

# Feminism isn't just a fad – and that's why so many anti-feminists are angry

By Jessica Valenti

*The Guardian*, 30 December 2015

The power that feminism currently wields has been described as a “moment” or a “trend” – but it's much more than that. The last 10 years of feminist work have paved the way for a feminism that's deeply resonant and embedded in the culture, and it's not going anywhere anytime soon.

And no matter how you cut it, gender justice has been at the forefront of the national conversation and a lot of people's minds this past year.

Some was good: celebrities spoke up against sexism, the military ended the ban on women in combat, battling sexual assault took center stage, and companies from Netflix to Spotify created realistic and generous parental leave policies.

Some of it was bad: a woman was arrested after desperately trying to end her pregnancy with a coat hanger, a Planned Parenthood was the target of a terrorist shooting and, no matter a woman's accomplishments, we were reminded that there is always someone ready to insult her with sexism or racism.

And some of it was a bit of both, like when Cecile Richards was forced to testify in front of a House committee (but she made them all look ridiculous). Some people were even outraged when *Ghostbusters* was remade with an all-female cast – but that didn't stop anything.

Feminism's prominence is even one reason that Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign looks very different – and is being responded to very differently – in 2016 than in 2008. Clinton isn't shying away from taking on gender explicitly any more, and the sexism lobbed at her isn't being tolerated in the same way, because since 2008 we've seen feminism get even more of a foothold in our broader culture.

Part of feminism's growing influence has to do with technology: before the internet, if a woman was interested in feminism, she had to seek it out by finding an organization with which to become involved, subscribing to *Ms.* magazine or taking a women's studies class. As feminism has become more entrenched online – first through blogs, now through social media – more people have gained access to activism, information and community. Now women stumble across feminism while they're on Tumblr or Facebook, reading about everything from politics to pop culture, and have the ability to learn more in just a few clicks.

The intersection of feminism and technology has also meant that sexist politicians can't slide under the radar the way they used to. In a pre-internet age, we would never have seen the national outrage that spread after Todd Akin said in a local interview that women who are raped don't get pregnant or the widespread action after Komen for the Cure ended their Planned Parenthood funding.

Technology has also helped democratize the feminist movement itself: the center of feminist organizing and power used to reside mostly within large organizations and well-funded ventures; now the most successful campaigns and most progressive thinking are those sparked by individuals. Feminist hashtags, SlutWalks, videos and memes all have pushed the movement into the future, brought newer, younger and more racially and economically diverse voices that had always been part of the movement to the forefront where they belong, and made getting involved even more accessible.

If there's still any doubt that feminism's power is a lasting one, consider the panicked backlash we've been witnessing these past few years. As throngs of mostly white male pundits bemoan PC and “victimhood culture”, they continue to be the demographic most likely to overreact when faced with changes they don't like.

If feminism wasn't at its most powerful there wouldn't be this kind of frenzied response to it. So though we may continue to see more bad news in the days ahead – like further moves to defund Planned Parenthood or the continued dismissal of rape victims – we can hold on to the fact that we are winning. Not just for the “moment”, but for the foreseeable future.

(675 words)