

Who Oppresses Who

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A speech delivered in Montreal to the
McGill Women's Alumnae Association

April 2, 2008



Thank you for that warm introduction. I am very honoured to have been invited to speak at my graduate studies alma mater and happy that the occasion has allowed me to reconnect with some old friends.

I admit to a little trepidation about how my remarks will be received, because feminism is such a powerful force in society that it arouses strong emotions amongst both its defenders and its critics.

It is for precisely that reason that I feel doubly honoured by this invitation. I congratulate the program committee for their commitment to the ideal of intellectual diversity that my minority opinion represents today. Intellectual diversity is— or should be - the lifeblood of a university, and I am very happy to see it is alive and well at McGill.

Although feminism is a topic I write about frequently, I didn't set out as a journalist with that end in view. When I began my weekly sojourn with the Post in 2003, I had no particular niche subjects. My political focus had up to then been Quebec-centred. But my general interest was our culture - how it got that way and where it was heading.

But so many of the cultural trends I found interesting kept leading me back to the same source.

Then too, I followed my anger. Systemic unfairness to any identifiable group on the basis of their difference is a red flag to me, and as it turned out, the marginalization of men's rights, especially in the family law system, was an orphan media topic desperately in need of a good home.

I also soon discovered that male writers felt the subject of anti-male bias was too hot a potato for them to tackle, and most won't go near it for fear of the blowback from women's groups.

At the same time, the disproportionately few women journalists in opinion writing today (with honourable exceptions) are almost to a woman not only feminists, but writers who have taken up opinion writing specifically to promote feminist claims. So in more than one way, feminism found me.

The most useful thing I can do at this point is to clarify what I mean by feminism. In its earliest and most benign form – the political campaign to achieve equality under the law and equality in economic opportunities – feminism was a necessary and welcome reform movement. No rational person could be less than delighted to see barriers to a full range of educational and career options for women fall by the wayside.

The feminism that I critique in my columns, however, and that I will argue against tonight, stopped being a reform movement many years ago. The feminism I take exception to is not the mild and blameless right of a woman to self-actualize that all women absorb by osmosis from the cultural air we breathe, but the radical ideology that has come to dominate the movement's academic and institutional elites over the last 40 years:

This is an ideology that sees the relations between the sexes as a never-ending antagonistic power struggle, with women as eternal victims and men as eternal oppressors. It is an ideology that explains away the moral failings of women as the fault of a patriarchal "system", but holds men responsible for their actions. And most important, it is an ideology that shortchanges children by privileging the rights and importance to children of mothers over fathers.

That kind of feminism is so deeply entrenched in our society's cultural elites and the institutions they dominate – really it is the defining ideology of our era - that whether she wants to or not, no thinking woman can escape the necessity of negotiating some kind of relationship with its claims.

However intellectually objective we all try to be, each of us brings our own particular life experiences to the decision of what kind of relationship that will be, and I am no different.

So for full disclosure: I brought two relevant pieces of personal history to the table. The first is that I am the daughter – one of three - of a charismatic, entrepreneurial, risk-taking father. Having known the privations of extreme poverty in his youth, he was so obsessed with providing economic security for his family that he literally worked himself to a premature death.

Because he was a hero to me, I am well disposed toward the men I meet, unless I am shown good reason not to be, and as a result there are many wonderful men in my life, not least my husband of 44 years and my son and son-in-law, both supportive, loving husbands of high-achieving women and engaged, beloved fathers of two daughters each.

Everything in my experience with men points to the conclusion that different cultural values around relations between the sexes produce different outcomes. Normal, psychologically healthy men, raised in a society respectful of women, as Canada's heritage culture is, are governed in their relations with women by the instinct to protect them, not to hurt them.

The second element I bring to the subject is the fact that I am a Jew, and grew up at a moment of expanding acceptance of Jews as social equals, a direct result of the world's sympathy for Jews following the Holocaust.

Because of my people's unique history, I am instinctively wary of any group – whether a race, an ethnic group, a religion or a sex - that plays a dualistic hand, scapegoating an entire group to explain the unachieved goals of its own members.

