

# Feminism paper essay

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The role of feminism is diverse and crosses generational lines as well as culture lines. This paper will explore the role of feminism as it pertains to these dialectics. The paper will be sectioned into modern day feminism with ideas by Gloria Steinem (a 20th century leader of feminism), the use of an article in which a look at first and third world feminism is analyzed according to personal accounts by Uma Narayan in Traditions and Third World Feminism. The final issue which this paper will present is the past and future fact of feminism in relation to Baumgardner and Richards' article A Day Without Feminism/Still Needing the F Word.

Gloria Steinem Feminism is not an theory based primarily on the injustices done to women, but is in fact a statement that women have had injustices done to them, and there is finally action and unification among women and men to stop such actions. In Gloria Steinem's article If Men Could Menstruate she develops a humorous way in which if men were the gender to have menstruation, then women would still be inferior because everything dealing with one's period would be glorified, she states,...menstruation would become an enviable, worthy, masculine event: men would brag about how long and how much. Young boys would talk about it as the envied beginning of manhood. Gifts, religious ceremonies, family dinners, and stag parties would mark the day. To prevent monthly work loss among the powerful, Congress would fund a National Institute of Dysmenorrhea. Doctors would research little about heart attacks, from which men would be hormonally protected, but everything about cramps.

The point that Steinem is making in this relation to if men had periods is how unjustifiable bigoted society is toward the complaints and ailments of

menstruating women. Women call off work during this time of the month and can be demoted, but if men could menstruate then there would be compensation from Congress. These humorous statements juxtaposed to the reality of the situation become facts of injustice when considering that women are scorned for their periods, shamed and even made from an early age to believe that it makes them inferior. In the article from the Violence Against Women Office, Stalking and Domestic Violence the highlighting subject is the previous rules about stalking and how laws are being changed so that juries will not blame the victim, Stalking creates a psychological prison that deprives its victims of basic liberty of movement and security in their homes. We must address these crimes effectively by working together to protect stalking victims and to hold perpetrators responsible for their criminal behavior. To eradicate stalking, we must act with the full force of the law. Previous to the focus on the balance of justice in regards to women centered crimes, rapists would receive a minimum jail sentence and in many cases, courts of law would often blame the victim for inciting the rape, for asking for it, or even go so far as to say that she wanted to be raped.

This is a common phrase in cases of victimization but no one is it repeatedly as often as in cases of a woman getting raped. The comparison of these two articles deals in the nature of the abuses women have suffered; although Steinem's article has a more upbeat voice, both articles articulate that women are being prejudiced against. Violence Against Women highlights that little in the way of law enforcement is being done in the realm of cyberstalking mainly because the law enforcement offices lack the necessary

' know-how' to strategically set up a course of action. The article goes on to say that some law enforcement agencies are blithely unaware of the problem.

This is the undercurrent theme in Steinem's article; she parodies menstruation onto men but the true message is that men do not know what it is like to have a period and thus could not empathize with women. If men could menstruate then the nation would become obsessed with menstruation, but because men do not menstruate, the nation remains callous to such ideas and concerns about the female body in that fashion. Steinem is highlighting how patriarchy is still ruling the world, while Violence Against Women is trying to focus on the same issue,...while some Internet service providers (ISPs) have taken affirmative steps to crack down on cyberstalking, others have not, and there is a great deal more that industry can and should do to empower individuals to protect themselves against cyberstalking and other online threats. This excerpt alone gives the impression of ambiguity to cyberstalking since some companies are taking aggressive action, yet others ignore it and do not use precautions. Steinem paints for the reader how the world, in fact industry, and culture would be a far more different place if men could menstruate, TV shows would treat the subject openly. (Happy Days: Richie and Potsie try to convince Fonzie that he is still ' The Fonz," though he has missed two periods in a row. Hill Street Blues; The whole precinct hits the same cycle).

So would newspapers. (Summer Shark Scare Threatens Menstruating Men. Judge Cites Monthlies in Pardoning Rapist). And so would movies.

(Newman and Redford in Blood Brother!). This notifies the audience about how much bias exists for women when even the issue of menstruating is a clandestine event. Her articulate gives credence to the idea that men's troubles are viewed in an overt fashion while women's troubles remain a covert discussion. The other articles focus is seemingly a more dangerous action involving stalking while Steinem's article is no less dangerous ideologically speaking but with a twist of feminist humor. The other article delves into the concepts of stalking and the different protocols put in place by the law and how these protocols do not seem to take the threat of women seriously,...harassing and threatening behavior that an individual engages in repeatedly, such as following a person, appearing at a person's home or place of business, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing a person's property. Most stalking laws require the perpetrator to make a credible threat of violence against the victim. Others include threats against the victim's immediate family, and still others require only that the alleged stalker's course of conduct constitute an implied threat.

