

Women Against Imperialism
Discussion Series
Spring 1991

First four weeks

Topics:

1. Women and our bodies in the Nineties....who controls us?
2. Militarism in women's lives...domestic media consumption of our minds...women in the military....
3. Zionism, Palestine, and anti-semitism
4. Women and activism...resistance and the state....militancy and machoism....FBI

Questions for week one:

1. Everyday we are bombarded with images and slogans telling us we as "women in the 90's" are now in control and have the right to be sexy, thin, blue-eyed, blond, and sexual--with men. How much in control of our bodies do we feel? How much more than our mothers, our grandmothers? What do we have control of? How are our options shaped? Who shapes them? How much control does that leave us?
- 2.(Because of the supreme court decision that came down last week, we thought peoples minds would be on abortion and reproductive rights, so we devoted the second question to this topic. If people feel differently, we can change it.) How central are the questions of reproductive rights to our oppression or liberation as women? What do we mean by reproductive rights? What does it mean to have "freedom of choice" or a "right to privacy? Are these (freedom of choice...right to privacy) the best ways to frame the discussion? What are the advantages and disadvantages of debating/fighting for reproductive rights within these frameworks?

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND WRONGS

Session One: Tuesday, March 24th 7:30, San Francisco

My body's no body's body but mine:

Are motherhood and heterosexuality compulsory? Population control vs. birth control, what's the difference? Are straight and bi women really sleeping with the enemy? Did the early family planning movement really embrace the racist eugenics movement? Did the birth control pill and legal abortions give women sexual liberation? What does any of this have to do with the F* word? *feminism.

Session Two: Tuesday, April 7th 7:30, San Francisco

The Handmaid's Tale: Beyond Abortion

Reproductive technology, forced sterilization, genetic engineering, infant mortality, lesbian custody, donor insemination, forced Norplant implants, AFDC, cuts, HIV infected moms, RU 486, kidnapping, disability rights, surrogate motherhood, egg farming-Women as vessel, vector and vampire.

Session Three: Tuesday, April 21st 7:30 San Francisco

Abortion: Women's Bodies are a Battleground.

The church, the state, our fate? Women of color-the gag rule is nothing new. Pro-choice or pro-abortion. Progressive men place in the abortion movement. What's in it for lesbians? Is there sex for wom(b)en beyond procreation? The Jane Collectives: Sisters are doing it for ourselves!

Session Four: Tuesday, May 5th 7:30, San Francisco

The BACKLASH: Men R Back

"They" say that the 60's was the decade for Black liberation, the 70's was women's liberation, the 80's was lesbian/gay liberation and the 90's will be the decade for men's liberation! Paternal rights and fetal rights vs. Women's rights. Dyke bashing/white supremacy/the patriarchal nuclear family-Amerikkka's traditional values, never ~~been~~ very far behind are being "rescued".

Four part discussion with short videos and challenging readings! Mixed (women and men) meetings with optional women's caucus at 6:30 pm on the same nights.

STUDY- REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND WRONGS

First Session: My body's no body's body but mine

Readings:

"Men Don't Really Hate Women, or Do They?" by Meg Bowman, Z Magazine

"What Can the White Man Say to the Black Woman" by Alice Walker

"Lesbians Choosing Children: The Personal is Political Revisited" by Nancy Polikoff, Politics of the Heart

"Motherhood" The Contemporary Emergency and the Quantum Leap" by Adrienne Rich, On Lies, Secrets and Silence

"Assaults and Invasions", poem by Janice Mirikitani from Shedding Silence

Excerpts from Abortion and Women's Choice, the State, Sexuality and Reproductive Freedom, by Rosalind Pollack Petchesky

"Population Control Out of Control", by Farida Akhter, Guardian Newspaper

Questions:

1. Brainstorm- Let's name 20 ways women are fighting to control our bodies.

2. Are motherhood and heterosexuality compulsory? Does "pro-choice" legislation guarantee that mothers and heterosexuals have come to that "decision" freely?

How do we know what we have really "chosen"?

