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# Men in The Feminist Struggle

bell hooks

Andrea Dworkin

John Stoltenberg

There can be no free men  
until there are free women...



## AN INTRODUCTION

This is a brief collection of writing on men and their participation in feminist/anti-sexist work that I have found thought provoking and motivating. I hope it will be useful in creating dialogue among men and, more importantly, inspiring courageous and effective action to confront male supremacy.

What I have found powerful in these selections is the urgency, the immediacy. I have been what could be considered a "conscious man" for a few years now, aware of some feminist issues and theories, attending events and demonstrations, even reproducing and distributing literature of that perspective. And all the while, playing out my gender role in so many ways: being needy and dependent in relationships, not returning the intimacy and emotions offered to me, sexualizing my friends, and offering less to friends who didn't get my romantic/sexual attention, supporting abusers over survivors, making and laughing at sexist jokes, advancing sexually without establishing consent- having to be told "no" (how many times have I done this with some one who was not confident enough to stop me, I'm not sure.)

So many of these things I'm becoming more able to identify, and it still seems to take a smack in my face to open my eyes sometimes. I still find myself having the urge to claim

that I'm not as bad as "those other guys." But I'm beginning to understand that even if that statement were valid, or worthwhile (and most comparisons aren't) all it really does is re-affirm my complicity to those whose lives might depend on my ability to do something more than make excuses for myself. Anti-sexist work is what might the difference between safety and violence, empowerment and fear, for a group of people who make up HALF of the human population. Every time, every second you ignore sexism and patriarchy is a stab in the back to a sister, a friend, a mother and to every child in this world who is forced through our socialization process.

I don't mean to oversimplify this message, and I know that my words may be bigger than my actions. But I want to give this message the urgency it deserves.

Our privileges are weapons of mass destruction; it's time we learn to disarm ourselves.

Most of the writing included maintains the language of the dominant culture perspective that there are two opposing gender roles in human society. Understanding that there is an infinite ranging spectrum of gender and sexual identity is an important part of dismantling the socially constructed roles that we're caged into.

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This essay is from a book titled *Transforming a Rape Culture*. There has been some controversy about the "civil rights" approach to feminism that Dworkin is known for, and the backlash that anti-pornography legislation has on, queers, transgender people, British/B&M, sex workers. Dworkin is not an anarchist, yet I feel this essay conveys a strong, inspiring message for those with opposition to all forms of oppression.

3 "Feminist Activism and Male Sexual Identity" by John Stoltenberg  
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FEMINISTS LONG FOR MEN TO HEAL... WE DREAM OF A WORLD FULL OF MEN WHO COULD BE PASSIONATE LOVERS, GROUNDED IN THEIR OWN BODIES, CAPABLE OF PROFOUND LOVES AND DEEP SORROWS, STRONG ALLIES OF WOMEN, SENSITIVE NURTURERS, FEARLESS DEFENDERS OF ALL PEOPLE'S LIBERATION, UNBOUND BY STIFLING CONVENTION YET RESPECTFUL OF THEIR OWN AND OTHERS BOUNDARIES, SERIOUS WITHOUT BEING HUMORLESS, STABLE WITHOUT BEING DULL, DISCIPLINED WITHOUT BEING RIGID, SWEET WITHOUT BEING SPINELESS, PROUD WITHOUT BEING INSUFFERABLY EGOTISTICAL, FIERCE WITHOUT BEING VIOLENT, WILD WITHOUT BEING, WELL, ASSHOLES.

STARHAWK

FROM HER ESSAY "A MEN'S MOVEMENT I COULD TRUST"





A rape devastates everything that a womyn and a community depend upon: a sense of safety, integrity and trust. For Kevin, everything he depends upon will also change forever. If, in the face of this, he acts with compassion, integrity and is honest with others about what is in his heart and mind, then we may after time begin to trust him once more. But there will be no business as usual, no matter how many conferences he organizes or how much work he does for Native sovereignty or the forest. We believe his own actions have made him a liability, which he will continue to be until he accepts full responsibility. Responsibility means understanding exactly how rape affects a life, how it feeds the system, why it is wrong and how to prevent it.

Kevin is a tall, slim man with broad shoulders, a light olive complexion, brown eyes and long, wavy, dark brown hair. He may cut his hair off and sometimes he wears glasses. He is recovering from a broken hip and an injury to his right knee. He wears Carhartts with handsewn patches. He carries a handmade tan canvas bag filled with tinctures, salve and Bach flower remedies. He came from Missouri, has hung out in Eugene, Portland, worked with Forest Action Network and Native sovereigntists in BC. Most recently, he organized a West Coast tour of Native sovereigntists. He does not readily answer personal questions and can be subtly controlling, and at times pushy, when he doesn't get what he wants. He has an alpha male vibe. He knows all the right spiritual and politically correct lingo to make it sound like he is speaking from the heart, but the words are not reflected in his interactions with people. He loves to talk about patriarchy and how he is taking it down.

We ask communities that he may visit to not compromise in their defense of womyn's safety anymore than they would in defense of the Earth. Like the web of life we fight for, we are interconnected and a harm to one is a harm to all. If your community decides to harbor this healing sex offender an important action to take might be to confront him if he doesn't inform the


community in an organized way. Let him know he is being watched and any oppressive behavior toward womyn will invoke a very serious, immediate and collective response. Although we realize this article will create tension within certain communities and will damage Kevin's reputation, we

sincerely believe that an organized and informed community is safer and more cohesive than one that is left in the dark by rumors and half-truths.



## Men in Feminist Struggle—The Necessary Movement

bell hooks

 THOUGH CONTEMPORARY feminist movement continues to serve as a catalyst enabling many women to transform our lives, providing new paradigms for change in how we think about gender and how we act, it is obvious that the vast majority of men remain unmoved by feminist thought or action. Much of the feminist theory addressing men specifically fails to creatively revision and reconceptualize masculinity. There are no books that adequately serve as maps providing males of all ages with a feminist education by explaining what patriarchy is, how it works, and why they should be committed to a feminist movement that opposes sexism and sexist oppression. Male advocates of feminist movement have not made educating masses of men in feminist thought a central political agenda. This is one of the major failings of the contemporary men's movement.

The earliest writings of the men's movement expressed far more concern with dismantling patriarchy and eradicating male domination of women and children than more recent work. There is a sharp contrast between the early collection of essays *For Men Against*

*Sexism*, edited by Jon Snodgrass in 1977, and the more recent book by John Stoltenberg, *Refusing to Be a Man*. While both men introduce their work by talking about being challenged by individual women to critique male domination, Snodgrass's language is deeply political, while Stoltenberg emphasizes the personal. In the first book, there is always the recognition that men involved with feminist movement must continually critique their motivation, strategies, etc. This emphasis on critical self-interrogation is absent in recent writings from the men's movement. Today's men's movement is much more self-congratulatory.

