



To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism

Rebecca Walker (Editor) , Gloria Steinem (Foreword) , Angela Y. Davis (Afterword)

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Determined to extend the boundaries of feminism to embrace social, political, and economic equality for all humanity, these twenty-one exciting young activists and thinkers recast the concepts of feminism to reflect their own personal experiences and beliefs. Inspired by activist and writer Rebecca Walker, they speak out, challenging many of their assumptions about the women's movement and demanding that readers recognize a new relationship between the personal and the political. Black and white, male and female, gay and straight, they fearlessly describe their liberation from the feminist "ideals" that conflict with the reality of who they are, expose "shocking" secrets, and acknowledge long-hidden accommodations and anomalies. Controversial and provocative, To Be Real is a blueprint for the creation of a new political force.

To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism Details

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Author : Rebecca Walker (Editor) , Gloria Steinem (Foreword) , Angela Y. Davis (Afterword)

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Chandra says

Essential reading

Parker says

not a fan of the third wave feminisms that focus on reclaiming barbie, lipstick, lady razors and high heels as if they were taken away by second wave feminists.

Kelechi says

I appreciate this anthology so much. As a black feminist I find "problematic" things I enjoy in my life and before reading this anthology, I thought there was a need to abstain or purge myself from these things- which is the furthest thing from the truth. I am informed enough to enjoy what I enjoy and still be a feminist. It is all part of my individual experience.

Dominic says

We live in a tricky time as feminists, when in one hand the lives of women and men are full of choices (and feminism was/is all about choices), but it is also a time when I hear the question, "Are you a feminist?" a lot less than I used to hear it. On one hand, feminism is alive everywhere, but on the another, the word itself seems to be slowly withering with the passage of time.

Now that I'm taking a Women's Rhetoric class for my graduate degree, I'm able to take some time reflecting on the extent feminism is still at work today. These essays, which I thoroughly enjoyed for their diversity and strength and lack of shame, blow open the question, "What is a feminist?" These essays remind me that feminism has done a tremendous lot for our world--and certainly my life. They fire me up. I'm empowered by the fact that three men are included. I'm happy to see my experience reflected in several of the essays--both those written by men and by women. These essays make me wonder what "To Be Real" (which was released in 1995) would look like if it was published in 2009.

I like to believe an updated version of the anthology today would be equally vibrant, continually challenging and questioning the world we live in. As long as we keep giving birth to young boys and young girls who we love with all of our selves, feminism is necessary...because, like bell hooks has said, "Feminism is about love."

I'm thankful for what feminism has done for my life, and Walker's anthology has me wondering what my contribution might be...

Lani says

Picked this up at Busboys and Poets on a whim - because I can't be trusted to 'kill time' at a bookstore, okay?

An essay collection by a diverse mix of writers, trying to address the diversity of feminism today. The most interesting point was made in one of the introductory essays (or possibly a concluding one?) talking about the collection as a whole. I don't recall which 'big name' feminist was writing, but the point was made that older 2nd wave feminists see some of the 'reactionary' responses to feminist history to be a little silly. Younger women assume that they can't wear lipstick or have kids and still be feminist, and that's more of an issue with the mainstream portrayal of feminism than the movement itself. That was something I could really relate to, and much of the book seemed to be various women protesting that 'I can do X and still be feminist!' That realization started to feel stale after the first few times, but I did appreciate the contrasting essays that were included in the collection.

I would say this was a solid collection of essays, but I can't really think of many that stood out as particularly new or unique. I did appreciate that there were a few essays by men included since that's a perspective rarely heard. I also wish more information about the authors were included before each essay rather than just at the end. I can appreciate how not knowing the race or gender or sexuality of an author can help with understanding the universality of the statements, but I think context can also help. Sort of a tough call.

Alexa says

A little dated in places, but a handful of the essays stand out with their themes of intersectionality and decentering the white western narrative. Many of the essays address topics we are still working on 15 years after publication. Overall, a good read that melds a history of 3rd wave with the themes that have carried through to current feminist practices.

Maddy says

To everyone who also consider themselves a feminist, this might interest you: "To be Real" edited by Rebecca Walker is an amazing collection by a diverse group of authors. There was a great diversity, women of color, queer (LGBTQ) authors, and men were included. It was a refreshing read. The book is also almost 20 years old, I was a little shocked to find out because they seemed to be talking about the world as it is now (which says something).

(I will post a longer review later, I'm in a rush now. :p)

LaToya Hankins says

I enjoyed the diversity of the authors which ranged from a straight married couple who dealt with the issue of what last name to use in a creative manner to legends of the feminist movement who reflects on how far the

journey has taken us as well as how far we have to go. Walker did a good job of pulling together different voices to present different outlooks. I may not have agreed with all the statements made but I came aware with an appreciation for the author's outlook.

