

# CaucAsia

international coalition of gender journalists

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# GENDER AND FEMMIINISM



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

As there appeared gender, the life of feminists changed. Instead of marginal defaming and derided 'women's studies,' there appeared respectable gender researches, serious international conferences and corresponding academic disciplines. Gender attracted even men; those, who would never dear to call themselves feminists.

Gender represents new political conditions. There are many changes in the life, but the fight continues. The changes can be evaluated both positively and negatively. It is important to remember that gender is not about the difference between two genders; it is about gender hierarchy, about the methods of suppression,

about cultural system of discrimination. But sometimes these indicators are not key important for numerous gender researches.

Theoretically, gender is a chance for feminism to use the new tools for improvement of the general situation. But practically, there remains a threat for gender to be discredited, as well as feminism was. Feminism is the component of all fair works and consistent actions. Its impulse makes its way through hypocrisy, apathy and slander.

Feminism is quite clearly seen through the gender, but it is hard to understand, if it is becoming more visible, or goes deeper into gender...

Olga LIPOVSKAYA  
Russia

**background**

# DIFFICULTIES OF INTERPRETATION, OR LOST IN TRANSLATION

The relationship between "gender" and "feminism" (put here in quotation marks as particular terms, or concepts) is chronological. Feminism appeared in the first place - as a movement, initiated by women, who realized, that their rights were limited. That is - women started thinking about reasons why their rights were restricted, why and how they were discriminated against, and launched actions in order to change the existing order. Different strategies were used in different countries - from establishment of women's parties and political organizations, from participation in liberal and leftist movements, to struggles for political participation, equal access to higher education and the right to be religious priests.

The concept of "gender" emerged in the "West", more accurately - in English speaking countries, sometime in the 70s, when feminism, after passing all the stages of self-identification, got into wider areas of conceptualizing inequality, than just "problems of oppressed women". It is worth mentioning, that these problems have not disappeared, and, whatever country, or culture it is, the do exist in some forms: control and violence in domestic sphere, limited access to politics and employment (i.e. in public sphere), sexual and physical violence in all areas of life, economic deprivation (i.e. limited access to economic resources). All these factors, initially elaborated by feminist theory, were focused, although not directly, on biological essence of sex difference. Feminism, so to speak, raised an issue of reproductive function of a woman, the function, that, ironically caused discrimination against her (i.e. woman's ability, even more - her exceptional advantage in reproductive sphere - to bear, give birth and nurture human species, was transformed into her disadvantage). In general this was a basic, the key position of feminism.

After some time, thank God, the human ability of abstract thinking have given us a brilliant loophole - the term "gender" came to life, which allowed us to distance ourselves from the "women's question". The way it was developing in the "West", look rather natural. First there were activist movements, consciousness-raising groups, participation in civil rights movement, collective considerations over common problems, and natural theoretical outcome. After that, as was mentioned above, feminism started to think more generally. After tackling, to a certain extent, some basic problems (violence in marriage, rape, discrimination in labor, in politics and many others are more, or less resolved by legislation and practice), feminists started to think from the point of view of both sexes. At that point, the term "gender" turned up to be a very marketable product. Former feminist theoreticians have not just introduced, but started to use rather extensively this term - gender - as a substitute for "social sex". In a way, it was an equivocal to



*...women turned out to be weak?*

photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia

men, a sort of a compromise. "Western" feminists, so to say, discharged their anger, and told to men, OK, let us now think about you. We agree that you also suffer from gender division; we can call it "gender discrimination", in order not to hurt your feelings. Yes, men has to perform a macho role quite often, he is forced to fight, whether he wants it, or not, they sometimes have to comply with an

image, totally alien to them. Therefore, here is "gender" for you, let us think about it together.

