

opinions. So it is quite another thing when one begins with a goal of "subverting western philosophical beliefs," because such a stance stifles dialogue. And that is neither necessary nor useful.

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NOTES

¹"Minority Employment in Daily Newspapers: A Statistical Analysis." Prepared by Jay T. Harris for the American Society of Newspaper Editors. 1981.

²"Window Dressing on the Set: An Update." A Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. 1979.

³Annual Survey by Paul Peterson. *Journalism Educator*. January, 1981.

⁴Jean Ward. "Check Out Your Sexism." *Columbia Journalism Review*. (May/June, 1980) 38-39.

Critique

Vine Deloria's incisive analysis of institutional racism in western culture applies equally well to the related problem of institutional sexism. Both women and minorities—especially individual members of minority racial groups who are immediately recognizable by members of the dominant white culture—belong to a caste rather than a class in western society. As such, we are all subjected by the traditions of white male philosophical and intellectual processes as much as by existing socio-political institutions to the different varieties of exclusion, co-optation and disempowerment that Deloria outlines. In the past decade particularly, women's situation in American political and institutional life has replicated the stasis and frustration experienced by racial minorities for many years preceding.

For example, women continue to attribute our secondary status in American society to irrational sexist beliefs held by

individual persons in power in our culture. Consequently, we characteristically adopt one of the two strategies Deloria cites: changing our own behavior to conform to societal demands or attempting to reason with our oppressors, so that they will see the light and grant us equal status with them as human beings. There is a popular saying in the Women's Movement, to the effect that "A woman must be twice as good as a man if she is to succeed." After a pause to let this fact sink in, the speaker concludes, "Fortunately, this is not difficult." Seemingly inspired by this bit of bravado, many women attempt to fulfill all of the traditional demands placed upon us just because we are women *and* all of the requirements of success in male-defined institutions. The irony is that even this extraordinary effort has not brought women the recognition and rewards we have earned. The alternate strategy, rational persuasion, has been equally ineffective. Even when individual attitudes change, and they sometimes do, the structural modifications we anticipate as a result do not occur. The Equal Rights Amendment has still not been ratified in this country, not because most Americans do not support it—overwhelmingly they do—but because white males in power inside the institution of government are committed to homogeneity, rather than pluralism, for all the reasons Deloria explains. Therefore, both of these strategies are ineffectual, because sexism is every bit as firmly entrenched in our culture as racism; indeed, some people believe it is even more so.

The only solution that would be far-reaching and immediate would be a radical re-analysis and re-organization of society and culture. Unfortunately, this is unlikely at the present time, not only because of established institutions' resistance, but also because of liberal reform-oriented lobby and action groups' failure to recognize the necessity for it. The National Organization for Women, the largest and some would argue the most powerful feminist organization in the United States, with over 150,000 members, has itself become a self-perpetuating institution, manifesting all the characteristics that Deloria describes. Membership drives stress the accomplishments of the organization, and N.O.W. leaders insist upon their members adhering to established policies and participating in mandated projects. Another example of institutional consolidation is academic feminism. At the 1981 National Women's Studies Association

convention, Adrienne Rich exhorted the group to be "disobedient" to patriarchy, including to those academic institutions which pay the salaries of most of those in attendance. Many academic feminists are still striving to succeed in patriarchal terms. To the extent that we accomplish this goal, we often find that we have been co-opted by the very system we began by criticizing, or even rejecting outright. We risk becoming less, not more, likely to advocate a radical restructuring of our own institution.

Since I am an officer in both of the women's organizations I have just named, I must accept responsibility for participating in this dynamic, and I can clearly see several important reasons behind it. The immediate and visible short-term achievements of the Women's Movement and of Women's Studies are nonetheless real, and they are genuinely rewarding to anyone who cares deeply about women. Furthermore, those of us who have only recently gained access to a modicum of power and economic security—however tenuous—are pleased to have these resources and hopeful that we can use them wisely and for the benefit of women in general. Still, we walk a narrow line between activism and co-optation; and we must not forget that co-optation works just as well as exclusion as an institutional strategy for diluting protest.

A review of the past decade reveals, incontestably, that the attempt to "reform" American institutions is not accomplishing very much. Women's salaries, proportional to men's, have actually declined. Institutional statements of "affirmative action" have in most cases proven to be just that—statements, not action; small and meaningless concessions, not genuine reforms. The institutional coping mechanism of "lip service" has served more to mollify protesters than to alleviate inequities. President Carter's endorsement of the Equal Rights Amendment is a good case in point. Had he exerted the same kind of Presidential pressure towards ratification of the E.R.A. that President Reagan exerted towards approval of the AWACS sale, the Equal Rights Amendment might be in effect by now. Carter's tokenistic stance with regard to women was clearly revealed when he fired Bella Abzug for her outspoken insistence upon women's economic needs and replaced her with Lynda

Johnson Robb, who could be counted upon to be ladylike and compliant in her dealings with the Oval Office.

So if, as Deloria says, American institutions are well defended against internal reform, then what can oppressed groups in the culture do to bring about significant change? Is anybody doing it? With what success? The goal of Women's Studies is to offer students a feminist critique of contemporary male-defined culture and an awareness of our female heritage of struggle against it. To the extent that Women's Studies classrooms are feminist in content, outlook, and methodology, then Women's Studies as a discipline is part of the solution, not part of the problem, of patriarchal society. Those who seek to change a system radically must have a clear understanding of that system's roots, a clear vision of an alternative, and a responsible strategy for moving towards that new system. Radical feminists envision a just and humane future and are currently formulating strategies for attaining it. Yet radical feminists are often separatist, thus narrowing their vision and limiting their general effectiveness. If we are to succeed, the many different groups who are oppressed by white male culture must join together, to formulate and work towards a radical re-organization of society. In the meantime, we should all individually examine whether by unwitting cooperation in institutional racism and sexism we may be delaying, rather than hastening, the day when truly revolutionary change can occur.

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*The original title for Dr. Hickok's critique is "Racism, Sexism, and Revolution."

Critique*

As Deloria indicates in the opening lines of his essay, the dominant paradigm of racism in the 1960s reflected the popularly held belief that racism was an individual