

ings of mixed gender organizing, and given me a critical perspective on the pseudo-feminism that too often permeates activism.

The Boys Club Lives On, Even on the Left

A couple of months ago I was at a gathering of influential political activists and progressives and I recognized two young children alone with their father. A feeling of despair and disappointment rushed over me because these were children I had known because their mother and themselves had lived in the house I worked in. I now had a face to the abuser that she had been attacked by over their decade-long marriage. As I stared at him with a look of genuine disappointment, and his children looked at me with excitement, immediately remembering me, he pretended to be puzzled by my glare. I, of course, could not say how I knew his children. I was forced to immediately leave the gathering because I could not bear the contradiction: prominent progressive, wife-beater.

Examples of progressives being blind to issues of women's liberation are often more subtle than giving a free pass to an abusive man. Too often, tokenism has taken the place of feminist practice. On organizing committees dealing with war and homelessness, I have witnessed a complete lack of sensitivity to the unique ways that these scourges impact on women. When this shortcoming has been pointed out, the solution has too often been to simply select women for a speakers' list or executive committee, rather than to infuse women with specifically feminist politics into the organizations' events. I have felt that getting a feminist agenda included in these venues is like pulling teeth.

Often, then, it seems like activists equate women and feminism. Even worse, sometimes anything that is stereotypically associated with women is considered evidence of "outreach" to the Second Sex. Two woeful examples occurred during the 2005 provincial election in B.C. First, the "Rock the Vote" youth participation campaign believed they would encourage more women to vote if they made their website a pretty pink colour and held a fashion show to register new voters. Not to be outdone, the "Get Your Vote On" campaign sold pink underwear with the slogan "check my box" (Whitfield 2005).

The colourful examples aside, there remains an all too pervasive "old boys club" feel to much progressive organizing. Long-winded men seem oblivious to their own sexism through the obnoxious monopolization of time, space, and positions of power and influence in social justice organizing. This often leaves me disappointed with the amount of feminist organizing that still needs to be done, including the need to educate and call our progressive men on their own patriarchal behaviours.

Conclusion

The relationship between feminism and men will always

be contentious. From a childhood with atypical parental gender roles, to the often alienating space of the academy, to the all too tenuous alliances with male social justice activists, my perspective on the negotiation of this relationship between women's liberation and men has remained fluid. While women have made advances towards equality in many spheres, rates of violence in the home and in relationships remain almost unchanged. This contradiction will not disappear until patriarchy is defeated.

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A. MARY MURPHY

death by liver
Ginsberg's viscera
slips him past the margins
ignore that sudden sag you feel
there on the cosmic left
your howler is not silenced
commune with the dead
read the oracle's entrails
only hair and toenails fall away

A. Mary Murphy's poetry appears earlier in this volume.