

THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

Third-wave feminism brings about an intersectionality that the previous waves neglected. Not only was this movement about women but it was about recognizing the different hardships and oppression different women face, and how those identities intersect. What is it like to be a black woman in this world? Native American? Able-bodied vs. disabled? What challenges do LGBTQI women face vs. women who identify as cis-heteronormative? And as many of our feminist leaders aged, they began to realize the disparity that ageism brings about. Feminism isn't just one issue - it's every issue rolled into one.

This wave is heavily rooted in the ideas and teachings of Kimberle Crenshaw (she coined the term *intersectionality*) and Judith Butler, who argued that gender and sex are separate and that gender is "performative."

Early 1990s

The third-wave of feminism and the ideals associated with it are starting to gain traction. Although opposition is met by staunch supporters of second-wave feminism -- aka "cis-women-only" feminism and "white" feminism. **Riot Grrrl*** groups begin forming and making headway in the music industry.

1991

Anita Hill, and the case that followed her, brought to light the treatment of women in the workplace -- even at the highest level. Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas was accused of sexually assaulting Hill. As Hill testified before a Senate Judiciary Committee she was subjected to a litany of accusations on her character, her claims minimized, and her pain dismissed. While there was no victory for Hill, the case rang through the halls of America and many more women came forward with their own stories. It also started the conversation about representation -- was there an overrepresentation of men in leadership roles, not just in our government but everywhere?

1995

The opposition continues but the third-wave marches on. The British pop-sensation the, *Spice Girls*, introduce young girls and the mainstream media to a "fun" -- but nonetheless empowering brand of feminism by exalting "GIRL POWER" as their credo.

1995-early 2000s

The third-wave embraced many of the things the Second-wave rejected: traditionally feminine presentation of self. Being "girly" was no longer a bad thing, it was an amazing thing. Rejecting your femininity was just as misogynistic as telling someone they *had* to embrace it.

1996

Eve Ensler's transformative play, *Vagina Monologues*, premieres in New York creating a space for women to express their sexuality and be heard. Ensler's play broke new ground and allowed

these topics to be discussed more openly and allowed women to be shown as sentient beings -- not in control of their sexuality but embracing it. A few years later, HBO's hit show, *Sex and the City*, premiered to rave reviews and continued to show women as sexual beings. Are you a Miranda, a Charlotte, a Carrie, or a Samantha?

Early 2000s to the Mid-Augths

As the third-wave continued on, the fight for LGBTQ rights and representation across all channels gained intensity. The third-wave isn't as much known for its influence in the legislative arena as it is in the social and pop-culture worlds.

Pushing for more and better representation of women - *all women* - in media became a large focus. As well, body positivity movements started to unfold, because when we say *all women* we mean all of them. Skinny, fat, chubby, muscular, tall, short, etc. etc. etc. ALL WOMEN. Women began to embrace their bodies in the face of rampant criticism, internet trolls, and Piers Morgan, and they pushed other women to do so, as well.

Feminism also gets a "new" spin. In recognizing the deeply performative aspect of gender, the effects of toxic masculinity and the deep hold of the patriarchy over our society, feminists around the world declare "feminism is for everybody." As we work to eliminate barriers between sex and gender, we create a more equal and equitable space for everyone. For men to express their emotions; for people to openly express gender in non-traditional ways; for trans* and non-binary rights to be secured; for women to feel like they truly have a choice in how they live and express. For all people to feel they have that choice, that freedom, and that security.

2010-Today

There's some talk and some contention over whether we've left the third-wave fully in the dust. Have we moved onto the fourth-wave and what does that look like? When did we leave the third-wave, if so?

Some believe we left the third-wave a while ago, back in the early-2000s. Some would argue we're still in it, it's just evolving. Whatever the case, we're stepping into a new time for women. Movements of the past have never felt more relevant than they do today. Anita Hill laid the groundwork for Christine Blasey-Ford to come forward with her own harrowing story against Brett Kavanaugh, and sadly the same outcome was had for both Hill and Blasey-Ford. BUT we know better now. We know that even with this outcome we will not stop fighting.

Issues of the past are still occurring today. They're in full force. We're still fighting for accurate and diverse representation in media, in boardrooms, at the head of the table, and everywhere in between. We're still fighting for representation in the House and Senate to make sure our voices are heard and our rights aren't trampled. And we're getting there day-by-day, closer and closer to more representation.

In the midterm elections of 2018 over 100 women were elected to Congress! That's only to Congress - there were many more women elected to state and local government positions across America. Women of color, women of varying religions, ages, sexuality and much more! With all of the setbacks of the last few years (looking at you Trump and your MAGA republicans) and even the setbacks from this election, there's so much to look forward to. We're gaining representation, we're making our voices heard, and we won't stop.

*"BECAUSE doing/reading/seeing/hearing cool things that validate and challenge us can help us gain the strength and sense of community that we need in order to figure out how bullshit like racism, able-bodieism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism figures in our own lives," wrote Bikini Kill lead singer Kathleen Hanna in the **Riot Grrrl Manifesto** in 1991. "BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak."