

Don't deny my reality

by Lynne Wanyeki

I have recently realized that all struggles are the same struggle. All struggles are rooted in the same thing: a basic denial of another's reality. ("Another" meaning any individual or group perceived as being, different, weaker, less vocal than the "norm").

This "denial of another's reality" can take many different forms - ranging from unconscious assumptions and stereotypes to actual violence. Thus, when I get angry, and say to you that I feel discriminated against, I am not necessarily talking to you about overt prejudice. I agree with you when you tell me that discrimination is decreasing. But I am only agreeing with you in the sense that overt discrimination is slowly decreasing. Overt discrimination is decreasing because it is no longer "socially acceptable", because more and more people targeted by overt discrimination are breaking their silence in protest against this.

But in no way am I agreeing with you that covert discrimination is

decreasing. The subtleties of assumption and stereotype (i.e. prejudice - pre-judgement) are still with us. Don't deny me my reality by pretending that they are not.

When you look at me, two things are immediately apparent - I am a woman, and I am Black. Two sets of assumptions are unconsciously made of you because of these two facts.

I do not separate my womanhood from my blackness. I cannot. I will not. This means that in my everyday life, I have to oppose

(with rage, and fatigue, and sometimes even fear) any assumption you make or present me with that invalidates my experience as a woman and as a Black woman.

My message is thus to women as well as men. Just as I ask no demand of men not to condescend to me, patronize me, think of me as inferior because I'm a woman, I demand of you all not to condescend to me, patronize me, think of me as inferior because I am black.

Feminism cannot be applied in the same way to traditional African

society as it is here. I look to my African, Kenyan, Kikuyu heritage with real pride. For women were honoured, respected - and if their lives may seem limited, confined to you here, you should examine the social contact in which gender roles were played out. There wasn't a lot of choice for anybody as to the ways in which simple survival was managed. And even in these limits, confines, there was the freedom of acceptance, and mutual respect in society at large.

Don't make assumptions about

my heritage as an African, Kenyan, Kikuyu woman. Look instead to the structures and institutions that are evolving now. The vestiges and imposed values of a colonial, missionary past, and not of my traditional past are stratifying African, Kenyan, Kikuyu society now and, in the process destroying African, Kenyan, Kikuyu identity.

As a woman, and a Black woman, I can only say: Don't deny me my reality. You do this by not actively fighting your own preconceptions of me.



Mesmerization!

*Dancing madly backwards on a sea of air,
knowing in truth that we are all there
Programs, programming, programmed, mesmerization,
Dizzily following orders, never asking ourselves, oh maybe.*

*Prancing badly forward, flee from there;
sowing false truth, we all know how, where.
Deny, denying, denied; feelings, thoughts, doings, being
Fussily allowing others to order, arrange my being, doing.*

*You know, you know, and you always know,
how you feel, what you think
Yet are you your thoughts and are you your feelings
Or are you simply the emptiness before the mesmerization!*

Maharishi Baba Hashist Yogurt

A focus for wimmin at CHSR FM

The Wimmin's Collective at CHSR-FM began a year ago to deal with problems specific to Wimmin at the station. It started out, basically, as a support group for volunteer Wimmin members but quickly evolved into an active advocacy collective.

It was decided this collective would shun the traditional trappings of most groups in that there could not be a hierarchy; i.e. each member is of equal status.

The first step was to produce a *Focus*, weekly half hour show dealing with topics of concern to Wimmin of all ages and backgrounds. Some of the issues we have tackled are geriatric care, Native issues, the insensitivity of all levels of government to Wimmin's concerns, daycare, abortion, lesbian issues, poverty and the welfare system, how media portrays Wimmin among many others. Ours is the only program in the Fredericton area which seriously deals with Wimmin's topics on a weekly basis.

Our next step was to attempt to

recruit more Wimmin from the university communities. We met with limited success, however, we hope to increase our numbers next term.

