature or product of their culture.

7. The term "reverse racism" is often used to characterize either the negative attitudes or misinformation that peoples of color may have about individuals from white ethnic groups. This term is less than helpful because it tends to obscure the difference between socially empowered misinformation (see point 5) and other sorts of misinformation.

8. Racism operates as a strategy of divide and conquer. It helps to perpetuate a social system in which some people are consistently "haves" and others are consistently "have nots". While "the haves" receive certain material benefits from this situation, the long range effects of racism short change everyone. Racism sets groups of people against each other and makes it difficult for us to perceive our common interests as human beings. Racism makes us forget that we all need and are entitled to good health care, stimulating education, and challenging work. Racism limits our horizons to what presently exists; it makes us suppose that current injustices are "natural" or at best inevitable. "Someone has to be unemployed; someone has to go hungry". Most importantly, racism distorts our perceptions of the possibilities for change; it makes us abandon our visions of solidarity, it robs us of our dreams of community.



Towards a Perspective on Unlearning Racism: 12 Working Assumptions

Because racism is both institutional and attitudinal, effective strategies against it must recognize this dual character. The *undoing* of institutionalized racism must be accompanied by the *unlearning* of racist attitudes and beliefs. The *unlearning* of racist patterns of thought and action must guide the practice of political and social change.

The following assumptions offer a perspective for unlearning racism. I call them "working assumptions" for two reasons: 1) these are the assumptions I use in my own work with individuals and groups, 2) I have found these assumptions to be workable, i.e., effective in the practice of attitude change.

* * * * *

1. The systematic mistreatment of any group of people isolates and divides human beings from each other. This process is a hurt to all people. The division and isolation produced by racism is a hurt to people from all ethnic groups. The awareness that there is this division is itself a painful awareness.

2. Racism is not a genetic disease. No human being is born with racist attitudes and beliefs. Physical and cultural differences between human beings are not the cause of racism; these differences are used as the excuse to justify racism. (Analogy with sexism: anatomical differences between human males and females are not the cause of sexism; these differences are used as the excuse to justify the mistreatment of female human beings).

3. No young person acquires misinformation by their own free choice. Racist attitudes and beliefs are a mixture of misinformation and ignorance which has to be imposed upon young people through a painful process of social conditioning. "You have to be taught to hate and fear".

4. Misinformation is harmful to all human beings. Misinformation about peoples of color is harmful to all people. Having racist attitudes and beliefs is like having a clamp on one's mind. It distorts one's perceptions of reality. Two examples: the notion that there is something called "flesh color"; the use of the term "minorities" to describe the majority of the world's people.

5. No individual holds onto misinformation voluntarily. People hold onto racist beliefs and attitudes because this misinformation represents the best thinking they have been able to do at the present time, and because no one has been able to help them out of this misinformation.

6. People will change their minds about deeply held convictions under the following conditions: 1) the new position is presented in a way that makes sense to them, 2) they trust the person who is presenting this new position, 3) they are not being blamed for having had misinformation.

7. People hurt others because they themselves have been hurt. In this society we have all experienced systematic mistreatment as young people—often through physical violence, but also through the invalidation of our intelligence, the disregard of our feelings, the discounting of our abilities. As a result of these experiences, we tend both to *internalize* this mistreatment by accepting it as "the way things are", and to *externalize* it by mistreating others. Part of the process of unlearning racism involves becoming aware of how this cycle of mistreatment is perpetuated in day to day encounters and interactions.

8. As young people we have often witnessed despair and cynicism in the adults around us, and we have often been made to feel powerless in the face of injustice. Racism continues in part because people feel powerless to do anything about it.

9. There are times when we have failed to act, and times when we did not achieve as much as we wanted to in the struggle against racism. Unlearning racism also involves understanding the difficulties we have had and learning how to overcome them, without blaming ourselves for having had those difficulties.

10. The situation is not hopeless. People can grow and change; we are not condemned to repeat the past. Racist conditioning need not be a permanent state of affairs. It can be examined, analyzed and unlearned. Because this misinformation is glued together with painful emotion and held in place by frozen memories of distressing experiences, the process of unlearning this misinformation must take place on the emotional level as well as on the factual level.

11. We live in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic world, a world in which all people belong to ethnic groups. Misinformation about one's own ethnicity is often the flip side of misinformation about other people's ethnicity. For example, the notion that some ethnic groups are just "regular" or "plain" is flip side of the notion that other ethnic groups are "different" or "exotic". Therefore a crucial part of unlearning racism is the recovery of accurate information about one's own ethnicity and cultural heritage. The process of recovering this information will show us that we all come from traditions in which we can take justified pride.

12. All people come from traditions which have a history of resistance to racist conditioning. This history deserves to be recalled and celebrated. Reclaiming one's own history of resistance is central to the project of acquiring an accurate account of one's own heritage. When people act from a sense of informed pride in themselves and their own traditions they will be more effective in all struggles for justice.



