

## Feminists in the Public Sphere

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Driving the girls around, the teenage daughter says: “Oh Mom. You’re such a second wave feminist. I’m a fourth wave feminist.” Her backseat friend adds, “ I’m a 16th wave feminist.”

Is this a post Judith Butler moment? Is the concept of performative gender/feminism a revolving door for the daughter? She went to Rock Camp for Girls, where they start the day practicing screaming. These teenage feminists are at a different starting point: they are not striving to match the female image: they are the image. I can only contrast this to my friend and me at that age riding our bikes to the far end of a new cul-de-sac and “burning our size A bras.” I remember being completely baffled at what repeating this media action had to do with woman's lib as we watched this small, pathetic fire die under the hot sun on the new pavement.

What is a current definition for a feminist? Incorporating the idea of the temporary autonomous zone, to act on redefining space and relationships, wherever there is an opportunity could be considered feminism, since it is subverting the hegemonic and politicizing the person acting.

This daughterly dismissal of my old feminism is culturally supported. The patriarchal structure systematically disempowers and erases older women’s visibility and voice. This loss of status happens just as women reach the end of the need for their domestic free labor and child rearing work that the patriarchy depends on. This cultural invisibility of aging women tactically separates their experiences and

knowledge from the younger women who are at the beginning of “happily ever after” allowing them to continue to respond and engage within the hegemonic structure, insuring the next generation of capitalism and their own problematic engagement in the public sphere.

The definition of the public sphere hinges on a “dialectic” conversation occurring within public space. To continually reach new synthesis in democracy we need the necessary anti-thesis. Anti viewpoints are suppressed in commercial space. Based on this definition, parts of the net today seem like our only remaining public sphere. Even though it is a capitalist information network, the creative working class within it has a personal interest to keep the information that wants to be free- free. The “viral” is a contemporary attempt of the many to visually converse. The bloggers, the vloggers, are engaging in creative production gaps, after a generation’s loss of art in the public school system. The best part of this participation is that it IS activating this generation.

It needs here to be acknowledged that like the public sphere that followed from the Gutenberg text revolution of printed matter that informed a limited class of property owning, educated men, to define democracy by their participation in the public sphere: the same is true with the digital divide. Owning and having access to the properties of technology equal the means to having a voice.

I am one woman with a computer creating a format on the web: GirlCity.TV. This structures aim is to generate content of “other” voice. I am thinking of this as a way for my voice and others to “hear and see” the stories that are culturally suppressed.

The girls are 4<sup>th</sup> wave feminists. By participating in their myspace/facebook social world, what gets communicated goes beyond a simple insertion of a photo, likes, dislikes, but actually spatializes a new network of girls in this public sphere that will migrate to a yet unimagined self generated forms that will be another anti-thesis. That's their job! They ARE teenagers.