

Conni Billie-Finnerty



THE ANGER OF WOMEN

by Vickie Swanson

"What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open."

— Muriel Rukeyser

I want to address the anger of women, all of whom are involuntary inductees at birth into the oldest and longest of wars, that waged around the issue of sexism. It is an undeclared war. As in all wars there is no real winner; there is only a victor who must constantly guard himself and his position by continuous aggression on the various fronts and behind the lines. It is a many thousand years war, a global war, both a cold and a hot war.

Many would like to think of this war as mainly a cold one, taking the form of oppression through discrimination in social and economic forms (which have violent effects, often, themselves). However, the victims, women, receive the message from the time they are small people that it is an actively physically violent war being waged upon them. They are made aware early of the guerrillas in the streets who, if they are not careful, will snatch them away and mutilate, torture, maim or kill them.

Beware the child molester! But how many girls are shocked to find that there is an enemy who dwells within the confines of her protected environment, camouflaged behind the title of father, uncle or family friend? And many young women are raised in homes where they see their model of adulthood, the mother, being physically abused by her husband. They know it is a hot war. Those not directly exposed to violence in their youth, perhaps brainwashed to believe themselves immune to involvement on the violent front lines of this battle, amazingly find themselves put there in a relationship with a man as an adult.

Upon reaching adulthood all women realize that the control of their bodies, their reproductive systems, is not determined by them. Many are subjected to unnecessary surgery, forced sterilization, forced pregnancy or continuation of pregnancy. Who has this power

over women's bodies? The religious, governmental and medical institutions of the society in which they live. And these institutions are controlled by creatures with very unlike bodies, people who cannot begin to relate to such a reproductive system.

Women are angry. Women who have been forced into the position of being on the front lines of battle in the war of sexism have added reasons for their anger. They, as front line victims in any war, have scarred and mutilated bodies, have experienced the isolation and lack of support, the hostility of their society, towards such an experience. Their eyes are especially opened in regards to the war and to the facts and effects concerning it. Their anger and fear is stirred every day as they hear about, read about, or see women who are victims of rape and battering. They are horrified at the destruction of women's bodies and women's minds and spirits which is notable everywhere; and they are most angered to discover the lack of power and control they have to change the situation.

Those women who cannot overcome their passive conditioning, who accept their impotence and victimization outwardly through lack of a knowledgeable choice, take it as a personal defeat. They feel helpless, sterile. They often channel their anger towards themselves. Depression, the women's disease; depression — anger turned inward. Valium. Liquor. Drugs. The victimization process continues.

Fortunately, many of us, whether or not exposed directly to the violence and destruc-

tion of this war, have gained a lot of knowledge about and insight into the condition. We do not love the institutions and people responsible for our victimization. We do not take on the oppressive roles of those in power and use them to oppress others. We do not want to see aggression of people upon other people rewarded. We do not identify with, and refuse to participate in, the perpetuation of this senseless violence. Instead we try to teach others to recognize the tactics, both subtle and blatant, and the realities of this deadly situation.

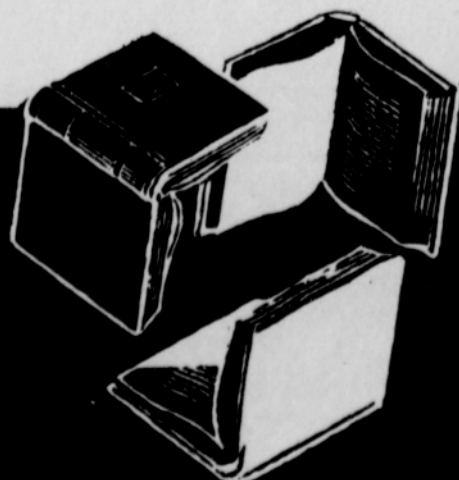
Tolstoy wrote that women have a universal acceptance and understanding of death that men only try to learn. We cannot feel sorry for men who have lost their innocent way of looking at life as if people were immortal as some war veterans have lost. We have always known our mortality and that of our children. We are not sorry that we are sensitive human beings, and that we can identify with others who are victims. How else can we help eliminate the category of victim?

We as women did not choose this war in which we are illegitimately involved. We would not choose any war. Instinctively, we know that any destruction of human beings by others is a challenge to the survival of us all.

Until those who are commonly being declared and promised the position of winner on the battlefields against other individuals become aware that there are no winners in struggles between people, but only in the struggles in which all people enter into against our common, age old enemies of disease and famine; until there are no medals, no praise, for any type of violence being done to anyone; until the concept of being a man includes the ability to be knowledgeable, sensitive and understanding of the human condition, past and present; until then destructive feats of violence and abuse, of oppression of peoples, will not cease. Those who have been active, aggressive contributors to war must not perpetuate it by continuing it wherever they happen to be. The oldest and most basic war between people must be ended. If it is not there will soon be the war during which it will be unquestionably proven that there are no winners, no heroes. There will be no more killing for the glory of God or government, or for the honor of manhood. There will be nobody left to kill.

Therein lies the anger of women.

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