

The Feminism of Galentine's Day

By Chelsea Davis

As a card-carrying, uber feminist I've had a hard time reconciling my belief system (feminism) with Valentine's Day. This goes beyond the obvious patriarchal, heteronormative display of love, and into the capitalist consumerism the day seems to perpetuate. That on this day, we decide to express our love with millions of other couples around the globe, and the way in which we express it is through chocolates, jewelry, fine dining, and an assortment of other gifts.

Not that I am completely cynical or against love and romance. I'm not. I'm not against the idea of expressing that love through any number of ways, on any number of days. I was just looking for something else. Something, or some day, that allows me to fully express my love and appreciation to my true soulmates: my friends.

That's why Galentine's Day, February 13, is *such* an important holiday. It's for friends, and again, *friendships between women*. Valentine's Day had the monopoly on romantic love, but Galentine's Day has the monopoly on this deeply soul-satisfying, affirmative expression of friendship.

Galentine's is more than just telling your friends you love them, and it is much more than just showering them with candies and flowers. Through Leslie Knope's unyielding devotion and care for her friends, *Parks & Recreation* showcased not only the importance of female friendship, but highlighted an important aspect: support.

Any woman who is friends with other women will tell you that their friends are there to offer comfort, advice, laughter, adventure, and most of all, support. And support can manifest itself in many ways; from the encouragement to follow one's dreams and desires to being a voice of stability and reason when your world feels chaotic.

Not all my friend-soulmates are women, but I am deeply grateful for the lady tribe I've surrounded myself with. I hold them so close to my heart, that I often wonder if anyone else can fit - and then I meet more amazing, incredible women (and sometimes men) and find room for them. That's the beauty - and oft misinterpreted part - of female friendships, we have our core people, but there's always room for more. There's always room for more female empowerment, strength, and support.

These friendships, and the expression of this love on Galentine's Day, is not only feminist but represents a core of feminism. Support, encouragement, lifting up other women, and opening your heart to other ladies. Again, Leslie Knope embodies all of this in her celebration of this day and her friends.

Leslie is also the embodiment of another aspect of feminism that is often cast aside - inclusivity. She opens her heart and arms to all women regardless of age, race, ability, size, sexuality, and

other labels that serve to further separate and marginalize us. Women, an already marginalized group.

Too frequently in today's world of feminism we put the idea of feminism above the people involved. We're told to choose between our womanhood and all of the other things that make us who we are, and shape our views on the world. This is not ok. This is not true feminism, and this is not the feminism we should perpetuate on a day that is about women coming together to laugh, discuss, support and encourage. And again, it's not the feminism Leslie Knope, our Galentine's Day Goddess, upholds.

I highly encourage you, all of you, to take this Galentine's Day *and* Valentine's Day to fully express your love, gratitude, and support for all the loves in your life, romantic and platonic. Show and tell them what they mean to you, and surround yourself with their love, gratitude, and support. I highly encourage you to celebrate Galentine's Day with your friend-soulmates, your soul sisters, and lift each other up. Oh and have a ton of fun!