Gaining that power means unlearning a history of women's oppression and suppression. Holly Near's song "Strong" deals with her realization that the time has come for women (and herself) to gain strength:

Mama taught me to be gentle,
love the man the way I should.
Papa taught me to be simple,
love the world, live while I could.
Sister taught me pretty
And brother taught me smile
But who's gonna teach me to be strong —
when the tears come.
Who's gonna teach you to be strong?

That strength will come as women establish new priorities. Although Carole King was willing to follow her man whenever he called, feminists deny such self-negation. Holly Near points out that she's never come across a man who cared enough about her own ideas and development to change his plans.

Well I've never found a man who would
do it for me
I've never found a man who felt he could
wait while I was free to grow, free to go.

The Red Star Singers recount the same kind of predicament Carole King might be in — choose your lover or yourself, but their reply is "Whoa no, I won't go."

He asked me to come and go with him
To do what he had to do.
Asked me to stay by his side for a while and
smile,
Said "C'mon and be what I am, and let me
know I'm real,
And order my confusion like a recipe file."

Whoa no, I won't go
I been that way before and it just won't do;
I gotta go where my feet take me
You know we don't wear the same size
shoe,
And I'm not about to get myself confused
with you.

If it's not a "boyfriend" you're expected to obey there are certainly plenty of other males you must play up to. This could mean dressing "femininely" to get hired for a job, or to win approval from an employer. The Red Star Singers sing:

. . .I don't like to dress to
Please no boss,
To file and flash a smile
When I feel cross.

Women deal with all kinds of harassment that men are never subject to. Women can't ever feel safe hitch-hiking, or walking down a city street, because it is common to be hassled by obnoxiously flirtatious men. Women soon learn to either look straight ahead or put on an artificially complacent expression.

Well some smile and say "see me,
I'm free,"
You know I'm not
'Cause sometimes I need what I ain't got.
I need a ride not rape when I stick out
my thumb
A nutritious meal, clear skies, and a home
without a landlord
I need love
I can afford to feel
And a smile on the street
That's for real, not some business deal.
—Red Star Singers

That insincerity is a moral corruption that pervades this society. It easily extends to all our relationships, breeding distrust, fear, loneliness, and dishonesty. Esther Phillips further describes these conditions in "Disposable Society."

Disposable society has thrown away the
best in me
They've thrown away sincerity, the
keystone of integrity
Disposable way you love, not exactly what
you're thinking of
Dispose of me when you are through, for
fear that I'll dispose of you.
Disposable, your closest friend, you swore
to love right to the end.

BETWEEN WOMEN

Friendship between women is another important point to focus on. One thing that the social emphasis on relationships with men encourages is a disregard for other women. Surely you've been in the position where a female friend drops her plans with other

Willie Tyson

women in order to go out on a last minute "date." Men may demand that kind of attention, but women certainly don't have to supply it. Jealousy and competition among women are other unfortunate by-products of the male-centered world. Holly Near has a very meaningful song that deals with those old habits that must be broken.

I used to think there was only one man
for me and they told me
"Girl if he passes by you, don't you know
that your life is through."

But men come a dime for twenty
And for me that is going to be
more than plenty
It's more important to me that we stay
friends for as long as we can. . .

Sister do you hear what I'm saying?
Don't you know that we must take care
God, it's hard to change old habits
It's so easy to fall back there to
the old days when
Women used to fight and squabble night
and day
Just because some guy had been
taken away
By a sister who was only staying alive
But know we don't have to compete, my
friend, to survive.

Bonds between women must be secured in every way possible in order to insure a successful struggle for liberation. For many women, lesbian relationships are the most fulfilling way to insure both personal happiness and political ends. In such relationships, the social roles, games and inhibitions that so commonly prevail in relations with men, can be avoided. The power struggle is eliminated, leaving time for the important tasks of personal sharing and growth. The social stigma against lesbianism is strong enough to make any natural attraction to another woman difficult to come to terms with. Lavender Jane expresses that confusion and it's resolution — a very satisfying relationship:

Because she's a woman,
Confusion is my feelings
I tried to name it everything but love
But like a magic dream,
It would not be turned aside
But suddenly and warmly it held me
Because she's a woman

Because I am a woman
A way was laid out for me
I always thought I'd need a man to love
And all the men I've known,
Were as loving as they could be
There's no one can match her beauty
It's because she's a woman
And she feels so much the sweet touch of a
woman's love.

Unity and sisterhood are the start. In what is now a "man's world," men's music prevails, but recent feminist music can be a fantastic source of inspiration.

If we don't let manipulating keep us apart
If we don't let manuevering keep us apart
If we don't let manpower keep us apart
or mankind keep us apart
We've won,
I mean, we don't got it easy
but we've got it!