

FLEDGLING FEMINIST BENT CROSS(WORD)ED OUT BY BETTER

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CROSSWORD puzzle clue No. 22, Across read “fem.org,” which translated into “feminist organization,” which further translated into “NOW” – a solution intersecting with the solution for No. 5 Down.

No. 5 Down read “male super,” which translated into “male superiority,” which further translated into “chauvinism.” This unusual intersection was enough to prompt a reformed chauvinist into pondering the coincidence.

Most of us chauvinists were unaware we were chauvinistic before the feminist movement caused us to re-think our attitudes. Conditioned as we were, there was little chance men of my age would develop attitudes differing from those of our parents and grandparents. They, both male and female, accepted male superiority without second thought.

My wife did not question my chauvinistic posture because she also was conditioned by preceding generations to accept a status slightly below that of her husband. Her father was a gentle chauvinist, albeit the word was not in his vocabulary.

Just as her mother accepted her role, my wife accepted a similar role - - at least as long as things went her way. She also enjoyed second guessing the commander-in-chief.

Considering the structures that molded my attitudes, there was little reason for me to study my role as superior being in our household. My maleness made me more capable of making decisions and honed my judgment. It didn't shake my superiority complex that my wife grasped abstractions quicker than I, that her mind computed more rapidly, and that she ranged ahead of me in physical agility.

The feminist movement was a revealing and sometimes shattering experience for males in my age bracket. Basic assumptions fell, theorems melted, and an entire philosophy collapsed. Despite our resistance to the militant leaders of the feminist movement, some of us chauvinists came to accept the basic premise of equality for all persons regardless of gender.

Even before the feminists made their move, I was bothered that a female, to a degree, lost her identity when she married. I have no solution to the problem; generally a name change for the bride leads to fewer complications and raises fewer questions. Nevertheless, I prefer Mary Jones to Mrs. Jed M. Jones.

Hyphenated names are awkward. If Mary Jones-Smith marries Henry Johnson-Wykowski, does their son become Filbert Jones-Smith-Johnson-Wykowski? Suppose Filbert marries Sara Anderson-Thompson-Heller-Rossini, and they have children?

What really bothers me is the suspicion that females may be superior to males. Despite bearing children and competing with chauvinistic males, females are the survivors. They control more wealth than men do, and therefore exercise more power than we suspect. Sometimes I suspect we chauvinist are being “used.”

The clincher is the suspicion that females are better at working cross-word puzzles. “What’s a seven-letter word for craftiness?” Promptly she said: “Finesse.”

She moved to look over my shoulder.

“You’ve got ‘track’ for ‘spoor.’ It should be ‘trail.’ And where you have ‘bullet,’ it should be ‘pellet.’”

I was ready to hop off of the feminist express. Women should stay in their place.

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