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Foreword

by Robin Morgan

"With the moral chaos that surrounds us on every side, the corruption in the state, the dissensions in the church, the jealousies in the home, what thinking mind does not feel that we need something new and revolutionary in every department of life?"

So wrote the women founding a new feminist newspaper, adding, in defense of its name: "The name speaks its purpose. It is to revolutionize. It is radicalism practical, not theoretical. It is to affect changes through abolitions, reconstructions, and restorations. It is to realize ancient visions, answer long-uttered prayers, and fulfill old prophecies."

The sentiments are as timely as tomorrow, but the date was January 1868. The women were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. The newspaper was *The Revolution*.

It was impossible then, and it still is, to calculate the significance—in fact, the centrality—of the feminist media to the women's movement. During this contemporary wave alone (erroneously called the second wave when it's actually closer to the ten thousandth), the patriarchal media have pronounced the movement dying or already dead, every year, with tedious reliability, since 1969 (in 1968, they were busy proclaiming that the incipient movement wouldn't get born to begin with). Relentlessly faced with such premature death certificates, where would we be without the alternative—a media of our own? Paraphrasing Susan B. Anthony, Donna Allen noted, when founding the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, "Freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press."

In "mainstream" (for which read: patriarchal) journalism, it's a given that newspapers are the most ephemeral form of print communication, that yesterday's papers are, well, good only for wrapping fish. And print media (including books) in a feminist context carry a particular irony, since two-thirds of the world's illiterates are female. It's no wonder, then, that the poorest women in the so-called developing countries of the South cite "education" as their first longed-for priority, neck-and-neck with reproductive freedom—before nutrition, better housing, or economic relief. Perhaps it's because even in the industrialized world women had to win the right to education that we value our books and periodicals so. We certainly treasure them: attics, basements, cellars, and apartment closets often hide stores of hoarded feminist magazines and newspapers—the more delightful then, to have a twenty-year "sampler" of *Sojourner's* best, between book covers, for keeps. After all, feminist newspapers constitute a veritable "herstory" of the women's movement, wave after wave, and now country after country as well; would we know of the existence of a thriving Arab women's movement in the