



Fall 2019

FYS 101 Women Writing the World

Fall 2019

The Power of #MeToo

Samantha Zechiel
Butler University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys_ww_f2019

Recommended Citation

Zechiel, Samantha, "The Power of #MeToo" (2019). *Fall 2019*. 24.
https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys_ww_f2019/24

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the FYS 101 Women Writing the World at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2019 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.

Samantha Zechiel

The Power of #MeToo

In the age of social media, feminist movements have been popping up everywhere. One of the most prevalent examples in contemporary society is the #MeToo movement that began on Twitter in 2006. According to the official website of the movement, it was founded to “help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing” (“About”). This movement supports the growth of gender equality by encouraging women to speak out and bravely share their experiences with sexual violence. It is more important than ever for women to make their voices heard and joining the #MeToo movement is an effective way to do that.

According to information from *Biography*, Tarana Burke, an African American civil rights activist, founded the original “me too” movement after hearing a young girl’s story about her experience being sexually abused by her mother’s boyfriend. Burke is a survivor of sexual assault herself; therefore, she strongly related to and understood the girl. In 2017, actress Alyssa Milano was the first to turn “me too” into a Twitter hashtag. It quickly went viral, spreading across various social media platforms and inspiring countless women to speak out about their own experiences with sexual harassment and assault.

The core of the #MeToo movement, however, resides in its empowerment of feminism. When the hashtag went viral, not only did it open the public’s eyes to the shocking prevalence of sexual assault, but it also brought forward the seemingly forgotten oppression of women. Suddenly, society was awoken to the fact that gender inequality is still just as prevalent as ever. Women are taught to be docile and never speak out against a man, even in the case of sexual

violence. For the first time, social media was allowing women a forum to openly and confidently express their experiences with oppression.

Since the inception of the #MeToo movement, encouragement for women to stand up against inequality, oppression, and sexual violence has become an increasingly important aspect of society. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pointed out in her book, *We Should All be Feminists*, the term “feminist” is no longer something women feel the need to be ashamed of. Being a feminist means being empowered and fighting to end gender inequality, both of which are clearly displayed by the brave women taking part in the #MeToo movement. Adichie ends her book by including her own definition of feminism. She writes, “A feminist is a man or woman who says, ‘Yes, there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better’” (Adichie 48). With this quote, she emphasizes the fact that feminism is about gender equality, not superiority. The #MeToo movement also demonstrates this by placing its focus on the empowerment of all women, not the degradation of all men.

Each time a woman uses #MeToo on social media, she is standing up for her equal rights as a human being. She is defying the misogynistic social norms that teach women they are inferior, and therefore must hold their tongues so they don’t risk angering or embarrassing men. According to Sophie Gilbert, writing in *The Atlantic*, “There’s a monumental amount of work to be done in confronting a climate of serial sexual predation—one in which women are belittled and undermined and abused and sometimes pushed out of their industries altogether” (Gilbert). This is the sad reality of the pervasive, often-unrecognized sexism in the daily lives of women. However, the #MeToo movement is a step in the right direction. It has brought women from all over the world together, uniting them in a fight for equality. Each time another woman uses the

hashtag, she is forcing her society to recognize the inequality that she and countless other women face regularly.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie discussed in her book, feminists face a lot of opposition. This is evident through strong opposition to the #MeToo movement. For example, according to CNN, “Trump has recently taken shots at the #MeToo movement by expressing concern for men who are accused of sexual assault or harassment” (Klein, Malloy, and Sullivan). It is difficult to succeed in a feminist movement when the President does not support either it or the ideals it represents. Perhaps as more women continue to join the #MeToo movement, as well as other types of feminist movements, the gender equality that they strive for will gradually become more apparent, as it has in past generations. While there has been a lot of progress towards equality for all, normative sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, and other injustices are still ingrained in cultures around the world. To use Adichie’s words, “If it is true that the full humanity of women is not in our culture, then we can and must make it our culture” (Adichie 46).

Feminism derives its power from the strong, independent, determined women that continue pushing it forward every day, women like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Tarana Burke, Alyssa Milano, and all of those who have spoken out using #MeToo. Feminism is about courageously defying gender norms and fearlessly fighting against gender inequality. The growth of social media has exponentially increased the ability of women to do this. With movements like #MeToo, women finally have outlets to share their experiences, not only with sexual violence but with other forms of gender inequality, as well. The social perception of feminism and females is changing. Societies around the world, including the United States, are making

strides toward equality for all. While oppression is still prevalent, it is demonstrative of the power of #MeToo that progress is being made each time another woman speaks out.

Works Cited

- “About.” *Me Too Movement*, Me Too Movement, 2018, <https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history>.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *We Should All Be Feminists*. Anchor Books, February 2015.
- Editors, Biography. “Tarana Burke Biography.” *Biography*, A&E Television Networks, 15 Apr. 2019, <https://www.biography.com/activist/tarana-burke>.
- Gilbert, Sophie. “The Movement of #MeToo.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 16 Oct. 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/10/the-movement-of-metoo/542979/>.
- Klein, Betsy, Malloy, Allie, and Sullivan, Kate. “Trump Mocks the #MeToo Movement at a Rally, Again.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 10 Oct. 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/10/politics/trump-rally-mocks-me-too/index.html>.