

bell hooks and the New Feminists

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Abstract

bell hooks envisioned a feminism that was *for everybody*, a revolutionary type of feminism that was inclusive and encompassing, which may eventually lead to a new social order. With the emergence of the fourth and fifth wave of feminists in the last two decades, however, a trend and trajectory can be observed within the movement. To continuously engage the diversity of themes in feminism, this paper reviews the development of new(er) feminist thought and praxis. Using hooks' feminist vision as a critical framework, I inquire about the new feminisms and evaluates whether these movements push for global transformation and revolutionary change.

Keywords: bell hooks, feminism, fourth wave, fifth wave, revolution

Introduction

After bell hooks passed away in 2021, there seemed to be a renewed interest in her works, with topics ranging from her influence on pedagogy, gender studies, cultural criticism, critical race theory, and feminist theory. These works embody how hooks fought for social justice and condemned oppression, domination, and violence through her radical feminist theorizing and her vision of revolutionary change.¹ Many remember hooks' contribution to feminist theory as she challenged White Capitalist Supremacist Patriarchy.² She highlighted women's unique racial and class differences and experiences of oppression and how feminism must evolve to become a mass-based movement that is not exclusively focused on women's liberation but an actual politics of the margins wherein *everybody* is liberated.³

While Anna Julia Cooper discussed this experience of oppression as early as the 1890s, Kimberle Crenshaw later defined it as intersectionality or the intersection of identities and systems of marginalization in the 1980s. Fast forward to decades after, with the affirmation of the intersecting backdrop of identities, emerging globalization, and the advancement of technologies, new feminists have surfaced. The fourth and fifth-wave movements of feminism would champion intersectionality and critique the interrelating identities, constructions, and experiences of oppression while concentrating on interpersonal empowerment and dismantling social constraints and barriers to equal opportunities.

The new feminists are noticeably distinct from their predecessors as they have more advanced technological tools for their cause. The fourth-wave movement, for instance, centers its discourse

¹ Stéphanie Perazzone, "Ending Global Violence Through Radical Feminist Theory: The Teachings of bell hooks on Power and Domination," *Civil Wars* 25, no. 2–3 (July 3, 2023): 595–605, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2023.2253047>.

² Perazzone.

³ Paola Rudan, "Speaking the Unspeakable. bell hooks' Living Political Discourse," *USAbroad – Journal of American History and Politics* 6 (March 6, 2023): 53–62, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-2752/16469>.

on social justice, sexism, and misogyny on online platforms. The movement would also be known as online feminism. Similarly, the fifth-wave movement depends on internet connectivity, with the COVID-19 virus as its variability. These newer feminist movements have shown how feminist ideas and praxis have evolved and worked towards improving the conditions of marginalized individuals and groups. Despite these developments, they have been subject to controversies and criticisms, particularly concerning their limitations, exclusivity, lack of engagement, and conflicting methods.⁴

While critiques and conflicts are not new to feminism, I wonder whether hooks' feminist theory would be relevant to these newer discourses, and if it is, would it be able to supplement current feminist conversations? While I have tackled some of these in my previous work *bell hooks and Online Feminism* (2023), this paper goes beyond the online sphere. I review the earlier waves of feminism and examine the fourth and fifth wave of feminist discourses against them. I identify their themes, examine concrete cases of their campaigns, and analyze them using hooks' feminist vision as a critical framework. To continuously engage the multiplicity of themes in feminism, I look at the progress and development of new feminist thought and praxis and evaluate whether these movements push for a global transformation and revolutionary change.

Earlier Feminists

British and American feminists challenged patriarchy and prevailing societal norms from the 1500s to the 1700s.⁵ Modern feminism of the first-wave movement, however, is said to have begun with Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In her work, Wollstonecraft addressed the difficulties

⁴ Mohammed Xolile Ntshangase, "A Philosophical Critique of Feminism: From the Third Wave to the Fourth Wave," *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development* 10, no. 2 (2021), 25.

⁵ Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, "Early Feminism," in *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2001), 11, 12.

faced by mothers and middle-class women and argued that women's education would uplift their intellectual stature as citizens of society. Approximately a century later, John Stuart Mill centered on how society oppressed women through legal subordination. He demanded equal rights between men and women.

