

# T A M A R A C K

## WHAT THE HELL IS A FEMINIST ANYWAY?!

**Myth #1**  
The word feminist is an activist word, it takes a position or side . . .

**Myth #2**  
All feminists are lesbians . . .

**Myth #3**  
All feminist hate men and think they are evil . . .

**Myth #4**  
In order to be a feminist, you cannot shave armpit or leg hair . . .

**Myth #5**  
Feminists see themselves as superior to men . . .

**Myth #6**  
Feminists don't wear bras . . .

**Myth #7**  
In order to be a feminist, you must be a vegetarian . . .

**Myth #8**  
Feminists don't wear make-up . . .

**Myth #9**  
All feminist have "penis envy" and secretly wish they were men . . .

**Myth #10**  
Feminists have secret meetings to "male bash" and devise ways of converting other women into men-hating vegetarians . . .

FEMINIST - In my experience, is a word that is frequently "blacked" out of public postings or announcements; when said, raises many a suspicious eyebrow; and is often used to refer to "those" women. So what the hell is feminist anyway?! According to the Canadian Senior Dictionary:

**fem-i-nism** (fem'ə niz'əm) *n.* a doctrine that favors increased rights and activities for women.

**fem-i-nist** (fem'ə nist) *n.* a person who believes in or favors feminism.

Hmmm . . . . As this definition seemed not to provide a satisfactory enough explanation, I decided to approach some women and ask them their thoughts on feminists and feminism.

Interestingly enough, all of the women I spoke to had a fairly clear understanding of what feminism meant for them. One woman defined a feminist "as a person that's always fighting for women's rights - in the workplace or anyplace." Another woman described feminism to mean that "women have equality . . . that women have enough power so that they can be considered equal". What I found surprising in speaking with women was that even though many women clearly understood what feminism meant and even believed in feminism, these same women would not call themselves feminists! When asked whether or not they considered themselves feminists, replied "No." "Not really." "No, I'm not a feminist." They believed in feminism, but yet would not identify themselves as feminists. One woman who responded, "Somewhat" when asked the same question, understood feminism as "Speaking your point of view, standing up for what you believe in . . . standing up for yourself."

When I explained to these women, that based on their definitions of feminism and that they believed in their own basic principles of feminism, that I would consider them feminists, they were shocked!

MORE . . . .

. . . . therefore I cannot be a feminist!

**The Terrace Women's Resource Centre is a  
registered non-profit society, providing  
services to women since 1979.**



**All of our services and  
programs are FREE!**

**So drop-in or drop us a line, we are available:**

**Monday - Thursday 10:00am - 4:00pm  
4542 Park Avenue  
(Near the Pool)  
Terrace, BC V8G 1V4**

**Phone: (250) 638-0228  
Fax: (250) 638-1141  
email: [twrc@kermode.net](mailto:twrc@kermode.net)**

***Anything you need, we'll try to help. The  
Centre provides a safe atmosphere for ALL  
women, as we believe in supporting women to  
be full and equal participants in society  
regardless of their race, ethnic origin,  
economic background, sexual  
orientation or disability.***

## Report On The NAC Annual Convention

I had the pleasure of attending the National Action Committee On The Status Of Women (NAC) annual meeting in Ottawa last month. Three days of listening to strong, clear, proud and articulate feminists from across the country representing organizations from trade unions to women's centres to sexual assault centres, Quebecois feminists, black feminists, lesbian feminists, aboriginal feminists, young feminists...I was so excited to discover how deep and strong feminism is among women from all across the country!

The new NAC executive committee is led by Denise Campbell, a young black feminist from Toronto whose enthusiasm and brilliance will help NAC in the coming year to build on our solidarity relationships with sister organizations. On Saturday, between executive meetings and plenary sessions, she raced over to the Canadian Labour Congress Convention on Anti-racism to address the trade unionists gathered there on the intersections of racism and sexism.

On Monday morning she chaired our meeting with the Federal political parties and eloquently expressed our demands for core funding for NAC, Canada's national feminist organization. We demanded concrete follow-up from the World Congress on Racism in Durban, South Africa, and expressed our concern for Canada's involvement in the war and the security provisions in the new law which will target people of Arabic descent.

