BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT
EVE HINDERER

My first recognition of social injustice was while in grade school. My family lived in Yorkville, now gentrified beyond recognition, but then a haven for German, Irish and East European immigrants. Due to ongoing problems with our landlord, i.e. lack of heat, my mother sought relief from the Metropolitan Council on Housing, a tenant advocacy organization. I remember learning that some buildings in our neighborhood were scheduled for demolition, and I was astonished to learn decent housing would be destroyed for more lucrative real estate development, leaving many people homeless. In fact, the income range in this area of Manhattan varied widely. I would passively notice the change from rows of tenements to the prewar, multiple dwelling, and townhouses lining the streets between Lexington and Fifth Avenues on walks to Central Park with my father. While still young, I was relatively unbothered by class difference, but when I moved up to Junior High, I was exposed to the students coming whose cachement area was the better heeled blocks of Manhattan's Upper East Side.

My father worked as a receiving clerk in a Stouffer's restaurant, where he ultimately met my mother. Both were good-looking individuals, but my self-effacing mother tried to foil my father's advances. He persisted, however, and finally made it clear that he was not making some kind of mistake in turning his attentions to her. They married late in life and I was the only child, born August 1947. My father's emphasis on education paid off when I was accepted to the Bronx High School of Science, graduating in 1964. It was while there that I was exposed to rightwing ideology, going on to read "The Fountainhead" by Ayn Rand, becoming familiar with the preaching of Nathaniel Branden and even supporting Barry Goldwater for president in 1964.

All of this lasted until sometime into my first year at the City College of New York, where I first ran into left wing ideology, and began associating with the 'commies' my mother had warned me against. The south campus cafeteria in fact, was a den for left political radicals of every stripe. This was my first encounter with the alphabet soup of PL, the SWP, along with the WEB DuBois club, the Spartacist League, etc. I faced my first intellectual dilemma in feeling all these groups to be completely foreign to me

ideologically, but feeling drawn to the rebellion they represented. At the same time that I was mingling with this radical population, my life at home with a verbally abusive father had reached a crisis, and at the age of 17 in 1965, I became a runaway.

During this brief interlude of attempted freedom, I became dependent on some of the people I had met at school, still not understanding the political philosophy they all seemed to embrace. Mel Maurer put me up in his apartment in the Bronx until I made the mistake of contacting my family and telling them where I was. When my uncle threatened to charge Mel with statutory rape if I remained with him, I agreed to return home. At this juncture, it was decided I would leave school and spend time with my godmother Eve DeForest in Daytona Beach, Florida.

This sojourn with my godmother, in fact, sowed the seeds of my first bout of mental illness. She seemed to find nothing but character defects whereas my cronies back in school saw only the attractiveness of youthful rebellion. Unsurprisingly, I cut my visit 'short' after three months, promising Eve DeForest that I was done forever with those things that would hurt her and my parents, and return home and to school.

After about a year of following through on these promises, I was suffering from panic attacks and anxiety and was ready to enter therapy for the first time. Since my family made it clear I would have to pay for these services out of my own pocket, I started work with Marjory Newstrand at $7.00/hour, twice a week.

By that time, however, the damage my parents feared had been done, as I had been exposed to the body of thought known as Anarchism. A wooly-haired denizen of the South Campus cafeteria at CCNY had introduced me to the New York Federation of Anarchists. I would travel down from Yorkville where I had returned to live with my parents, to the East Village where I would join in the Federation's nightly shared meals. (It was my first introduction to organic brown rice and macrobiotics.[1]) In the emphasis on community and personal liberation I found the missing links between my previous [right-wing] libertarianism and the concerns of the left wing. For anarchists, revolution embraced desire *and* need, the individual *and* community. In its' emphasis on personal transformation as the starting point for revolutionary theory and practice, anarchism

[1] Some of the members of this 1966 group worked on *The East Village Eye*, one of the first 'counter-culture' rags. Through these Lower East Side/CCNY south campus cafeteria connection, I met Murray Bookchin, the Anarchist philosopher and theorist, and Alan Hoffman, poet and later contributor to *Anarchos* magazine.

resolved my conflict between the left's concern for justice and the libertarian emphasis on the individual. I took refuge in the tenets of anarchism.