For a scapegoating ideology always ends in grievance-collecting and a conspiracy theory of history. My people has been unusually vulnerable to conspiracy theory evils over the centuries. It is presently in the midst of battling a particularly destructive and existentially threatening one.

Virtually all Arab and many other Muslim nations rely on Jew hatred to externalize an explanation for their own failures. It works very well. The world has not seen such a widespread and virulent strain of anti-Semitism dominating an entire region since the Nazi era. So I can say with the conviction bred of close scrutiny that I have no use for blame-laying ideologies of any kind.

The time and place in which I grew up was friendly to intellectual diversity, friendly to Israel and becoming very friendly to women. The time and place I inhabit today is unfriendly to intellectual diversity, very unfriendly to Israel, not so friendly to heterosexual men, but extraordinarily friendly to women. These are some of the themes I have lived, and now they are the themes I write about.

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I don't believe in re-inventing the wheel. In preparation for today's speech I decided to revisit my archives and trace the progress of those columns on issues in which I assigned direct or indirect blame for a social problem on feminist principles. So let me take you on a little stroll down my polemical Memory Lane.

I started writing intermittently for the Post in 2000, and on a weekly basis in 2003. For the first several years I wrote frequently about "bad girl culture": a column on children's hookerwear – little girls dressing like Vegas show girls with the complicity and even active encouragement of their mothers; then one on young women at Ivy League universities starting porn magazines; and a few about the demeaning custom of "hooking up": guilt-free promiscuity with no consequences, or rather none admitted.

I argued that what began for women as sexual liberation had degenerated into irresponsible, intimacy-anaesthetizing, sexual libertinism, an unhealthy trend for women and for society.

In its most delusional form, I cited what I considered a perfect media representation of the phenomenon: the 2001 movie Bridget Jones.

Bridget Jones was supposedly an update of *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen's classic novel of a meeting of true minds. In the novel the dignified and witty Elizabeth Bennet captures the heart of the upright and gallant Mr Darcy through her strong character, integrity and intelligence.

In the movie version Elizabeth has morphed into the ditzy Bridget Jones, an impulsive, chain-smoking slob of no discernible wit or understanding of human nature, entirely focused on sex, and available to any good-looking man who crosses her path without regard to his character. She is cute and sexy, nothing else.

Strangely, the modern Mr Darcy character with whom Bridget ends up – completely unrealistically, of course because such a man would never take her seriously - is in every way a faithful recreation of the original, an intelligent, refined man of taste, discernment and sexual restraint. My conclusion: "Bridget Jones' and Mark Darcy's screen characters illuminate a curious postmodern gender disparity in moral standards...For the gentleman is a gentleman still, but the lady has become a tramp."

I moved on from there to the dramatic demographic consequences feminism has had on society. As a result of feminists' promotion of career equity with men and unrestrained sexual experimentation over early and faithful commitment, women are having fewer children later, and many are having none. Consequently, birthrates are down in all western countries, in many below the replacement levels. Our current fertility rate is 1.54 per woman, behind one-child China's 1.7.

Sadly, many women realize they want to have children, but too late. They were not warned by their Womens Studies teachers or by feminist commentators that fertility peaks by age 25, or that late pregnancies carry elevated risks, or that induced abortions pose a risk of pre-term delivery in future pregnancies, as I noted in my column today.

Abortion is now such a commonplace here that it is used as a backup form of birth control. Abortions in Quebec have doubled in the last 10 years: in 1998 16% of pregnancies resulted in abortion. Today 30% do. You don't have to be a religious Christian to find that statistic disturbing.

All of these realities are directly traceable to feminist doctrine. Feminists' original goal may not have been the intention to preside over the actual demographic decline of western civilization. Their goal was to empower women. But as the old saying goes, when you are up to your neck in alligators, it's difficult to remember that your original intention was to drain the swamp.

I then turned my attention to the negative and far-ranging effects, of feminism on men.

