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A CHICANA LOOKS AT WOMANS LIBERATION

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The movement towards womens liberation has always left me bewildered. For although I accepted the validity of womens suppression, I could never understand how it related to me as a Chicana until I entered college and studied the history of my ancestry. It has come to my attention that the suppression of women has continued for over one thousand years. This, I have traced to the Aztecs and Spaniards. It seems strange to me that the "civilized" people of the twentieth century have deemed it right and just to condemn the barbaric religion of the Aztecs and the cruel treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards, while at the same time approving wholeheartedly the subservient position at which they kept their women. Our society not only sanctions this depravity, but also practices it almost to the letter! As a result, countless human beings have been and are conditioned to live a life of subservience to the male sex. This is clearly a case of institutionalized ~~subservience~~ against women! But this is a ~~subservience~~ that, until recently, has not been felt because women had come to accept this as their natural way of life. During this period of suppression men had been able to illogically justify a million reasons for treating women as slaves, housewives, prisoners, something of economic value, and (naturally) a sexual convenience. However, along with the new tide of rebellion, civil rights, and protest which swept the nation, came the awakening of the woman. Although aware that she must act, her combined Aztec-Spanish "inheritance" left her very sensitive to any danger which could cause her to be labeled "indecent" or "dishonorable". This hesitancy was sensed by man and used to make women suppress themselves! Women are now discovering that in order to attain "liberation" they cannot demand for it to be handed to them on a silver platter, for the subserviency

which they fight has become a part of them. They must come to realize the extreme potential which is theirs and begin to freely develop their minds to whatever capacity the human brain can maintain.

Many of our present-day beliefs spring from our Spanish heritage. Romantic Spanish philosophers convinced the women into suppression through illogical philosophy such as:

THE MAN CONVINCES THROUGH LOGIC-
THE WOMAN WITH TEARS

THE MAN IS POWER-
THE WOMAN IS LOVE

THE MAN IS THE HEAD-
THE WOMAN IS THE HEART

THE MAN HAS THE INTELLIGENCE-
THE WOMAN HAS THE "SOUL"

THE MAN IS THE SUN-
THE WOMAN IS THE MOON

The same philosophy was that the woman were to be educated in the art of decoration, adornment, and housework. They were to be taught the highest elevation of morality and religion, also that women were created to hold a baby in her arms and to comfort and guide the soul of the man. One of the trickiest justifications for not allowing a woman an education was that it would be a catastrophe for her! For to compete against men would be to lose her "greatest power". This power described would be the facility with which she could apply her "natural attributes" to manipulate men. In other words; why educate a woman to compete with scientists, doctors, or engineers when she could subjugate them with her virtues and dominate them with her purity and love!? This justification is the greatest insult for it implies that were a woman pure and virtuous enough, she would be considered equal or superior to man. It also suggests that women who feel they are not considered as equals are somehow lacking in their natural attributes, therefore making them less of a woman.

Within the Aztec culture, to be a woman meant that to be a mother would be your highest aim in life. Whenever a male was born there were numerous mystic celebrations and rituals which connected him directly to the gods. The mother became divine and precious for the suffering she endured in giving birth to a son. If a female were born she was meant to be his soul and serve him. The young Aztec woman was taught all the home occupations and instructed to:

- 1) reserve her body for only one man
- 2) give him her soul
- 3) be faithful and happy
- 4) make him feel strong and brave
- 5) wait until her body was ripe enough so that together they could enjoy the fruits of life.

These instructions are parallel with those that young women receive today, save one drawback. Since it was always the women who had to apply themselves to rules, the men decided that they didn't need any! Women became a popular game among men. The most popular version being that of making the girl break her rules, and broken, leaving her in order to find more attractive game. To explain why women kept quiet for so long is simple. No woman wanted other men to discover that she was no longer "pure" or "virtuous". Why did woman want to remain "pure" and "virtuous"? Because men dictated that she must be to deserve one of them. Does this sound illogical? Does this sound like man? This hesitancy of the woman to break free from all regulations imposed upon her by man can be traced to her fear of breaking her rule of chastity and becoming "indecent". Through the growing awareness of freedom, this fear need no longer exist. For freedom does not mean man! It means the ability of self-determination for every human being whether male or female and that no one has the right to determine the abilities of another.

The "liberated" women of our time who have reached this same conclusion are searching for a direction in which to vent their frustrations. Through trial and error, however, they are learning that to crucify man will accomplish little or nothing. Man is no longer the root of the problem! Just as the subservient position women were placed in became a part of them, so have moral rules and regulations been institutionalized to become a part of our of our way of life. As have I, countless women have come to see that you can't fight the person, you have to fight the idea and you can't do it alone. This realization makes the oppression of women just another part of the Capitalistic system under which we live. Women and men, working against each other, would strike another blow for a system of life which is built around the idea that in order to exist, someone must always be on top.