

UNTITLED

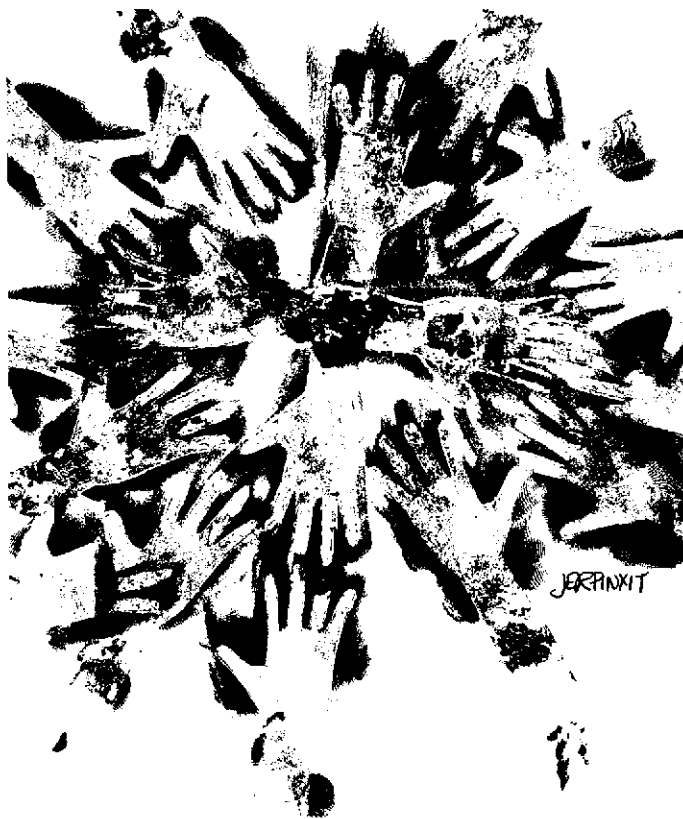
I was walking down the street minding my own business when someone honked at me. It was the guy from the marathon. After taking me home early from a preliminary evening of beer and a movie, he had more or less faded out of my mind, but there he sat, asking me to another movie the next night. Sorry, I said, I'm leaving tomorrow for two weeks in L.A. An awkward pause. How would I like to go to a Free U. Coordinating Committee Meeting. (A what?!) Sure. I liked him and I was leaving town for a while and why not? I'd taken several Free U. courses and so felt that I knew more or less what the whole thing was all about.

So he took me to my place so I could change my clothes. Everything was packed for the trip and so (perhaps sensing what would please him most and give my ego the biggest boost) I ended up wearing an improbable red dress and black fishnet stockings. Mainly my mind was on how to change my clothes with him standing in the middle of my single room, but that turned out really not to be so very hard after all. Then we went to his place to 'get acquainted'. We got very stoned and talked about psychodrama (a new thing then) and the groovy place I was going to live and next thing you know it was time (sadly, I thought) for the Coordinating Committee.

I remember clearly that Tresidder was serving corn fritters and bacon for dinner that evening, but the meeting I remember not at all, probably because I spent most of the time looking at my plate. Of course, since this was last summer, it was all about the Thoits and no Community Center Building and archtypically, as I learned, involved a discussion with Roy Kepler about non-violence and much money hassling. Nobody but Roy and my friend paid me much attention and I considered it merely a moment's pause in the evening's occupation. Then he asked me if I wanted to go to Confrontation with him. (To what?!) Oh, yes, I had once, somewhere, heard that the Free U. people got together after their weekly meetings to confront each other and work through the emotional conflicts which underlay so much of their arguments during "business hours." Sure. Why not?

"What a groovy house. Whose is it?" His girl friends's. Oh, great. But she was out of town and things had already started when we got there, so I merrily found a spare spot to sit, kicked off my shoes, and got all ready to watch. Somehow, though, the "hot seat" moved around to a guy I had known rather well quite a few months before. Radiating strength from my success with the guy from the marathon, I ventured a comment. Of course, someone latched onto it and, a relative stranger, I suddenly found myself summoned to move into the center of the circle. But nothing could touch me now (I must have been both drunk and stoned) and I complied--a regular fashion plate, someone said later, in red dress and black fishnet stockings, standing in the center of the room.

I told my old friend what I thought about his hang-up and he explained his rather hasty withdrawal from our relationship and we agreed to feeling resolved about the whole thing. But dishonesty is



not my bag, and I grooved on being the center of attention and so also admitted to an irresolved related problem that still made it hard for me to feel comfortable around him. Would I tell them about it? No, not really, I was working on it, but it did keep me from feeling free of the now long-dead entanglement. Why wouldn't I tell them about it? What was I doing about it? Why was I refusing to give anything to them?

I looked at the circle of faces, most of them new to me, some of them remembered as being unfriendly when I stopped by the Free U. office, some of them clearly jealous, some of them bored, some of them familiar from the marathon, some of them to become my friends, but not one of them yet known well or loved. In an unaccustomed burst of self-assertion, I finally told them, "Because I don't trust you."

Why, why, why, and then the guy who had brought me suggested that everyone who didn't trust the group (there turned out to be quite a few of us) get in a circle in the center and then the thing somehow broke up. As I tried to explain my reticence to a man I knew briefly and by reputation, a forceful girl cornered me and started to delve deeper into my distrust, when, to my amazement, the man I had been talking to said, unknowingly enough, "She can take care of herself." Even I began to believe it. Then the guy I was with brought me a cup of coffee and we sat for a long time and talked with people. Much too soon it was very late and I had to leave early in the morning, so he took me home. On the way, I fell asleep in the corner of his car, dreamy, happy, and more than content with this new fairy tale I had so irreversibly fallen into.

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