All this time I'd been dragging my heels through school, strongly convinced I didn't belong there. Ultimately, however, I had my moment of liberation. I finally worked up the courage to ask my therapist if she thought I should leave home. I was surprised at the alacrity with which she gave me an affirmative! Armed with the approval of my therapist, and having turned 18 and become an adult legally, I finally left home, leaving behind the agony of what was in those days diagnosed as a profound identity crisis. The time was now the summer of '66.

The war in Vietnam was raging on, and the City College campus was not immune from the turbulence of resistance manifesting in the rest of the nation. Some of us had decided to stage a sit-in in the campus ROTC office, and it was through this event that I met Steve Brownstein. Steve and I began orbiting each other, in a very natural and unself-conscious way. There was the usual progression of a shared kiss, the going out on dates, and then the inevitable sexual embrace. My sexuality at the time I met Steve was frozen solid, the result of innumerable promiscuous and incompatible encounters. It took me a while to open up to him, but I finally became orgasmic. This entirely natural event was to have enormous significance for me.

In the summer of 1967 I dropped out of school midterm and made the trip to Haight-Ashbury[2]. I was spreading my wings in my new self-confidence and wanted to stay in San Francisco. When Steve later joined me, however, he convinced me to return back East. As we set out hitchhiking across the Southwest, I seemed to be always sick with something. First it was impetigo, and then I became cranky and fatigued, not knowing at the time that I'd come down with mononucleosis. We had actually crossed over the Mexican border when I realized I couldn't go any further and we instead put me on a plane back to New York.

Thus I became an invalid for a month—back in Yorkville with my parents. I spent the time in bed reading books. There was never a question of my going back to live with Steve—we were in the process of breaking up.

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[2] ...during the historic "Summer of Love."

Sometime in the fall—late September, early October—I had learned there was to be an SDS conference at Princeton University. I took a bus out. I arrived in the early afternoon when the second set of workshops was already in progress. Reading down the list, all of them seemed remote and intellectualized to my young woman's mind, except one—Women's Liberation.

There were more than 50 women crowded into a classroom. Some stood. Some sat on desks. I surprised myself with the urgency of what I had to say, and spoke up three times that afternoon. I remember that part of what I had to say had to do with sexuality as an instrument of intimacy; a 'barometer' was the word I used.

From the beginning I was ardent in my support for a women's liberation movement. My comments were designed/intended to be the connective tissue between the testimony of pain and confusion on the part of the women present, and the need for our own politics. The discussion during the workshop was unflaggingly animated, urgent. We knew we were onto something.

At the end of the workshop, Pamela Allen said she was interest in continuing the discussion and dialog, and would be having a meeting at her apartment in November. I eagerly signed on, and busied myself in the meantime with finding an apartment and getting a job—my first fulltime—as secretary to the curator at the Schomburg Collection of Negro History and Literature, then Jean Houston.[3]

Since my return from California and points west, another change had taken place in my life. I began seeing another psychotherapist: Paul Rosenfels. At the time, Paul worked out of an office on East 6th street that he called the Creative Counseling Service. It had been Steve's sister-in-law's persistent urging that had finally made up my mind. Fall was a propitious time for a change, and I had stopped claiming any new territory for myself in my work with Marjory Newstrand for many months.

Seeing me sitting mute in my chair during our first visit, Paul immediately threw down the gauntlet: "Well, it doesn't seem like you have any problems" "Wait a minute," I quickly responded, "I'm having trouble in my relationships." "Oh, that's different" he said, and thus began a meteoric relationship that would leave my life turned around 180

[3] I thought I must've been the only person in the City at that time commuting from the Lower East Side to Harlem to go to work, until I discovered that one of the younger librarians also lived downtown.

degrees. Paul's work was very much about the externalization of oppression. His insights possessed a surgical precision in identifying sources of pain and confusion, illuminating them and exposing them for their true nature. He constantly denuded the aggression or passivity of others, demonstrating how it was the limitations of the world as it was presently constituted that forced people into the disfigurement of mental illness. Rather than listening passively to my recounting of my relationship with Steve and the other Brownsteins, he listened for as long as he needed to—maybe one or two sessions—and then tore apart a relationship he felt was clearly undermine my mental health.

