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Women's Studies Newsletter November 1981

Women's Studies

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opinions and commentary

This year the WSNL will include an editorial page open for your opinions and commentary. We will publish as many of these as space permits. Please take responsibility for your viewpoints and sign your name. We will not accept unsigned material, but we may agree to withhold names on request. We are also happy to accept other written material: poems, essays, announcements, reports on feminist theatre or music, etc. The deadline for articles for the next issue is December 2. Submit contributions to Jackie Ondy (Box #1530) or Becky Pschirrer (Box #2424).

The opinions expressed in this section are not necessarily those of the editors.

As a male deeply concerned with the success of the movement for human equality, I feel compelled to examine the connections between male and female values. It seems to me that there is a tendency for some women to assimilate male values uncritically. The potential and credibility of the women's movement has been weakened by this tendency. The "traditional" male values are far from admirable and might even be seen as inferior to female values. Female values, especially nonviolence, should be advocated as more valuable. Women have a key role to play in today's society: a role which reflects "humanness" not "maleness".

What are these male and female values to which I refer? I see society projecting the male image of virility, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and often violence. Though not all men possess these values, they are part of the covert and overt socialization process to which all men are exposed. These values are selfish and self-defeating. We all depend on each other, and any selfish act maligns the community on which we depend. These values are nothing to be proud of, and in fact should be avoided.

But what should replace these values if they are rightfully denounced? I see a new value system revolving around female values (such as those associated with the Chinese female symbol "yin"): care, nurturance, sacrifice, faith, and above all nonviolence. As Mahatma Gandhi says, "To call woman the weaker sex is a libel: it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. Nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.....Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?"

I get discouraged listening to women who, like Juanita Kreps, have assimilated the traditional male values. These women are missing something crucial: the development of their own value system. I would urge that non-
violence be at the heart of a human ethic. Gandhi believed that "woman will not make the contribution to the world by mimicking or running a race with man. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man." Women have an important role today. Joan Straumanis, in a panel discussion earlier this year about peace and its supervision, urged that women should be the ones to decide issues of major moral importance. Males today have too many violent tendencies that threaten all of our lives. "Women are the natural messengers of the gospel of nonviolence if only they will realize their high estate."


Submitted by Brad Bennett (82)

The Socialist-Feminist group requires one thing of our members: a commitment. Last year a committed membership was never a problem. Could this be because last year the group was for women only? We counted on one another to be there every week, to have done the reading, and to share our thoughts and ideas. We thought that opening up the group to men was a positive step towards non-separatism, and indeed in many ways it is. However, the men who expressed interest in joining have not participated with the same degree of commitment that women have. This lack of male participation suggests to me that the separatism rests with those who won't commit themselves to the group. Why is it that the women are making the commitment and the men are not?

Submitted by Carey Tompkins (84)
by Lin Distel

Editor's note: This was written in response to last month's editorial "It's Time to Include Men" (Women's Studies Newsletter, Vol. 7, No. 1).

The Women's Action Group is committed to the struggle to "seek and actively define and act upon the needs of women at Denison". Is it time to include men in this struggle? I think not. For the sake of argument, let us imagine that the entire female population is blind, and that this condition of their reality has existed since time began; conversely, let us imagine the male population as possessors of the gift of sight. Now imagine that a small group within the female population recognizes the fact that society not only refuses to recognize the female condition of blindness, but further, demands that women exist in a sighted society as if the fact of female blindness made little or no difference at all. This group of women are intent, not on altering the conditions of their reality, but on changing the structures of society so that the female reality will be as equally regarded and supported as is the male reality.

Now, enter into this picture a member of the male population who realizes the conditions of deprivation under which women have been struggling for so long: the fact that, even though women do not share in this gift of sight, they are expected to exist in a sighted society as if such disparity of experience is of both little consequence and cause for concern. This particular male, in order to gain a more complete understanding of the female experience, covers his eyes for a period of days. At the end of these days, he feels that now he is equipped to deal with the concerns of women because now he has some consciousness as to what it must be like for a blind individual to live in a sighted society which does not even recognize blindness as a condition of being. But the question which must be asked at this point is what is the nature of this man's consciousness concerning the reality of women?