Teresa says

i bought this forever ago when i was in college, and finally got around to reading it. it's a compilation of essays written by feminists from several walks of life. the one message i got the strongest from the book was that there were no "rules" or "right way" of being a feminist. and while i do consider myself one, i just wasn't jiving with this book. in all honesty, i skipped a lot of it.

honestly, i think the biggest issue i had with this book is that it just seemed a bit outdated. i believe it was published in the mid-nineties, and maybe i'm out of the loop, but i feel that maybe some of the issues addressed were things that we've since progressed on (not perfected by any means).

Courtney Stirrat says

This wonderful collection examines various women's relationships with feminist issues in a confessional style. At first it feels a bit scattered, as - unlike many 2nd Wave essays - the essays incorporate class, race, and sexual orientation into feminism itself. But when combined with Gloria Steinam's forward, Angela Davis's afterward and Rebecca Walker's introduction, the role of these confessionals becomes much more clear. This is not a blue print or an outline of the 3rd Wave's political agenda, but rather a place where 3rd wavers can begin by understanding the basic questions, assumptions, and contradictions underlying feminism. Rather than a call to arms, this collection is a call to inspiration and imagination in constructing a feminist viewpoint that is relevant and modern. Makes me want to curl up in front of a fire with coffee, more feminist literature and my laptop and just think. Brava!

T.Kay Browning says

I don't know if any individual essay gets five stars from me, but the breadth and daring of this collection definitely does.

Jaine says

Corny.

Also (it may be the prude in me)-- but I found discussions about sex and sexuality "tired" and cliched.

When I finished reading some of the essays, I had to stop and think about the role of sexuality as it relates to women's issues. It's not as if I think sexuality shouldn't be discussed and doesn't matter. I do.

But.

I sometimes feel as if some Feminist perspectives about sexuality are blissfully naive and disconnected from the reality of the experiences of everyday women. I think that feminism, at times, may emphasize sex and sexuality too much or...hm...maybe more like...present it in a manner that's out of context.

For instance, generally speaking, I think equating sex and sexuality with words like "liberating" and "empowering" is hogwash. There are obvious instances where the words may apply. But. Again. Generally.

In my mind, before one might even be able to speak of sex as empowering, I think there are bigger fish to fry. I think it's a luxury (a wonderful one indeed), for some Feminists to examine and express their feelings about sex/sexuality in a particular way. I don't mean to say that it's wrong. I just mean that there's more than one way to view the meaning, significance, and function of sex/sexuality.

There are many voices in Feminism. Many ways to be a Feminist. What I liked about this collection of essays was that there's a bit of this and a bit of that from all kinds of people. I really enjoyed the book for that reason.

Unfortunately, I didn't connect to a majority of essays in the book. Only 1, in fact. The Veronica Webb interview.

Which. Hm. Made me ask a lot of questions about Feminism. Obviously, my wanderings are part of a larger conversation that's re-negotiating and re-defining Feminism. I think of "To Be Real" as part of that conversation. To that extent, I embrace the voices in the book.

I suppose if I had to tag myself with a label, I'd be closest to being a "Womanist." However, if a random person were to ask me if I'm a Feminist, I'd say yes. Why? Because I'm unashamedly pro-woman. Tomato-Tomatoe.

Jesse says

This is one of the books that inspired me to call myself a feminist. It is a collection of essays from people of many different walks of life reflecting on feminism and is a great look at what feminism looked like in the mid nineties. It's worth the read.

Jay says

Great collection of early (1992) third-wave feminist autobiographical narratives. Diverse, challenging, and questioning.

The forward comes off a bit condescending and defensive, yet is accurate in that some of the understandings of first and second wave theories and realities are a bit one-dimensional.

I would like to have heard some trans/genderqueer voices.

This is a fun, accessible introduction to why third wave feminisms are different both in lived reality and in explosion of theories.

Andrea Dowd says

It has been a while since I read a collection of feminist writings. This book was very interesting in that it is written for, by, and about third wave feminists. Most of the essays were bland except for the two written about the pretense and the downfall of a woman's life due to marriage. It isn't as bleak as it sounds, but totally worth it to read those few essays. There was also an essay written by this woman who is turned on by violence and rape scenes/stories. I could only stomach a page of the essay before I moved on because I was not comfortable with that level of sexual honesty. But the book is not written to be comfortable, so I recommend it to anyone who is interested in broadening their horizons.
