

Women and the Environment:

Understanding the Connections



The subject of women and nature has a growing niche in feminism and women's studies. Based on the premise that as women are dominated and controlled so too is nature, as feminine oppression and abuse parallels environmental degradation and destruction. There is solid evidence that the more male-dominated a community the more oppressed women are within that community. Also true is the poorer the woman the worse her immediate environment, and thus her children are more likely to be unhealthy and uneducated. Historical trends show that when women and mothers lose cultural and religious respect within a society, that same society loses respect for nature and begins to self-destruct. For instance, our modern Westernized cities seldom considers the mother and her child in the design and construction of homes, streets, distances, and the quality of building materials. Women, especially poor women, cannot work and serve their families and jobs effectively within these city plans without greatly compromising their health and happiness. Endocrine disorders, allergies, asthma, and cancer inundate our society, and are believed to have links to our modern living environments. Environmental illness and multiple chemical sensitivities, real diseases, are more prone in women. Globally, the most industrial of Western cities are the leading the world in environmental degradation. It is this examination of the historical, cultural, religious, and political causes of feminine oppression and its subsequent ecological devastation that has led to the emergence of *ecofeminism*: The inextricable link between feminism and ecology.

Since its inception in the 1970s, *ecofeminism* has embraced '*Mother Earth*' and questioned the Judeo-Christian relationship to nature. The

separation from nature is at the heart of all feminine environmental arguments. Thirty years later it's no longer just a feminist issue. Almost all environmental debates are based on the question '**Are we of Nature**, or is nature here for us to dominate and control'? In our American society the answer to this question depends on if one is liberal or conservative, a Christian or not, Republican or Democrat. This black and white approach to nature and our relationship to the environment is why environmental policies have remained relatively unchanged for over 30 years, and why America continues to produce and manufacture materials and chemicals that are known to be toxic and unsafe for our homes

and communities. It is why no American city can implement a strong and sustainable recycling program, and why environmental education is practically non-existent in our schools. It is also the reason why America is the largest generator of waste in the world and consumes almost half the world's goods. According to many *ecofeminist* theories, America is on a road to self-destruction.

If *ecofeminism* theories are correct then it is not just the question 'Are we of nature' which America has yet to resolve, but rather '**Are we of Female**', or is the female here for us to dominate and control'? If societies across the world could look only at science and facts this question has already been answered: All life starts as *Female*, and all species enter this life through *Females*. No matter how much testosterone runs this world all men began as female, and they owe their lives to the sacrifices, pain, and love of their mothers. If men complain that their mothers did not sacrifice or love to a level that deserves respect, they should look at the multiple negative factors which (to this day) impacted a mother's life: Abuse, poverty, poor education, no family foundation, etc. All mankind must understand that the imbalance of the sexes hurts everyone, regardless of which sex. If this one fact could be embraced mankind's global relationship to nature would change for the better.



With true respect of women comes respect for her history and contributions to cultures. Women have been community gatherers, farmers, weavers, and pottery makers, where their hands molded and formed the earth's gifts on a daily basis. In most cultures the family doctor was the woman who understood medicinal plants and herbs and prepared healing foods for her children. In the majority of cases where women are given economic control of the family's welfare, the family survives. The recent Nobel Prize Winner Dr. Muhammad Yunus understood this, and over 90% of his micro-credit funding went to women. Where women thrive and succeed the environment around them is more likely

to become disease free, cleaner, and respected.

Women, who arguably are naturally more in tune with universal cycles, intuition, and "motherly instincts", are the true mystery-solvers of our universe. Within science, physics, and mathematics, a linear ceiling has been reached where concepts and solutions to the world's mysteries need non-linear, cyclic, and possibly ethereal contributions. Men have characteristically contributed to linear science and technology, but the future of science belongs to women who are intuitively better at understanding abstractions of the natural world. Natural and biological laws are based in the feminine, as each and every species and ecosystem operates in very unique ways, dependent on fuzzy logic ("sixth sense") and intuition to survive and thrive. The greatest natural laws discovered in the 20th century, the theory of relativity and DNA, would have never been solved without the amazing minds of the women who contributed (Mieva Einstein and Rosalind Franklin). In a more just time it may be proven these women were actual discoverers to those findings.



Mieva Einstein



Rosalind Franklin

No modern day person (*and* female) has been more in tune with environmental patterns and natural laws than Rachel Carson (1907-1964). This single working woman and marine biologist taught America the paramount importance of our relationship to the environment. With the publication of her 1962 book *Silent Spring* she exposed the repercussions of DDT use on ecosystems and human health. She created an awareness and up rise, which lead to the banning of DDT in the United States and eventually most of the world. Her efforts quickly lead to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Environmental Quality Council, and the National Environmental Policy Act. These US government institutions have indirectly become global models on how to organize and address environmental concerns and protect human health. Rachel Carson's sensitive, understandable writings on ecosystem dynamics have moved citizens to care deeply about the environment and understand the interconnection of all life. Ironically, Rachel Carson died prematurely of breast cancer, believed by many scientists to be caused by exposure to environmental estrogen mimickers, such as pesticides and industrial by-products. Many consider her to be our first **Environmental Prophet**.



Rachel Carson

It has been over thirty years since Rachel Carson set the foundation for our modern societies and pointed us in the correct environmental direction. But, we did not take heed. Cornell University recently stated they believe 40% of world's human deaths are caused by environmental pollutants. With the threat of global warming and American cancer rates twice that of other nations, the time has come for new environmental prophets; people and/or institutions that can (once and for all) redirect America's relationship with the environment. This can only happen by embracing an understanding and respect for the feminine and ecology. The American Indian culture has a deep understanding of nature and honoring the feminine. All levels of educators should teach our youth about Native American philosophy and religions. Many North American tribes are matriarchal, governed under the auspice of wise women, and honor *Mother Earth* with the seriousness of life itself.



America was created, designed, and governed by men, yet now we are one of the most violent Westernized countries, infested with cancer, and have the greatest disconnection from our ecological impacts. Young women today need to enter into the sciences with absolute urgency; studying toxicology, agriculture, biomimicry, conservation, green chemistry, alternative energy, health, nutrition, and ecological dynamics. Women today must enter all realms of governance. We need to preserve the best of modern living while walking as gently as possible on the planet. We must educate and KNOW that female is creation, female is nature, and female is the future. Most important:

Female is Life