

RESPECT OUR MOTHERS: STOP HATING WOMEN

by Russell Maroon Shoatz (2010)

This essay is mainly for men, although it will also make some women examine some of the ideas and practices they indulge in. With exceptions, men love or at least have loved their mothers—they think.

This fiction of loving our mothers has also translated into “respect” for mom more than for most other women. Plus men will (mostly) protest that they don’t hate women. Guys like me are experts in deceiving themselves in this manner. I deceived myself a lot—despite, in my youth, practicing the vilest forms of woman hating, attempting to be the ultimate street thug during the heyday of Philadelphia’s street gang craze in the 1950s and early 1960s. Afterwards, I was an equally insane, ruthless, low-down, dirty, drug-dealing hustler.

Nonetheless, after becoming politically conscious I further deluded myself into believing that being a “revolutionary” made me a champion dedicated to the uplifting of all humanity. It turned out, however, that I had just transferred many of my woman-hating practices to another arena. That’s the special fate of male revolutionaries who put so much stock in the testosterone-dominated armed struggle.

One can see a similar paradigm being followed by men who come from “the other side of the track.” Stan Goff—who’s White, while I’m Black—followed this same macho script:

In a distinguished career in elite Ranger, Airborne and Special Forces counter-terrorist units, Stan Goff went to Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, Grenada, Panama, Venezuela, Honduras, South Korea, Columbia, Peru, Somalia, and in 1994, Haiti. There he refused to turn away from the implications of his own experience. . . . *Hideous Dream* is a revealing look inside U.S. foreign policy, inside the elite echelon of the Special Forces and inside the racist history of American imperial domination of Haiti. It is also a deeply personal account of a man trapped between his emerging political consciousness and the cynical mandates of his life as a professional soldier. (From the back cover of Stan Goff, *Hideous Dream* [Softskull Press, 2000])

But Goff has also grown a great deal in his understanding and commitments to truly egalitarian social change. He has written books and essays, and he organizes in the streets to help bring this about. So here I’ll quote from his writing to help make my points: Two former “macho men”—once from opposing camps—are now joined in an effort to prevent others from making the same kinds of anti-women mistakes they made.

Some of the knee-jerk men are already thinking: “This guy’s talking to the nut cases. I don’t hate women. In fact I really love women more than I feel comfortable discussing!” What’s really being

said there is “I love sex! Period.” Of course that’s how most males are made. But don’t get that confused with what’s really being pointed out here. It’s similar to when the plantation owners in the American South used to swear to outsiders about the supposed affection they had for their “niggras”—especially after the North’s abolitionists began to make inroads with their anti-slavery efforts prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. What the slavers (too) were saying was; “I love what all my niggras can and are doing for me.”

In a passage from Stan Goff’s *Sex and War* (Lulu, 2006), he writes about how the related “male power is not simply father-right but sex-right. It’s about men having access to the bodies of women in a relationship of domination and subjection” (p. 196).

That’s not love; it’s exploitation like master and slave. To really get a handle on all of this we must clear away centuries of built-up diversions that hinder us from simply accepting the reality of so many woman-hating practices, by going to the root of the problem: the ancient and still-operational, institutionalized, and culturally-ingrained practices of a system known as “patriarchy.”

Patriarchy and the Roots of Women’s Oppression

Patriarchy as a system of male dominance over women emerged some 5,000–6,000 years ago among certain tribes living in the central Asian steppes north of the Black Sea. . . . The Kurgan People were able to make warfare and conquest of other tribes and their territory the main source of their wealth. The secret . . . was not their superior intelligence or culture, or some kind of genetic superiority, but mainly more efficient means of transport, namely tamed horses and camels, and their more efficient means of destruction, namely bows and arrows and spears and other long distance weapons. . . . This monopoly over efficient means of destruction, however, changed not only the relationship between those tribes and other tribes, but also the relationship between humans and nature and also, in particular, the relationship between men and women. . . . It also changed the whole conceptualization about the originator of human life. Whereas before it was clear that women were the beginning. . . . of human life, this logic could now be turned upside down. A new logic could be created, namely that of “He who kills is.” . . . “He who kills is” has remained the core of all patriarchal logic until today. (Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective—Beyond the Globalized Economy* [Zed Books Ltd, 1999] pp. 32-33)