There were numerous feminist activists works and efforts from the 1800s to the early 1900s, each clamoring for various women's rights such as the right to vote, the right to property, the right to paid work and economic independence, and the modification of laws relating to marriage, divorce, and parental legal authority. During this period, in other places besides Europe and North America, feminist activism likewise spread in Egypt, Iran, and India.⁶ During this time, Sarah Grand coined the phrase "New Woman" to account for the "new generation" of women who wished to be independent and refused to be confined to marriage.⁷

The second wave of feminism was highly influenced and pioneered by Simone de Beauvoir with her work *The Second Sex* (1949). Beauvoir's contribution to the movement is her description of the cultural construction of women and how they are categorized as the *Other*. Beauvoir asserts that women can overcome their subordination to men by transcending their gender. Following Beauvoir, from the 1960s to the 1980s, second-wave feminists questioned gender roles and women's sexuality.⁸ Kate Millett, in particular, echoes Beauvoir's critique of idealized femininity. Shulamith Firestone's radical feminism, on the other hand, highlighted that the "new" feminism of the 1970s was not merely a movement for social equality but rather the fight against oppressive power systems that men have reinforced.⁹ Some other notable feminists during this time include H el ene Cixous,

⁶ Ania Malinowska, "Waves of Feminism," *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication* 1 (2020), 2.

⁷ Valerie Sanders, "First Wave Feminism," in *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2001).

⁸ Malinowska, "Waves of Feminism."

⁹ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (Verso Books, 2015).

Rosalind Coward, Betty Friedan, Laura Mulvey, Alice Walker, Janice Radway, and Elaine Showalter. They highlighted the importance of shaping womanhood and recognizing women's lived experience.¹⁰

Third-wave feminism, also known as postfeminism, is a reaction to the feminism of the 1970s as it rejected feminism's grand narratives and emphasized the second-wave's stumbling blocks. R. Claire Snyder enumerates some of the third wave's criticisms of the earlier waves, specifically how women have been categorized.¹¹ The "woman identity" is not the only identity that should be examined, as there are striking and substantial differences among women.¹² Furthermore, the second wave neglected personal narratives and intersectionality, lacked multivocality and praxis, and lacked inclusivity.¹³ Thus, postfeminism recognizes pluralization and diversification, or "other" voices and identities aside from those represented by the second wave. It was concerned about pluralism and self-determination and that each woman (regardless of their differences) should be able to negotiate their choices regarding equality and liberation.¹⁴ While not all in agreement with each other, some prominent feminists during this period include Susan Muaddi Darraj, Rene Denfeld, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Faludi, Daisy Hernandez, Catharine MacKinnon, Camille Paglia, Bushra Rehman, Katie Roiphe, Rebecca Walker, and Naomi Wolf.¹⁵

bell hooks, another leading proponent of the third wave, challenged the earlier waves of feminism in that it focused primarily on the plight of white bourgeois women. As a reaction to Betty Friedan and other feminists of her time, hooks criticized the homogeneity of

¹⁰ Malinowska, "Waves of Feminism."

¹¹ R. Claire Snyder, "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (September 2008), 175–76, <https://doi.org/10.1086/588436>.

¹² Rory Cooke Dicker, Alison Piepmeier, and Rory Dicker, *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century* (UPNE, 2003), 9–10.

¹³ Snyder, "What Is Third-Wave Feminism?" 175–76.

¹⁴ R. Claire Snyder-Hall, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of 'Choice,'" *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (March 2010), 255, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592709992842>.

¹⁵ Snyder, "What Is Third-Wave Feminism?" 176; Snyder-Hall, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of 'Choice,'" 255–57.

