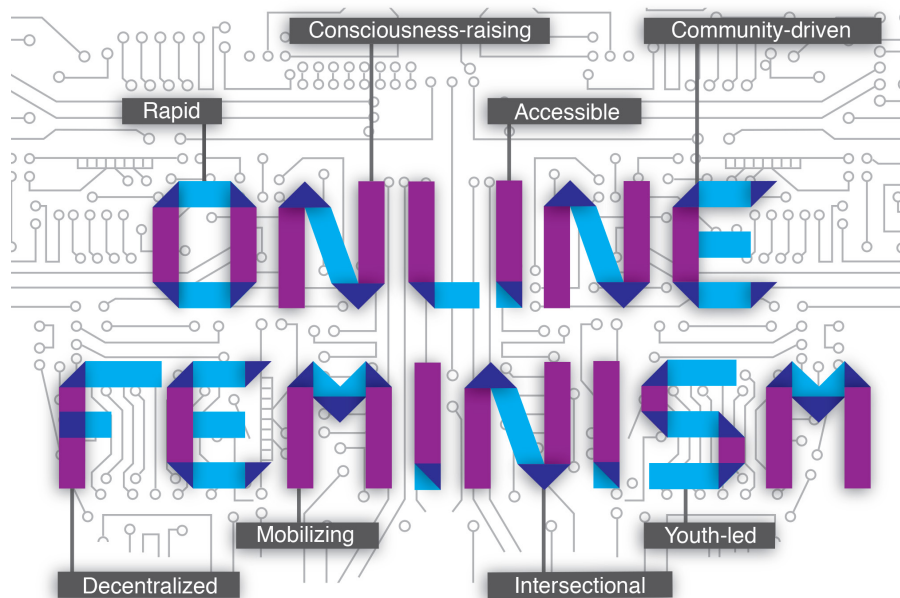


#FEMFUTURE: ONLINE REVOLUTION

THE DNA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every single day, 172 million people visit Facebook, 40 million visit Twitter, and two million publish blog posts. Contrary to media depictions of online activity as largely narcissistic and/or “slactivism,” young women across the country—and all over the world, in fact—are discovering new ways to leverage the Internet to make fundamental progress in the unfinished revolution of feminism.

Forty-one percent of young people have participated in what the McArthur Foundation dubs, “participatory politics”—meaning online action for a cause, and of those who do, 90 percent also either vote or are engaged in institutional politics, or both. According to The Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, young adult women ages 18-29 are the “power users” of social networking—and hundreds of thousands of them are harnessing the power of online media platforms to discuss, uplift, and activate gender equality and social justice.

Young women have used online tools to successfully pressure Facebook to take down pro-rape pages, to get *Seventeen Magazine* to stop photoshopping girls’ bodies in their pages, and to reverse the Komen Breast Cancer Foundation’s decision to remove funding from Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Beyond these more measurable impacts, countless young people, many of them feeling isolated and/or misunderstood in their own towns, discover feminism online and are transformed by it; conversations on blogs and tumblrs are often called “consciousness raising for the 21st century.” Online feminism is arguably the largest and most effective innovation in feminism in the last 50 years.

The online feminist ecosystem primarily consists of blogs, organizations that run online campaigns, online petition platforms, and individual thought leaders who leverage Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and other social

THE RISKS

“Strains have been starting to show and most of them are financial in nature. It’s really easy to spend so much time on Racialicious and then realize you haven’t pulled in any paid work for that week, so rent is going to be rough next month. A lot of people get so burned out in the process of producing, creating and engaging, that the emotional tolls are super high.”

—Latoya Peterson, Editor of Racialicious

Editor of *Racialicious*

“Blogging has become the third shift. You do your activist work, you have a job to make money and then you blog on top of that. It’s completely unsupported.”

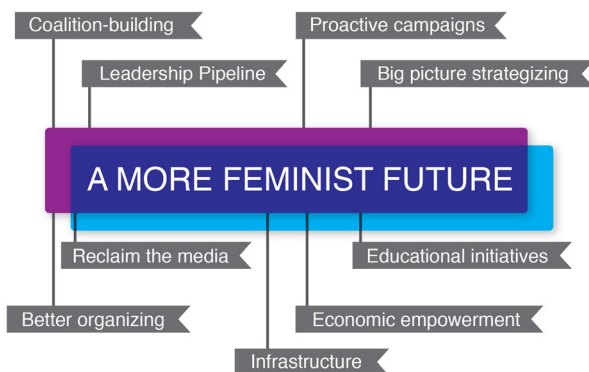
—Samhita Mukhopadhyay,
Executive Editor of Feministing.com



- 1 Reactive instead of pro-active
- 2 Myopic instead of long-term strategizing
- 3 Privileges the privileged
- 4 Anti-feminists will leverage the internet
- 5 A high burnout rate
- 6 Repeats the same tired story of the exhausted, underpaid activists

THE OPPORTUNITY

Benefits of investing in online feminism



It's time to create a more feminist future.