UNLEARNING RACISM WORKSHOPS
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The Happy, Healthy Flexible Back

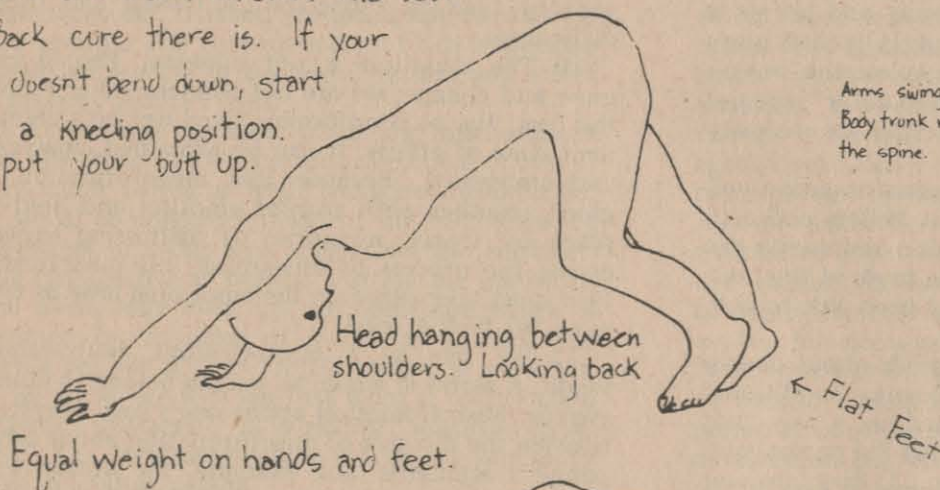
by: Darca Nicholson

copywrite: Nov 14, 1981

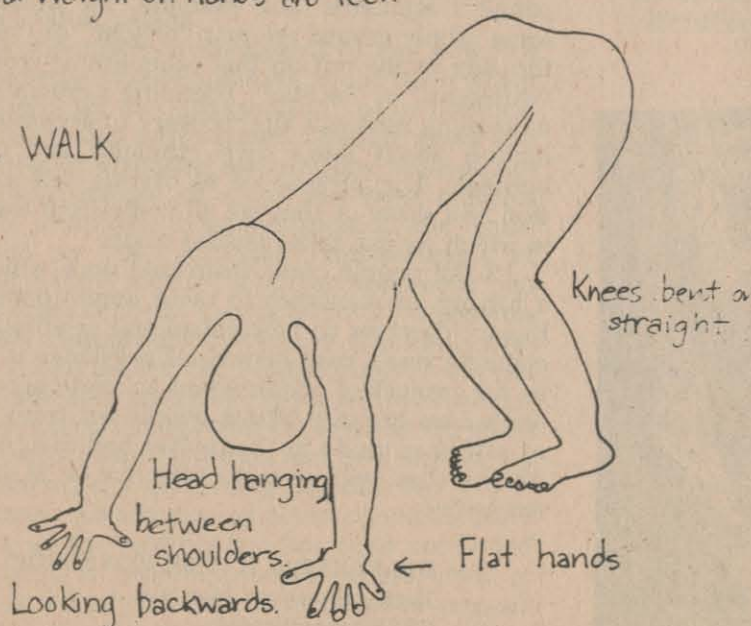
Body Balance: Exercises that are SLOW MOVING and FAST ENERGIZING. They are also PAIN SAVING.

Give the gift of power, strength and flexibility to your wonderful hardworking back. Do the following exercises a little bit each hour, each day, each week.

Numero Uno Back Stretch. The Best Bad Back cure there is. If your back doesn't bend down, start from a kneeling position and put your butt up.

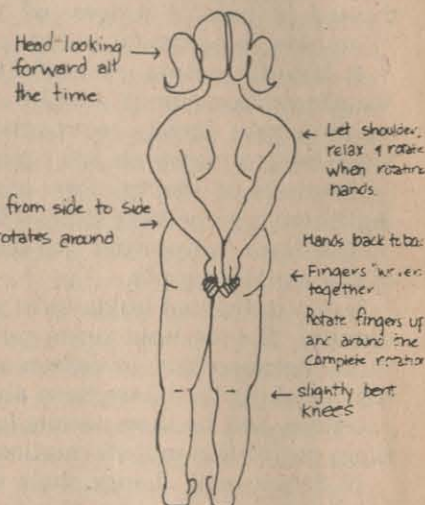


PRIMAL WALK

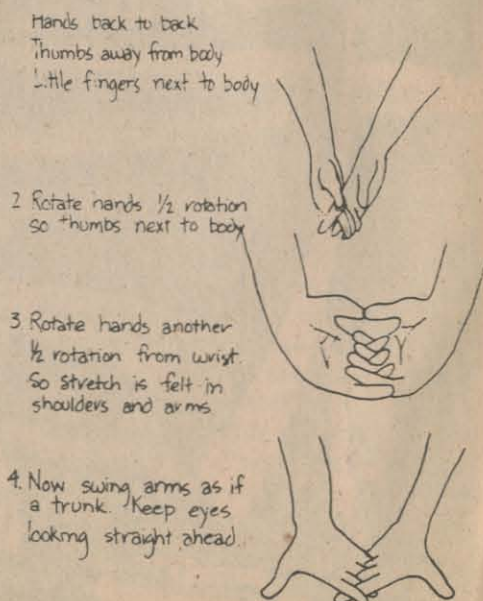


Walk around. (backwards is easiest) for 30 seconds to 10 minutes each day with equal weight on hands and feet.

ELEPHANT SWING



Hand Details for ELEPHANT SWING

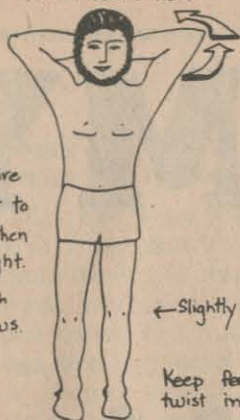


BUTTERFLY

Fingers "woven" behind neck

Keep
Eyes at
Eye level
as you

Twist entire
body first to
the left then
to the right.
Lead with
the elbows.



