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FEMALE LIBERATION: A Joint Statement by  
Six Female Liberation Groups in Chapel Hill  
and Durham, N.C.

Women throughout the United States, in cities and towns, on campuses, in high schools, and in neighborhoods, are beginning to work together for the first time to eliminate the contradictions in our society between their potential as human beings and the roles of servant and sex object assigned them. The remarkable thing about this "movement" is that it is intentionally without a central organization and without leaders and professional organizers. Yet groups of women are spontaneously organizing. These groups include women of every age, position in society, and political conviction. This is because women are coming to recognize that their problems, even those which appear to be personal, are really problems that they share with other women -- the result of social conditions -- and that the solution lies in working together.

What is it that women want? They are working to eliminate the inequities of a system that oppresses groups such as women, blacks, and the poor. Some specific goals are equal educational and job opportunities, equal pay for equal work, and the universal child care facilities without which such opportunities would be useless. But these are only part of the overall need for women to be able to freely make the choices which control their lives.

Women realize that their ultimate liberation must go beyond mere legal changes and beyond the so-called "sexual revolution." The liberation of women, like that of blacks and the poor -- whose struggles women must share -- requires basic changes both in social institutions, like the schools and businesses which do not give equal opportunity, and in the attitudes of men and women. Men will have to give up the privileges granted to them because of their sex, and accept their share of the care of children and the maintenance of the home. When a woman can freely choose her role in society, she is less likely to find her only acceptable role in raising children. Such changes will not only be in the interest of justice for women, but ultimately for the benefit of all society. Society needs the creative contributions of its female majority. All members of families -- even children -- will be better off when women are allowed to accept equal responsibility in every aspect of their relationship with men. Women who take part in more challenging jobs and experiences will be less frustrated and better companions for both husbands and children.

There is no reason to believe that men and women differ in intelligence. Studies indicate that differences in achievement between men and women are the result of social conditioning. Women in our society are taught from the cradle that they are different from and inferior to men, that chief value will be as sex partners and child bearers. Therefore the years previous to marriage must be spent in anxious anticipation and the decades after their children are grown must be spent in boredom and uselessness. The channeling of women into traditional roles of wife and mother, secretary, nurse, teacher, and social worker, is very specific in the schools. But equally influential in channeling are the expectations of others and the images of women as empty sex objects in the pervasive and influential mass media.

#### TRADITIONAL ROLES

The traditional roles of women serve a function in our society, of course, among other things providing a cushion of cheap unskilled labor and serving the ego-needs of their men, whose lives might otherwise offer them little satisfaction. At the same time, women unconsciously perpetuate their own childish dependence, sensing, as slaves once did, that freedom can be very frightening. But the traditional roles of women simply do not work, do not fulfill the needs of a complete



and it is the "problem that has no name", the phenomenon Betty  
Friedan called The Feminine Mystique.

Traditional roles of women have been perpetrated in the same way the destructive stereotypes of blacks have kept them down long, after they were "technically" freed from slavery. Like blacks, women are considered childlike, emotional, passive, dependent and unsuited for intellectual activity. Therefore, women, like blacks, must be protected--that is, kept in their place. Blacks have come a long way since 1869 when John Stuart Mill compared women to slaves in his essay "The Subjection of Women." Now although no law of the land (at least on paper) would deny blacks equality, women still do not have the benefits of many of these laws.

#### The Right of Self-Determination

Women's roles in society have traditionally been defined by their reproductive function, a holdover from the division of labor in primitive society, where bearing and care of children was an essential and all-absorbing function. As women fight for and win opportunities to take an active part in society, they see the advantages of limiting their number of children. For medical as well as psychological reasons, responsibility for contraception should be shared by both the man and the woman. Safer and surer contraceptives must be developed. Therapeutic abortion must be a necessary "back up" measure in birth control. Yet in most states abortion for any but strictly medical reasons is against the laws, laws made and enforced by men. Even in the states with so-called "liberal" abortion laws, abortions remain available only to the knowledgeable and the economically well-off. Other women who seek abortions must place themselves in the hands of butchers. Female Liberation, therefore, urges the repeal of all abortion laws and urges physicians and hospitals, some of which balk at the idea of becoming "abortion mills", to accept their responsibility to one half the nation's citizens. At the same time, Female Liberation abhors the forced sterilization of poor women. For the issue at stake is the right of every woman to the control of her own body.

#### Family

The typical American family structure of father, mother, and children perpetuates the traditional roles. Isolated from other women and deprived of a valued place in the mainstream of society, she is humiliated by her financial dependence. Even if she earns money in a job, she is saddled with the monotonous and unrewarding chores of housework. And she tends to channel her frustrated hopes into destructive ambition for her children. Female Liberation is not anti-man or anti-child, but sees the need for alternative life styles. A woman should have the right to remain unmarried without being discriminated against socially or financially. In a family relationship she must be allowed to maintain her integrity as an individual. This means men must share equally in housework and child-care tasks. Children must have fathers as well as mothers. It is best if both parents have time to devote to the children as well as interests outside the home. Even more important, husbands must support their wives' right to an independent income, a life-long career or vocation, and the sense of self-respect and adequacy which such a life provides. Women do not want to become men, but surely they have the same right as men to live to the fullest of their capacities.

