



BIPARTISAN FEMINIST
PROJECT

LISTENING
AND BEING
HEARD

The Bipartisan Feminist Project

The Bipartisan Feminist Project is a grassroots organization started by Veronica Tadross to take the politics out of feminism. Veronica is a senior in high school who has first-hand experience with the misunderstandings between political parties and genders that have made feminism a point of contention and slowed down the movement. She began the Bipartisan Feminist Project as a junior to inform high school students on a new concept: bipartisan, fully inclusive feminism.

This Project began with six workshops held in January through March of 2020, each covering an identity barrier in feminism and how to overcome the barrier through awareness of subconscious biases and lessons from history. The workshops covered four primary barriers to supporting feminism: partisan feminism, women's views of feminism, men's views of feminism, and racism in the feminist movement. In each meeting, participants of all views of feminism challenged one another's beliefs and brainstormed solutions to the polarization of feminism

In part one of this zine is a summary of the first barrier explored in our project: partisan feminism. In this part, just as we did in our workshops, we will point out sexism, recognize the complexities surrounding bipartisan support for feminism, and explain how we can get all groups on board to solve gender issues. Part two is an open forum, displaying literary works from contributors. We believe that a place, or a publication, in which all people can listen and be heard, is the epitome of equality - the epitome of feminism.

Letter from the Editor

As I began collecting works for this publication, I asked myself: what expression of feminism is the Bipartisan Feminist Project creating? This is a complicated question because the feminist movement has set its sight on equality for all. When it fails to achieve this goal or is perceived as “radical” in doing so, it is denounced and degraded by people across the political spectrum. Earlier social movements have been much simpler because they have only intended to support one group. For instance, Marxism supported the average worker, and the French Revolution empowered the Bourgeoisie, or working class.

However, the same early movements excluded marginalized groups - from women to enslaved people. Thus, today we assume a different course of action by pursuing equality for all, a goal that is confusing and challenging because it is nearly impossible to advance one group without earning the spite of another. For instance, company diversity quotas often forget about women of color or gain the resentment of white males.

People most often reject feminism because they feel unsupported by it or do not fully understand the perspectives of feminists. The Bipartisan Feminist Project seeks to take the politics out of feminism by educating the public on feminism and fostering a feminist movement that supports all people.

Several studies have confirmed that people are more motivated to support equality efforts when they feel they are accepted and have an important role to play in the women’s movement (Johnson and Smith, 18). Therefore, we believe that the way to advance support for a polarizing feminist movement is to ensure everyone can listen and be heard. The works in this publication display a wide array of views of feminism, both positive and negative. We hope that fostering an open forum gives each writer and reader a sense of belonging in the women’s movement and a renewed drive to support women on a grassroots-level and in their daily lives.

Veronica Tadross

Founder and President
Bipartisan Feminist Project



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Table of Contents

The Path to Feminism United	6
References	10
An Open Forum	11
Pain	12
Mourning Woman	13
How We “Aren’t Like Other Girls”	14
The “Feminist” Perspective	16
Crazed	18
Feminism: Controversial by Choice	19
Unstifled Women	21





PART 1:

THE
PATH
TO
FEMINISM
UNITED



Problem: Many people view feminism as controversial or choose not to support it because of their political affiliation.

Because the Democratic Party is considered the “Party of Women,” Republicans sometimes reject the feminist movement or deny gender inequality. Some non-feminists minimize or deny women’s issues such as the wage gap, subconscious gender bias, or women living in fear of sexual assault.

When feminism is a political issue, existing partisan tension translates into tension around feminism.

To address the root cause of partisan feminism, we need to understand the cause of partisan tension. Partisan tension is a result of income inequality. When people are dying of poverty and starvation, voters struggle to believe that all government officials have good intentions, and blame the opposing party for societal problems. Thus, partisan issues like feminism and income inequality become a self-fulfilling prophecy, because existing problems cause partisan tension and partisan tension makes it nearly impossible to solve problems (Mcavoy)

Today, only 32% of Democrats and 5% of Republicans identify as feminists (Swanson).

