ARCHITECTS OF THE THIRD CENTURY

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The imperative of the present is to integrate the struggle for greater humanization. To be more fully human is to share life, to respond to the dignity of ourselves and others, to be committed to the growth of one another, to develop and vitalize human community.

Preamble, Declaration of Interdependence.

PART ONE

The patriots assembled in Philadelphia two hundred years ago were equally concerned with the exigencies of their immediate political struggle and the vision of a free society thriving on our landscape without the fetters of arbitrary power. In their message of national self-determination, the tyranny of the British Crown was denounced and a glimpse into this new and democratic society was offered. The Declaration of Independence continues to provide a theory of human liberation as revolutionary in content today as it was in consequence in 1776. Since the time of Abigail Adams, women have embraced the promise of this historic document and puzzled over its applicability to them. Their struggle for social and political equality has been infused with the founder’s zest for freedom, investing their cause with the same belief in the power of solidarity to move human events.

Despite the obscurity of much political history about women in the United States, American feminism has had a continuous record of outrage and courage in the face of social and legal disability. A veritable chorus of women, over the many decades, has rung out in support of their entitlement to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Recently, the leadership of eleven women’s organizations met in the historic city of our nation’s birth, Philadelphia, to review the question of women’s role in the commemoration of the bicentennial. The consensus was reached that such a celebration, where half the population remained outside of the social and political life of the nation as equal partners, was not an occasion of retrospective satisfac-

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