← Slightly bent knees

Keep feet on the ground. Feel the
twist in the ankles.

BASIC STANCE



Arms hanging loose at side.

Knees soft and flexible

Feet: width of shoulders and pelvis.
pelvis.

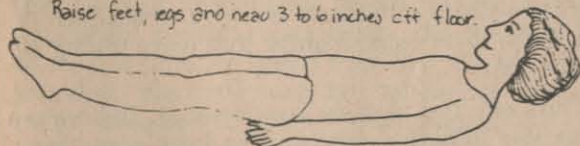
Rock forward and back on feet. Feel your center of gravity.
Rock sideways. Feel your weight pass thru your center.

If your back is healthy - or you have a troubled back,
never, never, never do sit ups! Instead, to keep your
stomach muscles supporting the front & helping out in
the back, do the following:

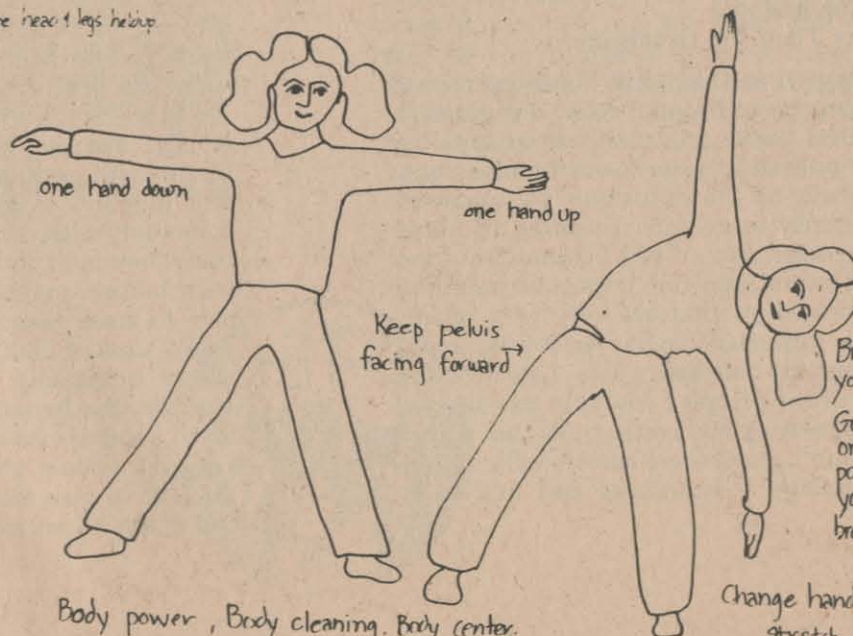
Lay with hands
calm down by
hips!



Raise feet, legs and head 3 to 6 inches off floor.



Hold for 6 to 60 seconds. Rest for 1/2 time head & legs held up.



one hand down

one hand up

Keep pelvis
facing forward

Breathe as
you stretch

Go as far to
one side as
possible with
your slow, easy
breath. Don't Bounce!

BODY STAR

Body power, Body cleaning, Body center.

Change hands up & down
stretch to other side

Breathe and visualize your favorite earth power moving thru your body,
dripping out of your finger tips.

OMNIGAMY IN IOWA

In response to our recent article on Omnigamy by Claude Steiner, Jesse Singerman, John Forgeron, Sue Futrell, Russell Karkowski, Janice Norman, Bob Singerman, and Anna Most got together in Iowa City on a sultry summer evening with a tape recorder and a jug of wine.

The resulting 3 hour tape recording, much edited by Claude Steiner, appears below.

Jesse, Bob, John, and Sue
Talk about Why They Are Omnigamous

JESSE: Omnigamy is inherently anti-patriarchal and it challenges the traditional roles and patterns of families in the society. It is also anti-capitalist. Those are two political reasons to be omnigamous; it really does shake up the status quo. I also wanted a feeling of security in my life. I wanted to know that I would be taken care of and I found that I get that by having more than one important relationship. I have friendships that are very very important to me, as important to me as lovers, and I consider that part of omnigamy also. I also wanted to avoid some of the pitfalls I found in monogamy, the kind of dependency and restlessness that comes with it. Yet, I don't always feel emotionally omnigamous. Emotionally I sometimes feel extremely monogamous.

SUE: I started consciously exploring non-monogamous relationships because of what I felt was the impossible set-up implicit in monogamy; to have all of my important emotional needs met by one person. It has also been important to me to maintain strong friendships outside of my lover-relationships and to be in lover-relationships that leave plenty of room for that.

BOB: For me, the reasons are personal. It became clear to me that the only way to keep something was to let it go and that if I ever wanted to see anything extend with guarantees into the future I was going to have to pretty much release it before I could count on it staying.

JOHN: For me, in personal terms, omnigamy has to do with getting secure enough about myself to feel like my lovers do love me when they love somebody else. I experience that I can love somebody new and love the person that I was in love with before, maybe even more so, because we were able to trust each other enough to let that happen. Right now, I find that the most rewarding thing about omnigamy is that, finally, after all the struggle, the benefits start rolling in and you get all these goodies—you get people liking you a lot and you get people giving you lots of nice stuff and you get to give nice stuff back and you get to not feel guilty about any of it.

