

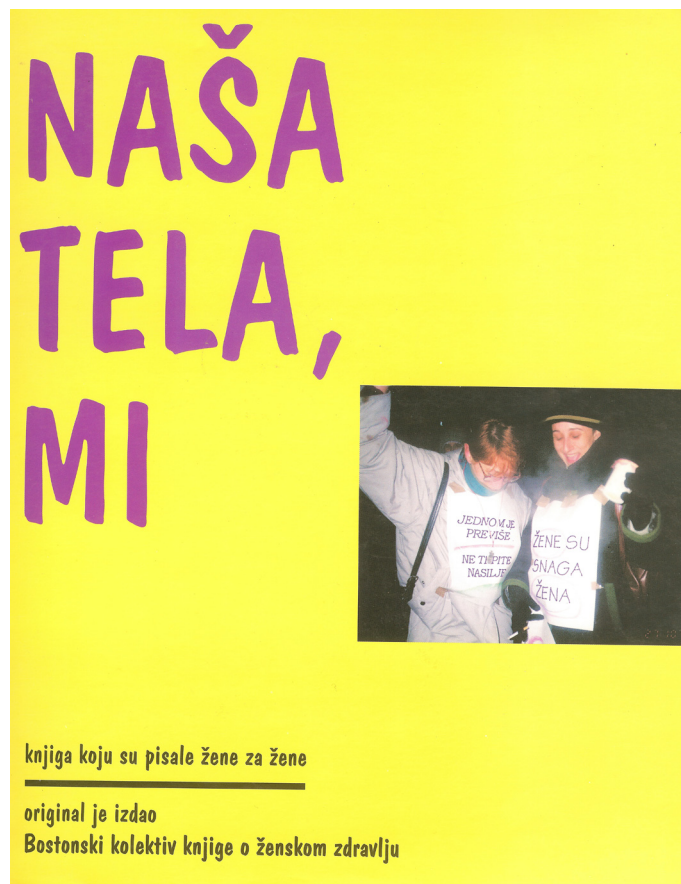
# Naša Tela, Mi

## Our Bodies, Ourselves

*Our Bodies, Ourselves* is a book that we have anticipated for a long time. It is the first published text and the first source of information available in Serbian language that deals with woman, woman's body, and woman's health. It has been written by women and they dedicated to other women. This book should enable us to get to know ourselves, as well as to start exploring ourselves, to discover the possible choices and opportunities for protecting our health. It is not a medically orientated book, but it does put emphasis on women's health by introducing the perspective of what are the things that we can do for ourselves and for each other, all by drawing the strength and the energy from our everyday experience.

The aim of this book is to provide information about women's health, to make the different female experiences 'talk' by making it available for as many women as possible and empowering them to take the full engagement in the care of their bodies and their lives, to encourage women to fight for advancement and progress in the health security system, to support both women and men that are working on the restructuring of the existing health system and the system of medical security in order to create the society in which health will be a right not the luxury and to give way to a society without gender inequity.

For a long time, it has been presumed that men's and women's health differed due to men's and women's biological differences. This perspective defines women's health strictly through the family and the society of the existing culture,



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through the tradition and the medicine, in which the key decision-makers are men. So far, the concept of women's health has been (and still is) closely related to pregnancy and child-delivery. Most women accept the state of ill health as though it was a prize of a lifetime and consider themselves healthy for as long as it is required by their socially allocated role. Millions of women all around the world live their lives suffering from bad nutrition, chronic conditions of reproductive organs and many other diseases. They tend to neglect the signals that their bodies are sending them until they are no longer able to get up in the morning, perform their everyday duties and look after their families and households.

The knowledge about women's health allows us to better understand women's needs as well as women's fears regarding their needs. The feminists dedicated to the problem of women's health are devoted to the fight demanding that the attitude of treating women as men of a different packaging should cease, for that is definitely something that we are not. It is the reason why it is not sufficient to merely collect the problems regarding women's health and women's health safety, but these problems also need to be further analysed from women's perspective. It is obvious that health is determined by gender, and that the gender discrimination does influence health. The issues such as the male aggression, the poverty and the less-paid jobs, the responsibility pressure brought about the role of a mother and a housewife and so on are all undoubtedly the factors that have a large impact not only on the physical integrity of a woman, but also on the control she exercises over her life, her chance and her right of choice.

The authors of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* are women. They are the feminists from the United States of America who, thanks to their enormous energy and devotion to women, approached the task of collecting and writing down the medical facts, the significant information and the necessities drawn from the female experience. This book

treats the concept of woman's health as a continuous process that requires to be constantly worked on and that is indeed constantly worked on. Hence, the text is regularly being updated with new data and modern approaches, which should provide all women with worthwhile information about their bodies, their health and their rights to health safety. Another aim of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is to induce each one of us into the thinking and taking the initiative for active participation in the processes of determining and changing the current reality regarding this issue. The book emerged as a result of the enduring and devoted work of a large number of women from Boston Women's Health Book Collective together their fellows from the medical as well as the non-medical circles. The book had several editions and got translated to a number of international languages.

Summing up their work, the authors wrote: "Being feminists we feel strongly bonded with all women. We appreciate the solidarity that the women from different countries and different environments express when they meet up and when they listen to each other and share their experience. We believe that feminism as a political perspective needs to jump over and by-pass all national boundaries and to devote itself to all kind of problems that affect the lives of women no matter where they are. For the issues like denial of reproductive rights, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment at work or in the street, racism, sexism, disclaiming of lesbian rights, threats at workplace, economic exploitation, and war horrors do not respect the legal borders of a State.

The translation and edition of this book, that for the first time appears in Serbian language, has been brought about by the activists from five different women's groups. These women invested their enthusiasm, their enormous will and work in order to bring the text closer to the women from this linguistic area. The following women Sunčica Vučaj, Tanja Drobňak, Milica Minić, Dušanka Vučinić, Isidora Jarić, Slavica Stojanović, Lepa Mladenović, Stanislava Otašević, Tanja Labus, Bobana Macanovič and Violeta Krasnić have tried to give their

contribution by providing translation, editing and technical arrangement of the text, or by supporting the enlargement of knowledge and by encouraging women to bring more security and hope into their lives. We want to generate further reflection and change of attitude, so that the activities and the activism of women may influence and alter the current state of affairs.

We hope that you shall enjoy reading this book and we invite you to call us, write to us and share your experience and participate in the realisation of the following editions of this book, which will allow us women to replace the uncertainty by courage.

And do not forget that women write books like this one and they dedicate them to other women.

Stanislava Otasevic

Translated by: Maja Sotra

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