

I, Myself, A Woman, not A Feminist

BADY2 Ethics and Sustainability Context Essay
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0 Abstract

Throughout human history, social movements are common in every society. When people began to question their way of living, they started to experiment other possibility and seeking changes. We named the psychological and behavioral revolution *Social Movement*. Social movement may caused by cultural drifts, social disorganization or social injustice ¹.

Feminism is a ongoing and trending ethnic and cultural related subject from the 18th century to the contemporary society. This essay is going to challenge The Feminism*, how the movement contradict with the ideology, that make me refuse to be called a feminist. Moreover, how can I reflect and foresee this social issue as a sustainable movement.

**Note: The Feminism is referring to the scenario of the movement. The essay is not against the ideology or the vision of feminism.*

Warning: If you consider yourself as a strong ideologist who have no rooms for other thoughts, stop reading.

I don't believe any ideology or argument should be one way or another, so if you came across any questions or ideas, feel free to raise discussion by emailing artpjupload@gmail.com.

Feminism is an ideology and social movement that about gender equality, sexuality uniqueness and women's rights. The movement can be cited from the Enlightenment period in the western countries. The number of women being educated increased under universal education system, that female philosophers started to raise the idea questioning the definition of women in the society and the male dominated system patriarchy ².

There were some fundamental written theories like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects (1792)* that influential to the following movements.

Different waves of feminism movement occurred after the awareness of gender inequality had been raised.

The first-wave feminism was forming organizations among feminists in the 19th century, focusing on challenging the legal inequalities.

The second-wave feminism was one of the main ideologies under modernity from the 60s to the 80s. Apart from argument of practical issues like family structure or workplace inequality, second-wave feminism also drew attention dispute issue such as domestic violence and rape. This period counted as the rise of feminism which the ideology is spread to the other culture from the west.

The third-wave feminism, the contemporary feminism, drifted into different cliques and themes. The movement targeted on gender role expectations and stereotypes issues. The movement became more ambitious and radical, involved in behavioral act ³.

1 Rewinding Feminism

According to philosopher Arnold Geulincx's illustration of the Two Ideal Clocks, in order to progress in a social movement, we first have to understand the origin trigger ⁴.

Patriarchy, a male dominated social structural phenomenon, was practiced and existed for reasons. In terms of science, men and women are physically different. In average, men is taller and heavier than women; Men are over 30% stronger than women ⁵. In ancient history, people are relied on agricultural society which economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. Under an agricultural society, men are more competence than women, for production duties like farming or cattle ranching which required more physical power. From this point, 'man-power' had established their gender status in the society.

These may be evidences of how patriarchy developed, however, doesn't mean it should be established as a conventional social practice; this topic will be further discuss.

2.1 Questioning Concepts of Feminism

First of all, naming the this ideology 'Feminism' is totally opposing the concept of it. I believe that the ideology of feminism is more about gender structure in the society than the physical sex. 'Feminism' is from the word 'female', which is just an adjective referring to sexual designation that can be applied to any animal species but not just for human gender.

Female(adj.)

Of or denoting the sex that can offspring, produce eggs, distinguished biologically by the production of gametes(ova) which can be fertilized by male gametes: a herd of female deer-
Oxford Dictionaries

Moreover, feminism is an ideology arguing not to give names, boundaries or expectations to specific gender, especially over women. However, calling oneself as a feminist is reversing the idea that to get rid of the stereotypes. We are giving ourselves names that differ from men, which instead creating the inequality.

Feminism isn't about women against men but fighting for a better balance in the world. The approach to be as good as men or better than men misguided the path of feminism. If women or anyone believe in gender equality, there should no longer be as 'men' or 'women', we are just as good as we are.

Last but not least, people argue that the differences between equality and equity. Equality means that the state is being equal for anything or anyone, and equity is the state of being just and fair. We should rethink about the gender issue can be settle by equality or equity. Will be further discuss in this essay.