Misandry, which is the female equivalent of misogyny (misanthropy is a hatred of humankind), is now entrenched in our public discourse, our education system and social services. I will give you a few examples, but for a full discussion of the phenomenon, fully referenced, you need only apply to two comprehensive books on the subject by Katherine

Young and Paul Nathanson, *Spreading Misandry and Legalizing Misandry*. Misandry flies beneath most people's radar, because we have become compliant in the acceptance of theories that have nothing to do with reality, and compliant in the speech codes that accompany that tendency.

Denigration of men in ways both casual and formal are a commonplace in society. Last Xmas I saw an advertisement for a butcher block knife holder in the shape of a man. The slot for the largest knife was placed in his groin. Hilarious? Imagine a knifemaker in the shape of a woman and a knife slot at the vagina. Not so much. Once you become aware of the phenomenon, you will see it everywhere, trust me.

But misandry can also be implicit in what is not demonstrated in words or images. For example, in March 2005, to give you a fleeting and seemingly trivial, but actually quite telling example, then PM-Paul Martin eulogized four RCMP officers who had been slain in the course of duty. He said, "No matter the era, it seems that children always want to grow up to be police officers...It reflects a young heart's yearning to keep people safe and families whole."

This is of course nonsense. I wrote in a subsequent column: "If he had chosen his words for truth rather than gender-equity piety, Mr. Martin would have said, "No matter the era, it seems that *boys* always want to grow up to be police officers".

Little girls dream of many careers today, particularly the physically safe and prestigious fields of medicine and law and academia, but rarely of policing, or of any of the other "death professions" like SWAT teams, fire fighting, military combat and construction. To "keep people safe and families whole" is a boy's life-risking ambition, and the tragic deaths of these four men cried out for acknowledgement of that noble male aspiration. But, to accommodate a politically correct falsehood, the PM simply airbrushed them out of their own narrative.

In fact there is only one day a year when men's heroism, gallantry and protective instincts are actively acknowledged and that is Remembrance Day. Even then the ceremony's wording is now gender-neutral, as if women and men made equal sacrifices on the battlefields of World War I and II, when in fact our female deaths in war under combat circumstances run in the single digits.

For overt misandry, one has only to survey the industry around domestic violence. You could be forgiven for thinking that domestic violence is a one-way street, for that is certainly the impression one has from the fact that there are innumerable tax-funded shelters for abused women, none for abused men, unlimited funds for campaigns to raise consciousness around abused women, none for abused men. There is not a single social services agency or charity in Canada advertising "family services" that offers counseling, shelter or legal services for men who have been physically abused by women.

And yet, as peer-reviewed community studies and Stats Canada attest, although under-reported, unprovoked violence by women against their domestic partners is equal to that

of men in frequency and spontaneity, and almost equal in severity. Spousal homicides of either sex are so rare as to be statistically insignificant.

The tendency to violence in intimate relationships is bilateral and rooted in individual dysfunction. Men and women with personality disorders and/or family histories of violence are equally likely to be violent themselves, or seek violent partners.

But the academics who bring us these inconvenient truths are shunned. UBC psychology professor Don Dutton has written the definitive book on Intimate Partner Violence, Rethinking Domestic Violence, but after 25 years of impeccable scholarship, has yet to be invited to consult with any government agency or institution because influential feminist elites don't like his message.

When I angry feminists adduce their mantra that only men are inherently violent and that women use violence only in self-defence, I bring up a theme that is forbidden to discussion in women's shelters: how is it then that partner violence amongst lesbians is significantly higher than amongst heterosexual partnerships? How is it that children are far, far more likely to be physically abused by their mothers than their fathers? And when they are, how can we justify a woman's rights to take her children to a shelter to escape a violent husband when there is no shelter in the country that will accept a father with children fleeing an abusive mother?

I interviewed one woman with a degree in psychology who volunteered to help at a woman's shelter. When she raised these very questions in her training program, she was told, "You are too educated to work here," and she was thrown out of the program.

And thus, through institutionalized misandry and suppression of dissent, these questions are never addressed objectively or for that matter even raised in the media, and the truth remains hidden under a suffocating blanket of feminist correctness.

