

Roe v. Wade Celebration, January 22, 1987, Gainesville, Florida:
Introduction to Movie, "Holy Terror." Sponsored by Gainesville
Area National Organization For Women (N.O.W.).

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I am 45 years old, a graduate of Gainesville High School and the UF law school. In 1968, Carol Giardina and I--then 22 years old and 27 years old--founded Gainesville Women's Liberation, the first southern women's liberation group.

I was glad to be asked to introduce this film by the organizers of this event. Exactly one year ago tonight, at last year's Roe v. Wade celebration, I had committed--in my mind--a mild act of cowardice, and this would be a chance to correct it. One year ago tonight I sat through the entire Roe celebration with Judy Levy, Margaret Parrish--two of the founders of Gainesville's first abortion clinic--and their names were not mentioned. I wanted to get up from my table, seize the mike, and at least say the names of the founders, because I think our history is so important, and they so important in it. Judy said it would be alright if I did that, but I should do it with love, because she believed the burial of her work had been due--in part--to her own mistakes; she smiled at me in the warm, calm way she developed as she matured: I got stuck in that contradiction, couldn't work it through, and remained seated. In one sense, I knew I didn't know enough to get up and speak. I've done more homework since then. I feel more ready to speak now, but of course it's much easier to be invited to speak than to seize the mike. Interestingly, when one of this year's organizers called and invited me to talk tonight-- I said I would like to speak about Judy Levy, and she said, "fine," much to my surprise.

The movement is full of wonderful surprises, as well as sacrifices. So I'll talk a bit about Judy and then about abortion and radicalism.

I am mindful that on July 6, 1986, in this very church, Judy made her last public appearance, reassuring all of us about her impending death, and her very last public words were: "it's been a whole lot of fun kicking ass." Then on August 23, after her death on August 18, we met here again, and her son Tom, in his testimonial, said of her:

"I can't tell you how many times I watched her expend energy on movement stuff and bitch and gripe about not having any money...I used to rag Momma about not being a success. I said, how can you put forth so much effort and not be a success? I

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watched her through civil rights, through the peace movement; through the health center; through Birthplace. She's one of the most successful people I've ever known. I hope that I can live up to her level of success. Again, here she is again, she's doing it first."

That's one way to raise a son! Doing it first is the way radical women define leadership. And being more ready now to talk about Judy, I only feel like pointing out that the first clinic named after Judy is not in Gainesville, but in Melbourne, renamed from the Aware Woman Clinic for Judith Moskowitz Levy on July 31, 1986: by Patricia Windle, herself a founder of a clinic you will see in the Florida segment of this movie.

I feel like talking about one of the things Judy taught me, as one of her many acts of leadership.

In the mid-70's, the backlash against abortion baffled me. Before we won the abortion victory, the conservatives and men had focused on how we had too many children, were having sex just for fun, were overpopulating the world, etc. Abortion seemed one way to take responsibility, although not a fair or easy or cheap way. I was surprised at the uproar. I asked Judy about this: "why are we still having to fight the abortion issue: it doesn't seem to be a radical issue to me." Judy said, "Oh yes, it's a radical issue, because it's really about who will control the means of reproduction, women or men, people versus those in charge of the country." She went on, "Just as it is a radical demand for workers to want control of their production, when and how, for what purposes, how they are paid for it, she said, abortion is a demand for control of our special social labor of reproducing workers. When workers move to control their work, the radical demand of socialism looms." When we say we want control of reproduction--and want fair pay when we do contribute to reproducing the work force--we are really demanding that power change hands in as big a way as workers. Workers' demand for power leads inevitably to more democracy in the workplace. Women's demand for control of reproduction leads inevitably to more democracy between men and women--and in society--equalizing the power, in other words. People power is the link, Judy said, between the struggle for control of production and the struggle for control of reproduction. It's radical, alright.

So how did Roe v. Wade get into all of this?

