

THE FIRST IN A TWO-PART SERIES

THE MYTH OF MALE POWER

A REVOLUTIONARY LOOK AT GENDER ROLES REVEALS:

- HOW FEMINISM DISTORTED AND DISCOUNTED WHAT'S BEST IN MEN
- HOW THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES BECAME A ONE-WAY WAR
- HOW WOMEN USE VICTIM POWER TO GET WHAT THEY WANT
- HOW BEING A MAN JUST MIGHT GET YOU KILLED

THERE ARE many ways in which a woman experiences a greater sense of powerlessness than a man. She may fear pregnancy, aging, rape, date rape and criminal assault. She may feel greater pressure to marry and, without regard to her own wishes, interrupt her career for children. She may feel excluded from an old-boy network. She may resent having less freedom to walk into a bar without being bothered.

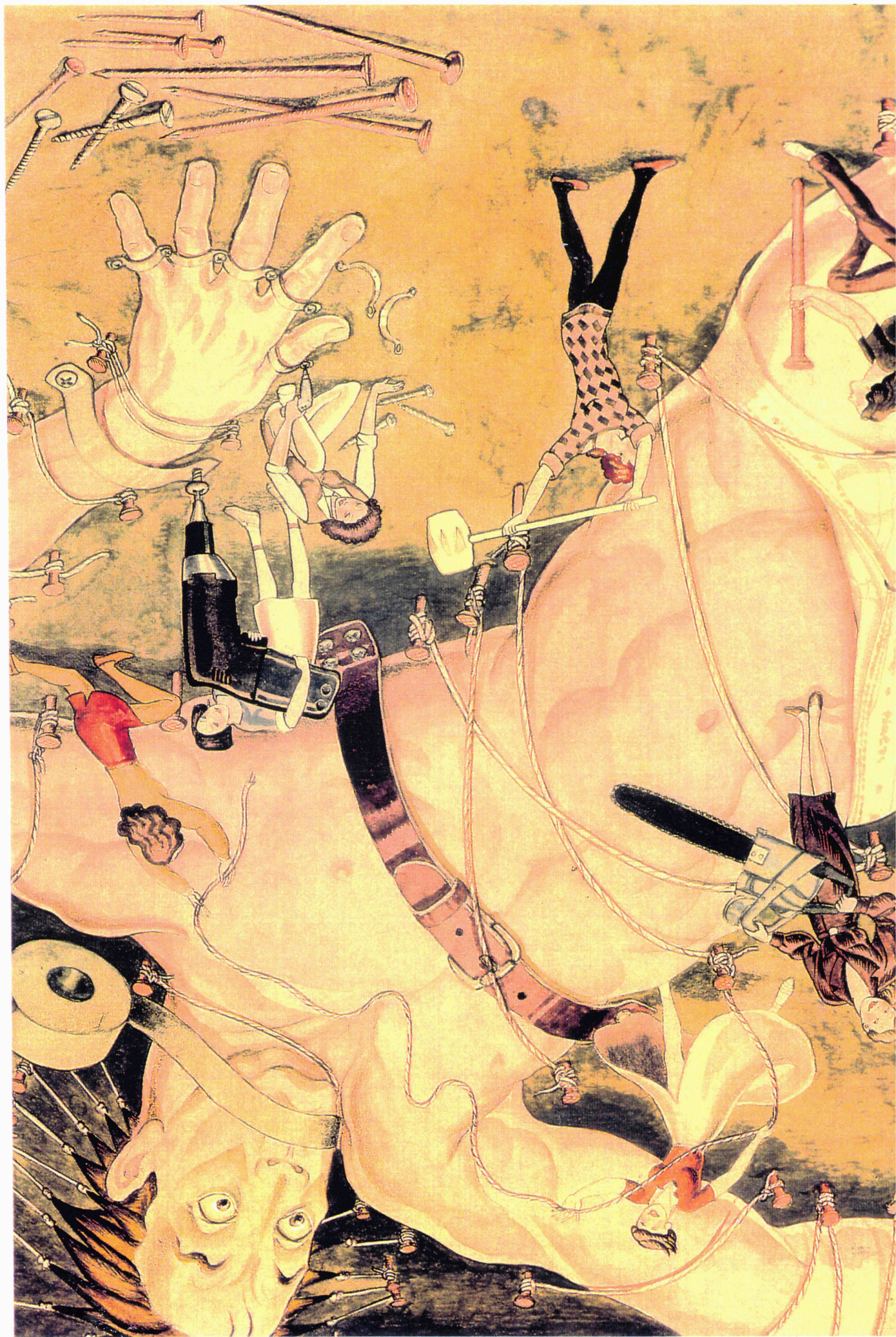
Fortunately, most industrial nations have acknowledged these female experiences. Unfortunately, they have acknowledged only the female experiences—and concluded that while women *have* the problem, men *are* the problem.

