

AUTHENTIC FEMALE PARANOIA

I have a BA in Women's Studies. I am owner of my own business. I am a creative artist. I am the mother of three adult children. I have survived 58 years on this planet. I could list many other accomplishments and roles where I have been an active participant or an intent observer. But it was ten years ago in my first Women's Studies Intro class that I began questioning the inferior status of women: How did women lose their rights? My instructor answered that she was not certain that women ever had rights!

I began to see persecution in religious dogma, in the nouns and verbs of language, in laws, in the stories and myths defining courage, philosophies and nation building, and in, particularly for women, countless contributions, artifacts and stories which were deemed unimportant and which were lost or destroyed. I felt as a woman that I was being paranoid: a psychosis characterized by systematized delusions of persecution or grandeur usually without hallucinations; a tendency on the part of an individual or group toward excessive or irrational suspiciousness and distrustfulness of others.

For now, though, I am going to label that initial experience as ***authentic female paranoia***: an awakening characterized by an intense awareness of the devaluing of the feminine through millennia and supported by countless historical and daily reminders of the suppression women have experienced at the hands and through the laws of men.

How has it been possible that women have had no rights? And not just in the United States or Europe? But globally. How has this been possible? Not only have women been kept legally and forcibly in a secondary position under male supremacy, and that our secondary status has been legitimized by judicial and religious laws, but culturally we ourselves, who have not had a voice in these laws that have governed us, have played a major supporting role in maintaining our secondary status.

Most women have believed that our male gods and their religions, our governments, our heroes, our grandfathers, our fathers, our brothers, our husbands, our sons would protect us because that is the stated benefit of men's supremacy over women: that women and children are to be protected by men. Of course we have only to look at centuries of *history* which reveal anything but... (We, as women might also ask *Whom* are we being protected from and *Who* benefits from this distribution of power and dominance?)

Both women and men (quite naturally) want to believe that altruism has motivated man to care for the weaker and less fortunate. This would also help explain why women have not in large part embraced feminism. If you believe in the inherent goodness of men's values and their motives to protect, then you must also believe in your own need for protection and secondary status. Unfortunately those male values and motives have historically been ***forcibly used against women*** and actually created those secondary roles of weakness and less fortune for women to inhabit.

Feminism was born as women demanded a cultural shift in valuing women and granting equality with the other half of the species. Feminism has looked at women's lives and

acknowledged the influences of religious filters (male deities) and those restrictive structures of patriarchal cultures that limit women's lives. What is unnaturally clear is that historically men have defined what is natural and unnatural for women. When women disagree (as in Feminism), then those patriarchal structures defined the feminist philosophy as combative and unnatural in an attempt to strongly discourage women from adopting a differing philosophy which valued women and their contributions.

With every passing year, women's numbers in positions of authority and power are growing locally, nationally and globally. We are at least 51% of the population of the planet. It is time for women to lead, through the principles of cooperation and collaboration, those efforts toward world peace.

Women, let us unite with the understanding that what is good for women is also for the greater good of all. Let us remember that a choice to do nothing in a patriarchal culture is a default choice supporting that restrictive culture.

Let us step into our Circle of Power

where our freedom is illuminated by feminine truths of justice and equality;
where feminine courage embraces change and awareness;
where peace comes when we are responsible for our self;
where tranquility reflects our quiet spirit center;
where self reflects a woman's first true and honest love;
where beauty mirrors a woman's autonomy;
where energy melds our purpose with creativity;
where women and feminine sexuality are treated with respect and dignity.

Blessings to you in the new year,

Rebecca

Fabulous books to read:

Who Cooked the Last Supper?, Rosalind Miles

Urgent Message from Mother, Gather the Women and Save the World, Jean Shinoda Bolen