

## The F-Word

Women's take on feminism - it's always interesting, often controversial and definitely diverse. For this issue of the Rose, we asked members of the National Women's Committee: 'what does feminism mean to you?'. Here are their witty, thoughtful responses as well as the opinions and impressions of other remarkable women.

"To me, feminism is independence, strength and inclusion for women with disabilities."

*Sharon Hambleton, National Women's Committee*

"To me feminism means a woman who is confident knowing exactly who she is, in whatever morals, values and opinions she voices, does not back down or "change her mind" to be liked, to be known as a "nice" girl and especially to satisfy her opposition."

*Donna Guerra, National Women's Committee*



**"Feminism directly confronts the idea that one person or set of people [has] the right to impose definitions of reality on others."**

*Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, authors*

**"I am a proud feminist. It is an essential part of my soul. I cannot strive to live with compassion and integrity without having feminism as a core value."**

I am a feminist because:

- Women do not have the right to control our

- bodies or make our own reproductive choices,
- Working women earn less than men. This wage gap is even larger for women of colour, Aboriginal women, and differently abled women,
- Lesbians are discriminated against,
- Violence against women is epidemic,
- Rape is used as a tool of war,

- Women are the primary targets of sexual harassment,
- Images of women make me feel uncomfortable in my own body.

Women's inequality hurts everyone.

I am a feminist because I want to live in a fair, just, fun, and equal world."

*Marion Pollack, National Women's Committee*

I will be a feminist until there are no more barriers. Until we live in a world where all people – regardless of gender, class, ethnicity or ability – are on equal footing in the workplace, union and home. Until that time I'll wear the label feminist proudly and strongly.

*Deborah Bourque, CUPW National President*

"Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings."

*Cheris Kramerae, author*

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**Presenting the Cookbook for Women's Equality**



[www.cupw-sttp.org](http://www.cupw-sttp.org)

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# What does feminism mean to you?

"It's always interesting to ask a group of women if they self-identify as "feminists" because many don't?"

I am always reminded of a quote by Ani Difranco:

*'Feminist, if you look it up in the dictionary, means 'people who believe women should have rights and opportunities equal to men.' I think it's very telling that there is one word in the language that means women are equal and we won't say it. We can't say it and we don't identify with it.'*"

Cindi Foreman, National Women's Committee

**"In our family there were five girls and my father had weekly meetings with us - and always told us 'remember you young women are every bit as good as any young man out there and don't you ever forget it.' And this has always stayed with me."**

Katrina Stewart, National Women's Committee



*"To be able to assert our differences in our daily lives, gain recognition for our strengths and talk about our weaknesses without being made to feel less worthy."*

*"To accept our role in society and be able to make choices. To take the lead and gain self-confidence."*

*"To have our strengths recognized. To feel good inside and see the beauty in ourselves."*

Chantal Blais, National Women's Committee

**"To be a feminist...is to be critical - to ask questions about how society functions, about how women live in society. Feminism is a process of questioning rather than a 'dogma' or a set of proscribed positions or answers."**

Jackie Brown



Does feminist mean "large unpleasant person who'll shout at you" or "someone who believes women are human beings"? To me it's the latter, so I sign up.

Margaret Atwood, author

**"Feminist politics aims to end domination, to free us to be who we are - to live lives where we love justice, where we can live in peace. Feminism is for everybody."** bell hooks, author & activist

**"A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle."**

Gloria Steinham / Irina Dunn

**"Feminism is always about equality: equal rights and responsibilities, equal opportunities and equal recognition, especially of each person's humanity."**

**For me feminism is particularly about self-determination and having these decisions respected. Motherhood is too valuable an undertaking to be foisted on unprepared or unwilling women by outsiders, but especially by male politicians. My equality work began with the pro-choice movement."**

R. Bonellie, National Women's Committee

**"To stop seeing ourselves as victims and become empowered."**

Monique Allard, National Women's Committee



I've defined myself as a feminist since I first heard the word at 19 years of age. It was a relief to have a name for what I was observing. I continue to be a feminist many years later because, although we may talk more about the differences in men and women's lives, sexism, like class and race, still influence our thoughts and actions. Stats on pay equity and violence are evidence of that fact, but really, we just need to examine the realities of our work and personal lives to know the struggle is far from over. This is part of the puzzle we need to solve to build an equitable and peaceful world.

Lynn Bue, CUPW 1st Vice-President



*"To me, feminism is about men and women sharing power equally. And so it necessarily transforms the world for the better for women and men. If women change, men have to change too. And we're still in the process of changing."*

Kike Roach, author & activist

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# Equality! Once and for all!



You're paid 71 cents on the male dollar. You receive 58 per cent of the pension as your retired male counterpart. You are a mother of one of the 10,000 children on a waiting list for subsidized child care spaces in Toronto. You don't qualify for Employment Insurance because you are one of the many part-time or self-employed women workers.

"Don't get mad, get equal" is the slogan for the radical activist campaign being launched by the CLC on March 8. One entire year will be spent on education, advocacy and organizing around women's economic equality from coast to coast to coast. The FTQ's March 8th activities will also focus on women's economic security with the slogan: "L'autonomie économique des femmes: Une force collective".