feminism and its goal of equality between men and women of the same class.¹⁶ She claimed that white feminists ignored the varying positions that Black women occupy under White Capitalist Supremacist Patriarchy. hooks referred to earlier white feminists as reformists, considering that while they fought for women's equal rights, they ignored the issues and concerns of women of color and women from underprivileged classes. hooks highlighted the web of oppressions that plague non-white women, which are functions of not only their sex and gender but instead their race and class as well. Following hooks, feminist political theorist Crenshaw terms such phenomenon as *intersectionality* or the web of oppressive factors that illustrates the intricacies of women's marginalization. During this time, the Riot Grrrl movement also emerged with music as one of their media, examining how racism, "able-bodiesism," ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism, and heterosexism affected women's lives.¹⁷

hooks, like other radical feminists, sought a unified cause despite the diversity of women's backgrounds and experiences. hooks' revolutionary feminism recognizes that *everybody* should participate in the movement to eradicate oppression.¹⁸ She also proposed a standard definition of feminism: the stand against any form of oppression. hooks stressed that eliminating oppression may only be possible through cultural transformation and continued feminist discourse. Women share the everyday experience of oppression, and the process of consciousness-raising leads to women's examination of their lived experiences alongside the dominant ideologies perpetuating their oppression.¹⁹

¹⁶ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Pluto Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Kira Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women: The Rise of the Fourth Wave of Feminism* (Guardian Books, 2013), 35.

¹⁸ bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Pluto Press, 2000).

¹⁹ Snyder-Hall, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of 'Choice,'" 257.

The New(er) Feminists

Kira Cochrane claims that the fourth-wave movement began in 2013 as a reaction to the continuing violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV).²⁰ Often synonymous with millennials, the fourth wave highlights activism,²¹ interpersonal empowerment, and equal opportunity for all sexes. More than just the assertion of the legal rights of women, fourth-wave feminism also fought against sexism, misogyny, and rape culture. Alongside this focus, fourth-wave feminists also used technology to promote feminist ideas, mainly through internet forums and other online platforms.

In the United Kingdom, various activist projects emerged to combat not only VAW but sexual harassment and the objectification of women as well. These include Laura Bates' Everyday Sexism Project, Caroline Criado-Perez's Notes for Women, No More Page Three, Campaign4Consent, Just the Women, Go Feminist!, UK Feminista, and Counting Dead Women Project. Similar protest efforts triggered by various local cases were likewise held in Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Germany, India, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine.²²

In 2011, the SlutWalk Movement, a transnational feminist effort, was also born. It was a reaction to a Toronto police officer's slut-shaming of college students. Joetta Carr analyzes the movement's resistance strategy and claims that it challenged how patriarchy controls women's sexualities through gender violence, victim-blaming, and slut-shaming.²³ SlutWalk also condemned rape culture or the "social" and cultural acceptance of GBV and rape.²⁴ In many cases,

²⁰ Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women*.

²¹ Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions* (A&C Black, 2012).

²² Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women*, 17–19.

²³ Joetta Carr, "The SlutWalk Movement: A Study in Transnational Feminist Activism," *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 4, no. 4 (January 1, 2013), 24.

²⁴ Alyssa Teekah, *This is what a Feminist Slut Looks Like; Perspectives on the Slutwalk Movement* (Demeter Press, 2015).

survivors are blamed for perpetrators' acts, and perpetrators go unscathed and unpunished. SlutWalk spanned more than 40 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, India, Indonesia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Ukraine, and the United States.²⁵

The condemnation of GBV across the world was not only limited to the SlutWalk Movement or only done on the streets. Local-based feminist movements have also become multi-dimensional and mobilized through various online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, and other online forums, blogs, and petitions. Referred to as feminism's online wave, the internet became one of the most used media in feminist activism. These feminisms have spun off into popular feminism, cyberfeminism, feminist cyberactivism, discursive feminism, online feminist activism, feminist digilantism, and Facebook feminism.²⁶ These projects aim to criticize media representations, create safe spaces, and call out various discriminatory practices offline and online.

Fourth-wave feminism has thus been referred to as online feminism despite being more significant than its online efforts. Some movements associated with the online wave include #TimesUp, and the #MeToo movement. Because of hashtags, they have also been classified as hashtag feminism. Some other examples of hashtag projects include Ukraine's #IAmNotAfraidToSayIt, and the Philippines' #BabaeAko and #LalabanAko (translated to "I am a woman" and "I will fight").²⁷ Both these projects are online campaigns that discuss injustices and sexual

²⁵ Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women*, 47; Carr, "The SlutWalk Movement," 45.

²⁶ Hazel T. Biana, "bell hooks and Online Feminism," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 25, no. 2 (March 22, 2023), 3, <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss2/10>.

²⁷ Tetyana Lokot, "#IAmNotAfraidToSayIt: Stories of Sexual Violence as Everyday Political Speech on Facebook," *Information, Communication & Society* 21, no. 6 (June 3, 2018): 802–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1430161>; Aniceta Patricia T. Alingasa and Mira Alexis P. Ofreneo, "'Fearless, Powerful, Filipino': Identity Positioning in the Hashtag Activism of #BabaeAko," *Feminist Media Studies* 21, no. 4 (May 19, 2021): 587–603, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1791927>.

violence in their regions as well. The #MeToo Movement likewise made the prevalence of sexual assault and GBV known to women and worked on the premise that collective power may overthrow patriarchal culture.²⁸ Perhaps the most well-known feminist transnational project of its time, the #MeToo Movement also triggered fourth-wave feminism in Brazil, Japan, South Korea, and many other countries.²⁹ Given its online nature, opportunities were created for feminists to mobilize regardless of where they were. #MeToo was a venue for women to voice out their experiences of GBV.

Because of its “calling out” nature, call-out and cancel culture stemmed from feminist online activism as well, to teach people about their offenses or misinformation.³⁰ The fourth wave movement, however, has been criticized as limited since its activism is centered on technology devices and social media platforms. There have also been various accusations, such as FemiNazism and “extreme” feminist positions.³¹

Fifth-wave feminism, which supposedly began in 2014 up to the present post-COVID-19 era, is shaped by organized political activism.³² While not chronological in order, the fourth wave overlaps with the so-called fifth wave. As a multi-dimensional movement, the fifth wave is

²⁸ Sarah Jaffe, “The Collective Power of #MeToo,” *Dissent* 65, no. 2 (2018): 80–87, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dss.2018.0031>.

²⁹ Olivia Cristina Perez and Arlene Martinez Ricoldi, “The Fourth Wave of Feminism in Brazil,” *Revista Estudos Feministas* 31 (October 30, 2023): e83260, <https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-9584-2023v31n383260-en>; Linda Hasunuma and Ki-young Shin, “#MeToo in Japan and South Korea: #WeToo, #WithYou,” *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 40, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 97–111, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2019.1563416>; Haeseong Park, “Korea’s #MeToo Movement and the New Feminist Generation,” *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2024): 301–3.

³⁰ Beth Tucker, “‘That’s Problematic’: Tracing the Birth of Call-Out Culture,” *Critical Reflections: A Student Journal on Contemporary Sociological Issues*, April 26, 2018, 4, <https://ojs.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/index.php/SOC/article/view/4545>.

³¹ Ntshangase, “A Philosophical Critique of Feminism.”

³² Eleanor Courtemanche, “The Fourth and Fifth Waves,” Stanford Humanities Center, January 8, 2019, <https://shc.stanford.edu/arcade/interventions/fourth-and-fifth-waves>.

inspired by earlier feminist waves as it seeks to “end the war” against women and rebuild the post-COVID world.³³ Shannon Mulvey traces its beginnings to the 2017 Women’s March in London when Women’s Equality Party leader Sophie Walker launched Feminism 5.0, or the fifth wave.³⁴ Walker asserts that women’s liberation and freedom have been under attack and are vulnerable more than ever. Thus, she proposes a space, this new wave of feminism, where online activism and organization can embody action.³⁵ Beyond the digital space of the fourth wave, fifth-wave feminists continue to push for mobilization and activism but beyond digital spaces. It also puts inclusivity, intersectionality, and privilege discourses at the center of its agenda. Mulvey stresses that the fifth wave is about transforming online action into embodied action against violence in multiple industries.³⁶ Sarah Ahmed asserts that this intersectional “feminist army” cannot bridge the gap between understanding women’s experiences and how women’s bodies are perceived and positioned.³⁷ Therefore, Ahmed recommends diversity work, transforming the institutions and systems, and fostering (intersectional) feminist consciousnesses.³⁸

³³ Natasha Garcha, “COVID: The Fifth Wave of Feminism,” *Medium* (blog), June 17, 2020, <https://medium.com/@natashagarcha16/covid-the-fifth-wave-of-feminism-f2e3d2a2a123>.

³⁴ Shannon Mulvey, “How Is Western-Influenced Contemporary Performance Practice in Dialogue with Fifth Wave Feminism? - ProQuest” (University of Kent, 2018), 1, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/6d57f1c56752ed60df0d7a6467e9c4df/1?cbl=2026366&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar&parentSessionId=LH659GhFQo58JG9iGcfvkRQ4cVEergz4FFK1rmpbyBY%3D>.

