

G L O R I A

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ANOTHER LOOK AT FEMINIST ART OF THE 1970s

SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT “TODAY’S FEMINISM” IS LIKE SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT “TODAY’S ORGASM”

Feminism is expressed in countless different ways by every individual man or woman who has a sense of dignity and justice. Like orgasms, feminism is harder to do than you might think, more prevalent than the media thinks, quite personal, improves with age, it’s often more gratifying if you’re not alone, and is better on some days than others. Also, like orgasms, the people who make the biggest show of how great they are at feminism are often getting it the least.

Feminism isn’t really an entity, though, or even a concept. Feminism is a spirit, which implies something ineffable and personal, animate and alive. Feminism is what one does with it, how each individual expresses it. It’s about the freedom to make choices, regardless of what choice we make—but it is about each of us being able to make that choice, not just a few of us.

Here are some things one could say about feminism today: There isn’t a big organized women’s movement with a common agenda. And its importance—activism—is lost when we allow ourselves to debate about whether its dead or whether a feminist can get a bikini wax or sleep with an intern. Feminism today can’t be boiled down to a single urgent issue like the vote or domestic violence. Instead, the movement is expressed through every person who believes in the full political, economic, and social equality of men and women—and who lives accordingly. As Ani DiFranco sings, “Every time I move/ I make a woman’s movement.”

— JENNIFER BAUMGARDNER AND AMY RICHARDS, 2002

AMY RICHARDS co-founded the Third Wave Foundation and is a long-time consultant for Gloria Steinem and First Nations Development Institute, among other organizations. She has organized community forums on race with Anna Deavere Smith, is a contributing editor to *Ms.* magazine, and is the voice behind "Ask Amy," an on-line activist advice column she began in 1995.

JENNIFER BAUMGARDNER is a former editor at *Ms.* magazine who writes for *Harper's*, *The Nation*, *Jane*, *Marie Claire*, *Z*, *Bust*, *Out*, and *Bitch*, among other magazines. She initiated the reissuing of a series of "Feminist Classics" for Farrar, Straus & Giroux, and is at work on a book about bisexuality called *Look Both Ways: Girls and Sex*. Together Jennifer and Amy have written *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future*, numerous articles, are currently at work on a book about activism, and have founded a feminist speakers' bureau called Soapbox.