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The Third Wave

- The 1990s ushered in a third wave of feminist activity, characterized by an intersectional approach which drew attention to the importance of local contexts, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation as key determining factors for each woman's experience of discrimination.
- This wave drew on popular culture, critiqued it and shaped it.

- 1990, Naomi Wolf published the bestseller *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*.
- She highlighted the strong influence of the media on women's perception of their bodies.
- “Women experience feelings of inadequacy, self-hatred and imperfection on being bombarded with visual representations of the ‘ideal body’”

- Although Wolf did not resolve the problem of the beauty myth in her first book, she later published *Fire with Fire* (1993), in which she clearly located the solution with women themselves.
- Wolf chastised women who indulge in what she called victim feminism
- Her claim was controversial, especially to feminists who do not believe that women should fight fire with fire, i.e. use men's tactics to fight men.

- Some third wave feminists were vocal about what they perceived to be rigid dogma that pushes women towards victimhood.
- Katie Roiphe wrote a controversial column in The New York Times in 1991 titled “Date Rape Hysteria” in which she challenged reported statistics of sexual assaults on college campuses, arguing that many women exaggerate incidents of date rape and sexual harassment to secure a victim identity.

- “There is strength in numbers, and unfortunately right now there is strength in being the most oppressed” – Katie Roiphe
- “This bitching about capitalism and America and men – it’s infantile, it’s bad for women. It’s very bad to convince young women that they have been victims and that their heritage is nothing by victimization” – Camille Paglia

- “I’m sick of the opposition trying to make me choose between being sexual and serious; and I’m sick of being split in the same way by victim feminism. I want female sexuality to accompany, rather than undermine, female political power” – Naomi Wolf

Feminism and Media Activism

- Feminist activism manifest itself in academic scholarship, film and theatre productions, the fashion and modelling industries and, most recently, on social media.
- 2004, Jessica Valenti started a blog on “Feministing”, which soon became an online community of women who supported each other in conducting real world activism.

- Laura Bates has become a household name since 2012 when she started an online space, “Everyday Sexism Project” where she shared her experiences of being groped and catcalled.
- Soon hundreds of women were sharing their stories, and the repository has grown to include more than 100,000 testimonies.
- She was awarded the British Empire Medal and the Shorty Award for Best in Activism, in recognition of the impact her work.

- Campaigns such as #MeToo rallied women together, offering support and encouragement for those who courageously added their names to the list of women who had been sexually harassed or abused.
- “I started a small non-profit organization in the Bronx in 2007. My aim was to offer support for underprivileged women of colour who were victims of sexual assault and abuse. I called it Me Too” – Tarana Burke

- “I used the hashtag MeToo in 2017 to launch an online campaign that supported women who experienced sexual abuse assault and harassment” – Alyssa Milano
- 2017, the social media campaign began as a way to call out powerful men in the film industry, but it soon expanded to include everyday experiences of sexual abuse and harassment.

Intersectionality

- Mary Romero is one of the most influential contemporary thinkers on race and inclusion.
- Her book *Introducing Intersectionality* has become a reference text for understanding the history and public manifestations of the term ‘intersectionality’, which was coined by American civil rights advocate and law professor Kimberle Crenshaw.

- “Blackness is always a political concept, not a register of national belonging. Black women have transformed British culture, but white feminist have largely failed to understand their problems. Attention to the social history of black women in Britain, and particularly to the creative work of black women writer, filmmakers and other cultural workers, is the place at which we should begin” – Lola Young

- Intersectionality invites us to understand the dynamic between co-existing identities (identifying as woman, lesbian, black) and the connected systems that oppress them (such as patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy)

Neoliberal Feminism

- It promotes the ideal of a balanced lifestyle for successful professional women who are equally successful in their domestic lives.
- This ideal is exemplified by high-powered women who are celebrated in the media for their “superwoman” status.

- Neoliberal feminists are individuated in the extreme: their attention is turned inward to their personal situation, at the cost of engaging with collective feminist activism that seeks to challenge the oppressive socioeconomic and cultural structures that shape the lives of less-advantaged women.

- “Others have argued that women can get to the top only when the institutional barriers are gone. This is the ultimate chicken-and-egg situation”
- “In addition to the external barriers erected by society, women are hindered by barriers that exist within ourselves. We hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking in self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and pulling back when we should be leaning in ... getting rid of these internal barriers is critical to gaining power”
- - Sheryl Sandberg

- “Sandberg has penned an updated ‘Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism’” – Kate Losse
- “Sandberg’s corporate feminism doesn’t extend to calling for collective rights for women, such as state maternity pay or a stronger welfare safety net or even encouraging women to unionize.” – Dawn Foster

Feminist Activity in Developing Countries

- Oppressed women exist in many countries around the world.
- However, the discourse of western feminism often relegates them to a marginal position, using universal labels such as “Women in the Third World” to denote a rich variety of cultural, racial and class categories.

- “The categorization of the history of feminism into ‘waves’ which are delineated by American and European events and personalities does not apply, nor does it reflect our condition”

- Feminist activities in developing countries resist social injustice against them in ways that often do not coincide with the feminist efforts that the West has witnessed.
- This sometimes leads to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of their struggle, their aims and goals.

- Feminist theorists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty attack the ways in which so-called “First World” feminists represent women in the “Third World”
- She notes that Western women are often depicted as strong, assertive individuals who are decisive and in control of their fate and of their bodies.

- “Whereas women in developing countries are invariably portrayed as victims of a patriarchal order which robs them of their voice, dictates their fate, and forces them into financial dependence”
- Mohanty condemns the West’s misrepresentation of these women as sexually constrained, ignorant and helpless.

Thank You