

Gloria Steinem: a rebellious soul assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Early life experiences send children on a path with a fixed set of morals and patterns that have a vital impact on their adulthood. Because of the unstable conditions of her home, Steiner was forced to expedite her naive girlhood. Her parents did not provide a stable household. Steiner's father had deserted the family, and she was obliged to care for her psychologically ill mother. Receiving nothing but apathy from her mother's doctors, Steiner became aware of the social injustices against women. Her mother's experiences, like an axis on a spinning globe, became pivotal to her understanding of the women's rights.

These events have a dominant effect on Steiner's personal point of view; she did not obtain the necessary elements of a childhood. Instead, she became aware of the lack of social and political equality for women. Although her childhood deemed disadvantageous, Steiner reveals, "I grew up seeing with my own eyes, following my curiosity, falling in love with books, and growing up mostly around grown-ups" ("A Balance between Nature and Nurture" 229). She rose above her unfortunate circumstances and eventually graduated from Smith College, a prestigious, private women's college.

During her early twenties, Steiner obtained a risqué reporting assignment: working as an undercover Playboy bunny waitress in city of New York. Despite the alluring advertisements of this "luxurious" lifestyle, she exposed the treatment behind the bunny ears: demeaning submission to lust, debasing capitulation to sinful behavior, and degrading compliance to the objectification of women. Steiner realized that "all women are Bunnies," and the women dressed up in scanty Playboy bunny outfits are not the only

subjects of gender injustice (“ I Was a Playboy Bunny’ 69). Her experience was one of the multiple sparks for the second wave of feminism.

Critic Ted Streets observes, “[S]he is not mad at the world. She is not playing the victim. She is just simply, honestly, warmly, telling the truth... About how far women have come... And how far they still have to go’ (2). Steiner’s amiable composure and lack of languor enabled her to break through from simple newspaper reporter to prominent feminist icon. Feminists hate men; feminists appear repulsive and manlike; feminists believe housewives remain futile to society. The word “ feminist” surfaces as a sovereign label, yet it is frequently digitized. Stereotypes crush its true meaning. What is feminism?

Feminism is simply defined as the doctrine that a woman’s social and political and economic rights should be defended despite her surrounding circumstances. In order to eliminate rigid stereotypes and raise awareness of the women’s liberation movement, Steiner educates the population with her charismatic writing and lectures. Critic Amanda Zoo suggests, “ Though she was not a pioneer of the women’s movement, the media singled [Steiner] out for her beauty and charisma; she was an articulate, telekinetic representative of women’s liberation. To this day, she remains a powerful symbol of feminism” (1).

Fifty years ago, the world was a different place. Like an ocean crest, the second wave of radical feminism was beginning to sweep the nation; young Gloria Steiner rules on its throne. She represents the touchstone for other feminists. During these years, an abundance of women noticed that nothing was available for them to read by women other than articles with simple-

minded, empty-headed content: cooking, cleaning, nurturing, and creating oneself as socially acceptable woman. A magazine about modern issues written by women for women seemed unthinkable at this time in history. In 1972, rebellious

Steiner founded Ms. Magazine, and it prevails as the indispensable guidebook for feminists. Founding a magazine about politics, sexual abuse, and other controversial issues is not an easy task. Nevertheless, Steiner maintains her classy wit when she concurs, " Trying to start a magazine controlled by its female staff should be the subject of a musical comedy' (Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions 4). To her delight, Ms. Magazine sold hundreds of thousands of copies in its initial release. Steiner's message is simple: feminists desire to make this chaotic world a better place.

In reality, part of the population lives under the ignorant impression that the urgency for the women's rights is buried alongside Abigail Adams and other historically known feminists. Since the establishment of the 19th Amendment, women possess the same rights as men. Today, the media reveals that they are still at a disadvantage to men. Western culture shapes itself by patriarchy, a social system in which males govern as the prominent and dominant leaders. However, sexual harassment from an overwhelming number of men still exists in the form of pornography, domestic violence, and body image controversy.

Society constructs the social ideals of the female body, but Steiner believes in the power of authentic beauty. A woman's outward appearance is simply a shell of her soul underneath. Until there is true equality among both men and

women, feminism continues as a relevant issue. Steiner's philosophy of radical feminism "will be key to other examinations of American culture and society in the latter half of the twentieth century' because of its notable impact and cultural influence (Zoo 2). This battle for equality has not ended.

Throughout history, as the world evolves and changes its viewpoints, it resumes as an ongoing struggle. Steiner plays a crucial role in securing the feminists' ideal society for the future. Originally, Steiner's beauty proved instrumental in attracting followers. Though her stunning appearance is not the only attribute that has gotten her national recognition, she displays qualities that make skilled politicians envious. Steiner carries the charm of a natural, magnetic leader with her selfless, sincere words and an evident absence of vanity.