Over the years, as I moved in and out of mental illness I would learn the significance of Paul's contribution to human psychology: the discovery and identification of polarity—masculine and feminine specialization of character, *independent of gender*.[4]

It was both through the application of Paul's unique and pioneering psychology, and my need to summarize and make sense of my failed love affair with Steve that helped carry along a nascent liberation movement along with me on my personal trajectory of change and development. Without realizing it, I had begun work on a model: the continuity between personal growth and social transformation.

Finally it was November, time for our first meeting in Pam's East 3rd Street apartment. (At the time her husband, Robert Allen, was then a writer for the *Guardian*, a left-progressive weekly now defunct.) We sat in a circle in dim light on her living room floor. There were 13 of us, I recall. I remember one we seemed to drag, kicking and screaming all the way, into the birth of the women's movement. She insisted from the beginning that she wasn't clear why women needed a [political] movement to meet their needs.[5]

My relationship with Pam was strained in a way that ultimately took its toll on me and helped to estrange me from the movement: a difference of class and education. The familiar, repeated interaction between us, since there was little else intellectually, is that I would refer to the 'Viet Cong,' and she would, she thought, 'correct' me by saying the 'North Vietnamese.' (It wasn't until recently in a discussion with Mary Lou Greenberg

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[4] Click on http://eserver.org/gender/rosenfels/.

[5] I remember having what was then an atypical religious moment in pondering as to whether there was a science in predicting whether a group of our size automatically produces a 'doubting Thomas.'

(of the RCP) that I realized I'd been right to begin with: Vietnamese liberation fighters were recruited from and fought in both North and South Vietnam, and were commonly referred to as the aViet Cong.) [6]

We all agreed to continue meeting, and although the intensity of the experience makes me feel as though we met every week, I don't know if we in fact met any more frequently than once a month. There were a few meetings that stand out in my memory that I will attempt to recount: one at Roz Baxandall's, one in my apartment on East 4th Street, and one at Shulamith's Firestones'.

The one at Roz' apartment on St. Mark's Place took place while she still lived with her husband Lee.[7] There were a great many of us at this meeting, although it's possible that because her apartment was a good deal larger than Pam's, people were more visible and spread out. I seem to remember always sitting on the floor. I experienced a moment of enlightenment while there that hit me like a sledge hammer. When I used Roz' bathroom, I saw her collage of images from the suffragist movement. I emerged incredulous. "You mean we've done this before?" I'd known vaguely about women having won the right to vote, but I'd never realized what a struggle it had been until I had used Roz' bathroom.

Immediately prior to this meeting, I had written a letter in response to a vitriolic moment involving Shulamith Firestone, and sent it to all the women in the group. I used the image of a dagger [through the heart] to describe that impact she had on me, and I believed, the rest of the group. If it was discussed at all, it was only briefly—our discussions were highly theoretical. This would presage the ongoing differences I was to have with Shulamith. It was only later that I came to grips with the cleavage in the group she represented. For now, I was impressed with and dedicated to the dynamism of the group and cherished the community it created among us as a revolutionary ideal. My heart was broken later when I perceived the group splitting up. This theme in my

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[6] In the ensuing years, in my obsessive peregrinations back and forth to the West Coast, Pam and Robert put me up in their apartment in San Francisco. It was during a drive in their car that Pam talked of her on-again/off-again desire to write. I talked persuasively for her to trust herself and do it. "Free Space" published by Su Negrin and *Times Change Press*, was the result.

[7] Lee Baxandall was instrumental in beginning the Naturist movement in the States, embracing and expanding the principles of social nudity.

feminism was only to find continuity only later in my involvement in the lesbian feminist community.

The differences in the group had much to do with the different directions we saw the women's movement taking. As a revolutionary anarchist, I felt women's liberation to be inextricably tied to victories over racism and people's struggle against imperialist war, i.e. victory for the people of Vietnam. The theory that the initial and primary oppression was of men over women created much of the dynamism of the group, but had significance for me only when it resulted in the breakup of the group. NO theoretical debate would ever have been important enough to break up solidarity among women, especially as it was manifest in New York Radical Women, the name we had given ourselves.