There have been exceptions, in particular in Sub Saharan Africa, due to women being responsible for the production of 80% of the food—at least up until European colonialism. But even there, and everywhere else inhabited by humans, patriarchy has developed and held sway until this very day. Patriarchy’s most virulent manifestation, however, developed with the early European capitalist system and has since metastasized into patriarchal capitalism, which dominates the world today. It is a male-dominated system that’s totally irrational and that can never hope to satisfy the needs or desires of its participants.

“In a system that is driven mainly by the motive of constant growth of money and because capital cannot say 'It is enough,' there is no concept of sufficiency” (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies, p.54). Nonetheless the history of our species runs counter to any idea that we are beings who have not in the past, or cannot today, satisfy our needs and wants—when not indoctrinated into believing otherwise. “Capitalism had to transform needs into wants and addictions by producing ever more fashionable ‘satisfiers.’ . . . Only when thirst will no longer be quenched by water but only by Coca-Cola or wine or beer is it possible to extend production of these beverages limitlessly” (ibid, p. 55).

Even with patriarchal capitalism dominating our world, most of the needs of its billions of inhabitants are still met in other ways.

Economists define growth as the increase of all goods and services produced and marketed in the course of one year in one country, . . . GDP or GNP (gross domestic product, or gross national product). . . . [But] the bulk of the work done on this planet is *not* included in this indicator, namely the work of housewives and mothers, the work of subsistence farmers and artisans, most of the work in the informal sector, particularly in the South, and, of course, the self-generating activity of mother nature. All this production and work does not *count*. On the other hand all destructive work—like wars, environmental and other accidents, oil spills, arms production, trade and so on—is included in GDP, because it “creates” more wage labor, more demand and economic growth. (ibid, pp. 56-57)

For generations some thinkers have been explaining how irrationally an economic system like capitalism functions, mostly to be ignored, vilified or silenced in other ways. Here’s a quick rundown on just why capitalism—ultimately—does not work:

In non-capitalist subsistence . . . *use-values* are produced for the satisfaction of limited human needs. When they are exchanged in the market, use-value is exchanged for use-value, for example, potatoes against apples. Marx called this the ‘simple circulation of goods’. His formula is C-M-C (Commodity -> Money-> Commodity). But the capitalist production process has a different beginning and aim. It starts with money and its aim is more money . . . M-C-M¹ (Money-> Commodity-> Money¹) . . . In the next production round the increased money

(money¹) is again invested with the aim of again producing *more* money (money¹¹). And thus ad infinitum. Use-value production and exchange-value production realise two different economic goals: the one life, the other money. The aim of use-value production—we also call it subsistence production—is fulfilled with the satisfaction of limited, concrete needs. It makes no sense to work longer once one has produced the things—or services—one needs for a good life. Exchange-value production, on the other hand, is by its very logic unlimited. Its aim is extended accumulation of ever more money, or abstract wealth. (ibid, pp. 57-58)

Money—Or Until the Wheels Fall Off

“In this logic lies the basic clue for the understanding of the capitalist growth mania, not in insatiable human greed, as some think” (ibid, p. 58).

A final but very important aspect must be touched on here. “A subsistence perspective can be realised economically only in smaller, regionally limited decentralised areas. Only in such regional or local economics can production and consumption be integrated in such a way that the interests of the producers and the consumers are not antagonistic” (ibid, p. 58).