Without perceiving himself as in any way disloyal to the men's movement, Snodgrass could write: "To understand my own reaction to the women's movement I read feminist literature and searched for materials written by men. . . . I continued my search for a meaningful men's group and helped form the Los Angeles Men's Collective in October 1974. In my practice I heard the men's movement criticized for being 'subjectivists,' 'individualistic,' and 'bourgeois.' I also heard radical males criticized for being 'masculine-identified' and 'dogmatic.' Both criticisms seemed correct to me." These criticisms resonate as I read again the introduction to *Refusing to Be a Man*, wherein Stoltenberg writes: "I count myself part of the struggle for women's equality for reasons that are intensely personal—so personal, sometimes, they can't be glibly declared." Passages like this one are not aimed at educating masses of men about the significance of men's role in feminist struggle. Though Stoltenberg has been for some time a powerful advocate for feminist causes, his writing hints at the kind of estrangement from the political task of feminist education that is potentially the most powerful contribution men can make in feminist movement. And Stoltenberg represents the radical edge of men's movement. The aspect of the men's movement advocated by males like Robert Bly rarely addresses the issue of dismantling patriarchy. Instead, the focus of this branch of the men's movement seems to be more on the production of a kind of masculinity that can be safely expressed within patriarchal boundaries. It emerges more as a critical response to feminism than as a critical commentary on patriarchy.

## An Internal Action by the Vaginal Liberation Front

by Pangaea and Opal

Kevin Kunzler, otherwise known as Huckleberry or Huck, came to Olympia, Washington, from Bella Coola, British Columbia, about two months ago. A week before he was supposed to leave, he became physically involved with a womyn here. They verbally discussed sex but decided not to go that far. She soon became uncomfortable with his constant visits and told him so. He confessed that he had issues with womyn, that once, when he was 16, he had raped a girl. He told her he was healing from that. One night there was a party that involved alcohol and nakedness. During the party, she tried to explain to him that she didn't want to be involved with him anymore. He told her that she was drunk and not making any sense. She left and headed out to her cabin. She was barely conscious: fatigued and under the influence of alcohol. She remembers only that he climbed into bed with her. He penetrated her, shattering the boundaries she had set when awake and sober, violating her while she lay nearly senseless and powerless. If sex had been money, it would have been said that he stole it. Furthermore, he broke trust and treated her as a pleasure object, not as a multi-dimensional, incredible person.

Several days later, he became aware of the full extent his betrayal. Kevin awoke, at three a.m. in his tiny cabin, to a cacophony of voices. Thirteen figures, mostly masked, surrounded him. The womyn he had raped threw a cup of menstrual blood on his head. She directed what followed, secure, in the power of the group, to face her rapist without fear. It was a poetry slum of rage and resistance. We spoke in turn about our anger, then our pain, then our hope for his healing. When he protested that rape was not a violent act, she punched him in the face. We chose not to do this in the daylight because we wanted him to fear. We did this so he would know what it was like to be naked in the dark and vulnerable. We also acted because we will not tolerate rape as a community, and because he was leaving for Big Mountain the next day. We repeatedly asked him how we could know that he wouldn't do it again. He had no answer.

Kevin's current feelings about his act are a mystery to us. In the first email he sent after the act, he wrote: "I raped a woman. That was absolutely wrong, there are no excuses." A few days later, he was convinced that what had happened was a simple "drunken mistake." In his most recent email, he wrote, "I have raped, but I am not a rapist, because I acknowledge I've done wrong and am changing it—and that isn't justification. I still have done wrong. I have forever changed [the womyn's] life. I wish for a circle—in the light—without masks. I am afraid for my life and not because I might take it." Most of the email, however, was dedicated to explaining how violated

he felt. He told us our night action would make the oppressors proud. He shows awareness that he has done wrong, but has never shown that he understands what this action means to her life or to the community he violated. He speaks the right words, but do those words come from his heart? We are not content with a promise because his act was a broken promise of the worst kind. Kevin was our friend. He is more than just a cardboard cutout villain. But he and all men need to know that we will not tolerate violation and will no longer be silent.

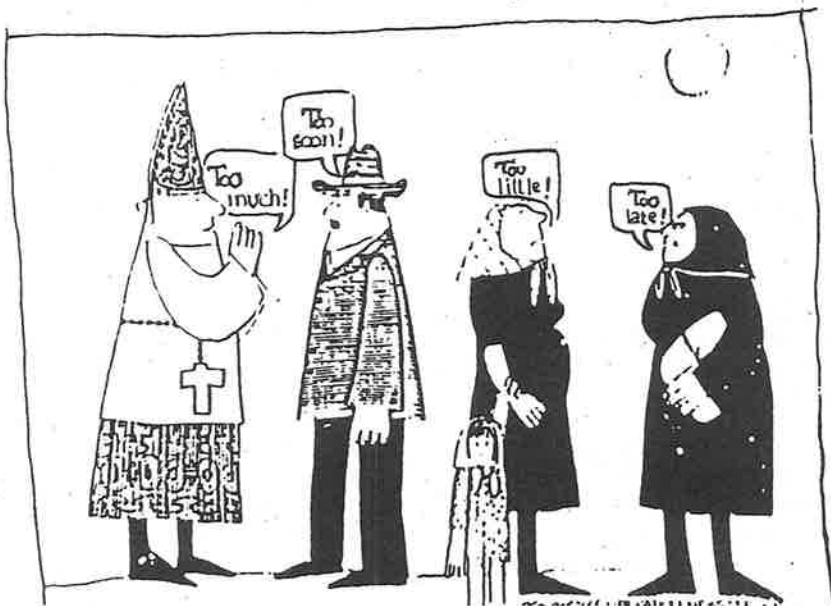
I will state, for the record, that I am not proposing "pacifism", for I am not a pacifist, and would never begrudge anyone their right to utilize whatever means necessary to defend themselves or in defense of others. I will not, however, succumb to the glorification of violence or romanticization of war, and a disorganized, vanguardist movement of undisciplined white kids, with no significant public support hardly seem capable of toppling the State anyways.

What I am proposing, however, is that we, as privileged men, recognize that we are coming from positions of relative comfort, which has been obtained from the systematic oppression of women and children, communities of color, the queer community, and other marginalized members of society. We must learn to abdicate our positions of power that we have not earned, and begin to support other communities and individuals, based on their own needs, which they will define for themselves. Our struggle against "the State" and "Capitalism" simply does not represent the entirety of the anarchist struggle against an entire culture of domination. By dismissing feminist, anti-racist, and queer liberation struggles as "single issue" or "reformist", white, heterosexual, anarchist men reduce anarchist struggle into their own struggle against their own exploiters, which is in itself "reformist" and "single issue" as well as elitist, authoritarian, and everything else that Anarchy opposes.

.....