³⁵ Mulvey, 1.

³⁶ Mulvey, 8.

³⁷ Mulvey, 1.

³⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2016); Mulvey, “How Is Western-Influenced Contemporary Performance Practice in Dialogue with Fifth Wave Feminism?”

bell hooks and the New Feminists

As the fourth and fifth wave of feminists emerge and mobilize, this paper inquires whether they embody the same inclusive vision embodied by hooks' feminism. Third-wave feminists, such as hooks, strived for inclusion and acknowledged the variety of women's identities and choices. Similarly, in both the fourth and fifth waves, feminists highlight intersectionality, the interrelation of identities, and experiences of oppression.³⁹ Furthermore, they avoid exclusionary tactics and base their efforts on intersectional factors and the recognition of women's varying subject positions and perspectives.⁴⁰

In hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, hooks discussed how feminists debated feminism and what the feminist movement should stand and fight for. hooks, therefore, argued for a well-grounded definition of feminism that would unify various causes. She came up with *Revolutionary Feminism*, like the theory of intersectionality, which ensured that the plight of marginalized women from other races or classes was also recognized. She invites the use of "special vantage points" to look at "the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony."⁴¹

In my previous work *bell hooks and Online Feminism*, I reviewed fourth-wave feminism and its themes and enumerated its pitfalls, particularly its online leanings.⁴² Some critics have pointed out how fourth-wave feminists lack unity and sisterhood, are disconnected from real issues and problems at hand, are apolitical, are faddish, lack intersectional values and political activism, and fail to disrupt convention and challenge dominating systems.⁴³ Online feminists have also been accused of being "slacktivism," or riding on particular causes

³⁹ Biana, "bell hooks and Online Feminism," 6.

⁴⁰ Snyder-Hall, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of 'Choice,'" 259.

⁴¹ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 15.

⁴² Biana, "bell hooks and Online Feminism."

⁴³ Biana, 4–5.

because of their trendiness, and limiting actions to merely “sharing” *feminist* content online.⁴⁴ While this may seem the “norm” for fourth-wave feminism, we can see from its history that its online component is not all there is to it. Furthermore, I contend that the online component may be a stepping stone toward the more significant hurdle of fighting against oppression, specifically GBV and VAW. hooks, however, would advocate for a more holistic approach in this fight, considering the oppressors' position.⁴⁵

A more serious allegation, however, is made on feminist digilantism. Feminist “digilantes” are accused of participating in exclusionary politics, trolling, flaming, and seeking vengeance through oppressive means.⁴⁶ Emma Jane explains that feminist digilantism is also referred to as e-vigilantism, cyber vigilantism, internet vigilantism, cyber avenging, trial by social media, or flash mob justice.⁴⁷ Some examples of these digilantes are the South Korean community groups known as Womad and Megalia,⁴⁸ feminist digilante gangs in India, and blogs and pages *Fat, Ugly or Slutty*, *Page O' Hate*, *Not in the Kitchen Anymore*.⁴⁹ Jane claims that such digilante projects participate in the

⁴⁴ Kira Daamen, “The Influence of Slacktivism on Feminist Movements,” *Debating Communities and Networks XII*, 2021, <https://networkconference.netstudies.org/2021/2021/04/27/the-influence-of-slacktivism-on-feminist-movements/>.

⁴⁵ Nathalia E. Jaramillo and Peter McLaren, “Borderlines: Bell Hooks and the Pedagogy of Revolutionary Change,” in *Critical Perspectives on Bell Hooks* (Routledge, 2009), 19, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203881507-8/borderlines-bell-hooks-pedagogy-revolutionary-change-nathalia-jaramillo-peter-mclaren>.

⁴⁶ JiHae Koo, “South Korean Cyberfeminism and Trolling: The Limitation of Online Feminist Community Womad as Counterpublic,” *Feminist Media Studies* 20, no. 6 (August 17, 2020): 831–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1622585>.

⁴⁷ Emma A. Jane, “Feminist Digilante Responses to a Slut-Shaming on Facebook,” *Social Media + Society* 3, no. 2 (April 1, 2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117705996>.

