

COMMENTARY

Real world really isn't that great

By Andrew Ross

Susanne Steffens expresses an admirable desire to reach dreams and goals in life ("Does anatomy still mean destiny in U.S.?" ODE, July 29).

If she believes her goals will be furthered by achieving "equal opportunity" with men, however, she is leaping from the frying pan into the fire. Many women these days are discovering to their outrage and despair that equality is just what they've achieved.

As Chuck Norris once said, "Welcome to the food chain, pal."

Women seem to have this fantasy that, while they've been chained up in the kitchen with Junior, men have been off having endless fun in the real world. Once they make it into the real world themselves, they are shocked and unprepared for the ordeals of life as corporate chattel.

In elementary school, while girls were being taught the principles of cooperation and nurturing, boys were being taught that theirs was not to reason why, theirs was to shut up and get in the line behind authority figures. Insubordination was the most common offense.

In higher education, we learned that professors and administrators may break commitments at will and that the key to high grades was to adopt the thoughts of the teacher.

In the army, we learned that our bodies were dispensable cannon fodder at the whims of people steeper than ourselves.

All of this was designed to prepare men for the real world, where all independent thought and action is not to be tolerated, and where civil liberties and dignity are left at home. Intellect and membership in unions or civil liberties groups are used as evidence of lack of patriotism.

One boss of mine encouraged his two dogs to pee in the personnel office, with no apparent reason

except that he had the authority. Another regularly used humor that diminished people and disparaged their minds, bodies, sexuality, achievement or potency, and we were expected to react positively, or else.

This was not considered harassment; it was just another fact of life in the workplace.

As demonstrated through Stanley Milgram's famous electric shock experiments, relatively few men have the resources needed to resist authority any more. We've seen our pensions and benefits eliminated, our unions busted, our wages lowered, our working conditions worsened, our jobs lost entirely, all without a peep.

We are not allowed to have our own opinions on pollution, safety or other issues that might conflict with the company's profit margin. Does Susanne Steffens want to become equal to this?

Most women, encountering real-world oppression for the first time, are understandably enraged. Unfortunately, many of them see the problem in terms of their gender. They approach harassment as a sexist issue, failing to realize that it happens to all of us. The men consequently see the women as demanding special treatment based on their gender, and resent them for it. This leads to the "battle of the sexes" mentality, which benefits nobody.

Women emerging into the real world have a chance to deeply affect the quality of life. They could join men in the equal opportunity to become chattels. They could continue struggling for unequal positions of privilege and hostility for themselves. Or they could work with men together to create a new "real world" in which self-determination for all people is a reality, and opportunity for all is limitless instead of merely equal.

Andrew Ross is a graduate student in the University law school.

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LETTERS

OCA way

I am disturbed by the reports that the recalls of state and city officials in Oregon are merely based on a disagreement over a controversial issue and because the Oregon Citizens Alliance just wants to have its own way.

Why shouldn't Oregon citizens be disturbed when their officials violate their oath of office in which they promise to support the constitutions and laws of the United States, Oregon and local municipalities?

The OCA's "no special rights" initiatives were passed under the permission of the Oregon Constitution, Article IV, Sec. 1 (5), which reserves "to the people ... independently of the Legislative Assembly" (IV(2)) "initiative and referendum powers ... to the qualified voters of each municipality ... as to all local, special and municipal legislation of every character in or for their municipality ..."

House Bill 3500, for which 14 legislators are being recalled,

takes away from the people this right of the people to the petition process on the subject of homosexuality and offends the will of the people of the winning initiatives.

When city council members join as plaintiffs in an American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit against their own city, as has been done in Canby, the violation of the oath of office and assault on citizen rights deepens further.

The recalls are addressing the democratic process, not a particular controversial issue. It's time for our legislators to re-read the constitution under which they must operate and quit playing political games while making the laws that you and I must live by.

Pat Smith
Canby

Prez again

I am extremely pleased by action taken Tuesday by the Senate in passing the National and Community Service Trust Act. I am also gratified that Republicans

and Democrats were able to work together to turn this landmark legislation into reality.

National service will take on our nation's most pressing unmet needs while empowering a new generation to serve as leaders of change. National service is about enhanced educational opportunity and rebuilding the American community. Most importantly, national service is about getting things done.

A number of senators played crucial roles in helping pass this bill. In particular, I would like to thank Sen. Kennedy for the leadership and dedication he has shown throughout this process. Thanks to the efforts of the Senate Tuesday and the House last week, young people will soon be serving their country in their communities here at home.

I've always said national service is the American way to change America. I commend the U.S. Congress for taking action that will prove that true.

Bill Clinton
U.S. President

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