

CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING FOR LESBIANS

Consciousness-raising means: to become more aware... in our cases--aware of what it means to be members of two minority groups. First we are women who are subservient in our society--secondly we are feared and despised as lesbians. Consciousness-raising also means absorbing information about our common condition through the experiences of our sisters and understanding what we can and must do to change the situation in which we find ourselves by changing laws and attitudes.

We meet in small groups (preferably 8-12 women) once a week or more and discuss our feelings and our thoughts on various subjects affecting us as lesbian women. C. R. was developed early in the new feminist movement by women who understood the importance of sharing their experiences in order to discover the common grounds for unhappiness about our situation.

C. R. is done with women sitting in a circle; after the group decides on a topic, one woman volunteers to begin. She speaks about her personal feelings related to the topic. We have found that limiting her to talking about personal experiences rather than the experiences of someone else, or intellectualizing on a topic makes the experience of C. R. more sharing and deepens the understanding between us. After she has spoken, the group can ask her to clarify anything she's said. We don't ask leading questions; only questions that clarify what she's said...and NO personal attacks or questioning of another's feelings and we keep what we learn of the personal lives of our sisters to ourselves. There are no leaders in C. R.: we all participate on an equal basis.

After everyone has spoken and if the group wishes to they can discuss the question and the information received in a general way and if it's pertinent, what the group can do about effecting change.

The reasons for doing consciousness-raising? It provides an environment where we find ourselves relating on a deep emotional level with other women and this gradually opens us to new thoughts and feelings about ourselves and our sisters. We begin to understand that our personal problems are political and that as members of two minorities we must unite to effect change.

We in Lesbian Feminists encourage all new women to participate in C. R. It is important to the development of ourselves as women who are ready to do battle to defeat and replace the political, social, and psychological system which traps us all. Without developing our consciousnesses we are ineffective, because we haven't analyzed the institutions of the society. By ourselves, we are without strength and can change nothing.

The following are suggested topics for C. R. They can be added to as you think of new topics to discuss.

1. How do you feel about being a lesbian? Do you consider lesbianism an aberration?
2. How do you feel about being a woman?
3. Discuss role-playing--butch-fem..the relationships of role playing to power.. lesbian role-playing, imitative of heterosexual (male-female) relationships.
4. How do you feel about your mother? What is your relationship to her? What societal pressures caused her to be what she is?
5. How able are we to defend ourselves against male hostility? Do you fear being raped? Do you think men who rape are sick?
6. How do you see yourself? Do you accept others' image of you? Do I try to convey a certain image?