In the former USSR all went wrong. First of all, feminism was suppressed at the very beginning (meaning the first equal rights movement in the end of 19th century, after which the First All-Russian Women's Congress took place in 1908, and there were several women's parties and groups, running for the Constituent Assembly in February 1917). The Great October Socialist Revolution put an end to independent women's movement, since it was decided, that "women's question" was successfully resolved. From that point all the official structures, like "women's departments" and "women's councils" were pretending that they were dealing with "women's problems". Those were the years of stagnation - political, ideological, cultural.

After "Perestroika", when people suddenly realized, that they can organize in order to defend their interests collectively, women demonstrated a very high level of activism. They played a significant role in public organizations and various NGOs - transferring humanitarian aid, advocating for their disabled children, fighting against drugs among youth, against violence in the Russian army. However, that had nothing to do with feminism. Russian (post-Soviet) women were again following their reproductive roles and obligations - like "protecting their domestic hearth", "raising their offspring", "being good wives and mothers". They are still playing the same role. There are thousands of "Soldier's mothers" in Russia, but that has nothing to do with feminism. However, "gender" had been successfully rooted into Russian culture and society: as far as in 1996, if I am not mistaken, the "gender studies" were officially "allowed", or

even, "recommended" for teaching in the higher education curricula of humanitarian courses. And it seems to me, that our Russian ability to dissociate ourselves by abstract knowledge from urgent problems, is in a way an instrument of escaping the obligations of resolution. In view of that, I think, that "gender", which has become a subject of study, teaching, employment for many scholars and academia people, had come very handy excuse for dismissing feminism. Feminism is a subject, that is uneasy, uncomfortable, widely ridiculed by mass-media and public opinion in general, a cause for irony, a topic sexist jokes.

Nevertheless, I do believe in following chronological order. The baby turns into a toddler, than a child, than an adolescent, than youth, than adult, the elderly, etc. That is why, coming back to the title of this paper, I would like to say, that, for example, the film "Lost in Translation" was translated into Russian as "Difficulties of interpretation", so part of the meaning of the film's concept was lost. The same had happened with "gender" - we were eager to "translate", to "adopt" a rather alien concept into our reality, omitting the natural way of development. Gender is meaningless without feminism, but it was somehow "Lost in translation". Gender was implanted on our "fields" like corn in Khrushchev's times (corn was particularly stubborn to grow in Siberia), in some areas it grows, but most of the land was not prepared for it. But feminism had never had such an opportunity - women in Russia were too much unprepared for that, too weak. And, I think, ladies, it is the case not only in Russia.

(translated by the author)



Stanimira KHAJIMITOVA,  
Bulgaria

## frankly speaking

# THINKING OF WOMEN MOVEMENT'S IMAGE in order to gain the support of the society

I think radicalism is quite harming for the women's movement. Especially in our countries, where women's movement is not popular among the society. The image of a women movement activist is not prestigious or attractive for younger generation. I think the reason behind it is professionalism. There is an opinion: if you are a high-qualified professional, you have a well-going career; if not, you enter women's movement. It is very questionable, but there is something to discuss. We need to conduct our work so that it attracts the positive attention of the society.

I entered women's movement after working in the foreign trade field and in private business sphere. Over ten years passed since then, but I am still standing at the cross-road: I can not quit my work at the women's movement, but at the same time I miss my profession. For six years, I used to combine these two types of activity, but after that I started working at a large project, which was so interesting that I decided to make choice. In the non-governmental sector, I earn less than used to when involved in business, but here I see that me and my colleagues raise the questions that are very important for the society.

The fund I work at was created one year ago. It was founded by Bulgarian non-governmental organization Gender Prospect, active for more than 10 years. Working in a fund differs from work in a non-governmental organization. NGO is more of activism, while fund involves serious fundraising work, business skills, formation of financing policy. It is very interesting, and I think it fully corresponds to my demands.