Although patriarchal capitalism is a world-wide system, that does not mean it can be grappled with or defeated using the same methods it has given rise to: massive, regimented, faceless armies of dissidents who will also fall victim to an inability to adequately understand, and thus empathize with, the needs of other dissidents who are geographically and culturally removed from them. The antithesis of global patriarchal capitalism, therefore, must be a global, decentralized localization, that nevertheless still shares a common need to be rid of patriarchal capitalism’s exploitation and domination. We must develop ways and means to coordinate our efforts in order to accomplish such a goal. Failure to both decentralize and (ultimately) coordinate will allow patriarchal capitalism room to develop new and better ways to continue to pursue it’s goal of accumulation.

Many of my readers already desire and work towards the realization of egalitarian goals—they believe—but by now may be troubled by some of what I’ve written so far. Let’s call them “left alternative thinkers.” It seems to me that many of these thinkers have been confused by a blind following of doctrines and practices of what I’ll call “patriarchal socialism.”

We discovered that women’s work to reproduce . . . labor power did not appear in the calculations of either capitalists or of the state, or in Marx’s theory. On the contrary, in all economic theories and models this life-producing and life-preserving subsistence work of women appears as a “free good,” a free resource like air, water, sunshine. It appears to flow naturally from women’s bodies. . . . We began to understand that the dominant theories about the functioning of our economy, including Marxism, were only concerned with the tip of the iceberg visible above the water, namely only capital and wage labor. The base of that iceberg under the water was invisible, namely women's unpaid housework, caring work, nurturing work

. . . the production of life or subsistence production. . . . And finally we saw that nature herself was considered to be a “free good,” to be appropriated and exploited with no or little costs for the sake of accumulation. Therefore we called all those parts of submerged “hidden economy” which are under the water in our iceberg metaphor—nature, women and colonised people and territories—the “Colonies of the White Man.” (pp. 31-32 [“White Man” here stands for the western industrial system -RMS])

Even the followers of Marx, Mao, Che, Nkrumah, Cabral, Newton, and George Jackson fall woefully short in grasping the true nature of patriarchy, even though they strive mightily to overcome capitalism. The author fit into that category too, until as recently as four years ago anyway.

“In revolutionary practice, women were relegated to being revolutionary helpmates with certain exceptions and the most immediate forms of women’s oppression—often in the home—went unrecognized or were ‘deferred’ for resolution within the socialist project until after the revolution” (Stan Goff, *Sex and War* [Lulu, 2006] p. 182).

Even though we’ve all seen those iconic posters of the woman guerrilla, rifle in hand and baby on her back, how many posters do you know of *male* guerrillas with babies on their backs?! Even during times of war the “life preserving” work of women appears as a free good, a free resource, that appears to flow naturally from women’s bodies.

That’s patriarchy at work: propaganda designed to encourage women to support and participate in movements labeled “anti-oppression.” It’s a sleight of hand that’s hidden by patriarchal socialization. Thus we inadvertently propagate our own blindness about how the patriarchal woman-mother stereotype is perpetuated.

And it’s apparent that those tens of thousands of women guerrillas who participated in the wars of national liberation from Angola to Vietnam to Nicaragua, as well as anti-oppression struggles globally, have all but been forgotten today, except by those who lived through those times or by the diligent student or researcher.

Everyone knows who Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was. Only some know who Ella Baker was.

Yet her contribution to the Black Freedom Struggle was contemporaneous with King’s and just as significant. (Goff, p. 182)

In the U.S. one can locate scores of streets, buildings, programs and even a national holiday named after black men who contributed to the civil rights and Black-liberation movements of the last hundred years. But one would be hard pressed to find a dozen named for Black women. Without being a student of the subject, everybody has images of black women and children being set upon by cops or dogs, or being dragged away and arrested. We can visualize the sisters in their huge afros showing defiance in the front ranks of all manner of struggles during that same period. If it wasn’t for the capitalists recognizing that a dollar could be made recording those images, we would really be at a loss!

Earlier, I quoted Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies concerning the fight against patriarchal capitalism and about decentralization. Here's something from our comrade who spent decades in the U.S. military and should know a thing or two about the strengths of centralization and decentralization, and how this fits with his/our desire to dismantle patriarchal capitalism.

