

WHY WE NEED

Right now is the best time to be a woman, we can go to school, get a job, our worth isn't based on our husband or how many children we have, things have never been better for women. But even so, that doesn't mean women have obtained equality in today's society, and just because things are good that doesn't mean they shouldn't be better. Women have been fighting to make their voices heard for hundreds of years but the term "feminism" became widespread in the 1970s.

Feminism is the advocacy for women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men. Over the years feminists have fought for reproductive/bodily rights, workplace rights, and maternity leave rights, they have fought against domestic violence and against misogyny. The feminist movement has done a lot of good for women and for society as a whole, but the battle isn't over. Despite the illusion of equality, there is still so much work for the feminist movement to do. There are many reasons that we still need feminism. We need feminism because there is still a wage gap and because rape culture exists.

Although many people think the wage gap is a myth, the wage gap has

been proven to be very real and a problem in today's society. People think the wage gap is a myth because women typically go into lower paying jobs. But, according to an article in the Washington Post, even in the same field of work women make less. **Female financial specialists make 66% of what their male counterparts make, female doctors earn 71%, and female lawyers and judges make 81%.** Men, especially white men, tend to make more money than women in female dominated positions and

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easily rise to supervisory roles over women. According to a post in the U.S Department of Labor blog, economists generally attribute 40% of the pay gap to gender discrimination in the workplace.

Women also face unfair discrimination based on being a mother. According to a post in the U.S Department of Labor blog, mothers face a "motherhood penalty" and employers will pay them less money running on the assumption that mothers will work less. Just because the person is a mother they will pay her less because

they think they can assume her work habits. The same is not true for men who are fathers. According to an article in the Washington Post, men tend to earn more money the more children they have whereas women see their pay go down with each individual child. But yet people think men and women are treated equally in the work place?

One obvious case of the wage gap is in Hollywood. According to Forbes Magazine, the world's highest paid actress, Jennifer Lawrence, made \$52 million dollars in the past year for all of her work. This is an incredible amount of money until you compare it with how much the highest paid actor made which was \$80 million. In the movie

American Hustle, Jennifer Lawrence and her costar Amy Adams received a 7% cut from the movies profits, that is two percentage points less than what their male costars made. Jennifer Lawrence and Scarlet Johansson were the only females to make Forbes' list of top 100 paid celebrities. Even after three Oscar wins Meryl Streep still got paid less than her male costars. The wage gape alone shows that there is inequality in society between the sexes and therefore feminism is still important in today's world. But this is only one of many examples of why

we need feminism. Another is the existence of what some call "rape culture."

Many people deny the existence of a "rape culture" but there are many examples in everyday life of it. A quote by author Emilie Buchwald defines rape culture as "a complex set of beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent" When society normalizes sexualized violence, it accepts and creates rape culture. You may be thinking that this doesn't seem like the society you know and doesn't represent society as a whole. But there are many everyday examples of how society has normalized "rape culture".

According to the Every Day Feminism website, examples of rape culture include: normalization of street harassment and catcalling, rape jokes and the fact that people defend them, the fact that women are taught to avoid sexual assault rather than people being taught not to view women as objects, and publicly defending celebrities accused of rape just because of their status and therefore denouncing or ignoring the victim. It includes the fact that only 3% of rapists ever serve a day in jail. The popular assumption is that false reporting of sexual assault is the norm, when in re-

FACTS

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FEMINISM

OPINION

By Megan Riordan
Guest Columnist

ality false claims make up only 2.8% of reports. For example, a judge sentenced a 50 year-old man who raped a 14-year-old girl (who later committed suicide) to only 30 days in jail on the grounds that she was “older than her chronicle age.”

Rape culture also includes when adults will blame girls for posting sexy selfies and therefore leading males to sin instead of discussing with them their responsibility for their own sexual expression. The fact that people actually believe that girls allow themselves to be raped by wearing provocative clothing, acting a certain way, or by what they’ve had to drink - when in reality sexy clothes and alcohol do not give a person permission to violate consent and does not mean they are “asking for it.”

Rape culture also includes the prevalence of derogatory remarks in popular music - for example telling women “you know you want it” because of these “blurred lines” (referring to consent).

A huge contributor to “rape culture” is the defending of athletes who have committed sexual assault. A case I’m sure we all remember is the Brock Turner case. According to an article in the *Washington Post*, Brock Turner was faced with up to 14 years in

prison but it was decided that he should get only six months and of those six months he only ended up serving three. The judge worried that a stiffer sentence would have a “severe impact” on the 20-year-old. His father even wrote a letter defending Turner, begging that he only get probation not jail time because “his life will never be the one that he dreamed about and worked so hard to achieve,” “that it is a steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action out of 20 plus years of life,” and “he will never be his happy go lucky self.” He never once considered how his son’s “20 minutes of action” affected that poor girl for a life time,

how his son ruined her life and changed her forever.

Brock Turner is not the only case of athletes getting off easy for sexual assault. According to PBS.org, Baylor University has been responsible for covering up many sexual assault cases in order to protect their football players. The victims were ignored so that the university could have a good football team and therefore the university condoned sexual assault. Another instance of athletes being defended is the Kobe Bryant rape case. Bryant

never saw a day in court so it was never proven whether or not he raped his victim (although I encourage you to do some research before you call him your idol) but that’s not important for my argument.

According to ThinkProgress.org, when the victim accused Bryant of rape people were appalled that she would have the audacity to accuse their favorite athlete. The media tore into her, trying to make her seem like a liar and attention seeker. The negative attention may even be part of the reason she decided to drop the charges. People didn’t know what happened in that hotel room, but they did not hesitate to tear into the victim and defend an athlete they loved.

People actually defended Bryant by saying the girl may have been known to have sex often, as if that makes her an unreliable source incapable of being raped. The prevalence of rape culture shows just another reason that we still need feminism.

There are many more reasons for feminism but these two should be enough to prove the importance of feminism in today’s society. To conclude, feminism is still important because society has not achieved equality between the sexes. Although it may seem easy to believe that men and women are equal because things have improved for women so much



over the years, the evidence supporting that there is a wage gap between men and women, and the fact that society has condoned a rape culture prove that there is still so much work to do, so much work for the feminist movement to do. After everything I have said today, I hope you all will look at feminism in a new light and support it and what it fights for. Maybe even you too will call yourself a feminist.

THE PREVALENCE OF RAPE CULTURE SHOWS JUST ANOTHER REASON THAT WE STILL NEED FEMINISM.



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