

Hatred of Women  
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Women make up half of humanity. We appear to be designed for a partnership with men, at least biologically. Yet for the 3,000 years of human civilization, women have been treated as property with no autonomy. At worst they have been abused, enslaved, and treated with scorn by men. At best, they have been protected and loved.

The most gratifying revolution of all the scientific and social revolutions since the 18th century is the transformation of women as an inferior species to equality and partnership. But this process is a work in progress, by no means completed.

Remnants of the former attitudes toward women still flourish legally and in practice in the less developed parts of our world. Civil wars erupt, and women are raped with impunity to humiliate the enemy. Religions that have not yet been replaced by secular modern law enforce the inferior status of women and authoritarian governments, even in modern states, are trying to force women to return to breeding the next generation of foot soldiers. Even in our own modern democracy, one Republican representative condemned childless women (a choice today) as unpatriotic and little short of criminal.

As a historian, I am aware that such an overwhelming change as women being recognized as equal citizens cannot be easy. There will be pushback, and we see it today in the continuity of wife beating and the number of women who die annually at the hands of their menfolk. But in modern societies, these actions are criminal and are punished under law. The majority of men and women treat each other as partners.

What I do not understand is the undercurrent of hatred that motivates a sizeable minority of men to detest women so much that they feel a compulsion to beat, maim, and kill. What set me off was a trio of articles on one page of the August 8 Santa Cruz Sentinel. The first was "Survivors of acid attacks in Mexico unite to push for change." The second was "French push against domestic abuse may overlook some police." The third was in Japan: "Man accused of injuring 10 with knife on train."

Acid attacks on women began in India and Pakistan, ranging from attacks on women who refused marriage proposals to random motor cyclist attacks on women whose faces were not covered by religiously mandated veils. In Mexico, these attacks are personal and the UN says: "Dousing someone in acid means wanting to dissolve a person physically and psychologically. It is always premeditated. Women who survive require years of surgery and totally ruined beauty."

France, a very modern country, still faces wife-beating among its underclasses (and some fanatical refugees). Last year, 102 women were murdered and many others beaten. One woman who reported threats from her batterer in prison discovered he had been freed and was coming for her. She notified the police, seeking protection. Unfortunately, the cop who received the call was himself being investigated for wife battery, and he managed to lose the report. The woman was murdered.

Most astonishing of all was the Japanese story about the 36-year-old man who slashed 10 women aboard a train. He boarded the train armed with a knife, scissors, cooking oil and a lighter to set fire if he could. When apprehended, he told police he developed the intent to kill women who "looked happy." Apparently that was an offense he couldn't bear. How dare they be happy!

The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan reminds us of how much they hate women. The last time they ruled, women were barred from going out without a keeper. They were completely veiled in public, with even faces screened, forbidden to talk or laugh loudly in public and to wear rubber soled shoes so they wouldn't offend by being heard. And they were executed in a public arena if even accused of adultery.

Even some of our own countrymen can't bear women having autonomy over their bodies. They want to ban abortion for women, yet they protest infringement on their own bodies. No vaccines, no matter how many others they infect.

Why this hatred?

686 words

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