Women have been able to contest for power with men more effectively at the local level where these communal networks (more often than not organized by women) were strongest, and that “the more centralized, bureaucratic, and trans-local working-class organizations are, the easier it is for men to monopolize decision making and marginalize women.” (Goff, p. 172, quoting Johanna Brenner, “On Gender and Class in US Labor History,” *Monthly Review*, Volume 50, Number 6, November 1998.)

Again quoting Johanna Brenner, he continues: “Limitations on women's participation were cultural (definitions of leadership, and notions of masculine authority and the role of women in the public sphere) but also material. In the first instance, care-giving responsibilities restricted women's leadership beyond the local level. Until quite recently most women union leaders and organizers were single, childless or had grown children” (Goff, p. 172).

Once again we see patriarchal privilege manifesting itself in order to keep the women union members from effectively exercising power, albeit without really saying so or even recognizing it. The women union members were expected to do the bulk of the work in raising the children, and to the union men that seemed natural. Of course in 2010 there is an ever-growing number of men who do the bulk of work in raising children, usually because the capitalist class has discovered it can discard large sections of higher-paid men and replace them with lower-paid women, leaving couples with little option but to switch roles. Yet most men and women still adhere to patriarchal norms: the men resenting the women for taking their jobs, and the women accepting women's (patriarchal) wages for work they know men are or would be paid more to do. The overwhelming majority would not dream of blaming or challenging the real culprits, the twin pillars of capitalism and patriarchy.

Once again Goff comments on centralization and its history in supporting patriarchy: “As resistance struggles begin they are more local, and increasingly as the struggle transforms into a nationwide (and even internationalized) coordinated one, from war of maneuver to war of position, from guerrilla to conventional, the organizational tendency is to centralize. Given that many forms are necessarily centralized and trans-local, the question becomes how to be intentional about preventing sectoral patriarchal defaults from kicking in” (Goff, p. 172).

I would wager that most men who consider themselves to be combating capitalism's many ramifications—whether they consider themselves to be seeking “socialist” solutions or not is besides the point, since another wager says that they fit the bill otherwise—have not seriously wrestled with the issues presented so far about patriarchy. That's been left for some future time, until after the primary problems of national, racial, and class oppression within the capitalist framework are solved. This author lived this position as well, until former macho-man Stan Goff's writings, coupled by earlier shoves by a couple of women comrades, forced me to go back to school where I discovered the neglected writings of radical feminism. In fact, it took another former macho-man to provoke me to

read titles such as *Ecofeminism* by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (Zed Books, 1993). Feminism at that time evoked visions for me of middle class, pampered, northern White women who were struggling to be like the ruling class capitalists. Of course many so-called feminists fit that bill. But I was floored to be introduced to some real radical revolutionary feminists from whom I've learned more from in a few years than I did in the previous few decades!

Many of my White comrades believe that most other Whites become more open to seriously examining their racist views and practices only after being patiently and intelligently engaged by other Whites, and work hard challenging others in that way. Similarly the radical feminists say the main task of true liberation-minded men is to challenge other men to first recognize how deep a hold patriarchy has on all of us, then move forward to help them really fight patriarchal capitalism. In my case they were right.

“We need to organize a community of organic and academic intellectuals and activists who are committed to the refoundation of a revolutionary left that makes gender, national oppression, and ecological science as central to its theory and practice as class and—here is my own wish—that we recruit, educate, and incorporate those with military backgrounds (especially women) into this revolutionary process” (Goff, p 187).