Tamara HOVNATANYAN,  
Armenia

**myths**

# I AM NOT FEMINIST, BUT...

**there remain only few of those who wants to rehabilitate feminism**



*Active and independent, strong and experienced, earning for their families and for themselves - even so, we are afraid of the word 'feminism.'*

photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia

"Of course, I am not a feminist, but..." - it can be said that this intro started the international coalition CaucAsia. It was three years ago, when the participants of the third international conference Mass Media for Gender Equality, founded CaucAsia. The majority of participants seemed to do all their best to distance themselves from feminism. The argument on this issue ended up with the remark made by Galina Petriashvili, the conference organizer, who said: "It's hard to imagine, what did the enemies of the women's movement did! Even feminists themselves avoid the word 'feminism!'"

Today, feminism continues being subject of strong misunderstanding. For many different people, the word 'feminism' represents some sort of abusive word. It is even viewed as a bon ton, when someone criticizes feminism; even in the case of appropriate discussions in a corresponding audience. If an expert manages to make a participant admit that she/he is a feminist, it highlights the high professionalism of an expert. It is just at the class of the anonymous alcoholics' club: the first step towards recovery of each patient is their admittance: I am an alcoholic.

Actually, gender was made up when it turned out that it was impossible to fight the negative perception of feminism. It was considered that it would be easier to admit one's sympathy towards gender. But another problem is that even this word was already discredited, and the UN has even started searching for the new word for the concept.

The main problem is not about the name of course; the most important is that the people's understanding of feminism results from a very limited number of cliché, received from different sources.

In Armenia, these are external sources only, because here we never had feminist movement. Back in the times when feminist movement first became very popular in the West, in Armenia, the fight for women's rights was initiated by men. "Only an independent woman can educate an independent citizen," these men said. These educators suggested women to unite together in order to fight for their rights; all this was taking place in the context of the idea of national revival.

But along with this, Armenian history knows a bunch of women, who devoted themselves to the fight for



Saule MAYLIBAEVA,  
Kazakhstan

## poles

# TWO WAYS TO SHOW STRENGTH: PRESS and PULL

## women's 'summit' failed to notice women

The summit was planned to mark the 10-th anniversary of the Kazakhstan's Businesswomen Association. The information on the plan to hold International Women's Summit on February 22-23, was released back in December. Announcements listed numerous activities of the summit, it was stated that over 350 representatives of social and business organizations from 20 countries would be participating. It was recommended to the interested individuals to fill in a registration form and to fax it

I like to be familiar with what is going on, that's why I got interested in the summit. I got the registration form and filled in 8 questions out of 10. The 9th read: "Do you agree to pay membership fee of 30 000 tenge + VAT to participate in the work of the Eurasian Women Summit (EWS)?" I had to put the form aside.

I understand that it is difficult to organize alike meeting for a cheaper price. I also thought that women like me would not be participating there, as summit - means talks of heads of the governments. But why then we are invited? I found \$ 300 and decided to participate. I expected to see international figures, important for gender issues. TV advertisements kept announcing: "Women will come together top speak openly about their problems in the globalization circumstances." The number of participants was increasing every day: Eurasian economic community (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), Khabar Agency, Chevron Company. I was surprised about the number of sponsoring companies, who seemed to be eager to pay for letting women speak of their problems. Among sponsors, there were Alliance Bank, Philip Morris Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy JSC, Tengizchevroil Company, OSCE, and many others.

Kazakhstan is quite consistent in its gender policy. We reached quite a progress in the sphere that improves our political image. We joined CEDAW, formed presidential commission on family affairs and gender policy, last December, the president signed Gender Equality Strategy. All we need is to make this documents to work in practice. But this is way more difficult than just signing documents.

Finally, the summit started. As it was women's, men decided to watch at it from the outside - they were not involved anyhow. Even the head of the state did not come to the summit, but only sent his assistant, the head of Family Affairs and Gender Policy Commission Aytkul Samakova. As the worm speech on successful women of the present and the past was over, Samakova highlighted that the president does all his best in order to improve our status. I believe her, of course: the president chose not to attend the summit, as he is too busy improving our status. Thanks a lot!