I was filled to bursting with the erotic eruption we fondly look back on now as "the '60s." The imagery of Haight-Ashbury; my love-making with Steve; my association with the anarchist community in New York;[8] my work with Paul Rosenfels; my revelry with the street theatre group known as the 'Pageant Players,' not to mention my youthful idealism, led me to believe I would die in a revolution fought in the streets of the nation that summer[9].

The second meeting I have a distinct recollection of was the one that took place at my apartment on East 4th street, where of necessity we had to sit on the floor: there was no living room furniture of any kind. I remember Roz coming in with her clogs—I never remember her wearing any other footgear. It was during this meeting that we reached an understanding of the dynamics of the group and described it to ourselves. Our first go-round would be a sharing of personal experience. The second would be a discussion of that experience and our unvarying discovery that it was *common to us as women*, not particular to us as individuals. The third and final sharing was to extrapolate an analysis—a political analysis—of the significance of this discovery. Kathy Sarachild (then Kathy Amatniek) recalled the slogan used in the Chinese revolution during village 'consciousness raising' sessions, "Speak pain to recall pain." We had just formulated the primary tenets of latter-day *feminist* consciousness raising.

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[8] Including the *Anarchos* collective and Black Mask /"Up Against the Wall Motherfucker", also affectionately known as the "motherfuckers."

[9] …and it was in the streets of Chicago, while the Democratic National Convention was underway.

At this same meeting I remember an exchange between Kathy and myself. One of the beliefs we were struggling with is that our pain always seemed to be of a *personal* nature, that it was not blatantly political or sociological in the way that racial oppression was. That's when my model of liberation led me to the formulation that "the personal *is* the political." This was a major break-through for the group. Believing our dilemmas were private and exclusive to ourselves only kept us from the discovery of our common oppression as women. Now that our personal past could translate dynamically into the energy required for a social mobilization, we needed no longer tolerate the internalization of our own suffering. We would continue to use the group format we had arrived at to raise the consciousness of others. Only in struggle and solidarity could we overcome our oppression. We would continue to use the group format we had arrived at to raise the consciousness of others. Only in struggle and solidarity could we overcome oppression.

The third meeting was at Shulamith Firestone's on East 2nd street. It seems as though one of the themes that had woven its' way through our meetings was the similarity of women's liberation to the black struggle. I remember Peggy Dobbins and myself running a rap, in Black English usage, about our oppression, with Shulamith Firestone looking on in alienated disgust. With this distancing of herself, I felt the finality of her differences with others of us.

After that meeting, sometime in the early spring of '68, I perceived the group as lacking cohesion. The only thing left to do at that point for me, I decided, was to organize a second group. Judith [Ann] Duffett, who was later to write "The Secretarial Proletariat", had joined Radical Women.[10] She and I now embarked on this organizing project.

Our first meeting was in Manhattan's Kips Bay, in Judith's apartment. She would later go on to work at Ziff-Davis, where her observations formed the text of her article.[11] I had aroused interest in women's liberation among the women where I worked at the Schomburg Collection. They attended this first meeting. Alas, we had more questioning: why did there need to be a movement? Judith and I somehow slogged our way through

[10] At the time both she and her husband were in leg casts from a motorcycling accident they'd sustained slamming into the side of a truck.
[11] Included in the anthology edited by Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful*.

this first session, which went nowhere, but I was deeply discouraged, and also tired of the differences abounding in RW.

It was about this time, early summer/late spring, that I abandoned the infant movement altogether to make what would be for three years consecutively—'67, '68, and '69—my peregrination to the West Coast. I had already quit my job, now I sublet my apartment and joined up with a group of others to drive out to the West Coast.

I did *not* get the job I'd hoped for with the California educational system and, penniless, returned to New York City.

Upon my return, I'd discovered that Peggy Dobbins and others had been arrested for demonstrating at the Miss America Pageant. I took advantage of an opportunity to ride down to Atlantic City with her and a friend to see her attorney.

