

→ claims, points, arguments

→ my commentary

VISIONARY FEMINISM

"Be realistic and practical in your actions, but don't lose sight of ambitious goals."

To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality. A primary strength of contemporary feminism has been the way it has changed shape and direction. Movements for social justice that hold on to outmoded ways of thinking and acting tend to fail. The roots of visionary feminism extend back to the early '60s. At the very start of the women's liberation movement visionary thinkers were present dreaming about a radical/revolutionary political movement that would in its reformist stage grant women civil rights within the existing white supremacist capitalist patriarchal system while simultaneously working to undermine and overthrow that system. The dream was of replacing that culture of domination with a world of participatory economics grounded in communalism and social democracy, a world without discrimination based on race or gender, a world where recognition of mutuality and interdependency would be the dominant ethos, a global ecological vision of how the planet can survive and how everyone on it can have access to peace and well-being.

Radical/revolutionary feminist visions became clearer and more complex as the movement progressed. However they were often obscured by the absolutism of reformist feminists who really felt

We see this phenomenon today, too:
→ e.g. voting independent even when it's not practical—virtue signalling that doesn't contribute to (admittedly, painfully slow) progress.

hooks claims feminist myths of the 60s were radical and visionary in that they:

- aimed to improve rights within patriarchal society
- aspired to eliminate flawed system overall

practical component? ambitious goals

safer working for change solely within the existing social order. While some reformist feminist activists were really eager to change economic discrimination based on gender so that they could have equality with men of privileged classes, others just believed the change in women's reform. However ultimately forsaking the radical heartbeat of feminist struggle simply made the movement more vulnerable to cooptation by mainstream capitalist patriarchy.

Danger of prioritizing a feminist narrative that fits within confines of current system.

hooks doesn't outright disagree with reform—she instead thinks it should be the scaffolding for systematic change.

innocuous cruelty of white feminism!

and/or greater class mobility once they existing social order fewer women were interested in dismantling that system. On one hand while we are told again and again by individual feminist thinkers like Carol Gilligan and others that women are more caring, more ethical, the facts of how women conduct themselves in relation to less powerful women suggest otherwise. The ethics of ethnic or racial groups with which they identify those with whom they do not feel empathy. Women of privilege (most of whom are white but not all) have rapidly invested in the sustained subordination of working-class and poor women.

'non-visionary feminism', i.e. feminism that seeks to fit and fill the mold instead of breaking it, is often comfortable enough for women of privilege that they don't seek systemic change.

A fundamental goal of visionary feminism was to create strategies to change the lot of all women and enhance their personal power. To do that, though, the movement needed to move way beyond equal rights agendas and start with basic issues like literacy campaigns that would embrace all women, but especially women of poorer groups. There is no feminist school, no feminist college. And there has been no sustained effort to create these institutions. Educated white women as the central beneficiaries of job and career-based affirmative action programs reaped benefits in the existing structures and were often not motivated to do the work of creating

institutions based on feminist principles. These institutions could never pay high salaries. But even independently wealthy feminist activists have not used their money to fund educational programs that begin to work with women and girls who are disadvantaged when it comes to basic skills.

While visionary feminist thinkers have understood our need for a broad-based feminist movement, one that addresses the needs of girls and boys, women and men, across class, we have not produced a body of visionary feminist theory written in an accessible language or shared through oral communication. Today in academic circles much of the most celebrated feminist theory is written in a sophisticated jargon that only the well-educated can read. Most people in

similar to my philosophy and works in research & accessibility: if it can't be understood by the people it's supposed to benefit, how can it be of use to them? understanding of feminism; they cannot learn from a wealth of diverse material, and go on, because this material does not exist. We must create it if we are to rebuild feminist movement that is truly for everyone.

Feminist advocates have not organized resources to ensure that we have television stations or consistent spots on any existing stations. There is no feminist news hour on any television or radio show. One of the difficulties we faced spreading the word about feminism is that anything having to do with the female gender is seen as covering feminist ground. For example, women's sports! We do have radio shows and television shows that highlight gender issues, but that it is not the same as highlighting feminism. Ironically one of the achievements of contemporary feminism is that everyone is more open to discussing gender and the concerns of women, but again, not necessarily from a feminist perspective. For example, feminist movement created the cultural revolution that made it possible for our society to face the problem of male violence against women and children.