## OFFICIALLY

### THE FIRST EURASIAN WOMEN'S SUMMIT open in Astana

The first Eurasian Women's Summit open in Astana (EWS,) organised by the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan, opened on February 22, in Astana. The forum is carried out with support of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC,) Kazakhstan Today correspondent reports.

An international conference "Women and Globalization: Challenges, Threats and Prospects of Development" will make part of the forum.

The EWS participants will consider three groups of issues at the international conference: political promotion of women as a part of the gender strategy, economic opportunities of women in conditions of globalisation, women's health, and family policies.

Besides, an awarding ceremony for laureates of the national premium for public recognition of Kazakhstani women's achievements "Azhar" will be carried out.

More than 400 heads and representatives of public, political, expert, and business organisations from more than 20 world countries - Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Bulgaria, USA, Germany, Turkey, Mongolia, Norway, South Africa - are participating. Among the participants - Raushan Sarsembayeva, president of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan, Aitkul Samakova, aide to the president of RK - chairperson of the National Commission for Family Affairs and Gender Policies, Grigory Rapota, Secretary General of EurAsEC, MP Dariga Nazarbayeva, head of "Aimak" faction, and many others.

An "Astana Declaration "On Establishment of a Council for Gender Strategy Promotion in the EurAsEC Member States" is going to be adopted at the end of the Eurasian Women's Summit.

On the first day of the summit, the participants have proposed to make it a regular event.

Source: Kazakhstan today

In many countries, women make the majority of the population, and are the most active part of the electorate. This fact was mentioned in the report delivered by Dariga Nazarbaeva: "We need to learn how to use this opportunity. It's all up to us."

On the very next day, men awarded laureates of republican competition. The president of the Kazakhstan's Businesswomen Association Raushan Sarsembayeva said: "if women set a goal, they can reach anything. If they unite, there can be no obstacles for the women."



photo by author

## AFTERWARDS

*To check my impressions on the summit, I decided to interview other participants*

But after this, everything was mixed up.

"If we, the women, want to be influential, we don't have to deal with traditional men's duties. We must educate the population, to work as scientists, to develop culture. This is something we are good at, because of our natural interest to this spheres. Only brilliant women can enter politics," Jahan Pollyeva, Russian president's assistant said.

"Those women, who are actively involved in politics, should not expect any indulgence. Stop all your naive talks. There are no gallant gentlemen in the politics," Ms Dariga Nazarbaeva suggested.

It reminded to me the words of one of our parliament members: "If a woman is beautiful, wealthy and smart, she can enter politics. But why would she need it? All she needs is to come to my office, I'll do anything she is concerned about!"

But the words of one woman, turned out to be the very climax of the summit. The woman, who is very popular, because she is: a parliament member, the head of Asar political party, the head of media holding, an opera singer and, which is the most important, the daughter of the Kazakh president and the one, for whom the VIP-meeting was organized, said:

"We are very beautiful, strong and - which is terrible - we are smart."

This remark was printed by all newspapers, as it was considered to be the main result of the summit.

### **Yelena:**

*Everything was very respectfully. I liked participating women leaders. They know how to comport themselves. I really liked it.*

### **Sagdat:**

*It was just a VIP party. Everything was luxurious. Foreign women were invited only to show importance. Russians were surprised that Kazakh women could afford it. It was a part of the PR campaign aimed to popularize the Kazakh capital and certain figures. The activity was quite expensive, but I don't think it made any sense.*

### **Gulnara:**

*Women in power do not understand us, 'just' women. They swagger and boast, and want to show how important they are. When we ask about equal opportunities, they respond: "What is the problem? You are free to get involved in politics." And they sincerely believe in their superiority. I feel like reminding them, that the fight for women rights is not being held for some selected women only."*

### **Gulzhan:**

According to statistics, there are 53 percent of women in Kazakhstan. And only 1 percent of them expressed their interest towards the summit. The biggest part of the women did not even notice this summit. While the summit did not notice these women."