A man, of course, has a different experience. He can see marriage become divorce, and often finds that shared financial burdens become alimony payments, his home become his wife's home and his children become support payments who have been turned against him. A man who finds himself in these situations feels as if he is spending his life working for people who hate him. He feels desperate for someone to love, but fears that another marriage may ultimately leave him with another mortgage payment, another set of children turned against him and a deeper desperation. When such a man is called "commitment-phobic," he doesn't feel understood.

When men try to keep up with payments by working overtime and are told they are insensitive, or try to handle the stress by drinking and are told they are drunkards, they don't feel powerful but powerless. When they fear a cry for help will be met with an instruction to stop whining, or that a plea to be heard will be met with "yes, buts," they skip attempting suicide as a cry for help and just commit suicide. Men have remained the silent sex and are increasingly becoming the suicide sex.

What feminism has contributed to women's options must be supported. But when feminists suggest that God might be a She without suggesting that the Devil might also be female, they must be opposed. Feminism articulated the shadow side of men and the light side of women. It neglected the shadow side of women and the light side of men. And it didn't acknowledge that each sex has each side within itself. When issues of sexual harassment (continued on page 152)





"Feminism has been to the daily news what bacteria is to water. We consumed it without knowing it."

surfaced, we were told, "Men don't get it." In fact, neither sex gets it. A man doesn't get a woman's fear of harassment, which stems from her passive role. A woman doesn't get a man's fear of sexual rejection, which stems from his initiating role. Both sexes are so preoccupied with their vulnerability that neither understands the other's vulnerability.

The difference? Feminism taught women to sue men for sexual harassment or date rape when men initiate with the wrong person or at the wrong time. No one has taught men to sue women for sexual trauma for saying yes, then no, then yes, then no during a sexual encounter. Feminism left women with three sexual options—their old role, the male role and the victim role. Men were left with less than one option—they were still expected to initiate in a relationship, but now, if they did it badly, they could go to jail for it.

Feminism justified female "victim power" by convincing the world that we live in a sexist, male-dominated and patriarchal world. In fact, the world is both male- and female-dominated, both patriarchal and matriarchal, each in different ways. Among other things, that's why patriarchy and male dominance double as code words for male disposability. The male's role—to provide and protect—led to the disposal of men in war and work (in the "death professions" of construction, firefighting, lumberjacking, trucking). While we acknowledged the glass ceilings that kept women out of the top, we ignored the glass floors that kept men at the bottom. Thus the *Jobs Rated Almanac* reveals that the majority of the 25 worst jobs "happened to be" male dominated.

By the Eighties, feminism's ability to articulate a woman's light side and a man's shadow side led to women's magazines, talk shows, self-improvement books and TV specials that equated progressivism with women as victims and men as victimizers. Rarely did we see women as victimizers and men as victims (of false accusations, emotional abuse or deprivation of visiting rights with their children).

It was soon considered progressive to criticize male legislators for making war, but not to credit male legislators for making democracy. In the United States, almost 1 million firefighters volunteer to risk their lives to save strangers. Of these, 99 percent are men. We see TV specials that ask the question, "Does the man next door molest girls?" but not

our everyday lives we might see six firefighters saving women, but no TV special points out that all six firefighters were men—or that male police officers, rescue-team members, lifeguards and ambulance technicians who save women's lives are far more ubiquitous than men who jeopardize women's lives.