Sue, Bob and John Talk about Their Omnigamous Relationship

SUE: John and I had been relating to each other for maybe six or seven months with some kind of intellectual commitment to non-monogamy which had not been put into practice. Basically, we were just seeing each other and not anybody else. The kinds of feelings that happened to me when omnigamy started to become real and not just talk were very strong. In spite of my head being relatively clear about it, it was a terribly difficult thing for me when John started seeing other women. I was not being pulled toward any other relationships, at that time, and for me it meant a lot of work to feel good about myself and confident about the feelings between the two of us.

The scariest thing was that I thought that there wasn't going to be enough time for more than one relationship. I was afraid of having to make do with less than I wanted and that there wouldn't be enough to go around. And some of that was true. I didn't always get everything I wanted and I still don't get everything I want, but the quality of our relationship got better, probably because it got clearer, and it forced me to realize how I felt and that I felt stronger about myself and John. Without that kind of challenge it would be easy to become dependent on the relationship, the material aspect of it, the time we spend together, the things we do together, the little everyday habits—and not pay so much attention to what is becoming of us.

It was very important that John, as the person that was taking the first omnigamous step, be very patient and pay a lot of attention to me to make sure that I knew what was going on and was reassured about his feelings for me. That made it much easier.

BOB: Sue's reaction of being afraid of not having

enough time must be a common one because when Sue and I first started being lovers John was out of town and that gave us a lot of access to each other. Upon John's return I started getting nervous and frightened about not being able to get what I wanted when he got back.

SUE: My biggest fear about relating to both John and Bob when it got closer to the time that John was going to be back was that I was going to be the person in the middle, and that I was always going to have to be the one to figure out what was going on. I would have to decide if I wanted to spend time with John or with Bob, and whether they wanted me to spend time with them. I have a tendency to want to take care of everything and worry about it, and I was afraid that I was going to fall into that; the person in the middle. To have either John or Bob talk to me about: "I'm not seeing you enough" didn't make the situation easier, but it took a lot of pressure off of me because I wasn't the only one doing the checking.

BOB: People don't talk about how they feel because they are afraid of what the response is going to be. The perceived threat of John, in terms of time and constant access to Sue no longer being there, was infinitely greater in his absence than it is in his presence. In fact, upon his return the problem pretty much went away. I think that what is important about that is that real things aren't nearly as bad or as threatening as things in your head, and that anything unsaid grows far beyond what is real. Telling Sue what was going on with me did two things at once—it kept Sue informed about me, and it kept me handling my own stuff. It prevented those things from growing out of control by my just thinking about them. And then, when John showed up, there was essentially no problem.



JESSE: Something important here is that you and John have been good friends for a long time.

JOHN: That is why I wasn't freaked out in North Carolina when Sue told me about Bob and her. I knew what was going on. I trust Bob totally, and Sue also, and no matter what was happening I knew it was not a problem. Even if Sue and I could not be lovers again, that would be all right. Bob and I have done enough together and our friendship is strong enough that that wasn't my fear. If it had been a person that I didn't know I think I would have been more nervous about it. I would have trusted Sue still, but the other person is very important, because other people can be such jerks—they don't have the same assumptions, they don't have the same belief systems as we do—you know. But I knew Bob—Bob is my best friend.

BOB: Sue and I knew each other for a long time when we weren't sexually involved, but over the four years we've known each other we've been becoming closer and closer. In a lot of ways what was happening was clear, but it didn't happen until the time was right. I've tried to put to use the things I've learned over the years and it really worked. We talked about stuff. . .

SUE: I was remembering the first night that Bob and I slept together. For awhile there probably had been an unspoken thought between the two of us and finally, one night after talking about our relationship—well, we were very very good. Bob was good and brought it up, me being the chicken that I am, and we had a discussion about where we each were at, and what we wanted and so on. It was very serious and controlled. It makes me laugh because immediately after we did all this talking we just kind of lost it. . . But we were good at the beginning, a lot of stuff got talked about. . .

BOB: It was three days of talking about everything that was the least problem. In the past I would not have brought it up, if I was the least bit uncomfortable. To my amazement all the bad habits that I had were suddenly replaced by good habits, that took about three days to create.

SUE: We did it by talking about what one tends not to talk about, for example: How afraid you are—the fear that the other person is going to get too involved, or not being able to handle it—the kind of stuff you think about and then shove back. It's really true that catching that stuff at the beginning made it easier, and it didn't work with Bob and me

—it made it easier when I talked to John, it made me comfortable about the whole thing.

BOB: One of the hardest lessons I have to learn is that when I'm afraid of saying something, because of what the other person will think, and I don't say it, it becomes a horrible problem. When I do say it, I feel so good about having taken care of it, that I can handle the response.

SUE: Bob and John and I have a lot of things in common, including friends, and we do things where all three of us are at the same place, such as dinner at someone's house or a party. We came up with the suggestion that whenever the three of us were going to be somewhere together we would decide before we got there who is going to go home with whom and what is going to happen at the end of the night.

On Being Alone and Living Arrangements

JESSE: I think that Bob and I worked it out over the long term, but initially I would say we made some big mistakes. I would say that the biggest mistake I made was that I didn't talk enough about what was going on with me. I don't think Bob, that you and I communicated really. . .

BOB: I don't think I knew what it meant to communicate then.