*The 'poles' are so far away from each other.*

photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan



Natalia DOMAGALSKAYA,  
Kyrgyzstan

## fought for what?

# woman's question WITHOUT ANSWER

paint from nature as one year passed since revolution



Picture taken one year ago. It seems, that local politics experiences the same methods.

photo by Igor Sapozhnikov, Kyrgyzstan

There are no women in the Zhogorku Kenesh (Kyrgyz Parliament) as one year passed since the 'Tulip Revolution'. Previously, there was some six percent of them. There is a law On Gender Equality in Kyrgyzstan. Huge number of non-governmental organizations received grants for their projects aimed at the increase of number of women at the state decision-making process.

Exact amount of money spent for this purpose will become known only after several decades, I guess, but the reasons of this discomfiture are discussed already today. Some specialist consider that the reason is that revolution caused ignorance of the 'previous' laws adopted by the ousted authorities. New officials traditionally believe that women's business is kitchen.

... Nobody would be surprised by the fact that judges sometimes appear in the dock. But here is an unusual case. Deputy judge of Batken district court is charged for her husband's murder. The situation is quite common: the husband was an alcoholic and a home tyrant. Witnesses say that the woman was concerned about the shame mostly, as some of her neighbors used to say: "Before judging others, take care of your own family."

According to the preliminary investigation, the woman had finally 'taken care.' Presently, the court considers the issue of depriving her of immunity of a judge.

...

The number of women, who want to have military career keeps increasing in Kyrgyzstan. Presently, there number makes some 60, but the army itself is also not numerous. The number of women officers is extremely low; the majority of them are medical workers.

These women explain the reasons behind going to army simply: "Here is more order than anywhere else. And it is important that besides salary, here are uniforms."

It is not about women's fashion, the reason for liking military uniform is that women do not have to spend money for clothes.

...

"Are you friends with Zamira?! She's a crazy feminist! Only Tamara can stand her."

"Why do you slander? She is a normal woman, and she was twice married. And they are not lesbians, her and Tamara; I know for sure. They don't even kiss each other, when they meet. (dialogue in a bus)

Rinata GALIEVA,  
Uzbekistan

**surroundings**

# AS MANY KIDS AS SHE CAN

## gynecologist is someone villager women should avoid

Startig from her childhood she is taught to obey her parents and to follow their experience. Their experience does not allow a woman to object those who are older or have higher social status. Early marriages do not consider any legal regulations here; even a 14 years old girl can become a wife and a mother. The majority of men believe that this is what women are taught by Koran; which doe not include, according to them, any possibility for women to study or work. Young mothers, aged 15, 16 or 17 raise their kids, please their husbands and take care of the house. Many women subdue and turn into obedient and humble wives. These women have to work at home, in the garden, in the field. They know almost nothing about their city co-citizens, who fight for their rights and want to enter politics. Muslim moral does not consider family planning issue possible. A woman is assumed to give birth to as

many children, as she can. Gynecologist is someone she should avoid. Some time ago, a capital city sent gynecologists to the country's provinces in order to explaine to them what contraception is. Doctors tried to distribute pills; they even had some sort of directive to place loops forcibly to some of the women. These procedures were taking lace in anti-sanitary conditions. "We brought them to sheds where it was comparatively clean. We lied to some of them that we had to inoculate them, and gave them sleeping-draught. As these women went asleep, we placed loops," one of the gynecologists said. Some of the women went desperate, saying that they will not be allowed to go home, and that everybody will disregard them. Husbands had no idea about why their wives felt so bad. They were not interested, in fact.



*Generations change, but the women's status remains difficult*

photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan



there is the word "independence," meaning economic independence from parents family and husband. many girls wrote that they wanted to earn a lot of money in order to help their parents. Also, every fifth essay reads "I do not want to live as my parents do," while every seventh girl states she does not want to live in Russia. The half of the authors wrote "I don't want to live in Murmansk."

