

So What Is Radical Feminism?

Compiled by Lierre Keith

Oppression, as a phenomenon, includes two parties (or classes)--the Oppressor and the Oppressed. These parties are artificially created and are, then, combined into systems dichotomizing the human race sequentially on the basis of various pretexts--sex, race, religion, et cetera. Any given class system... is stabilized by institutions (all of which are, by definition, "political"): in the case of women, marriage, motherhood, prostitution, rape, pornography.

—Ti-grace Atkinson

Amazon Odyssey

...[L]esbianism, informed by feminism, is much more than just a sexual choice. It is a total perspective on life in a patriarchal society representing a primal commitment to women on all levels of existence and challenging the bulwark of a sexist society—that is, heterosexism. Thus it is not a mere sexual alternative to men, which is characterized simply by sexually relating to women instead of men, but a way of being in the world that challenges the male possession of women at perhaps its most intimate and sensitive level.

—Janice G. Raymond

The Transsexual Empire

For me, feminism means working as much as one can to end the oppression of women, to break our dependence on men, and to subvert, challenge, and ultimately destroy those bastions of male power that enslave us. Strategy may vary. So may commitment. Being a woman-oriented woman whose lifestyle is as much as possible -- socially, politically, sexually--focused on women, I attempt to define a clear line for myself by as complete and uncompromised a commitment to women as I can possibly sustain.

--Ngahuia Te Awakotuku

Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed

Womanist 1. From womanish. (opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in

greater depth than is considered "good" for one. (...)

2. *Also*: A woman who loves other women, sexually and /or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength.

(...)

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.

--Alice Walker

In Search of Our Mother's Gardens

Just as I was taught always to ask, "Is it good for the Jews?" I now ask, "Is it good for women?" ... My mother said, "Scratch a goy and you find an anti-Semite." I say, "Scratch a man and you find a sexist." Sometimes I refer to men as the goyim.

—Pauline Bart

Nice Jewish Girls

My personal ideal of feminism is not one in which women of the ruling class have equal power with men of the ruling class, while poor men and women go to hell together. This is, however, because my ideal of feminism requires a general commitment to social justice and human dignity. A liberation which sets some women free to humiliate and exploit others is no liberation.

--D. A Clarke

Unleashing Feminism

I think it is about time that equipped women began to take on some of the ethical questions which a male-dominated culture has produced and dissect and analyze them quite to pieces in a serious fashion. It is about time that "half the human race" had something to say about the nature of its existence. Otherwise--without revised basic thinking --the woman intellectual is likely to find herself trying to draw conclusions...based on acceptance of a social moral superstructure which has never admitted to the equality of women and is therefore immoral itself. As per marriage, as per sexual practices, as per the rearing of children, etc. In this kind of work there may be women to emerge who will be able to formulate a new and possible concept that homosexual persecution and condemnation has at its roots not only social ignorance, but a philosophically active anti-

feminist dogma.
--Lorraine Hansberry
letter in *The Ladder*, 1957

[T]he bodies of murdered women are strewn across the landscape of this country. Rape a national pastime, a form of torture visited upon all girls and women, from babies to the aged. One out of three women in the U.S. will be raped during her lifetime. Battering and incest, those home-based crimes, are pandemic. Murder, of course, is men's ultimate violent "solution." And if you're thinking as you read this that I'm exaggerating, please go get today's newspaper and verify the facts. If anything's going down here it's woman-hatred, not man-hatred, a war against women... The feminist movement and the anti-racist movement have in common trying to insure decent human life. Opposition to either movement aligns one with the most reactionary elements in American society.
--Barbara Smith
Home Girls

Wild politics is feminist and in keeping with the resistance of Indigenous peoples, the poor and the marginalised. It resists Cola colonisation and accumulation, over-consumption, fundamentalism and repressive ideologies, mass communications, the military and interference by international scientific, monetary and cultural elites. Wild politics is a politics of joy.
--Susan Hawthorne
Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed

We want to destroy the positions of power ... not get up into those positions. The fight against unequal power relationships between men and women necessitates fighting unequal power every place: between men and women, but also between men and men and women and women, between black and white and rich and poor.
--Ti-grace Atkinson
Amazon Odyssey

All issues are feminist issues -- and bandaid reforms, or equality with men in a male-dominated society, or "empowering" women to have "self-esteem" while leaving intact a status quo with a perforated ozone layer -- all are pseudo-solutions that a radical feminist finds unacceptable... At its most basic, [feminism] can simply mean the struggle for female freedom against a male supremacist society -- certainly a vital, valid fight in itself. It can also be, in part, an

ethics, an esthetics, even a metaphysics. For me, feminism... is also something more: it is the politics uniquely capable at this moment in history of, quite literally, saving the fragile blue and green biosphere naked Earth.
--Robin Morgan
Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed

We choose the earth
and the edge of each others battles
the war is the same
if we lose
someday women's blood will congeal
upon a dead planet
but if we win
there's no telling
we seek beyond history
for a new and more possible meeting
I look to meet you
upon whatever barricade you erect or
choose.
--Audre Lorde

One more thing I learned: that because I was calling for social change, for social censure of male behaviors that had historically been routine and uncensored—I was not only a feminist. I was a radical feminist.
--Louise Armstrong
Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed

[W]hen I talk about a resistance, I am talking about an organized political resistance. I'm not just talking about something that comes and something that goes. I'm not talking about a feeling. I'm not talking about having in your heart the way things should be and going through a regular day having good, decent, wonderful ideas in your heart. I'm talking about when you put your body and your mind on the line and you commit yourself to years of struggle in order to change the society in which you live... A political resistance goes on day and night, under cover and over ground, where people can see it and people can't. It is passed from generation to generation. It is taught. It is encouraged. It is celebrated. It is smart. It is savvy. It is committed. And someday it will win. It will win.
--Andrea Dworkin
The Sex Liberals and the Attack on Feminism