3. Petchesky, says that the tension between individual desire/subjective reality/privacy on the one hand and social needs/collective responsibility/socially imposed morality on the other hand can never "be totally reconciled". She adds "this very tension may be the source of a political vitality for feminism". (pgs 400-401) Let's discuss this in terms of issues other than reproductive freedom (for example, sexual freedom, fashion, Madonna-like stardom, responsibility for children, community pressure/restrictions for anti-social behavior (substance abuse, child abuse, etc.)

4. Did making contraception more accessible and legalizing abortion give women sexual liberation?

STUDY: REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND WRONGS

Second Session: Reproductive Freedom: Abortion isn't the only issue

Readings:

"Debating Reproductive Technologies", (Germany)Connexions Magazine
"Sperm Smorgasbord", (Switzerland)Connexions
RU486 Debate in the Bay Guardian
"A Long Story" by Beth Brant, Politics of the Heart
"Forced Contraception" by Julie Mertus, Z Magazine
"The Case of Marion Sparg" (South Africa)Connexions Magazine
From From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom, Edited by Marlene Fried:
"Abortion and Sterilization in the Third World"
Statistics on Infant Mortality
"Survival, Empowerment and Activism" by Roxanna Pastor
"Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights" by Angela Davis
"Women's Reproductive Rights in the Age of AIDS: New Threats to Informed Choice"
by Hortensia Amaro
"Shared Dreams: A Left Perspective on Disability Rights and Reproductive Rights" by
Adrienne Asch and Michelle Fine
"Court Ordered Ceasareans: A Growing Concern for Indigent Women" by Janean
Acevedo Daniels

Questions:

1. There has been an historic and ongoing struggle by women of color in the U.S. and around the world that white women do not integrate and prioritize their issues. What do we think are the priorities that women of color are actively pursuing now? To what can we attribute the failure of the primarily white women's movement to take these issues on?
2. There are some very controversial debates about reproductive technologies and newer methods for fertility control. In terms of controlling women's lives, what is different about these newer methods? What is the same?
3. What do women gain from these new technologies? What do we lose?

Twenty plus ways women are fighting to control our bodies. By Study group April 7, 1992.

1. coming out
2. demanding accessible, fully funded, safe and legal abortions
3. fighting violence against women
4. fighting for birth control
5. wearing cornrows
6. educating ourselves about our bodies instead of relying on doctors
7. demanding more research on breast cancer
8. getting CDC definitions for HIV changes to include women's diseases
9. being able to afford having a baby if you want one
10. having incest survivor groups
11. setting limits and boundaries -physically
12. demanding and obtaining safe sex- free and all over
13. fighting against environmental toxins
14. not looking like Barbie
15. stopping welfare cuts
16. exposing and stopping forced sterilization and coercive norplant implantation
17. writing
18. writing books like Susan Faludi
19. marching and demonstrating
20. choosing not to have children
21. building alternative families
22. demanding free and accessible childcare
23. through donor insemination for lesbians and other women
24. making connections with women in other countries
25. creating battered women's shelters
26. leaving battering situations
27. exercising and getting stronger
28. learning self defense
29. taking over land
30. demanding quality health care including pre natal care
31. reclaiming language to reflect women
32. fighting to educate men to be "tuned in"
33. defining women's only space
34. breaking out of traditional roles
35. not getting married
36. saying "NO"
37. quitting jobs
38. fighting sexual harrassment
39. educating kids against sexual stereotyping

- 40. Creating Jane collectives. Learning Menstrual extraction together
- 41. confronting violence directly (not through the courts)
- 42. having good childcare, paying more attention to this
- 43. changing the stereotyping and objectifying of women's bodies
- 44. not dieting
- 45. lesbians fighting for the recognition of non biological mothers
- 46. making men use condoms

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STUDY-REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND WRONGS

Third Session- Abortion: Our Bodies are a Battleground

Readings:

"The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom: Three Stages of Feminism" by Linda Gordon

Excerpt from "Feminism Lives" by Radical Feminists

"A Gag is a Tool" speech by Sharon Powell

excerpt from "On the Issues" by Merle Hoffman

From From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom. Edited by Marlene Fried.

"Transforming the Reproductive Rights Movement: The Post-Webster Agenda

"Putting Women Back into the Abortion Debate" by Ellen Willis

Just Call "Jane" by Jane

"Abortion without Apology"