Women Are Oppressed Essay, Research Paper

?No one else is free while others are oppressed?, states Martin L. King. It is an essential claim that women are oppressed. What is oppression? Oppression is the subjugation by one group to another group. By being oppressed you are being denied your human right to be an equal. Equality should not be an unattainable ideal that is only imagined in a far off place. Equality should be realistic and true. However, is equality just an unrealistic ideal for women in today?s society? To achieve a goal of equality, oppression has to be dealt with in the way we talk, the way we live, and the way we are taught. The treatment of women in today?s society is related to culture and the society we are living in.

Marilyn Frye relates oppression to a birdcage. You cannot see oppression just by looking at one bar in the cage, you have to look at the whole picture. Only by taking a couple steps back can you see that oppression is in our homes and in our everyday lives. We live in a man?s world, and we also live in a society of double standards. Take for example our language, this form of communication describes our values and attitudes. In language women are often oppressed in words such as: Mrs., Miss, Ms.. This form of language is a tool for ownership. If we hear the word Mrs., automatically she is married or ?owned? by her husband. However, Mr. is only used in one connotation. Like Frye expresses, unless looked at from the ?big picture? prospective, it is neglected. This is just one example of our language that reflects the subordination of women.

Now I am a guy, just the usual ? Joe Schmoe? if that?s what you wish to call me. Nevertheless, I have one unique character that differentiates me from most other males. I have my eyes wide open to the world. I am aware what is wrong with the world, and I am conscious that having an open-mind is in my best interest. I witness other males oppress women, and I realize that the world has not progressed as much as we would like to think. Take for instance, the ongoing problem with sexism in our culture. I feel sexism by males to females is related to the way males were brought up in their household. I live in a traditional catholic household, where the female of the family takes care of the children, cooks dinner for the family, and provides moral support for her husband. Furthermore, the male of the household provides the financial support, takes care of the bills, helps his ?boys? grow into men, etc. Being raised in this setting created a lot of confusion for me as I started growing up. The older I got I soon realized that women are special and should be treated with great respect, and equality. Why was I under the impression that the woman of the household should be the caretaker of the family? It was because I was raised to think that. My cultural upbringing resulted in a personality that was close-minded in the beginning of adolescence.

Sherry Ortner expresses that the secondary status of women in society is a true universal, a pan-cultural fact. Further, the treatment of women and their comparative power varies from culture to culture. Ortner believes that every culture oppresses women in some way, no matter what. I disagree. I feel most cultures have oppressed women in someway, however, not all of them. There are some cultures (I am sad to say in rural lands) that believe that the woman is near a God. I sympathize for Ortner?s dejection in her essays, but I cannot say I understand. I feel that unless you are oppressed, than there is no way to understand what pain and suffering women have gone through.

There are some positive movements that have resulted from women while being oppressed. Take for instance the feminist movement. The feminist movement has been good for the woman of today. My analysis of the feminist movement is anger, anger for that the way women have been treated. However, I feel anger can be used in a constructive manner. For example, women?s studies courses, feminist rallies, self-protection classes, etc. These are examples of how the movement is spreading the word. There are problems that come with women being more independent in today?s society, and that is the contradiction of people who oppose the idea. Audrey Lorde feels that people who are privileged (being the white, middle class male) do not see oppression, they are blind to it. That is why males today still think women who are feminist are man-haters. Despite the economic progress of women, has it been forced? We do not know, but there is still a lot of work to be done from the feminist prospective.

Ultimately, it must be stressed again that women are oppressed, however, to what extent has the oppression diminished. We must all agree that women have been subordinated and thought of as lower class citizens. Change in a society can be painful. But if we work together as a cohesive unit, the struggle can be fought, and goals can be achieved. For all women, only change can bring results.

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