During Mike Tyson's rape trial in Indianapolis, the hotel in which the jury was sequestered caught fire. Two firefighters died saving hotel occupants. Tyson's trial made us increasingly aware of men as rapists, but the firefighters' deaths did not make us increasingly aware of men as saviors. We were more aware of one man doing harm than of two men saving, of one man threatening one woman (who is still alive) than of dozens of men saving hundreds of people (and that two of those men died).

Men's expectations are about as deeply ingrained in society as women's were in the Fifties. Women's studies have helped women question their expectations. And this is positive. What isn't positive is the tendency of feminists to argue against men's studies because "history is men's studies." History books, though, do not encourage men to question their expectations. In fact, history books sell to boys the traditional male role of hero and performer. Each history book is advertisement for the performer role. Each lesson tells him, "If you perform, you will get love and respect. If you fail, you will be nothing."

To a boy, history is pressure to perform, not relief from that pressure. Feminism is relief from the pressure to be confined to the traditional female role. To a boy, then, history is not the equivalent of women's studies, it is the opposite of women's studies. It tells him that the only acceptable role is the traditional one. Women's studies do more than question the female role—they tell women they have a right to what was once the traditional male role. Nothing tells men they have a right to the traditional female role—an equal right to stay home full-time or part-time with the children, for example, while his wife supports him.

To acknowledge the full truth about sex roles—that both men and women are burdened by and benefit from them—was considered regressive. Worse, it didn't sell. Women bought the books and magazines, and publishers pandered to them, just as politicians pander to interest groups. Women became

Women Who Love, and men became *Men Who Hate*. The pandering transformed a female strength—understanding relationships—into a female weakness: misunderstanding men.

In the past quarter century, feminism has been to the daily news what bacteria is to water. We consumed it without knowing it—both the good and the bad. Men were not perfect listeners. But many did absorb new concepts: sex object, glass ceiling, palimony, the battered-woman syndrome, deadbeat dads, the feminization of poverty. Slogans were focused on female concerns: "A woman's right to choose," "Equal pay for equal work," "Our bodies, our business." Men found their sexuality blamed for almost everything—sexual harassment, sexual molestation, pornography, incest, rape, date rape.

Men accepted as truth many assumptions of discrimination against women—women are the victims of most violence, women's health is neglected more than men's, women are paid less for the same work, husbands batter wives more, men have more power, ours is a patriarchal, sexist, male-dominated world. Many men condemned these so-called discriminations against women even as they accepted the necessity for discrimination against men—affirmative action for women, government-subsidized women's commissions, women's studies, government programs for women, infants and children. For men, feminism turned the battle of the sexes into a war in which only one side showed up.

Have we been misled by feminists? Yes. Is it feminists' fault? No, because men have not spoken up. Simply, women cannot hear what men do not say. Now men must take responsibility to stand up for what they want.

Men can be thought of as searching for their inner perestroika. Just as Soviet citizens watched the world around them become freer, men watched the women around them become freer. In the same way Soviet citizens began to question if their perception of themselves as a powerful nation distracted them from facing their powerlessness, men are on the verge of questioning if their perception of themselves as the powerful sex simply distracts them from confronting their powerlessness. Men are appropriately beginning to see themselves for what they've become—a Third World sex.

In post offices throughout the United States, Selective Service posters remind men that they must register for the draft. Emblazoned across the body of a man is the legend "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do." Imagine the outrage if the post office posters said "A Jew's gotta do what a Jew's gotta do," or if a poster with the body of a pregnant woman

had "A woman's gotta do . . ." written across it.

What might happen if steps were taken to rectify that situation? Imagine music playing on your car radio. An announcer's voice interrupts: "We have a special bulletin from President Clinton." The president announces, "Since 1.2 million American men have been killed in war, as part of my new program for equality, we will draft only women until 1.2 million American women have been killed in war."

