I've been interested in the history and theory of sexuality for a long time, but was afraid to speak or write publicly on the issue. I was afraid of inadvertently exposing myself and/or appearing ridiculous, and this shut me up. I assume similar fears have shut other women up, although it certainly hasn't stopped men who have been working on sexuality for years. Anyhow, being a member of the planning committee helped me to get over that fear and I hope that the conference does the same for women who participate in it. Once we start talking and thinking seriously about sexuality, women -- feminists -- will make great breakthroughs, I'm sure.

Ellen DuBois

I want to acknowledge insecurity as well as pleasure: the persistence of a grade school self that groups of women still bring out in me: the little girl who wonders who is best friends with whom, who's terrified of being left out. Talking about sex, if not false, is intimate. It turned me inside out at times.

Kate Ellis

Why this conference on sexuality? Because it asks us to look at the uncomfortable questions surrounding the issue. Most feminists in the N.Y. area support reproductive freedom. There is no controversy when CARASA draws the parallel between the struggle of White middle class women for abortion rights and the campaign of working class Blacks and Hispanics against sterilization abuse. Even the right to be lesbian (sorry Betty F.) is taken for granted. But when we talk about the possibilities for sexual pleasure under Patriarchy many of us, myself included, get nervous. While some of the most exciting theoretical work engaged in today explores this question, we still have no common vocabulary, no common commitment to the political importance of fulfilling our private desires. If not ready to resolve the problem, at least we will have the chance to reflect on the ways women have defined and experienced eroticism. When have we insisted on sexual freedom and when have we sacrificed it for other ends?--Judith Friedlander

Late at night in Fargo, N.D., ten degrees below zero outside, a farmer just jump-started my rental car, the "pro-life" women I spent the day with are all at home tending families. I summon up a split-screen in my mind. On one side, the Right-to-Life meeting I just attended at the Evangelical Free Church, on the other the last planning committee meeting I attended at Barnard and I wonder, "How can two groups of American women get together and have such different conversations about sex?".

Faye Ginsburg

It is exhilarating to look back over the past decade and note the changes in feminist thought and scholarly inquiry that make this conference possible. Each year we pride ourselves in selecting a theme for our annual Scholar and Feminist conference which is on the cutting edge of feminist scholarship. This may be a special moment in history, a feminist conference on sexuality which could not have been held ten years ago and may not have the same urgency or import five years hence.

Jane Gould