

Russell scott sanders: a feminist past

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



A feminist is a theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. Russell Scott Sanders, "The Men We Carry in Our Minds," discusses his personal observation of the conflict of gender equality that grew in his mind after seeing the harsh lives of his surrounding class of people. It deals with the problems that exist between sex and social class issues. He reveals that the men in this class had no choice over their own destiny in life. Their only ways of making money to barely survive were as factory workers or soldiers. He had envied women for what he thought they had a pleasant lifestyle, spent time in the home looking after the children, compared to the difficult lives of the men having to work at the factories and go to war in the foreign land. This essay demonstrates troubles that lie between rich and poor, males and females. Sanders was born into a poor, low-class family that had only known hard labor. During his childhood he witnessed many men go to the same job day in and day out to do back-breaking labor so as to support their families.

From his yard he had a view of the prison and watched black prisoners slave away against the land. Watching them were guards dressed in white that didn't raise an arm or bend their backs to do their job. Sanders claimed that, "As a boy, [he] also knew of another sort of [man], who did not sweat and break down like mules" (Sanders). He saw soldiers, who didn't work in the factories or the fields, as far as he could tell they didn't work at all. He watched these soldiers from his house on a military base in Ohio. He knew the life of the soldier conceived of little excitement except for in the time of war.

Either way, he knew that he neither wanted to inherit his father's life, though after time he prospered, or join the military. As a youngster, he also saw the difference in men and women in the workplace. His ideas of women were ladies who sat around the house reading, tidying up and running errands. To him this was a life of a luxury. In his childhood, he imagined his own destiny as eventually becoming one of these two cruel identities. Due to his early opinions of gender roles in his class, he was “slow to understand the deep grievances of women” (Sander). In his lifestyle the options of each gender were bleak.

He idolized them, though they suffered as men suffered when money was tight, it wasn't their fault or responsibility. As Sanders says, ‘...they were not the ones who failed’ (Sanders). In the past, slaves of either sex or women of any race held property in their own labor. The labor of slaves, male and female, belonged to their owners. Free women of every race were conceived as wives and mothers; their labor belonged to husbands and families (as Sanders views). Both engaged in life as well as wage labor without acquiring what more privileged men understood as “rights to work. This issue of unfairness against women comes far beyond the class differences into our individual life, developed from our past, and in effect turning into an important part of the modern life.

For example, free labor was built on a concept of independence in which skill at craft work was associated with a manliness that would preserve dignity while workers earned wages and that promised in the end to release them from wage labor. Men practically symbolized labor to show their manliness

by operating industrial machines in which the past women were not allowed to operate. Men [he] knew labored with their bodies. They were marginal farmers just scraping by, or welder's steelworkers, carpenters; they swept floors, dug ditches, mined coal, or drove trucks, their forearms roped with muscle; they trained horses, stoked furnaces, built tires, stood on assembly lines wrestling parts onto cars and refrigerators.... The nails of their hands were black and split, the hands with tattooed scars" (Sanders). The idea also explicitly excluded women, even wives and daughters, from wage work.

Women were usually the ones who catered the men with food or any housekeeping material and taking care of their children. This idea took a transition when he went to college. Sanders was very fortunate to attend college. He himself was very surprised, for among people of his social class, it was a rare opportunity. His views of the world were put into logical perspective. His socialization with the women opened his eyes to the hardships they had to undertake, to get out of the shadow of being a female and be respected for their intellect and hard work.

As he felt helpless before for being poor, they in relation felt the same for being of a different gender. He thought he'd made an alliance because of the alienable circumstances that they'd been through. To his disappointment, the females at college did not take him in as a friend, but recognize him as the enemy. Even after he had grown up, escaped his harsh surroundings, and attended college, he often had to deal with the concept of unfairness. For in their lives growing up, being daughters of rich families, they knew

from birth that men would become the ones with degrees and would be successful.

Sanders proclaimed, “ It was not my fate to become a woman, so it was easier for me to see the graces” (Sanders). This was an example of shift for Sanders; everything he thought he knew about women was turned upside down. Sander’s jealousy over women affects his views in college which creates contradicting elements of dignity towards the women he meets in college. Although the women he meets in college distinguish him as an enemy due to him being a feminist, he still respects their point of views. All Sander want for women to understand is equality.

Since the women he meets in college come from a wealthy family and have no idea the way he was raised viewing life from a low class perspective; he tries to prove to them that this world is based on social perceptions rather than human perceptions. Not having a family that works in business and attire he only viewed men as toil workers and women as wives that provide house maintenance for the family. In conclusion, Sanders should be accepted as a feminist all to the women he meets in college. Sanders realized that the women he met wanted to share in the dignity of wealthy jobs worthy of degrees and intelligence.

He also realized, “ The difference between [him] and these women was that they saw [him], because of [his] sex, as destined from birth to become like their fathers, and therefore as an enemy to their desires” (Sanders). Sanders main point was that it is easier to overcome gender than class. By Sanders being accepted as a feminist in college he can engage those who are

clueless and let them view his perspective. He can show his sympathy that he once faced in his childhood; the envies he had towards women.