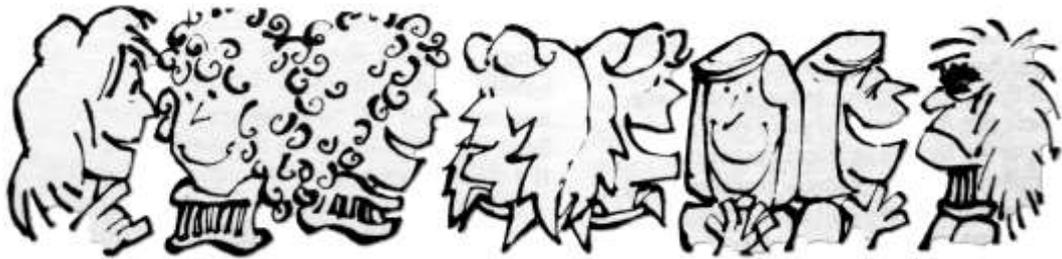


Liberating Histories

A testimony by Victoria Bazin

An important aspect of the Liberating Histories project is recording the experiences of actual readers of feminist magazines, **people like you**. This is Victoria's response.



Introduce yourself...

I'm Victoria Bazin. I'm the Principal Investigator for the Liberating Histories project. I was born in the US and my mother is American. We came to the UK in 1970 when I was five and then every summer, we would visit my grandparents and my extended family in the Catskill Mountains.

How/when did you first encounter a feminist magazine? How old were you, where were you living, who introduced you to the magazine/s?

I first encountered a feminist magazine in the summer of 1973 when I was 8 and when I was visiting my American family. My Aunt, my mother's younger sister, subscribed to *Ms.* and that was the first time I was introduced to a feminist magazine. It would have been lying around with the other newspapers and magazines that my grandparents took: *The New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *People* and the *TV Guide*. It was on the coffee tables of middle America and had quite an impact.

How did it feel, reading a feminist magazine for the first time?

Reading *Ms.* gave me an insight into what was going on with my mother's generation. It offered a model of a kind of fashionable femininity that I very much associated with my aunt who was at the time working as a freelance artist. Anything my aunt was interested in - I was interested in. I wanted to be just like her. I'm not sure if I actually read any articles in *Ms.* I was probably absorbing the images more than anything. I do remember those adverts - 'You've come a long way, baby'. This tells you quite a lot about magazines and the kinds of things that stand out.

Did you encounter feminist magazines through the women's movement, or the other way round?

I was too young to be in the women's movement and my aunt was an observer rather than an activist.

What features or aspects of the magazine(s) stand out to you most vividly/are most memorable? Did you have favourites? Dislikes?

It wasn't so much the magazine itself that was memorable but rather the arguments that the magazine stimulated. This was the era of ERA - the Equal Rights Amendment and my aunt was a passionate supporter but my grandfather was staunchly opposed. So there were rows about that but there were also rows about women's roles and more generally, about equality. I do remember that in the wake of those furious debates, we adopted what was called a KP rota. Everyone, with the exception of my grandparents, was required to take their turn doing Kitchen Patrol. This wasn't exactly a profound change and probably had more of an impact on my life than on my mother's generation.

How involved a reader were you? Were you a subscriber? Did you send in letters or listings?

I wasn't a subscriber and I didn't send in letters. I was too young.

Did reading feminist magazines influence your politics or daily life? If so, how?

Reading *Ms.* definitely influenced my politics. It was my first introduction to any kind of politics or at least the kind of politics that has an impact on your daily life. I could see that there was a connection between what people were writing in the magazine and how people were thinking and that perhaps, sometimes, what people were writing could change how people were thinking and living. That was very exciting.

As a reader of feminist magazines, did you feel part of a larger network or movement?

No – I wasn't part of a larger movement but I was aware of the debates and I was aware that things were changing.

Do you still read feminist magazines now? If so, are they print or digital?

I read a range of feminist magazines not only because it's now part of my job but also because I'm a real magazine junkie. I'm a big admirer of gal-dem but I still very much enjoy reading print magazines when I can get hold of them. Reading the project's print collection of magazines like Shocking Pink, Spare Rib, Scarlet Women, Red Rag, Mukti and Outwrite brings back the pleasures of reading a magazine.

Did your mother read feminist magazines?

I'm sure my mother must have read Ms. but I can't remember her doing that. She was much more interested in books and I think always felt and probably still feels that there's something quite ephemeral and superficial about magazines.

Looking back, how much impact do you think feminist magazines had?

Looking back, I would say that reading Ms. was really important. It showed me that things were different for my mother and my aunt's generation. They grew up in the fifties, in the American suburbs, they went to High School and they were expected to get married, have children and devote themselves to taking care of their families. They both fought against that but they both were, undoubtedly, shaped by that upbringing. I knew that it wasn't going to be quite the same for me and that I was lucky in that respect.

About the project

Liberating Histories tells the stories of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) through UK feminist magazines and connects these stories to women's activism today.

Want to tell us your story?...

We are collating stories of the women, like you, who read magazines like *Spare Rib*, *Red Rag*, *Outwrite*, *Mukti*, *Scarlet Women* etc. and the impact they had on their lives and attitudes.

If you would like us to include your story in our archive, [check out this page](#) on our website to find out how to get involved.