2.1 Questioning Contemporary Feminism

Although each social movement has its core objective, we cannot ignore the fact that how the movement turn out in reality. In the third-wave feminism, the ideology started to drift into different pathway and developed few types of feminism.

Radical feminism is one of the most common feminisms in the society, reordering the society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts. Radical feminists seek to abolish patriarchy by challenging existing social norms and institutions, rather than through a political process ⁶. Radical feminists promote feminism by launching campaigns or extreme acts like using their own body the protest medium in order to express their more advanced idea than the previous waves of feminism.

2.1.1 Contemporary Feminism: Manifesto and Actions

In the 60s, Valerie Solanas, a radical feminist published the SCUM Manifesto claiming that men are responsible for all that is wrong in the world. In the manifesto, Solanas vents her rage toward the opposite sex, with lines such as ‘To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he’s a machine, a walking dildo.’⁷

In 1968, they protested against the Miss America pageant by throwing high heels and other feminine accoutrements into a garbage bin, to represent freedom. Radical feminists argued that wearing make ups, high heels or doing housework are disgracing women.

‘A Woman Ran A Marathon Without A Tampon To Take A Stand Against Period-Shaming’ became a headline of the news this year in London. Kiran Gandhi who trained for a year to complete the London Marathon in April. She said she made her decision to “run free” and not wear a tampon because she wanted to highlight how women are often shamed for having their period.

2.1.2 Contemporary Feminism: Pop Culture

Feminism became iconic in the pop culture. The international superstar Madonna not just an icon from the 60s to present, so as a well known feminist. Her advance style, the themes of her songs talk openly about sexuality, or her speeches about embracing freedom of her body influenced different community.

Feminism is a common topic in contemporary art as well. Pussy Riot is a Russian feminist punk rock group founded in 2011. The group release songs concerning feminism, LGBT rights, democracy and soon. Their performances were considered as an alternative way of protest. People began to pay attention to the group after 5 members was arrested charged with hooliganism in 2012⁸. The mask, bright colored dresses and tights became symbolic in contemporary feminism.

After ages of procrastination in feminism, feminist decided to start up protests and campaigns in the recent decades. With the aids of social media, the ideology can be reached a boarder audiences in the shortest amount of time. *Free the Nipple* is a feminism campaign brought up by the filmmaker and activist Lina Esco in 2013. It is an equality movement focused upon the double standards regarding the censorship of female breasts⁹. The campaign violated after the reposing by famous artists Miley Cyrus and Bjort, and the new hashtag #freethenipple on twitter and instagram, where women can post their topless photo to show support.

3 Concerns

People aware that feminism has drifted into different pathways and the direction is getting more and more confusing. I understand the stand point and motive of the contemporary feminism, however disagree with some unreasonable parts of the movement.

First of all, feminism shouldn't just be aiming a society that women=men or women>men, each gender should embrace our physical and mental uniqueness. The status of women will not rise by shaming on men or depressing their ability, but to empower what and how women can be capable of.

Feminism is not necessarily against nature.

The actions like throwing high heels on beauty pageant, wearing no makeup or not using tampons maybe a statement in feminism but not a necessary actions to represent whether you are a feminist or not. This will only categorize a liberal woman as wearing no makeup or only jeans, but not a liberal mind.

We should be free to do anything when we are comfortable with, any actions mentioned or defined in feminism is just a personal choice rather than a gender choice.

For example, having period is a nature of women, so wearing tampons is for my own comfort and hygienic purpose.

In the era of advance technology, information travels fast, movements or campaigns start up and massively spread all over the world in a short period of time. However, the consequences of a trend rising fast is falling fast, people always move on from one trend to another really quick. Advertising feminism through social media achieved an instant and huge response, yet cannot create a fundamental or solid cultural influence in long term. I'm afraid that contemporary feminism had become an industry with successful packaging and gimmicking, it is losing the origin as a social movement.

4.1 Visions: Politics

There are different areas to initiate with to preserve and progress the ideology of feminism.

