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FEMINIST FATALE

Voices from the "twentysomething" generation explore the future of the "Women's Movement"

By Paula Kamen

Donald I. Fine. 404 pp.

Despite its sinister title, *Feminist Fatale* is a sober, even mild assessment of how the nation's youngest adults view and fit into the women's movement.

Freelance journalist Paula Kamen, 24, backs away from the cutting edge of feminism to locate the majority of today's young people. She finds that, despite the gains of the previous generation and the consciousness-raising of women's studies programs, the feminist stereotype lodged in the popular mind often "divides women instead of uniting them."

To save feminism from a graying, dwindling future, Kamen urges that more young women must be recruited. So must young men, for sexism won't disappear without basic reform in male attitudes.

Kamen notes the irony of how, *because of* hard-won victories, young women often do not have profound consciousness-raising experiences until their thirties, in the workplace. There they find the "glass ceiling" blocking them from the top. There they meet what columnist Anna Quindlen called the "quota of one" woman allowed ("I really wish I could run your column, but I already run Ellen Goodman"). There they work as hard as the next guy, whose wife takes care of the home and kids the career woman cannot afford.

To attract sufficient new adherents, Kamen suggests, the movement must: 1) focus on exigent issues—violence against women, reproductive rights, equality in the workplace, child and health care, the feminization of poverty; 2) find young spokespersons and promote media outlets for them; and 3) emphasize diversity and inclusiveness, i.e., incorporate racial equality into the concept of feminism and acknowledge that different women must follow different paths to the common goal. That goal, ultimately, is equality of power, and "to get that power, women must visualize themselves as having the right to it."

Veteran feminists might wish this a more vanward book, and all might wish it less redundant. Kamen says little new and nothing radical. Half her 236 people interviewees don't even call themselves feminists. But Kamen doesn't seek the already converted. Rather, she blends intelligence, sophistication and youthful energy into a quest for how the women's movement might grow.