Most importantly, it must be noted that crucial qualitative differences exist between the "blind" experience of this one male and the "blindness" of all women. First, the male continues to have control over his situation because he can choose to discard his affected blindness at any time; for him, it is not a condition of reality. Thus, it seems that even though the intentions of this male are not without value, the fact remains that his experience with blindness will be burdened by a cloak of artificiality. Because his condition is not permanent, one wonders if he will be able to grasp certain emotional and intellectual processes which are present in a "blind" woman who is struggling to survive in a sighted world. Will he experience the confusion and bewilderment; the questioning; the anger and furious rage; the depression; the sadness; and finally, the resolve and the strength to be, while fighting against forces which negate that being?

A second important difference between these two experiences is that even though this particular male is attempting to experience blindness by cutting off his visual perceptions, the fact remains that he possesses a knowledge of the world which is couched in terms of his vision. It would seem that even the attempt to experience blindness is influenced by, and sifted through a
filter of, sighted experience. So when our concerned male talks with a woman about his experience, is he really sharing in the same blind experience that is hers or is he sharing his newly broadened perspective that remains, essentially, sighted? And now the question is, how much assistance does this male have to offer a group of women who are not seeking to change what they are, but who are seeking instead to alter the structures of a society which refuses even to recognize that it ignores and thus, negates, the reality of women?

I am compelled to contend that such "help" or support is of little importance to such a group of women. The dynamics involved in breaking free of oppression are such that the crucial emphasis must be placed on developing an understanding of the circumstances of oppression and on communicating this understanding to all of those who share in the oppression. As long as there are those women who not only fail to appreciate the fact that they are oppressed, but who are actually comfortable existing within the narrowly defined limits of womanhood as dictated by this oppression, efforts to rectify the situation will have relatively little impact. It is the responsibility of women who are aware to challenge those women who feel there is no need to be aware of anything but those things deemed important by a male society.

This is a rather long-winded attempt to explain why I do not feel that now is the time to include men in the Women's Action Group. I am, of course, assuming that the nature of the group is primarily that of a support and educational group, designed to "seek and actively define and act upon the needs of women at Denison." Were it a political group, committed to action and altering the patriarchal structures of the Denison community, I would be more inclined to welcome the contributions of those few Denison men who possess an intelligently sensitive level of consciousness concerning the oppression of women. But because it seems that here we are still attempting to reach the female members of this community and open their eyes to their own oppression, I think the group should remain an exclusively all-women group. At this point in the development of women's consciousness, I do not think the contributions of those concerned men could possibly equal the crucial need for the Women's Action Group to actively educate the opinions of the entire female population here at Denison. We need a situation where all women share equally in the reality of being Woman, and I do not mean a male-defined concept of woman. Once such a reality exists, then it will be time to include men like the concerned male in my analogy -- men who, even though they cannot share in the reality of women, are aware of the fact that a woman's reality requires societal support and nurturance, just as man's reality has been accommodated since time zero.
it fits

It fits my hand so well
    its smoothness the texture of my skin
    my closed hand covers it almost completely.
I can only clench my fist
    tight around it and listen...

The people laugh and joke
    it bites
    into my knuckles and palm.

Warm now from my skin
    it could be a weapon.

s/he

she ran out of paints today
    particularly green, \text{the sky}
now
    had to be blue.

she inquired about her striped stockings
    he was dyeing them, you see
    and so she wondered...

of course they both knew
    that dyeing stocking striped requires a
highly accomplished practitioner.

pink shot from his doorway
    scattered
    thoughts, why
pink,
    now worried pink
    \text{she thought}

the sky
    now
purple.

shawn mcentee
"Women in Science" has been selected as the theme of the next annual meeting of The Ohio Academy of Sciences, to be held at The Ohio State University April 23-24, 1982. Nobel Laureate Rosalyn Yalow will present the keynote lecture on Saturday, April 24, and she has also been invited to attend receptions for various groups (students, women scientists, etc.) during her stay. Dr. Yalow's lecture and many of the other events and presentations will be open to the public. Denison students interested in science and social science careers are urged to attend.