We know unions can close some of the economic divide between women and men. But it's clear after decades of struggle in the labour and women's movement that we are still

a long way from equal economic rights for women. Yet this issue is being ignored at all levels of government and by the media. In fact, the Conservative government has made cuts to programs that support women's equality.

The CLC campaign will focus on:

- Wage gap,
- Child care,
- Pensions,
- Young women,
- Violence against women,
- Pay equity, and
- Employment Insurance.

This year, the FTQ is coordinating International Women's Day activities for all members of the March 8 collective (Quebec women's groups and unions). The FTQ has established four demands for March 8, which are mainly directed at the Quebec government:

- Major increase in the minimum wage;

**This is a great opportunity to organize in your local and community for women's equality. You can:**

- Help organize a teach-in for your local, local women's committee or community on campaign issues,
- Attend campaign events in your community,
- Contact your local or your labour council to find out how you can help organize an equality event.

- Recognition of immigrants' diplomas and acquired rights;
- Quebec policy on balancing work and family life;
- Policy to address the precarious nature of jobs held by women.

Events and activities including teach-ins, demonstrations and press conferences will be taking place in many towns, cities and regions throughout the year. We'll keep you updated with information and materials as they come out.

As we approach International Women's Day 2008, it's important to take stock of the gains we've made but also to recognize the barriers left to tear down.

## Rose Resource Centre

Check out some of the thousands of feminist blogs up on the web.

[cupwsisters.blogspot.com/](http://cupwsisters.blogspot.com/)

Maintained by Sister Cindi Foreman.

[www.shamelessmag.com/](http://www.shamelessmag.com/)

Maintained by *Shameless*, an indie magazine for young women.

[www.breadnroses.ca/rosesplace/](http://www.breadnroses.ca/rosesplace/)

A collaborative effort to bring news, information, resources and voices together.

[marginalnotes.typepad.com/pj/](http://marginalnotes.typepad.com/pj/)

Takes on feminist economics, labour issues and ecofeminism.

[finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/](http://finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/)

Answers some of the frequently asked questions about feminism.

# What does feminism mean to you?

**"You are a human being. You have rights inherent in that reality. You have dignity and worth that exists prior to law."**

*Lyn Beth Neylon, activist*

*"When I was fourteen I went to an evening lecture. It was a speaker I wanted to hear, and the fact that I was out alone after 10 p.m. only added to my excitement. The lecture was great, and when it was over I walked to the bus stop and proceeded to wait.*

*Thirty minutes later, there was no bus. I was worried that I would never get home. Then a man I had seen at the lecture drove by and offered me a ride home. I accepted.*

*Halfway home this "gentleman" turned into a dark street and proceeded to grope my breasts and genitals. I screamed, and bit and I got away.*

*I did not tell anyone. I thought it was all my fault for being so stupid to accept the ride. I blamed myself.*

*It took me years of guilt to name what happened to me. It was attempted rape.*

*I am a feminist because I do not want any girl or woman to have the same experience. I am a feminist because I want to stop violence against women."*

*Marion Pollack, National Women's Committee*



**"Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."**

*Arundhati Roy  
author & activist*

**"Are you a feminist?"** When asked I had to think before answering. Yes I am a feminist. [A] feminist is someone who is in full control of their right to choose to participate fully in the ways of preference, to have full control of their body and have a voice in decision making in the home, workplace, community or public life. [A feminist] supports other women in their struggles and encourages them to participate without fear. [A feminist]

supports women's equality in every aspect and challenges all forms of discrimination or injustices against women. World events leading to ill-treatment of women, gang rapes, abuses, violence, oppression, even murders. Politicians who do not care about women's equality or rights make feminism even more necessary today than ever before."

*Bena Pattni, National Women's Committee*

**"I am a feminist because:**

- I believe men and women are equal
- I believe that despite being equal our equality does not exist in our society or in most societies."

*Cathy Kennedy, National Women's Committee*

**"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all human beings, irrespective of race, color, or sex, are born with the equal right to share at the table of life."**

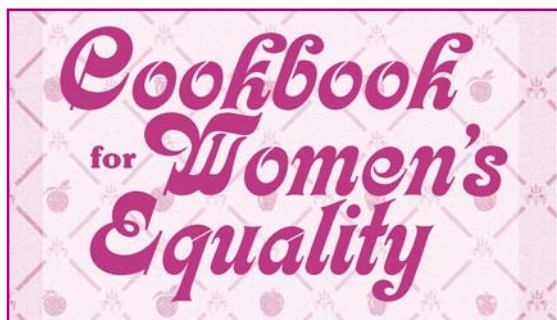
*Emma Goldman, anarchist*

**"Feminism to me is a simple definition. "A feminist is a woman who stands up for women's rights". Although I self identify as a feminist, it is not a word I use. I don't use it because I see the word as a label. I don't like labels because labels lead to stereotypes.**

**I see almost every activist as a feminist because they stand up for workers' rights and half the workers are women."**

*Tammy Dickeson, National Women's Committee*

## Out of the Kitchen, Cooking up Equality!



Help us fight the Harper government's attack on programs that support women's equality.

Hungry for change? Try the *Cookbook for Women's Equality*.

Includes saucy recipes for social justice and fairness!

To order, contact your local or the Ad-hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights ([www.womensequality.ca](http://www.womensequality.ca)).