Two girls (out of 46) say they want to be housewives and mothers only, three girls want to start their own business (make up saloons and clinics). Love is listed as a superior value in the majority of the works; almost every essay reads "I want to be loved," "I will love," "I will have beloved husband." The context show that "love" to these girls represents warm emotional relations, rather than sex. Almost always a family means to them having kids. Many girls wrote: "I will get married and will have (number) kids." In other words, gender self- consciousness of today's school-girls does not essentially differ from that of their mothers, despite of the changes that appeared during the recent decade.

Boys of 9-11 grades, think of their future in a more general way. Every third guy plans to start his own business, only a half of the boys mentioned the plan to create a family. The creation of a family depends, according to the boys, to their "material status." This means that the value of the family is not as significant for them as for the girls. In contrast to their female classmates, boys plan to travel, to have interesting hobby, and plenty of friends to have fun with. In school, kids share information on their future plans. Thus, teenagers understand not only the values of genders, but their correlation as well. As its seems, girls and boys have different life strategy. It even seems surprising that people get married, create families and continue living in Russia.



Always lead by someone?

photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia

## APROPOS

# WOMEN'S TOPICS IN MEDIA

Recently, Russian open media competition Women City finished. We received works from all parts of Russia, total of 397 articles, TV and radio programs on women's issues.

The main impression was: women are neither loved nor respected in our country; while women themselves do not see any perspectives to change this attitude. Women overcome enormous difficulties in order to simply live, love and work.

Our competition had 5 nominations: "Women faces in politics," "woman and business," "Woman at labor market," "Woman's role in the family," and "from equal rights to equal opportunities." All heroes of the stories were shown as playing the second role, as men are more important, but can forward to women part of the most difficult work. Men were also shown as leaving families, while women remain with their problems, poverty, and care about their children... These women were shown as proud about being strong enough in alike circumstances. We felt like saying: "Dear strong and smart women, learn how to respect yourselves!" From the other hand, we were surprised about certain non-standard of journalistic works. It seemed that we all live in one country, but the articles from central newspapers and those written in remote provinces turned out to be very different. It was quite touching to look through tiny newspapers with low-quality paper and printing describing happy life of a small settlement. Or to watch a TV program, where it is described that there are women in the town, and they live a very good life...

*Nadezhda Ilyinskaya,  
Chairwoman, Guild of Gender Journalism  
Sankt-Peterburg*

Diana PETRIASHVILI,  
Georgia

## genres

# WILD FEMINISM TYPES

## everyday causes for going wild

*Let me introduce myself: a wild feminist. Sometimes I introduce myself in this manner. For example, when someone starts some sort of a gender argue. The majority of opponents generally think I am only teasing. One of the guys I spoke to recently even said:*

*"Who would believe you! You are married."*

*General mentality of the people believes that feminists hate men. It is also likely for a feminist to be a lesbian. Feminists would never let men: present flowers, kiss on the hand, help to put on a coat, let go forward and pay for coffee. This is what does the society think. And it may be somewhat right.*

### Hate

Sometimes, I actually do hate some of the men. For example, a husband of one of my friends, whose husband reproached her for sterility during ten years. As it turned out that the problem was about his health, he insisted on adoption, although doctors advised him to get medical treatment. He did not want to do so, as during necessary procedures he would not be able to drink alcohol. He is not an alcoholic, that guy, he is just 'a real men,' always available for a party.

I hate my friend's boyfriend, who once beat her so severely, that she was unable to leave house for a week.

I hate my neighbor, who beats his kids for each low grade at school. I hate my colleague, who cheats his wife and believes it is a normal situation.

### Flowers

No problem if I get them from my husband or some other relative. Or if it's a birthday present. But if I suddenly receive a bunch of roses from my co-worker, neighbor or my dentist - I will really dislike it.

I am a traditional Caucasus woman, actually. Why should I get presents from unknown men?!

### Coat

What does 'help' mean, if a man helps a woman to put on her coat. If she broke her arm recently, than, maybe, helping would make sense. Or in the case if she asks for a help. But if a man grabs my coat and gallantly throws it open, I don't like it. I don't feel comfortable when someone helps me putting on my coat. Besides other, I think it's quite an intimate action, to help a woman to put on her clothes.