Feminism was a Republican platform until 1980. In 1919, two Republican Senators from Kansas proposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which would give men and women full legal equality. Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative lawyer, responded with the STOP ERA movement, a grassroots campaign against the Amendment and their notion of gender equality. Schlafly conceived many arguments against feminism that people still use today. She preached that gender equality would cause a host of unintended consequences, such as stay-at-home moms losing social security benefits and husbands financially abandoning their wives. She also garnered support from society’s fear of change, claiming that the ERA would justify single-sex marriage and a female military draft (Napikosky). Similarly, those who oppose feminism today hold onto subjective images of what is “appropriate” and argue that feminism will push us down a slippery slope to what is “inappropriate.” Others claim that feminism elevates women above men or makes women “angry” and “unattractive.” As promoted by Schlafly, to

this day it is a common belief men and women are already equal in the status quo.

By 1980, the Reagan administration abandoned the ERA in favor of a Constitutional amendment against abortion. When female Republican National Committee leader Mary Dent Crisp asserted that she supports the ERA and is pro-choice, Reagan publicly denounced her as disloyal, and she resigned from her post (Berebitsky). Today, the American political landscape still views abortion and feminism as mutually exclusive. The clash between pro-life advocacy and feminism belief is the cornerstone of partisan feminism and the primary reason why we are currently living without an Equal Rights Amendment in our Constitution.

The fate of the Equal Rights Amendment and Mary Dent Crisp reveals three negative ramifications of partisan feminism today. First, when partisan tension is high, women are pressured to fit the view of their party, even if it means not advocating for themselves. Republican women may be trolled for not supporting the “Party of Women” or feel pressured to identify as Republicans to appeal to men. At the same time, Democratic women may be labelled as “disloyal” or “anti-woman” for having any conservative beliefs. All of these partisan constructs of what women ought to believe try to stop women from thinking for themselves.

Second, Democrats may only superficially support feminism to attain power, while not genuinely caring about the consequences their actions have on women. Consider Harvey Weinstein, who was a Democrat and Hillary Clinton supporter, but who also raped several women (Beinart).

Third, partisan feminism ensures that about 50% of world leaders will oppose feminism to maintain the loyalty of their base. When politicians and voters are so staunchly anti-feminist, it become difficult to promote real progress for women. Just this year, the ERA finally received enough state votes to pass. To ratify this Amendment on a federal level, both houses of Congress need to vote in favor of extending the Amendment deadline. The House of Representatives already approved this measure; however, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell (R-TN) refuses to bring it up to be voted on.

Through education and open discussion, the Bipartisan Feminist Project strives to create a new generation of leaders with a bipartisan view of feminism (Stolberg).

Solution: Students can promote positive change today by viewing and explaining feminism as an objective, bipartisan cause, just like natural disaster relief and seat belt laws.

From childhood, our family and surroundings influence us to view feminism as either “good” or “bad.” Just as children are taught to despise the opposing political party, they are often taught to despise or think lowly of feminism.

Fortunately, some causes are exempt from political controversy, and through education, we can make feminism one of these issues.

A basic understanding of women’s issues can help men and women understand that pro-women causes are just as objective as natural disaster relief and seat belt laws. The Bipartisan Feminist Project aims to promote this basic understanding of feminism and inclusion of all people in the feminist movement.

For instance, in 2015 Representative Kathleen Rice of New York’s 4th Congressional District introduced a bill to prevent drunk driving (Lamb). However, in January 2020, when a majority of states ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, an Amendment to make men and women legally equal, the Justice Department under President Trump pointed out that the $\frac{2}{3}$ majority was reached past the Amendment’s deadline (Burkhalter). In reality, Congress has the authority to extend any bill’s deadline under Article V of the Constitution, but the executive branch still tried to block an Amendment that would make men and women equal - something that should be viewed as objectively good. Currently, there is no Amendment in the U.S. Constitution recognizing that men and women are equal, meaning that pregnancy discrimination and the gender wage gap remain legal in many states.