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women [sic] deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

--Richard Shull



Ideally, men's movement should merely be a segment under the larger feminist movement. By acting as though such movement exists apart from women's movement, men undermine support for feminist struggle. When feminism is defined as a movement to end sexism and sexist oppression, it is clear that everyone has a role to play. Fundamentally, the struggle is not defined as a conflict between women and men. It is defined by resistance to a politic of patriarchal domination that is perpetuated and maintained by nearly everyone in our culture. Defined in this way, there is no question that men can engage fully in feminist struggle. Unfortunately, as long as individuals both within and outside feminist movement consider it to be a movement for women only or even one that primarily benefits females, men will be allowed to believe that feminist struggle is not for or about them. And it is. It has to be, or patriarchy and male domination will never be eradicated.

The most frightening aspect of contemporary men's movement, particularly as it is expressed in popular culture, is the depoliticization of the struggle to end sexism and sexist oppression, and the replacing of that struggle with a focus on personal self-actualization. Feminist struggle should enhance the male quest for self-actualization. Contemporary men's movement often pits the two against one another, sometimes to such an extent that feminism appears to be seen as the enemy and women the group to be resisted or attacked. The book *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine* by Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette (who dedicate the work to Robert Bly) is an example of the kind of contemporary focus on masculinity that is utterly depoliticized. In the conclusion to the book, the authors write: "In this book we have been concerned about helping men to take responsibility for immature forms of masculinity. At the same time it is clear that the world is overpopulated with not only immature men but also tyrannical and abusive little girls pretending to be women. It is time for men—particularly the men of Western civilization—to stop accepting the blame for everything that is wrong in the world." Obviously, this statement was not meant to encourage men to assume greater responsibility for their participation in the perpetuation and maintenance of

male domination, of sexist thought and action. And indeed there is an implied critique of that aspect of feminist movement that rightly sees men as directly accountable for their continued support of patriarchy.

In the anthology *For Men Against Sexism*, Snodgrass called attention to that aspect of men's movement that grew out of male outrage at women for calling out the evils of patriarchy and naming all men as complicit. Those men who did not see themselves as complicit wanted then, as well as now, to deny male power and male domination or their abusive use of that power. Often they see themselves solely as victims of patriarchy and want to be seen as just as oppressed as any woman. While they positively insist on the need for men to grow emotionally and express feelings, they do not suggest that these actions alone cannot be viewed as meaningful resistance to patriarchy and male domination. Within popular culture in the United States there was and is the stereotypical assumption that men who support feminist movement represent "wimp masculinity." This notion emerged because so many of the males in the men's movement acted as though the most central aspect of the movement for them was the emphasis on opening up, sharing emotions, expressing, crying together. The current use of the term "snag" (sensitive new age guy) to describe these men hints at the narcissism that emerges when males in the men's movement are obsessed primarily with their desire for a safe space for certain forms of personal interaction that are not affirmed in most locations in our society; i.e., a place where men can hug one another, cry, and tell their stories, offering physical and emotional care.

All women active in feminist movement recognize the importance of males learning how to express a wide range of emotions. Yet many of us know from having lived or worked with "snags" that often these men dominate even as they take time to cry, share feelings, and so on. Being a "sensitive new age guy" often serves self-centered male goals. There is little material in the published written work of the contemporary men's movement focusing on ways men can learn to express feelings, emotion, in encounters with women, both private and public, without reinscribing male domination.

Anarchist men, who posit themselves as enemies of oppression, have even more of a responsibility to pick up the slack left by the broader, mainstream male culture. Unfortunately, many male anarchists, much like their counterparts in mainstream society, are rather selective in choosing their battles; Mostly preferring to focus their energy fighting their own exploitation and avoiding participation in liberation struggles that would require them to transform their own behaviors and attitudes. Many anarchist men tend to view "sexism" as an issue that is secondary to class struggle (their own struggle) and insist that focusing their energy to fight sexism would distract them from "the Revolution", which is often defined as a glorified class struggle against "the State" and "Capitalism". That many anarchist men tend to identify "the State" and "Capitalism" as the oppressors, suggests a preoccupation with their own class exploitation. For many male anarchists, many of whom are also white, young, able-bodied, and heterosexual, class exploitation is the only area in which they experience any form of institutionalized domination. Based solely on their own class exploitation, anarchist men often mistakenly conclude that the cops, CEOs, landlords, bosses, and politicians that exercise authority over them to be the sole possessors of authoritarian power. By assuming that capitalist parasites and officially sanctioned agents of state repression hold some sort of monopoly on oppression, anarchists ignorantly disregard an entire spectrum of oppressors to be targeted by anarchist revolt.

This limited, white male definition of what constitutes an "oppressor" does not typically include the broader spectrum of sexist, racist, and homophobic predators that are abundantly scattered throughout all classes of our culture, even within our own movement. What about the rapists and child molesters that have infiltrated our communities, conveniently disguised as fathers, brothers, husbands, uncles, and boyfriends, or the misogynistic bible thumpers who lay claim to the minds and "souls" of our society's men, churning them into homophobes, bashing and murdering queers in dark alleys behind bars and bombing abortion clinics? What of the organized racist groups: The Klansmen and neo-nazis that litter the landscapes with their vile presence and ideologies? Statistically speaking, the majority of these predators tend to be heterosexual white men, the same demographic group that controls both "the State" and "Capitalism" and ironically, the leadership positions of Anarchist movement.

Should we not be concerned with these predators because they don't have badges indicating positions of state power, or because they are not wealthy property owners, simply because they do not exercise authority over us straight white guys?

It seems to me to be completely ignorant to assume that "smashing the State and abolishing Capitalism" as sole strategies of anarchist revolution would somehow rid the world of these predators. In fact, to be honest, I shudder to think of the horrors that would be unleashed upon the actualization of a chaotic war-like scenario, within the contexts of an already violent, racist, sexist, and homophobic society. The conditions imposed during wartime are doorways for organized anti-gay, racist militias as well as those who prey on wimmin, children, the elderly, and disabled people. For a bunch of privileged white guys, far removed from the realities of systematic violence, with no intimate understanding of oppression, to assume the authority to impose more violence into communities of people for whom

sexism has proven itself to be quite a controversial and divisive issue within the anarchist community. Wimmin in increasing numbers over the years, have risen up, in defiance of the male "leadership" that dominates anarchist circles, to demand, among other things, the inclusion of the struggle against sexist oppression into the anarchist agenda. In theory, anarchy opposes all forms of oppression, so it seems ironic to me that wimmin should have to spend so much of their time attempting to convince anarchist men of what should seem obvious.