On the domestic violence front, nothing has provoked me to greater indignation than the exploitation by feminists of the 1989 Montreal Massacre of 14 women at the Polytechnic by sociopath Marc Lepine.

In 2006 I wrote: In the massacre's wake, ideologues elevated Lepine's rampage from a random act by one disaffected individual into the gender equivalent of Kristallnacht or 9/11. A narrative evolved in which every woman became a potential victim of an organized, hate-driven enemy -- like the Nazis or al-Qaeda -- with the massacre as an ominous harbinger of more aggression to come.

Both male and female feminists colluded in promoting the myth of lone killer Lepine as the symbol of all males' innate hostility to women, however dormant it might be.

In a shameful, inflammatory broadside affirming generalized male responsibility, for example, a group called Montreal Men Against Sexism responded to the massacre with

self-hating stereotyping inconceivable in the context of a similar crime committed by, say, a black or a Muslim: "Men kill women and children as a proprietary, vengeful and terrorist act ... with the support of a sexist society ... As pro-feminist men, we try to reveal and to end this continuing massacre."

What "continuing massacre"? Where are the copycats? There never was a female-only mass killing before Marc Lepine and there hasn't been one since. Women have been subjugated by men throughout history, but organized massacres of women by their own culture's males? Never.

Amongst other unjust and gender-divisive consequences of the massacre, the "White Ribbon" educational movement, initiated in 1991 as a direct response to it, and now integrated into more than 100 schools across Canada, sponsors a biased, error-riddled curriculum on domestic violence (read "violence against women by men").

A freak tragedy has thus become the misandric lens through which many Canadian children are taught to perceive gender relations.

Ritualized violence against women, such as wife beating, bride burnings or honour killings, is learned behaviour, a function of retrograde cultural notions of sexual relations. If such abhorrent behaviours were officially tolerated or encouraged here, then politicizing a particularly egregious example would be justified in order to end the practice.

But the complete reverse is the case. Officially and unofficially, virtually to a man and woman, Canadians schooled in our heritage culture utterly repudiate violence against women.

Ironically, the Montreal Massacre commemoration industry, whose emotive effect depends on scapegoating men, is having the opposite effect: For the sins of a few, the nature of half our polity is often falsely maligned, breeding suspicion and hostility in women, needless shame and guilt in all men, and mutual resentment and mistrust between the sexes.

Anti-male bias that affects men is of course morally wrong. But institutionalized bias that inculcates shame in children on the basis of their sex is scandalous and, when abetted by school boards and Childrens Aid Societies, a serious stain on any democratic society.

In 2000 the Peel School Board in Ontario accepted a grant from the Ontario Ministry of education and the Ontario Womens Directorate, specifically tied to programming around violence against women. Called "Breaking the Silence," the project was construed as a teacher's guide for identifying and helping children who witness violence in the home.

If the teachers followed the guidelines, however, they would only be alert to children whose fathers abused their mothers -- not the other way around -- as witness the following representative statements from the pamphlet:

"Women abuse is a serious problem"; "Violence against women is a crime; it is never justified or acceptable"; "Woman abuse is about a husband or partner controlling a woman's behaviour and may condemn a woman and her children to suffer in silence"; "Children who witness violence in the home may feel guilty for not protecting their mother"; "In Ontario, as many as six women are murdered each month by their current or former male partner."

Did you believe that last statement? That absurd "statistic" symbolizes the fecklessness of the entire enterprise, implying that Ontario saw "as many as" 72 women murdered by their male partners in 2000. In 2000 the *national* spousal homicide total was 67! (By the way in a country of 34 million people, this figure is completely nugatory.)

So where did the Ontario Women's Directorate's one-sided findings on domestic violence come from, which the board accepted for the pamphlet without demur? Not from peer-reviewed sociological studies like Don Dutton's or StatsCan. No, the Peel Board simply downloaded information provided by three women's shelters about whom the most charitable thing one can say regarding their bogus "research" is that it is uncredentialed, guilty of selection bias, ideologically driven, patently skewed, and utterly unreliable.

