

OPINION

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Stop Making Women Apologize

No more to carrying this weight

BY TRACEY L. ROGERS

I was getting on a bus with grocery bags in hand, apologizing profusely to the driver as I scrambled to find my bus pass.

He curiously looked my way; I thought he was judging me as I convincingly portrayed the damsel in distress. To my relief, however, he actually smiled and said, "It's ok, ma'am. There is no need to apologize."

I reflected on the driver's kindness as his words began to sink in: "There is no need to apologize." He was right. I wasn't holding anyone up or causing any problems, yet I still felt the need to say, "I'm sorry."



For many women, offering an apology is second nature. In a country where women have been traditionally cast in the role of "appeaser," asking forgiveness has been ingrained into our DNA.

It's something we're taught at an early age — to be nice and polite as all young girls should be, reinforcing gender norms that began at this country's inception.

Our culture is one that silences women in order to uphold patriarchy. "I'm sorry" has become a filler in the English language. Whether asking for what we need, or stating our opinion, women often begin with an apology for having the audacity to speak at all.

A study done in 2010 confirmed that women apologize more than men. The research speculated that women were "more concerned with the emotional experiences of

others" — no doubt a symptom of our socialization.

In 2014, Pantene put out an ad campaign entitled "Not Sorry," which highlighted the various ways women issue apologies almost immediately in most settings — at work, at home, even with strangers.

It seems no matter how far we've come in the era of #MeToo, women are expected to deflect, give excuse, and provide explanation with just two simple words: "I'm sorry."

Holding oneself accountable for genuine wrongdoing should be the norm. For women, however, our "wrongdoing" is often simply our attempts to take up space and have a seat at the table.

To remain "collegial," for example, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford was apologetic throughout her entire testimony against the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. She was

testifying about a sexual assault against her, yet she was the one apologizing.

More recently, Rep. Rashida Tlaib was cornered into an apology after accusing Rep. Mark Meadows of tokenizing a black staffer by calling her out to stand next to him, as though this meant Republicans weren't racist. Tlaib was right, but she was the one expected to apologize.

The role of "appeaser" has always been imposed upon us, especially women of color who navigate a society stacked against both our race and our gender. God help us if we break this unspoken protocol; we're often punished for it.

Remember Serena Williams in the 2018 U.S. Open?

Serena was penalized, fined, and attacked in the media for "inappropriate behavior" after arguing with an umpire during the match (behavior longtime tennis fans considered quite mild when

compared to hotheaded male players like John McEnroe).

But more egregious than these male displays, apparently, was that this talented black woman demanded an apology from the umpire for unfair treatment. (What's more, Serena's opponent, Naomi Osaka, apologized herself after the match — "I am so sorry it ended like this," she said. She couldn't even celebrate her victory.)

It was a classic example of how women are expected to carry emotional weight. I say no more.

For Women's History Month, stop making us apologize. We are not here to appease. Our contributions to society prove our equal standing in society. We will no longer apologize for demanding equal liberties — it's 2019, and we're not sorry.

Tracey L. Rogers is an entrepreneur and activist living in Northern Virginia. Distributed by OtherWords.org.

Green New Deal Movement Matters to Us

BY SAMANTHA M AND ANGELICA PERKINS

Outside of Sen. Diane Feinstein's office in San Francisco on Feb. 22, youth leaders from Sunrise Bay Area, Youth Vs.



Apocalypse and Earth Guardians Bay Area Crew gathered together for a rally in an attempt to persuade Feinstein to vote yes

on the Green New Deal.

We attended the rally to show support and help in whatever ways we could as this movement is one that matters to us and our future -- we hadn't planned to talk with Feinstein directly. In spite of this, when the opportunity presented itself YVA and Earth Guardians accepted gladly and were more than excited when we learned that we would actually be allowed into her office to speak to her personally. For us at least, this excitement turned quickly into fear as our peers and Sen. Feinstein began to converse.

This fear was not because we felt that we were being "taught a lesson" or "told off." It was because we could see ourselves talking to our future grandchildren about what breathable air used to be like. We could see workers in impoverished communities whose children's lives depended on risking their own. We were afraid because, at that moment, we could see the world around us shrinking - becoming something small and unimportant, and with it so did we.

However, we only felt this way. As we sit here and write this piece, we know that we are not

small and we are definitely not unimportant. Our words speak for all youth, as we demand a future. And that future will only be possible through the Green New Deal.

In advocating for the Green New Deal, we are also advocating for the future of our Earth and all of its inhabitants. A promised future. The future we deserve. Because the adults that decide our future, got theirs, so who are they to cancel ours?

We are not fighting for the Green New Deal because we are brainwashed youth or because we are being manipulated and

used for political gain. We fight for the Green New Deal because we are in charge of our future, and know exactly what it means. It lies in our hands, only ours. It is our future, whether or not elected officials like that and the only way to protect what belongs to us is through bold and transformative action.

We cannot separate ourselves from all the animals, plants and all other life because we are all interconnected. We are all affected by the destructive aftermath of climate change.

Just because we are human, it does not negate the fact that we are also in danger because of our actions. We are in also in danger from inequality and lack of economic opportunity. We can't leave behind anyone.

That is why we believe in the Green New Deal, and we know what the Green New Deal is. We have read it and we understand it because we know exactly what we have to do to secure our future. Youth have a right to be in this conversation because in the long run, this is more than a debate. It is our life and future.

Samantha, 12, and Angelica, 17, write for PeaceVoice, are Oakland students and members of the youth-led climate justice group, Youth Vs. Apocalypse.



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