For wimmin, sexist oppression is the reality that they must deal with on a daily basis; being objectified, ridiculed, and silenced by men in their lives and reduced to second class status by a male hierarchy that views wimmin as objects to be possessed, and raped and murdered by men. For men, the luxury to ignore these atrocities and avoid active participation in anti-sexist struggle is a reflection of our own privilege. It is nearly impossible for men to avoid the sexist indoctrination of male supremacist culture and sexism does not just disappear from men because they call themselves "anarchists" and proclaim themselves "liberated". What is more likely to actualize the demise of sexist oppression, would be for significant numbers of men to break ranks with the dominant supremacist culture, identify and work to transcend their own sexist behaviors and attitudes, support wimmin in their daily lives and speak out against sexism to other men. In mainstream society, very few men are willing to break the silence that maintains the culture of violence that manhood has imposed on upon wimmin. Patriarchal culture has trained men to either "mind their own business" and ignore the epidemic of violence that men unleash on wimmin or to accept it as commonplace and blame wimmin for what men do to them. The silence of men, along with the silencing of wimmin, by men, has allowed for us to remain in denial, sweeping the problems under the rug, pretending they do not exist.

Many men assume that because they do not actively participate directly in physical violence against wimmin, that they should be resolved from complicity. Yet, rape, murder, and battering of wimmin only represent one end of the continuum of sexist oppression that includes on the other end, the degrading sexist slurs, controlling and abusive behaviors, condescending attitudes, and male silence that maintain an environment that encourages men to physically violate wimmin.

I am reminded of an incident last year, in Central Park, New York City.

Amongst a public gathering of thousands of people, a smaller group of men, many of whom did not even know each other, took opportunity of the crowd and began groping, molesting, and basically raping random wimmin. Not only did other men not interfere, but rather, many men, when they realized that it was possible, and that they could get away with it, joined in on the frenzy themselves. Similar incidents have occurred at "Woodstock '99", and a recent LA Lakers game that resulted in a riot afterwards. That abusive men can safely assume to face no significant obstruction from other men that would prevent them from assaulting and raping wimmin in public, in broad daylight is testament that male silence acts as a green light for men to

Much of the relational focus of contemporary men's movement is aimed at improving homosocial bonding between men. Yet one of the major dilemmas created by sexism and sexist oppression is the inability of men to bond with women in all aspects of social life. Until the men's movement focuses more on unlearning sexism and sexist practices as they are acted out in everyday life, it will not have the full support of feminist women, or actively challenge the status quo.

My most immediate experience of the "men's movement" occurred when I attended one of the major conferences focusing on men who are concerned with confronting sexism and challenging patriarchy and heterosexism. I must confess with all honesty that I did not feel "safe" at this conference. Many males articulated their desire that women not be present and some that even those of us who were invited speakers not be allowed to speak. Some men explained their resentment of female presence by saying that this was their "special" time away from women. I kept thinking if this celebration of homosocial male bonding could only take place as a reaction against the female and if the men present were supposedly more conscious than most men of sexism in our society, then there was not a lot of hope that men would ever participate fully in feminist movement. Many of the men present seemed not to understand that the contempt and disdain that they were expressing for female presence was akin to that expressed by misogynist and/or sexist men, and their denial of the link between the two seemed dangerous. In some ways this conference mirrored early radical feminist meetings where male presence was not tolerated or desired but with one difference. Homosocial bonding (men strengthening their bonds with one another), albeit on different terms, is promoted and affirmed constantly in this society. Should a men's movement exist that is primarily concerned with intensifying male interest and pleasure in homosocial bonding?

I came to the conference with a black male who has been and is a supportive colleague though we teach at different places. A gay black man with a white lover, he had not attended such an event



before and felt after attending that all he could say was "never again." We were both disturbed by the complete lack of any emphasis on **face**. We were disturbed by the discussions of masculine identity that were based on the assumption that all men share equally the rewards of patriarchal privilege in this society. Privileged white male thought, experience, and culture was often presented as a norm standpoint. There were few black men present. And there was no real emphasis on outreach. It was definitely (as some all female feminist gatherings and conferences have been) an exclusive meeting for the "in" crowd. There was no indication of the way in which progressive ideas about gender, about masculinity, even would be shared with an audience beyond those able to attend the conference. While I met individual men at the conference who were deeply committed to the struggle to end sexism, in general the issues of patriarchy and abusive male domination of women and children were not the central agenda. Indeed, it appeared as though feminist movement had somehow been appropriated and made to serve the interest of creating an alternative space for men to gather without any apparent sustained commitment to feminist movement. Where is the work within contemporary men's movement that affirms the struggle to end sexism and sexist oppression? To what extent has the focus on male woundedness (healing the child within), which is an important process of self-actualization, obscured the need for organized collective resistance?

In all my feminist writing, I have labored to articulate the deeply felt conviction that men must play an active role in feminist struggle. While I am critical of those aspects of the men's movement that render it less than radical, not a political space for men to educate for feminist critical consciousness and work at transforming society, there is no doubt in my mind that there must be such a movement. In its present form much of the men's movement is presented to the public as being a response to the demasculinization of men. And feminism is often seen as one of the "weapons" women have used to belittle men. As long as sexist and/or misogynist sentiments inform the core belief system within men's movement, feminist

## Feminist Activism and Male Sexual Identity

necessary so I can feel good as a man? Don't you see that sexism is necessary so I can have a sex?

### Some Closing Thoughts

Male sexual identity is not a "role."

Male sexual identity is not a set of anatomical traits.

Male sexual identity—the belief that one is male, the belief that there is a male sex, the belief that one belongs to it—is a politically constructed idea.

This means that masculinity is an ethical construction: We construct it through our acts, through the things we choose to do and not do, through the acts we commit that are "male" things to do. Most of our choice making has to do with choosing to do acts that will make the idea of our maleness real and that will keep far away the idea that, really, this dividing up of the species into two separate and distinct sex classes may be utterly specious after all. Most of our choice making has to do with dissociating from all that is coded and stigmatized "female." Most of our choice making has to do with disidentifying with women. Most of our choice making creates our sexedness.

So long as we continue to try to act in ways that keep us still "men," we are doomed to paralysis, guilt, self-hatred, inertia. So long as we try to act *as men*, in order to continue to *be* men, in order to do our bit in the social construction of the entity that is the *sex class* men, we doom women to injustice: the injustice that inheres in the very idea that there are two sexes.

Male sexual identity is constructed through the choices we make and the actions we take. We cannot continue to construct it and give ourselves fully to feminist activism. One cannot cling to one's gender as the core of one's being and be of use in the struggle. One must change the core of one's being. The core of one's being must love justice more than manhood.



manners when you're trying to impress people to whom it matters while at the same time keeping open your options to hob-nob with woman-haters?

QUESTION: Which of the following is the most convincing pretext for not doing anything about sexist injustice: (a) self-hatred, (b) guilt, (c) more pressing political priorities, or (d) "Can't you see I'm trying?" Are some women more taken in by some pretexts than by others? How can I tell the difference? Where can I meet the women who are easy?