Breaking the Silence encourages teachers to assume -- and in a trickledown way, communicate to children -- that females won't be held responsible for any violence they initiate, that males' characters are inherently worse than females', and that the pain of all children who witness abuse of their father by their mother, or who themselves suffer abuse by their mother, is socially inadmissible. *Breaking the Silence* is the misandric equivalent of racism: "We" are blameless; "they" cause trouble.

For another example, last September I wrote about RUCS - Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening – a protocol now in place in 25 Ontario health units. According to this protocol, girls of 12 or older are routinely asked when they enter these units for any reason whatsoever whether they have been sexually abused, in order to pro-actively offer them therapeutic help. But boys are not asked the same question, even though boys are sexually abused as often as girls in childhood.

The protocol has even won the recognition of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario as a "best practice." I asked the nurses' spokesperson why they didn't serve boys. I got nothing but evasive responses. In one case the spokesperson said the sexual abuse of boys was "understudied."

Yet after a brief Google search I had no trouble finding credible peer-reviewed research that attested to the fact that boys are abused but tend to under-report it, and that it is unprofessional not to offer help. Boys desperately need the therapeutic outreach RUCS only offers girls.

Don't the 137,000 registered nurses of Ontario have sons, brothers, nephews? How is it that not one of them felt shame enough to object to this blatant discrimination? How can any public institution in conscience allow an entire sex to be disqualified from a possibly

helpful therapeutic encounter in the full knowledge that these boys are equally liable to abuse as girls – and not only from males; about 20% of sexual abuse of boys is perpetrated by women. Again, is there any other identity group one can think of in society against whom such an insult would be tolerated?

One final note: The legal definition of a child is anyone under the age of sixteen, and the CAS is mandated to protect all children's rights. Yet the London CAS director sat on the task force that recommended RUCS, and no CAS voice has ever been raised in opposition to it.

Finally I want to talk about the implosion of the traditional family, which can be directly traced to feminism's repudiation of normative marriage and the role of fathers as vital to a child's psychological well-being.

In June 2006 I wrote about the imbalance, in women's favour, in the family law system: 90% of contested custody suits end in sole custody awarded to the mother. Such a skewed percentage is unthinkable in any other branch of law.

The family law system is now systemically colonized by radical feminists. Their goal is the incremental legal eclipse of men's influence over women's spheres of "identity" interests, which includes children. To that end the custody issue has become a front line in the gender wars, supported by all feminist academics and institutional elites, by supine cabinet ministers and by feminist judges.

To illustrate with just a few examples:

- Supreme Court of Canada chief justice Beverley McLachlin: "We have to be proactive in rearranging the Canadian family"
- Former justice minister Martin Cauchon: "Men have no rights, only responsibilities"
- Feminist psychologist Peter Jaffe, a social-context educator of family court judges: "[J]oint custody is an attempt of males to continue dominance over females"
- And most egregiously this from the National Association of Women and the Law: "Courts may treat parents unequally and deny them basic civil liberties and rights, as long as their motives are good". (reread)
- Here we are truly in George Orwell country. In simple words this statement means "The end justifies the means" and there is not a totalitarian regime in the world that does not espouse that exact excuse for their denial of rights to their citizens.
- In our courts the "good" that motivates them is supposedly the child's "best interests" but in fact it is virtually always the mother's happiness. This is not justice.

Their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

- Eminent lawyer and civil libertarian Eddie Greenspan notes: "Feminists have entrenched their ideology in the SCC and have put all contrary views beyond the pale;"

- Liberal MP Roger Galloway, who chaired the 1998 Report of the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access, has commented that "Justice, if it occurs in a divorce court, is accidental."

Misandry in family law arises from an ideology that views children as the property of women, even though many peer-reviewed studies show children want and need both parents, and no studies show sole parenting by a mother serves children's best interests.

This ideology is instilled in judges during training sessions featuring feminism-driven materials, and subsequently often plays out as unaccountable kangaroo courts.

