

*Selections from “Ending Violence” in Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black by bell hooks*

(p.61) ... Patriarchal violence in the home is based on the belief that it is acceptable for a more powerful individual to control others through various forms of coercive force... The term “patriarchal violence” is useful because unlike the more accepted phrase “domestic violence” it continually reminds the listener that violence in the home is connected to sexism and sexist thinking, to male domination...

(p. 62) Just as a vast majority of citizens in this nation believe in equal pay for equal work most folks believe that men should not beat women and children. Yet when they are told that domestic violence is the direct outcome of sexism, that it will not end until sexism ends, they are unable to make this logical leap because it requires challenging and changing fundamental ways of thinking about gender. Significantly, I am among those rare feminist theorists who believe that it is crucial for feminist movement to have as an overriding agenda ending all forms of violence. Feminist focus on patriarchal violence against women should remain a primary concern. However emphasizing male violence against women in a manner which implies that it is more horrendous than all other forms of patriarchal violence does not serve to further the interests of feminist movement. It obscures the reality that much patriarchal violence is directed at children by sexist women and men... The fact that many violent attacks on children are perpetrated by women is not equally highlighted and seen as another expression of patriarchal violence...

(p. 63) I first raised these concerns in the chapter “Feminist Movement to End Violence” in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*; stating:

... So far feminist movement has primarily focused on male violence, and as a consequence lends credibility to sexist stereotypes that suggest men are violent, women are not; men are abusers, women are victims. This type of thinking allows us to ignore the extent to which women (with men) in this society accept and perpetuate the idea that it is acceptable for a dominant party or group to maintain power over the dominated by using coercive force. It allows us to overlook or ignore the extent to which women exert coercive authority over others or act violently...

(p. 64) A mother who might never be violent but who teaches her children, especially her sons, that violence is an acceptable means of exerting social control, is still in collusion with patriarchal violence... Men are socialized by ruling-class groups of men to accept domination in the public world of work and to believe that the private world of home and intimate relationships will restore to them the sense of power they equate with masculinity...

(p. 66) And it is especially vital that parents learn to parent in nonviolent ways. For our children will not turn away from violence if it is the only way they know to handle difficult situations. In our nation masses of people are concerned about violence but resolutely refuse to link that violence to patriarchal thinking or male domination. Feminist thinking offers a solution. And it is up to us to make that solution available to everyone.