



Ms. at 40 and the Future of Feminism

2012 marks the 40th anniversary of **Ms. magazine**, a publication that both chronicled and nurtured the feminist movement. *Ms.* covered topics that had long been ignored or glossed over in mainstream society — reproductive rights, lesbian relationships, balancing motherhood and work, sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence and more. When *Ms.* was founded in 1972, women weren't allowed to get a loan without their husbands' permission. They were paid much less than men and were expected to wear girdles to work. Abortion was illegal and the American Psychiatric Association classified homosexuality as a mental disorder.

We've come a long way since 1972. What does our progress mean for the feminist movement today? Have its goals shifted? Or its methods? How do religion, race, and sexuality fit into these discussions? What does it mean to be a "feminist" today?

This discussion guide explores where feminism is now, and what it might look like in the future. It draws on information and discussions from a weeklong series of events at Stanford University commemorating the *Ms.* anniversary.

- [Definitions, Facts & Figures](#) [page 2-3](#)
- [Gloria Steinem](#) [page 4-5](#)
The writer, activist and Ms. co-founder urges feminists to do "one outrageous thing every day."
- [Ms. essay contest winners](#) [page 6-7](#)
Nearly three hundred contestants came from all corners of the world and spanning four generations of women, from age 14 to 81, to contribute their thoughts on what 40 iconic Ms. covers meant to them.
- [Learn More](#) [page 10](#)

Let's start with some definitions

Fem·i·nist

“Someone, which can be a woman or a man, who believes in the full social, economic, political equality of women and men.” — Gloria Steinem

Gen·der

The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Sex

Biological and physiological characteristics that define males and females.

In other words, “male” and “female” are sex categories, while “masculine” and “feminine” are gender categories.

Now, some facts and figures

Women in Education

- One year after graduation from college, women earned only 80% of what their male counterparts earned. Ten years after graduation, women earned only 69% of what their male counterparts earned.
- Women receive just 4.2% of venture capital funding.
- Women earned 18% of all Computer Science degrees and made up less than 25% of the workers in engineering and computer-related fields in 2009.
- Women account for 40% of MBA students but only 3% of CEOs in Fortune 5000 companies. Women are half of law students, but only 1/5 of equity partners at major law firms. Women earn more than half of college and Master's degrees, but represent only about 1/4 of professors and 1/5 of college presidents.

*Sources: AAUW, “The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap”; Clayman Institute for Gender Research; Deborah L. Rhode, Stanford University

Women in the Workforce

- 2007 — Women own 29% of all non-farm businesses
- 2010 — On average, women earn 77.4 cents on the dollar compared to men. The gap is even greater in certain fields, such as financial advising, retail sales, property management and law (on an annual earnings, based on full-time, year-round workers).
- 2010 — 67% of working women are college-educated. In 1970, that figure was 22%.
- 2010 — Women hold only 16.6% of seats in U.S. Congress and 17% of seats in the Senate.

*Source: Department of Labor

Violence

- In a 2006 survey, 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men reported that they had been the victim of rape or sexual assault.
- In 2008, 57% of the rape or sexual assaults against females were committed by an offender whom they knew.

*Source: Department of Justice

Global Women's Health

- About 12 million people live in literal slavery around the world, and 80% of them are women and girls.
- The AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly female. Of all adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, 61% are women.
- Every year, about 14 million adolescent girls become mothers. More than 90% of these very young mothers live in developing countries.

*Sources: International Labor Organization; World Health Organization 2011 report

Gloria Steinem's Perspective

Gloria Steinem is a journalist, author, activist, co-founder and longtime editor of **Ms. magazine**. She coined phrases like “reproductive freedom” that simply didn’t exist in the 1970s. Much to her chagrin, Steinem came to be viewed as the “face” of the feminist movement. In her Jan. 26, 2012 keynote speech to a sold-out audience at Stanford, she addressed a wide array of topics with her trademark humor, optimism and passion for social justice. More than 400 people live-tweeted the speech and responded to her call to “do one outrageous thing” every day.

LAUGHTER

When we learn something, we get a hit of dopamine. It's like an orgasm of the mind.

People in positions of power, in surveys what they say they fear the most is being laughed at.

When we laugh, we're doing a political act.

YOUTH

Polls show that young women are more likely to support feminist issues than older women.

I spend most of my time working with women 30 to 60 years younger than me.



TECHNOLOGY

No matter how miraculous technology is, the highest purpose of technology is bringing us together.

It can cause us to cocoon, if we just listen to people we agree with, if we don't get diversity of media. If you hit "Send," you think you've done something. You haven't, you must DO something.

NO MORE 'WOMEN'S WORK'

First came equal pay, then comparable worth. Next: The economic value of caregiving. We should attribute an economic value to caregiving and make that tax-deductible or tax-refundable

VIOLENCE

Violence against women is the paradigm of all violence.

Violence in relationships and families normalizes it on the societal level.

Millions of children are forcibly wed, made to bear children before they are willing and able to do so.

