

2c. Feminism

What is **your** understanding and practice of feminism, and how is this shown in your artwork?

KFW recognizes feminism as a dynamic force for social change that varies across age, ethnicity, economic class, geography, sexuality, and other differences. For this reason, **KFW does not promote a single definition of feminism, but encourages grant applicants to describe their own understanding of the term.** This is your chance to think through your ideas, and reflect on the meaning of feminism in your own context and in your own life.

Below are a few examples of how different applicants have approached the question. Ultimately, this is an opportunity for you to think through and explain *your own* understanding and practice of feminism, and how this influences the activities you are proposing. These examples are inspired by actual applications, but are shortened for ease of reading. Answers to this question vary in length, but are typically 1 -3 paragraphs long.

EXAMPLE 1: Popular culture is full of negative messages about women and girls, from how we “should” dress to who or how we “should” date to what we “should” do with our lives. These messages affect all of us, and have a devastating effect on teenage girls who are just figuring out who they are and what they can do. Our workshops give space for middle and high school girls to reflect on these negative messages and then disrupt them with positive messages spread through their own creative expression.

EXAMPLE 2: To me feminism is about recognizing the work women do. I work with kids through the Boys and Girls Club in our neighborhood, providing an opportunity to learn video making skills and to create their own short videos. We ask them to work on the theme of what family means to them. We talk about family both in terms of biological family and also the family we choose, and the people in the community who show up for us. They say it takes a village, and in some cases the village is the strongest family a kid might have. Making the videos is fun and teaches them a new skill. I consider this to be a feminist project because although there are exceptions, most of the caretaking done for these kids is done by women. It also opens up conversations about what different families look like, as we have kids in all different kinds of family types. These programs are open to boys and girls alike, because these are conversations everyone needs to be having.

EXAMPLE 3: As a woman of color, I prefer the term womanist. Alice Walker defines this as a word for feminists of color, coming from “womanish,” as in mothers telling their daughters “you acting womanish” (i.e. grown, serious, willful). She says: “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.” My workshops are womanist because they empower young black and brown girls to know their power, to resist the stereotypes that are put on them, and to stand up for themselves and their sisters, even if this means being seen as “willful.” We give these young girls a chance to find their voice in a positive and supportive environment, led by women of color who understand their struggle and also their power.

EXAMPLE 4: To me, feminism is about taking care. Women are the ones who most often take care of their own children, while also nurturing others in their communities. They also understand the importance of taking care of the planet. Women have been at the forefront of the environmental movement from the beginning, seeing the care of the earth as an extension of care of our children and our communities. If water is poisoned for one child, all of us should care. If air is polluted in one community, all of us should work to make it better. This mural will honor women's contributions to the environmental movement, while also raising awareness of the importance of taking care of the planet.

EXAMPLE 5: Our theatre company is creating a play about Rosie the Riveter, which is based on a real woman's life. I see that as an example of feminism, because we are telling a story that many people do not know, even if they have heard of the icon. However, where I come from, feminism is seen as a bad word. Even many people who think Rosie the Riveter is a strong female icon might not want to think about her as a feminist. We might not use "the F word" in our materials or on our website, because our goal is to reach the widest audience we can with this story and message. But to me, this is feminist art, because it is telling the story of a strong woman who did what needed to be done and didn't let anything hold her back.