



For profeminist men doing work to end sexual violence, a twofold accountability--to feminists and to victims--has become a guiding principle. In working to end men's violence, men who are unequivocally profeminist have agreed to follow feminist leadership in the anti-violence-against-women movement and not to put any woman more at risk. We seek to apply that crucial principle responsibly in doing work against pornography and prostitution.

We acknowledge that men working to end men's violence face a particular challenge selecting which feminists to be accountable to at a time when pornography and prostitution are often portrayed, even by some feminists, as "victimless." Moreover, there may be no way for profeminist men to know directly the situation of those victimized by pornography or prostitution because of the silencing nature of the victimization.

This accountability principle recognizes and affirms that there are brave and embattled feminist activists and writers whose work is explicitly grounded in a politics that begins with the harm done to real human beings through systems of prostitution and the production, trafficking, and use of pornography. These feminists are devoted to stopping the harm, stopping the sexual violence and subordination, stopping the sexualized inferiority--not fronting for it.

We wish to dissociate our activism from the views of those who, even in the name of feminism, would advocate, obscure, or offer a political apology for the abuse, subordination, and civil inferiority generated by the sex industry--a vast misogynist social institution of pimps and profiteers. We therefore publicly declare our political allegiance, in conscience, with feminists who are actively accountable to those who are or have been victimized by pornography and prostitution. These feminists are the freedom fighters whose inspiration and leadership we have determined must be our guide.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Principle of Accountability

I ENDORSE THIS PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

To sign on to this accountability principle, please copy and paste the form below into an email message and send it to the [Sexual Exploitation Education Project](#).

Or, sign and send it by snail mail to:

Men Against Pornography
PO Box 150786
Brooklyn, NY 11215-0786, USA

Signature (for those of you using snail mail):

Name, printed or typed:

Date:

Organization:

City, State or Province:

Country:

This endorsement is by me as an individual; my title and/or organizational affiliation may be used for identification only.

This endorsement is from a group or organization, for which I am the contact person.

****The following information is optional and will not be made public****

Mailing address:

City, State or Province, Zip or Postal Code:

Telephone:

To the [Sexual Exploitation Education Project Homepage](#)

To the [Working for Justice - Ending Violence Homepage](#)

Frequently Asked Questions About A PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY for Profeminist Men's Activism Against Pornography and Prostitution

[Adapted from "No Choice but to Choose" by John Stoltenberg.]

Is it appropriate for activists against men's violence to "take sides" between feminists on the issues of pornography and prostitution--to decide which feminists we are allied with and which we are not?

Yes, absolutely. For anyone dedicated to end all the violence that maintains male supremacy, there is no choice but to choose.

Activists against men's violence have a moral obligation to interrupt the oppression of women--even when it is women who are promoting other women's oppression by actively collaborating with pimps and pornographers. This means choosing between conflicting feminist leadership.

The women's movement is sharply divided on the question of accountability to victims of systems of prostitution and pornography (which is a technologized form of prostitution). On one side are those feminists who actively fight the power of pornographers and pimps, and on the other side are those feminists--some with considerable institutional power--who have actively been fighting antipornography and antiprostitution feminists.

To sit this controversy out, or to observe the dispute like a voyeur to a mud-wrestling match, is to be morally obtuse. To be uncommitted in the middle has the political effect of reinforcing male privilege. To be silent about our fundamental loyalties to victims has the political effect of making even more work for the feminist freedom fighters with whom we stand allied.

Is it appropriate for men against men's violence to publicly state which feminist views we disagree with and why?

Yes--but we must not do so misogynistically. Just as men of conscience must learn to disagree with and criticize the male-supremacist convictions of other men without being bellicose (which would turn our principled disagreement into a cockfight), we must learn to disagree with and criticize the male-supremacist advocacies of some women without expressing misogyny.

Ending men's violence today necessarily means taking sides among feminists. For instance one can, if one wants, find a self-avowed feminist who publicly supports snuff films; and during the late seventies one could find many self-avowed feminists who said that the crime of rape should not be prosecuted. The identifying word "feminist"--without clear-cut accountability to victims--is not a reliable North Star for our work to end men's violence. If we delude ourselves into thinking that the word "feminist" by itself is enough, we choose to exercise our male privilege to waffle, thereby protecting the status quo of male supremacy. For men doing work to end men's violence, this means we are obliged to publicly distinguish our activist stance from those who actively defend perpetrators' political interests--even those who do so in the name of feminism.