JESSE: We were just babies. I don't think that we understood that we had to talk about stuff, that it was important. Another thing that I did was that I fell in love with John, and didn't take good enough care of my relationship with Bob. I don't think I handled it as responsibly as I should have. I think it was a hard lesson and I learned it. I don't do that any more. I don't just fall passionately in love and let the pieces fall where they may. It is something that I have control over, that I have access to adult problem solving about, and I don't have to feel that just because my emotions are so strong everything is going to fall apart. The reason that we are all here sitting in the same room together now is because our intentions were good in spite of the fact that our technique sucked. We went through a period of living in all different combinations with each other. John moved in with Bob and me in our apartment and then John and I moved out and then Bob moved into where we were living and then I moved out and then John moved out and then we all moved in together and I kicked them

both out and they became fast friends in the process and we all ended up really close. It's like building a cushion or a nest egg or something.

BOB: It is essentially building a family.

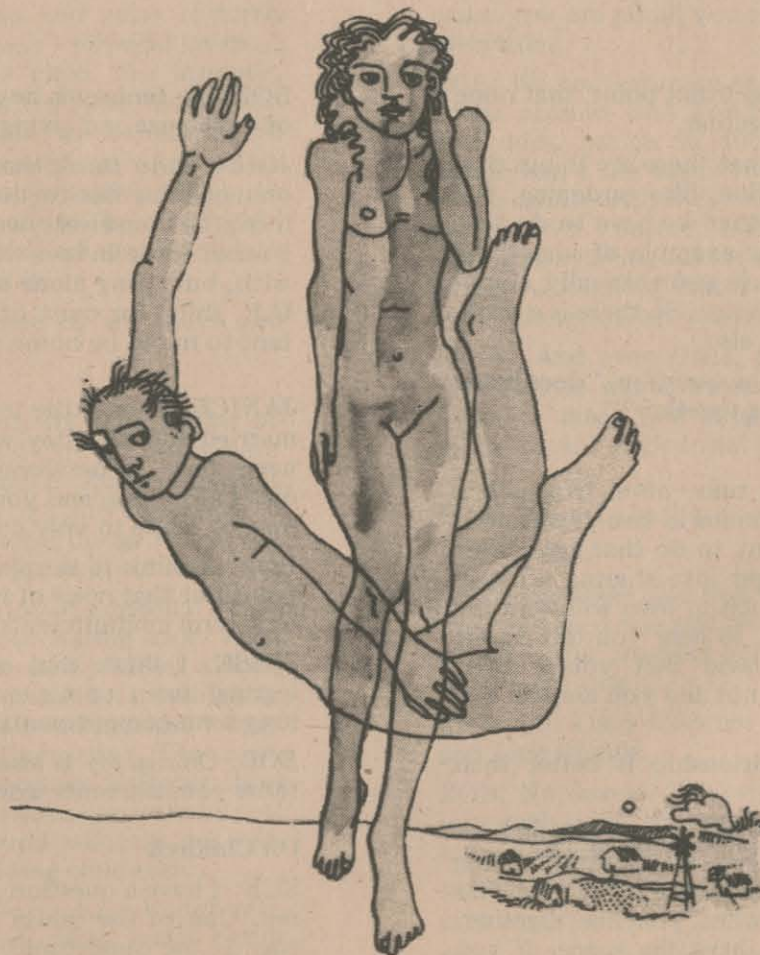
JOHN: Yeah, a non-nuclear family. And I think that is one of the things that omnigamy gets put down for is that people think it is short term, or that it doesn't have the foundation that you get with monogamy. I think it is just the opposite. I have life long rapport and strokes and love from people. I want to be able to die with someone I'm lovers with. I don't want to go from one situation to the next.

BOB: What I get out of this now is the fact that I know I won't be alone when I'm 80.

JESSE: Think of the number of people that are going to be around when we are 80. First there are 2, then there are 4, and then there are 8. . .

BOB: The process leads to not being alone at any age. Usually the older you get, the less people you know, and the more likely you are to be alone. This process, if it continues, involves people of different ages, people for different amounts of times and it just feels to me like everyday there is less and less chance of being alone when I'm older.

SUE: Not living with your lover, not having all your eggs in one basket, as in the nuclear family—you're having everything taken care of in one place—is an advantage.





JESSE: Yeah, that is an important point, that none of us who are lovers live together.

BOB: That reminded me that there are things that I would like to do with Sue, like gardening, but because we don't live together we have to do that separately. That's a specific example of something which John and Janice have geometrically amplified by living even farther apart. So there is a problem of being too scattered, also.

ANNA: It also brings up the question, "does being omnigamous preclude living together?"

SUE: I hope not.

JESSE: I used to have a rule—never live with a lover. I split up two households in two years and it was rough, so I never want to do that again. But now I feel that I could get into sharing a house with someone I'm very much in love with and it's encouraging to me, Janice, to hear you talk about your relationship with David that you've lived together and now you are not and you are still in a strong relationship.

JANICE: Better. Our relationship is better than ever.

JESSE: Because I'd like—well, since relationships have phases I'd like to be able to phase into living together. And I do think there are more problems relating to other people when you live together. For one thing, you don't have the space. If you don't even have a bedroom, or it is next to your lover's that is one of the problems.

BOB: My fantasy is buying the house on either side of our house and giving it to people I know.

JOHN: I do think that a lot of our ability to be omnigamous has to do with the fact that we like living by ourselves—we really do like to be alone. I mean we're in love with the people we are in love with, but being alone and being by ourselves is an O.K. thing for most of us to do. It is really important to me to be home alone.