⁴⁸ Sabda Ningsih, “The Political Identity for Megalia, Womad and Webtoon to Counter Confucianism Culture in South Korea,” *Simulacra* 6, no. 2 (2023): 221–34.ftrolling

⁴⁹ Emma A. Jane, “Online Misogyny and Feminist Digilantism,” *Continuum* 30, no. 3 (May 3, 2016): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2016.1166560>.

naming and shaming of alleged perpetrators.⁵⁰ Incidentally, some seek justice and revenge through derogatory and oppressive means.

These specific movements have also been accused of *FemiNazism*. Some online feminists target those not engaged in social media or those with varying feminist approaches and perspectives. For instance, non-engagement or non-involvement is misinterpreted as anti-feminism, and individuals would then be “canceled.” Furthermore, those who have or promote perceived “culturally unacceptable ideas” are, thus, publicly boycotted, ostracized, and discredited.⁵¹ Cancel culture, while founded on progressive ideals, has suddenly become the basis for modern witch-hunts and violence.⁵²

Like other feminists, hooks was also highly critical of patriarchal violence and oppression against women. She, however, argued for “an analysis and understanding of “man’s” position in the overwhelmingly dehumanizing world order.”⁵³ Furthermore, in the true spirit of her book title, *Feminism is for Everybody*, hooks discouraged choosing sides between “woman or man.”⁵⁴ She, however, calls for considering “the inter- and intrasubjective formation of racial and gendered identities within complex community and social relations.”⁵⁵

Focusing primarily on the online aspect of fourth-wave feminism, hooks would criticize its exclusionary framework given her vision of inclusion and eradicating multi-layered oppression. Like her critique of the first and second waves of feminism and the feminists who ignored racial, class, and other socio-political and cultural differences of women, hooks would likewise assert that online feminists must recognize many intersecting identities and positions -

⁵⁰ Jane, 5.

⁵¹ Umut Ozkirimli, *Cancelled: The Left Way Back from Woke* (John Wiley & Sons, 2023).

⁵² Ozkirimli.

⁵³ Jaramillo and McLaren, “Borderlines,” 19.

⁵⁴ Jaramillo and McLaren, 19.

⁵⁵ Jaramillo and McLaren, 19.

the actual basis of fourth-wave feminism. To stay true to the vision of inclusion, however, online feminists must “engage in honest confrontation, dialogue, and reciprocal interaction;” and “engage in self-reflection or self-interrogation.”⁵⁶ Such reflections answer hooks’ call for examining the political implications of feminist efforts.⁵⁷ She recommends self-reflection, dialogue, and confrontation between feminists and the appreciation of global culture.

With its transnational leanings and engagement with social media audiences, fourth-wave feminism is and should be dialogical in itself. “Feminist” confrontations, after all, also occur in the online sphere. The problem, however, arises when feminists think that others are not feminist enough or are misogynistic when they do not share the same perspectives or views or are not members of their groups. Unfortunately, losing sight of differences or asserting that “we are all the same” ignores the unique “social, political, and existential identities” that have been previously formed.⁵⁸ Incidentally, based on hooks’ idea of revolutionary blackness, Arnold Farr argues that forgetting these identities leads to forgetting “the violence that shaped the long-term process of group identity formation and the future consequences of this violence.”⁵⁹

Some feminists also resort to vigilantism and may be fueled by retribution and revenge. There is a danger of a “toxic” kind of feminism, along with a “clicktivist” culture, which can be awful and harmful to its targets. Activist Loretta Ross claims that because of this type of “call-out” and cancel culture, “people avoid meaningful conversations when hypervigilant perfectionists point out apparent mistakes, feeding the cannibalistic maw of the cancel culture.”⁶⁰ Ross refers to shaming

⁵⁶ Biana, “bell hooks and Online Feminism,” 6.

⁵⁷ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Routledge, 2014).

⁵⁸ Arnold Farr, “The Specter of Race: bell hooks, Deconstruction, and Revolutionary Blackness,” in *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks* (Routledge, 2009), 156.

⁵⁹ FARR, 156.

