

**Resisting & Re-inscribing
Gender Norms:
See Me/Hear Me
by Kathryn A. Broyles**

Veterans in Society: Changing the Discourse
Conference 2014
Roanoke, VA

“When a woman tells the truth she is creating the possibility for more truth around her...”
---Adrienne Rich

The “Vietnam Vet”
people instantly conjure
their own picture
in their mind

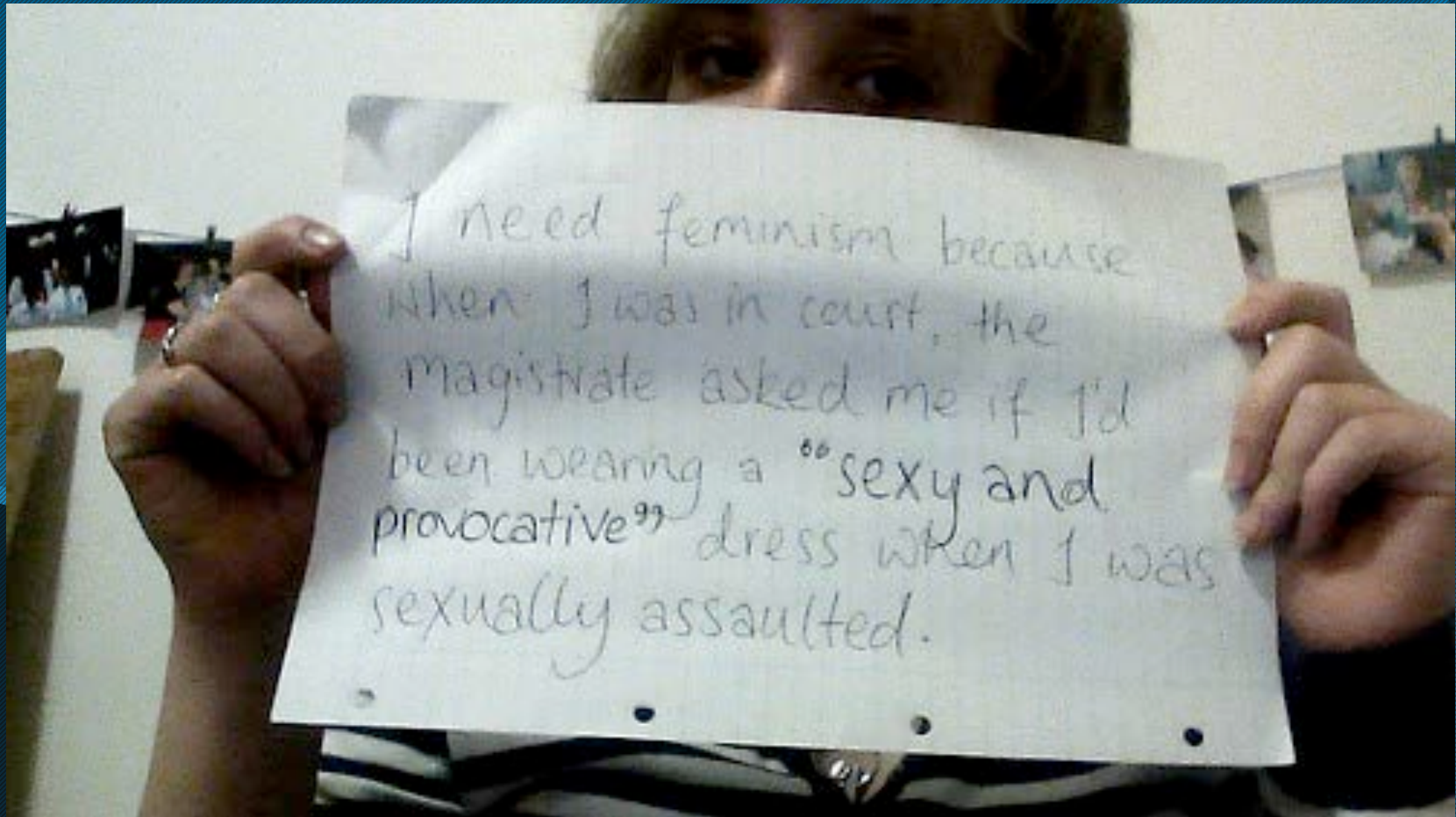
Is it ever of a woman?

---Norma Griffiths (1982)



SAF Headquarters Public Affairs Office
from Kabul, Afghanistan

WHO NEEDS FEMINISM?





**U.S. Marine Staff Sgt. Amanda Kokx, Afghanistan, on April 18, 2006.
Photo by Spc. Michael Zuk, U.S. Arm**



*Army Women's Voluntary Service
1952*



**Infantry Training Battalion
Nov 2013**



U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, right, speaks to an Airman -March 29, 2013
Photo by Michael R. Holzworth, TSgt, USAF

Re-thinking

“ What do feminist scholars do then? What should they do, with and for armed women, women vital to war efforts, women wounded in war?

“ How can a feminist ethic of care encompass women warriors without essentializing them or victimizing them?



“[These women veterans] reported growing from shy, naïve young women to mature, self-confident adults. Participants found the transition back to civilian life problematic, in part due to difficulties meeting traditional gender role expectations and in part due to isolation, as they no longer related to civilian women in their hometowns.”

“The injury wasn’t new, and neither was the insult. Rebecca, a combat veteran of two tours of duty, had been waiting at the V.A. hospital for close to an hour when the office manager asked if she was there to pick up her husband.

No, she said, fighting back her exasperation. She was there because of a spinal injury she sustained while fighting in Afghanistan.”

“It’s not that their stories are poorly told [women’s stories of combat]. It’s that their stories are simply not told in literature, film and popular culture.”

“Male soldiers’ experiences make up the foundation of art and literature: From “The Odyssey” to “The Things They Carried,” the heroic or tragic protagonist’s face is familiar, timeless and, without exception, male. The story of men in combat is taught globally, examined broadly, celebrated and vilified in fiction, exploited by either side of the aisle in politics.

For women it’s a different story, one in which they are more often cast as victims, wives, nurses; anything but soldiers who see battle. In the rare war narratives where women do appear, the focus is generally on military sexual assault, a terrible epidemic of violence that needs to be revealed and ended, but not something that represents the full experience of women in the military” (2).

“Understanding the development of women veterans require[s] making a connection between what these women experienced during their military service and how those experiences may or may not relate to how they make meaning of their experiences as college students”

“Women who enter a male-dominated setting must learn to redefine and manage “femaleness” (Herbert, 1998, p. 21)

“Women in the military are forced into a more conscious and deliberate role as an armed force member and are not allowed a natural expression of gender... removal of the forced military identity causes a crisis of identity for female veterans as they struggle to re-assume roles as civilians” (40).

How do we “listen” better?

How do we see and understand more?

Allowing and not essentializing
tensions of gender and identity
and story



Exploiting Androgyny in
alternative digital
environments...

Normalizing the
female soldier...

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