Even though representations of domestic violence abound in mass media and discussions take place on every front, rarely does the public link ending male violence to ending male domination, to eradicating patriarchy. Most citizens of this nation still do not understand the link between male domination and male violence in the home. And that failure to understand is underscored as our nation is called upon to respond to violent murders of family members, friends, and schoolmates by young males of all classes. In mass media everyone raises the question of why this violence is taking place without linking it to patriarchal thinking.

Mass-based feminist education for critical consciousness is needed. Unfortunately class elitism has shaped the direction of fem-

most feminist dialogue takes place in the laundry machine of higher academia. For the most part we do not write children's books, attend schools, or sustain a powerful lobby

which has a constructive impact on what is taught in the public school. I began to write books for children precisely because I wanted to be a part of a feminist movement making feminist thought available to everyone. Books on tape help extend the message to individuals of all ages who do not read or write.

A collective door-to-door effort to spread the message of feminism is needed for the movement to begin anew, to start again with the basic premise that feminist politics is necessarily radical. And since that which is radical is often pushed underground in our setting then we must do everything we can to bring feminism above ground to spread the word. Because feminism is a movement to end sexism and sexist domination and oppression, a struggle that includes efforts to end gender discrimination and create equality, it is fundamentally a radical movement.

Confusion about this inherent radicalism has caused feminist activists moved away from challenging sexism in all its manifesta-

Feminism must be accessible to everyone in order for its benefits to be accessible to everyone.

divisive: enables a wealthy, white idea of feminism that is comfortably progressive - seeming to conservatives.

V

Avoids harsher realities that affect non-white & non-wealthy ppl.

tions. Advancing the notion that there can be many "feminisms" has served the conservative and liberal political interests of women seeking status and privileged class power who were among the first group to use the term "power feminists." They also were the group that began to suggest that one could be feminist and be anti-abortion. This is another misguided notion. Granting women the civil right to have control over our bodies is a basic feminist principle. Whether an individual female should have an abortion is purely a matter of choice. It is not anti-feminist for us to choose not to have abortions. But it is a feminist principle that women should have the right to choose.

Parasitic class relations and the greed for wealth and power have led women to betray the interests of poor and working-class women. "girl man" "coquette" "i'm just a girl" "girlhood aesthetic" has turned feminism into flattened idea of ...

... femininity which has become about consumerism and looking the part and paying to fit the mold.

name. The representation of feminism as a lifestyle or a commodity automatically obscures the importance of feminist politics. Today

insidious weaponization of language like 'reclaiming femininity' — stolen from black movements & appropriated for advertising! without feminism. They want the system in the private sphere even as they are. But visionary feminist thinkers have understood from the movement's inception that collusion with patriarchy, even patriarchal support of some aspects of feminist movement (i.e. the demand for women to work), will leave females vulnerable. We saw that rights gained without fundamental change in the systems that govern our lives could be easily taken away. And we are already seeing that happen in the arena of reproductive rights, particularly abortion. Giving civil rights within patriarchy has proved dangerous because it has led women to think that we are better off than we are, that the structures of domination are changing. In actuality those structures are re-entrenched as many women

Bit of a chilling statement — eerily prophetic.

"The purpose of a system is what it does." (Stefford Bear) → true feminism & liberation cannot exist within the confines of an inherently oppressive system.

move away

Extrem

Previous generation / older conservative women are victims, but also perpetrators in their ignorance.

My mother told me to read 'The Rules' (dating advice book that delegated women to subservience).

movement. A significant part of the backlash is the bashing and trashing of feminism done by opportunistic, conservative women. For example: a recent book, *What Our Mothers Did Not Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman* by Danielle Crittendon, tells women that we should all stay home and mother to produce healthy children, that we should acknowledge basic differences in male and female psyches and that above all it is feminism that is at fault. Critics of feminism blame the movement for all the dissatisfaction modern women face. They never talk about patriarchy, male domination, racism, or class exploitation. While the anti-feminist books tend to be written in an accessible language that appeals to a broad readership, there is no body of popular feminist theory that serves as a counter to their message.

Antifeminist rhetoric has 'real', albeit romanticized & falsified shared cultural experiences to spread the ideology in accessible language.