QUESTION: If men are so evil, what's the use?

ANSWER: Was that pretext (e)?

QUESTION: Don't we first have to work out some serious and personal questions about when and how and whether we're going to have sex?—I mean, what's in this for me and my penis?

QUESTION: What happens when a man takes feminism utterly seriously, in every area of his life, in every moment of everything he does? Does he still stay a man?—or does he turn into something else?

QUESTION: Why is it so difficult to hold on to my sense of maleness in the company of women? Why does being in large groups of mostly women protesting sexist injustice make me feel like shit? Why do I need a gaggle of men around me to feel better? Why is it so difficult to get a gaggle of men to clear their calendars so they can gather around me and help me feel better? Does penis size matter? Am I getting off the subject? What is the subject?

ANSWER: Feminist activism and male sexual identity.

QUESTION: How can I always know I am male and not female and not in between, how can I always know I belong to the male sex and not the other one, how can I always want there to be a male sex to belong to, how can I know it's always okay to belong to it, how can I always feel good about myself as a man and feel truly male at the same time, how can I always enjoy the company of other men? How do you expect me to identify with women's struggle for justice? Don't you see that my aloofness is politically necessary? Don't you see that gender injustice is

struggle is undermined. I know of no instance where men have come to women within feminist movement to request critical feedback about the direction of the men's movement. This is unfortunate: For in many ways the same forces that have undermined women-centered feminist movement are undermining the men's movement. Let me reiterate that we need a men's movement that is part of revolutionary feminist movement. If the masses of men in our society have not unlearned their sexism, have not abdicated male privilege, then it should be obvious that a men's movement led only by men with only males participating runs the risk of mirroring in a different form much that is already oppressive in patriarchal culture. Much of what Bly and his followers offer as an affirmation of a different masculinity is only a nineteenth-century notion of the benevolent patriarch. Currently contemporary men's movement does not address in a serious political manner feminist transformation of society. Until the men's movement renews its connection with revolutionary feminist struggle in such a manner that efforts to end sexism and sexist oppression remain central agendas, it will lend itself to cooptation by the status quo. Men active in feminist struggle, in the men's movement, need at this historical juncture to pause and reevaluate the direction of their work, asking themselves whose interests are served in the men's movement? How and in what concrete ways does the men's movement advance feminist struggle? These questions need to be answered if we are to build the kind of political solidarity between women and men that shows by example that feminist thought and practice liberates us all.

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bell hooks is Associate Professor of English and Women's Studies at Oberlin College. A feminist theorist, cultural critic, and creative writer, she is the author of *Ain't I a Woman*, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, *Talking Back*, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Her most recent book, written in collaboration with Cornel West, is *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*, all published by South End Press.

# I WANT A TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR TRUCE DURING WHICH THERE IS NO RAPE

by Andrea Dworkin

*This was a speech given at the Midwest Regional Conference of the National Organization for Changing Men in the fall of 1983 in St. Paul, Minnesota. One of the organizers kindly sent me a tape and a transcript of my speech. The magazine of the men's movement, M., published it. I was teaching in Minneapolis. This was before Catharine MacKinnon and I had proposed or developed the civil rights approach to pornography as a legislative strategy. Lots of people were in the audience who later became key players in the fight for the civil rights bill. I didn't know them then. It was an audience of about 500 men, with scattered women. I spoke from notes and was actually on my way to Idaho—an eight-hour trip each way (because of bad air connections) to give a one-hour speech on Art—fly out Saturday, come back Sunday, can't talk more than one hour or you'll miss the only plane leaving that day, you have to run from the podium to the car for the two-hour drive to the plane. Why would a militant feminist under this kind of pressure stop off on her way to the airport to say hi to 500 men? In a sense, this was a feminist dream-come-true. What would you say to 500 men if you could? This is what I said, how I used my chance. The men reacted with considerable love and support and also with considerable anger. Both. I hurried out to get my plane, the first hurdle for getting to Idaho. Only one man in the 500 threatened me physically. He was stopped by a woman bodyguard (and friend) who had accompanied me.*

I HAVE THOUGHT a great deal about how a feminist, like myself, addresses an audience primarily of political men who say that they are antisexist. And I thought a lot about whether there should be a qualitative difference in the kind of speech I address to you. And then I found myself incapable of pretending that I really believe that that qualitative difference exists. I have watched the men's movement for many years. I am close with some of the people who participate in it. I can't come here as a friend even though I might very much want to. What I would like to do is to scream; and in that scream I would have the screams of the raped, and the sobs of the battered; and even worse, in the center of that scream I would have the deafening sound of women's silence, that silence into which we are born because we are women and in which most of us die.

And if there would be a plea or a question or a human address in that scream, it would be this: why are you so slow? Why are you so slow to

## Feminist Activism and Male Sexual Identity

heterosexual or homosexual, married or single, living together or apart—it doesn't matter; what matters is their public alliance. She will provide him with credentials of his own: a plastic-laminated wallet card that says "I have been approved by a feminist woman" and it will have on it her good name. He will flash the card when it suits him. He will keep it in his pocket when he buys pornography. When he visits her home he will leave a mess.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience, when their wife says goodbye, when their live-in maid says clean your own piss around the toilet, when their politically astute feminist comrade-in-arms says "I no longer trust you" and stops wanting to hang out together—when their personal conduit to feminist consciousness leaves them—many men of conscience will become less and less like men of conscience and more and more like ordinary men. They will turn their attention to political issues that don't blatantly remind them of the fact that men like themselves oppress women like her. Nuclear energy. Wars in foreign lands. Food co-ops. Rent strikes. Important issues, not unimportant issues. It's just that they're better than alcohol or drugs when your heart is broken and you want it to harden.

## Some Questions Often Asked about Feminist Activism and Male Sexual Identity

QUESTION: If it's true that men are the doers, the agents of history, the performers, the active ones, how come men are so passive?

QUESTION: Can a man have a feminist consciousness if he doesn't consistently act on it?

QUESTION: Can high consciousness exist in a man who is more or less inert? How high can consciousness go before the fact that it exists in a lump becomes a political embarrassment to the lump?