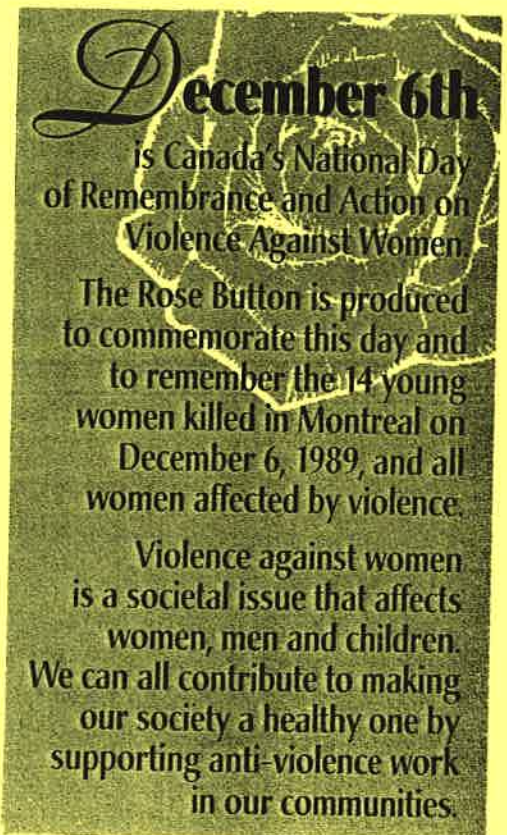
We demanded that the federal government support First Nations people who are being subjected to a referendum in BC in violation of the 1948 United Nations Declaration against subjecting minority rights to majority rule. We also expressed our concern that funding for accessibility for disabled women to attend women's conferences was inadequate and their voices were not being heard.

The backlash in the media against Sunera Thobani, former president of NAC, was of great concern, as delegates spoke out against the targetting of her as a woman of colour and as a Muslim. NAC head office in Toronto has received a lot of hate mail in the previous few weeks and issued a press release making our support for Sunera clear. NAC

delegates were unanimous in calling for the United Nations to step in and prevent the loss of women's lives in Afghanistan through 'collateral damage' as the Americans call it.

As with other women's organizations, NAC has been refused core funding by the federal government. We approved a deficit budget and are launching a national fund-raising campaign. If you wish to support NAC's efforts on behalf of the women of Canada, please send a cheque to: National Action Committee On The Status Of Women, 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5

\*\*\*\*\*



**December 6th**  
is Canada's National Day  
of Remembrance and Action on  
Violence Against Women.

The Rose Button is produced  
to commemorate this day and  
to remember the 14 young  
women killed in Montreal on  
December 6, 1989, and all  
women affected by violence.

Violence against women  
is a societal issue that affects  
women, men and children.  
We can all contribute to making  
our society a healthy one by  
supporting anti-violence work  
in our communities.



This lead me to believe that:

- 1) women understand feminism on many different levels,
- 2) some women understand being a feminist as being something definite, as being an absolute; and
- 3) some women understand that feminists can exist with varying levels of principle.

There is a definite link between a woman's understanding of feminism, the level of activity in which she practices that concept, and whether or not she will identify herself as a feminist. For example, lets examine the one woman who understood feminism as always fighting for women's rights and who could not identify herself as a feminist. When asked why she could not call herself a feminist replied, "Because I know that if a man was doing the job I'm currently doing he would be paid more . . . because I accept that and do not fight for equal pay, I am not a feminist." Now, if we were to look at the woman who could "somewhat" identify herself as a feminist, her understanding of feminism meant to speak her mind and to stand up for herself. When asked if this was something she practised, she responded, "Daily."

Women studies research will agree that "feminists do not agree themselves on one all inclusive and universally acceptable definition of the term feminism. Depending on one's political or sociological observations and goals, one's individual aspirations for womanhood and for humanity, one's understanding of the word woman, and several other factors, the term feminism can mean different things and have a variety of functions. Feminism may be a perspective, a world view, a political theory, a spiritual focus, or a kind of activism." (Ruth 1980)

Although we recognize there may be several theories of feminism, we understand that there are certain beliefs, values, attitudes common to all feminists. Most importantly, as feminists we point out that for centuries we have been denied our rights as citizens and as human beings. The right to vote, the right to earn a substantive living, the freedom to determine whether to bear children - and that the denial of these and other freedoms constitutes oppression. Women constitute more than half the human population. It is our strength, spirit and passion in the face of such oppression that will encourage change. After all, women's rights are human rights!

## What the hell is feminist anyway?

artists engineers  
student visible aggravating  
aboriginal pilots  
~~dis~~Abled mechanic  
**nieces**  
survivor academic  
**ATHEIST** older urban  
farmer radical  
poodle clipper  
thinkers fishers journalists  
unemployed worldly  
**hetero** ~~workers~~  
pacifist artists  
doctors **CRAZY**  
poets lesbian writers  
social workers independent  
~~understandem~~ carvers  
environmentalists **plumbers**  
**Elders** philosophers  
mother liberal wonderful  
editor **lawyers** activists  
teachers carpenters  
**truck driver**  
francophone ~~bi-sexual~~  
youth strong manicurist  
scientists **FIGHTERS** pagan  
avon lady ~~political~~ lovers  
believers weavers **COOK**  
ballet dancer musicians  
**fanatic** northern  
union seamstress **pianist**  
**punk** **HOMEMAKER**  
**WOMEN**  
♀♀♀♀♀♀♀♀♀♀