⁶⁰ Loretta Ross, “I’m a Black Feminist. I Think Call-out Culture Is Toxic,” *The New York Times* 17 (2019): 2.

people as “ruthless hazing,” which dictates the *acceptable* discourses.⁶¹ This toxic approach leaves no room for dialogue, self-reflection, or cross-cultural exchange. “Toxic” actions do not in any way reflect intersectional feminism, which fourth-wave feminism supposedly stands for. It propagated hate, misandry, or victimization. Umüt Özkýrýmly, for instance, talks about how some have been practicing “toxic hatred” and “outrage-mongering,” which is by no means affirmative of freedom and pluralism.⁶² The goal to be more intersectional and aware of everyone’s diversity seems lost in the web of online exchanges. hooks would assert that feminists should be able to dialogue critically with each other and affirm that they can learn from each other.⁶³

Fredrika Thelandersson proposes that intersectional online feminist movements must work across differences through constructive critiques, sharing knowledge across geographical constraints, and talking and listening to each other.⁶⁴ Jane proposes “hybrid activist strategies” to address equity and misogyny through a commitment across feminist generations. Such a recalibrated approach would be more pragmatic and relevant to the current issues.⁶⁵ Without recalibration, toxic feminism may use violence and get lost in the same violence that it condemns.

As early as 1984, hooks already challenged feminists to think of ways to eradicate not only violence against women per se. She claimed that “feminist efforts to end male violence against women must be expanded into a movement to end all forms of violence.”⁶⁶ hooks believed that “such a movement could potentially radicalize

⁶¹ Ross, “I’m a Black Feminist. I Think Call-out Culture Is Toxic.”

⁶² Özkirimli, *Cancelled*.

⁶³ bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (Routledge, 2006), 110.

⁶⁴ Fredrika Thelandersson, “A Less Toxic Feminism: Can the Internet Solve the Age Old Question of How to Put Intersectional Theory into Practice?,” *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 3 (May 4, 2014): 529, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.909169>.

⁶⁵ Jane, “Online Misogyny and Feminist Diligantism,” 9.

⁶⁶ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 130–31.

consciousness and intensify awareness.”⁶⁷ The challenge is how online feminism can address these strategies and prescriptions.

The fifth wave’s approach addresses Jane’s activist model and hooks’ radical outlook. Walker and Mulvey’s fifth-wave concept combines online and offline activist efforts, a mobilization beyond digital activism. Mulvey and Ahmed highlight the intersectional awareness, consciousness, and understanding of the fifth wave. Still focusing on individual and collective diversities, fifth-wave feminists work towards transforming institutions and systems, but beyond the online sphere. Fifth-wave feminism, in a sense, is a more holistic revival of third-wave feminism or postfeminism but with the integration of online means.

Conclusion

If both the fourth and fifth waves remember the pitfalls of the first and second waves, which are exclusion and nonrecognition of other groups, feminists would remember that efforts should continue challenging privileged arrogance and group centrism and recognize the range of identity markers and oppression of marginalized peoples.⁶⁸ hooks would remind us of multiple voices or the acknowledgment of diversity and uniqueness of traditions and pluralistic conceptions -and this time, also in the online sphere. Feminists would have varying perspectives, but if they based their efforts on a commonality of feeling oppressed, as hooks put it, there would be feminist solidarity.⁶⁹

In *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women*, hooks asserts that “solidarity is built through hard, ongoing political work.”⁷⁰ This entails “confronting conflicts,” “finding common interests and goals,”

⁶⁷ hooks, 130–31.

⁶⁸ Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 121, 28.

⁶⁹ Hazel T. Biana, “Extending bell hooks’ Feminist Theory,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 24, 2020): 23.

⁷⁰ bell hooks, “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women,” in *Feminist Social Thought* (Routledge, 1997).

and opposing “oppression in all its forms.”⁷¹ When feminists unleash violence and oppression, their “feminism” can be questioned. If feminists were more emphatic, not toxic, and cognizant of *everybody*, feminism would be globally transformative and revolutionary (regardless of whatever wave).^{72,73}

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⁷¹ hooks.

⁷² Cochrane points out that describing and periodizing feminism in terms of waves is controversial because such may not be globally applicable. For instance, specific movements arise as responses to specific cultural conditions. Cochrane, however, affirms that conditions may overlap.

⁷³ Some online sources claim that there is now a sixth wave.

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