

#Hashtag Feminism

On October 7, 2018, Taylor Swift posted her political opinion to her one hundred and twelve Instagram followers to read, urging all of her followers age eighteen and over to register to vote before the November election and provided the Vote.org website. Following this post, Vote.org reported that in the twenty-four hours after this social media post, over sixty-five million thousand new voters registered (Respers). The role of social media in the feminist movement has increased in the past few years due to the ease of allowing a person's followers to immediately hear their opinions. Because of the rise in Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook postings, feminists are now able to reach millions of people daily to spread their messages. Pictures can be shared, websites can be linked, and rallies can be organized using only a computer or a smart phone. Feminist thinkers now have the ability to share their platforms with one click. Due to the social media presence, feminists can positively share their message and spread the word about feminism.

There are also many who believe that the use of social media is harmful to feminism. They believe it is detracting from the feminist message. In her article for Harpers in March 2018, Katie Roiphe explains that women have used the #metoo movement as a way to sometimes anonymously speak out about how they have been abused. Some like Roiphe argue that this is an-anti movement in a way. Accusers are able to make claims against men by hiding behind social media. For example, the Shitty Media Men list was a crowd-sourced spreadsheet shared on social media last year for accusers to speak out against the men who had harassed them. Those against the use of this message argue that "there is something chilling about circulating lists like this, with their shadowy accusations capable of ruining reputations and careers, simply so that a woman can be sure that a weird interaction she had at a bar with a media guy was, in

fact, creepy (Roiphe). Those against Hashtag feminism also think that this speech medium leaves out a part of feminism that has a positive side and only focuses on the negative.

According to Sarah Jones' article in the New Republic, social media has the ability to work too quickly as "we're moving too fast to be careful, that some women's complaints are trivial, that their demands are unnecessarily punitive" (Jones). They believe that too many people are left out of these conversations. While some can argue that social media works too fast to spread the message, this is actually a positive attribute for a feminist's stance.

Hashtag feminism uses the social media platform to benefit feminism. There has been a wide increase in the use of the term feminism throughout social media. Not only has social media pushed the #metoo movement over the past year, but other hashtags such as #freethenipple, #askhermore, #whyistayed, #notbuyingit, and #yesallwomen have been brought to the attention of the mainstream popularity (Henderson). Feminists are able to quickly bring visibility to whichever issue they would like to on that day. Women, and especially feminist women, are able to use their voices with social media to spread awareness to these issues. "A greater amount of people are presented with feminist issues in some form, from Facebook activity to smartphone ads, and their capacity to engage with them through digital platforms has significantly increased" (Rok Jons). Prior to social media, it was extremely difficult for women to quickly share their opinions. At this point and time, users can be connected to multiple different feminist issues by simply logging on to an app with their smart phone or accessing a blog.

Next, the use of social media is beneficial to feminists because they are able to reach millions of different people. In an article for Blue Stockings Magazine, Ragna Rok Jons explains, "Every person who has some form of access to digital media technologies, whether

limited or permanent, has the potential to engage in the various feminist communities that exist and persist today”. There are very few people in the world today who do not log onto social media daily. In fact, eighty-one percent of Americans had a social media account in 2017 (The Statistics Portal). If eighty-one percent of those in the United States would read these hashtags, it makes certain that a feminist’s message is reach by many. “The vast variety of “schools of thought” within online feminist communities showcase the new faces of feminism, oftentimes each of them individually coming to terms with their own definitions for and ideal practices of their own individuated yet multiple feminisms” (Rok Jons). Most even argue that Feminism’s fourth wave has occurred because of social media and the invention of the World Wide Web, therefore, the feminist movement is again positively influenced by social media.

Lastly, social media is consistently inspiring others to become active with their own thoughts and opinions about feminism. While it only took one Instagram post from Taylor Swift to organize millions to register to vote, there are numerous other examples of how feminists use their social media platforms to not only inspire, but also effectively and efficiently organize their support and their supporters. On January 21, 2017, over three million women went to Washington, D.C. for the first Women’s March on Washington. Without social media, it would have been extremely hard, if not impossible, for everyone to organize their efforts. Feminists and social media users posted on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to assist in the organization of these marchers. These three million people who gathered that day proves that feminists have the direct ability to reach out to organize others. They use their social media accounts to help inspire others and bring attention to the important feminist issues.

In 2019, feminists can positively share their message and spread the word about feminism due to their social media posts and presence. No one could have known that one post by a

popular music star could create such a change in the political culture. In one Instagram post, Taylor Swift rallied millions of Americans to register to vote so that their voices could also be heard. More women should feel empowered by using their social media accounts to share positive thoughts and opinions, just as some feminists do. Should more women and more feminists share their platforms, it will create more conversation throughout the country and create the change that is needed.

References

Henderson, Callum. (2017). How the feminist movement has changed in the social media age.

Retrieved March 3, 2019, from <http://vt.co/lifestyle/social-media-changed-feminist-movement/>.

Jones, Sarah. (2018). There's No Such Thing as Twitter Feminism. Retrieved March 3, 2019,

from <https://newrepublic.com/article/146984/theres-no-thing-twitter-feminism>.

Respers France, L. (2018). Voter registration reportedly spikes after Taylor Swift post.

Retrieved January 20, 2019 from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/09/entertainment/taylor-swift-voter-registration/index.html>.

Roiphe, Katie. (2018). The Other Whisper: How Twitter Feminism is Bad for Women. Retrieved

March 3, 2019, from <https://harpers.org/archive/2018/03/the-other-whisper-network-2/>

Rok Jons, Ragna. (2013). Is the "4th Wave" of Feminism Digital? Retrieved March 3, 2019 from

<http://bluestockingsmag.com/2013/08/19/is-the-4th-wave-of-feminism-digital/>.

The Statistics Portal. (2018). Social Media Statistics and Facts. Retrieved March 2, 2019, from

<https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/>.