Feminist rhetoric (esp. visionary) does not (to the same degree). Hence — essential to document these success stories.

positive impact of feminism. It is essential that we document this work so that it stands as testimony countering the popular assumption that all feminism did was make the lives of women harder. It is more complicated for women to have feminist understanding of the patriarchal system of ...

No feminist equivalent to the pop culture awareness / understanding of the trad wife aesthetic.

Visionary feminists have always understood the necessity of converting men. We know all the women in the world could become feminists but if men remain sexist our lives would still be diminished. Gender warfare would still be a norm. Those feminist activists who refuse to accept men as comrades in struggle — who harbor irrational fears that if men benefit in any way from feminist politics women lose — have misguidedly helped the public view feminism with suspicion and disdain. And at times man-hating fe-

Good point, but where do we draw the 'being the bigger person' line? Men are victims of the patriarchy, too, but things like 'the male loneliness epidemic' generate resentment toward women even though the real cause is men / the patriarchy.

"women always get compliments and men don't, women don't understand" vs. "I'm scared to patronically compliment men because I don't like getting cat called & men also assume I'm hitting on them."

males would rather see feminism not progress than confront the issues they have with men. It is urgent that men take up the banner of feminism and challenge patriarchy. The safety and continuation of life on the planet requires feminist conversion of men.

Feminist n Reminds me of "I Am Not Your Asian Stereotype" TED Talk. Small, mindful, consistent actions trump sporadic major instances of activism. Everyone is accountable. ever any male or female of any age wo sm. That work does not necessarily req ization; we can work on behalf of feminism right where we are. We can begin to do the work on feminism at home, right where we live, educating ourselves and our loved ones. In the past feminist movement has not provided individual females and male enough blueprints for change. While feminist politics are grounded in a firm set of beliefs about our purpose and direction, our strategies for feminist change must be varied.

There is no one path to feminism. Individuals from diverse backgrounds need feminist theory that speaks directly to their lives. As a black woman feminist thinker I find it essential to critically examine gender roles in black life to discover the specific concerns and strategies that must be addressed so that all black people can understand the relevance of feminist struggle in our lives.

Radical visionary feminism encourages all of us to courageously examine our lives from the standpoint of gender, race, and class so that we can accurately understand our position within the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. For years many feminist women held to the misguided assumption that gender was the sole factor determining their status. Breaking through this denial was a crucial turning point for feminist politics. It enabled women to face the way biases of race and class had led to the formation of a women's movement that was not mass-based.

We are now ready to renew feminist struggle. Anti-feminist backlash exists because the movement was successful at showing everyone the threat patriarchy poses to the well-being of females

and males. If feminist movement had not offered a true accounting of the dangers of perpetuating sexism and male domination, it would have failed.

"Why would they try to stop it if it wasn't really working?" a no need to mount an anti-feminist campaign. mass media continues to spread the lie that males are not welcome in the feminist classroom, truthfully more males are studying feminist thought and converting to feminist thinking. It is this significant change in feminist movement that makes it more of a threat to patriarchy. As has been stated, had the movement only focused on women, the patriarchal status quo would be intact and there would be no need to severely bash feminism.

We are told again and again by patriarchal mass media, by sexist leaders, that feminism is dead, that it no longer has meaning. In actuality, females and males of all ages, everywhere, continue to grapple with the issue of gender equality, continue to seek roles for themselves that will liberate rather than restrict and confine; and they continue to turn towards feminism for answers. Visionary feminism offers us hope for the future. By emphasizing an ethics of mutuality and interdependency feminist thinking offers us a way to end domination while simultaneously changing the impact of inequality. In a universe where mutuality is the norm, there may be times when all is not equal, but the consequence of that inequality will not be subordination, colonization, and dehumanization.

Feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression is alive and well. While we do not have a mass-based movement, the renewal of such a movement is our primary goal. To ensure the continued relevance of feminist movement in our lives visionary feminist theory must be constantly made and re-made so that it addresses us where we live, in our present. Women and men have made great strides in the direction of gender equality. And those strides towards freedom must give us strength to go further. We must courageously learn from the past and work for a future

where feminist principles will undergird every aspect of our public and private lives. Feminist politics aims to end domination to free us to be who we are — to live lives where we love justice, where we can live in peace. Feminism is for everybody.