SOCIAL MYTHS

Whenever one group of women is sexually restricted to preserve the purity of the group, others are sexually exploited to produce workers and cheap labor.

We can't just let religions create gods who look like the ruling class and pretend it's not political.



ISSUES

We need to link the movements. Somehow gay rights, environment, civil rights are viewed as separate.

Social justice movements "are all deeply, deeply linked."

Ranking instead of linking oppressions is killing us.

Categories can be the enemies of connection.

We must go from dependence to independence to interdependence

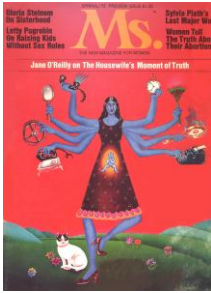
We will overcome these crazy categories based on race or gender or sexuality, with joy and poetry and sex and humor

EFFECTING CHANGE

What works are true stories. If it's happening to many people, it's about politics and we can organize and change it. It is the stories that get us out of the street and into physical action.

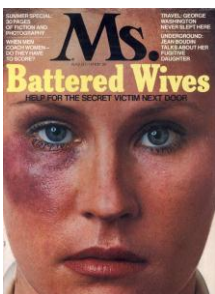
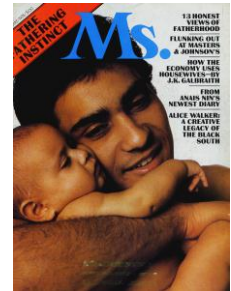
We must not hold our fingers to the wind. We must become the wind.

Perspectives, Past and Present



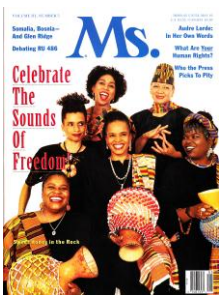
The Dance Worn thin, Jane O'Reilly's housewife gracing the Spring 1972 cover balances baby, beauty, and an array of domestic and office duties. Her spinning plates depict everyday responsibilities associated with the helpmate sex. While the author encourages *Ms.* readers to register the "click! of recognition" that we are much, much more, the weeping model grasps objects that reinforce the myth that feminism is/was about moderating a narrow private sphere. In Hinduism, the Nataraja (or dancing "he" Shiva) reveals four outstretched arms holding up the cosmic symbols of creation, protection, destruction, embodiment—all while stamping out (the dwarf of) ignorance. Women have been negotiating the same for centuries. Click! — **Cynthia Ryan. Birmingham, AL**

Because it dares—without artifice or mockery—to associate manhood with the tender cradling of an infant, this 1974 *Ms.* cover is as relevant now as it was then: It asserts feminism's capacity to liberate men as well as women from restrictive gender scripts, and reminds us that while feminism must empower women to pick up the pen, the scythe or the sword, it must also empower men to live what Michael Kimmel has called more "emotionally resonant lives" (*Ms.* 1997). As long as men are socialized to repress human attributes that are aligned with and generally (dis)regarded as "feminine," patriarchy will endure. — **Trish Matson. Coquitlam, British Columbia**



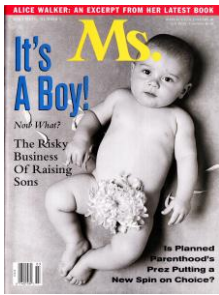
She is the one right next to you clutching the shopping cart and steering it down the aisles, picking up milk, eggs, and the occasional vegetable. She is the woman who goes to church on Sunday mornings. She is normal, pretty and nice. But this woman bears witness to a secret pain. Normal, pretty and nice is being beaten behind closed doors and her womanhood is being slowly stripped away. And you do not know. You and I do not suspect. This cover exposes the hurt that she experiences on a day-to-day basis. It uncovers her hidden wounds so that you and I can have the courage to uncover ours. — **Angela Banks. Carol Stream, IL**

In September of 1977, while *Ms.* magazine reported on women and their bodies, I was 14 and at war with mine. I weighed 90 pounds and could count my ribs. Eating Disorders were rare in 1977, but *Ms.* was keenly aware of the dangerous path women were on. Ten million females suffer from eating disorders today, and while we've made progress, we still fall victim to an attitude that power over our bodies will somehow empower us. The September 1977 issue illustrates how *Ms.* moves the feminist movement forward while making us conscious of the challenges and limitations we're faced with as women. I salute *Ms.* for maintaining its voice and being a positive role model for the past forty years. — **Shari Brady. Vernon Hills, IL**



Sweet honey in the rock. Sweet honey in the rock. Sounds rise and warm like morning sun; rhythms pulse within our bodies, between our bodies. A brilliance of color, we sing: we are people of worth. We are history. We are today and tomorrow. We may be beaten, molested, barred from crossing thresholds of opportunity, but our voices will not be stilled. Together we sing. We are women. We are African American. We, mothers and sisters and daughters, know your journey is our journey. Come, sing with us. We celebrate though the journey continues, we smile knowing tears will come again. Come, join us in joy. Clap, shimmy, stomp and shake. Raise your voice – for grace is big enough for all of us. Black, not black, women, children and men. Sing for the ones we have lost. Sing for the struggle and for strength. Sing, sing now for freedom. — **Audrey Shafer. Mountain View, CA**

