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STRIKING FLYNT

Irene Moosen

The 38th floor of a 45-story office building on Century Park East in Los Angeles belongs to Larry Flynt Publications, home of *Hustler* magazine. The morning sun glints blindingly from the side of this awesome structure as the lunch hour traffic picks up its pace.

If Larry Flynt, *Hustler's* editor, had been in his office last Monday, he could have looked out of his window and seen the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade stage a protest and leaflet passersby below his office. If he had come down one of the six elevators which open onto his entryway, tipped his hat to the three guards who maintain a constant vigil over his business chambers, he would have received a poster with his own face shining up at him. He would have seen himself under the WANTED sign with the charge below his picture—"for inciting the violent rape and murder of women and children."

The Santa Cruz-based group traveled south on this first business day after International Women's Day to confront *Hustler's* publication of violent pornography and to discuss the First Amendment. The dozen women and two-man auxiliary who comprised the group held picket signs and talked with the press which gathered for the noontime demonstration.

The "Porn Machine" stood on the sidewalk, a conceptual monument to the powerful millions that *Hustler* represents: 1.5 million in circulation and millions in revenue. The machine is a black box with pictures from the magazine of naked women being sexually brutalized, and cartoons mocking such things as the Hillside Strangler and domestic violence. This black box is the foundation for a large gold phallus with an American flag, which waves back and forth atop the machine.

At 12:00 the street theatre began with three women lying beneath the Porn Machine, while others read scripted dialogue to the crowd.

The demonstrators discussed censorship and whether violent pornography breeds the acts that it depicts, as the group believes. The skit ended with several

women tearing up copies of *Hustler*, breaking eggs over them and dousing them with chocolate syrup. The group called upon people to destroy *Hustler* at the newsstands and to pressure vendors enough to discontinue selling the magazines. Nikki Craft, one of the organizers of the protest, stated: "*Hustler* has been tearing up women for long enough, now it's time for women to tear up *Hustler*."

The demonstration brought reluctant response from Flynt Publications. A press release was brought to reporters on the street acknowledging Preying Mantis' First Amendment rights and calling for the group to respect *Hustler's* First Amendment rights in turn.

The most vivid and perhaps most candid response was offered by Althea Leasure, Larry Flynt's young wife, throwing a copy of the latest *Hustler* at Ann Simonton, a participant in the demonstration, and remarking, "Read this. Maybe you'll learn something."

Jess Grant, one of the men supporting Preying Mantis, explained, "We're not calling for censorship. If we wanted a law, we would be in Sacramento. We want private individuals to see it and then communicate their anger and disgust any way they can."

"We're calling for corporate responsibility," said Nikki Craft. "Drug and automobile companies must prove their products are safe for the market before they are released; we ask Larry Flynt to prove that what he prints does not lead to acts of violence."

ACTIONS AGAINST *HUSTLER*

Preying Mantis Women's Brigade

At this time the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade and its active supporters take responsibility for the destruction of over 550 *Hustler* magazines on newsstands in the Santa Cruz area. Men and women have worked individually and in groups, as drivers, diverters and destroyers. Various techniques used were squirt bottles filled with black India ink, Verathane, motor oil and toothpaste; many copies had the first pages torn down the center. There were many "accidental" spills of coffee and Coca Cola over the publication. Red paint is also aesthetically appropriate.

These magazines were destroyed in memory of Cindy Lee Hudspeth, age 20—a victim of the Hillside Strangler, Kenneth Bianchi. They were destroyed in retaliation against *Hustler's* "joke" which aggrandized Bianchi. *Hustler* refers to her murder as "his latest accomplishment." Then goes on to state, "You gotta treat 'em rough. After knocking off a couple of bimbos the Hillside Strangler likes to kick back and relax with Dewar's Lite Label."

Hustler, Bianchi, and other mass murderers of women work in direct collusion with each other. The media's ability to mold mass consciousness and affect behavior makes the connection between violent pornography and sexual crimes against women undeniable. News accounts document the political atrocities being committed against women daily. Women must gauge their lives by the setting sun and in our community we are warned not to walk in public parks in daylight hours.

Now let us discuss freedom and 1st Amendment Rights. Larry Flynt maintains his rights to abuse and degrade women. He strips, binds and mutilates women to humor and entertain his male audience. He reinforces social hatred and malice against women. As he profits, women pay—with their dignity and their lives.

We support the 1st Amendment. We do not want official censorship. We demand corporate responsibility. Flynt's product incites the rape and murder of women and children. Any publication that panders to the idea that women are merely objects for sadistic mutilation cannot expect to be immune to the outraged response of women and men who know better.

We know that men and women across the country will join with us in the systematic destruction of *Hustler* through individual and group acts of civil disobedience. Store owners and distributors take no financial loss. All unsold magazines are returned to Flynt Publications with the message that we are fed up with his violence.

Flynt's call to violence has been directed against human beings; our call to destruction is aimed against property and objects that seek to destroy our bodies and our lives. As soon as Larry Flynt expresses concern for our safety as human beings, we will concern ourselves with the safety of his publication.

We recognize the importance of education and encourage people to write or call stores that carry *Hustler*, respectfully requesting the removal of this publication from their stands. We are currently compiling for publication a list of establishments that stock *Hustler*. Future boycotts of those stores are also planned. We appreciate notification of any store in your area that carries this magazine, as well as documentation of any additional actions against it.

Postscript by Nikki Craft: As a result of these actions, and at the time of this writing [1981], only one out of 18 stores raided has reported the incident to the Santa Cruz police. Six merchants have ceased to sell the magazine in their stores, four more are considering doing so. The Preying Mantis Women's Brigade plans to organize boycotts against any store that tries to press charges against our guerilla actions. Women in the brigade have managed to photograph some of the actions by pretending to be photography students. They are calling for systematic national destruction of *Hustler* on the newsstands in the hope that if enough community dissent is expressed over violent pornography, news dealers will be pressured to take the magazine off their racks.