FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FEMINISM

Wait wait wait: isn’t “feminism” about those man-hating trigger warning social justice warriors PC-policing all of the badass rebel free-thinkers out here?

Not really. Feminism is about gender equity. Of course, the movement is complex, and different people have different specific definitions; here are a few.

• Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of all genders
• “Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” - bell hooks
• “A feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better.” - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
• “Whatever feminism you choose — good, bad, flawed, or half-assed — the label isn’t something to fear. It doesn’t mean you want too much or despise men. It means you believe in the equality and rights of everyone.” - Roxane Gay

Gender equity? Don’t we already have that? Isn’t feminism going TOO FAR?

The gender wage gap persists, according to the Pew Research Center (and it’s worse for women of color). Reproductive rights are being rolled back all over the country. Women still face sexual violence, domestic violence, gender-based discrimination, objectification, and harassment in the workplace, at school, and on the street.

We don’t even need to argue over statistics; just pay attention to the world. How many politicians, generals, billionaires, CEOs, high-level managers, board members, or other people who hold real power are NOT men? Staggering inequity persists. Is that because men are just inherently more talented and ambitious? Or is it something else? No one is saying that all men have it easy, or that all women are victims; feminism is about deepening our understanding of how gender (and our other identities) impacts our lives and experiences.

But isn’t feminism about shouting and calling people out and separatism?

It really isn’t. Feminists all over the US and beyond are working on issues like preventing domestic violence, defending reproductive rights, supporting survivors of sexual violence, and striving to create a world in which men, women, and people of any gender identity have equal access to opportunities and are free to be their authentic selves. Furthermore, few feminists are single-issue activists; feminists can be found deeply engaged in the struggles for economic justice, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and beyond.

This stereotype of feminists as shrieking, ultra-extreme, irrational banshees who hate all men is kind of, well, sexist. So why does it persist? Because people who benefit from the status quo (often but not exclusively men; often white, often rich too) benefit from it. Don’t fall for it.

Why should I listen to you? You’re just a piece of paper!

I agree. Don’t listen to me. Read books, challenge yourself, and connect with people in real life. You don’t have to agree with everything, but doing a little research on what actual, real-life feminists believe can really demystify the idea.