

“Men Against Feminism”

Masculinism is a specific form of anti-feminism that alleges that men’s problems (dropout and school failure rates among boys, suicide and “loss of masculine identity” among men) are caused by “women’s domination” and feminism. Masculinism is based on a caricature of feminism, reducing it to a “war of the sexes” rationale.¹

Masculinist discourse uses “the hardships endured by certain men (e.g., isolation, suicide) or their own stories (e.g., separation, charges of conjugal violence) to conclude that men are subjected to discrimination and are the victims of feminism, and to lobby for the consolidation of male privileges.”² Claiming that equality between men and women has already been achieved, masculinists assert that feminism discriminates against men and fails to recognize the natural and innate differences between the sexes. This is an insidious way to send women back to the kitchen and maintain control. Masculinists use false statistics to vehemently attack grants and subsidies for women’s groups, particularly politically active groups that oppose violence against women. Shelters for battered women are being directly targeted, since, according to masculinists, “feminist discourse on violence is irrational and unfounded.”³

Masculinists advance false concepts such as the “symmetry of violence”, claiming that there are as many violent women as there are violent men. Yves Pageau, a masculinist activist, suggests that “women cultivate violence through their status as victims.”⁴ Yvon Dallaire, another standardbearer for the rights of “wronged” men, maintains that “roughing up... even striking a female partner constitutes one way in which [the man]

¹ “Pour les féministes, l’homme représente l’ennemi à battre ou l’animal à dresser”, Actes du 1er Congrès Paroles d’hommes, held in Montreal, 2004.

² “These men who wish us well...” by the Montreal pro-feminist men’s group, Hommes contre le patriarcat, www.antipatriarcat.org/hcp.

³ Roch Côté, *Manifeste d’un salaud*, Éditions du Portique, 1990, p. 76.

⁴ Accessed from the Web site of the [men’s] group, Content d’être un gars, at www.garscontent.com.

expresses his frustration.”⁵ In his comments on conjugal violence, Dallaire goes as far as to say that “we need an approach in which no one is guilty and which holds both protagonists responsible.”⁶ Meanwhile, according to Statistics Canada, conjugal violence is perpetrated by a man in 9 out of 10 cases.

A right-wing *backlash*

Masculinism is, in fact, a right-wing, reactionary and conservative *backlash* that opposes the social changes made through the struggles and analyses of the feminist movement. Masculinism promotes an essentialist, traditionalist and stereotypical view of social relations between the sexes and within the family: the weak, gentle, emotional, caregiver housewife; the strong, protector, provider virile man.

Unlike feminism, masculinism does not constitute a social movement. As a social movement, feminism is based on an analysis of women’s structural oppression through patriarchy, and is organized in a vast, worldwide network of groups. It possesses a rich and compelling history, as well as a series of detailed theories and concepts. The feminist movement fights for progressive social change to end oppression and systemic inequalities while voicing clear demands. By contrast, masculinism is largely a discourse, often expressed in inflammatory terms and held by a mere handful of organizations. Using stunts and an analysis that advocates preserving men’s privileges and power, masculinists’ views are disproportionately disseminated in the media, in our legislative bodies and among some university professors.

The main strategy used by masculinists is to propagate an antifeminist discourse, as epitomized in the following quotations: “feminist ideologists have ‘cashed in on’ the massacre at the Polytechnic”;⁷ and “the commemoration of the events at the Polytechnic

⁵ Yvon Dallaire, quoted by Normand Brodeur “Le discours des défenseurs des droits des hommes sur la violence conjugale: une analyse critique.” *Service social*, vol. 50, 2003.

⁶ Actes du 2e Congrès Paroles d’hommes, held in Montreal, April 22–24, 2005

⁷ Roch Côté, *Op. cit.*, p. 76. On December 6, 1989, armed with a hunting rifle, Marc Lépine entered l’École Polytechnique de Montréal and killed 14 women before committing suicide. He left behind a note with an anti-feminist message.

on December 6th is a typical example of... the intellectual fraud [committed by] a group of fundamentalist feminists who are cashing in on a meaningless event, for the cause.”⁸ Masculinist discourse is not an analysis, but rather a hateful “discourse”.

Intimidation, threats and law suits

In Québec, masculinism is incarnated in the words and deeds of a few groups: *Fathers for Justice*, *Content d’être un gars*, *L’Après-rupture* and the *Mouvement Égalitariste*. These groups use various tactics, some of which are known to the public and could be described as “soft”, such as lobbying, participating in parliamentary commissions and other official government bodies, and flooding Web sites and blogs with anti-feminist texts.

Masculinists are also leading their anti-feminist crusade with the aid of emissaries who enjoy a certain measure of legitimacy, including psychologists, politicians, social workers, university professors, lawyers, religious figures, etc. These “professionals” and “authorities” use their supposed credibility to appear as experts on television shows and so-called news programs.

Masculinists also use more dubious tactics, ranging from law suits to intimidation and harassment, including a break and entry into the Maison Parent-Roback - during which a worker was pushed aside - and attempts to enter and sabotage feminist events⁹. Other tactics have included publishing photos and “wanted” posters for feminists and pro-feminist men on web sites and making death threats to prominent figures in the feminist movement.¹⁰ *Fathers for Justice* recently submitted a request to the *Commissions des droits de la personne du Québec* (The Québec human rights commission) for the

⁸ Accessed through the Web site of the separated fathers’ group, *L’Après-rupture*, at www.lapresrupture.qc.ca.

⁹ On April 6, 2006, four members and sympathizers from the Fathers for Justice (F4J) masculinist group attempted to gain entry into an evening of feminist entertainment attended by an audience of over one hundred people. F4J’s “intervention” ended with the arrival of two police officers, who were responding to a complaint made against a feminist by Andy Srougi (the man who scaled the Jacques-Cartier Bridge on September 2005 with a large banner that read “Daddy loves you”), for assault and instigation of violence.

¹⁰ One example is the case of Donald Doyle. On November 21, 2005, Doyle was found guilty of making death threats to 25 workers in women’s groups and of the illegal storage of two rifles and ammunition in his home. His letter, sent to several feminists, ended with the statement: “As the reincarnation of Marc Lépine, I am going to come back and finish what I started,” followed by a list of the names of his 26 potential victims.

investigation of three feminist and pro-feminist individuals as well as two community groups - le *Centre des femmes d'Ici et d'ailleurs*, and *Centre Lajeunesse* - both of which have organized or hosted feminist workshops and events. These activists and two groups may now have a lawsuit on their hands simply because they are openly feminist and questioned or denounced the hateful discourse and aggression of various masculinist groups.

Why we must respond in solidarity

Québec is one of the places where feminism has achieved the most significant progress and where the structural inequalities between women and men have been the most successfully mitigated. Still, struggles remain to combat poverty, all forms of discrimination, and various forms of violence against women, as well as to end all oppression. We have yet to achieve economic security, equality amongst women, pay equity, and much more. Men *and* women benefit from the struggles spearheaded by the feminism movement, as deconstructing gendered stereotypes breaks the shackles that bind both women and men to constraining roles and opens new spaces for all to freely redefine social relationships.

All social movements that have supported and led to fundamental social change have encountered considerable opposition from conservative forces defending the status quo in the distribution of power, wealth and privilege. The feminist movement is no exception to this rule. The masculinist backlash must concern us all. We must do our utmost to identify and denounce the dangers of the masculinists' hateful discourse and stand in solidarity with the feminists who are subjected to their malicious attacks. We must do so in the name of equality for all.