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The F-Word

Stephanie K. Adamczak
Gettysburg College

Taylor C. Amato
Gettysburg College

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The F-Word

Abstract

I'm thinking of a word. Can you guess it? This word is considered negative and harsh. It's generally avoided in everyday conversations. You wouldn't normally hear this word spoken by professors or sophisticated celebrities. It starts with an F... Do you know it?

That's right folks! It's "feminist". [*excerpt*]

Keywords

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Disciplines

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Sociology | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

THE F-WORD.

March 27, 2013

I'm thinking of a word. Can you guess it? This word is considered negative and harsh. It's generally avoided in everyday conversations. You wouldn't normally hear this word spoken by professors or sophisticated celebrities. It starts with an F... Do you know it?

That's right folks! It's "feminist".

I had never considered feminism to be a bra-burning, chest-beating, man-hating culture, but several powerful women of our generation seem to disagree with me. Carrie Underwood stated that the word can "come off as a negative connotation". Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer believes that there is a "militant drive" and "chip on the shoulder" associated with this theory. Lady Gaga's statement, "I am not a feminist. I love men. I hail men," holds to the same idea. Katy Perry, while accepting her Woman of the Year award was quick to state her anti-feminist stance: "I'm not a feminist, but I do believe in the power of women." So, what's so bad about being labeled as the dreaded F-word? Why are people able to openly agree that they believe in the core beliefs of the movement, without saying the F-word in public? What's so scary about being labeled a "feminist"?

My quest for the truth started on the web (of course). I looked up a few definitions.

Merriam-Webster: a theory of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.

(The ever-reputable) **Wikipedia:** a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women.

Dictionary.com: doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men.

The trend here is **equality**, not superiority. We are living in a time when a movement founded upon the idea of equal rights for all genders has been turned into a stigma associated with stereotypes like lesbian, man-hater, and (according to urban dictionary) 'hairy-legged bitches.'



Feminist has become a dirty word. People see it as an insult. It has now become a term so laden with negative connotations that, realistically, I can understand why people are hesitant to identify with it. But when did women start buying into this totally inaccurate image?

I think it sprouts from observations of the second-wave of feminism, which focused on social equality as opposed to first wave feminists who mainly focused on political rights and women's suffrage. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* undoubtedly unleashed a new form of feminism that centered around "Women's Liberation." And thus began the activism that current women now look down upon as being overbearing and harsh.

I think this judgment is unfair, though. The women of the 1960s and 1970s were in a very different place, struggling with different issues from the women of the 21st century. Because of this, they needed to use different tactics to be heard. Now, we assign all kinds of labels to these historical demonstrations and as a result, write off current feminists because of these preconceived stereotypes. But is it fair for us to disregard the strengths and accomplishments of this movement simply because it had different goals than the movement today?

Zoey Deschanel sure doesn't think so—and she's [not the only one](#). During an interview with *Glamour*, Deschanel spoke out against this image, "I'm just being myself. There is not an ounce of me that believes any of that crap that they say. We can't be feminine and be feminists and be successful? I want to be a f–king feminist and wear an f–king Peter Pan collar. So f–king what?" Lena Dunham also dispelled the negativity surrounding the word by explaining that "feminism isn't a dirty word" with the following quote:

"It's not like we're a deranged group who think women should take over the planet, raise our young on our own and eliminate men from the picture. Feminism is about women having all the rights that men have."

Just because you don't share the exact same ideals and values of feminists past, that does not mean you're not a feminist. The standards of feminism have obviously changed from the 1970s, and that older second-wave should not define current feminist ideals. If you believe women should be equal with men, then you are a feminist—plain and simple. You don't have to hate men and stop shaving your legs to be a feminist; you simply have to believe, wholeheartedly, in equality. This goes for you, too, [men](#). Yes, that's right. Regardless of sex or gender, if you believe that both women and men are equal, and deserve to be treated in this manner, then you, too, are a feminist.

So let's all congratulate individuals like Amy Poehler, Tina Fey, Lena Dunham, and Zoey Deschanel for owning the F-word. And for those of you who are hesitant to be considered a feminist, I encourage you to try it out. Who knows, you might just realize that you actually can be a feminist without sacrificing who you are or what you believe in.

Stephanie Adamczak '15
Staff Writer

Taylor Amato '14
Contributing Writer

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