The result is that an adversarial mother who initiates a divorce against the will of the father --however indifferent her parenting skills, however superb his - and even if the children spend their days with nannies or day care workers --pretty well has a lock on sole custody of the children.

If she makes a false allegation of abuse in order to have him barred from the house – this happens regularly; any unsubstantiated claim of abuse or *even voicing her fear of abuse* by a woman will be acted upon instantly by the police and the courts with no recourse for the man – or denies rightful access to the father, she will never be punished at all.

Conversely, if he withholds support money, even if he has lost his job and has no other means of paying, he will be criminalized: His picture as a "deadbeat dad" may appear on government-sanctioned Internet sites, and if he goes to jail, as is likely, he will serve a longer sentence than cocaine dealers.

In the days when children belonged to both their parents, it used to be said that children were "hostages to fortune." Today they are hostages to feminism and the state.

And yet every credible sociological study on record demonstrates without ambiguity that if there is a single sure indicator for success in adulthood, it is the presence of a father in a child's life from the time he or she is old enough to negotiate a path through the world beyond her doorstep.

If there is a sure indicator of failure – dropping out, drugs, promiscuity, crime – it is not poverty, it is fatherlessness in later childhood and adolescence.

But ideologues don't care about statistics, and they don't pay attention to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Children, which states that every child has the right to know and love his biological father and mother. Ideologues care about theory, and according to the one they favour, women don't need men, and children don't need fathers.

Children, on the other hand, are natural conservatives and are impervious to ideological brainwashing. They mourn the lost connection to their fathers. I get a lot of mail from heartbroken fathers who have lost their children to women-friendly courts that heartlessly

and self-righteously, thinking they are doing good, cut fathers out of their childrens' lives. Reading these tragic narratives is the toughest part of my job. Their stories haunt me.

In one story a social worker asked a child in an assessment interview (the following was read to me from an actual transcript): "What's the best thing and the worst thing about your father no longer living [at home]?" The best thing? Why this leading question? Can you conceive of a social worker asking that question about a mother of a child being raised primarily by a father?

Fortunately children don't read or care about feminist scripts. As the "worst thing", that particular pre-adolescent girl responded, "I don't have a father." And the "best thing"? "Nothing."

Peter Jaffe, the feminist psychologist I mentioned earlier, makes a very good living from sitting on feminist task forces, collaborating on writing feminism-driven guidelines for judges, keynoting domestic violence against women conferences and so forth because he says the things feminists (and therefore governments) want to hear.

Jaffe sat on the 2001 task force that recommended the girls-only RUCS protocol, even though he is also an expert on the sexual abuse of boys, and better than anyone understands the injustice of the protocol.

I interviewed him and asked him – a father of four boys, by the way - about this apparent conflict of interest.

He admitted that he would not have sat on that task force today, as he no longer agrees with the outcome. Did he think that the feminist pendulum had swung too far, I asked. Yes, he said, and I quote, "Men find themselves today very much in the position that women used to."

I said to him, "You know, Peter, you are respected by feminists. You would do the men of this country a great service if you wrote a letter to the editor when my column appears and say to all of Canada what you just said to me."

Of course he didn't, and I regret his cowardice, for such a letter might have gone far to effect a necessary reconciliation between the sexes in this country.

There is a Yiddish expression my mother used to invoke with a philosophical sigh, "The 'reidele dreht sich'" – the wheel turns. A hundred years ago, it was homosexual love that dared not speak its name. Today homosexual love roars, and it is manliness that whispers in the shadows.

Goethe said: "All theory is grey, but green springs the golden tree of life." The time for zero-sum theories – if your sex wins, mine loses – is past. Men's voices needn't be silenced for women's to be heard. We need more conversation, less monologue.

Only one voice should be privileged by everyone: the still, small voice of conscience. Conscience leads away from sexism and toward humanism. Humanism leads to mutual respect and trust between the sexes. And collaboration between the sexes leads to the “golden tree of life” we should all be striving toward – a healthy society.
