The Truth About Feminism

Ashley Buckowing  
Iowa State University

Becky Eilers  
Iowa State University

Liz Zabel  
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos

Part of the Higher Education Commons, Journalism Studies Commons, Social Psychology and Interaction Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethos by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
The person sitting next to you in class, the girl sharing your booth at the Hub, a man sitting across the table from you at Parks Library and your professor in Civil Engineering—all of these people can be feminists. A woman who takes pride in being a female or a man that wants his girlfriend to make the same amount of money that he does can be a feminist.

A frequently used definition is one similar to that in the book “Gendered Lives” by Julia Wood: “An active commitment to equality and respect for all forms of life.”

According to women’s studies and English professor Elyse Demaray, the most misconceived notion about feminism is “that it’s anti-male or male bashing. I think because we have gotten more conservative in a lot of ways, and the energy from the ’60s and ’70s has dissipated, and as we’ve gotten more opportunities, we’ve confused that with actually achieving the goal of an equal playing field.”

In the 1920s, women were found with a drink in their hands, dancing the night away in a speakeasy, and men were right by their sides. Women started smoking alongside men, raised their skirts and cut off their hair. Women made up almost 24 percent of the labor force. Women played sports. They drank openly during Prohibition. Almost a century later, women are doing some of the same things. Although, they are being held back in other areas.

In the State of the Union Address held on Jan. 28 this year, President Obama spoke about women’s rights in current times: “Today, women make up about half our workforce. But they still make 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is wrong, and in 2014, it’s an embarrassment. A woman deserves equal pay for equal work. She deserves to have a baby without sacrificing her job. A mother deserves a day off to care for a sick child or sick parent without running into hardship—and you know what, a father does, too. It’s time to do away with workplace policies that belong in a ‘Mad Men’ episode.”

Dr. Denise Oles-Acevedo, a professor of Speech Communication in the English department, agrees with Demaray, saying that she believes the most misconceived notion about feminism is that it is male-bashing. “You know, yes, there are those fractures of the women’s movement, but the majority of feminists don’t hate men,” Oles-Acevedo says. “I would say that the majority of feminists would welcome the support of men to pushing their causes forward.”

Oles-Acevedo explains that there are men’s movements alongside women’s, and that it’s important to understand both sides. “Most men’s movements develop out of a response to women’s movements, [so] one has to understand why men might feel that their rights are being infringed upon, or why men feel like they need to join the
“We still have a lot of gender roles that maybe aren’t as obvious or explicit as they have been in the past. But they still shape what we think it means to be a man or woman in our culture.”

Betty Friedan, Marilyn Monroe and Anne Frank: the list of amazing women goes on and on. Emily Dickinson taught us poetry; Chanel taught us innovative clothing and design; Rosa Parks taught us strength; Billie Holiday taught us blues, and Marilyn Monroe taught us confidence. What does feminism mean to you?