QUESTION: Is there a way to seem to be a man of fine feminist

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will do only that which makes them feel better about themselves. If something does not make them feel better about themselves, they will be unlikely to do it. Discussing their feelings will make them feel better about themselves.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience, if they notice they are doing nothing, will want to spend hours and hours struggling with the question of what is politically correct for them to do *as men*. *As men*: the two most paralyzing words in the vocabulary of the so-called man of conscience. He won't do anything until it is clear to him how it affects him and his brethren *as men*. He won't do anything unless it is clear to him in what sense he can do it with other men *as men*, unless their action particularly matters because they are doing it *as men*, unless the action makes them all feel much better about themselves *as men*. *As men*. Words to live by. Words to do nothing by.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience, if they notice they are doing nothing, will want to spend hours and hours justifying their inertia. They are waiting for women's leadership, they may say. They don't want to do anything rash; they want it all spelled out for them exactly, step-by-step. And they have not yet received precise instructions from the central feminist organizing committee. All women have to do is ask, they may say. All women have to do is hold their hand, is what they mean.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will spend more time shopping for tofu than they spend reading the feminist press.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will turn out for one feminist demonstration every twelve months. They will raise their voices in shout. They will shout louder, in fact, than all the women combined. They will even get into a scuffle with some other men, any other men, hostile bystanders, the police: They will make a noble scene; they will stage a cockfight. Then they will go home and try to get in touch with their feelings for another year.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will ally themselves publicly with a woman of feminist credentials. They may be friends or lovers,

You understand those. *The simple things*. The clichés. Simply that women are human to precisely the degree and quality that you are.

And also: that we do not have time. We women. We don't have forever. Some of us don't have another week or another day to take time for you to discuss whatever it is that will enable you to go out into those streets and do something. We are very close to death. All women are. And we are very close to rape and we are very close to beating. And we are inside a system of humiliation from which there is no escape for us. We use statistics not to try to quantify the injuries, but to convince the world that those injuries even exist. Those statistics are not abstractions. It is easy to say, "Ah, the statistics, somebody writes them up one way and somebody writes them up another way." That's true. But I hear about the rapes one by one by one by one by one, which is also how they happen. Those statistics are not abstract to me. Every three minutes a woman is being raped. Every eighteen seconds a woman is being beaten. There is nothing abstract about it. It is happening right now as I am speaking.

And it is happening for a simple reason. There is nothing complex and difficult about the reason. Men are doing it, because of the kind of power that men have over women. That power is real, concrete, exercised from one body to another body, exercised by someone who feels he has a right to exercise it, exercised in public and exercised in private. It is the sum and substance of women's oppression.

It is not done 5,000 miles away or 3,000 miles away. It is done here and it is done now and it is done by the people in this room as well as by other contemporaries: our friends, our neighbors, people that we know. Women don't have to go to school to learn about power. We just have to be women, walking down the street or trying to get the housework done after having given one's body in marriage and then having no rights over it.

The power exercised by men day to day in life is power that is institutionalized. It is protected by law. It is protected by religion and religious practice. It is protected by universities, which are strongholds of male supremacy. It is protected by a police force. It is protected by those whom Shelley called "the unacknowledged legislators of the world": the poets, the artists. Against that power, we have silence.

It is an extraordinary thing to try to understand and confront why it is that men believe—and men do believe—that they have the right to rape.



Men may not believe it when asked. Everybody raise your hand who believes you have the right to rape. Not too many hands will go up. It's in life that men believe they have the right to force sex, which they don't call rape. And it is an extraordinary thing to try to understand that men really believe that they have the right to hit and to hurt. And it is an equally extraordinary thing to try to understand that men really believe that they have the right to buy a woman's body for the purpose of having sex; that that is a right. And it is very amazing to try to understand that men believe that the seven-billion-dollar-a-year industry that provides men with cunts is something that men have a right to.

That is the way the power of men is manifest in real life. That is what theory about male supremacy means. It means you can rape. It means you can hit. It means you can hurt. It means you can buy and sell women. It means that there is a class of people there to provide you with what you need. You stay richer than they are, so that they have to sell you sex. Not just on street corners, but in the workplace. That's another right that you can presume to have: sexual access to any woman in your environment, when you want.

Now, the men's movement suggests that men don't want the kind of power I have just described. I've actually heard explicit whole sentences to that effect. And yet, everything is a reason not to do something about changing the fact that you do have that power.

Hiding behind guilt, that's my favorite. I love that one. Oh, it's horrible, yes, and I'm so sorry. You have the time to feel guilty. We don't have the time for you to feel guilty. Your guilt is a form of acquiescence in what continues to occur. Your guilt helps keep things the way they are.

I have heard in the last several years a great deal about the suffering of men over sexism. Of course, I have heard a great deal about the suffering of men all my life. Needless to say, I have read *Hamlet*. I have read *King Lear*. I am an educated woman. I know that men suffer. This is a new wrinkle. Implicit in the idea that this is a different kind of suffering is the claim. I think, that in part you are actually suffering because of something that you know happens to someone else. That would indeed be new.

But mostly your guilt, your suffering, reduces to: gee, we really feel so bad. Everything makes men feel so bad: what you do, what you don't do, what you want to do, what you don't want to want to do but are going to do anyway. I think most of your distress is: gee, we really feel so bad. And

*At issue: pornography.*

The ropes cutting into her breasts  
give him pleasure.  
The gag stuffed into her mouth  
makes him feel full to bursting.  
The black leather hood over her face  
makes him feel radiant,  
hot.  
The chains around her ankles and wrists  
make him feel strong,  
like an ox ready to gore.  
The pincers ripping her nipples  
make his penis swell.  
The way she spreads her labia  
makes him feel like fucking her  
raw.

He imagines her.  
He has her.  
He uses her.  
He possesses her.

*As if there was a question  
what men of conscience should do.*

#### **What Men of Conscience Will Be Doing in the Next Decade**

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will do very little or nothing.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will prefer to discuss their feelings.

can accommodate a grown man's penis.  
 They think it's eight.  
 Or  
 they don't bother to calculate.  
 The infants go to the hospital  
 with gonorrhea down their throats.

They pick up children and drug them.  
 When the children are passed out,  
 they get it on.

Or  
 they pick up children and keep them conscious.  
 They photograph them—being pissed on,  
 perhaps, or  
 spread open,  
 poor and pimply,  
 in Polaroid.

They pressure their daughters and nieces  
 and stepdaughters and little sisters  
 into secret sexual intimacies.

Simon says diddle diddle dumpling,  
 little miss muffin,  
 Simon says red rover red rover  
 wants to come over and over.

And  
 they make the girls promise not to tell.  
 The girls keep the promise:  
 They grow up unable to speak.

*As if there was a question  
 what men of conscience should do.*

I'm sorry that you feel so bad—so uselessly and stupidly bad—because there is a way in which this really is your tragedy. And I don't mean because you can't cry. And I don't mean because there is no real intimacy in your lives. And I don't mean because the armor that you have to live with as men is stultifying; and I don't doubt that it is. But I don't mean any of that.

I mean that there is a relationship between the way that women are raped and your socialization to rape and the war machine that grinds you up and spits you out: the war machine that you go through just like that woman went through Larry Flynt's meat grinder on the cover of *Hustler*. You damn well better believe that you're involved in this tragedy and that it's your tragedy too. Because you're turned into little soldier boys from the day that you are born and everything that you learn about how to avoid the humanity of women becomes part of the militarism of the country in which you live and the world in which you live. It is also part of the economy that you frequently claim to protest.