There will be a symposium on "Women in Science," jointly sponsored by the Sociology and Science Education sections of the Academy. Other papers on women in science are being presented within various sections, along with research reports on a variety of other topics. Papers addressing the status of women in the earth sciences, chemistry, geography and mathematics are among those offered. Presentations on the participation of women in 19th century U.S. botanical research and on current oral history research on Ohio women naturalists of the early 20th century have also been suggested. Dr. Shirley Malcolm of The Office of Women and Minorities, American Association for the Advancement of Science, has been invited to give a luncheon address on the current status of women and minorities in U.S. science, and how current economic policies will affect participation of these groups. In addition, field trips to areas near Columbus will highlight work of women scientists who have contributed much to our understanding of Ohio's biology and geology.

A special program entitled "Women in Science Present Career Opportunities in Science" has been organized for area high school students. On Friday afternoon preceding the meeting of the full Academy, male and female high school students will have the opportunity to meet in small groups with women scientists talking about their work.

All of this has been planned and coordinated by a committee of scientists and other interested persons drawn from academic institutions, industries and scientific organizations in the Central Ohio area and working with officers of the Academy.

This coming year's theme of "Women in Science" promises to add an exciting dimension to discussions in a number of scientific fields. It is particularly appropriate for Denison, since it coincides with the final year of The Mellon Program: New Career Opportunities for Women which has focused increasing attention on women in science on this campus. I hope many of you will be able to attend part or all of the conference.

NOTE: Students, faculty or staff interested in attending may call Julie Mulroy or Mary Schilling.

by juliana mulroy
The New York Times recently published an article outlining the impact of the Reagan administration on women. Yes, Reagan has kept his promise to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court, but in other areas, this administration has had extremely detrimental effects on the rights status of women. Here are some examples:

-- "Of 367 administrative appointments to date, only 43 are women. No women sit in the Cabinet... In addition to Justice O'Connor, 53 people have been confirmed or nominated or are under investigation for judicial appointments; three are women."

-- The 25 percent cut in the social services block grant will greatly affect "services to the elderly (2/3 of whom are women), child care (essential for the mother trying to get off welfare and into the workforce), and services to victims of domestic violence (almost all women)."

-- Cuts in the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) hit women twice. The act provides training and jobs for many women, primarily in services utilized by other women (e.g. battered women's shelters, rape crisis centers). Already many of these services have been curtailed. The rape crisis center in my home town closed this past summer.

-- The majority of families receiving funding from AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) are headed by women. "The cuts will eliminate 40,000 families from the program rolls and reduce 285,000 families' benefits."

-- Seventy percent of the clients of the Legal Services Corporation are women. Reagan wants to eliminate this program entirely.

It is quite clear that although Reagan promised to "support equal rights for women and work actively to advance women throughout society", he has not done so, and is in fact doing just the opposite.

-- As Denison students we may feel that these budget cuts will not directly affect us. A closer look shows that they will. Already, Planned Parenthood of Newark (which operates a clinic here) is feeling the cuts (see Women's Studies Newsletter, Vol. 7, No. 1, October 13).

Many Denison students plan careers in social services—some of these jobs will disappear under the new budget cuts. Furthermore, all of us have a stake in what happens to children who are living in poverty conditions. For further information there is a copy of the articles on file in the Women's Resource Center.
Andrea Dworkin is a woman actively and vehemently opposed to pornography. She has been criticized by all sides — by the left and the right, by gays, straights, and by feminists and antifeminists. The attacks on her position have intensified with the publication of her book Pornography: Men Possessing Women (1981). Her critics use the word "dangerous" to describe her and her ideologies. I'd like to share with you a small part of a recent interview with Dworkin which was published in Soho News, September 15, 1981. Asked if her attacks on pornography were in proportion to the harm it does, she replied:

