

PC CULTURE

The Kavanaugh Fight Exposed Feminism's Identity-Politics Problem

By ALEXANDRA DESANCTIS | October 9, 2018 6:30 AM



Activists rally against the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh in the Senate's Hart Office Building, October 4, 2018.

(Mary F. Calvert/Reuters)

Today's feminists don't believe in female independence: They erase or bully women who don't toe the leftist line.



The Supreme Court has revealed the cracks inherent in third-wave feminism. Because they have linked their movement to progressivism and its growing taste for identity politics, feminist thinkers systematically ignore or castigate women who disagree with the left-wing agenda.

This bullying tactic is in obvious contradiction with feminism's historic promise to uphold the individuality and agency of every woman. Can women actually think for themselves, or must they necessarily fall in line with progressive groupthink? The resounding answer from feminists seems to be the latter.

In response to Kavanaugh's confirmation, prominent feminist pundit Jessica Valenti tweeted that "women will not forget," while Jill Filipovic tweeted that "at least women now see a little more clearly how much we don't matter to the people in charge." Jennifer Wright, meanwhile, wrote in *Harper's Bazaar* over the weekend:

Our rage burns so brightly. I look out, and I see a nation of women
incandescent with rage. We will burn patriarchal institutions to the ground.
And I pray that, for our daughters, the blaze will light the way forward.

These enlightened feminists claim to speak for all women even as they insist that women are independent, free-thinking individuals.

During the 1960s and '70s, second-wave feminists promoted their agenda of sexual liberation, and third-wave feminists radicalized further by propounding turn-of-the-century gender theory, a realm of sociology that seeks to explain the entire female experience through the lens of patriarchy and oppression. Now, feminists have fully assimilated the ideas that were once en vogue only in academic departments, and today's feminism is nearly identical to the most militant form of progressivism. In large part, this compact was the natural fruit of the feminist movement's emphasis on sexual license, a priority that the



unlimited abortion, the ultimate guarantor of consequence-free sex.

This alliance between feminists and the Left has materialized politically in an especially potent way over the last decade. In 2012, Barack Obama ran for his second term on the promise of providing government-funded contraceptives. He made good on his vow by compelling employers to subsidize birth control regardless of their religious belief. In 2016, Hillary Clinton ran for the presidency on a Democratic platform that, for the first time in history, vowed to erase the Hyde Amendment and allow taxpayer dollars to directly facilitate abortion procedures.

With their social agenda thus wedded to the progressive movement, feminist thinkers have taken a nosedive into corrosive identity politics, asserting their influence based on the notion that all women necessarily share their viewpoint, that women as an identity group (and a voting bloc) are united in a fight against patriarchal oppression. Feminist claims to political power are therefore premised on the fiction that *all women* are shackled by men and that *all women* should be united around one liberating platform — the progressive one.

Women out of lockstep with that agenda — women who won't drink the Kool-Aid — are a threat to the legitimacy and political efficacy of the movement. As a result, feminists ignore or attack such women, contradicting what has always been the movement's defining characteristic: the belief that women shouldn't be written off as a single group with one mind, that they won't be spoken for or controlled by others.

Identity politics has other ideas.

Because feminist activists now derive their cultural clout from advocating identity politics, maintaining their power on the left requires shaming or whitewashing women who undermine the intellectual consistency of the



threatens the Left's formulation that abortion is intrinsically linked to female freedom. If women vote Republican, it threatens the notion that progressivism is the inherent ideology of the Female.

Which brings us back to the fight over Kavanaugh, a battle that proves the feminist movement clings to its societal power by silencing women who contradict progressive premises. Not only did feminist pundits claim to speak for all women during and after the bitter partisan struggle, but they reserved special hatred for women who rejected the leftist line — moderate Republican senator Susan Collins being the prime example.

Collins was said to have sold out the sisterhood when she voted to confirm Kavanaugh. She was tarred as a “gender traitor” by progressive activist Alexis Grenell in a recent *New York Times* op-ed, “White Women, Come Get Your People.” Grenell dismissed Collins's colleagues as being “mostly male,” refusing to name female Republican senators Joni Ernst, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Deb Fischer, and Shelley Moore Capito.

One feminist warrior, Nancy Lee Grahn told Collins on Twitter: “You may have female parts but you are no woman . . . and we who are don't want anything to do with you.” That famously pro-woman group the Women's March, meanwhile, labeled Collins a “rape apologist” after she took to the Senate floor to explain exactly why she'd be supporting Kavanaugh's confirmation — including because she believed he'd be the most likely of any Trump nominee to respect the precedent of *Roe v. Wade*.

Susan Collins is pro-choice and often anti-Trump, and she's been a popular moderate senator for more than two decades. She was the first female nominee for governor in the state of Maine. She has voted in favor of every Supreme Court nominee considered during her time in the Senate. She advocated giving Merrick Garland a hearing when Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell



about her belief that Christine Blasey Ford had endured sexual trauma that damaged her life forever. She articulated her decision to support Kavanaugh based on his judicial philosophy, on the importance of the presumption of innocence and the rule of law. But for feminists, none of that is good enough. Empowered women are all well and good until they're so empowered that they won't toe the progressive line.

In their haste to “un-person” non-progressive women, activists have exposed the inherent weakness of the modern feminist movement: Its embrace of identity politics undercuts its supposedly pro-woman agenda. When feminists claim to speak for all women and erase or bully those who disagree, they reveal that their dedication is not to true female agency. Their goal is rather to maintain political power and advance a radical social agenda by whatever means necessary.

Today's feminists don't actually value female independence; they value women insofar as we fall in line. Any women silenced or trampled along the way are just collateral damage.



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