

What Gender War? It's A War of Words

Contributed by Matt Katz
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Back in the day, women burnt their bras and men made crude comments to female coworkers without fear of retribution. The Gender War raged from coast to coast.

Unfortunately, the Gender War has gotten pretty lame these days. No one is burning anything at all, and it's rare to see men and women shout sexist comments at each other. It's even hard to figure out whose team everyone is on, what with men supporting women and vice versa.

There's only one place where the Gender War is blowing up -- the dictionary. Although this seems boring, the new words that are being coined as part of the Gender War are actually telling, occasionally offensive and often hilarious.

Remember when some feminists pushed replacing "history" with "herstory" back in the 90s? (Best word controversy ever, by the way.) That's the kind of thing that's going on today across the front lines of the Gender War.

On one side, we have the "masculists," a community of men who think feminists -- they would say "feminazis" -- have seriously infringed on the rights of men in their quest for equality (they would say "equality"). These men are mostly found on anonymous Internet message boards and talk radio.

Their message isn't anti-woman; they just wish the last 35 years never happened. So they've come up with words to explain what annoys them most about feminism:

Castrationism -- Self-explanatory, I hope. If you still don't get it, then you're better off. This is just a shocking, weirdly painful way of encapsulating the problems the feminist movement has allegedly wrought on mankind.

Hopefully this column serves as a guide so you can decide whether you support the masculists -- who use clever words to attack feminists -- or the anti-heteronormativists, who use clever words to make "male" and "female" irrelevant.

E-mail me to let me know which -ist you prefer, and if your comments have the right mix of shocking and family-friendly, I'll reprint them.

In the mean time, I'll try to figure out if the Gender War actually, well, exist.

Because in researching this column, I spent a lot (too much) time Googling "bra" and "fire," and after seven hours and 1,900 pop-up windows it turns out the famous bra-burnings of the 60s and 70s are bogus. There actually aren't any reports of bra-burning demonstrations.

But the reality doesn't matter. It's all what you say happened -- and what words you use to say it.

This column appeared in the Courier-Post and Gannett newspapers.