JANICE: That is the irony of monogamy. You get married and you stay with one person so that you never have to be alone, and then that one person dies before you and you are totally alone, knowing how to relate to only one person in a specific way.

BOB: I think it is important then that we should point out that none of what we are doing precludes long term commitments.

JESSE: I think that one of the things that I've learned from omnigamy is that I am capable of long term commitments and that I want that.

BOB: Omnigamy is also a way we have of making those commitments work.

On Children

SUE: I have a question about omnigamy and children. One of the things that is a tribute to monogamy is the opportunity to have children, which is an opportunity that you may not be able to have with non-monogamy. That goes along with the

whole issue of living together and how you work out the different kinds of things.

BOB: That issue is probably right at the heart of it too, because we were talking about not having a nuclear family which is focused around wife and kids. You've got to come up with a child-raising scheme that works.

SUE: If you are talking about making non-monogamy or omnigamy work then it needs to work for different situations. It needs to work for people who want families.

JANICE: I know couples who have lived together non-monogamously and raised some of the sharpest, brightest, greatest kids I know.

BOB: It is clear for Jesse and myself that to live together in the same house and raise children doesn't require that we be lovers—physical lovers... But that is very hard on the child. For instance, Dana (Jesse and Bob's daughter) has always expressed to me the desire that we be married or divorced, two states she would be comfortable with, I suppose because they are fairly traditional. So there is a generational reaction. The other problem is how to work child-rearing commitments into non-monogamous commitments.

SUE: Which is why it is nice to see Darca and Denali and Claude.

RUSSELL: I feel those questions are a matter of degree. I think the same child-care problems have to be worked out in monogamous situations too. If people are going to work it out they are going to work it out; they are practical things which can be solved. Child-rearing is a universal problem.

BOB: As a parent I have a lot of curiosity about what non-parents think about having kids. John has expressed himself as someone who likes to take care of other people's kids. Now that omnigamy opens up different forms of relationships, it also opens up different forms of parenting. That is an option of parenting that becomes available, that you don't usually have access to in a community of nuclear families—adults around who are not biological parents but who are doing child care.

JOHN: And they almost always have better relationships... They trust more, they listen better and you don't have to pretend that you are their parent—you don't have to put up with anything. It is a wonderful thing, to not be attached to your

kids in a possessive way. You know you can trust other people with your kid. . .

BOB: Well something I noticed about that trust is realizing that you may not know the best way or the only way to deal with your kids. . . This other adult may do something different than what you would do and it's O.K., and it turns out to be O.K. for the kid because the kid knows the difference too. Like you've done things with Dana that I wouldn't do, but that I don't mind.

JOHN: And the kid gets a whole new perspective of the adult. "Oh, adults aren't all parents". And in my life, all adults were parents and they all pretended that they were parents to everybody else, they'd do this real straight little number with me.

JANICE: It makes you not want to grow up because you are afraid you are going to have to know everything.

BOB: We are fortunate being parents that there are adults around that don't shy away from people with kids, which in nuclear-family communities usually isn't the case. There's a big difference between adults with kids and adults without kids, to generalize if I dare. . . But that is a really powerful idea, guaranteeing access of children to non-parent adults—something that is much more available in a real heterogeneous community.

JOHN: And even Dana, as resistant as she was to our lifestyle was appreciative of knowing me and Laura—I mean she finally said, "Well, however weird this is I'm glad that I know these people."

BOB: Did she say that to you?

JOHN: Yeah.

BOB: She never said that to me. The last two times Dana has seen Sue and me we've been taking a bath together and brushing our teeth together which she finds quite cute.

SUE: But Dana likes me and she likes it that Bob and I are friends.

BOB: No, lovers. You've got to remember that this is a real sense of normalcy, with Dana having a lesbian mother (Jesse).

SUE: But I don't think—my relationship to Dana is like her mother.

BOB: It is not like a second wife, to me.

SUE: It's interesting to me to see what Dana was going to do with me. It still doesn't seem com-

pletely clear to me whether Dana likes it when I'm around or if she wishes she had her Dad to herself more of the time.

BOB: It's interesting. Your relationship to Dana and her relationship to you is better than her relationships with other women I have gone out with—partly because my relationship with you has been better than my relationships with those other women.

SUE: Well, the most fun thing that happened so far is when we met Dana downtown. Bob and I went out and got a beer, and we came out of the bar and she was hanging out on the street corner with her friends and she loved running into us.

BOB: But Dana has had a real hard time with Jesse's sexuality, and Jesse's and my relationship. It's clear that Jesse and I were learning about omnigamy as we were bringing Dana up which was hard on Dana because she had to put up with us going crazy and figuring out how to do it.

On Public Opinion

JOHN: I think one of the weirdest things about omnigamy is other people's perceptions of what it is. Bob, Jesse and I had to deal with that a lot. Two years later you find out what people were thinking. The truth is weirder to them than their fiction. They have these wild ideas in their minds that they can understand, but the truth doesn't make any sense to them. It is hard and it's difficult, but we do this and everybody does get along. And we are very concerned about other people. I won't even tell a stranger that I have two lovers. I don't want to explain because people's experience is so limited. When I came back from North Carolina everything was all right, I felt good. I trusted Bob and was glad they had fallen in love and it felt good to come back, and suddenly, I realize that the eyes of Iowa City were upon us. It was so funny to drive up to where Sue works and there are three little ducks on the fence and everybody started laughing at the three of us in the front seat. . .

