

A New Feminism, or Fuck Patriarchy

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When I watched Jennifer Fox's *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman*, I was blown away. I don't say that often here, so sit up and take note.

I've never seen a film that connected with me, as a woman, like this movie. Admittedly, I have a lot in common with Fox—educated, single, white, living in the New York area. We come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, and while I don't have two lovers at the moment, let's just say, I can identify. But, the point of recognition felt deeper than any of those points.

If you haven't heard about it yet, *Flying* begins as Fox's personal story as she attempts to navigate her complicated love life, but her issues bring up larger questions of what it means to be a "free" woman in modern times. Acknowledging that she has freedoms that many women of the world do not possess, she sets off to the many destinations where her career as a filmmaker has brought her in the past. She meets her female friends of all different cultural, economic and social backgrounds and uses the concept of sexual freedom as the springboard for much deeper conversations about identity, children, disease, sex trafficking, relationships to other women, and of course, to men.

If you didn't know already that regardless of differences, human beings are more similar than dissimilar, *Flying* is another lesson about that. You may think that what you hope for is unique or the challenges you face exceptional, but Fox probably met one or more women who would be able to share your joy and pain. What struck me after watching all 6 hours in one sitting (I couldn't stop!), was how little of these similarities show up in our images, whether it is movies, magazines, websites.

Feminism of the '60s was in search of equality, and as equality became a reality, feminists began to tackle representation. How are women portrayed? Are movie stars positioned in such a way to be attractive to men? Well, yes. No disrespect intended but we've established issues of representation exist yet we still suffer. Eating disorders, both anorexia and obesity are sky-rocketing among women; depression and low self-esteem are so commonplace as to be the norm rather than the exception; in other parts of the world, women continue to suffer oppression, with sex trafficking one of the highest grossing industries world-wide.

We need a new feminism. We need to not just take back our image, we need to take back our power. There isn't anything that is quite as empowering to me as connecting to other women—when we talk out our problems, when we help one another or when we simply offer a shoulder to cry on or a lift upwards. This is illustrated in this film as well as brings us into the conversation as the women pass the camera between them as they talk.

Women were burned at the stake as witches because they possessed inner power; women around the world still are coerced or forced to cover their bodies, heads and faces because of the power they possess; and we are silenced from talking to one another (you can't ask how much your colleague earns at work, masturbation is taboo, marriage problems should be worked out at home, etc). Where are all the women? How do we connect to one another in a meaningful way?

Margaret Mead who said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

I don't have the larger answers, but I'm excited by the prospects of Jennifer's film. She is hoping to take it around to campuses and community groups, in addition to its Sundance Channel broadcast and small theatrical run, beginning July 4 at Film Forum in New York City. Details are on the *Flying* website.