Getting Off the Patriarchal Capitalist Merry-Go-Round

Not convinced? Of course you're not. Most men have gone their whole lives being socialized to either exploit women or simply ignore—as much as possible—the obvious disadvantages that a majority of women are forced to live with. Furthermore, the most exploited and/or brutalized man still believes in his heart that he's better than any woman. This is one of the reasons for so much otherwise-senseless violence against women. To men it's the pecking order, similar to the way many Whites feel about non-Whites in matters dealing with race. Yet most men also know—deep inside—that the world we live in is very, very fucked up! Bear with me. If I get too graphic the Agents (as in the movie, *The Matrix*) will keep you from reading this. Things are so bad that this film is as close as Hollywood likes to come in depicting the control exercised over our lives. It raked in untold millions and has become a classic. And as in the movie, we don't really know who's unplugged from the Agents. Those who are unplugged must keep trying to stay out of the Agents' way as they search for ways to defeat the Matrix. Let's face it: every attempt to fight patriarchal capitalism (our Matrix) has failed. Yet most of the male-dominated efforts today are still trying to get the job done with the same tools (ideologies and ideas) that our matrix has repeatedly defeated for centuries.

A new vision is needed. And, ironically, like in *The Matrix Revolutions*, maybe it's time that we look to some wise women to help guide us, like the Oracle and the woman head of Zion's council of elders.

Allow me a little digression here, in case the reader is thinking my Hollywood references have no place in this discussion. Patriarchy is so clever and deep that an anti-establishment blockbuster like *The Matrix* can be stolen from the original script of an African American woman by two White movie making brothers. And its legions of fans will remain in awe of these men producing a sci-fi movie that so clearly mirrors patriarchal capitalism's development—a very rare thing indeed! Yet it was another anti-woman undertaking from its beginning:

Sophia Stewart filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of California against Hollywood defendants, Andy and Larry Wachowski, Joel Silver, and Warner Brothers alleging copyright

infringement of the movie *The Matrix* and the *Terminator* movies' original script. . . . Stewart, a Black woman from the Bronx, New York, now living in Salt Lake City, Utah, filed her case in 1999 after she saw the Matrix. . . . She was certain that it was based upon her own manuscript, "The Third Eye." It was copyrighted in 1981, '83, and '84 Ms. Stewart sent her manuscript to an address given by the Wachowski Brothers. . . . "Third Eye" is an epic plotted in the past, present, and future—about a woman whose baby is part of a prophecy—or "the one." there is also a Terminator-like figure that comes from the future to protect the baby so that the prophecy is fulfilled. Considering herself a very conscious observer of society, Stewart wrote the script as a counter balance to the impression left by the 'Blaxploitation" films of the 1970's. "I am the oracle," she said. "I write myself in my work. I know two White boys are definitely not the oracle." There were so many changes made and ghost writers for *The Matrix* and *Terminator*. Holding out for more meaningful legal retribution, she rejected the initial court settlement. "The rich steal because they're greedy; the poor steal because they're needy," asserted Stewart. "Some people said they were just validated because they could not believe it was the Wachowski's because they would never explain anything about the movie," she said. "They never went on any talk shows. The first *Matrix* went through seven different plot changes and copyrights. America will be throwing stones at the Wachowski brothers because they pulled the Millie Vanilli on everybody." The defendants have filed several unsuccessful motions to have the lawsuit dismissed. If successful, Stewart will receive damages from both trilogies. She could receive one of the largest payouts in copyright infringement history. (*Philadelphia News Observer*, Dec. 8., 2004 and Feb 23, 2005)

My digression reflects so many aspects of patriarchal capitalism that I'll just leave the reader to ponder them, while I hope you will now be more open to the remainder of this essay, which also requires that we dig more deeply into our already-molded ideas and practices.

The new vision that's needed is *not* really new. It must contain aspects of ways of life that have been practices (and to a degree are still practiced) by what we call "underdeveloped" societies. It is a

way of living that is more balanced and sustainable than what “developed” societies have become addicted to, a way of living and of viewing life that is going to be very hard for the reader to accept because I will not have enough space to adequately take you through the steps that led me my conclusions. A few assumptions that underpin most peoples' economic, social, and world views can be touched on, however: the fallacies of pursuing a catching-up-with-the-rich (or “developed”) strategy; the reliance on technological fixes for all problems, and the belief that a good life can only be had by societies and individuals who have access to the trappings that surround the middle and upper classes of the global North.

