

A Slave to No One *by Cassandra Grant*

I am a woman. I am an African/Native American. My mother conceived me, carried me, and gave birth to me, and here I am. I am an individual with my own ideals, and my own conceptions of what the 21st century woman should be doing and not doing. For one thing, I am no slave for anyone. Not even the prison system can enslave my mind. I am a woman that is neither feminine nor masculine. I don't dominate nor am I dominated. I live in a white-male-centered world—which thinks up things that are supposed to be for a woman and things that are supposed to be for a man. I am aggressive, but I'm also caring and compassionate.

Being a feminist means knowing there is no limit to where females can go and what we can do. Women's self image and self-esteem have been affected by discrimination and inequality for years. The threat of being labeled unfeminine has long confined women to socially approved roles. We want the freedom to have jobs and to play different roles in society. Stereotypes and the negative valuation of women in the United States happen in day-to-day interactions.

Feminists make change by making our immediate communities more humane and more cooperative places to live and work. We advocate societies that are not characterized by relations of domination and subordination. As a feminist, I believe in the ideas of shared household work and economic responsibilities, financial independence, choices about

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Womanism (black feminism) describes African-American women's struggle for self-determination and community, past and present. This term was created by Alice Walker, who said "womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender." It derives from the African American term "womanish," which means acting like a woman.

when and if you are going to have children, sexual freedom, and the right to enter into free and loving relationships with whomever you choose. Sexual liberation is 100% feminism. The freedom to love cannot be achieved until it is accompanied by freedom from fear. Some women have discovered the possibilities of lesbian love.

Feminism means women caring for each other. Women's sympathy for one another is a new source of strength. Women form close bonds with one another, whether they are professional, social, or domestic. These connections can mean independence and freedom. Feminism is for all women of whatever race, class, or religion. Despite the differences that separate women, feminism is a global phenomenon. It all comes together.

Cassandra Grant is incarcerated at Western Wayne Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Michigan. She loves writing, reading, playing tennis, coaching Little League baseball, and traveling. She will be released in January 2005.

Discussion Questions for *A Slave to No One*

1. What does Cassandra Grant think feminism means? List her ideas.

2. In the second paragraph, the author writes, “Women’s self image and self-esteem have been affected by discrimination and inequality for years. The threat of being labeled unfeminine has long confined women to socially approved roles.” Do you agree? Why?

3. To describe who she is (and who she isn’t), Cassandra Grant uses certain words and their opposites. For example, she says she is neither masculine or feminine. What other sets of opposites does she use? Have you ever needed opposites to describe yourself? Try filling in the blanks below.

I am neither _____ nor _____.

I am both _____ and _____.

4. What does feminism mean to you?