If any other group—blacks, Jews, women or gays—were singled out to register for the draft based merely on characteristics at birth, we would immediately recognize it as genocide. But when men are singled out based on their sex at birth, it is called power.

What any other group would call powerlessness, men have been taught to call power. We don't call male-killing sexism, we call it glory. We don't call it a slaughter when 1 million men are killed or maimed in the battles of the Somme in World War One, we call it serving the country. We don't call those who selected only men to die murderers, we call them voters.

Our slogan for women is "A woman's body, a woman's choice." Our slogan for men is "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do."

Empires are often considered the quintessential example of men's desire for power and conquest.

Empires were to countries what insurance policies are to individuals: a source of security. For example, as European countries saw themselves as vulnerable to attack, empires became a buffer zone against that vulnerability. Likewise, the vast resources of an empire provided protection against food shortages and economic dislocation. It is ironic that we blame men for killing to create empires, and yet we live contentedly in the empires men create.

The accumulated wars that formed the United States are another example that men are considered less important than property. Men died for property, while women lived on the property that served as their husbands' graves.

Put another way, major powers became major powers through the deaths of men. Because men died, empires can be seen as a male form of subservience; because the intent was to protect men's families, empires can be seen as a male contribution to survival.

It is often said that women are a civilizing balance to the innately warlike male. It could be said that because men took care of the killing for women, men civilized women. When survival was the issue, men killed to protect the children that women bore; it was the male form of nurturing, their contribution to the civilizing balance. Whether killing in war or making a killing on Wall Street, men

were protecting what women bore.

Throughout history, games and sports have prepared boys and men for battle. The more violent the game, the better the preparation. Today, violence against women is rightly abhorred. But we call violence against men entertainment. Think of football, boxing, wrestling, ice hockey, rodeos and auto racing. All are games used to sugarcoat violence against men, who need to accept—and find glory in—the prospect of death in battle. Yet even today the violence against men in sports is financed by our public education system and by public subsidies of the arenas in which sports teams play. Violence against men is not only called entertainment, it is also called education.

Imagine how we would feel if I wrote, "Today, violence against women is rightly applauded." We would know I favored the death of women; yet, when we applaud violence against men (as in football or boxing), we favor the death of men. We do it because we have learned that the more effectively we prepare men to sacrifice themselves, the more our women and children, our societies and our empires are protected. The subconscious translation of "our team winning" is "our society protected." We applaud violence against men and abhor violence against women because part of the purpose of violence against men is to protect women.

Death in battle isn't the only price men pay for being men. In 1920 women in the United States lived one year longer than men. Today women live seven years longer. The male-female lifespan gap has increased 600 percent. We acknowledge that blacks' dying six years sooner than whites reflects the powerlessness of blacks in American society. Yet that men die seven years sooner than women is rarely seen as a reflection of the powerlessness of men in American society.

Is the seven-year gap biological? Probably not. If it were, it shouldn't have been just a one-year gap in 1920. If men lived seven years longer than women, feminists might insist that life expectancy is the best measure of who has the power. And they would be right. Power is the ability to control one's life. Death tends to reduce control. Life expectancy is the bottom line—the ratio of life's stresses to life's rewards.

If power means having control over one's own life, then perhaps life expectancy is the best ranking of the impact of sex roles and racism on power. Here is the ranking, according to the National Center for Health Statistics:

white females—79 years
black females—74 years
white males—72 years
black males—65 years

White females outlive black males by almost 14 years. Imagine the support for affirmative action if a 49-year-old woman was closer to death than a 62-year-old

man. Men face other sex-related risks well. There was a journalist who lived near me in San Diego. Every day he went home to have lunch with his wife. Recently, as he got near his door, he heard his wife screaming. She was being attacked, so he did what most men would have done: He fought the intruder. The intruder killed him.

A friend of mine asked me: "If you would you pay someone who said that he was ever with you when you were attacked, he would intervene and try to get himself killed slowly enough to give you time to escape? What is the hourly wage for a bodyguard? As a man, that's your job every time you are with a woman, any woman, not just your wife."