Perspectives, Past and Present



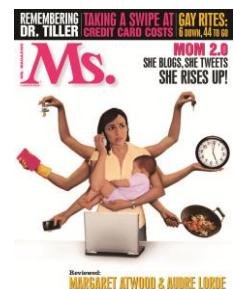
In the early 2000s, pregnant with my first child, I was 100% sure she was a girl. I had a girl's name picked out, and non-gender-stereotyped clothing for my strong non-gender-stereotyped little daughter to wear. Nonetheless I was shocked when, a few weeks before she was born, I found out she was a boy. On the surface nothing needed changing, but inside me everything did. A friend said, "That's great! Everyone these days wants to raise strong little girls. Raising sensitive boys – nobody's into that. That's not a popular cause." Two little boys later, I know how right she was. Raising feminist sons: still a minority goal in 2011. Raising little boys who will be seen as fully human, not thugs in training? A risky business indeed. — **Elisabeth Cohen. Bala Cynwyd, PA**

The first time I saw this cover, I stopped in my tracks. Here was a memorial to my war. The names listed were my comrades-in-arms, except that we weren't armed. I traced the names and wondered how they died—imaged how they died, until the lines between their loss and my life began to blur and I had to stop. Survivor's guilt swept over me and all I could do was cry. How did I escape with my life, when countless women around the world have not? In 1994 I was just four years out of the war zone, still shell shocked and learning to live in freedom; still afraid to speak my truth. But here it was, on the cover of Ms., for all the world to see. Name after heartbreaking name – but mine wasn't on it. And I knew then that I would never go back. — **Amy Stewart-Mailhot. University Place, WA**



We were awkwardly silent as we drove through Greek Row on a Friday night. My "sisters in Christ" and I did not know how to respond to the sidewalks full of sorority women. We only had one category for their peals of laughter, their tottering high heels, and most of all, their short skirts. Melissa broke the silence by muttering the word "sinners." I didn't yet know how to articulate the problems with the virgin/slut dichotomy, but Melissa's pronouncement slid unwelcome into my stomach. As a present-day Christian and Feminist, I rejoice when my religion's sexual ethic is prodded and challenged. I long for my sisters (in Christ or not) to know themselves as powerful, competent, and trustworthy sexual beings, undeserving of the violence that the virgin/slut categories enforce. — **Christine Canty. San Francisco, CA**

This cover captures the plight of modern women as we juggle multiple discourses of femininity. Traditional expectations of housework and motherhood persist, while new assumptions of financial and social independence accrue. The overlay of these discourses, each pulling the woman in a different direction causes her to appear monstrous, a grotesque parody of what happens when women cannot maintain the balance. She looks away; rather than involving the viewer, she bears her struggle alone, claiming only the attention of the person on the phone, a narrow audience for a universal problem. Is this woman, so troubled by her attempts to "be it all," the 21st Century version of the problem that has no name? — **Rebecca Burnett. Jenkintown, PA**



It was in the magazine rack of the university's Women's Center exactly when I needed it—when giving up seemed wise. Another audience had responded with disbelief to my revelation that coerced sex is rape. I felt like I was back in that metal chair at the police station, trying to explain to the detective why the bruises on my body weren't "evidence of passionate love making." At such times, when it's clear that those in power just don't get it, the fight against rape seems endless. In 2011, lawmakers reminded us that they didn't get it when they quietly tried to affirm the FBI's distinction of real rape as "forcible." Yet also in 2011, Ms. reminded us that anti-rape work has not been in vain. Survivors aren't alone anymore; those who abuse power—in the back of a car or from behind a government desk—will be called out. — **Andrea Harris. Beavercreek, OH**

Learn More

gender.stanford.edu/activism

Clayman Institute on iTunes: [Listen to the full Gloria Steinem speech](#)

CoverItLive: [Viewers live-tweet Gloria Steinem's speech](#)

Gender News: [Steinem awakens young and old, encouraging 'outrageous acts'](#)

Suzanne Braun Levine: ["What We Left Behind: Girdles, Silence and Illegal Abortion"](#)

Stanford Report: ["The feminist struggle continues, Gloria Steinem says, encouraging a Stanford audience toward 'one new subversive thing' "](#)

Stanford Daily: ["Steinem outlines future of feminism, activism"](#)

Stanford Report: ["Stanford University symposium, exhibits, talk by Gloria Steinem commemorate Ms. magazine's 40 years"](#)

Fem 2pt0: ["Does Feminism Have a Future?"](#)

San Francisco Chronicle: [40 years of feminism](#)

The Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford University creates research and programs to move beyond the stall in the gender revolution. Our goal is to create a research agenda that will drive new solutions to move society forward. This fact sheet was created by Jessica Parks, with assistance from Natalie Jabbar and Lily Bixler – current and past students of Stanford's Graduate Program in Journalism.