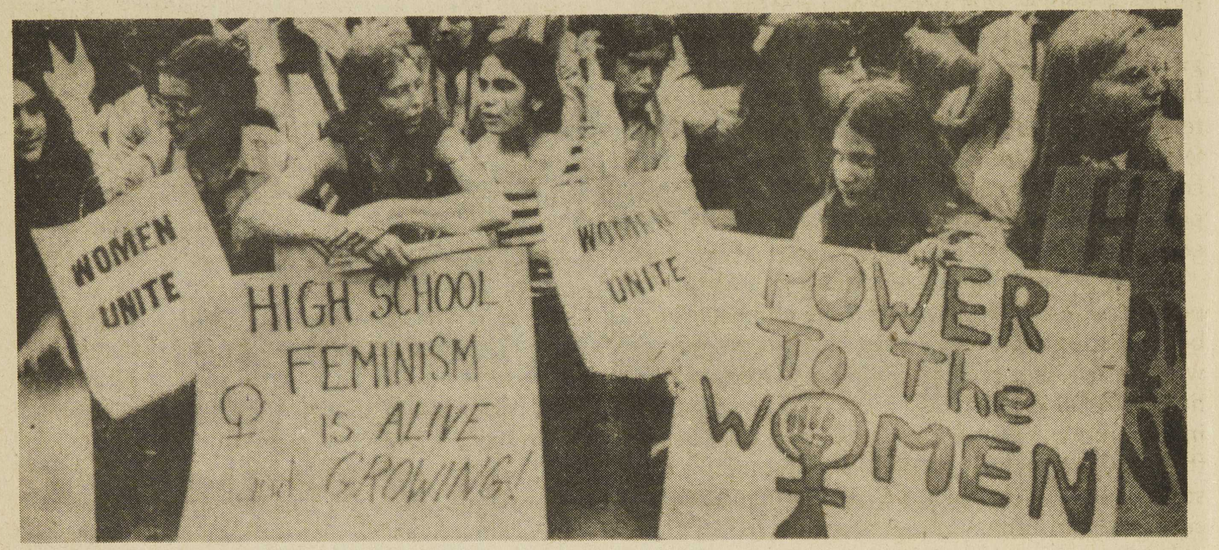


Demonstrate!: A picket line or other public protest is often the most effective way to expose sexism in your school or community.

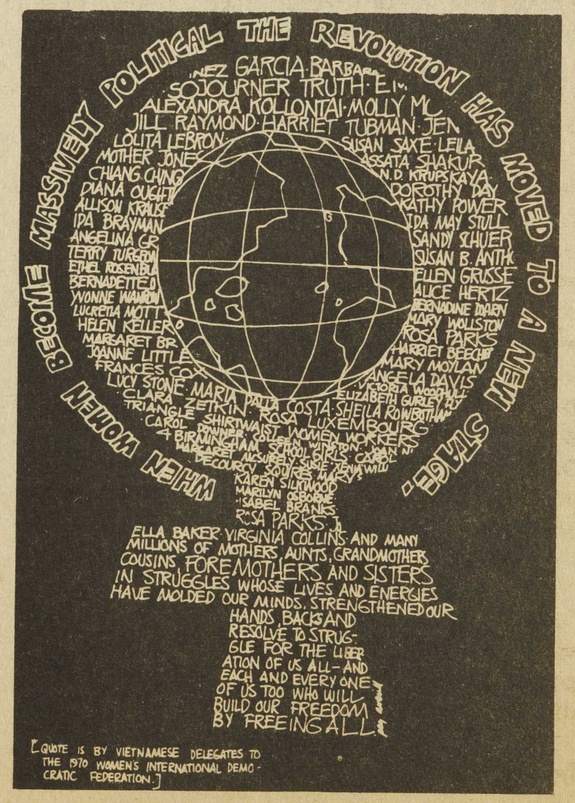
This is just one of several "free schools" here on the East Coast that find their basis in community and various kinds of resistance. One of the things I find most exciting about the Learning Action Center is the way it is helping men and women to change the social roles they have been taught, and to learn more honest, open, and equal ways of relating to each other. Not only are there no "teachers" at the center, but men and women share equal responsibilities in the groups — in fact the whole thing is based on a shared responsibility for making it work. The Center also provides a base where people in high school can have political meetings, as well as some time away from school, family, and the usual social scene. This center not only gives people strength to resist in school, but it helps people find a vision of a better way, a hope for *now* which gives strength in the struggle for the future. The Learning Action Center is not a women's liberation group but it does draw people together for strength in various resistance struggles.

On a more personal level, community can be found for high school women in a women's group. Such a group would meet somewhere away from school and family — somewhere that women can relax and gain some perspective on themselves and these institutions. If the group felt strongly enough it could meet with an older woman active in women's liberation or a radical woman teacher. However, in doing this it is important to work on the old/young, teacher/student gap, and be sure enough of yourselves that you won't let an older person or teacher dominate or "run" the group. If the group comes together as *women*, their other roles in society should not get in the way of relating as women to common problems.

High school women can act in other ways to fight sexism in the schools. The whole school social calender of proms, homecoming queens, club "sweethearts" and the like can be publicly opposed. Beautiful and effective guerilla theater or demonstrations can be held around such public "popularity" events that view people as ornaments and sex objects, not as people. Women can make a thorough study and critique of the curriculum and guidance facilities at their school, bring these inequities

to the school's attention, and *fight it*! They would publicly challenge teachers who degrade women, even asking that a teacher be fired on the basis of male chauvinism (just as teachers have been fired for blatant racism!) Women can start their own women's history course, and demand credit for it. As much as possible, these activities should start as self-educating, freeing, *human* things.

When acting politically in schools, I don't necessarily see confrontation as the first step, but rather *acting* in the midst of the system in ways that help strengthen understanding, humanize relationships, and point out the inhumanity of that system. If women can find the strength to direct their own education, social life, and family life, they will gain support from other students and draw other people into a greater awareness of their unfreedom and give them strength to join with them. Of course, from such actions oppression and confrontation will follow, but that confrontation will be as a result of a creative, freeing action, one which helps people gain understanding and strength.

In addition to political and institutional activities, the women's group could support each other in their personal efforts to relate honestly and equally with men, and in efforts to be treated as an equal in their families. Often the group is a place where women can share their frustrations as they struggle in these personal areas. In overcoming the traditional jealousy and competitiveness among women, women can realize that even if their parents don't respect them, and men reject them, here is a group that will accept them as an equal and with respect.

Let me say again that I see this group as functioning both politically and personally. If it is only personal it will turn into another gossip club, not relating to the institutions that cause these problems. If it is only political it will suffer from the same hangups of jealousy and competition and lack of community that other political groups do. The women's movement is talking about a whole redefinition of roles in this society — destroying the hierarchical patterns in which this society places people. When we talk about changing institutions we are also talking about redefining the whole way we relate to each other as human beings — as man to woman, as teacher to student, as parent to child. The women's movement emphasizes sharing, equality of leadership and responsibility, the ability to *listen* to one another, to see beyond intellectual analysis to common problems. In struggle against oppression we can often become very rigid and defensive about our actions. We need to accept the fact that people in the movement can struggle in different ways and that doesn't need to threaten us. We need to work together from different fronts as we deal with our problems and come to understand the ways this country messes us all up. And as we come together in small groups we can hope, from the positive things we discover, to find strength to know the way for the future, a future of liberation for women, a future of liberation for people!