### Paying for coffee

There is a simple rule: pays the one who invites. But each time I interview my male respondents in a tiny cafe next to my office, it really scares them when I ask to give me the bill. They grab the bill and pay for it, while I feel really indebted: a person found time for meeting me, and even paid for it. I don't like it.

### Letting go

Actually, the majority of men still let me go forward when entering a room. But to tell the truth, neither I like this. Sometimes it feels to me that it is a legal opportunity for a man to look at women's back...

### Kissing on the hand

Fortunately, we do not have this tradition. In Georgia both women and men kiss each other on the cheek when meeting. A kiss on the hand is an intimate flirting.

*There is ample evidence that I am a wild feminist. Let me introduce myself.*

## APROPOS

Recently, we finished multimedia project, aimed to show that Millennium Development Goals are directly related with gender and each of us. I participated in the work at gender application. the work at the project followed working at the information - internet, interviewing gender projects participants, international and local NGOs, researching everything that was published on gender in our country. After this work, we prepared technical tasks, versions for slogans, texts for informative advertisements, talk-show scenarios etc. It is a difficult topic. Vague focus audience. Crazy deadlines. Because of the difficulties, the word "gender" turned into a swear-word for the working group. But it was all very different to me. I found a book Thais the Athenian, which I read long time ago, but understood differently now. "The Da Vinci Code" turned out to be not just a detective, but quite a real theory on the start of gender inequality. And I did not only read Cosmopolitan, but evaluated its gender sensitiveness. I had plenty of questions. This was my own product of the Gender and Millennium Challenge Goals project.

*Marina Perekrestova,  
Bishkek*

Alma BEKTURGANOVA ANDERSEN,  
Denmark

## left and right

# I AM A FEMINIST!

It is an ordinary phrase in Denmark,  
and it does not include any challenge

"I am a feminist, just as many others in my team," Ritt Bjerregaard, a runner for burgomaster's position emphasized during her elections campaign. This statement did not hamper her anyhow and she became the first female burgomaster of Copenhagen. According to the local newspaper, Bjerregaard's victory was so magnificent, that her male candidate of the Liberal Party stated he would never try to continue with politics.

Now, please imagine that someone in our post-Soviet countries makes alike statement: I am a feminist. How many voices would this person lose? I remember one of the sittings Commission on Family affairs of the local Kazakhstan's Zhambyl district. Her secretary, D.M. Akhmetova, kept repeating: "Please do not think that were feminists here." I told her: "You sound just as if "feminist" would be a swear-word!" I was very surprised about the reaction of other leaders of women's organizations. They looked at me in perplexity: "it IS a swear word indeed!"

Well, I know how my ex-co-citizens understand this word. But here is how it is understood by the new residents of Scandinavia.

At one of the parties, my new friends, immigrants from Russia and Belarus started complaining. One of the women said that her husband did not let her to have a baby. The other said that she gave birth after continuous home scandals and threats that the husband would send her back home. Myself and another woman were surprise: do things like this happen? The girls explained to us that their husbands considered that the wives were too old to have kids, while the men already had children, as they were married before. "My husband has three children, but there were no questions about me having more kids!" I said. I was asked straight away: "Does your husband help you with home duties?" - "What do you mean - helps me He does even more than I do. It is very common for a Danish family. My husband's brother has three kids, and there is a detailed schedule in their family: his wife stays with the kids until 6 p.m., while he takes care of them after 6. He gets up in the night, if the baby cries."

Another woman added: "In my case, the husband initiated birth of the sun. I was against this idea, as it was really hard for me to raise my daughter alone. But my Danish husband keeps doing at least a half of everyday home duties."

