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The Intersection of Humanism and Feminism

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The question is how do we advance NeoHumanism and humanist values in this century. The Institute for Science and Human Values, in its advancement of NeoHumanism declares humanists must accept responsibility for the well-being of society, guaranteeing various rights, including those of women. Humanists firmly defend the separation of religion and the state and consider freedom of conscience and the right of dissent vital. They deplore any demand for the subservience of women to men, the repression of sexuality, the defense of theocracy, and the denial of democratic human rights—often in the name of religion. Neo humanism focuses on the principles of personal integrity: individual freedom and responsibility. It includes a commitment to social justice, planetary ethics, and developing shared values for the human family. In addition societal acceptance of same-sex relationships and marriage must be assured.

This involves some mode of sexual fulfillment and compatibility, *for woman as well as man* and the willingness to end repression of women.

It is paramount to provide for the safety of women from the culture of male violence. Women's needs must be recognized as equal to men's. Neo-Humanists recognize the urgent need to guarantee women's right to autonomy, *especially*, in matters of pregnancy, for their good as while as the good of the family and the health of the planet.

Feminism is women's quest for equal rights and is philosophically linked with modern humanism. Feminism aims to establish, define, and defend equal political, economic, and social rights for women around the world. In addition, feminism seeks to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. This includes a serious and ongoing examination of the sameness of women and men; of our shared humanity. A feminist as well as a humanist is a woman *or man* whose beliefs and behavior are based on the definition of *equality of all*. Feminists are also realists who recognize that inequality exists and is predictably defended because it advantages one class at the expense of the other. Feminism is a challenge to the status quo as is humanism.

Because inequality is so pervasive, feminist activists campaign in all areas of civil rights while also promoting bodily integrity, autonomy and reproductive justice, including access to safe, affordable contraception and abortion without interference from the state, the church or other people, including parents, marital partners or guardians, and the abolition of forced sterilization.

Feminists work to protect women and girls from violence in their homes, sexual harassment in the work place, on educational campuses, (from kindergarten through university) and sexual assault, including the use of rape as a war tactic and in the military. This work includes the abolition of rape and slavery of girls and women world-wide.

Feminist campaigns have changed cultures, particularly in the West, by achieving women's right to run for and hold elective office, gender neutrality in language, and the right to enter into contracts and own property. They also work for equal pay for women and pay equity in careers. They advocate for workplace rights, including family leave for women and men, and against forms of discrimination of women in the workplace, including the definition of pregnancy as a disability. Still, in the constitutions of many countries including the United States discrimination against women is not prohibited.

Feminism is usually identified as focused on women's issues. In reality it is a fight for human values and family values. Men's liberation from macho, paternalistic culture is a necessary element of a feminist and humanist society. Recognition that men are also harmed (even as they are privileged) by sexism and gender roles can move humanity and civilization forward in the new century. This is an important commonality of humanism and feminism; working for human rights for all. The realization that sexism harms men is a fact that men and women, human beings, of the world must be educated on and must finally and fully realize for the good of society around the globe.

Unfortunately, men worldwide have been conditioned by patriarchy and histories written by men to believe that males are intrinsically superior. Written accounts of men that glorify their accomplishments, but largely ignore the herstoric achievements of women, support the idea that men are naturally entitled to exclusive rights and privileges. Many of these beliefs are instilled and actively promoted by anachronistic religious fundamentalism, but often also by governments and laws, and sometimes even by the academy. Thus as a group and individually, many men think they *deserve* these rights over women. To maintain these rights, many men demand women's subservience.

The institution of men's privilege demands that men defend these their privileges. How do they do this? They enforce their brotherhood of privilege, with institutional violence against women; women they know and women they don't know. They enforce it with a demand for prostituted women and children, with photos and videos of pornography that depict the actual humiliation, disrespect, violence toward and in some cases, the death of women. And what of the men who eschew this behavior? Who say they are not a part of this culture of domination? How do they participate? They enforce it by looking the other way, by denial, by keeping the secret, by cold indifference or by callous ignorance. They endorse and normalize it by accepting it in mainstream entertainment media.

Many men choose to believe they have a compelling need for sexual gratification that involves and justifies the degradation, harm and shame of women. Twenty-first century humanism and feminism question why men 'need' to have power and control over women and children. It questions the humanity of men who find sexual satisfaction and gratification in paying to rape,

brutalize and dehumanize other human beings; women and children. It questions the character of men who never think of the poverty and abuse that push women into prostitution and pornography.

Who never think of the women and children's need for a life of safety, freedom and happiness without having to spread their legs, open their vaginas, mouths and anuses to "earn a living". And the 'living' I am writing of? the living of not being tortured and beaten by a pimp or madam, slave owners, to assure they smile and appear happy while being prostituted, the 'living' of desperation and poverty, "the living" that is so sub human that some decide death may look like the only way out.

It is not just men who demand the subjection of women for profit and privilege. To a lesser extent, it is also women who grew up with secrets, being conditioned; groomed, terrorized, brutalized; who may not know of others in their community or neighborhood who do not live in a household of violence, who believe "this is just the way it is". Accepting that, after all "It is a man's world" they are complicit in the enforcement of the culture of violence and inequality of others.

Education is another important point of the intersection of humanism and feminism. Both humanism and feminism emphasize the urgent need for the education of men and women, human beings, on these topics. To this end women and men, *human beings*, many who espouse humanist and feminist values are taking action all over the world, organizing against male privilege and violence.

Today we call on you to be brave, to stand up for and with humanists and feminists to demand an end to the violence. Only then will women and men; all humankind being to heal, live in peace and realize the advancement of world-wide neo humanism, the new humanism.