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Feminism is solution for humanity's plights

There's this scene in the film "Star Trek: Insurrection," where Captain Picard, held captive aboard an enemy ship, attempts to reason with his captor in a way that makes him realize the repercussions of his actions. His captor, clearly annoyed, eventually says, "Stop pleading for your life!"

"I'm not pleading for my life," Picard answers, looking him straight in the eye. "I'm pleading for yours."

Here, he is able to make his enemy identify with a larger situation. Picard is really asking, "What can you live with?" In regard to my columns in the Emerald, this is the question I've wanted to raise all along. I guess I should have been more explicit. I cannot tell anyone what to do, nor would I want to. I can only ask: What can you live with?



Aaron Shakra
Out of range

Our relationship with life itself is rapidly and dramatically changing, faster than any insular, human-centric cash economy or media will indicate. This has not happened out of the blue. The historical basis comes from European colonialism, and now globalization, which leaves nothing untouched by the hands of the patriarchal Western way.

"The land, the forests, the rivers, the oceans, and the atmosphere have all been colonized, eroded and polluted," ecofeminist Vandana Shiva writes. "Capital now has to look for new colonies to invade and exploit for its further accumulation — the interior spaces of the bodies of women, plants, and animals."

This control over life results in monoculture. We are actively waging a war on diversity. One can see parallels of this everywhere. Among the numerous land-raping results of the Green Revolution is a diminished crop biodiversity. Instead of numerous varieties of food, we have one type of corn, one type of potato, grown in large amounts at the expense of any kind of sustainable relationship with the land. We denude our old growth forests and replace the trees with vast plantations of the same kind of species. Most pop music is in 4/4 time, blasting the sound of homogeneity. And you wonder why people have stopped dancing. The rhythm of white America is one of monotony.

An obsession with uniformity and norms of cleanliness also has curious parallels. What we do to our bodies, we do to nature. Notice most of the lawns on campus, with uniform fluffy green blades of grass. These lawns have been heavily treated with chemicals for this desired result, which is what we expect grass to look like. In fact, the healthiest lawn

is the one with flowers and crab grass strewn throughout.

These aforementioned examples are not directly correlated, but rather, symptoms of a larger disease. Speaking of rhythm, the greatest peculiarity of life is perhaps how we define time itself. Authors such as José Argüelles have been spearheading the movement toward a more sensible system.

"The 12-month calendar is irrational and the 60-minute hour is mechanistic. So you have a civilization that is totally irrational," Argüelles explains. "Civilization based on the mechanization of everything."

In 1842, a study made by French positivist philosopher Auguste Comte concluded the most rational calendar for a measure of the solar year is 13 months and 28 days because the moon goes around the earth 13 times a year, and it's also the basis of the female biological cycle.

Our very system used to track our history and lives is out of harmony. University student Orion Trist, who studies the work of Argüelles, concludes, "Following a time keeping system that brings humanity fully into sync with the natural world is a dream for changing people's basic values and consumption patterns. This would be the fastest way to really change our development patterns into one where the natural world is seen as integral to the healthy functioning of an urban settlement, not an inert resource for our consumption."

In the essay "The All-Consuming Self," Allen D. Kanner and Mary E. Gomes note, "First World consumer habits are one of the two most serious environmental issues the world faces," the other issue being human population growth. And while our consumer-driven lifestyles are supposed to bring happiness, they are instead a "merciless distortion of authentic human needs and desire."

"Having ignored their genuine needs for so long, they feel empty. But the emptiness is constantly denied," the authors write. The perception in this culture is that such emptiness must be avoided like the plague. In this way, perhaps "emptiness" is a misnomer, because what it really implies is an interconnectedness that is not actually empty of anything but separation. We are not separate. We are full of everything. Emptiness is truth, not despair.

The hardest thing to do is to let go what we know; to let go of our privilege, power and control. It's probably going to be harder for men, who have played such a dominant role in civilization. I was told in Sociology of Women class that 80 percent of environmentalists are women. To me, this implies that they are the leaders of the future, if we are to have one.

I began writing about feminism this term because I could not settle for an activism that avoids issues, and live standing silent and idle to the bugles of patriarchy. Perhaps because of this, I can become slightly more radical each day.

This is only the beginning.

Contact the Pulse editor
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Helen Schumacher
Notes from the underground

Graduates will acquire their own knowledge

Over the weekend I flew back home to attend my little brother's high school graduation — four years after my own departure from high school and two weeks before I'd be wearing the robe and mortar board to ceremoniously mark the completion of my bachelor's degree.

Even though it was my brother's plans that relatives and other commencement guests were most concerned about, I couldn't evade the questions about what I was going to be doing next. It's a question I hate to answer, and my response was similar to the vague mumblings about "being a writer" that I had given four years ago. When persuaded into a more specific answer, I admitted that my current plans involve moving to New York City in about nine months, and boy did that get some eyeballs rolled in my direction.

It's difficult to share with others your plans for the future, especially with those who are older because their response is often condescending. They seem to figure that the time they've spent living their lives makes them qualified to know how you should live yours.

I'm not denying that being older means having more life experience and a wiser perspective. However, I am saying that being wise can prevent you from taking risks, and, furthermore, knowledge gained in one lifetime doesn't necessarily apply to another's.

Going home is always a chance to re-examine the choices I've been making, to see if I am progressing into adulthood and developing my own identity, and this visit's circumstances stressed the differences between who I was at 18 and who I am at 22 even more. As I watched my little brother sit and wait for his name to be called, I realized that the decision I had made — to take a risk and do something that made me uncomfortable — was the reason I have been able to accomplish and grow as much as I have. It's hard enough to figure out what direction to move in your life without others trivializing what you want to do.

Moving across the United States to such an enormous city may seem a little foolish, but I know that it will be a way for me to keep on learning, even after leaving academia.

Contact the Pulse columnist
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Her opinions do not necessarily
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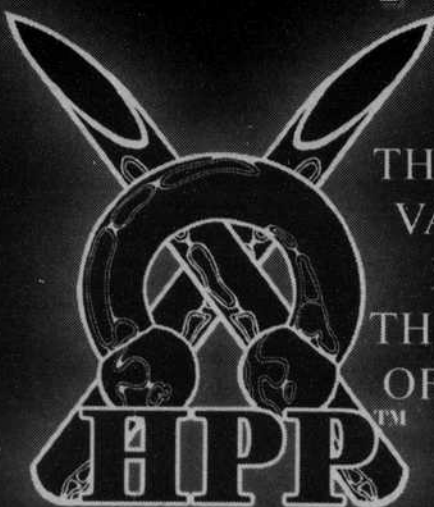
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