

Coming into consciousness: the writing is on the stalls

"Ignorance is not innocence; it's sin." Robert Browning

by Jill Skorochod

"Be proud to call yourself a Feminist." The message, in blue magic marker, screamed out at me, an unassuming victim in the stall of a central square washroom. Before I left the stall, I searched frantically for a pen to respond with my blinding, all-consuming thought: "What?!? And support lesbian-led suppression?"

Giggling and snickering, I left the stall, taking note of its exact location, vowing to return to examine the entourage of graffiti that would surely ensue. I was a self-possessed, know-it-all 19-year-old first-year student. I was an ardent anti-feminist, and I didn't care who knew it.

That's not all. I guarded myself in all conversations with the catch-all phrase: "I'm not a feminist by any means."

I spouted off what was really wrong with the women's movement: "All the feminists need is a really good fuck, then they wouldn't be running around bitching."

I truly believed that the only reason I ever saw women on the news,

marching for their rights, was because they were so ugly. "Well, if I looked like that, I guess I'd be a whining feminist too," I reasoned.

I constantly extolled, to anyone who would listen, the innate and wonderful differences between men and women. "But we're not equal," I would rave, "so why should we be fighting for something that is never going to happen?" I just couldn't make sense of it.

Returning to the washroom stall, there was enough backlash against my anti-feminist comment to fill all three walls. I responded in kind, with things like "I'm sorry to see that you are obviously in dire need of a good fuck. Good luck, sweetheart!" or "Men are the best thing that ever happened to us. Learn to appreciate them!"

Still, the volume and vehemence of the pro-feminist comments scared me. I quickly learned to shut up on campus, in the face of so many "radi-

cal feminists."

I knew if they found out who I was, they would make my life a living hell, harass me, verbally and physically assault me, follow me home and set my house on fire.

What a shock.

These women were rational and intelligent, calm and congenial. There was no screaming, no extremities, and no tension. They did not bash men, promote androgyny or denounce heterosexual relationships. They were not ugly, and judging from the free-spirited conversation, most were quite satisfied with the quality of their sex lives, thank you very much.

So here I am, almost three years after the graffiti incident: a little bit older, a little less ignorant, a little more calm. And very ashamed.

I am beginning to understand the issues that concern women. We (so comfortable am I that I can identify with "We") aren't asking for the world. In fact, most of our wishes are pretty simple.

We want the freedom to walk the streets without being in fear, at any time of the day or night.

We want equal pay for equal work, as well as the opportunity to access all positions in the workplace.

We don't want to be forced into an ideal of beauty: what we look like

should never take precedence over who we are.

Just yesterday, I saw some graffiti scrawled on the wall of the tunnel that I, not too terribly long ago, could have written. It read "Dear Libbers,

bearpit

criticism • condemnation • diatribes • manifestoes • rants • discourses • speeches • ideas • dialogues • polemics • dissertations • epistles • monologues • proclamations • accusations • declamations • declarations • defences • defenestrations • blatherings

Stop fucking with a guy's right to grab a chick's ass... just because no one grabs yours."

I didn't laugh. I didn't agree. And I didn't ignore it. Instead, I marveled at how far I have come and was saddened by the realization of how far we still have to go.

"I constantly extolled, to anyone who would listen, the innate and wonderful differences between men and women."

But just because I kept a lower profile, my attitude towards feminists did not change.

Two months ago, when asked to join the women's caucus at *Excalibur*, I attempted to brush off the invitation with the excuse "I'm too busy." But I knew that the real reason was because, like before, I didn't agree with, understand or support the women's movement, and wanted no part of it.

As memories of my prior fears resurfaced, along with a desire not to offend anyone my first month working at the paper, I reluctantly agreed to participate.

CIA veteran decries U.S. self-destruction

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of the one-eyed babysitter and turn it on."

Stockwell cited studies which show that children are exposed to thousands of hours of military violence on television. He also cited movies released in the 1980s such as *Red Dawn*, which its producers admitted was made so the American people would warm up to the idea of war. This particular film was shown to U.S. troops in Honduras as they prepared for possible war with Nicaragua.

For Stockwell, the current woes of the United States are a formula for war. The government will try anything to divert the public's attention away from the fact that nothing is being done about their economic plight. "Today the United States is no longer in control of its economic destiny," he explained.

It is for this reason that Stockwell believes Bush may try to destabilize Cuba if he runs into problems with his re-election.

"They will do Fidel's Cuba in the next six to nine months, before the '92 elections. They will either do it with a destabilization and a takeover — but one in which the exiles who were part of Batista's society will go back, and they will take with them the instant death squads. They will purge the society. We will watch thousands and thousands of Cubans die."

Stockwell ended his lecture by urging people to fight to influence what the New World Order will look like. He urged people to take steps to ensure politicians are not allowed to wage further wars against our environment, our economies and against other countries.

"The people of Cuba are now caught between George Bush's and Fidel Castro's egos and political imperatives, and if we don't really get on that and make some noise about it and put pressure on them, a lot of Cubans are going to suffer and die."

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