I also learned that the group—greatly expanded—had begun meeting at the East 11th street offices of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC). It was then that I first remember meeting Carol Hanisch. Carol was representative of the part of our group that had already been in civil rights struggles in the South. I believe Pam Allen had also come out of this experience, as well as Kathy Amatniek. I was told that Robin Morgan had joined the group Judith and I had formed. She was also in attendance.

My foremost feeling was one of being daunted by the sheer size of the group. By this time, I had become friends with Sherry Milner, whom I met through Murray Bookchin, the anarchist theoretician. I remember clearly her and me lying prostrate on the floor. A seemingly unaware Shulamith Firestone was standing nearby, virtually on top of us. I remember her saying to a woman words to the effect of we're going to do thus and so "even if we have to line them up in rows." As an anarchist, I then and there vowed to be her eternal enemy.[12] Never had the frustration and weariness from a year of struggle felt heavier than at that moment. That remained the one and only SCLC meeting I attended.

I *do* remember attending a meeting at Robin Morgan's home over the Kiehl Pharmacy of a group called WITCH—Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell." I did not, however, remain active in feminist politics at that time. Susan Silverwoman (then Susan Silverman), was a member of this group, and she is included in

[12] I've since sent Shulamith my regards through Carol Giardina.

the photo in the Morgan anthology of the Wall Street action, casting a spell over a corporate office.

Sherry and I became close friends and she represented yet another formative influence on my life. Sherry identified very strongly with being an artist and eventually inspired me to return to school to study [art].

During my third trip out to the West Coast's Bay area in the summer of '69, I made an attempt at settling down there, renting an apartment in Berkeley. I was dismayed at the selection of jobs a secretary could hold in this area: banks, brokerage houses, or law firms; besides which, working as a temp did not pay my bills, including the very large long distance phone bills for calls to New York. Early in '70, I had made up my mind to return to New York City for good, leaving behind my obsessive, illusory dream of the perfection of life in California.

Once again, I found work and an apartment, this time on 6th Avenue in the West Village. My recollection is that sometime the following year (1970), the gay liberation movement started. I remember reading an article about it in the *Village Voice*.[13] Through Susan Silverwoman, also an anarchist, I found out about Radicalesbians. Freespace Alternate U was also in existence at this time, and I remember an evening where a group of 'out' women came to speak. I was struck by how the affirmation of sexual love between women created exactly the revolutionary community I had been hoping for with New York Radical Women and did not find. I embarked on a three-year exploration of my lesbianism while living at 260 6th Avenue. The experience for me was more one of the movement and expansion of consciousness, rather than a sexual experience. Although I had sexual encounters with women and was with one woman for about five months, I never experienced a lesbian orgasm.

At some point in those three years I became disillusioned with the experience: the sexual experimentation many of the women were involved with was foreign to me. After a while, I didn't see that life in the gay subculture was any less conventional than a straight lifestyle culture. After three years, I quietly disengaged from the separatist

[13] Paul Rosenfels was to figure in the gay movement in the creation of the Ninth Street Center, a drop in center primarily for gay men, and the publication of his book *Homosexuality: the Psychology of the Creative Process*.

community, realizing instead that I was bisexual, an identity I embrace passionately and have struggled with for most of my adult life.

I got involved, briefly, in a women's bisexual group, but at that point in history, bisexual women were castigating each other because they were not exclusively lesbian, an internalization of biphobia that I like to think the bisexual movement has by now gotten over. At this time, because of this negativity, I realized the voyage of personal discovery and social transformation was not going to take place among bisexual women, so I once again dissociated myself. For the rest of my 20s, I led a reclusive, isolated existence until I moved to the East Village in 1976 to become part of the very beginnings of what would later be called the New Wave in music and art.[14]

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At the age of 54, I now reside in the City of Newburgh in a rehabilitated foreclosure homestead, and participate in the Newburgh renewal movement. I am active in St. George's Episcopal church in their multicultural growth program, Kaleidoscope; and I co-lead a staff workshop at the Omega Institute in community-building and revolutionary change.

[14] If scholars are interested, they can interview me on that development and the rest of my life since then, but here ends the biography.