While some conduct involving annoying or menacing behavior might fall short of illegal stalking, such behavior may be a precursor of stalking and violence and should be treated seriously. Between these two articles it seems that the same issue is being addressed; unfair treatment of women. Although the concepts of each article are quite different in their examination of the problem and the presentation of the issue, it is clear that the bigotry of women is the overall theme. As for an opinion on the issues at work here, it must said that both articles are correct in their assumptions about the abuse and ignoring of women. There is no day set aside for menstruation

and there remains to be seen a shame free sentiment involved in talking about menstruation. Also, for the Violence Against Women article, a lot of companies still do not have appropriate protocols for cyberstalking and even though laws on stalking are changing they are not changing at a rapid enough pace to ensure that not one more woman is hurt, or killed in a stalking scenario.

Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism  
The communication gap between First and Third world feminist, as expressed by Narayan lies within a cultural setting: though Western feminism is still an upholding to the rights of women, Third world feminism speaks towards a culture's specific issues, as Narayan writes, " I am arguing that Third-World feminism is not a mindless mimicking of ' Western agendas' in one clear and simple sense – that, for instance, Indian feminism is clearly a response to issues specifically confronting many Indian women" (13). Thus, feminism is explicit to country and cultural beliefs, not hinging upon a predetermined, or in this case Western view. It is therefore in culture that the main difference between First-World and Third-World feminism lays. The treatment of women in India is one filled with hypocrisy. In Narayan's essay, the India chastises Western civilization for their treatment of women; for instance, Indian women were permitted to attend higher education classes decades before the English even considered the aspect. Indian's say that they treat their women as goddesses, while the West treats their women far less as equals, but this in turn is duplicitous, in examples Narayan gives of the treatment from men received by her grandmothers, and her mother (chastisement, beatings, and submissiveness, and silence). Narayan

gives childhood examples of how she became a feminist, and they are not dominantly rooted in the idea of Westernization, but culturally in a Third-World view, as she writes, "...though I cannot bring myself to it, of her pain that surrounded me when I was young, a pain that was earlier than school and 'Westernization', a call to rebellion that has a different and more primary root, that was not conceptual or English, but in the mother-tongue" (7).

This then gives insight into how feminism isn't dependent upon the introduction of Western culture in liberating women, but is in fact contingent upon a witness's own account of oppression and their reaction to that oppression, that is that Narayan's own rebellion was a response to her mother's sadness in being trapped by her mother-in-law and her marriage. This exemplifies the difference between First-World and Third-World feminism, the fact that Narayan must contend with the paradigm of Western feminism instead of simply revered as representing her own culture's fault; Narayan is not representing Western ideas but is only supporting equality and fair treatment for her fellow Indian women. In the Indian culture, women are perceived to become wives first and their own identity as a person is wiped away by such a paradigm, this is true for the incentive of women's movements, the West included. Indian wives are submissive and the Third-World culture enhances this notion by parlaying women into marriage at the age of thirteen (as Narayan's grandmother had done), and treating them as Other rather than as Self (Simone De Beauvoir). Narayan writes of the predominant sentiment found in India in regards to women, "They were anxious about the fact that our independence and self-

assertiveness seemed to be making us into women who lacked the compliance, deference, and submissiveness deemed essential in good “Indian” wives” (8).

The wife and mother ideas of women are predominant in most cultures, and the concord factor between First and Third world feminism is united in this fact, and their rebellion against such submissiveness. The culture of feminism is presented as one that has great bonds with politics. For both First-World and Third-World feminism there is no difference in the root of feminism when it is in politics, and political campaigns that women are often secluded: in schooling, voting, and citizenship, women have been treated secondarily in both First and Third world cultures. Therefore, Narayan’s generation of Third-world feminist aren’t rebelling because of Westernization, but because in their own politics women have been forgotten in India and in the West, “ It takes political connections to other women and their experiences, political analyses of women’s problems, and attempts to construct political solutions for them, to make women into feminists in any full-blooded sense, as the history of women’s movements in various parts of the world shows us.” Therefore, the dichotomy of First-World and Third-World feminism finds harmony in this political connection. The westernization of Indian has been blamed for the rebellious nature of feminism and even the introduction of the women’s movement, but in fact, it is the own culture’s deviant nature that gives rise to the necessity of feminism. Narayan gives example of her cousin being tortured with cigarettes and being locked away while in another country and keeping silent about it for years until a relative came to visit. The silence is the devastating



part of the story; in Indian culture, it is supposed and indeed ingrained in Indian women to hold their tongues, and be submissive, and not innocent, but obedient.

Yet, western culture was seen to pervade the Indian traditional way of living, “ Veiling, polygamy, child-marriage, and sati were all significant points of conflict and negotiation between colonizing “ Western” culture and different colonized third-World cultures. In these conflicts, Western colonial powers often depicted indigenous practices as symptoms of the “ backwardness and barbarity’ of Third-World cultures in contract to the “ progressiveness of Western culture.” The figure of the colonized woman became a representation of the oppressiveness of the entire ‘ cultural tradition’ of the colony.