Bring feminism to politics and economy maybe the most effective way to practice the ideology. The Equal Rights Amendment, written by Alice Paul, is introduced in Congress in the 1923. Using the legal force to protract women rights as a topic in human equality 10. Law against gender discrimination was introduced long ago in *Civil Rights Act of 1964*:

Title VII (Equal Employment Opportunities) Prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.

Also, laws specific over women rights are proposed afterward, such as *Pregnancy Discrimination Act (EEOC): Prohibits employment discrimination against female workers who are (or intend to become) pregnant -- including discrimination in hiring, failure to promote, and wrongful termination and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: Prohibits sex discrimination in education programs that receive federal funds, to increase educational and athletic opportunities for females in schools and colleges nationwide* ¹⁰.

As mentioned before, there are differences between equality and equity. Law are aimed to provide different protection according to different needs. Gender issues need to be farther discuss based on independent demands. Paying men and women the same or policies about quality maybe the first step under feminism, however should not be applying to all gender related laws. The next step of the movement should be about equity.

Since the world is constantly changing, feminism should no longer just be about women rights but a wilder approach in gender issues. It is a globalized topic which ethic and culture are different so related laws should be set up based on different needs of different regions. Government should set up department that focus on human rights and equality which gender right is one of the focus.

4.2 Visions: Technology and Career

Technology helps minimized the physical differences between men and women. Women is no longer isolated from men-dominated career like engineering, army or workplaces required lots of physical power thanks to the invention of machines.

The society should encourage women to embrace their physical advantages 5, such as women have better night vision, better visual memory, and more sensitive and organize than men.

Beside replacing men population in certain career, women should be able to deliver better performances according to their ability. Companies should constructing the team without gender orientation, and considering the balance of the number of both gender can boarder targeted consumers with non bias perception.

4.3 Visions: Education

From the history of feminism, great progress has been made in the society. The orientation in career has changed, women voices are valuable in decision making and important role in the workplace. The status of women increased, where women are able to participate in politics that used to be bent. The structure of households changed, women is no longer only be able to take part in the role as a housewife in forming a family. The role reversing and pregnancy holiday are set up for men as well. The living environment became more gender neutral like the unisex toilet are adapted in some of the western countries. Sexuality is no forbidden topic or a shame to talk in the public ¹¹.

However, the progress of feminism seems to slow down and changes is not as significant as before. Setting up feminism rules or launching campaigns is only treat for the symptoms but not the root cause. Education is the only way to make a continue practice and a sustainable impact on feminism.

Patriarchy, gender stereotypes or moral expectations are passed down from generation to generation. We were told that girls play dolls and boy play gun, men go to work and women stay home, or marriage can only from by a men and a women...these thoughts then became unconscious to us and got accepted in the social practice. Feminism is a long term battle, instead of forcing the generation immediate response to the issue, the society should take time and plan the stages of developing a society eliminating the rooted bias of gender. The society need to find the modest way to introduce 'gender' to the society, redesigning a gender neutral living environment. Stop the gender stereotype by education, through offering freedom to chose your own gender over sex.

Conclusion

In order to keep abreast of the constantly changing society, especially with the cultural exchange under globalization, we cannot avoid social movements that challenging the existed system.

Educating all the concepts above is not enough since it will just create another patriarchy, a society that people think and act to what they've been told, that eventually causing other problems. Indeed, education of critical thinking is crucial to any social movement. The generation should be able to distinguished their stand point in the society and responsible to their behaviors. We don't have to be classified into any ideologist since everyone can have different understanding of the society.

The day that feminism truly success is the day that the term Feminism no longer exists; the day that no women will be judge whether they are a feminist or not; the day 'man' and 'woman' are just a fact and description of one's gender; the day that we empower ourselves as an individual, not our gender or representing a whole community.

I refused to be called a feminist is I believe in gender equality myself, not necessarily because I'm a woman.

2541 words

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