



## The Radical Women Manifesto: Socialist Feminist Theory, Program and Organizational Structure

*By Radical Women*

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### **The Radical Women Manifesto: Socialist Feminist Theory, Program and Organizational Structure** By Radical Women

Politics. Cultural Writing. Founded in Seattle in 1967, the working-class feminist group Radical Women continues to fight for social justice, freedom from oppression, and an end to capitalism. This manifesto covers the history and theoretical underpinnings of the movement, from its marxist origins to the present day, and establishes the goals and structures for Radical Women of today. This visionary manifesto is for today's warriors, wherever we are. It's a brilliant guide toward our common goal: freedom -- Debbie Brennan, Radical Women Organizer, Melbourne, Australia.

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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Since its founding in 1967, the grassroots organization Radical Women "has kept alive the militant spirit of feminist rebellion... by being audacious, multiracial, queer and straight, socialist feminist advocates for the overthrow of capitalism!" The Radical Women Manifesto: Socialist Feminist Theory, Program and Organizational Structure will resonate, these women believe, with the most outspoken second-wave feminists and provide younger activists with a how-to guide to running a bare-bones organization and working effectively on behalf of a variety of meaty and, in some cases, controversial issues, ranging from the availability of quality, affordable health care to the legalization of prostitution. Not for the faint of heart, this little book will speak volumes to a select audience.

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### About the Author

Radical Women, a unique socialist feminist organization, has been continuously active on every social issue since its founding in 1967. It has branches today in numerous U.S. cities and in Australia.

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INTRODUCTION by Megan Cornish (excerpt)

As I write this introduction, I think back to the exhilarating mass challenge that met the World Trade Organization's 1999 Seattle meeting. It was an upsurge the like of which hadn't been seen since the 1960s-era revolt against the Vietnam War. The "Battle in Seattle" against global corporate rule reverberated far beyond U.S. borders and signaled growing, revitalized ferment among young people and workers. Once again, it was cool to be young, radical, in sync with political events, and involved in changing the world!

It is to this new wave of rebels and revolutionaries that The Radical Women Manifesto will speak most directly, offering a cutting-edge guide for their search to build and sustain a movement for redesigning society.

Some may be surprised at that statement, since Radical Women (RW), founded in Seattle in 1967, is older than many of these young activists! But consider: out of the profusion of women's liberation groups — consciousness-raising circles, utopian collectives, and action coalitions — that spanned the political spectrum of the 1960s and early '70s, only Radical Women has kept alive the militant spirit of feminist rebellion. And Radical Women has not merely survived, but dramatically changed the political landscape.

Why have we had such an impact? Precisely by being audacious, multiracial, queer and straight, socialist feminist advocates for the overthrow of capitalism! Precisely by embracing a theory that explains why war, environmental devastation, and all forms of oppression are the order of the day under a system run for private profit. And precisely by, on the organizational front, having a democratic structure that enables us to act swiftly and decisively when it matters most.

When I first met Radical Women in 1972, the Manifesto took up only two mimeographed pages, yet it already encapsulated Radical Women's core beliefs on the cause of, and cure for, women's oppression. It described the origin of patriarchy in the rise of private property. And it explained that women's emancipation

could only be achieved through socialism — which for its part, could only be won by a movement of the most oppressed, with women, especially women of color, playing a defining role. These were heady and subversive concepts — and they still are today!....

PREAMBLE (excerpt)

As political radicals, we anticipate and organize toward a revolutionary new world, reborn free.

As women, we anticipate and organize toward a new historical level of human relations based on equality and mutual respect.

As Radical Women, we understand and promulgate the concept that the Woman Question is a decisive issue in the unfolding international revolution because the exploitation of women has created a specially oppressed sex whose potential for revolt and capacity for leadership are second to none.

The current mainstream leadership of the women's movement is largely professional, middleclass and white. But the movement was founded by radicals and today its leftwing leadership is gaining strength, rising from the vast ranks of militant women from the working class, especially women of color and lesbians.

These women are doubly- and triply-exploited; they come into direct and daily conflict with bosses on the job and with racists and sexists on every level of life. They develop a keener awareness and consciousness of the triple nature of oppression — class, race and sex — than is possible for most white, nonworking, middleclass women.

The raw battle for survival in the everyday world has equipped women of color, women workers, and lesbians with a talent for discipline and respect for theory because the life of the poor woman, the working mother and the independent woman depends upon clearheadedness, self-control and organization. Accordingly, they demand these qualities in any movement that claims to be mature and realistic, and have no patience for idlers, triflers, coquettes, leeches and self-seekers within the movement. They have the least to lose and the most to gain by eliminating capitalism. They are radicalized and tempered by their actual victimization in life, not just by intellectual choice. Their experience is indispensable to a movement that must challenge the pinnacles of the bourgeois state and ultimately go so far as to seize power on behalf of all the humiliated and outcast.

It is precisely such women, who join nothing lightly but are ready to devote their lives completely when they do commit, who are destined for leadership of the entire movement. It is the historic responsibility of the movement to make an ideological connection to these women, a connection that always exists in the real world of jobs and workingclass/people of color communities, where women must fight together and, in the course of those battles, find solidarity and comradeship.

Our struggle for women's emancipation is not an easy one. The changes needed to free women from the bondage of inferior economic and social status involve a prolonged conflict, an endeavor that is met with great hostility and resistance at every step of the way. This resistance is twofold: from outside enemies as well as from within the movement, which is itself fraught with its own contradictions and inconsistencies.

Radical Women knows that the women's movement will have ups and downs, and that only a confident grasp of history, social theory, and tested organizational principles can provide the ballast to weather the storms ahead. The Radical Women Manifesto is our guide to achieving equilibrium amidst the chaos and corruption of the society around us, a guideline firmly grounded in women's historical past — in the beginnings of our oppression as a sex.

## **Users Review**

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