

Everything You Always Wanted to Know

About Sexism (But Neglected to Ask)

By Susan Satterthwaite
and Joann Leake

Do not be misled as to the seriousness of this article, judging from our take-off on a popular book title. This week the Feminist Perspective examines the sexism present as one progresses throughout the course of everyday living, both on the level of the university society, and in society at large. There are some very real sexist ideas being promoted here on campus, dispelling the notion that discrimination is somewhere "out there", and not the concern of each and every individual. Discrimination affects us all, and by not rejecting its presence in our lives, we are serving as but merely more links in the chain of prejudice and of bigotry. We intend to discuss, and to dispel, some of the inaccuracies and the mythology of current ideas of womankind, not to mention the broader humankind.

For example, let's talk titles. As things recently stood, a man, regardless of his marital status, was addressed as "Mr.". A woman, if she was not married, was addressed as "Miss", and "Mrs." if she was married. The discrepancy to be found here is that a woman's title depends on her marital status, the evidence of it being overt in terms of public scrutiny, while with a man, status, at least in terms of address, is covert. Naturally there are advantages to this: a) he is not defined in terms of his relationship to a woman, and b) he does not have to reveal the status of this relationship on official documents. Hence came the term "Ms." into the current English vernacular in an attempt to try to equalize the imbalance. But just the other day one of the authors of this article was completing a form at the Registrar's office, and lo and behold, there was no alternative of Ms. on

the form. One either has to resort to Miss, add a fourth Ms. to the selections or go titleless. The latter, in our opinion, is the state most preferred, but, since our society is hooked on titles, at least allow us the choice of using one not riddled with such subordinating overtones. Few men are defined in terms of "having" a woman, so why should women be defined in terms of "having" (or being had by) a man?

Another rather offensive and insulting occurrence is when, in the course of congenial conversation, a woman is queried about receiving her M.R.S. degree, instead of being asked as to what she actually is majoring in, or what she hopes to do upon completion of her degree. It completely degrades any thought of serious intentionality on the part of the female university student when it is assumed that she is only attending university in order to find a husband, or for lack of something better to do. Two thousand dollars plus per annum is an expensive price to pay to hunt on the university grounds. Why not frequent construction sites (a predominantly male job market), public libraries or city nightspots? If the intention is to marry for the sake of marrying, then one certainly cannot be overly choosy as to whom they are marrying. This is as ridiculous as it sounds, folks. Granted, marriage may be on the minds of some, but give us a break from these sweeping generalities. It should be added that those women whom we know as having marriage plans or as being married have many more concerns in their lives, in addition to marriage.

Also, where is it written into basic laws of living that women and men cannot "just be friends"? A common happening in

the campus and the general milieu is for one individual to spot two other individuals, one of each sex, engaged in intense conversation and then automatically presume that they are in the grip of a torrid passion. No member of one sex is going to appeal to the entire population of the other (no, not even Bo Derek!) discrediting the notion that Male and Female = Automatic Copulation. It just ain't necessarily so! Another even more sexist and invariably insulting concept is that of the expectations by males of females after a date. Who the hell ever laid down the rule that when a man pays for a woman's night out, the woman owes the man a "favour" before the night is out. Men have no right to expect this type of reciprocity. However, women must also realize that if they choose to take advantage of the fact that everything is paid for by the man then it is only natural for the man to expect some type of remuneration. Moral of the story: the responsibility for "taking

the cheque" should be a fifty-fifty proposition.

The aforementioned sexist occurrences have been chosen from personal experience and experiences related to us by others. Obviously there are numerous

other common incidents that we could discuss at some length, but time and press space dictate otherwise. The point is here that the first step to eliminating or modifying archaic practices is to

be aware of their presence in our own lives. Then, once awareness has happened, we can take action to ensure that we do dispel the myths and their accompanying behaviors.

This places sexism within the personal ballpark of every individual, not as some type of media mythology promoted to incite the masses. Perhaps our selection of incidents

may seem trivial to some, but when one examines the symbolism behind them, then their importance in light of the entirety is not so readily dismissed.



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