And the problem is that you think it's out there; and it's not out there. It's in you. The pimps and the warmongers speak for you. Rape and war are not so different. And what the pimps and the warmongers do is that they make you so proud of being men who can get it up and give it hard. And they take that acculturated sexuality and they put you in little uniforms and they send you out to kill and to die. Now, I am not going to suggest to you that I think that's more important than what you do to women, because I don't.

But I think that if you want to look at what this system does to you, then that is where you should start looking: the sexual politics of aggression; the sexual politics of militarism. I think that men are very afraid of other men. That is something that you sometimes try to address in your small groups, as if you changed your attitudes towards each other, you wouldn't be afraid of each other.

But as long as your sexuality has to do with aggression and your sense of entitlement to humanity has to do with being superior to other people, and there is so much contempt and hostility in your attitudes towards women and children, how could you not be afraid of each other? I think that you rightly perceive—without being willing to face it politically—that men are very dangerous: because you are.

The solution of the men's movement to make men less dangerous to

each other by changing the way you touch and feel each other is not a solution. It's a recreational break.

These conferences are also concerned with homophobia. Homophobia is very important: it is very important to the way male supremacy works. In my opinion, the prohibitions against male homosexuality exist in order to protect male power. *Do it to her*. That is to say: as long as men rape, it is very important that men be directed to rape women. As long as sex is full of hostility and expresses both power over and contempt for the other person, it is very important that men not be declassed, stigmatized as female, used similarly. The power of men as a class depends on keeping men sexually inviolate and women sexually used by men. Homophobia helps maintain that class power: it also helps keep you as individuals safe from each other, safe from rape. If you want to do something about homophobia, you are going to have to do something about the fact that men rape, and that forced sex is not incidental to male sexuality but is in practice paradigmatic.

Some of you are very concerned about the rise of the Right in this country, as if that is something separate from the issues of feminism or the men's movement. There is a cartoon I saw that brought it all together nicely. It was a big picture of Ronald Reagan as a cowboy with a big hat and a gun. And it said: "A gun in every holster; a pregnant woman in every home. Make America a man again." Those are the politics of the Right.

If you are afraid of the ascendancy of fascism in this country—and you would be very foolish not to be right now—then you had better understand that the root issue here has to do with male supremacy and the control of women; sexual access to women; women as reproductive slaves; private ownership of women. That is the program of the Right. That is the morality they talk about. That is what they mean. That is what they want. And the only opposition to them that matters is an opposition to men owning women.

What's involved in doing something about all of this? The men's movement seems to stay stuck on two points. The first is that men don't really feel very good about themselves. How could you? The second is that men come to me or to other feminists and say: "What you're saying about men isn't true. It isn't true of me. I don't feel that way. I'm opposed to all of this."

Clothing that looks slit by a knife.

Faces made up like flesh bruised from beating.

Around the haunted, deep-set eyes:  
black and blue.

On the temples and cheekbones:  
purplish-magenta welts,  
brushed on or beaten on,  
in a patch the size of a fist,  
broken blood vessels pancaked over.

It takes a lot of pancake to cover damaged goods.

Check out the street.

The abused look is in.

Men like their women beautiful.

They see beauty in women's pain.

Go to your corner drugstore;

check it out,

Get your personal bruise kit  
in the latest, chic-est shades.

Or just go home.

The beauty of pain is within the reach

of every woman

within a man's reach.

*As if there was a question*

*what men of conscience should do.*

*At issue: child sexual assault.*

They calculate the age at which

the diameter of a child's vagina



laws across the land to make the right to rape  
legal in cohabitation,  
to make the right to rape legal  
if she ever said yes once—

yes once on a date,  
yes once three years ago,  
yes once just once:

a yes to any penis is permanent,  
say these clever new laws.  
Extend the marriage contract to the unmarried,  
to the roommates,  
to the date.

Skip the cake.

Get down to the business of devouring female lives.

*As if there was a question  
what men of conscience should do.*

*At issue: battery.*

She walked into a door.  
She fell down some stairs doing the laundry.  
Her dark glasses are prescription.  
She limps from a slight sprain.  
She went to the hospital to visit a friend.  
Her screaming was all in fun,  
it was laughing,  
hysterical laughing,  
you know how women are.

Fashions change.

The look today is abused.

And I say: don't tell me. Tell the pornographers. Tell the pimps. Tell the warmakers. Tell the rape apologists and the rape celebrationists and the pro-rape ideologues. Tell the novelists who think that rape is wonderful. Tell Larry Flynt. Tell Hugh Hefner. There's no point in telling me. I'm only a woman. There's nothing I can do about it. These men presume to speak for you. They are in the public arena saying that they represent you. If they don't, then you had better let them know.

Then there is the private world of misogyny: what you know about each other; what you say in private life; the exploitation that you see in the private sphere; the relationships called love, based on exploitation. It's not enough to find some traveling feminist on the road and go up to her and say: "Gee, I hate it."

Say it to your friends who are doing it. And there are streets out there on which you can say these things loud and clear, so as to affect the actual institutions that maintain these abuses. You don't like pornography? I wish I could believe it's true. I will believe it when I see you on the streets. I will believe it when I see an organized political opposition. I will believe it when pimps go out of business because there are no more male consumers.

You want to organize men. You don't have to search for issues. The issues are part of the fabric of your everyday lives.

I want to talk to you about equality, what equality is and what it means. It isn't just an idea. It's not some insipid word that ends up being bullshit. It doesn't have anything at all to do with all those statements like: "Oh, that happens to men too." I name an abuse and I hear: "Oh, it happens to men too." That is not the equality we are struggling for. We could change our strategy and say: well, okay, we want equality; we'll stick something up the ass of a man every three minutes.

You've never heard that from the feminist movement, because for us equality has real dignity and importance—it's not some dumb word that can be twisted and made to look stupid as if it had no real meaning.

As a way of practicing equality, some vague idea about giving up power is useless. Some men have vague thoughts about a future in which men are going to give up power or an individual man is going to give up some kind of privilege that he has. That is not what equality means either.

Equality is a practice. It is an action. It is a way of life. It is a social practice. It is an economic practice. It is a sexual practice. It can't exist in

a vacuum. You can't have it in your home if, when the people leave the home, he is in a world of his supremacy based on the existence of his cock and she is in a world of humiliation and degradation because she is perceived to be inferior and because her sexuality is a curse.

This is not to say that the attempt to practice equality in the home doesn't matter. It matters, but it is not enough. If you love equality, if you believe in it, if it is the way you want to live—not just men and women together in a home, but men and men together in a home and women and women together in a home—if equality is what you want and what you care about, then you have to fight for the institutions that will make it socially real.