Primarily on the issues of pornography and prostitution there exists a so-called feminist defense of women's civil inequality and violence against women. For rapists and batterers, no such "feminist" defense exists--certainly not with the same significant links to legal and financial resources (through the American Civil Liberties Union, for instance), academia, "progressive" publications with a sex-industry advertiser base, organizations infiltrated with prostitution and propornography leadership, and pornography producers. The "Principle of Accountability" was carefully drafted to delineate and

distinguish a political allegiance to victims of pornography and prostitution--without apology, without equivocation. Careful readers of the text will note that this precise language of delineation is completely different from *ad feminam* hostility.

Some readers of the "Principle of Accountability" may be unaware of the extent to which some women in academia, in political organizations, and in the media have actively allied themselves with pimps and pornographers. To some readers, the document may seem startling or less than credible--whereas to frontline antipornography and antiprostitution activists, such collaborationist strategies are only too familiar. On the academic front, for instance, there's a huge list of books and articles that denounce and discredit feminists who have been actively trying to end women's victimization by the sex industry and that valorize prostitution as a historical touchstone of women's sexual agency. It has become a virtual cottage industry to bash antipornography and antiprostitution feminists in print--and often a career boost as well. One of the commonest academic arguments used to stifle activists' allegiance to victims of pornography and prostitution is that we should now defer to the notion of "feminisms"--as though to hold a personal political conviction were somehow gauche. If someone wanted to make the grass-roots movement against male supremacy more perpetrator-friendly, they could do no better than to promote such obfuscatory discourse.

What difference can it make if I or my group signs on to the "Principle of Accountability"?

One way significant political change happens is that whenever people recognize their allegiance to the human rights of those at the bottom of a social hierarchy, a moral contradiction becomes apparent. Making that moral contradiction blatant through concerted political pressure makes something in the system have to give, something have to move, something have to change. (For a succinct analysis of this political dynamic, see *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality*, by Andrea Dworkin and Catharine A. MacKinnon.)

The public act of signing the "Principle of Accountability"--together with efforts to publicize the principle among organizers and activists--helps heighten the contradiction between a reactionary politics that protects and shields perpetrators of male supremacy and a revolutionary politics that prompts change by starting with what's happening to folks at the bottom.

Can signing on to this principle create accountability?

Of course not. This particular principle declares *loyalties and political allegiances*--not a practical plan for effecting them. The lines of communication with which any individual or group makes accountability happen need to be worked out diligently and locally, on a project-by-project basis.

How did the "Principle of Accountability" get started?

The idea originated in 1992 at a conference about ending men's violence, during conversations about how to clarify the confusing issue of political allegiance for profeminist men who are doing work against pornography and prostitution. When the "Principle of Accountability" was first drafted, a conscientious effort was made to do so accountably. To refine its language both factually and politically, drafts were sent to nearly a dozen leaders and experts in the U.S. and international radical-feminist movements against pornography and trafficking in women. Their editorial comments were then incorporated into the text, and all such leaders and experts have reviewed the version that is now in circulation.

It should be noted that one of the leaders consulted voiced objections to the project. Her critique was not of the document text itself but rather a deep skepticism as to whether profeminist men will ever act accountably at all. Her critical distrust was learned the hard way--by working politically with a local group of profeminist men. The decision to circulate the "Principle of Accountability" implies no dismissal or dishonoring of her distrust. Quite the contrary. It is being circulated in hope that profeminist men *can* act

accountably--and with certainty that profeminist men must. But as anyone in this movement ought to know by now, wherever profeminist men are gathered, there are ample grounds for this leader's suspicion. And that is all the more reason for clarifying communication about what accountability today must mean.

Since the "Principle of Accountability" was launched, its individual and organizational endorsers have made it their own. The project continues as a conscientious and broad-based political action, reaching out to as many concerned activists as possible.

If after reading the "Principle of Accountability" carefully you believe that it speaks for your allegiance and moral conviction, please add your name to the list of signers. [Click here](#) to return to the "Principle of Accountability." Thanks.

[John Stoltenberg is cofounder of Men Against Pornography (PO Box 150786, Brooklyn, New York 11215-0786, USA) and author of Refusing to Be a Man, The End of Manhood: A Book for Men of Conscience, and What Makes Pornography "Sexy"?]