Join the movement at [#femfuture](https://onlinefeminism.com) onlinefeminism.com

media platforms. What makes this ecosystem distinct is that it is decentralized and accessible, unapologetically intersectional, community-oriented, catalyzes rapid, large-scale action, and is very often youth-led. In this way, it is a powerful pipeline for the next generation of feminist leadership.

But for all the progress that online feminism has made, it is unquestionably hindered by being largely unsupported and uncoordinated. Most young feminists leveraging online tools are doing so as a “third shift”—after their paid job, and their on-the-ground, unpaid activism. Most online feminist entities—whether blogs or more formal organizations—are operating on profoundly inadequate budgets, pieced together from individual donors, third party ad revenue, or some combination. No philanthropic institution yet exists that has funding specifically available for online feminist innovation.

This is unhealthy for individual feminists who are overworked, often uninsured, and burned out, but it's also dangerously unhealthy for the movement as a whole. Online feminism has mostly been exercised in ad-hoc and reactive ways. The longer it remains unsupported, the more it will become a province of the already privileged, who can afford to donate unpaid labor to their favorite cause, and the more that anti-feminist forces will use the tools we've invented to push progress back.

But there is hope. We believe that forging partnerships between feminists—online and off, young and wise, poor and wealthy, organizing at the grassroots and strategizing at the treetops—will have far-reaching consequences. It will foster the formation of new connections between grassroots advocacy and service organizations, educational institutions, coalitions, unions, convenings, conferences, legacy media, policy makers, politicians, entrepreneurs, etc. Online feminism has the capacity to be like the nervous system of this modern day feminist body politic.

In this paper, we call for collective action to build the infrastructure and initiatives needed to make this a reality, and recommend the following, among a range of potential solutions:

THE LANDSCAPE



"Young adult women ages 18-29 are the power users of social networking" — Pew Internet, 2011



89%

of women online use social networks overall

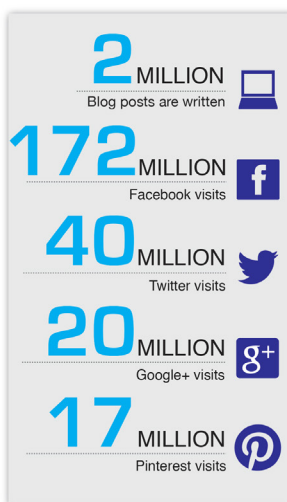


69%

of these women do so on an average day

In one day on the internet:

Engagement in social change online



94%

of people aged 18-29 use the Internet



41%

of people aged 18-25 have engaged in political discussion or action on social media

Pew Internet and American Life Project

- **Annual #FemFuture meeting:** 100 online and on-the-ground organizers, philanthropists, educators, and public intellectuals interested in feminism online could gather to look at the year ahead and brainstorm issues, actions, and benchmarks that we can put our collective resources toward focusing on. This would also be a chance for organizations to eradicate redundancies and forge partnerships, funders to prioritize and respond in an agile way to on-the-ground needs, and online feminists to plot complementary communications and cultural change strategies.
- **FemSource:** a “Craig’s List” for feminists. A skill-sharing site where feminists could create mutually beneficial exchanges. For example, one feminist video website may need someone to write descriptions for their videos, while a feminist blogger would like someone to create a video series – a perfect opportunity to swap skills, where each person is compensated for their labor without requiring money.
- **Feminist Business Bootcamp:** a weeklong opportunity for bloggers and organizers to come together to learn about business and financial structures from leading experts, examine social business case studies, such as Change.org and Purpose, and get preliminary training in fundraising and development.
- **Online feminist portfolios:** a pipeline of funding specifically geared to support online feminist work. These portfolios must be structured with the pace and fluidity of online feminism in mind—not sticking to artificial grant cycles, but instead looking to

support the general operating costs of online feminist organizing, allowing these innovators to do what they do best: respond in the moment with creativity and an eye for motivating action.

The opportunities for collaboration are infinite, as are the possibilities for impact. All that remains is for us to connect the dots—between voice and influence, between the broad base and the tools, between the online influencers and the philanthropic innovators, between the policy goals and the savviest civic engagement strategies, between our present and our more feminist future.

Join us.

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