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## Research Article

# WHAT IS FEMINISM, WHEN DID WOMEN START FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS AND WHY DOES FEMINISM STILL EXIST

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## ABSTRACT

This article deals with the concept of feminism, its forms and way of expression. The history and stages of development of feminism around the world are also described.

## KEYWORDS

Feminism, history of feminism, women rights, movements of feminism.

## INTRODUCTION

Feminism is the recognition that throughout history people have been treated differently based on their biological sex as well as the prevailing understanding of gender norms. Based on these factors, society granted an unequal degree of power to men and women. Perceptions of gender and gender have exacerbated wage inequality, discriminatory treatment at work or school, and unequal access to resources and political power. In addition, most societies resort to organized and individual violence to reinforce these sex and gender norms.

Violence against women and people who are perceived as or identify as women, such as transgender people, was the norm in most societies until recently. Women have been abused by men at all times and in all parts of the world. This violence against women has taken many forms, from official and organized - like the systemic rape of women by armies during the war - to what took place in the context of the home and family: domestic violence, intimate partner violence. Some forms have also taken place in conditions of unequal social power, such as sexual assaults on university campuses. And feminism is about recognizing that all these factors have influenced women's lives and the

decision to organize to try to solve these injustices and create a more equal society.

### The conception of feminizm

The term "feminism" appears at the beginning of the 19th century. Under it in the journalism of this era is understood the totality of the qualities inherent in a woman. Just as there are specific male traits - masculinity, there is also femininity, or "feminism".

Towards the end of the 19th century, in the context of the suffragette movement, the word "feminist", originally French, appears, which is used to describe the activists of the women's movement. Thus, by the beginning of the 20th century, the meaning of the term was gradually changing. For the last 100 years, by feminists we have definitely understood women who are fighting for their rights. Moreover, these rights can be understood in different ways, and the struggle is not always reduced to the demands of formal political equality.

### Beginnings of feminism

There is no one universal feminism. There are many different currents of feminism, so if you look at the history of feminism, you need to consider different types of movements for women and their allies. Currents of feminism often intersected with each other. There were movements that included black and white women, rich and poor, young and old. And all these movements focused on different issues. In addition, there were feminist movements among labor movements, civil rights movements, homosexual movements. There were even environmentalist feminists. In addition, there were racist feminist movements - Ku Klux Klan women and skinhead women.

The first feminist is usually called the Englishwoman Mary Wollstonecraft, who lived at the end of the 18th century. In the treatise "Protection of the Rights of a Woman", she raises questions related to the fate of a woman: how different is a woman from a man, how fair are the accusations of a woman in her lack of reason, how motherhood and domestic work affect the role of a woman. The main slogan of Wollstonecraft, which caused a scandal, is that a woman can independently control her own destiny. Somewhat in the shadow of Wollstonecraft is her compatriot Mary Astel, who relied on the rationalist philosophy of Descartes, who made no difference between men and women. Wollstonecraft is likewise influenced by and polemics with Rousseau. As we read these early texts, the caricature of the feminists crumbles: they offer a versatile, often ironic, and sometimes surprising argument. For example, Estel discussed the creation of women's "secular monasteries" as a possible alternative to marriage and the transition of a woman "to the property of a man."

Among the first feminists was at least one man, the classic of liberal philosophy, John Stuart Mill, who in 1869 published a treatise, The Subjection of Woman, in defense of women's rights. Most men, however, were strongly opposed to feminism. In part, they simply could not understand what these women wanted. One male author even stated in response to the publication of Wollstonecraft's treatise that the claim for the rights of women was as ridiculous as the claim for the rights of pets. In response to the suffragette movement, a "classic rebuttal" was also formulated: supposedly only very ugly women who count on finding a worthy husband cannot become feminists.

### History of feminism

Feminism in the United States began as a social movement in the 1830s and continued as women's

struggle for the right to vote. Although this movement had many prerequisites, the 1948 convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, is considered to be the founding moment. The delegates drafted and approved a "Declaration of Sentiments", often referred to as the "Declaration of Women's Rights". The 1776 "Declaration of Independence" and the 1789 "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" stated that women and men were equal before God and therefore had the right to education, property, divorce, child rearing, protection from violence from their husbands and, finally, the right to vote. It took 72 years before they got the right to vote in the United States.

