

## Roots of Grass

*CL/LL* started as, and still is, a grass-roots magazine. She is run by a collective of lesbians,<sup>9</sup> and no one has ever "owned" her, in any sense, and certainly not through monetary investment. There are only a few true collectives around anymore, and "collective" has taken on different meanings in different contexts. For *CL/LL*, collectivity means that consensus must be reached on any decision, and consensus means that everyone is willing to own the decision, even if it isn't her first choice. It's a slow process, but one that has served the collective well. Consensus shaped cohesion of direction and forced us to deal with our differences, and not just "register" them with differing votes. Consensus also prevented any one lesbian, or even a faction, from being responsible for a decision. Critics are frustrated when there is no isolatable target to blame, and it is true that collectives can find collectivity a useful shield at times, and this one has. But to the survival of the group, and thus the publication, I think the degree of protection provided by collectivity has been crucial. Horizontal hostility<sup>10</sup> threatens political activists and projects all the time; collectives can support one another and deal internally as well as externally with criticism better than individuals and hierarchies.

Using collective structure allowed us to learn skills, empower each other, and resist the trap of specialization that chains of command are built on. Although for the past five years or so new *CL/LL* members have had to learn the skills and methods of collective decision-making on the job (gone are the days when everyone was in a collective this and a collective that), the *CL/LL* collective sees the process as important to lesbian future, and not an anachronism.

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9. The *C/LL* collective usually numbers about five or six lesbians, although there have occasionally been a couple more (luxury!), and in hard times, as few as three. Collective members are named on the copyright page of each issue, so a pretty accurate guess at the stress level of the group can be made from adding them up.

10. *Horizontal hostility* is a phrase used to describe the effects of internalized oppression that lead oppressed peoples to "do the work of the oppressor" by cutting down leaders and generally infighting so much that nothing ever gets done to further the revolution. Naturally, then the white heteropatriarchs look blameless and uninvolved, while achieving their goals undisturbed.