

The Backlash

A Column for the Politically Incorrect

Coeditors: Peter Hanus & Joseph Murphy

How Can I Oppress Thee, Let Me Count the Ways
Are you, or have you ever been, sexually harassed? According to a study done by Professors Beth Percival and Don Mazer (1988) there is a good chance you have been. They found that 89% of women and 85% of men on this campus had been sexually harassed at least once in their life. Many may now be wondering "What have I been missing?" or "My, how times have changed (since 1988)!" Well, not really. A closer look at this study reveals why. Included among the 34 different manners of sexual harassment were "Sexual 'looks' from other students" and "Social 'teasing/jokes' from other students." One then may wonder how the numbers came out to be so low. Well, Professor Mujeeb Rahman noted this and some other problems with the survey and expressed these views in the March 10, 1988 issue of The Gem. But rather than opening up debate concerning the study, Prof. Rahman came under attack and what then resulted was a barrage of charges and defences in the following editions of the Gem. One notable letter to the editor in the March 24, 1988 Gem began "The article which was published in this paper on March 10th by Mujeeb Rahman was a clear example of a smear campaign. . . ." It was signed by Professor Vaughn Jelliffe (some may now want to refer back to a letter to the editor by Prof. Jelliffe in the January 16, 1992 edition of The X-Press). It is fairly easy to banter about ad hominem (feminem) and red herrings when somebody has something to lose with the advent of critical analysis concerning a certain topic. These tend to have the effect of deflecting debate from the topic at hand and turning it into a "name-calling contest." Print, when used properly, is the fairest manner in which debate can occur (though this doesn't exclude the possibility of public debate). Don't take this article as a belittling of the seriousness of sexual harassment, this is a serious problem--when it occurs. As Prof. Rahman noted, "Harassment of any kind begins only when there are elements of relentless pressure and coercion which carry a threat or evidence of actual exploitation or deprivation of a person's benefits and rightful earnings (in cash or credits)" (The Gem, March 10, 1988). We must reiterate that we don't believe that there is no violence or harassment committed against

some women by some men (a minority) nor that nothing should be done about it. We believe that regulations should be put in place to curb its occurrence against women and men. We don't believe that going to ridiculous extremes and directing all the criticism at an entire social group (males) is conducive to good, open critical evaluation of the problem at hand. And we are sick of the use of emotional testimonies of individual women being used to indict all men. Which brings us to two other social problems (or at least one) that have come under the scrutiny of feminist criticism: rape and romantic love. The intention here is not to belittle this (these) problem(s?) but to point out how they have been taken to ridiculous extremes by radical feminists. Rape is usually viewed as when a man, stranger or not, uses weapon and/or physical violence or the threat of it to force a woman into sex. For radical feminists, rape means much more. Bechhofer and Parrot point out that "Assailants are more likely to use verbal or psychological coercion to overpower their victims than guns or knives." Radical feminists often speak of trying to transcend the "false dualities" (e.g., between "ends" and "means" or "emotion" and "reason") imposed on women . . . oops, women by patriarchal society--apparently here they are trying to transcend what they view as the false duality between "rape" and "seduction". As Norman Podhoretz notes, when we realise this "it will immediately become clear that we are in the presence here of nothing less than a brazen campaign to redefine seduction as a form of rape, and more slyly to identify practically all men as rapists." Susan Brownmiller notes that "[rape] is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (emphasis in original). Is it any wonder that radical feminists continuously come up with rather insane ideas when they are so paranoid? Andrea Dworkin, however, takes the cake as far as the definition of rape is concerned. For her rape "precedes marriage, engagement, betrothal, and courtship as sanctioned social behaviour. . . . it embodies sexuality as the culture defines it." Apparently, at least from what we can surmise from Dworkin, men have been raping the human race into existence for centuries. Her rather dark view of heterosexual intercourse is as follows: "Physically, the woman in intercourse is a space inhabited, a literal territory occupied literally: occupied even if there has been no resistance, no force; even if the occupied person said yes please, yes hurry, yes more. . . . occupied women [are] more base in their collaboration than other collaborators have ever been: experiencing pleasure in their own inferiority, calling intercourse