Currently the collective is endeavouring to have an Employment Equity policy passed by CHSR's Board of Directors. This has been a lengthy process and as yet this goal has not come to fruition.

In the upcoming year the collective will continue to promote Employment Equity, recruitment and *Focus*. We also hope to encourage management to actively recruit more Wimmin for newscasting, technical work, and music programming highlighting female artists.

We shall also endeavour to improve *Focus* by delving into a wider range of issues concerning Wimmin.

K. Brookland
Case Ward
Katherine Miller



Gender neutral terms

A short appraisal by Alan Carter

My access to various student newspapers and press releases have allowed me to form an opinion about the use of gender neutral terms.

Needless to say, press releases from women groups always use gender neutral terms. In fact, recent press releases from various department of the government are also jumping on the band wagon. Unfortunately, though, not everybody has joined in on the practice. Mainstream media, like broadcast news and the Canadian Press, very seldom use gender-neutral terms. What is more disturbing is when a woman is holding a position as, lots say, "Chair" or spokesperson she is described as a "chairman" or "spokesman". A bit offensive, to say the least.

However, some of the media outlets that use Broadcast News or the Canadian Press, edit such copy. The Daily Gleaner, which still uses "chairman" or "spokesman" usually does at least change it to

"chairwoman" or "spokeswoman" when it is actually a woman.

CHSR-FM, the radio station on the UNB/STU Campus, has taken on a tougher policy. They change all their news copy that they get from Broadcast news and use gender neutral terms.

I believe that this is not only a fair policy, but also a practical one. Whatever the reasons may be, and there are many of them, "chairman" or "spokesman" have become offensive to many people. Changing terms to read "chairwoman" is not only troublesome, but dangerous. Occasionally an editor can come across a name that can either be a male or a female name. If that editor is not familiar with the story, how can he/she know what to put? Adjusting a term to fit the gender of the sex does not work.

In addition this type of practice with titles can suggest that a woman being in a certain position is a unique or a special situation.

Chairperson, or chair is not only, more practical, but less offensive. Recently, the Gateway, a student newspaper from the University of Alberta, had a spoof issue. In a tasteless and unamusing opinion it is suggested that "man" should be replaced with "human" but "human" has "man" in it. Thus replace it with "huperson". But "son" is a "pretty gender-repressive" so replace it with "huperchild."

Granted the article was a spoof, but it indicates an issue which I believe may sometimes be missed or forgotten. Although many would argue with me, I believe the main reason gender neutral terms should be used is to simply recognize that women's roles are quickly changing and society has to change with them. Society has to learn to respect this change - not only in thought, but in language.

When I first heard about gender neutral terms I was against them. I felt 'what is the point in them?' But now I say "what is so hard in changing to these terms?"

When media outlets have to change copy from the Canadian Press or Broadcast News they should strongly suggest that they start using gender neutral terms. After all these outlets are paying for these services.

"Chairperson". Does it offend you? It doesn't offend me. We are not all men and we are not all women, but we are all people. Is the whole issue as simple as that? I think so.

Alan Carter

Male power; female dilemma

by Chris Lohr

HE : "To what do I owe this pleasure?"
SHE : "I wanted to talk to someone who cares."
HE : "Of course I care. My actions are very selective, and my libido seeks adventure."
SHE : "Are you saying it's just the sex? Should I be complimented or insulted deeply?"
HE : "That's for you to decide. But I care, really."
SHE : "Should I let you affect me though? I like to know how to act next."
HE : "How can you act for a moment you can only forever expect?"
SHE : "By feeling pain now for the loneliness I foresee."
HE : "A crime not yet committed! You must forgive me."
SHE : "You see, every step I take I must seize and hold."
HE : "But why not run, ignore the path beneath your feet, and be bold?"
SHE : "Because it takes more courage to scrutinize the path of habit, than to lazily accept past injustices."
HE : "Then you postpone your desires and ensure loneliness."
SHE : "???"

