

As a peace activist, I am happy to see the peace movement growing and hopeful that we will work together as a broad coalition of individuals and groups toward the peace we desire. As a feminist who has studied the male dominated 1960's peace movement and its resulting violence, I want to contribute a feminist perspective to the conversation about peace so we can learn from past mistakes.

Before I connect feminism to the peace movement, I'd like to briefly introduce my particular kind of feminism. Contrary to popular opinion, feminists are diverse, just like peace activists are diverse, in methods and theory. The feminism I advocate is not an attack on individual or even large groups of men. It is an analysis of societal institutions and systems

that maintain the rule of men (generally called Patriarchy). It encompasses a set of varied prescriptions for how we can change our institutions to give more power to women and people of color, or how we can build new ways of relating to one another that do away with current hierarchical institutions of power.

Everyone maintains the Patriarchy, men and women alike. Under Patriarchy, we must scramble to have our voices heard because there's not enough room for all people to speak from their personal fount of knowledge and wisdom. Patriarchy promotes an attitude of scarcity rather than abundance in the world of ideas, as well as in the world of material things. The idea that there's not enough to go around in our society and institutions is accepted as the natural state of affairs rather than a humanly constructed mode of being. Poverty and social injustice are an inevitable result of living under a patriarchal system that promotes competition and hierarchy.

Peace Starts at Home

Alison Jaggar, in her book *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, observes that radical feminism is "the first approach to politics to take the subordination of women as its central concern." (p.100). Because approximately 52% of our population is women and because many of us live with men, work with them and interact with them on a daily basis, the place to look for our practice of peace is not necessarily in a book or abroad, but in our own lives. Feminism gives voice to personal experience like no other body of thought that I know. It claims that we can truly begin to change the world by examining how we exist in it and by changing ourselves. If we are honest, we start to see how our voices are

not heard amid the noise of our daily lives. We see that we are afraid to reveal those less-than pretty truths about our jobs and relationships because we think we'll be rejected by our men first, and by our girlfriend's second. Once we start along the path of deeper understanding of self in the midst of a patriarchal context however, we have a way of uniting behind a common cause.

Feminism in the 1960's was often dismissed as "not crucial" compared to working to save men dying in the Vietnam War. But the fight for an empowered feminist voice in

world violence and war. The peace movement must respond to this by challenging its precepts of male domination and by creating a peaceful alternative.

Male Domination in Human Thought and Academic Disciplines

Feminism is not only about my liberation as a woman, it is also about giving voice to new ways of structuring our reality—ways that cannot be dreamed of if one is functioning solely in the male-dominated paradigms of thought. By male-dominated paradigms of

thought I mean socialism, Marxism, capitalism, philosophy, psychology, literature, physics and anthropology. I mean any paradigm that does not specifically give equal

voice to women. Notice the word "male-dominated." Just because women now hold degrees and write books within these bodies of thought does not mean that they were not *invented* by men and do not have a history of male attitudes. In fact, there is only ONE female dominated paradigm of thought and that is feminism. No wonder everybody thinks feminists are all alike—we only have one umbrella to stand under in the storm of ideas.

Why Feminism is Essential to the Peace Movement

by Kristine Petterson

society is a very important fight and should not be casually dismissed because "peace issues" are different and disconnected from it somehow. Feminism illuminates the human potential for relating peacefully within personal relationships as well as within the broader society. Feminist perspectives are not completely distinct from peace perspectives but instead can contribute valuable insights to the root causes of war.

Origins of Contemporary Warfare

The war machine was created by men and in fact, is fueled by the Patriarchy. One only need look at the inventors of the nuclear bomb and the vast numbers of male officers in the military to see that this is true. Women warriors are few and far between and some posts in the military, to this day, are not accessible to women. These facts are important when developing our peace movement because if we want to create a culture that trains us in peace, we need to closely examine the one that trains us in war.

The invention of the nuclear bomb by men and the military secrecy surrounding it brought together two otherwise distinct male institutions—science and the military. "This heady combination (military and science) resulted in an impenetrable fusion of secretive masculine power. Physicists managed to harden the gender barriers of their discipline by allying themselves with the military; previously caricatured as woolly-headed, mild-mannered "sissies," physicists improved their public image (and their ability to garner government grants) inestimably by producing monster weapons in the 1940's and 1950's" (Seager 53). With this union of science and the military, we have seen an escalation in

A Few Suggestions

Patriarchy has existed for five thousand years and is basically entrenched in our collective social mind. If we are serious about peace, then we must listen to feminist voices as we move into the next century. To compensate for the damage that Patriarchy has specifically leveled against women, special attention should be given to the nurture of girls. Girls must be taught that they are individuals with a voice to be heard from a very early age.

Men in the peace movement can begin to learn feminist values by listening to women and reflecting on how they personally fit into our patriarchal system of power. To do this, they can actively engage the women they know in conversations about gender and gender inequality, listening to them at every turn. They can make a personal commitment to listen when their sisters in the peace movement speak—even if we are not speaking loudly due to the repression of our voices for so long. During meetings, all of us can become more aware of gender roles and pay special attention to who is talking the most and what the women are saying and whether they are being heard.

Women can form groups to discuss feminist thought and practice as they participate

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in the peace movement. We can foster an attitude of universal sisterhood and promote respect and appreciation for women's contributions throughout history and into the present. We can find common threads that tie us all together as women living under a violent patriarchal system of power. We can lift each other up at meetings, pointing out to our male counterparts the insights that we have as women. We can demand to be heard.

Non-violence, Peace, and Power

Finally, peace can only be achieved through non-violent means if it is to be long-lasting. This is not to say that peace is free of conflict. Peace includes conflict, especially

since we are trying to eradicate a system of war and must SPEAK OUT about violent atrocities committed in our world. Speaking out may even increase conflict at first because the powers-that-be want us to remain silent as they continue to sell weapons of mass destruction, massacre innocent people and treat women violently even, and especially, in the home. Peace asks us to examine conflict honestly, which leads to creative resolution and reconciliation without the use of force.

It was male-dominated thought in the 1960's peace movement that advocated overthrowing our current government using violence. This attitude and method is ridiculous both on a practical level (the U.S. military can kick our butts) and on a philosophical level as we move into the next century. Peace-

ful means bring about conciliatory ends. Violent means bring about retaliatory ends, once the "new" order is established by those who have seized power in the name of peace and justice.

We need to redefine what power is and how much power is available to us all. If we look at power in terms of personal empowerment, there is enough for everybody and it doesn't need to be withheld from one group or seized by another. Power *over* others will never bring us peace. We must all work on empowering ourselves and others to work together to transform our violent world into one of peace and reconciliation. Listening to women and feminist voices has never been as crucial as we struggle for human liberation from violence and war. ☑

Endnote: Any woman in the community interested in joining our feminist study and discussion group should email femstud@umich.edu for more information.

References

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- Earth Follies: coming to feminist terms with the global environmental crisis.* By Joni Seager, Routledge, NY 1993.