Women’s issues are not viewed in the same way as natural disasters because the struggles of women are not always visible. In schools, the workplace, and everyday discussions, we need to help people see gender inequality as clearly as they see a tornado or car crash.

Statistics from reliable sources can reveal how concrete women's issues really are. For instance, both a 2010 US Study and the FBI have found that only 2-10% of heavily investigated rape accusations are false (Kay). It may not be realistic to claim that every sexual assault accusation is a lie. Another study had two focus groups read about the same successful person. In one group the person was labelled as "Heidi" and in the other "Howard." The test subjects described Howard as "visionary," and "cooperative," but saw Heidi as "critical" and "hard to work with" (Sandberg). This study displays a bias people have against women when women defy their expectations. Society expects and finds it attractive when men are aggressive and take charge, but expects women to be amicable and kind. When men and women defy these expected roles, they are viewed negatively. Because women are not seen as attractive when they take charge, they have been kept from important decision-making positions.

Second, it is important to help people of all political affiliations and views of feminism understand that their perspective is valued in the feminist movement. Research on psychological standing has found that gender equality efforts in workplaces are more effective when men feel that they have an important role to play in helping women. When men feel accepted at pro-women events, their motivation to support women is bolstered (Johnson and Smith, 18). Thus, it is vital to listen to all perspectives of feminism because every perspective has some truth and some falsity to it, and being heard makes allies feel welcomed in the feminist movement.

People of both political affiliations have pushed aside important causes, having been blinded by hatred for the opposing party. It is vital to ensure that these silly alliances do not stand in the way of the rights of 50% of our population.

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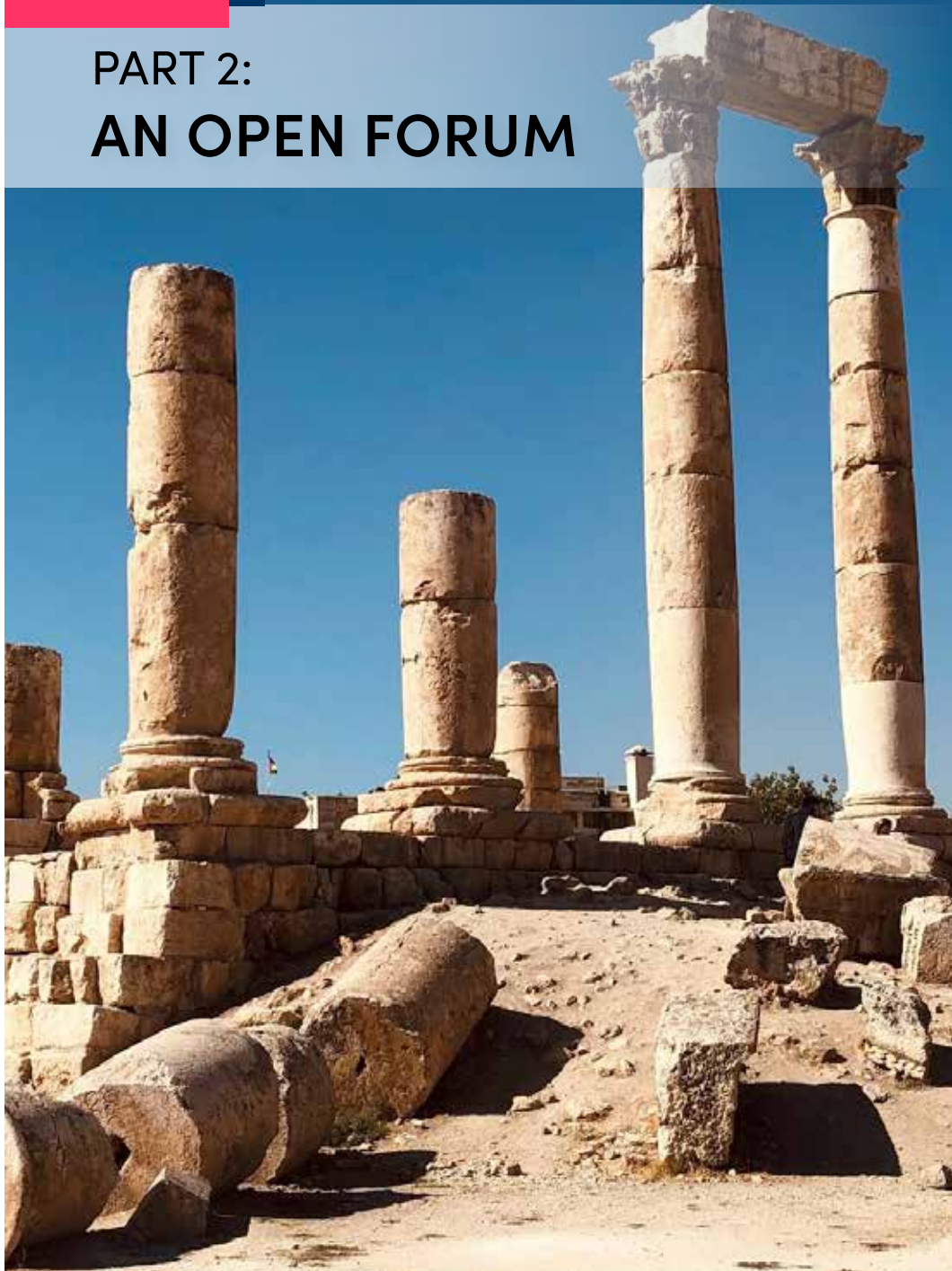
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**PART 2:
AN OPEN FORUM**