Different kinds of pornography are harmful in different ways. On one level, the fact that the environment is saturated with pornography is very important because it constantly tells women what their function is and how much their environment owes them. If I go into bookstores, supermarkets, drugstores, and I see pictures of women being exploited, abused, basically spat on, that tells me something about my status as a woman in that drugstore or supermarket. One of the ways I started thinking about the meaning of pornography in my day-to-day environment had to do with having lived on Crete. In the city where I lived, there was a public square where I went every day and had coffee. Then I read Nikos Kazantzakis' Freedom or Death. He describes that public square. When the Turks were occupying Crete, they would hang rebels from a tree in that square. He describes one particular hanging and its effect on those who saw it, the dead body hanging. My whole relationship to that public square changed. Because I knew that tree. And I knew it was true — that a man has been hung there. And when I started thinking about pornography in my environment and what it did to me and women I knew, I began to see it as a similar thing. The pornography is this society's way of hanging a woman in a public square so that all the other women know their place. It has an incredible effect on girls, the way they see themselves, on women and what they dare to do in public — and question of what right women have to be out of the house to begin with, takes on a whole new meaning when one thinks about a public environment saturated with women-hating depictions. I also think the place of pornography in high intellectual life is serious because it has a tremendous influence on everything that comes forth from the people it influences. These are all the people who think that pornography is more important than feminism is. They think that pornography is more central to human freedom (referring to the First Amendment)...

If anyone is interested in reading it, there is a copy in the Socialist Feminist file in the Womens' Resource Center.

by jackie ondy
Minorities, Women, and the Media: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Women's Studies

---Suzanne Condray, Speech and Communications, Denison
   T. Kimberlie Cromwell, Admissions, Denison
   Grace McDade, Student, Denison

Sexual Harassment: What Are We Doing About It?

---Ann Fitzgerald, English and Women's Studies, Denison
   Diane Vreuls, Oberlin
   Karen Williamson, Kenyon

Natural Sciences

---Juliana Mulroy, Biology, Denison

Institutional Response to Affirmative Action

---Lou Brakeman, Provost, Denison
   Jack Nyenhuis, Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts, Hope
   John Fuller, President GLCA

White Men and Black Women: Transforming a Traditional Course

---John Schilb, English, Denison

So What's This Institute All About?

---Robin Bartlett, Economics, Denison
   Sandy Zagarell, English, Oberlin
   Kathy Lanahan, Oberlin

Toward A Feminist Transformation of the Classroom

---Nan Nowik, English and Women's Studies, Denison
   Eve Berton, GLCA National Summer Institute in Women's Studies Staff
   Barbara Caruso, English and Women's Programs, Earlham

Strategies for Institutional Change

---Ann Fitzgerald, English and Women's Studies, Denison
   Sandy Zagarell, English, Oberlin
   Karen Courtney, Romance Languages and Women's Studies,
      Ohio Wesleyan
   Donna Scott, Women's Academic Coordinator, Kenyon

The Role of Men in the Transformation of the Academy: When is a Vanguard not a Vanguard?

---John Schilb, English, Denison
   Lou Brakeman, Provost, Denison
   Don Luidens, Sociology, Hope
   Cyrus Banning, Philosophy, Kenyon
   Jim Schlager, Albion
SCIENCE ANXIETY: FEAR OF SCIENCE AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT
by Jeffry V. Mallow

Written by a physics professor at Loyola University of Chicago, this urgently needed work examines the causes of science anxiety and investigates its personal and political consequences. Topics which are explored are: how people are taught to fear science; how lack of science education acts as a "job filter," often discriminating against women and minorities; how science is artificially separated from liberal arts; how science is similar to and different from math anxiety; how sexism in science teaching can be corrected; and, finally, how fear of science can be overcome.

In considerable detail, Mallow describes the method and techniques he and his colleagues at Loyola University have used in their Science Anxiety Clinic, developed with initial funding from the Mellon Foundation.