What do men as women's bodyguards and men as volunteer firefighters have in common besides being men? They are both unpaid. Feminists make much of women's unpaid roles—chauffeur, housekeeper, nurse, etc. Men have not yet begun to investigate their unpaid roles.

Another way of looking at power in dollar terms: spending power. The Census Bureau finds that women are heads of households have a net worth that is 141 percent that of men who are heads of households. How is this possible? The value of the net worth of a household is that it allows us to see what men and women have left when their expenses are subtracted from their assets. The median net worth is \$13,000 for women and \$9,883 for men.

Among the wealthiest 1.6 percent of the U.S. population (those with assets of \$500,000 or more), women's average net worth is greater than men's. How can this be? Many of the wealthiest people are women when women hold almost none of the top corporate jobs? In part, by marrying the men who do and by living on the assets of those men die.

A glance at any large store bears out this spending power differential. A doctoral dissertation presented at the University of California at San Diego found that retail stores in large shopping centers (including men's shops and sports goods stores) devoted seven times as much floor space to women's personal items than are devoted to men's. Men buy more for women. The wealth is not in what we earn, it is in what is spent on us, at our discretion, at our request.

According to *American Demographics* magazine, women control consumer spending by a wide margin in nearly every consumer category. And spending power brings other forms of power. Women's control over spending has led to women control over TV programming because TV is dependent on spot advertising. When this is combined with the fact

women watch more TV in almost every time slot, shows can't afford to bite the hand that feeds them. Women are to TV what bosses are to employees. The result? Almost half of the approximately 250 made-for-TV movies in the 1991-1992 season depicted women as victims subjected to some form of physical or psychological mistreatment.

In my travels around the country, I've asked servers about the spending gap between men and women in restaurants. They tell me that men pay for women about ten times as frequently as women pay for men. The more expensive the restaurant, the more likely the man will pay. Women often say, "Men earn more." But when two women go to a restaurant, they don't assume that the woman who earns more will pay the bill. The expectation on men to spend more on women creates the spending obligation gap.

I got a sense of this gap as soon as I began dating. As a teenager, I loved baby-sitting. (I genuinely loved kids, and it was also the only way I could get paid for raiding a refrigerator.) But then I got to dating age. Alas, baby-sitting paid only 50 cents an hour. Lawn mowing, though, paid two dollars an hour. I hated lawn mowing. But as soon as I started dating, I started mowing lawns.

For boys, lawn mowing is a metaphor for the way we soon learn to take jobs we like less because they pay more. I believe that in their junior year of high school, boys begin to repress their interest in foreign languages, literature, art history, sociology and anthropology because they know an art history major will make less than an engineer. Partially as a result of different spending expectations (he may have to support a woman but cannot expect a woman to support him), more than 85 percent of college students who major in engineering are men; more than 80 percent of the art history majors are women.

The difference in the earnings of the female art historian versus the male engineer appears to be the measure of discrimination, when in fact both sexes knew ahead of time that engineering would pay more. In fact, the woman who enters the engineering field with the same lack of experience as the man averages \$571 more than her male counterpart in her first year of employment.

If a man feels obliged to choose a higher-paying career he likes less, it is a sign of powerlessness, not power.

Don't men, though, have almost all the influence and power? In business and politics, yes. But we often ignore the influence of a mother over her children, including her sons. It is the mother who can make the child's bedtime earlier, take away desserts or ground the child. It is the hand that rocks the cradle that creates the child's everyday heaven or hell.

Few men have comparable influence. While traditionally the man was master of the house, a man now feels he is a visitor in his wife's castle in the same way a woman would feel like a visitor if she entered her husband's place of work. From a woman's perspective, a man's home is his castle. From a man's perspective, a woman's home is his mortgage.

Almost every woman has a primary role in the female-dominated family structure. Only a small percentage of men have a primary role in the male-dominated governmental and religious structures. Many mothers are, in a sense, the chair of the board of a small company—their family. Most men are on their company's assembly line—either its physical assembly line or its psychological assembly line.