A way out of this destructive and irrational system of commodity production cannot be found in catching-up development and technological fixes, even if technological alternatives could be quickly found to end and repair some of the environmental damage caused by industrialism. [p. 300] . . . If, for example, we note that the six percent of the world's population who live in the USA annually consume 30 percent of all the fossil energy produced then, obviously, it is impossible for the rest of the world’s population, of which about eighty percent live in the poor countries of the South, to consume energy on the same scale. . . . But even if the world’s resource base was unlimited it can be estimated that it would be around 500 years before the poor countries reached the living standard prevailing in the industrialized north; and then only if these countries abandoned the model of permanent economic growth, which constitutes the core of their economic philosophy. It is impossible for the South to “catch-up” with this model, not only because of the limits and inequitable consumption of the resource base, but above all, because this growth model is based on a colonial world order in which the gap between the two poles is increasing, especially as far as economic development is concerned. [p. 60] (Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* [Zed Books,1993])

Do not think that the present author or the activists whose books he’s been liberally quoting from are anti-technology; we’re not. Basic and well-known facts are here being unhinged/liberated and presented without concern that they might trample certain sacred cows that have prevented many of us from questioning what we’ve been doing for a long time.

These facts are widely known, but the myth of catching-up development is still largely the basis of development policies of the governments of the north and south as well as the ex-socialist countries . . . if one tries to disregard considerations of equity and of ecological concerns it may be asked if this model of the good life, pursued by the societies of the North, this paradigm of

'catching-up development' has at least made people in the north happy. Has it fulfilled its promises there? Has it at least made women and children there more equal, more free, more happy? Has their quality of life improved while the GDP grew? (Mies and Shiva, pp.62 and 60-61)

Those of us who live in the USA in 2010 cannot but come to the conclusion that even the bulk of the middle classes, to say nothing of its lower classes, are not experiencing happiness, even in the midst of so many material possessions. Our ubiquitous media thrives on delivering statistics to attest to our consumerism, added to the TV images of people trampling each other in a head-long rush to purchase the latest gadget or article of clothing that they believe will make them happy. If not, then millions turn to their search engines, overeating, prescription drugs, TV sports, video games, cyber sex, channel surfing, and any number of other addictions that patriarchal capitalism daily produces in order to keep them hooked.

“It has been found that in the USA today the quality of life is lower than it was ten years ago. There seems to be an inverse relationship between the GDP and the quality of life . . . The affluent society is one society which in the midst of plenty of commodities lacks the fundamental necessities of life: clean air, pure water, healthy food, space, time, and quiet” (Mies and Shiva, p. 61).

The primary contradiction (materially) is that not only is the catching-up strategy not viable for most of us outside of the privileged classes, but that patriarchal capitalism's trajectory cannot even be sustained for the most privileged sectors of society, forcing these societies to throw tens of thousands to the wolves every day, while trying to hold the starving millions from the global South at bay, and engaging in an ongoing war to steal their resources.

Look at how the former “privileged” workers in the Midwest of the USA have been forced out of their labor-aristocracy jobs, to become homeless, jobless, and all but destitute—not knowing how they're going to feed themselves and loved ones once their (formerly taboo) handouts run out. And on the bottom—overall—are women and children.

Our radical feminists have been advocating for decades that our new vision must be what they term a “subsistence perspective.” For a number of years I too had been thinking along those lines. But I was not strong-minded enough to totally go against everything I'd previously championed. And most of my comrades were also stuck in the same dead-end. So I remained in limbo, beating a dead horse. But now that I've read these writings and further researched the subject, I too believe that a subsistence perspective is the vision that holds promise. There are certain reservations that I harbor, but on a scale of one to ten, they would register a two. On that same scale, my current clarity about what needs to be done, and my determination to pursue it is a nine. (Nothing is a ten, except maybe hindsight.)

