



The Lavender Menace

The Legacy of Lesbian Feminism

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Subject: History

Topic: Integrated; Women's Rights Movement

Grade Levels: High School; 11

Overview

This lesson covers the contributions of the Lavender Menace, or Lesbian Feminist movement, of the 1970s to the general Second Wave Feminist movement, as well as the limitations and downfalls of Lesbian Feminism.

Time: 50 mins

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Learn about the Lesbian Feminist movement of the 1970s.
- Understand the exclusionary nature of many social movements.

Essential Questions:

What was Lesbian Feminism/the Lavender Menace?

How and what did lesbian feminism contribute or detract from the ongoing women's rights movement?

Who did feminist movements, including Lesbian Feminism, include and exclude?

Standards:

CA History 11.10.7. Analyze the women's rights movement from the era of Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the movement launched in the 1960s, including differing perspectives on the roles of women.

History Framework, Chapter 16, 11th Grade, p. 420: On the social and cultural front, feminists tackled day-to-day sexism with the mantra "The personal is political." Many lesbians active in the feminist movement developed lesbian feminism as a political and cultural reaction to the limits of the gay movement and mainstream feminism to address their concerns. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, feminists promoted women's health

collectives, opened shelters for victims of domestic abuse, fought for greater economic independence, and worked to participate in sports equally with men.

CCSS W.11-12.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners *on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Vocabulary:

Lesbian Feminism: A cultural movement of the 1970s for the inclusion of queer women and their issues in mainstream feminist organizing

Lavender Menace: Later called the Radicalesbians, a political group that organized for the recognition of lesbian issues within the Women's Movement of the 1970s

Second Wave Feminism: Also called the Women's Movement, a political movement in the 1960s-1980s to further women's legal and economic rights, as well as their social position

Teacher Background:

The teacher should have some knowledge of women's movements (historical and contemporary), as well as Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (see <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mapping-margins.pdf>).

Materials:

- Internet-connected computer
- Projector
- Combahee River Collective Handouts
- Woman-Identified Woman Handouts

Instruction:

1. Slideshow (20 mins) and discussion (10 mins)
 - a. The teacher will show the [slideshow](#)
 - b. *Please note the slideshow includes lots of knowledge questions and discussion questions- give time for student participation before clicking to cue the next bullet point.*
2. Primary source analysis and discussion (20 mins)
 - a. The teacher will split the class into two groups.
 - b. One group will read "[The Woman-Identified Woman](#)" by the Radicalesbians (1970)
 - c. The other group will read "[The Combahee River Collective Statement](#)" by the Combahee River Collective (1977)

- d. Give 10 minutes for groups to read their documents.
- e. Each group should answer the following questions about their document and present their findings to the other group:
 - i. What is the goal of the group (e.g. Combahee River Collective or Radicalesbians) and the document?
 - ii. Who is intended reader of this document?
 - iii. What is the group's stance on feminism?
 - iv. What is the group's relationship with the larger Women's Movement?

Relevant Resources:

"1969: The Year of Gay Liberation." *1969: The Year of Gay Liberation*, New York Public Library, <http://web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/year.html>.

Burkett, Elinor. "Women's Movement." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2 Aug. 2016, www.britannica.com/topic/womens-movement.

Combahee River Collective. (1977). *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. Publisher: Authors.

Echols, A. (1989). The Eruption of Difference. In *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (pp. 203-234). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

"For Stanton, All Women Were Not Created Equal." *NPR*, NPR, 13 July 2011, www.npr.org/2011/07/13/137681070/for-stanton-all-women-were-not-created-equal.

Jay, K. (1999). The Lavender Menace. In *Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation* (pp. 137-146). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Lange, Allison. "National American Woman Suffrage Association." *History of U.S. Woman's Suffrage*, National Women's History Museum, 2015, www.crusadeforthetvote.org/nawsa-united.

Pascaline, Mary. "Voting Rights 2016: When Did Women, Black People And Native Americans Get The Right To Vote?" *International Business Times*, Newsweek Media Group, 4 Nov. 2016, www.ibtimes.com/voting-rights-2016-when-did-women-black-people-native-americans-get-right-vote-2440441.

"Radicalesbians." *1969: The Year of Gay Liberation*, New York Public Library, web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/radicalesbians.html.

Radicalesbians. *The Woman Identified Woman* [Pamphlet]. (1970). Philadelphia, PA: Know,

Inc.

"Who got the right to vote when?" *Aljazeera America*,
<https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2016/us-elections-2016-who-can-vote/index.html>.

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