Influence, though, is not real power. Mothers would laugh if we told them that having more children would give them more power. If we told mothers that having influence over ten children was their only path to love and respect, they would feel pressured, not empowered. But when we tell men, "The more people you supervise, the more power you will have and the more people will respect you," they buy it. Real power does not come from caving in to pressure to expand obligations. It comes from controlling your own life, not others' lives.

Did men historically have more control over their lives? Historically, a husband spent the bulk of his day under the eye of his boss. A stay-at-home wife did not spend the bulk of her day under

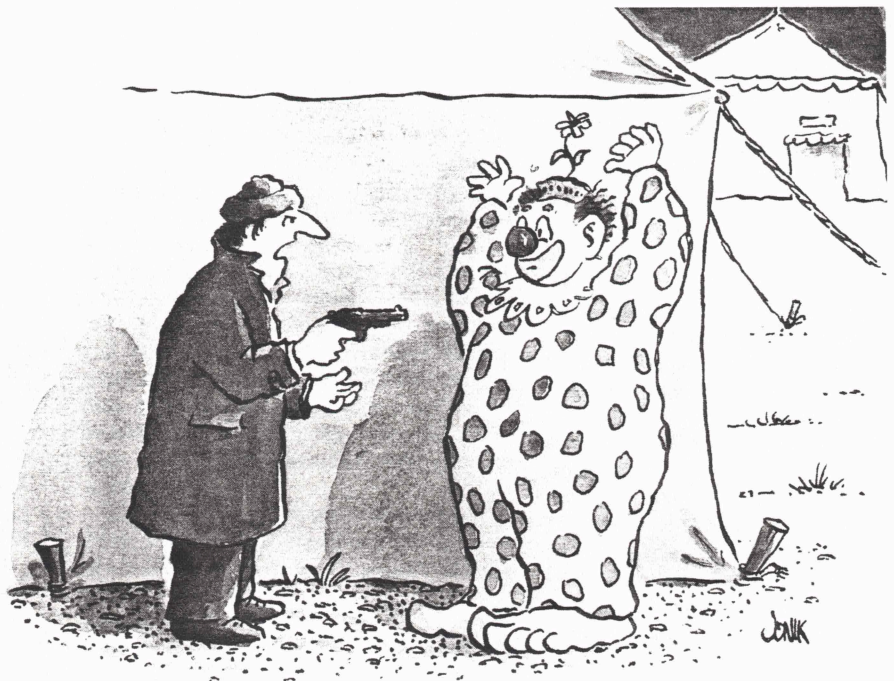
the eye of her husband. She had more control over her work life than he had over his.

What about workplace security? The prohibition against divorce gave women security at work. Nothing similar gave men security in their workplaces. A man's source of income could fire him; her source of income could not fire her. Even today, if he quits his job, he doesn't get severance pay; if she initiates divorce, she takes half the corporate stock.

The media popularize studies reporting the greater amount of time a woman spends on housework and child care, concluding that women work two jobs while men work one. But this is misleading. Women do work more hours inside the home, but men work more hours outside the home. And the average man commutes farther and spends more time doing yard work, repairs and painting. What happens when all of these are combined? A study conducted at the University of Michigan (and reported in the *Journal of Economic Literature* in 1991) found the average man worked 61 hours per week, the average woman 56 hours.

Nor is this a recent change in men. In 1975 the largest nationwide probability sampling of households found that when all child care, housework, work outside the home, commuting and gardening were added together, husbands did 53 percent of the total work, wives 47 percent. So the image of women as the servants of men needs questioning.

The October 1969 article in *Psychology Today* titled "Women as Nigger" quickly led feminists to draw parallels between



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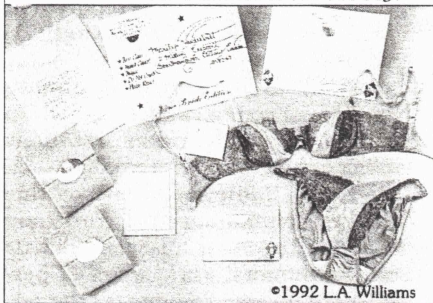
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the oppression of women and blacks. Men were characterized as oppressors, masters, slaveholders. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm was widely quoted for her statement that she faced far more discrimination as a woman than as a black.

