

Lucile's Involvement with TOPS

Click. Click. It was in the mid 1970's. Consciousness raising groups were springing up all around. One met in my home. "Click" was the term that expressed an "a-ha" insight and I was clicking a lot. My thought world was changing, but I couldn't then see the larger picture -- that with each "click" one more link in my developing feminist consciousness had fallen into place. I was giving birth to myself and a new understanding of what I had assumed was reality. Stunned by new concepts, I became obsessed with changing my own perspective. This meant unlearning a lifetime of socialization based on patriarchal assumptions, i.e. the system of institutionalized male dominance not only over wife and children in the family but over all of creation. Since no course of unlearning patriarchy was available in the credentialing institutions I devised my own home study course. I read everything I could find about patriarchy as a global consciousness. My specific interest centered on determining how major religions sanctified a prime feature of patriarchy, namely male dominance and female subordination. It was in this cultural context that I, at age 66, learned about and began attending the Theological Opportunities Program at Harvard Divinity School. (1977)

TOPS proved to be a one-of-a-kind gathering of dynamic women, primarily lay women, many intentionally seeking new insights. I found myself continuing with enthusiastic associates what I had formerly tried to do on my own. Amazingly, the vehicle for change became sharing our lifetime stories as they had been lived in a milieu where we had always been assumed to be subordinate to men. The result for me has been revolutionary, not only in my point of view but in my actions as well. I recall impetuously standing on my head at lunchtime one day in Rockefeller Hall. I had become even more acutely aware of the role religions play in undergirding patriarchy and I felt the need to turn the whole theological school upside down. I stopped celebrating religious holidays and celebrated solstice instead of Christmas. A new name took me. Lucile K. Schuck became Lucile S. Longview. Six years later I made it legal.

In this time of the second feminist movement when major emphasis has been on the liberation of women from subordination, TOPS, for me, has been an oasis for radical feminists and the work of deconstructing patriarchy and the religion that sanctifies male dominance. It has also been much more, in a social sense: a bonding of like-minded women into a supportive sisterhood community.

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