

# Man vs woman or rich vs poor essay example

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The duality between genders has been an ongoing phenomenon since the beginning of mankind - man has always been different from woman, and vice versa. Many conflicts have arisen because of an arguably patriarchal society - it is generally considered that men oppress, and women are subjugated. But is that the entire story? Given the works of Cornel West, Judy Brady and others, it is clear there is an economic and racial subjugation that is also occurring, one which affects both genders. In many ways, the duality between rich and poor must be combated in order to protect against other types of injustice, whether gendered, racial or economic.

A group in power will often oppress another, lesser group. In Judy Brady's "I Want a Wife," the resentment towards men by many women is made apparent; she claims that she wants a wife, and proceeds to list all the things a wife would allow her to have. With a wife, Brady says, she could be free to do whatever she wants, like "go back to school so that [she] can become economically dependent" and support herself and her dependents (p. 1). Cornel West discusses the white power structure's capacity to diminish black father's effectiveness in their own leadership in "On Black Fathering." Sanders, conversely, believes that women should not envy men the difficult tasks of war and hard labor, and he wishes he had the ability to avoid those that women receive, in "The Men We Carry in Our Minds." Jesse Jackson relates the private companies creating indentured servants in the third world to provide us with our clothes in "Who Makes the Clothes We Wear?" In all of these instances, one group holds all the cards, and it is up to the agency of the lesser group to make the necessary changes in society to make it better.

The presence of gender inequality is a much more nebulous phenomenon than might be thought. Sanders, in his text, studies himself and his experience with both genders, and comes to the conclusion that his own anxieties about being a man make him wish he were a woman, at least in terms of social responsibility. " It's much easier being the victim. All the victim has to do is break free. The persecutor has to live with his past" (p. 69). As a boy, Sanders looked at women's grievances with a jaundiced eye, feeling as though they had a freer life, not having to deal with the horrors of war or bodies broken by decades of manual labor. West emphasizes the importance of fathers in the raising of a child, supported by Brady's insistence that wives (wrongfully) are forced to do all the work when raising a child; " I want a wife who will have arranged that the children are fed and ready for bed before my guests arrive so that the children do not bother us" (p. 2).

The true enemy of society being the unchecked power of the rich is made clear in these texts. Jackson unequivocally blames the ignorance of the private companies of America for the forced labor conditions in the third world, particularly how they " turn their backs as their subcontractors routinely trample the basic rights of their workers" (p. 1729). Sanders, meanwhile, eventually realizes that the true enemy of both genders is the rich - both women and disenfranchised men looked to the power that rich men held, and coveted it. " The difference between me and these daughters was that they saw me, because of my sex, as destined from birth to become like their fathers, and therefore as an enemy to their desires" (p. 72). This helps to illustrate just how righteous resentment of the rich can be masked

in gender-based resentment; women resent men in general, when it is typically the rich men who stand in the way of the equality they desire. West details the struggles of poor blacks in their attempts to be good fathers; without the ability to support a family economically in a world that discriminates against them in the job market, they cannot command the respect of their children as easily as whites.

The kinds of solutions that are present involve dramatic regulation and changes in corporate and gender attitudes. Jackson advocates for government regulation of these corporations, and public support to come out against their despicable business practices - he hopes that "informed consumers may begin to make the trampling of basic decency a whole lot more expensive than the cost of respecting it" (p. 395). Sanders discusses the presence of disenfranchised men like him as an ally for women's rights; if they were to work together, they would be able to come to a solution that benefits both sexes, only at the expense of the haves for the sake of the have-nots. Brady's satirical take on what a wife should 'willingly' do is a call for change in what is expected of a wife in general; by making the gender lines in a marriage more equitable, there would be no cause for resentment as the husband would get away with less. West, meanwhile, advocates for black fathers to "give of themselves" and "try to exemplify in their own behavior what they want to see in their sons and daughters" (p. 310). By improving on what is considered the stereotypical behavior of black fathers, better images can be created which can foster greater race relations.

In conclusion, there are many things that can set us apart - rich and poor, black and white, man and woman, etc. Each of these differences contain their own complications; there are specific reasons why things are the way that they are. Both sides have their own reasons for wanting what the other hands, for the most part - where this distinction stops, however, is for the disenfranchised. Regardless of what cosmetic or sexual differences there might be, the power presented by the rich is often considered to be the primary enemy against which the majority of mankind needs to stand. Women wish to feel the freedom that men feel, while men would like to shoulder less of the hardships, like women. Black fathers want the chance to be fathers in a society that says they are no good, and people in third-world sweatshops want their labor conditions to improve. All of these desires speak to the opportunity for freedom that all individuals, regardless of circumstance, wish to obtain.

## **Works Cited**

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