Pain

By Rachel Caves
Chef

I despised her for years
Detested her negative projections
Hated her for being deliberately obtuse
Hated her willingness to remain a victim
Hating her for forcing her fatuous beliefs on me;
For making me abide by the rules of a church I had
No respect for;
For telling me homosexuals are going to hell;
I Detested her for being a member of a dysfunctional
Congregation
Hated her for not protecting me; for letting a predator have his way
Hated the hypocrisy; the contradictions!
However; what I despised of her the most was for not letting me express
myself;
For telling me I could only dance for the Holy Spirit
Years later the hate I felt for her wholly dissipated
I finally forgave my mother
Anger turned to compassion when I realized she was an abused
woman just trying to do her best
I knew I held the key all along;
And one drunken night, something beautiful happened when I
decided to liberate myself from the hindering pain
I danced like nobody was watching...
Felt no guilt and moved my body for myself; for my spirit...

Mourning Woman



“This statute was in a small park across from the Louvre in Paris. The artist was not indicated, but I found it to be moving. It reminds me of the struggles that so many women have faced throughout time.”

Stephanie Radday
Nonprofit Coordinator

“One of the Boys,” “Girl Next Door,” “Manic Pixie Dream Girl”:

How We “Aren’t Like Other Girls”

By Hailey Pitcher

Grade 11, Kellenberg Memorial High School

You’ve probably heard the phrase since you were little - “I’m not like other girls.” This phrase can bring on a sense of self-entitlement - to the one saying it and inferiority to the one hearing it. What made us begin to use this phrase to degrade other women and uphold ourselves? Was it media, gender stereotypes, or our own internalized misogyny?

Let’s start with gender stereotypes. Along with a common American upbringing comes gender stereotypes that we’re expected to follow. Girls are expected to be girly, reserved, play with Barbie dolls, and enjoy wearing dresses. When we don’t act like this, we’re usually told we “aren’t like other girls.” When we first hear it, we’re usually young and can’t comprehend exactly what it means. Was that a compliment or an insult? Some would take it as a compliment: they always hear about how girls are bossy and cause drama. That they only want attention. Others would take it as an insult: they’re sticking out of the crowd, a crowd that they identify with. Those who take it as a compliment can begin to identify with this phrase and use it to their advantage.