Students who feel uneasy about enrolling in science courses and those who have experienced negative emotions in relation to the learning of science should read this book. Not only will it help them to acknowledge and begin to address their own anxiety, but also it will help them to realize that an appreciation of science, like art, enhances and enriches the human experience.

Both this book and Sheila Tobias' Math Anxiety are available in the Women's Resource Center.

Review by Mary Schilling, Coordinator of The Mellon Program
If I have ever regretted anything in my 1 and 1/2 years at college, it was my unwillingness to testify against the invasion of my self by another. It was my first night at Denison last year; I was a freshman and knew virtually no one. I had left my door unlocked (I had never locked my door at boarding school, so why start now?) and my roommate had not yet returned. I was abruptly awakened at 3:00 a.m. by a man in my room. He jumped on me and threatened me with death if I did not comply with his wishes. He then grabbed my neck and punched me in the chest, leaving a bruise the size of a grapefruit. I have never been so scared in my life as when he put his hands over my mouth telling me to shut up or he'd kill me. Damn did I put up a fight, but I was not willing to bet my life that he wouldn't do anything to me if I screamed. I eventually got away, ran into the Student Advisor's room in the hall. The Dension community was now involved.

I refused to testify against the guy, I just couldn't. I was in a new environment, wanting to start fresh at college. I wanted nothing to spoil my new start, especially a trial which might be open to the public. The guy didn't know who I was, I didn't know who he was and I didn't ever want to see his face again. As I look back at the whole incident, I am bitter and regret not testifying. As it turned out, the male was put on ultimate probation- that's all.

I wish I had been stronger. If I had known back on the first day of school that what happened to me is not uncommon at Denison, or at any other school for that matter, I would have testified publicly and loudly. This type of mistreatment and mental abuse is inexcusable. If something like this happens to you, you must testify: people will support you, you will not lose friends but more likely you will gain friends, because you are not alone. I wish I had known that last year, things would be very different today.
denison policies and procedures regarding racism, sexism, and discrimination

Recently, a faculty group developed a written interpretation of Denison University's policies regarding racism, sexism, and discrimination. We are including here an excerpt from that document which suggests ways that members of the community can take positive steps to overcome these problems. We'd like to hear from you about ways that the Denison Community has or has not responded to problems of racism, sexism, and discrimination. If there is sufficient response, we may devote one of our spring issues to these concerns.

Continuing Responsibilities:

1. Denison recognizes that special efforts are needed to inform the community about the contributions, needs and sensitivities of women and minorities. To assist in these efforts the University employs a Women's Coordinator and a Director of Black Studies, each of whom works with a Faculty/Student/Staff Committee. Specialized training opportunities are also offered for students and staff who are in advisory or supervisory relationships to women and minorities.

2. All members of the community are expected to conduct themselves in ways that not only avoid discrimination but also contribute positively to mutual understanding and full participation of all members of the community. To facilitate such cooperation, the following suggestions are offered:

   a. Care should be exercised in selection of terms used to refer to women and minorities. Terms such as "girl" for "woman" or "boy" for "black man" convey an attitude of superiority or disdain.

   b. Generalizations about all members of a group should be avoided wherever possible (e.g., women are "emotional," women are "late," blacks are "poor" or "underprepared").

   c. Standards should not be applied or questions asked of one category of person that would not be asked of all (e.g., a woman employee should not be asked how she will handle the care of her children unless you would also ask a man the same question. A woman's physical appearance should not be mentioned in a job reference unless you would mention a man's. Comments such as "for a black student, he/she is..." should be avoided).

   d. Policy making and planning committees should seek to involve minorities and women and their concerns in the planning process so that their interests and needs are adequately reflected in decisions.
e. Special efforts should be made to highlight the contributions of women and minorities since such contributions have been so long ignored in American culture.

f. Many minority and female individuals feel uncomfortable in speaking about what all blacks or all women want, feel, or need. It is more comfortable for them to speak simply for themselves unless they have made an attempt to survey their associates.

g. In any organization those who are different are in the spotlight. The tendency is to expect more of them or to watch them more closely than others. This can put a special burden on such persons.

h. Persons of different backgrounds will often react to situations in ways that seem strange or inappropriate. Each party in such situations should make a careful effort to find the meaning and importance of others' reactions rather than presuming to understand or judge the behavior.

i. Conflict between persons in a work situation is inevitable. When conflict arises between persons of different races or sexes it can be perceived as an issue of racism or sexism. Care needs to be taken to deal fairly, openly and specifically with the tensions. Occasionally advice on how best to handle a tense situation should be sought from a sensitive third party, such as the Women's Coordinator or the Director of Black Studies.

