

# Evolutionary revolution: Divining seduction - Women Initiating Courtship, Partnership and Peace

Contributed by Donna Sheehan and Paul Reffell  
14 September 2008

Editor's note: From the creators of the performance-art-for-peace project Baring Witness, this eminently sensible appeal to intelligent human behavior can stimulate hearts and minds weary of both activism's weak record and the general slowness in conscious awakening. -- Jan Lundberg

Today, young western women are proudly dressing to display their breasts and bellies, their centers of procreation, as never before. If this style comes from a sense of pride in their bodies, rather than blindly following a trend, it's a healthy and encouraging sign of a return to the love of femininity. Indeed, our young women are displaying the fount of their Feminine Power.

In a way they are beginning to redefine feminism. By intelligent use of female power, using sensuality, intelligence, wisdom and assertiveness, women can have anything they want, from good relationships to global peace.

To find inspiration, they need only look to Charles Darwin. In 1871, Darwin rocked the world with his revolutionary work *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, in which he revealed that it is the females, not the males, of most sexually reproducing species that choose their mates. However, after thousands of years of male-dominated human societies that have been recorded by male-wielded pens, men's and women's roles have become distorted.

Evolutionary Behaviorism 101

1. Most male inventions and behaviors, including literature, music, art, exploration, technology, aggression, altruism and shows of physical strength, stem from mating displays to attract the female. Evolutionary psychologists believe that any activity not necessary to the immediate survival of the organism is developed to attract the opposite sex.
2. Females select male mates based on their displays. Males compete with other males for female attention, but do not actually select their mates. In other species, the traits selected for have mostly to do with genetic health and vitality. The human species has used its ability to override such innate feminine preferences.

Over millennia, women in most societies have been forced (by such tactics as arranged marriages and suppression of women in general) to accept the male traits that men prefer, creating a bias towards aggressiveness and 'success at any cost' behaviors whose deleterious effects can now be seen on a global scale.

3. Human male display has undergone a "runaway effect". Any male trait that is selected for by females becomes more pronounced through succeeding generations, because males will be born with that trait and females will be born with a preference for it. In a runaway effect, the trait will become so pronounced that it presents a danger to the male and, by extension, to the entire species. The classic example is the peacock's tail, which has evolved to be hazardous to the male bird's ability to escape predators. In this case, the runaway trait of the cumbersome tail is restrained by predation on the slowest males.

Many human males try to get noticed by being loud, reckless and dangerous, so we see everything from unmuffled motorcycles through extreme sports, to pursuit of status even when such pursuits involve injury/death, ecological destruction and war. When men indulge in such displays and are then chosen as mates, their predilections may be passed on to the next generation's males.

4. Females of other species tend not to choose mates with traits that show weaknesses that will endanger genetic survival. Since humans are at the top of the predator chain and the greatest dangers to our species are ourselves and our actions, man's runaway traits of aggression and destruction are now endangering our species and all others.

Unfortunately, the lack of cultural partnership between men and women means that most men have taken on the double roles of displaying and trying to choose their mates. So most cultures have evolved with men displaying the traits that are more aggressive and destructive than would be the case were women to make their own more biological choices. The egg knows, not the sperm (see article link below for "New Rules in Sperm and Egg's Cat-and-Mouse Game").

Modern women are the products of thousands of years of being trained to be unassertive and accepting, even desirous, of restricted choices, so most of them unconsciously accept men with those aggressive "manly" traits. In America, the majority of men supported the Iraq war and the majority of women did not. Most women stayed silent, complicit and didn't want to make waves.

Yet the evolutionary power of sexual selection may be the greatest agent for change, both now and for the future. A man's greatest biological drive is to be selected by a woman (or women) for the reproduction of his genes. To satisfy that innate urge, men will do anything to attract women and be willing to make any necessary changes to get their attention.

Sexual selection can alter a species' evolutionary path within three generations. But we don't have that long to curb our species' suicidal tendencies, which is why an Evolutionary Revolution is called for.

Do women continue to define progress by having latchkey kids, contributing to consumerism, trying to claw their way to the top of male power hierarchies? Or do they define it by acknowledging their power and focusing on guiding men to mindfulness, altering the power structure from within and thereby saving the environment? True, we may all have to give up some of the luxuries that men work so hard to provide. Then again, who tells us we need those luxuries if not male-dominated corporations? We have to ask ourselves what we would trade for fewer weapons and wars and a healthier world. Would fewer appliances and choices of breakfast cereal, for example, be too much to trade for the survival of the species?

There's no time to wait for a 'functional' male or female president, simply, women's immediate leverage is within their connections with a partner, a male relative, the guy next door, a date; and the venue can be the office, the kitchen table or the bedroom.

Men will justify all their actions by saying that everything they do is to attract females, provide for them and to protect and support their families. That's the biological function of the male, but it cannot justify the depredations wrought in its name. Men have moved heaven and earth in their need to display and provide for women, while female input has been reduced to accepting these 'gifts' and demanding more and more. Right now, when women are beginning to regain some self-esteem, it's time to say, "Thanks, honey, that's enough now," and show the way to a different paradigm.

For example, the U.S. Congress has no ethics system other than self-policing to curb the inevitable corruption of the almost all-male membership. What if the wives of these men were held accountable for their husbands' behavior? They do have the power to guide them, and when men act in ways that endanger the existence of future generations, it is the biological bailiwick of women to put an end to such actions.

So, how do we start on an individual level? By helping women come to the realization that they are evolutionarily supremely significant, so that they may honor their instinctive sensual feminine power of influence. The responsible feminine role is to gently pick up men's loose reins and steer them towards peaceful, productive and sustainable society, a place that is safe for future generations. It is time for both women and men to develop deep listening and being mindful of the effects of what we say and do.

Sensual feminism is power. Take inspiration from the young who say yes to life and sensuality. It is time to take active, aware responsibility for the survival of our partnerships, our children and the environment. Women must help men redefine progress. When men are awakened without blame, you will find that all they really want is women's loving, nourishing attention and the promise of comfort, and they will do anything you want.

September 14, northern California

(As you can tell, this is written with heterosexuals in mind, but we think the underlying principle, of re-powering the Functional Feminine and Functional Masculine in all of us, applies universally to human beings, gay and straight and the indeterminate sexes).

\*Natalie Angier, New Rules in Sperm and Egg's Cat-and-Mouse Game, New York Times, Feb 27,2001  
nytimes.com

\*Geoffrey Miller, 2000: The Mating Mind: How Sexual Choice Shaped the Evolution of Human Nature

\*Charles Darwin, 1874: The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex

\* \* \* \* \*

Donna Sheehan and Paul Reffell are co-authors of Divining Seduction: Women Initiating Courtship, Partnership and Peace. Paul and Donna, peace activists turned Evolutionary Behaviorists, are also the organizers of BaringWitness.org and co-producers of the feature documentary film Baring Witness. Donna and Paul are available for speaking engagements and Divining Seduction workshops (see DiviningSeduction.com). Contact: info "at" diviningseduction "dot" com