“ (17) The effect of this colonization of Indian women was one of conflicting progressiveness. Traditions of Indian culture were already bred with English sentiments (such as the sari) and English clothing was continually being upgraded and introduced into Indian culture; in fact men were wearing suits long before women were allowed to change into less traditional clothing. In one example Narayan gives, she and her family went on a vacation in a more rural part of the country and she was instructed to wear her Indian clothing and not her Western clothes because she had hit puberty (though in the city nothing was wrong with such clothes), Narayan writes, “ My story reveals that what counted as ‘ inappropriately Western dress’ differed from one specific Indian context to another, even within the same class and caste community”(27). The effects of Westernization

therefore and colonization give rise to differing ideas of what constitutes traditional wear from one part of the country to another. In conclusion, Narayan gives insight to how differing opinions of feminism are still spurned from similar ideals.

Third-World feminists are not 'outsiders within', that is, they are not denying the tradition of their country, but instead, feminists need to challenge some of the more patriarchal rules of India. Third-World feminists are not denying their culture, but are asking for change. A Day Without Feminism/Still

Needing the F Word Within the context of the readings and the very overt relationship the authors have with feminism, it seems that the lack of proof of feminism is strong. Although it is highlighted in Baumgardner and Richards' article that feminism has brought about great changes in society such as women being more prevalent staples in working in their career field of choice, the authors also point out that in certain areas there is still an extreme lack of forward thinking. The examples the authors give of this are that women are still not permissible in becoming priests in the Catholic Church. In Baumgardner and Richards' article feminism is not only

addressing issues dealing with women but also issues dealing with men in society and the perceptions therein.

They believe that men are also overlooked when it comes to specific roles they are thought to fulfill. One such role as mentioned in A Day without Feminism is that of being a schoolteacher. It is embarrassing to note that men are often times not allowed to become school teachers (in the last century especially) or, if they were given the vocation, could not teach below

a sixth grade level. On the subject of teaching, women were not allowed to teach if they became pregnant because school kids were not supposed to think about sex.

Such prehistoric thoughts only show how ignorant a society's traditions and mores prove to be. The article highlights important features of feminism by focusing the reader's attention on what a pre-feminist world is like. In accordance to occupations alone, women were not nearly the magnitude at which they are now in the job market, and the jobs that were popular for women to hold were limited in scope to secretaries, teachers, and seamstresses. Just as men were not allowed to occupy female considered roles, women were not allowed to be equated to male dominated roles, or if they did become doctors, there were not a plethora of gynecologists in the United States.

Since Baumgardner and Richards' article speaks toward the non-feminist world of 1970 the points made in Quindlen's article are shockingly similar, though she writes in modernist terms. The study which Quindlen makes reference to in *Still Needing the F Word* is the Duke University study. This study gives context to how the feminist book *Feminine Mystique* is still current in its fight against patriarch society, although it was written in the '60's. The Duke study shows that although women are no longer concerned about the appearance of their kitchen floor, they have changed such concentration upon their own appearance. The suggestion made by both articles is that women, as well as society, still have a long way to go before feminism is completely embraced, and before post-feminine becomes

a modern term. Women, in order to compete in a male dominated work force are more than encouraged to hide their intelligence in order to succeed. This was also true in the '70's. Quindlen's article references governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger's abundant sexual bigotry of women: Not only was he not put on trial for assault but the voters themselves did not seem to mind.

The truth in this article is that gender equation does not exist, yet, " But the world hasn't changed as much as we like to tell ourselves...Otherwise the governor-elect of California wouldn't be a guy who thinks it's playful to grab and grope, and the voters wouldn't ratify that attitude." The over-abundance of empirical evidence stating that feminism is far from becoming an enforced reality is overwhelming. Even though women are now included (rightfully) in formerly male-dominated jobs, they are taught not be as aggressive, they are continually hitting the glass-ceiling (getting paid less for the same job as their male-counterparts, and chastised for having children by not being made partner because of the time off) and they are taught still to remain silent in their role, however newly defined. In reference to these articles, there is a point made that suggests that women and men should still be fighting for feminism since it is actualizing the definition of equality among the sexes. Not only are women segregated from job opportunities but men as well; there are far less male kindergarten teachers than female, just as there are far fewer fire people that are female. The truth behind each article is that feminism needs to be re-emphasized in this modern society.

Women have simply not stopped hitting the glass ceiling because they now have the same jobs as men; the truth is they have to work even harder at the same job to receive equal credit, as Quindlen states, " Now they (women) also obsess about being the perfect professional and meeting the standards of their male counterparts. In the decades since Friedan's book became a best seller, women have won the right to do as much as men do. They just haven't won the right to do as little as men do. Hence, effortless perfection" Conclusion

It is ignorance that spurns on the reality of bigotry in relation to feminism. Feminism is still highly needed in society and the examples stated above give credence to this fact. When society is willingly to disregard the actions of its political leaders in the case of California governor's actions in groping women then it becomes necessary to question society's own mores, even in modernity. Women also must reevaluate their roles in jobs since the Duke study stated women are more concerned over being considered cute than smart when on the job hunt.

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