Civil Rights Movement

The Supreme Court did not start the Civil Rights Movement. Black persons started it. The t.v. series¹ that began last

¹ "Eyes on the Prize," PBS.

night--while having defects--shows some of the whos, when, where, why, hows of the Civil Rights Movement and has enormous lessons for women--beyond the specific references to women's activism and rights in the program. It will be on every Wednesday night for the next 5 weeks, and I want to urge you to study it, because the Women's Liberation Movement has its roots in the American Civil Rights Movement; lessons, style, reliance on personal experience, radicalism.

Even the most mundane, establishment-oriented law schools routinely teach that important legal cases lag far behind the social movements that create them. The movie shows and hints at the fact that the great school desegregation case, Brown v. Board of Education, came after long struggle, not before it. Supreme Court cases bob along behind social reality like little rowboats towed behind huge gun-ships. They ratify reality. Thus, when we celebrate Roe v. Wade, we celebrate--not the legal opinion of 9 men in DC--but the thousands of women who forced a change so that what was once illegal became legal.

Women's Liberation Movement

When Roe v. Wade was rendered in 1973, it marked certain realities: 1) more than half of US women wanted the right, although more than half of US men did not; 2) NY state had already given into demands of radical women and instituted abortion in July, 1970. Women in NY State had interrupted legislative hearings to testify about their illegal abortions. 25,000 women marched up 5th Avenue in NYC on August 26, 1970. To appreciate the significance of the size of that demonstration, you have to realize that only two years earlier, women's liberation--women's issues--were not on the public agenda in the US at all; old-time suffragists were merely a joke. No women were on the streets together. It is impossible to comprehend how the Women's Liberation Movement burst on the scene in 1968 unless you lived through the 50's or 60's without it--or can study newspapers of the period now.

On January 5, 1969, Bill Hager in the Gainesville Sun was still showing the stunned reaction of many to the new movement: he had read the "Florida paper," written by Bev. Jones and myself in June of 1968, and had this to say:

"The end of man as we know him is coming up....As a few of us have suspected, they--the women--have been plotting behind a convenient skin-deep facade supplied by Max Factor and Helena Rubenstein....We may not know until it is too late what it will be like, or if any degree of mercy will be shown. "How could we guess," he goes on, "that Lady Clairol gloss covered up the mind of a revolutionary? Who was to realize that the light in those big blue eyes was a militant glint?"

Later in 1969, the Sun ran another story of bewilderment: women were meeting in groups of 7-10 in Gainesville, and didn't advertise their meetings. Women just showed up from "nowhere." Well, Roe v. Wade came out of meetings like that--all over the country. The Supreme Court didn't give it to us; we took it; we made history; they wrote us up.

Because it's not enough to say that men should take an equal share of the labor in our privatized domestic lives. We need a social solution; a drastic reallocation of resources--resources we make with our work. For example, if you've been following Doonsbury, it shows the pain of a family where both parents work and their child is in child care until 6 p.m. The childcare facility--private home of another overworked woman--is one where this "liberated" couple's child watches t.v. cartoons and eats Oreo cookies when he cries. He hates it. The parents are distressed, and in today's cartoon, they begin carping at each other--arguing about who picks up the child the most, and at what time. They can't solve the problem alone, because both are working and want to keep working; fairness in who picks up the boy from childcare doesn't solve their problem. Their plight raises the question--at least up to today--of a social solution; such as: A friend brought back photos of a wonderful Nicaraguan pre-school child care facility--in this war-torn country where necessities like toilet paper and tampoax have to be sacrificed for guns. The children were crowded into a place that looks like a shack by our standards--very crowded. But they looked great; they were wide awake, their eyes bright and attentive, being taught, excited, jumping up and down, many hands raised--no t.v., no Oreos. Government supplied child care. Quality time.

I know the Doonsbury couple would rather have their child in this electric environment. "Time is the room of human development," wrote K. Marx, arguing for reduced working hours. Time, he said, to the impoverished 19th century workers! We can get with that, can't we? It's not just higher wages, but time to shop, time to go to the doctor, time to cook and clean, time to spend with friends and family; time to read! The Doonsbury middle class parents are in agony because they don't have time to raise their carefully planned child in the quality setting they dreamed of that some "poor" Nicaraguan kids already have because their people-oriented government makes it a priority. In Nicaragua, Nicaraguan men and women making history for everybody, more in phase. A Nicaraguan Sandinista leader Carol G. met last year credits the US Women's Liberation Movement for some of her militancy.