There was a germ of truth to the comparison. It allowed the hard-earned rights of the civil rights movement to be applied to women. But few of us realized how each sex was the other's slave in different ways.

If men had made such a comparison, they would have had every bit as strong a case as feminists. Not until we understand how men were also women's servants do we understand the sexual division of labor and, therefore, of the fallacy of comparing sex roles to slavery.

Men, like black slaves, were forced to risk their lives. Slaves did so in cotton fields so that whites would benefit economically. Males did so on battlefields so that everyone else might benefit economically. The disproportionate numbers of blacks and males in war increases the likelihood of blacks' and males' experiencing post-traumatic stress, of becoming killers in civilian life and of dying early. Both slaves and men died to make the world safe for someone else's freedom.

Slaves had their children involuntarily taken from them. Men have their children involuntarily taken from them. We tell women they have the right to children and tell men they have to fight for children.

Blacks were forced, through slavery, into society's most hazardous jobs. Men are forced, through socialization, into society's most hazardous jobs. Both slaves and men constitute almost 100 percent of the "death professions." Men still do. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, 94 percent of occupational deaths from injury occur among men. That should come as no surprise. The most dangerous jobs—firefighting, logging, trucking, construction and coal mining—are accomplished at the risk of men's lives.

When slaves gave up their seats for whites, we called it subservience. When men give up their seats for women, we call it politeness. Slaves bowed before their masters; today, traditional men still bow before women. These symbols of deference and subservience are common with slaves to masters and with men to women.

Blacks are more likely than whites to be in prison. Men are about 20 times as likely as women to be in prison. Blacks are less likely than whites to attend college or graduate from college. Men are less likely than women to attend college (46 percent versus 54 percent) and less likely to graduate from college (45 percent versus 55 percent).

Blacks who are heads of households

have a net worth much lower than heads of households who are white. Men who are heads of households have a net worth much lower than heads of households who are women. No oppressed group has ever had a net worth higher than its oppressors'.

It would be hard to find a single example in history in which a group that cast more than 50 percent of the vote got away with calling itself a victim. Or an example of an oppressed group that chooses to vote for its oppressors more than it chooses to have its own members take responsibility for running. Women are the only minority group that is a majority, the only group calling itself oppressed that is able to control who is elected to every office in virtually every community in the country. Power is not in who holds the office. Power is in who chooses who holds the office. Blacks, Irish and Jews never had more than 50 percent of America's vote.

Women are the only "oppressed" group to share the same parents as the oppressor, to be born into the middle class and upper class as frequently as the oppressor, to own more of the culture's luxury items than the oppressor. Women are the only oppressed group that is able to buy most of the \$10 billion dollars' worth of cosmetics sold each year, the only oppressed group that spends more on high-fashion, brand-name clothing than its oppressors, the only oppressed group that watches more TV.

The difference between slaves and males is that blacks rarely thought of their slavery as power, but men are taught to think of their slavery as power. If, in fact, men were slavemasters and women slaves, then why did men spend a lifetime supporting the slaves and the slave's children? Why weren't women supporting men instead, the way kings were supported by their subjects?

Our understanding of blacks' powerlessness has allowed us to call what we did to blacks immoral, yet we still call what we do to males patriotism and heroism when they kill on our behalf. We call it violence, murder and greed when men kill the wrong people the wrong way at the wrong time.

We try to adjust our immoral treatment of blacks through affirmative action programs. By thinking of men as the dominant oppressors who do what they do for power and greed, we feel little guilt when they die early in the process. By believing that women are an oppressed, slavelike class, we extend privileges and advantages to women that had originally been designed to compensate for our immorality to blacks. For women—and only women—to take advantage of this is its own brand of immorality. For men to cooperate is its own brand of ignorance.