INDEX

- abolitionists, 56
- abortion, 6, 25–26, 85, 114
 - class issues and, 26, 28
- academia, 57
 - access to, 9–10, 96, 111–12
 - curriculum, 15, 20–21
 - effects on feminist theory, 22–23
 - sexism and, 13–14
- academic discourse, 4–5, 9, 112
- agency, 95
- aging, 34, 91–92
- Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (hooks), 14, 20, 57, 94
- anorexia, 34–35
- anti-feminist backlash, 28–29, 115–17
- anti-sexist men, 68–69, 75–76
- Barfoot, Mary, 41
- beauty, 31–36
- birth control, 25–27, 78, 85, 86
- bisexuality, 88
- black feminists, 3–4, 116
 - challenges to white feminists, 16, 21–22, 57–60
 - class issues, 40
- body image, 31–32
 - cosmetic and fashion industry, 32–36
 - life-threatening aspects, 33–35
 - media view, 32, 34
- boyhood, 70–71
- Brown, Rita Mae, 39
- Bunch, Charlotte, 39
- cancer, 33
- careerism, 10, 16–17, 51
- childcare, 81–82
- children, 23, 102
 - male violence toward, 61–62, 74–75
 - white supremacist view of, 73
 - women's violence toward, 62–64, 73–75
- children's literature, 23, 113
- Christianity, 2, 106–7
 - feminist Christians, 107–8
 - reproductive rights and, 27, 28, 109
- civil rights movement, 15, 55–56
- civil rights within patriarchy, 114
- Class and Feminism* (ed. Bunch and Myron), 3, 39
- class issues, 3, 5, 37
 - access to academia, 9–10, 96, 111–12
- birth control and, 25–26
- within feminism, 43–45
- patriarchy and, 40–41
- race and, 40
- sisterhood and, 39–42
- in workforce, 48–49
- colonialism, 44–46
- The Coming Black Genocide* (Barfoot), 41
- consciousness-raising (CR), 2, 7–8, 19, 57, 101
 - disbanding of groups, 8–9, 16
 - for males, 11–12
 - renewal of, 11

Questions:

What is it to be a feminist & what is feminism?

- not a denial of gender & sex-based differences — neutralizing them instead.
- not making neutral gender-related differences cause for discrimination.
- bodily autonomy for everyone; right to self-expression & emotional expression for everyone.

Before entering this course, what have you heard about feminists & feminism?

- some good, some bad:
 - ↳ "radfem" / "TERFs" → exclusion under guise of feminism
 - "angry SJW" → mocking feminist movement as a whole with over-circulated, cherry-picked bad examples
 - solidarity & support; intersectionality
 - #MeToo, body positivity of the late 2010s.

Who first told you about those concepts and/or how did you find out about them?

- I was active on the internet, so it was a mix of positive and negative influences:
 - ↳ general 'fandom' communities were largely left-leaning.
 - grooming pipelines like Orison pushed anti-feminist rhetoric in the guise of protection.

Do you label yourself as a feminist and/or do you support feminist movements & feminism? Why or why not?

- yes: it's a good general label.
 - ↳ I would rather be lumped with the feminists than the not-feminists even if I disagree with some subset of feminist ideologies.

After reading "Visionary Feminism", explain Hooks' argument and the points she makes.

- Visionary feminism plays a critical role in the modern feminist movement:
 - ↳ it serves as a symbol and a reminder of the bigger goal
 - it resists the complacency of reform feminism and the exclusionary, antifeminist nature of white feminism.
 - Visionary feminism emphasizes distributing feminism to everyone.
 - as opposed to academic feminism, which circulates amongst academics with little trickle-down.

Have we fulfilled some of what she is expressing?

- somewhat...
 - ↳ message is just as applicable now.
 - if someone published this today, it would still bear the same relevance.
- we've made more subtle progress:
 - ↳ body critique of 90s — 2000s
 - 'women's studies classes'!

What have we achieved since her publication of this work, nearly a quarter of a century ago?

- more women in power
- more awareness of things like #MeToo, body acceptance
- many cultural changes in left-leaning circles.

What have we not achieved? How far do we have to go to achieve what she is expressing?

- left has gotten more left, but right has gotten more right?
 - ↳ in an aggressive/divisive manner?
- either more misinformation, or more public misinformation,