Suddenly I realized what was going on: "Do you, girls, know, whom your husbands voted to?" - "Mine voted for the liberals," the first, whose husband would not

help at home, replied quietly. "Mine voted for conservators," the second added. Her husband did not want her to have children. My husband votes for social-democrats. I looked at the fourth woman: "Yours should vote for someone of the left-block, huh?" "He votes for radicals," she said firmly. "Here we go," I replied, "it's a left-wing party, that sometimes enters the bloc of social-democrats or socialists..." "What does it mean?" My friends asked. "It means that left-ist parties have always been demanding equal rights for the people, including national, religious and gender issues. And I told them about Ms. burgomaster. Social outlook of feminists and left-wing parties oftentimes coincident. Feminism is not only a fight for women's rights, it also considers social ideals and suggests the ways to obtain them. I would really like if the phrase "I am a feminist" turns into a very common one and would not include any protest. Let it mean equal opportunities in all spheres.



*Maybe, feminism was exactly what helped Ritt Bjerregaard to be elected*



## APROPOS

# QUOTAS IN UKRAINE: PROS AND CONS

*Women's Consortium of Ukraine, gender network of Ukrainian NGOs, which includes the only men's organization, Men's Adaptation Center, held an opinion poll, asking political parties and elections blocks about their opinion regarding quotas. Here are the responds*

### **People's Bloc of Levitin**

In general, we have a positive attitude. But each fight for the equality should end as soon as the equality is reached. There are plenty of women in the Bloc's lists and its leadership.

### **Our Ukraine Bloc**

Gender equality represents a problem for today's Ukraine. There are too many patriarchal stereotypes, both in personal and in social spheres. The Bloc supports introduction of quotas.

### **Ukrainian Public Bloc of Kostenko and Plusch**

Against quotas. Their position is: it is necessary to create necessary economic conditions, so that a woman can be occupied with a business she chose.

### **Ne Tak! Opposition Bloc**

In this bloc, Women for the Future Party is the one working at gender equality issues. The bloc suggests improvement of women's status and supports the idea of gender equality.

### **Yulia Tymoshenko's Bloc**

It is harder for a woman to be involved in politics. But gender equality should not be provided through directives, as it would humiliate women. Equality should be achieved through the integration of gender culture to the society.

### **Communist Party of Ukraine**

Women and men are equal both in families and at workplaces, if it is about physical activity.

### **PORA-PRP Civil Bloc**

Gender equality does not represent a national problem. It was created artificially. In Ukraine, women enjoy the same rights as men do. Discussions of this problem can lead to infringement of men's rights.

### **Socialist Party of Ukraine**

Just as the world's civilized countries, we should be oriented to equal rights for men and women. It is especially important to have women at the state management bodies; the proportion should make 50/50.

*Vladimir Khanas,  
Ternopil,  
Ukraine*



*Parliament members are not this friendly to us, unfortunately...  
photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia*



**The edition was prepared by:**

Galina PETRIASHVILI (editor) - Georgia;  
Olga LIPOVSKAYA - Rusia;  
Tamara HOVNATANYAN, Susanna OVANNESYAN - Armenia;  
Saule MAYLIBAEVA - Kazakhstan;  
Natalia DOMAGALSKAYA - Kyrgyzstan;  
Lubov SHTILEVA, Nadezhda ILYINSKAYA - Russia;  
Diana PETRIASHVILI - Georgia;  
Alma BEKTURGANOVA ANDERSEN - Kazakhstan/Denmark;  
Vladimir KHANAS, Valeriy RUDIK - Ukraine

**Photo:**

Umida AKHMEDOVA, Uzbekistan;  
Galina PETRIASHVILI, Georgia;  
Igor SAPOZHNIKOV, Kyrgyzstan

**Design:**

GMC design-group, Georgia

**Translation:**

Diana PETRIASHVILI - Georgia (GMC)

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[www.gmc.ge](http://www.gmc.ge)

17 Ioris Str. TBILISI, 0103, Republic of Georgia

Tel./fax (995 32) 77 60 18; mob. (995 99) 90 11 24

e-mail [galapet@ip.osgf.ge](mailto:galapet@ip.osgf.ge)