What has been happening here in the US? Tuesday's Gainesville Sun reports about how the erosion of wages--lowering of wages--has been hidden by changing family situations. This study does not talk about the "feminization of poverty"--it talks about the impoverishing of the American worker--both our money

and our time. "For the first time in history typical American workers have gone more than two decades without any real increase in pay." A higher proportion of adult Americans are working than at any time in this century, a large number of whom are women whose husbands also work! On the average, each person's wage is less than it was a decade ago, and Americans are treading water because now two, not one, work outside the home. One reason we're holding ground is that we are having fewer children, and social security is also helping more to support non-workers at the other end of the age scale--retired. Having less children, social security supporting retired workers, and two worker families mask the erosion of real wages. It is fine, the author argues, for couples to have fewer children if that's what they want, but it is tragic for them and for our society if the reason is that they can't afford them. Since 1980 we have gone from being the world's biggest creditor--owed money--to being its biggest debtor--owing money. Our workers are no longer the world's best paid. He says that before we can figure out how to reduce the trend of impoverishing American workers, we need to face the fact that it has occurred! How do we face the fact? How do we study the implications of such a newspaper report? What is the duty of movement people to study, to learn, to make new proposals? To make more history?

This impoverishment is not, folks, a backlash against the Women's Liberation Movement! This is a backlash against American workers, male and female. When a family unit now has to work outside the home a total of 80 hours a week instead of 40 to stay in place, real wages are cut in half, really meaning that 40 hours of the family's labor are unpaid, by standards of the 60's; 40 hours worth of labor product is still there--produced in those extra 40 hours--but the benefit is not going to the workers, their family. Do feminists know where those 40 hours of extra labor are going? We should know that. Why, with our massive educations don't we know, or even know how to study it? Where to begin? When someone works for no pay, it is called slavery by the economists. The battle in the home intensifies where no one is there to do that work in the day-time. I'm not arguing that women return to the home, far from it, but that men and women work fewer hours--maybe a total together of 40 hours--20 each--outside the home. Lots of problems could be solved that way: That's how "time is the room of human development." Quality time.

It may be that as women battle more with men for equal work at home, while the profiteers continue to take an extra 40 hours a week from a two worker family, both will be able to see the problem more clearly and join hands, turn together, and face a much larger enemy than each other. While we fight the battle of our time and our wages, women must continue to do battle with men. When we earn 59 or 62 dollars for a man's 100, it takes his mind off who is getting that 20 hours per week of free work

from him; he's special like a chump is special. The corporation has the last laugh on him. This is one way that the demand for equal pay is a radical demand. It will strip bare the illusion that the only problem is between men and women, whites and blacks. Working Americans need the whole pie, not just a slice, and we need to stop battling with each other over slices. We have to teach men that. Make more history.

Reproduction

Katha Pollit interviewed a full-time right-to-lifer picketer in December and watched him carefully. He never yelled at men to be responsible for their sexuality as men went into the building where the abortion clinic is housed; he never yelled at older or less fertile looking women. He mainly yelled at young, attractive, and minority women. Men have no moral responsibility, in his mind. To him, we are "wombs on legs," Pollitt observes. Instantly we resent that characterization, but maybe we should think about the early, radical, pro-woman line, and say "yes, we are--in part, at least--wombs on legs." The pro-woman line looked at what we are and said it's not all bad, lots of it is good. We're not psychologically damaged, unable to hold jobs, unable to battle with men for our rights--we are oppressed, like black people. We're not against having children but against the prices we pay for them. We looked at how women used democratic decision-making in the home--rather than pounding fists and shouting out orders--and said, "Let's teach that to men--logic, negotiation, fairness." So maybe we should admit that in a fundamental way, yes, we are wombs on legs. Now, what are we going to do about it?