In fact, others are being forced to adopt a similar strategy even though they may not use the word “subsistence” in their explanations. That word tends to generate misunderstanding about what is being advocated. Here's an example of what is actually meant:

The World Wide Fund For Nature *Living Planet Report* 2006 pointed to Cuba as the only nation in the world to have achieved sustainable development. . . . Some large state farms were transformed into co-operatives, where large machinery was replaced by human and animal labor. . . . In cities, unused plots of land were turned into urban farms . . . and gardens, increasing food production, providing employment for 30,000 people in Havana alone. . . . In

Havana, these now supply 100% of the city's fruits and vegetables and are supplemented by urban patios, which number 60, 000 in Havana. . . . They have developed pasture techniques to increase milk productivity and help recycle nutrients. . . . Specialist[s] work closely with farmers, learning from each other and overcoming the artificial gap between manual and mental labor. In electricity, Cuba uses a variety of renewables: biomass, mainly from waste products of sugar cane. . . . hydroelectric, which is small in scale and largely used for local needs, biogas, produced from the decomposition of organic waste, . . . solar energy, . . . wind farms. Santa Clara University develops eco-materials for use in small scale localised production of housing, . . . low-energy fire clay bricks, . . . laminated bamboo sheeting, . . . light but strong micro-concrete roofing tiles. . . . Wildlife and biodiversity are also protected in Cuba. . . . Now forest cover has risen to 24.3%. Cuba's internationalist solidarity and its building of the Bolivian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) with Venezuela, joined by Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Honduras (under Zelaya), Ecuador, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda, with its policy of humanitarian, economic and social cooperation through non-market, non-profit-based exchanges show the only sustainable and workable basis to deal with the effects of climate change. Socialism is good for the environment. (David Hetfield, "Socialism is good for the environment" *Fight Racism Fight Imperialism*, No 214 April/May 2010,).

Nowhere in that article was the word "subsistence" used. But although Cuba and other ALBA countries continue to do a lot of good—often under the "socialist" heading—what they're doing is a lot of what subsistence-perspective advocates believe is needed for a new vision. *If* they also work as hard to root out all forms of patriarchy—that's the dividing line between a subsistence perspective and patriarchal socialism.

Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen summarize some of the "main features of a new subsistence paradigm":

1. *How would work change?* There would be a change in the secular division of labour: Men would do as much unpaid work as women [childcare, elderly care, care for the sick and infirm, household duties]. Instead of wage work, independent self-determined socially and materially useful work would be at the

centre of the economy. Subsistence production would have a priority over commodity production. . . .

2. *What are the characteristics of subsistence technology?* It must be regained as a tool to enhance life, nurture, care, share, not to dominate nature but to cooperate with nature. . . . Technology should be such, that it's effects could be 'healed' and repaired.

3. *What are the 'moral' features of subsistence economy?* The economy respects the limits of nature. The economy is just one subsystem of the society, not the reverse . . . The economy must serve the core life system [which militates against the patriarchal capitalist—unspoken—morality that says: 'War is an extension of politics, and politics is the tool best suited to increase one's economic worth short of war'; thus anti-core life system—RMS]. It is a decentralized, regional economy. . . .

4. *How would trade and markets be different?* Local and regional markets would serve local needs. . . . Local markets would also preserve the diversity of products and resist cultural homogenization. Long distance trade would not be used for meeting subsistence needs. Trade would not destroy biodiversity.

5. *Changes in the concepts of need and sufficiency.* A new concept of satisfaction of needs must be based on direct satisfaction of all human needs and not the permanent accumulation of capital and material surpluses by fewer and fewer people. A subsistence economy requires new and reciprocal relations between rural and urban areas, between producers and consumers, between cultures, countries and regions. The principle of self-reliance with regard to food security is fundamental to a subsistence economy. . . . Money would be a means of circulation but cease to be a means of accumulation.

(Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies, 1999 op. cit., pp. 62-63)

It is imperative that this new vision not be lumped in with the talk about “green energy” and the other fashionable ideas about saving the planet from global warming. In none of these schemes do the advocates make the bottom line what it needs to be: the absolute destruction of the ideals and institutions that define and help patriarchy to continue its exploitation and brutality towards women that has been going on for thousands of years. We must even reject some of those ideas that claim to put destruction of capitalism up front, patriarchal socialism included.

Conclusion

“The liberation of women is not an outcome of revolution. It is the precondition for it” (Goff, Sex and War, p. 177).

By now some of you men will be saying “Yeah Maroon, you make some good points. I’ll have to check out what you’re saying. But what has all of this got to do with “Respect Our Mothers”? You’re totally out of order to suggest that we don’t respect our moms! Forget about all those other BI_____ (I mean women). I’ve always respected my mom! In fact, I think you and Stan Goff done got y’all in, now in y’all old age, y’all are feeling all guilty and shit. Fall back on us young brothers. It takes time to digest and adjust to all these changes. Plus, how do we know that women ain’t gonna act crazy too?”

Let me end by saying everything written here speaks to ways that women have always—as a whole, all of our mothers for sure—been forced to the bottom of the bowels of patriarchal capitalism’s Matrix-like slave ship. So if you and I are not working to destroy that setup, then we cannot really say we respect our mothers.

Stan Goff ain’t Morpheus, I ain’t Neo. Bennholdt-Thomsen, Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva and company ain’t no shape-shifting oracle. But I believe in much of what they have written (here and elsewhere), primarily because much of it aligns with my own thinking and reasoning. So I ask you to take the red pill. Get a hold of their writings and let them show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.

Note: The alternative spellings “womyn,” “wimmin,” “humyn,” etc. have not been used here in order not to confuse the reader, because the conventional spelling of those words has been used by all of my quoted radical feminist sources. That does not mean I reject such alternative spellings. That’s a subject for another work.

Recommended Books and Articles

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, “Subsistence Production and Extended Reproduction,” 1981, in: *Of Marriage and the Market*, Kate Young et. al. (eds.), London, pp.16-29 (2nd ed. 1984, pp. 41-54).

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, “Toward a theory of the Sexual Division of Labor,” 1984, in: *Households and the World Economy*, J. Smith, I. Wallerstein, and H-D. Evers (eds), Beverly Hills, Sage. pp 252-71.

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, “Women’s Dignity is the Wealth of Yucatan” (Oaxaca, Mexico) 1991,

Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 327-34.

Stan Goff, *Hideous Dream*, Softskull Press, NY.

Stan Goff, *Full Spectrum Disorder*, Softskull Press, NY.

Stan Goff, *Sex and War*, Lulu and [http://www.insurgentamerican.net/](http://www.insurgentamerican.net/download/StanGoff/Sex-n-War.pdf) download/StanGoff/Sex-n-War.pdf .

Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor*, Zed Books Ltd.

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, Zed Books, LTD. (2nd edition 1994).

Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof, *Women: The Last Colony*, Zed Books, Ltd.

Maria Mies, "Women, Food and Global Change: An Ecofeminist Analysis of the World Food Summit-Rome," Institute for the Theory and Practice of Subsistence (ITPS) November 13-17 1996, Bielefeld.

Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalized Economy*, Zed Books Ltd, 1999.

Vandana Shiva (1989) *The Violence of the Green Revolution*, Zed Books, 1991.

Vandana Shiva (1995 a) 'Food Security: The Problem', in Seminar No. 433, New Delhi, India. Dehra Dun.

Vandana Shiva (1995) *Captive Minds, Captive Lives: Ethics, Ecology, and Patents on Life*, New Delhi, India.

Vandana Shiva, Afsar H. Jafri, and Gitanjali Bedi "Ecological Cost of Economic Global Isolation: The Indian Experience," (prepared for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Rio + 5).