

# WOMEN AND FEMINISM: HOW CAN WE REVOLUTIONIZE LEADERSHIP?

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*Women all over the world struggle to be seen as leaders within their communities. Feminism has played an important part in human rights and important social movements throughout the years; however, many people do not understand the basis of feminism and how it can revolutionize society by changing what leadership means. The objective of this article is to educate readers about feminism and feminist leadership as well as education and representation. This differentiates feminism from its branches and explains what it means to be a feminist leader. Additionally, it provides an insight on how much education can affect a community and its leaders. This article reiterates the importance of having diverse leaders who can represent and speak for minorities.*

**I**t's no secret that the female gender has been oppressed throughout the years, and it's no secret that women have achieved a lot to overcome sexism through feminism. However, women still struggle to be seen as leaders while fighting to overcome gender roles, education and pay gaps, and lack of representation. Even accepting and respecting the idea of feminism can be difficult. Feminism may have a bad reputation due to incorrect preconceptions, but many people are feminists without even knowing it. Feminism is "the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes" (Watson, 2014, para. 4). Although feminists have

achieved much for their cause, they continue to revolutionize leadership through education, feminist leadership, and representation.

### **FEMINISM**

Many people need to be educated on what feminism really is and how it can affect leadership. Even though some feminists have created different “branches” based on feminism (such as eco-feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism), the concept of feminism in which this article is based is simple—feminism is the social, economic, and political equality between sexes (Watson, 2014). Many may ask why feminism isn’t called humanism or something to that effect since it is based on the equality of sexes. The reason why goes beyond its belief. Claire Andersson (2017) implied that the word feminism is “an idea of what reality is like” (p. 392). Calling it feminism not only acknowledges that gender equality is necessary, but also that women are the oppressed sex (even if this does not seem true in one’s immediate reality). The ability to understand and embrace feminism changes how people envision leaders who bring awareness to important gender issues the world is currently facing.

### **EDUCATION**

Many leaders discuss how to fix one of the major issues found around the globe: education. In several countries, people can receive formal education from high school, college, or more, while in other areas of the world, many are not so lucky—especially the girls. According to Shay Spivey (2017), about 62 million girls around the globe are not in school, and many more are still fighting to receive an education. Although having a career and ensuring that women are financially independent is extremely important, an education can also ensure that women will have a safe and valued life. Spivey (2017) writes that when women are not properly educated, they are more likely to be dependent on others which results in “higher instances of domestic violence and being treated like property” (Spivey, 2017, p. 42). It is important to provide women with the necessary and basic tools so they can succeed in leadership positions.

### **FEMINIST LEADERSHIP**

Women and men not only need to receive basic and formal education, but also an education in feminist leadership. Feminist leadership can redefine leadership because it is also about social change (Clover,

Etmanski, & Reimer, 2017). Women and men can become feminist leaders and can help others become better people and continue this important social change. Clover et al. (2017) state that feminist “leaders do seek to empower women with opportunities to speak out against discrimination and to take up roles that will bring about change” (p. 26). When feminists are armed with education and with the knowledge of a feminist leadership style, they can greatly improve their communities by recognizing where the education gap lies and how to fix it while ensuring that other people feel empowered to make the world a better place.

### REPRESENTATION

Feminists who are educated provide more representation through leadership. Lately, we’ve seen the power of representation in the media. Many people are praising real-life leaders, as well as movie or book characters for representing minorities (women, people of color, etc.) Diverse representation can be seen in movies, such as *RBG*, a documentary film that tells the story of one of the most important leaders in the U.S., Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who has been fighting for gender equality in court throughout her career (Cohen & West, 2018). Because of the different cultures around the world, it is important that our world leaders are diverse and representative of their people. Those who are represented by their leaders feel more inspired to improve their communities. McLane-Davidson (2018) writes about the importance of “Black Feminist Leadership” in the HIV/AIDS community:

Their ability to define their leadership is based on their need to forge new paths and to create strategies and programs where previously there were none. This meant relying on their historical experiences as Black women and their gendered skills as nurturers and caretakers. (pp. 292-293)

Due to their history, feminist leaders were able to connect with the HIV/AIDS community because they knew how difficult it was to live with discrimination. People must be represented by leaders who understand them and listen to their ideas and concerns. Feminist leaders add more insight into what some issues look like from a woman’s or a minority’s perspective. Because feminist leadership is “a means to advance agendas

to dismantle oppressions of all kinds” (Clover et al., 2017, p. 29), these leaders ensure decisions are acceptable to the people who would actually be affected by them.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many people still have the wrong idea about feminism, but it is important to remember the purpose of feminism: to achieve gender equality. People need to remember that feminism can help educate many women and men around the globe about current gender issues and help them understand what a feminist leader looks like. Feminist leaders can help represent minorities in politics, business, and social obligations by providing decisions based on minorities’ perspectives—feminist leadership does not see gender, and both men and women can become feminist leaders. Even though this is a global concern, there are simple things we can do to continue this social change. Feminist leadership starts by helping a struggling person get to work or class. It begins by providing emotional support to those who suffer from discrimination. Feminist leaders empower those around them to never give up on their goals. These leaders help provide the tools minorities and underprivileged people need to succeed.

Overall, feminism can change the way we look at leadership—leadership will become more than what we believe it is. Leadership will not only become achievable to all but also become a way to advance social changes in our communities. Feminists and women can revolutionize leadership by not only representing minorities, but also by empowering their followers to take a stand, lead, and fight for what is just.

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