If we reproduce the very workers we work with, who fill the slots emptied by the retiring, the very workers who help to supply us with food, housing, shelter, medical care, highways, services, art, history, etc, why aren't we paid for the production of reproduction? Since unions constantly seek better wages, better conditions for workers--pay for their production--why not for women for reproduction production? Why are we battling just to get unpaid leave to take care of this physiological, productive--ultimately useful, function? Why shouldn't we be paid, and paid well? Slaves were paid for, after all, because of the value of their work. And then once we have the child, why is it our special responsibility, and the special responsibility of responsible fathers, to take care of the child until he/she can work and reproduce? American corporations take far better care of their machinery than they do of women who produce the workers who use the machinery. Taking care of walking wombs is seen as a "personal" matter, or a matter between wife and husband only, and often not even that. Remember our early slogan, the personal is political? Meaning that what we experience as individuals has a general implication having to do with power?

If Americans understood the stakes and could vote on it, wouldn't they vote for a 20 hour week for men and women, for terrific child care, adequate medicine, payment to a woman or to her family when she gives birth? Wouldn't people vote for a chance for the father to spend more time with his children? And if they really understood the contribution of the mothering function--reproducing the work force--wouldn't they pay for it whether the mother were married or not? Is the farm worker, the factory worker, the teacher, any worse a worker because her mother didn't have a marriage license years ago? I think Americans will get behind a radical program if we can stop being lied to. This kind of democracy is not on the agendas of the major political parties. But it's just what the corporate spokesmen on the right fear most. Those on the left who dilute pro-abortion demands, talk vaguely about choice, and sentimentally about children, and start worrying about the rights of cells and tissues, do some of the lying. We're the left in this country, like it or not, and we've got to get a grasp of the problems and solutions that people really want. Make history.

It's not enough to try to hold on to what we've got. We've got to start demanding again that men shape up. We've got to go for what we really want.² Teach men to go for what they really want and stop blaming us for their problems in the world. We have to have an independent Women's Liberation Movement to lobby the progressive forces--which are composed of both men and women--on women's issues. Men have to give up the corporate crumbs that make them feel superior like the smart fish gives up the bait. Men must be taught to go for the whole loaf.

We've got to start talking about the rich as well as the poor--all their specific priveleges--their cars, where they eat out, their vacations, their telephones and t.v.s in their bathrooms, NYC apartments that routinely cost more than 1 million dollars each, their clothes, their doctors, their private art. To the truly rich, all of us in this room are nothing but "crackers." And what about the overpaid, who are not classified as rich in this country? Why do 1.15 million men earn more than \$75,000 per year? Are they really worth more than the R.N. who makes \$19,000, the 40 hour a week secretary who makes \$14,000, the teacher who makes \$17,000? Is a corporate executive who earns more than a million dollars a year really worth more than the impoverished mother who gives birth to a child who will eventually pick up garbage at \$4.00 an hour? Are the people who sit and clip their dividends really worth more than the young

² "Going for What We Really Want," by Kathie Sarachild, in the book, Feminist Revolution, by Redstockings, Random House, New York: 1978. Available for \$8.00, postpaid, with censored section, from Gainesville Women's Liberation, P.O. Box 2625, Gainesville, Florida 32602.

person getting our lunches together at MacDonald's at a minimum wage which qualifies that young person as legally poor for a full-time job?

We need to raise the level of our struggle to demand more and more--not water it down, hoping that by demanding less and less, our little victories will not slide away from us. Equal pay for women is a good demand but it is not enough! We need more pay for the average workers, male and female, and more time away from work. Let's equalize the pay of the rich, with ours!

We need to think, study, learn, struggle, think some more, study some more, struggle some more, always learning. Some of us know that sacrifice is needed, and it's not an empty word; some of us need to sacrifice some of our grimmness, and learn to laugh again. Judy Levy joked in June about becoming a "hospice dropout." It's a lifetime's work, this movement.

Christen Lem sang at ERA rallies, "We'll never give up; we'll never give in." Some of us retreat from the struggle into personal solutions that don't work too well: cultural or scholastic feminism, half a marriage, or half a non-marriage; when we do this, we settle for what we never wanted. Some of us try to escape with alcohol, mental illness, religion, careers, even. Some of us fall with our hands on the plow.

But, Judith Moskowitz Levy, the movement will never give up; will never give in!