Her optimistic nature shows hope for the potential of the world. In all societies, leaders are important. This role requires major confidence. As instigators of cynical retinue, countless critics slander Steiner and accuse her of "exploiting the attention she attracted to promote herself and her moderate feminism at the expense of the radical vision put by other females" (Zoo 2). These men and women devalue her contributions. Some claim she resides as nothing more than a figurehead, a nominal leader without any substantive power.

Others contend that her stigma of radical feminism proves limited. Steiner did not necessarily volunteer as the one and only face of the second wave feminist movement. Her endeavors make it clear that a movement with a set leader undermines the actual strength of a revolution. One cannot face a

crowd on his or her own. Critic Sarah Hoopla comments, “ Ms. Steiner has labored mightily to correct the notion that she was a lone revolutionary or that feminism was only for the privileged” (3).

She believes that feminism is for everyone: man or woman, young or old, ravishing or repulsive, poor or rich. In the introduction to *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, Steiner insists, “ feminism, by its definition, has to include [all] females as a caste across economic and racial boundaries” (5). Steiner’s leadership paves the way for present day leaders, particularly females, to continue the fight for equality. Some of us are becoming the men we always wanted to marry,” Steiner states in her essay “ Words and Change” (149). At one time, women were trained to marry a doctor.

Nowadays, women are educated to work as doctor. Men have lost their traditional roles. In America, women can be volunteer firefighters, heroines of fictitious novels and movies, lifesaving surgeons, or high-ranking military leaders. Accusing a person of not being a “ real man” or “ real women” endures as a “ potential social weapon in preserving the status quo’ (Steiner, “ Women and Power,” 2). The status quo is what society believes is socially acceptable t the time, but society typically maintains a defective mindset. One cannot depend on the status quo.

For thousands of years, the women’s movement has prevailed as a contagious and progressive historical recurrence. Measuring this distance between new and old affairs evoke the unique history of human beings. Critic Tom Seeders explains, “[M]y life and relationships are much richer because I listened to and followed the wisdom of Gloria Steiner... As equals, we are

better together" (2). Equality trumps imbalance. Being a female that grew up in the early sass's, Steiner relates closely to the struggles of women.

Furthermore, the woes of women are not her sole focus.

Steiner fights for equality for all human beings. Critic Ted Streets proposes, "[I]t is clear that her philosophy goes beyond women's rights... Her advocacy is not gender specific" (2). To be successful, people cannot deteriorate. To be successful, people cannot stay in their same mindset. To be successful, people cannot stay trapped in a worn-out belief system of stereotypes and prejudice. This concept affects a broad spectrum: race, sexual orientation, outward appearance, age, and intelligence. Steiner notably touches on the similarities between sex and race discrimination.

She concedes, "[S]ex and race discrimination are so pragmatically linked and anthropologically interdependent that one cannot be successfully uprooted without taking on the other" (Steiner, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* 5). Deeply ingrained in the roots of the American system are discriminatory acts towards both race and gender. African Americans were not granted the right to vote until the 15th Amendment while women could not vote until four amendments later. Steiner believes that women's equality survives with the successful elimination of racial discrimination.

Streets concludes, "[I]mplicit in every word is that her fight is not just about equality for women, it is also about equality for minorities, for gays, for the disabled, and even for men. She speaks the language of feminism, but more accurately, she is a humanist" (2). Humanism is key to her philosophy. Does he who has hope have everything? Two closely-related viewpoints, hope and

optimism, maintain a brand of amity with Steiner's organizations. Hope eternally lives in the hearts of people. Steiner "mocks herself gently as a 'hope-alcoholic,' encapsulating... Her optimism" (Has 2).

Unwavering like a rock, one's foundation is built upon the idea of hope. Rain, flood, and wind beats on the foundation, but it never falters. Her philosophy inspires humanity. Critic Sarah Hoopla illustrates, "Ms. Steiner's DNA has been scattered into a million cells" (4). She continues as a legacy, and "the recognition of [her] work highlights that what and her colleagues started requires multiple generations to finish. We must never stop moving" (Dunn 1). In order for the world to develop substantially, a sense of innovative motivation is crucial. It can even begin with a dream.

On her official website, Gloria Steiner points out, "Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning." Leaps of imagination are part of the fuel that keeps hope alive. Human lives are the finest textbooks one can read. The life of Gloria Steiner reveals that each and every person alive is valuable and one-of-a-kind. Encouraging equality for all, Steiner rises from an average woman too nationally known hero. Every day should be a rebellion; vitality and a desire for amelioration are its ingredients.

Steiner endures as a lasting legacy that anyone can make a difference. One question remains: how does one discover the inspiration that encourages external self-expression? Works Cited Primary sources Steiner, Gloria. "A Balance between Nature and Nurture." *This I Believe. Deed.* Jay Allison et. Al. New York: Picador, 2006. 228-231. Print. Steiner, Gloria, com. "I Was a

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