#### Education

The discrimination against women in our schools is obvious. In high schools, girls who show extraordinary promise in the conventional academic sense are often channelled into training programs for low-level or dead-end jobs, while men (at least white middle-class men) are universally encouraged to further their education.

Although more women than men achieve higher academic records in high school, fewer are able to go on to college because (1) they are taught to believe from an early age that marriage is more important, and (2) colleges, even state institutions,



have admissions quotas for women, unequal admissions standards, and sexually "segregated" employment placement services. At the University of North Carolina, for instance, there are quotas for women students, and those few admitted have far higher academic records and entrance examination scores than the men. In the freshman class of 1966 at Chapel Hill, 93% of the women were in the top one quarter of their high school class, while only 79% of the men were. Some scholarships at UNC discriminate against women. Our women's colleges, many of them founded with high scholastic standards, are often little more than training grounds for successful middle class wives or successful secretaries and "Girl Fridays." The function of women in our universities is too often 'to enhance the social and intellectual life of the men, an advantage Harvard and Yale are beginning to realize, and to keep the education industry booming.

### Employment

Often women who in the artificial environment of schools feel they are equal to men are shocked by the discrimination they encounter in the working world. In factory and service jobs women, taught to value themselves so little, work for lower wages than men. Overall, they receive fewer fringe benefits, less responsibility, and less training, which makes them the first victims of mechanization. The failure of the unions to fight equally for the rights of males and females is divisive and detrimental to all workers. Women clerical workers often do the work of their counterparts, or even their male superiors, while receiving inferior status, pay, and job benefits, and less chance of advancement. For instance, male bank tellers receive from five to thirty-one dollars per week <sup>more</sup> than women bank tellers. A job classification system which gives men and women different job titles but the same duties is often the justification for these differences. A large number of women workers are not covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which does not have jurisdiction over religious or educational institutions or federal and state workers. Women are even being pushed out of traditionally female occupations such as teaching, libraries, nursing, and social work, as the pay for these socially important jobs rises and as the demand by large numbers of men for professional jobs increases. (And top administrative levels of even those jobs, as well as the editorships of women's magazines, have always been filled by men.) Many women with college education graduate degrees, and other valuable skills find themselves in dead-end jobs as "glorified secretaries," and in the case of graduate degrees, in a job with a fancy title but requiring the same kind of duties, because they have the misfortune to know how to type. Men who have similar or better typing skills are never considered for these boring and servant-oriented jobs (consider a man having to make coffee for his boss every morning). Even in the professions, women seldom receive the same pay as men for the same work. For instance, according to the Oct. 21, 1968 issue of Chemical and Engineering News, in 1968 the median income for men with PhD's and 2-4 years experience in chemistry was \$13,300 while women with equal experience and education were <sup>paid</sup> \$9,350. There is only one woman on the North Carolina Supreme Court. There are only a few women state legislators. Even worse, only sixty-four women were <sup>appointed</sup> by Governor Scott, as opposed to three or four thousand men. This certainly is not proportional to the number of women in this state who are doctors, lawyers, teachers, or are in other ways eminently qualified. The end result of all this is that women who imagine they will beat the system by playing the man's game are usually disillusioned.

### Projects and Concerns of Female Liberation Groups in the Chapel Hill--Durham Area

Female Liberation in Durham-Chapel Hill has been rapidly expanding for one year now, and to date, there are six groups comprised of women of various ages with



a variety of outlooks and interests. Despite the diversity of specific projects undertaken, all groups share a common concern for the achievement of full democratic rights for women, legally, economically, and socially. To attain equality for women, five specific goals must be realized. These are:

1. Extensive changes in the ways female children are socialized to fit into oppressive and uncreative roles.
2. Equal opportunities and equal pay and benefits in employment.
3. Twenty-four hour child-care centers to both bring about the necessary changes in the socialization of society's children, and to free women to choose their own means of fulfillment, whether inside the home or out.
4. Self-defense training for women as a standard part of the school curriculum. Such training would free women from the fear of physical attack and enable them to move about freely and confidently on the streets.
5. Improved health-care facilities for women. This would include abortion on demand to all women at a reasonable price, free abortions for all poor women who desire them; public programs to provide women with extensive information about and preparation for child-birth, so that they may make their own decisions about breast-feeding, natural child-birth and similar questions; more research to ensure a variety of safe and effective contraceptives for both men and women; and efforts to lower the U.S.'s unusually high death-rate for women during pregnancy and child-birth.