Feminism was present during the American Civil War when women were nurses and volunteers at the front. When they returned home, they wanted access to education and various professions. After the Civil War, women fought for the right to dispose of their property, since by law they could not control their income and savings. The Married Women's Property Act of 1884 gave women greater financial independence from their husbands. The men in the legislature agreed to this, because in such a case, creditors could not go to the families of the soldiers and take the property that their wives had earned during the war.

Feminism was present in the 1910s when a large movement of immigrant workers swept across the US. It included hundreds of thousands of working women. After World War I, when a global labor and peace movement emerged, women began to feel they were in a war that they did not start. A more global feminist movement emerged. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Women Workers' International Federation, and other transnational

women's federations emerged and met from the 1910s and between the two wars.

It makes sense to supplement the chronology of the waves of feminism with an idea of the ideological structure of the movement.

Liberal feminism suggests that feminism is primarily a story about equal rights for men and women. As soon as we guarantee the formal and substantive equality of rights, we can consider that, just as we once solved the issue of racism, we have solved the issue of gender inequality.

Liberal feminism is mainstream, and in the Western world the big political parties are geared towards it. Western political correctness towards women is also primarily a product of liberalism.

The second variety is Marxist feminism. Marxist feminism suggests that the oppression of women is a special case of capitalist and class oppression. In other words, there is an exploitation of employees in the economy, and women are one of the types of people who are exploited. Just as workers were exploited in the 19th century and later, women are forced to work for men. Marxist feminism is interesting because it introduces the problem of unpaid, free domestic labor as its central theme. There are Marxist scholars who argue that the basis of the world economy is the work of housewives, which is not valued in any way, but at the same time makes a key contribution to our well-being.

Russia has made a great contribution to Marxist feminism, and this should not be forgotten. The Bolshevik government in the early 1920s became the most progressive government in the world in terms of gender equality: formal political equality was guaranteed, formal electoral equality, women were

taught to read and write, and attempts were made to free them from "kitchen slavery" through the opening of centralized proletarian canteens. Those moves were also made that were unacceptable for Western Europe at that time. In particular, abortion was decriminalized. The most famous defender of women's rights among the Bolsheviks is Alexandra Kollontai. After the first years of Soviet power, attitudes towards women became gradually more conservative. But before Comrade Stalin, we were an advanced feminist power.

### Feminism in the 21st century

There were many important feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. There was a really powerful group in New York that included Kate Millett, who wrote the book *Sexual Politics*, and journalist Betty Friedan. Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. It was an important book that helped middle class women understand why they felt trapped as mothers and wives. Friedan worked with attorney Pauli Murray, who campaigned for racial and gender equality. They were members of the group that founded the National Organization for Women in 1966. Murray coined the term "Jane Crow" in reference to a system of laws that discriminated against women. Although Murray was the author of an analysis of Jim Crow laws that would later be called "the bible of the civil rights movement," she believed that Jane Crow was as good at restricting women's rights as Jim Crow was at segregating blacks.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a member of the US Supreme Court, was a very important figure in the 1970s. She was involved in changing the laws and making them fairer for women. She founded the American Civil Rights Union Women's Rights. She greatly expanded the rights of women in the United States. Her role is invaluable. She has served on Supreme Court cases, and many of the rights that women have today are due to her. She was heavily influenced by Pauli Murray.

Of course, if we think about feminism in a global way, then you can think of many other notable activists. But there are three important figures in the feminist movement who stand out in particular. The first is Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan activist who founded the Green Belt movement. The movement now has over 50,000 women planting trees in sub-Saharan Africa. In these areas, trees were cut down by the colonialists. Wangari helped create an environment that allowed women to support themselves and their families. This dealt a decisive blow to women's independence in a number of patriarchal cultures, which was the goal of Maathai. It is also important to mention Berta Cáceres, from Honduras, who was killed in the fight for the land rights of indigenous peoples, whose houses were rented out to foreign corporations who planned to build a dam there. Finally, credit must be given to Calpone Actor, the leader of the Bangladeshi clothing movement, whose advocacy work to build a global coalition of workers, students and consumers has led to an agreement now signed by more than 200 corporations.

Today, in 2023, the big problem for feminism is the generation of millennial who believe that women have basically already achieved equality. Indeed, great strides have been made as a result of the labors of all the activists. Women can take out mortgages and get business loans. But in popular culture there is a normalization of violence against women in popular songs and music videos, a concentration of women among the world's least paid and most exploited workers, a small number of women in positions of political power. So the next generation of feminists have a lot of work to do.

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