

# YWTF ISSUE AGENDA

## **Raising Consciousness about the History and Need For Feminism**

Sexism continues to be a problem in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and feminism is a movement to fight that problem. We believe in educating current and future generations about sexist oppression, historical and contemporary.

While building on the tradition of feminist activism, we plan to redefine feminism for our generation. By this definition, feminism can be an identity but is more importantly a call to action for all individuals. Critical awareness of the ways that sexism and all other forms of oppression are manifest within ourselves and our society is imperative. At the same time, we encourage diverse ways of living out feminist activism.

## **Breaking the Silence: Acknowledging and Redefining the Power Dynamics in Feminist Efforts**

In continuing the work of our foremothers and the women's movement, we celebrate and allow the evolving participation of a plurality of voices and leaders in working toward equality and empowerment.

We call on the women's movement to recognize that anyone can advocate for and express feminist principles in the simple actions of their daily lives; actively recognize, celebrate, and support nontraditional forms of leadership as a method for promoting and integrating feminist principles on individual, community, national, and global levels; and question what diversity means within a feminist context and to value equally shared and unshared experiences.

Recognizing that the use of language can alienate and exclude people, we call on the women's movement to be thoughtful and strategic about the language it uses.

Recognizing that people experience different forms of oppression, we call on the women's movement to listen, learn, and mobilize from voices and identities, including historically oppressed voices and identities, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender identity and expression, sex, sexuality, age, language, culture, religion, spirituality, geography, and socioeconomic status.

## **Gendered Violence**

Gendered violence is a global epidemic that produces and is a product of oppression. Gendered violence is rooted in power relations; it exists in and among individual, inter-personal, familial,

community, cultural, and institutional levels; it is expressed in physical and psychological forms. The overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men while women and children are overwhelmingly the victims and survivors. We recognize that individuals are affected differently by gendered violence based on their race, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, age, class, immigrant status, employment status, and education. Gendered violence is a learned behavior -- it is not inevitable -- and all individuals are victims in a society that perpetuates this violence.

Although the movement to end gendered violence is thirty years old, the problem persists in epidemic proportions. Younger women are disproportionately affected by gendered violence and play a critical role in raising consciousness to promote accountability. Gendered violence is normalized and accepted in our society and we call for a radical shift in our social fabric to stop it. It is critical that younger women work to raise consciousness, increase visibility, and promote prevention and accountability about gendered violence.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Freedom**

Universal access to reproductive health care is a fundamental and global human right. Comprehensive sexuality education enables individuals to make informed decisions. Sexuality education and reproductive health care must be accessible without undue social, legal, religious, and institutional burdens. All individuals have a right to enjoy, embrace, and openly express their sexuality.

### **Economic Justice**

In a context of globalization, important international and domestic economic issues exist. All forms of discrimination and inequality in the work place impact individuals' ability to be full economic participants and the overall economic health of society.

The following work/life negotiation issues are important to parents, nontraditional families, and individuals: supporting all care giving, mandating living wages, maintaining a publicly funded Social Security system, redefining success, honoring life outside work and the place of work in life, and expanding economic literacy and participation.

Healthcare should be a universal right for all individuals, regardless of life choices, family status, or group membership, with a general wellness focus throughout the life cycle, including, but not limited to, coverage for mental health, contraceptives, and maternal/paternal support.

We encourage women to raise their voices by voting and taking leadership positions ranging from grassroots organizations to corporate leadership and domestic and international policymaking.

### **Women in the Media**

Mainstream media silence women's voices by valuing an often physically and financially unattainable definition of womanhood in our culture - damaging perceptions of self and health and hindering women's progress. The mass media is an instrument of exceptional power and must be used to improve women's lives by supporting alternative media outlets, fighting against media conglomeration, and encouraging alternative representations that are diverse in size, shape, age, race, occupation, sexual orientation, and class.

### **Access to Education and Opportunities**

Younger women today face inadequate resources and limited accessibility to educational opportunities as students and professionals. Students and professionals face rising costs of education, inadequate grant and scholarship opportunities, lack of equitable compensation, benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

Women also lack sufficient support systems, role models, and communities as they advance in their education and careers.

The continued use of non-inclusive, oppositional language in educational tools, career planning, and education institutions unconsciously reinforces limited notions of acceptable roles in education and careers. Language and word choice reinforce the *status quo*, locally and globally.

### **Political Representation**

Younger women today are underrepresented in and disengaged from institutional politics, the political process, and positions of power and leadership. A need exists to expand the democratic process to include marginalized and disenfranchised groups with the intent of increasing the diversity among women leaders committed to a progressive agenda.

We demand a societal shift to reflect these priorities.