We also begin to get a taste of this phrase through movie tropes. Most coming-of-age movies that the 12-17 age range watch have a main character who “isn’t like other girls.” “One of the boys” is a trope in which a girl solely hangs out with boys. It’s usually to avoid the “drama” and “cat-fights” that come with female sisterhood. They’re usually a tomboy who’s subjected to the “you clean up nicely” plot. This plot, in some ways, can take away a woman’s female identity, usually using the phrase “a man’s woman” or “an honorary man.” Another example is the “manic pixie dream girl,” who exists solely to better a man’s life. She isn’t like the other girls he’s been with: she’s fun, stunningly attractive, quirky, risk-taking, and can eat 10 cheeseburgers while still remaining a size 0. She acts as the light to the

darkness in a man's life. It's possibly one of the most toxic movie tropes because it tells any girl who acts like or identifies with this trope that her only job is to make a man happy.

We finally stumble upon internalized misogyny, which is when women shame and doubt themselves and other women. This comes from societal pressures that usually tell us contradicting things about being a woman: care about how you look, but don't be vain. Eat, but don't stuff your face. This is when being "not like other girls" becomes toxic. We use it to our advantage and degrade other women. "Other girls wear makeup, I don't. It's way too cakey and boys don't like it." This is when we take "you're not like other girls" as a compliment. We want to please the other gender and to do so, we can't act like a woman. We're essentially being ripped of our female identity and it's implanted that we shouldn't want to act like a girl, causing us to hate ourselves and other women.

The phrase "I'm not like other girls" has turned into a toxic phrase that can degrade women. It carries extreme misogyny when used to voice a woman's superiority over other women. We should do without the phrase and we women should accept ourselves and other women for who we are. We're all stronger together.

The “Feminist” Perspective

By Lauren McGrath
Comedian and Writer

I wonder if more people slow down or speed up at yellow lights

I wonder if he thought her body was a traffic light, and when she said slow down he took it as a sign to hit the gas

When she said stop, let’s take a break, he thought of her as a red light
but seeing no cameras, it was one he could blow.

I wonder how many people still put change in a meter

I wonder if he mistook my drink for a meter and his roofie for change he could slip inside

If my friend didn’t come see me and carry me away

What else would he mistake for a meter

What else would he try to slip inside

Sometimes when guys look at me I think they see a gas station

Somewhere to stop, pump twice, and then go to their actual destination.

I never understood why men punched walls when they’re angry.

Doesn’t it hurt your fucking hand?

And I wonder if he hurt his fucking hand

when he tried to punch down the walls my friend had put up.

I’m tired of making shitty metaphors to explain that women are not objects.

Women’s bodies

Their bodies

Our bodies

Are not things to be

gwaked

and grabed

and groped

In my freshman year English class my 90 year old professor looked at me over his tiny glasses and asked for the hundredth time that semester if I could speak on this from a “feminist perspective.”

And for the hundredth time that semester, I heard the boys in my class laugh and groan and hit their desks.

Each groan they made sounded like the groan my bones made when my friend collected them from the man who promised to take me home and make me feel all better.

Each laugh sounded like the dry scratching scream my friend had made when she recounted her rape to me.

Each time they jokingly hit the desk in frustration I saw the way she beat at her stomach and pulled at her hair

As if she didn't want to be in a body that he too had been in.

I wanted to scream that I wasn't seeing things from a “feminist perspective”

I was seeing it from a human one.



Rebecca Melkonian
Grade 11, Garden City High School

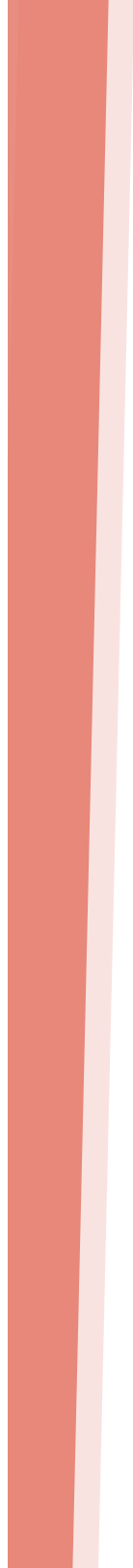
Feminism: Controversial by Choice

Anonymous, College Student

In philosopher and economist Adam Smith's book, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he discusses subjectivity in relation to how we define our identities. Smith believes that an individual's experiences build their morals and cognitive capabilities, and choices. The reason I bring up Smith's ideas is to form a common thread that the meaning of feminism is subjective to all and that my experience of feminism may be very different from that of someone else. Essentially, my past experiences - growing up with Christian beliefs, living in a predominantly Catholic town, and surrounding myself with friends who have similar Christian values - constructed my identity. That being said, modern feminism doesn't align with my morals. In today's society, feminism has a liberal connotation. A more liberal focus often gets in the way of my morals and doing what I view as the right thing. However, as I said before, morality is subjective, therefore it is okay that perspectives on feminism and morals vary amongst everyone.

I believe in women's rights and equality and giving a voice to the voiceless and demands for justice. However, I wouldn't call myself a feminist. While I respect every political party, modern feminism seems to have a more liberal focus, which I largely do not agree with. Who says you can't be a conservative woman and believe in women's rights? Just because my beliefs align more with conservative values, doesn't mean I have any less respect for myself or any less desire for equality of the sexes.

In college, I noticed when a peer or friend mentions something slightly feminist, such as "my body my choice," and I disagree, because (clearly) you are killing a baby, I am suddenly the enemy. Those who I talk with about feminism or politics become personally offended when I don't have the same ideals as them. These liberal feminists preach equality, justice and tolerance while they lack the ability to tolerate and respect my views. This is not true all the time, as many do try to build relationships with others regardless of different perspectives, and some even try to avoid touchy subjects such as feminism. I don't call myself a feminist because I associate feminism with the liberal perspective of women's rights.



The issue here is not in the controversial nature of feminism created by students, but in the intrinsic meaning of modern feminism and its political ties. It's trendy for young individuals to adopt liberal values such as being pro-abortion.

From what I have experienced in my short two years of college, I learned that you don't have to be involved with feminist ideals and that political realm if you don't want to. As Adam Smith said: who we are, what we experience, and who we choose to surround ourselves with inevitably alter who we think we are and who we really are. The hard part is not getting caught up in the influences of others beliefs. Just because your roommate or friend supports feminism doesn't mean you have to do the same. Feminism is only as polarizing as you want it to be, and, when you stand firm in your own beliefs, you can decide how much it impacts you.

Unstifled Women

By Marilyn Jerro
Senior citizen

My experience with discrimination against women was when the females in my family and community were discouraged from pursuing higher education since we would probably face the future of marrying a good provider, having children, and staying home to raise them. “Why waste money on a college education for a girl,” was their erroneous philosophy.

Sadly, to this day, I regret that I conformed to this idea. I proceeded to attend business school and join the work force of secretaries in offices.

My fate was sealed because I was raised by a first generation immigrant family who emphasized education of males so they could achieve successful careers and be the financial support of their family. My brother advanced to college, while my two sisters and I were encouraged to find a suitable spouse to accomplish our (their) lifetime goals. Despite those restrictions, many of the women I am privileged to know were denied a college education in those days, but did find a way to self-educate and rise to interesting and financially secure professions.

I suppose I was luckier than the generation of my mother’s era in the 1930s when her three older sisters were encouraged to participate in an arranged marriage with a successful businessman much older than they were. At the ages of 15 and 16, they married men of reputable families who were introduced to them at home by the parish priest. My mother was a rebel, and refused to abide by this practice. When she finished high school, she took a job in retail sales at Macy’s Department store in Manhattan where she worked for several years. As her fate would have it, she followed her heart and married for love. For her, “the one” turned out to be a family friend who eight years earlier was her groomsman partner when she was a bridesmaid for her 16 year old sister! How I wish I had a photo of that first pairing!

Despite the barriers several generations ago which discouraged higher education for many smart women, I am proud to say that we certainly have succeeded in many ways. Some of us have contributed to society by marrying and raising bright children, female and male, who have been privileged to pursue their dreams by attending colleges, universities, law schools, medical schools, and other avenues where they can break glass ceilings. I especially applaud the women of today who are proving to be fierce and unstoppable. Bravo.



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