

# Standing Up for What I Believe

by Tonya Kordonis

If you had asked me that question seven years ago, I would have had to look feminism up in the dictionary. At that point in my life, feminism to me was a bunch of male-looking women who were burning their bras and doing a lot of complaining about things I couldn't care less about.

Seven years of living in a confined space, with little to no educational programming (beyond GED classes), means I have had very few ways of challenging myself to think outside the "box" of every day life. I have grasped at every group, class, or discussion panel made available by the upper echelon in charge of prison programming to help me better understand myself and how I "fit in." That's how I came to participate in the women's group at the facility where I am currently incarcerated.

Today, feminism to me is standing up for what you believe in and not accepting second best. It's abhorring discrimination of any kind, whether it's racial, sexual, or gender related. It stands for equality in the workplace. Promotions should be granted on the basis of job performance, leadership skills, aptitude, and willingness to explore the possibility for growth, not on how fast the boss can get the woman into bed, how big her bust is, or how nice her legs look in hose, heels and a short skirt.

A woman should not have to squash her beliefs and values just to stroke a man's ego to make him feel he's the superior one in order to get what she rightfully deserves.

Everywhere you look, from the housing market to the workplace, everything is male-oriented. Ever tried getting your car serviced? If you're a woman, plan on paying a much higher price than a man would in most cases. On the other side of the coin, have you noticed when you go the grocery store, how much more "female friendly" it is than most other places? The assumption is that it's women who do the shopping and feed their families. Today, we must consciously fight every step of the way for equal footing when it comes to living and dealing with men in a male dominated world.

There's nothing in this world we can't do. Until we stop allowing ourselves to be deceived into thinking we're less intelligent, weaker, less mechanically inclined, more emotional, and all around less able to handle major decision making beyond "What's for dinner?" we will not be able to crack the proverbial "glass ceiling" in the job market or anywhere else.

As women we must fight against what we perceive to be injustice, inequality, and discrimination. I'm not saying shove what you believe down other people's throats. What I am saying is, as a woman, your opinions, beliefs, values, and convictions have merit. Stand up for what you believe in and let your voice be heard. Just don't shout so loud that you can't hear what's being said around you.

## FEMINISM

*Free of male domination*

*Equality in all things*

*Man-handled no more*

*Individuality*

*Naturally beautiful*

*In sync with our feelings*

*Stay at home by choice, not by force*

*My choices—not his.*

---

*Tonya Kordonis is incarcerated at the Western Wayne Correctional Facility, Plymouth, Michigan, where she participated in a women's group sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee.*