

Introduction

By Elizabeth O'Brien

A *YA Hotline* issue has never centred explicitly on feminism before. Feminism is often a term that is misconstrued, vilified, or dismissed, and this is why we thought it was an important issue to create in order to break down those misconceptions. Feminism is a methodology; a frame through which you view and analyze the world, rather than a just a simple, unchanging, and uncritical belief.

As we began planning our issue we had many different ideas among the four of us about how we individually conceptualized the term. It became clear that we needed a definition of feminism that was encompassing and that we could look upon to help us understand and form the *YA Hotline* we were creating. We like the definition created by South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre, which states that feminism is...

“An intersectional movement that is continuously working to create a society free of sexism and patriarchal oppression, which acknowledges that we cannot eliminate sexism without challenging all forms of oppression and domination, including racism, classism, transphobia, homophobia, colonialism/neo-colonialism, and ableism. Because feminism is a continuous struggle, self-reflection and self-care are essential to any aspect of feminism.” (South House, 2014).

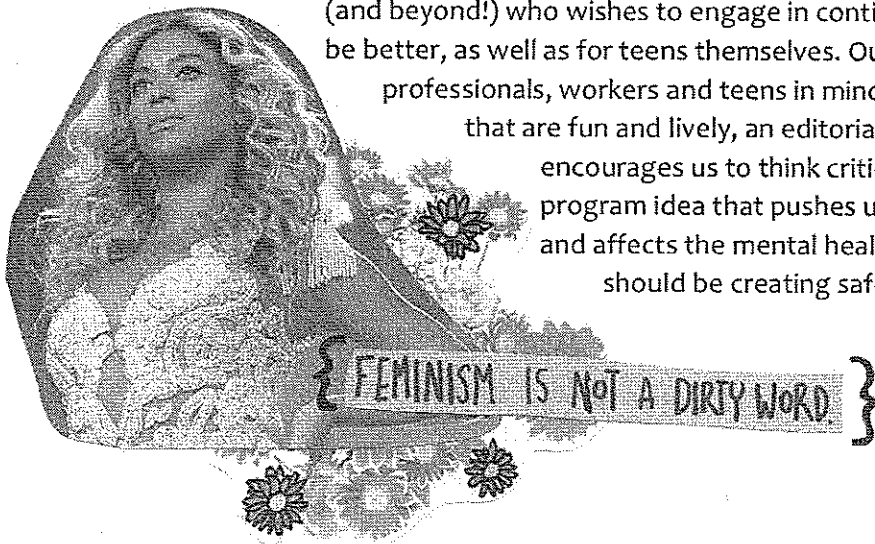
While feminism is important in our daily lives, it is also important in public libraries and within teen spaces because it ensures that we think critically about the services we offer our patrons. A feminist analysis recognises vast systems of oppressions, not just those centred around binary gender roles.

Creating safe(r) spaces for teens in libraries means that we acknowledge, analyze, and consider things like...

- does our staff reflect the racial and cultural diversity of our communities?
- is there access to gender-neutral bathrooms for genderqueer and trans teens?
- is our programming reflective of the intersecting identities of teens?
- are the information resources we promote inclusive?
- are we mindful of mental health issues that affect the teens who use our space?
- are we able to connect with teens to offer a space where they can freely express who they are?

With this in mind, we created our *YA Hotline* issue to reflect some of these issues. We tried to check our privilege, but we acknowledge that we may have missed things. We welcome all forms of feedback! Creating teen spaces, programming, and resources is an ongoing and reflexive project we are committed to, and a huge part of this is creating community among teen service providers so we can discuss issues and challenge each other to be better.

The resources we provide in this issue are for anyone who works with teens in library spaces (and beyond!) who wishes to engage in continuous learning and to challenge themselves to be better, as well as for teens themselves. Our booklists were created with both library professionals, workers and teens in mind. This issue also contains music lists that are fun and lively, an editorial on the Orca Soundings book series that encourages us to think critically about the resources we provide, and a program idea that pushes us to acknowledge that fatphobia is rampant and affects the mental health of our youth (and adults!). Public libraries should be creating safe(r) and inclusive spaces that facilitate learning, information sharing, and discussions, including on tough topics. This is why we think our issue is important and we hope you do, too! ☑



Images

Beyoncé: <http://images.intouchweekly.com/uploads/posts/image/48463/beyonce-diet-body.jpg>

Feminism quote: https://cdn3.cdnme.se/4450389/9-3/heartit3_54d69295ddf2b33a34ec34bb.jpg