SUE: Sometimes I feel like people don't want it to work, that they are really watching to see what happens. That feels oppressive, it feels like you can't make mistakes. If John and I, or Bob and I decided not to be lovers anymore people are going to say, "We knew it wouldn't work."

JOHN: It would still be all right because we'd all still hang out together and they'll still all see us.

The thing that I liked about it was, that they can see that it is O.K. Bob and I can sit down together and Sue is not even on our minds.

BOB: Even among people we know well. . . At one point Sue and I were approached with things like, "Oh are you two doing a garden together?" which is pretty innocuous until you realize the context of the whole thing, because we borrowed the rototiller together and returned it together the question is, "John is out of town so when are you moving in together?"

JANICE: Oh, I get that from friends all the time. I want people to know. I want them to understand. I'll get a girlfriend calling me up, she is upset, and all I can do is tell her about my experience, what I find works. The response is always "What, you really agreed to that?" When I told people I fell in love with someone and I'm going to see him, they say "Well what happened to David?" I say, "Oh, nothing, David is out on the road and he's working." His mom was one of the worst sort of watching types. I did this whole thing of moving out and having lovers which just confirmed all her suspicions. She was waiting for David to come home crying any day and it never happened. David and I got closer and closer and just the week before I came here we went out with his mom and dad for lunch. At last she realizes that I am not a horrible wicked woman, and David and I really love each other. We don't have to get married and live happily ever after starting tomorrow.

On Jealousy

JESSE: I have been very jealous in relationships and it's a heavy distraction. What works for me, having gone through a lot of emotional trauma about it, is that I don't want it anymore and I bring it up and I talk about being jealous and I no longer think that it's the end of the world if I feel jealous. I recognize that it is a common, ordinary human emotion and that it passes. I bring it up and ask for reassurance, or figure out what I need in order to feel safe, or loved again. If this doesn't take care of it and jealousy keeps rearing its ugly head then I want to take a more careful look at the relationship, because it is not a very good sign.

BOB: Jealousy gets back to living together. I'm much more comfortable with Sue seeing John somewhere else than if we were all in the same house and I wanted to see Sue while John was there. It's the physicalness of it. When they are

away then I can withdraw and do other things and pay attention to either myself or somebody else.

JOHN: One of the things I worked on that worked pretty well was that I accentuated my thought, "She's fucking somebody else." I envisioned in my mind the most obscene scene I could possibly imagine and my lover enjoying it and that being O.K. And then suddenly my anger, my rage, became ludicrous because all that is happening is that the person is making love to somebody else, and that is what I have to deal with, and then the more I thought about that, the less important it became, the less it became something that made me angry and then I could get reassurance. Mostly it was some strong insecurity about my own sexuality that worked to just exaggerate whatever could be happening with them.

JESSE: I'm going to try that!

JANICE: I know that part of the reason why I wanted to stop living with David when I did was that I was feeling jealous of nothing—there was no real threat. I was horrendously jealous so I stopped living with him and started having other lovers myself. I could go out and come back, and it didn't change what we had. For me, jealousy came from real old shit, from when I was a little kid or somebody telling me that if your old man looks at somebody else then you are not a real woman. And when I started to get into the realities of it, I didn't feel jealous anymore. I've met a lover of David's

and maybe at first I'll be a little bit shy, but I feel that way with a lot of people that are not lovers with David. I know that by getting to know them, and knowing that what I have with David is secure, that there is no problem. If things start feeling weird between us, that has only to do with us, even if he or I are making love to someone else.

BOB: It's important for me to keep the difference between me not getting something that I want, separate from what Sue may be doing. When I keep those clearly separated it prevents me from projecting my jealousy toward her.

SUE: For me it's been important to be able to just say, "Oh, I'm pissed off, I'm jealous" and realize that it's O.K. to say that, and that the other person doesn't have to say anything. I know I might be wrong, that's not the point, the point is that I'm pissed off and that helps. Also, if I'm jealous because John is with somebody else and I feel like I need something, it's O.K. for me to ask for it, and it's O.K. to run into John with one of his other lovers on an outing and not feel uncomfortable. It's good to agree that if "I run into you with somebody else I want you to come up to me and say hi, I don't want you to pretend like you don't see me."

JANICE: I love it that everybody here is into what we are talking about. I come from a community in which all the same stuff goes on but nobody talks about it.



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RITUAL AND SURVIVAL

another person responded when asked why she participated in a ritual: "Because it feels good."

Rituals provide a protective structure within which people can safely play or improvise. This playful focus might be described as the experimental methodology of the right brain. Ritual at this point in history is a consciousness-raising tool: a combination of politics and play which takes place in a nurturing atmosphere. Once people feel safe with each other, I have confidence that we can get in touch with ancient methods of survival. Doing rituals together bonds people, creating a sense of community and a supportive place where people's consciousness can be changed.

"some women—join forces with the life of the planet and become her peculiar voice."

—T. Roszak, *Person/Planet* p. 45

Ritual is:

At times, I have found it helpful to define ritual as a metaphor for all of conscious living (Iglehart, p. 56). Any act can become a ritual, whether it is lighting a candle and incense, or attending a meeting. What counts is the ritualist's state of mind/body and her focus on the connections which I've been talking about. Rituals can be done alone, with intimate associates, or in public performance. They are never the same twice, since it is not the intellectual *knowing* of the ritual acts, but the conscious physical *doing* of it and experience which is crucial. In a ritual, a connection is made between the individual and the group and then between the group and some specific kind of energy in the universe. This energy varies according to the seasons, the weather, nonhuman beings nearby, the physical location of the ritual, and I am sure according to many other factors which I have yet to learn about. Emotional, physical, and psychic energy is raised by: dancing, clapping, singing, smelling incense, meditating, listening or tapping into the power of natural objects. That energy or power is then focused and directed toward a specific goal.

Different rituals focus consciousness on different aspects of our connections to the earth and to our own bodies. Ancient rituals celebrated seasonal energy and how it affected food-planting, gathering and eating. Rituals have always been used as protection against bad energy. They were used to acknowledge major passages in peoples' lives: birth, death, menarche, puberty, menopause, bonding. They can be used to change relationships between people, for healing and celebration. Rituals in the past were a holistic, creative celebration of our connection to the universe. Since we have become alienated from this connection rituals today can be used to re-connect ourselves with the earth, and the cosmos. We can use ritual to redefine power. Patriarchal power is power *over* others, including power over the earth. This kind of power disconnects us from each other. It has been abused to the point of endangering our survival. In a feminist ritual power is, above all, *shared*, whether it is defined

as energy, passion, creativity, intense focus, or love. These kinds of power enhance connections between us and other living things. Through the active experiencing of ritual, we are creating a new order of things, one which will promote life rather than destroy it.

The only way to really learn about rituals is to do one yourself. I suggest that you meet in a small group of people whom you trust and with whom you feel an affinity of interests. Read about psychic power, feminist witchcraft, and ancient rituals. Practice psychic work with friends and ask for their validation and support. To plan a specific ritual, first be clear about what you want to accomplish. Think about the seasonal weather, the waxing, full or waning phase of the moon, and decide how these factors best fit in with your plans. Do the ritual outside if possible. Have a discussion at which everyone contributes creative, "off-the-wall" ideas. Gradually fit these together so that the ritual begins with some energizing activity, then focus that energy toward some goal. End with more celebrating. Once a loose structure for the ritual is created, improvise whenever it feels right. Rest and meditate before the ritual. Include children. Unless a group has worked together for quite a while, you'll need to select a leader. Don't be scared to try something you've never done before. Don't be afraid to let others see how powerful you are. Play and have fun.

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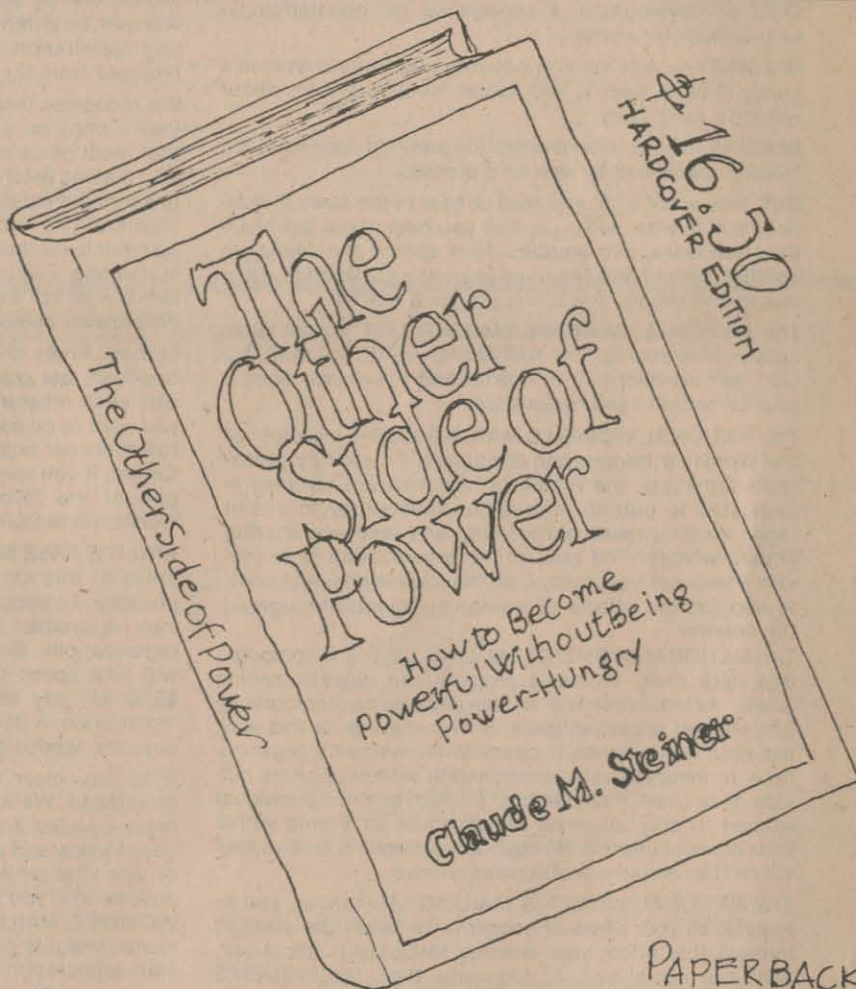
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food for the world. Affordable
& responsible health care, education,
& housing. Fair distribution of re-
sources. Freedom of sexual choice.
Economic liberty. Racial equality.
Socialism**