

The Monthly Rag

Brought to you by the Feminist and Gender Studies Student Advisory Council

Block VIII, 2012

Reflections on CC Feminism...

As a graduating senior, I've spent plenty of time the last few blocks reflecting on my CC experience. I can confidently say that a significant part of my growth over the past four years can be attributed to "getting into" feminist and queer issues. Though CC isn't always the most hospitable environment for feminist and queer issues (don't get me wrong, it's certainly not the worst environment, either), I've learned a lot here. So, I want to use my last little blurb of space to give some advice for those of you who are venturing into the feminist world at CC:

Make connections everywhere you can.

Students: I'm not just talking about connections with FGS majors/minors, that's the easy part. Seriously, try to branch out. There are plenty of 'feminist-identified' individuals at CC, and not all of them are declared majors/minors. Plenty of students around campus have very strong feminist values and are making huge strides in their

personal circles. Keep an eye out for that kid who calls out the professor for being sexist or critiques theory for being heteronormative--they might be where you're least expecting them.

Faculty and Staff: The faculty and staff on this campus are amazing. They're more than simple resources. Instead, they can help you through dealing with things like prejudice, apathy, or indifference. More importantly they can help you channel your frustrations into productive environments, and maybe most importantly they'll celebrate progress and be supportive of relative failure. These people "get it," they're smart, they're empathetic, they're here. Connect with them in any way you can. CC faculty and staff have become some of the most supportive and inspiring people I've ever had the opportunity to interact with.

C-Springs Community: The greater Colorado Springs community can be the most daunting to start to connect with. Here's the thing: You can't operate under

the assumption that everyone in C-Springs hates women and queers. It's simply not true. Even conservatives can be feminists, so don't discount that. Volunteer with or hang out at local orgs (Planned Parenthood and Inside/Out Youth are my favorites), the people you'll meet off-campus will give you a really unique perspective, and give you opportunities you wouldn't necessarily find elsewhere.

Go big: You probably thought I was going to suggest making global connections. NOPE! Though, I'm sure those are certainly worthwhile, that's not what I'm getting at. By "go big," I mean take risks. If that means calling out your best friend on making a joke about sexual violence or inequality, do it. If it means starting an all-campus campaign, do it. If it means writing a blog, do it. Do something that will make changes however you can, with whomever you can. Finally, have fun with this adventure! Make friends, have conversations, be happy!

Toni Pizza, Sociology Major, Class of 2012

Manon Merewether, English Major, CC Alum

Last week I had jury duty, which meant I had to drive to Hugo and wait around forever. It was kind of nice though, because it meant I got to catch up with my former preacher. She and her husband are on sabbatical right now, so I haven't seen them in a while. We talked about all the usual stuff, and then she started talking about politics, which I'd never heard her do before. Apparently the reason for that was she and her husband didn't want to voice their opinions and influence the voters in the church. She told me how 57% of women prefer Obama and 34% or whatever like Romney. I hadn't heard that before, but she asked me why I thought that might be. I said I really didn't know, but that maybe it had something to do with the birth control issues. First, she really startled me by saying how tired she was of hearing about birth control. I got the impression that maybe she was okay with its use, as long as she didn't have to hear about it. Second, and this was the most upsetting part, she said, really? I don't think that's the reason. I think women aren't that logical. They don't have that much sense. I think they prefer Obama because he's better looking. I honestly didn't know what to say to that. Some of the most anti-feminist people I've ever met have been women, but that's the craziest thing I've ever heard. Here's a well-educated, logical woman putting down her sex as not having a mind for politics. And not just that, but being generally illogical.

FemCo, BSU, and Sigma Chi asked:

"What do you love about being a man?" and "What do you hate about being a man?" Here are the anonymous results.

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<i>not having to share my feelings!! not worrying about being quiet/ strong silent type! :)</i>	<i>close male friends can sometimes "never" be close and personal</i>
<i>Gazing upon females</i>	<i>Bigger is better :(</i>
<i>Independence</i>	<i>being over-simplified and stereo- typed as a: sex-obsessed, overly- macho, emotionless dude.</i>
<i>We take pride in knowing we are dependent on to provide</i>	I AM NOT.
<i>Who cares? We are the same as women except for our GENITALS!</i>	<i>The pressure not to feel.</i>
<i>Pissing in the woods is the most satisfying experience known to man OR just peeing standing up generally (sex is good too)</i>	<i>Nothing.</i>

**"Being a feminist is like being a stunna."
~Sam Crook, Class of 2015**

Katie Rogers, Sociology Major, Class of 2012

"Interests are formed in any structure of inequality, which necessarily defines groups that will gain and lose differently by sustaining or by changing the structure. A gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defense, and women as an interest group concerned with change. **This is a structural fact, independent of whether men as individuals love or hate women, or believe in equality or abjection, and independent of whether women are currently pursuing change.**" - R.W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity"

One of the greatest barriers - and, concurrently, one of the greatest strengths - toward a comprehensive understanding and mutual respect in discussions about feminism is, I believe, communication. Disagreements and false impressions abound, it seems, when a feminist or a sociologist assumes that the listener knows exactly what she or he means by terms like "gender binary" or "masculinity" or

"femininity," when it would rather behoove those engaging in a critical discourse to take the time to understand one another.

But how to breach this hurdle? After spending four years crusading for "feminism" at CC, I'm still dying to know two things: a) why the perception of feminism as a movement on campus appears so negative and b) how to remedy this perception. In conversations, I often feel that I'm either caught in a discursive tempest of miscommunication and assumption or preaching to the proverbial choir. I have heard many CC students say that they feel unfairly scapegoated or blamed by feminism on campus, and while I must say that this upsets me, I also can conceive of how my phrasing could misconstrue my meaning. I can see how my use of the word "masculinity," a social construct, could easily be conflated with biological "maleness," and thus seem an attack from an exclusive community of educated sex/gender researchers rather than an inviting conversation about equal rights.

Of course feminists have a right to be angry. While I do become angry about feminist issues, and believe I have a right to be, I think it's an important practice to maintain a sensitive, level head in discussions. It's far too easy to condemn another viewpoint as "defensive" or as "an overreaction" when, ever-so-frequently, many arguments are motivated by passionate, reactionary mechanisms rather than motivated to understand and educate the other side. I am often guilty of such condemnations, myself.

Ultimately, I believe feminism can serve everyone. I also believe one of the fundamental goals of feminism is to clarify and discuss it with those who misunderstand or reject it. I wonder how much of the hostility about gender on campus would be quelled if we all might first clarify and agree upon the terms, such as "masculinity," which we are discussing. Some of us may even discover that, to some extent, we already agree.