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Remember, for every knight in shining armor, there's a castle somewhere waiting to be cleaned.

from Women's Calendar
recent faculty papers and workshops

Anne Shaver (Eng.) will present a paper for a panel on Women Warriors in the Renaissance at a symposium at Hollins College entitled "Britomart and the Iron Cocoon".

Jose de Armas (Mod. Lang.) read a paper on the social poetry of Carmen Conde, October 10, at the 31st Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference, Richmond, Kentucky.

Bahram Tavakolian (Soc/Anthro) has submitted for publication "Sheikhanzai Women: Sisters, Mothers, and Wives". He is now working on a new paper "Segmentary Lineage Theory and Sheikhanzai Practice".

Gill Miller (Dance) organized an all-day workshop: "Artist-in-Schools: Teacher/Artist" for the Columbus Public Schools.

Louis Brakeman (Provost) participated in a panel in Washington, D.C. at the Annual Meeting of the American Council on Education. The panel was entitled "Keeping Vital in the 80's, Institutional Renewal Through New Scholarship." During October he spoke at an invitational conference on the subject of the "Role of Women's Studies and Liberal Education: Issues and Constraints in Curricular Change."

Pat Somers (Car. Planning) presented a paper: "Sexual Harassment: A Call to a New Ethics in the Profession" at Midwest College Placement Association Fall Meeting.

Amy Gordon (Hist.) presented a paper October 30, 1981 "The French in Brazil: What are we doing here?" at the 16th Century Studies Conference, Iowa City. She presented another paper on November 7 "French Colonization in 16th Century Florida" for the Society for the History of the Discoveries, Athens, GA.

John Schilb (Eng.) gave a paper entitled "Adrienne Rich Goes to the Advanced Placement Examination: Contemporary Women's Literature and Feminist Perspectives on Literature" at the College of Wooster on October 3.

Janet Hyde (Psych.) has published a paper: "How Large are Cognitive Gender Differences?" in the August issue of the American Psychologist.

June Horton (Geog.) presented a paper:"A Global Perspective: Toward a Clearer Understanding" at the National Council of Geographic Education Annual Meeting in Pittsburg, PA.

women's action group

The Women's Action Group met on November 9th to discuss sending people to the GLCA Women's Studies Conference. We also planned the upcoming elections. A new steering committee (5 people) will be elected in December. Anyone interested in running please contact Becky Pschirrer, Amy Cochran, Jackie Ondy, or Carey Tompkins by November 30th. Ballots will be in the mail by December 9th. The new committee will serve from January 1982 to December. We also discussed ways to collaborate with the Black Student Union, as a result of the reception for Aileen Hernandez (Mellon Visiting Profession, November 2nd).
STUDENT MEMBERSHIP IN WOMEN'S STUDIES COMMITTEE. Students interested in serving on the newly formed Women's Studies Committee should send a letter of application to Beverly Purrington by Friday, November 20. We are interested in students who have been involved in Women's Studies courses and programs, those who will minor or major in Women's Studies, and those who are supportive of the program.

STUDENT EDITOR NEEDED FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER

One student co-editor is needed for the spring to replace Becky Pschirrer who will be studying at The Institute of European Studies in France. Responsibilities include writing and soliciting articles for the newsletter, editing material, and preparing the newsletter for publication. Editors also perform a range of other miscellaneous duties, the most important of which is keeping up with campus and national issues of interest to women. This paid position normally involves about 15 hours per month. Please send letters of application to Beverly Purrington by Monday, November 23.