

## **F-Word Event Story: The Necessity of Feminism in the Modern World**

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**Blogspot**

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Imagine living in a world where men rank higher than women based on the simple fact that they are male, and therefore are the dominant one. Your voting rights do not exist, and you face the possibility of sexual harassment, domestic violence, or sexual assault. This was what it was like for a woman before feminism came to be. Feminism refers to the movement of which women gained equal rights and opportunities. After three waves of feminism, many rights and policies were placed and women now have much more equality compared to before the feminism wave began. However, it could be argued that although many things have changed for women and for the better, that there is still discrimination targeted towards women. These topics were openly discussed at the F-Word event in Brantford at the Research and Academic Centre on Thursday, November 18th.

A modern example of how there are still inequalities between men and women can be found at CAMI Automotive, a car factory located in Ingersoll, Ontario. The factory used to be a place where only men were allowed to work, but in today's modern world, plenty of women can be seen in the factory. Anne Macmeekin has worked at CAMI for almost twenty-two years, and for the past four and a half years, she has been elected to the position of CAW Local 88 Human Rights/Medical Placement/Employment Equity Representative/Women's Advocate. Apart from this position at CAMI, Macmeekin earned her Bachelor's Degree in Women's studies at the University of Western Ontario, while working full time and taking care of her daughter. Macmeekin is also a certified mediator. To Macmeekin, the word feminism means, "That I am "for women". It means that we don't have to be the same, we don't have to agree but we support women's efforts and don't do things to undermine each other. Being "for women" means ignoring men's efforts to keep women competing with each other as opposed to doing more useful things." To her it means challenging traditional roles of women and men and testing things out to see if they can be different and fairer. "Feminism also means challenging violence, because violence is the means by which most oppressed groups are kept under control; Sometimes that violence is extremely subtle," Macmeekin commented. Working in a place where 75% of the workers are men, women are faced with daily instances of stereotyping and bias' because of their sex. Tracey McIntosh has been with CAMI for twenty-two years and says, "When it's time for break, the supervisor chooses someone to sweep and clean up after the line, almost every time it has been a woman chosen for the job, and a lot of the times it has been me." McIntosh also commented that there tends to be, from time to time, some sexual harassment in the workplace. "I know that they're just joking, and I personally wouldn't report it or anything major like that, but it all depends on the person, they may take more serious offense to it than others," she said. Macmeekin agreed that women encounter discrimination regularly, but does not always feel it is necessary to speak up about every incident. "I am unapologetic about my right to earn a living as much as anyone else. Speaking up is a balancing act. If you are too vocal, you lose your audience. If you are too quiet, you never get an audience," she said. Macmeekin feels that there will always be those who benefit from women's oppression and they will never stop working at coming up with new ideas or schemes to control women (and other oppressed groups) so that they can profit or benefit. Macmeekin summarized her feelings by saying, "I feel that when I encounter discrimination or harassment, it is part

of a growing and changing world. Change can take a long time to happen. I try to be patient, but sometimes I just say to myself, "this is bullshit" and move on."

"I am a Feminist because I believe women can do anything," said Lyla Miklos with a positive attitude at the F-Word Event located in Brantford's Academic and Research Centre. Lyla Miklos is an award-winning broadcaster amongst many other things such as: activist, publicist, vocalist, public speaker and many more. Also present on the discussion panel, along with Miklos, were Margaret Toye, the assistant professor with Women and Gender Studies, Bryn Ossington, who is a Waterloo student studying Women and Philosophy, and Alicia Sayers, an advocate in the Aboriginal community. An interesting topic discussed amongst the panel was the possibility of men being Feminists. "To me, it doesn't matter who you are, men can be Feminists, anyone can be as long as they truly understand what it means to be one," said Sayers. Toye, however, had a response that was quite the opposite. She felt that a man could be pro-feminist, but he himself has not lived with the daily consciousness and therefore cannot fully understand what it's like to be a woman in today's society. Towards the end of the panel, Miklos summarized the discussion about feminism by saying that when you feel you've been wronged or your rights have been violated, the best thing to do is, "When you feel it, speak up about it, write a letter, when the passion is there, listen to it. Act on it, don't just ignore it." The panel answered questions from the mostly female audience at the end of the discussion.

Women and Feminists have been fighting for their rights for years, and are still continuing to do so today. Feminists exist for that very reason, to ensure and continue the rights of women. According to the women interviewed, discrimination against women will always exist, and therefore feminism is necessary to help prevent it. The F-Word Event opened up discussions and helped students and audience members that attended to understand what feminism is and why it is still an important subject in today's society.