



Fall 2019

FYS 101 Women Writing the World

Fall 2019

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Recommended Citation

Hazelton, Emily, "We Should All Be Feminists" (2019). *Fall 2019*. 9.
https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys_ww_f2019/9

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Emily Hazelton

We Should All Be Feminists

In the book *We Should All Be Feminists*, from the beginning to the end, there is a recurring theme: feminism is pointless, and only for certain women. When you're a feminist, "you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you're always angry, you don't have a sense of humor, you don't use deodorant" (Adichie 11). These are all ridiculous stereotypes about what a feminist is, and what feminism, itself, ultimately is. However, when a single word is changed, a vast majority of these assumptions and themes remain the same. Change the word "feminism" to the phrase 'climate change'. Granted, there are not many stereotypes about climate change activists hating men, but many of the other stereotypes seem to follow a certain pattern. While feminists and climate change activists face frequent stereotyping, both require strong leadership to accomplish their respective main goal – change.

Feminists encounter many negative assumptions, all because of what they desire for the world. Asking for an equal playing field, not female domination, should not be that unreasonable of a thing to ask for. Yet still, time and time again, feminists are assumed to be unhygienic, angry, men-hating people. Because mind you, feminists can be anyone, not just women. Even a person's gender is assumed when the word feminism is mentioned. As if all men are forbidden from siding with 'the enemy', because any change to the status quo is seen as a traitorous offense and instantly transforms someone from a human, to a man or woman. This change is simply due to the assumption that men are seen as always being right, so opinions that fail to back men's agendas are the enemy.

Similar assumptions are made toward climate change activists. Those fighting for climate change are seen as angry, tree-hugging hippies who do not shower. People who are not climate change activists actually go as far as to argue that climate change is not real and is merely a fictional issue made to scare people into not supporting capitalism, which is a completely misguided thought in itself. While large companies may be an easy scapegoat, no single factor can solely be to blame, the same way the stereotypical, radical feminist cannot be the only problem. However, in both cases, blame is still placed, which is comparable to feminism. To those who don't believe that feminism is an issue, or that climate change isn't real, both movements seem like radical ideals that could never be brought to fruition and are ultimately foolish causes to support.

When considering who make the best leaders, and when describing credible people, many envision a man. There is a general belief in society that a CEO must be a man, and similarly the president must be a man. Because a large portion of these roles are held by men, it is assumed that their leadership skills prevail over women's. However, even though it may not be seen as true, in nearly all leadership positions, a male role is equal to a female role. A male professor teaches the same curriculums as a female professor, and yet receives less pay, because a male's perspective is seen as more credible. In *We Should All Be Feminists*, Adichie states that she earned the role of class monitor after earning the highest score on a test, but to her dismay, the role was given to the male runner up, as the position had to be filled by a boy (12). This story is yet another method of silencing women and assuming a role of power or authority must be given to a man.

In similar fashion, climate change activists are treated poorly in regards to male versus female power. Recently a young girl, Greta Thunberg, has begun speaking and protesting for a change in leadership and a change for our climate. Even though she is still a young girl, she is taunted and harassed for reasons not pertaining to her argument about climate change. This large amount of criticism is not surprising if one views it in the context of feminism. Thunberg is a young girl, and any female (especially young) is not to be trusted as a source of scientific evidence; even if she has scientific sources and scientists at her back, strengthening her argument. A similar situation would never occur had it been a man saying these things, for instance, Elon Musk is seen as a credible and reliable source for climate change information. Any claim of his that the climate is benefitting from a specific product, or is not benefitting, would be instantly believed by the general population. Yet it is because he is a rich and powerful person who is upheld in the public eye, he can do no wrong, unlike Thunberg, who is targeted simply because she is a young girl.

Feminism and climate change feel on one hand like polar opposites, having to do with social interactions and the state of the ecosystems. However, by taking a closer look, one can see that there is far more to each of them than is perceived. Feminism can be seen to an extent in every area of the world, be it the present, the distant past, a third world country, or here in the United States. Similarly, it is understood that climate change is something that cannot be overlooked by anyone in the world, regardless of status or gender. Something as broad as feminism can have a major impact everywhere in the world, but will never escape the grasp of the power struggle and assumptions that are nearly identical to the controversy surrounding climate change.

Works Cited

Adichie, Chimamanda N. *We Should All Be Feminists*. Anchor Books, 2017.