It is not just a matter of your attitude. You can't think it and make it exist. You can't try sometimes, when it works to your advantage, and throw it out the rest of the time. Equality is a discipline. It is a way of life. It is a political necessity to create equality in institutions. And another thing about equality is that it cannot coexist with rape. It cannot. And it cannot coexist with pornography or with prostitution or with the economic degradation of women on any level, in any way. It cannot coexist, because implicit in all those things is the inferiority of women.

I want to see this men's movement make a commitment to ending rape because that is the only meaningful commitment to equality. It is astonishing that in all our worlds of feminism and antisexism we never talk seriously about ending rape. Ending it. Stopping it. No more. No more rape. In the back of our minds, are we holding on to its inevitability as the last preserve of the biological? Do we think that it is always going to exist no matter what we do? All of our political actions are lies if we don't make a commitment to ending the practice of rape. This commitment has to be political. It has to be serious. It has to be systematic. It has to be public. It can't be self-indulgent.

The things the men's movement has wanted are things worth having. Intimacy is worth having. Tenderness is worth having. Cooperation is worth having. A real emotional life is worth having. But you can't have them in a world with rape. Ending homophobia is worth doing. But you can't do it in a world with rape. Rape stands in the way of each and every one of those things you say you want. And by rape you know what I mean. A judge does not have to walk into this room and say that according to statute such and such these are the elements of proof. We're talking about any kind of coerced sex, including sex coerced by poverty.

Tender, vulnerable organs all wanting  
in,  
all wanting  
fun.

Penetration on demand.  
Surefire fail-safe proof the guy's a man.

*As if there was a question  
what men of conscience should do.*

*At issue: marital rape.*

The right to rape that comes with the wedding cake.

His conjugal right.

Her connubial duty.

Whenever he gets hungry,  
he gets his piece of cake.

Lip-smacking good.

She's his.

His piece.

Can't say no now.

Can't ever say no.

She said a permanent yes to one penis forever.

Forever is a long time.

Forever is anytime.

Now the legislators of America know a good thing  
when they see one. Now they see couples by the millions  
just shacking up, not getting a license,  
living outside the sacred bondage.  
No matter, say the legislators. They're passing

Pregnant teenagers, children bearing children,  
 one million every year.  
 Now the superfathers of America say, "Stay chaste or else."  
 Now the superfathers of America say,  
 "The paramount right to life resides in your uterus,  
 not in you."  
 Now the superfathers of America say,  
 "Go knock up your daughters,  
 your stepdaughters,  
 your nieces,  
 go on;  
 that gob of cells has a paramount right to life."  
*As if there was a question  
 what men of conscience should do.*

*At issue: rape.*

Penetration on demand.  
 Penises engorged with rage.  
 Tender, vulnerable organ—  
 with a little help it gets hard.  
 With a little help from fists,  
 knives,  
 force,  
 contempt.  
 With a little help from friends:  
 two on one,  
 three on one,  
 ten on one . . .

You can't have equality or tenderness or intimacy as long as there is rape, because rape means terror. It means that part of the population lives in a state of terror and pretends—to please and pacify you—that it doesn't. So there is no honesty. How can there be? Can you imagine what it is like to live as a woman day in and day out with the threat of rape? Or what it is like to live with the reality? I want to see you use those legendary bodies and that legendary strength and that legendary courage and the tenderness that you say you have in behalf of women; and that means against the rapists, against the pimps, and against the pornographers. It means something more than a personal renunciation. It means a systematic, political, active, public attack. And there has been very little of that.

I came here today because I don't believe that rape is inevitable or natural. If I did, I would have no reason to be here. If I did, my political practice would be different than it is. Have you ever wondered why we are not just in armed combat against you? It's not because there's a shortage of kitchen knives in this country. It is because we believe in your humanity, against all the evidence.

We do not want to do the work of helping you to believe in your humanity. We cannot do it anymore. We have always tried. We have been repaid with systematic exploitation and systematic abuse. You are going to have to do this yourselves from now on and you know it.

The shame of men in front of women is, I think, an appropriate response both to what men do do and to what men do not do. I think you should be ashamed. But what you do with that shame is to use it as an excuse to keep doing what you want and to keep not doing anything else; and you've got to stop. You've got to stop. Your psychology doesn't matter. How much you hurt doesn't matter in the end any more than how much we hurt matters. If we sat around and only talked about how much rape hurt us, do you think there would have been one of the changes that you have seen in this country in the last fifteen years? There wouldn't have been.

It is true that we had to talk to each other. I know else, after all, were we supposed to find out that each of us was not the only woman in the world not asking for it to whom rape or battery had ever happened? We couldn't read it in the newspapers, not then. We couldn't find a book about it. But you do know and now the question is what you are going to do; and so your shame and your guilt are very much beside the point.



They don't matter to us at all, in any way. They're not good enough. They don't do anything.

As a feminist, I carry the rape of all the women I've talked to over the past ten years personally with me. As a woman, I carry my own rape with me. Do you remember pictures that you've seen of European cities during the plague, when there were wheelbarrows that would go along and people would just pick up corpses and throw them in? Well, that is what it is like knowing about rape. Piles and piles and piles of bodies that have whole lives and human names and human faces.

I speak for many feminists, not only myself, when I tell you that I am tired of what I know and sad beyond any words I have about what has already been done to women up to this point, now, up to 2:24 P.M. on this day, here in this place.

And I want one day of respite, one day off, one day in which no new bodies are piled up, one day in which no new agony is added to the old, and I am asking you to give it to me. And how could I ask you for less—it is so little. And how could you offer me less: it is so little. Even in wars, there are days of truce. Go and organize a truce. Stop your side for one day. I want a twenty-four-hour truce during which there is no rape.

I dare you to try it. I demand that you try it. I don't mind begging you to try it. What else could you possibly be here to do? What else could this movement possibly mean? What else could matter so much?

And on that day, that day of truce, that day when not one woman is raped, we will begin the real practice of equality, because we can't begin it before that day. Before that day it means nothing because it is nothing: it is not real; it is not true. But on that day it becomes real. And then, instead of rape we will for the first time in our lives—both men and women—begin to experience freedom.

If you have a conception of freedom that includes the existence of rape, you are wrong. You cannot change what you say you want to change. For myself, I want to experience just one day of real freedom before I die. I leave you here to do that for me and for the women whom you say you love.

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Revolutionary Runt: sometimes known as the Frightful Boar [*porcus tedius*] seems to be friendly, but treat with caution. A creature of contradictions, it can smell oppression at a distance of 5,000 miles, but remain unaware of the quinge it wallows in.

## Feminist Activism and Male Sexual Identity

*For a panel about what direction "the men's movement" should take*

*At issue: reproductive freedom.*

Pregnant poor women,  
denied dignity,  
denied integrity,  
denied a safe home.

Now their lives hang in the balance  
against a gob of cells.

Now the superfathers of America say  
that gob of cells deserves more dignity,  
that gob of cells has more integrity,  
that gob of cells has a paramount right to a safe home.