

# **“Breeders”**

Annie

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I want to offer my thoughts on calling wimmin with children “breeders” and on the analysis, or lack thereof, implied by the use of this language. “Anti-breeders” workshops at EF! rendezvous’ offer yearly forums for the discussion of these environmentalist “ethics,” but I would like to add my piece here, because I think the use of this label is offensive and the analysis behind it misguided at best and fatally misogynist regardless.

“Breeding” *to me* implies MANipulated reproduction, a creature reproducing at the will of a man, for the man’s purposes. Even if you want to try to argue that wimmin are the “breeding” pawns of patriarchy, (and even if I gave you credit for a *simplistic* insight into the problem of wimmin and overpopulation), I don’t accept the derogatory labeling and I think this “blaming of the victim” diverts us from recognizing and resisting the true forces responsible for humyn overpopulation.

Regardless, wimmin are not merely the “breeding pawns of patriarchy”, and I don’t think that’s what you are talking about anyway. You (I think) don’t really equate a womyn’s power in the reproductive situation with the level of choice involved in being mounted by “Secretariat” in a Kentucky corral. So, I *guess* what you’re doing by calling wimmin “breeders” and the act of having children “breeding” is simply about trying to denigrate the act of humyn reproduction because you’re angry about the obscene overpopulation/over-con- sumption of humyns in the industrialized world. Fine. You’re angry and disgusted. Righteously so. So you’re angry and you want things changed. Good. I agree. I too acknowledge the obscene overpopulation of humyns. I too acknowledge the imperative of putting humyn needs into a perspective that acknowledges the needs of the planet and the other beings here. I too aspire to the personal strength and commitment to refrain from bringing any more children here. But I think you are missing the point.

So let’s take this deeper. This is not as simple as those who would call wimmin “breeders” or push for “zero-population growth” would make this. Having “too many children” is simply a symptom of the problem. The *problem* is the rule of (primarily white, european) patriarchy; patriarchal politics are *at the root of* the overpopulation of humyns. The problem is not individual wimmin’s choices. Cultures where wimmin have power within themselves do not over”breed.” Patriarchies, with their pro-natalist bent, act to override healthy and natural social instincts to keep populations in check. Patriarchies have perverted the social context of individual wimmin’s choices and, in combination with capitalist exploitation, have led us to the obscene overpopulation of humyns on this planet. The domination of wimmin is the cornerstone of patriarchy; it is patriarchy. Patriarchy rests its power on the control of wimmin’s sexuality and reproductive choice. Patriarchies do this because wimmin’s control over reproduction is the ultimate power in a society; men recognized this and acted (and are still acting) to wrest this control away from wimmin. The maintenance of this power involves keeping wimmin childbearing and rearing, twisting our capacity to bear children into our ordained role. We do not need your “help” to figure this out; we need your help to smash patriarchy. The *solution* is nothing short of the abolition of patriarchy. Anything else is reformist or fascist.

So your strategy is misdirected. A lack of child-bearing and rearing will not stop the machine, or the havoc it wreaks. Sure, we could all stop having children and reduce the population burden, but if capitalist patriarchy is left intact, the planet will fare little better. Nothing short of resisting and stopping the machine itself, the patriarchal ordering of “life,” is going to save this planet. And I do not want to live in a culture where I’m told not to “breed” or where I am segregated by my “reactionary” choice to have children. Have you read the *Handmaid’s Tale*? I will not exchange one fascist ideology for another. Stopping patriarchy means stopping, *not re-creating*, the disempowerment of wimmin. Because you *are* recreating our disempowerment when you impose political mandates on what we do with our wombs, as opposed to recognizing and resisting our exploiters.

Look at where your anger has taken you. You are expending all this energy to denigrate reproduction so wimmin stop reproducing. You are, in effect, telling wimmin not to have children, still telling wimmin what to do with their sexuality and reproductive capacity. Sorry, you cannot be “pro-choice”/pro-wimmin/anti-patriarchal and do this. And please don’t stand next to me at the clinic defense line, ‘cause I might forget how you are supposedly different from the Operation Rescue folks.

And how effective do you think shaming wimmin about our child-bearing is? I can, and have, responded to the harmful reality of bringing children here. I/my body has made such choices that I have no children. But I’ll tell you, any decisions about this came from my heart, ultimately, and not my intellect. My heart (mind/body/spirit united) recognizes that right now my energy is best directed to addressing present needs, as well as resisting the root causes of injustice. I have faced, in my work in a youth crisis shelter, the real experience of unwanted, abused and homeless children. That is my choice about how I direct my nurturing energy. And this choice fits hand in glove with my “environmental” activism, which is about confronting and resisting capitalist-patriarchal power. I applaud any work that alarms us to the state of the planet, and the state of children born into a world that does not support their existence and the state of wimmin with children are integral parts of this. But this is my way, born of my experiences, and all wimmin need to ultimately express their own way. When’s the last time you acted to empower wimmin, as opposed to regulating us? Acting to support our empowerment, on our terms, is the act of liberatory resistance that serves us all, as well as the planet.

So try listening to us. To our strategies. To our needs. We do not exist for you to rule. We are finding our own way, battling our desecration and the silencing of our heritage by the “culture” of patriarchy. We are resisting having our very existence being defined and stunted and mutilated by a misogynist society. We do not need your politics to validate our worth or *to define our path*. And obviously not all childbearing and rearing arises from or because of the patriarchal machine. There is a myriad of choice, a myriad of biology, the expression of love and community, and the instinct for survival involved here (try not to forget that certain indigenous and other populations

face a very real threat of their own “extinction” — would zero-population growth apply to them?).

So quit scapegoating wimmin. And it is about scapegoating because the root cause of overpopulation lies with the rule of capitalist patriarchy. And you are scapegoating *wimmin*, because the fact is the burden of the pregnancy choice and the reality of abortion lies with the womyn. The onus for “zero-population growth” or “voluntary human extinction” rests upon the womyn. So hear this: Wimmin are not responsible for cleaning up after what is ultimately a male-created mess. To the male misogynist misanthropes, I say: Do your own friggin’ dishes. Scrub patriarchy. To any and all who push the “anti-breeding” agenda: Be celibate. That, I think, would be the only honest way to meet a purist and simplistic “commitment” to zero population growth, as no other form of “birth control” is 100% and abortion is a harsh “cure-all.” You cannot have your cake and eat it too.

I am *not* saying that we should not address the reality of humyn overpopulation, but I am saying that we need to put it into its proper context and address it accordingly. Focus on resisting the engineers of overpopulation and those who profit by it, whether in wealth or in social power via keeping wimmin “producing” for their own purposes, (eg more consumers, more cannon fodder). Spend your time organizing and preaching against the corporations, the pope, and the myriad of minor patriarchs. Basically, take your hands and your politics off my womb. I refuse to allow you and Operation Rescue to DICKer over what I should do with it.

The Ted K Archive

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