


Frontline Fighter
[artist statement]
Johanna Falzone
Artist



My work, *Frontline Fighter*, is the feelings and observations I have on Modern Feminism, what I've seen in society as it progressed, and comparing it to our past. I do not believe in identifying "waves" of Feminism because, while it is important to understand the past, my fight is in the present. My Feminism is pretty cut and dry. Society doesn't believe that, as a woman, I am equal to a man, and this widely affects how I construct my poetry. While the United States has come a long way in the past 117 years, mainstream Feminism is still very new. The women's rights fight has gone on for thousands of years. However, the fact that we still have not fully accomplished equality means we still have to overcome a large struggle in order to meet our goals. Being aware that this world is inherently imperfect, I'm not sure we will every truly meet these goals, and that is why we have to continue the fight to protect ourselves, gain power over our own bodies, and gain control of our own destinies.

One of the biggest factors is finding peace within our own movement. We continue to fight within our cause and, at times, I know this is why some of our biggest battles result in losses. We become distracted by small non-issues, resulting in progressives accusing other progressives of not being pro-active enough or criticizing their humor, art, and expressions of clothing choice. We need to be focused on women's rights and the rights of other minority groups.

In this poem, I address historical issues women have faced, while reassuring us of our undeniable power through women of history and mythology. I revisit this theme to tie up the issue of equality. In no way is this poem meant to convey misandry; it is a clear assertion of power over one's body, choices, and what women have faced to gain their independence. I want people to be reminded that we are still struggling by tying in recognizable chants heard at the Women's March on January 21, 2017. Many people think our fight is coming to an end, when in reality, we are just getting started.

Johanna Falzone was born and raised in New Port Richey, Florida. Growing up in the nineties, the influence of punk rock music, feminism, Nickelodeon cartoons, and Barbie took over Johanna's world. These forces influenced her attraction to pretty imagery ranging from the grotesque to the overtly feminine. Her self-portraits create contemporary icons blurring boundaries between celebrity and self. These theatrical productions use color and narrative to create charming antagonistic paintings. She also constructs drawings and books combining personal experience with feminist undertones and heritage through relation or repurposing of an unknown. With a background in literature and creative writing, Johanna also writes poetry, prose, and short stories all influenced by the same themes she creates visual art from.

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Getting further into the poem, there are controversial topics covering persecution. The Middle East has always been a paramount example of a region in which multiple countries have severely oppressed not just women, but those who identify as LGBTQ. Coinciding with this statement, I also assert that every country is guilty of continuing inhumane actions as well. Joining minority themes of sexism and LGBTQ rights transitions into allusions of diversity within Feminism. It's pertinent to address various human rights topics because they are part of Feminism.

The conclusion addresses political obstacles. We have to face the fact that not all elected officials are good people, some believe in policies that are oppressive and hateful to women and minority groups. It is a call to action on how we need to support the Separation of Church and State our country was built upon. Corruption within our government continues to strip rights away from minorities and force people into dire situations. While we organize a revolution against corruption, we need to take a firm stance and work together actively to see results. It's time we stop ignoring the problems and take steps to progress, not allow ourselves to be consistently distracted by our favorite television shows. We need to speak out in any way we can whether it is through writing, public speaking, comedy, news reporting, or visual and performance arts.

While not mentioned in this particular poem, my own stance on uniting the people to create a better country, ties in the idea of equality with men. We do not work well as one dominating sex and Patriarchy has proved this, from being in company of Matriarchal friendships, I know an all women society is not a Utopia either, Charlotte Perkins Gillman also proved this point with her short story, *Herland*. There is nothing good about one sex ruling over everyone just as there is nothing good about religion ruling over diverse groups of people. We all have to come together in the end to make the world work. This means as working partnerships, not in sexual and identity ways. Sexuality is fluid, this is part of the goal of Feminism as well. Fighting for the rights of those who have been marginalized, anyone who is considered an "other" needs their equality as well, but to gain this equality, men and women have to come together to make it successful. Time for the battle of the sexes to end.