

Feminism: Not Just a Female Issue

Sarah Black
Guest Writer

The impetus of this article lies in the reactions to feminism that I have observed here at Guilford. To be more specific, it stems from one particularly incident.

I was taking, with a friend, about a project relating to feminism that I was to be presenting to my IDS class. He grunted knowingly and replied that he understood feminism and proceeded to equate the female liberation movement with male bashing.

Unfortunately, I have discerned this attitude among other men here, too. Now, I consider myself to be a feminist, and I do not hate men. Indeed, none of the other women that I know who are feminists hate men either. The problem here seems to be a singular lack of information.

To begin with, let us examine the underlying beliefs of feminism. The American Heritage Dictionary defines feminism as the "advocacy of the political, social, and economic equality of men and women." It is, perhaps less than eloquent, but it touches on an important idea — namely that feminism is not a fight for female supremacy, but rather, the struggle for female equality.

Although there will always be women who use the feminist movement to legitimize their own sexism, it is important to remember that this is not the stance of most people involved.

Another frequent misconception that I have found here at Guilford about the feminist movement is that only men are capable of being sexist.

From my own personal experience I know that for every male chauvinist there is a female one, too. On the surface this can appear to be an oxymoron. However, it is not. There have been countless occasions that I have been told by other women that I was not capable of doing something because I was a woman.

The flip side of this errant idea is the belief that only women can be feminists. This is not only false but damaging to the movement as a whole. It is my opinion that the only way to achieve complete equality with men, is to work with them. Without mutual cooperation the ideal of equality that the movement hopes to achieve will remain a dream.

Men have a stake in the feminist movement also. If the movement succeeds, it will liberate men from stifling gender stereotypes, too. Society will no longer demand that a man behave like Tarzan and a woman behave like Jane. Men and women will be judged on the basis of their personality and abilities and not by their sex.

Men, like women, have been entrapped by the Cult of Domesticity. This philosophy suggests that men must be all powerful, aggressive and dominating providers. The ability of men to escape this stereotype hinges on the ability of women to free them-

selves from their corresponding stereotype. Therefore, it is safe to presume that men have a direct interest in seeing the female liberation movement succeed.

It is galling that in a country that professes to be a bastion of freedom that I, a tax-paying American citizen, should be discriminated against because of my gender. It sickens me that my movements are limited — I cannot go out to a restaurant at 10 p.m. without fear of sexual harassment, or worse, rape. I am told, by the media, that if I am raped it is my fault because I was wearing a short skirt or, God forbid, had flirted with the offender.

The mere idea that I am somehow inferior to men because of my sex is not only offensive but ridiculous. Yet the point of this editorial was not to catalogue the crimes committed against me as a woman, but to point out that the male perpetrators of these offenses are hurting themselves, too.

Feminism, if successful, will liberate both males and females from constricting and debilitating gender stereotypes. I will briefly indulge myself in a cliché and say that I hope that one day people will not be judged by their gender, but by, in the famous words of Dr. Martin Luther King, "the content of their character." Yet this dream will remain just that, a dream, if men and women do not cooperate with one another to combat sexism in its every form.

Cambodia

> continued from page 2

overthrowing the Khmer Rouge and resisting the Vietnamization of the Cambodian people.

Finally, after 21 years of insurrection, genocide, and war, the rightful ruler of Cambodia Prince Sihanou has returned to his battered country. With the announcement that free elections will be held in 1993, a real hope for democracy has finally arisen in Cambodia.

However, the dreaded Khmer Rouge have returned to the political scene. These murderous self-proclaimed nationalists, supported by the People's Republic of China since the earliest days of the civil war, have demanded a position in the new coalition government that will rule the nation for the next two years.

Pol Pot, the eternal villain, is back with his blood-drenched cronies. The people of Cambodia will never forget the atrocities committed in the name of Khmer Rouge, and Pol Pot's group is still very much alive. Reports from the countryside state that the Khmer Rouge have stockpiled weapons in with certain backing from China, would have a relatively simple time of overthrowing the disorganized national forces.

Instead of allowing the Khmer Rouge to regain their power base in the current disorganized political arena, the people of Cambodia must support the efforts of Prince Sihanouk and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front to suppress these butchers. Peace must be allowed to take hold in Cambodia before being prematurely halted by the resurgent Khmer Rouge.

If the hopes of the Cambodian people for their first peace since 1970 is to become a reality, the democratic forces of Cambodia must unite to crush the Kmer Rouge before the killing fields again dot the Cambodian countryside.

Vegetarianism and feminism mix well

> continued from page 3

undigested, rotting meat is found in surprising quantity in our intestines after we die. Nor is meat necessary for strength. In fact, studies have been done in which vegetarian athletes have shown longer physical endurance under many conditions than meat-eating ones. Nonetheless, meat-eating has come to symbolize power and masculinity in our society.

"My becoming a feminist had seemingly little relationship to my vegetarianism... now I understand how and why they are intimately connected..." (paraphrase from Carol Adams). When I began studying feminism, I began to realize how dependent meat-eating and sexism are upon each other. And how they bring with them racism, classism, homophobia, and other systematic subjugation of what is considered "Other" than the norm. And this is not a new concept.

Women in feminism have been connected with vegetarianism since at least the 1800s, and can perhaps be traced back to a prehistoric civilization in which a vegetarian diet was the norm, and in which "survival of the fittest" could have implied a strength to feed, nurture, and heal, rather than a strength to dominate over and to kill.

Our participation in the food chain requires us to use this intellect we claim differ-

entiates us from non-humans to realizes that we do not have to eat animals, and in fact are degrading ourselves and our environment by doing so. We are assuming that non-humans, by definition, should be controlled and used for our purposes precisely as a result of their differences from us (they are not sentient, they do not have souls, whatever).

This type of "Otherness" thinking makes it easy for us to subjugate whoever does not fall into the "normal" human category, which is, realistically, the white male.

Also, accepting this type of abuse, torture, and violence toward non-humans facilitates its acceptance toward humans. There are many connections to be made between meat-eating societies and their violence within society. A common justification battered women give as to why the husbands beats them is that they failed to put meat on the table.

I see a link between systematic oppression on a human level, and systematic oppression on a non-human level, and I don't think we can speak of global liberation while ignoring the suffering on our plates.

Whether or not you agree with my position, it seems that given the many and varied reasons for becoming a vegetarian, the defense of one's dietary habits would be more appropriately left to the meat eater.

FURTHER READING

Environmental and health issues:
Diet for a New America. John Robbins.

Animal rights:
Animal Liberation. Peter Singer.

Feminism and vegetarianism:
The Sexual Politics of Meat. Carol J. Adams

Writers Needed
for death penalty forum
Contact:
Chris Ward x3293

Corrections

In the interest of getting the story correct, *The Guilfordian* compiles corrections of errors in previous issues in this space. *The Guilfordian* regrets all errors that happen.

In the Nov. 8 issue, *The Guilfordian* inaccurately reported that the Justice and Policy Studies Department supplied the highest percentage of A's and B's among the departments on campus. JPS does not rank as the highest provider of A's and B's but is one of the highest.

Also in the Nov. 8 issue, Heinz Seltzmann's phone number was incorrectly listed in the computer services announcement. His phone number is ext. 2339. Also in the same announcement, Kim Johnson's number was incorrectly listed. That number is ext. 3976.