

Activist Photography and Its Usage in Women's Movements: Guerrilla Girls and FEMEN

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Abstract

This article examines the role of photography in the organization and actualization of social movements, and how it has depended on technological developments. The study reveals the transformation of activist movements, which began as gangsterism, from the early days until today and discusses the shifting of methods to the digital environment with the support of technological developments. The human communities that pour out into the streets to awaken the masses, can now let millions hear their voices within a single photo frame. In this context, as a branch of activist movements, photographs of the two most visible women's organizations (Guerrilla Girls and FEMEN) are analyzed. The use of the photograph by non-governmental organizations — and whether the organization's objectives are concordant with the visual content — are discussed.

Keywords

social movements | women's movements | activism | photography | activist photograph | Guerrilla Girls | FEMEN

INTRODUCTION

Today, social movements are divided into many factions and become active in different circles due to the changing and transforming social structure. Non-governmental organizations and activists have moved street movements to social media, making them physically more passive but visibly more active. The most important reason for such developments is undoubtedly the development of social media, which offers possibilities for delivering the message to audiences in previously unreachable geographical region.

The transformation of social movements from the early days until today is examined in the first part of this article. It is revealed that social movements were first carried out by the masses, but then became more individual. Today they are known as activism or exist under the auspices of non-governmental organizations where each individual has an equal role. This chapter explains how these movements developed ideologically and methodologically in the context of women's rights advocacy.

The growing importance and usage of photography in activist movements is explained in the second chapter. Throughout history, many war photographs, documentaries, news reports, etc., have shown that the photograph carries more meaning than words. It is understood that photography represents not only an artistic product, but also a great force in creating awareness. Therefore, the practice of reaching the masses through photography by activism has become widespread. It has become a point of importance how a photograph is framed and edited, and which messages are carried.

The usage of activist photographs by non-governmental organizations is analyzed in the last part of the article. This analysis is based on two NGOs, Guerrilla Girls and FEMEN, which have the highest visibility in an international context. The discourse of the visuals of the aforementioned feminist organizations is examined, while the extent to which organizational ideologies reflect these visuals is discussed and the harmony of the given messages is evaluated.

The research reveals that these organizations, trying to raise awareness for the masses, are moving away from basic principles while creating popularity. The photographs have an influence worldwide, while not preventing the commercialization of non-governmental organizations. Organizations with increasingly expanding target groups have gradually evolved into creators of advertising material, moving away from activism.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVISM

Social Movements

From the beginning of history, various forms of resistance, conflict, and rebellion have existed in social life, and conflicts both among rulers and between rulers and the oppressed classes have led to the emergence of very different forms of resistance, causing significant changes in people's lives, which have passed on into human history.¹ Changes in social structure, influenced particularly by the processes of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, have accelerated since the middle of the twentieth century and, with the addition of globalization, have affected both developing and distant regions with mass communication channels.²

Social movements are conscious, common, and perpetual efforts carried out by organized groups of ordinary people (contrary to political parties, the

¹ Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *Toplumsal Hareketler: Tarih, Teori ve Deneyim*, 25.

² Elif Topal Demiroğlu, "New Social Movements: A Literature Review," 133–44.

military, and trade unions in industry) and aimed at changing problematic aspects of society by means other than institutional channels.³ According to Tarrow, social movements are defined as “collective actions developed by individuals who have a common goal and a persistent interaction with each other against elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes.”⁴ According to research, no social event suddenly emerges and economic, cultural, and social crises accumulated over time lie behind the start of a movement.⁵

Social movements have begun to adopt new forms due to the changing conditions of the period. Community and leader-based movements have gradually become individual and voluntary activities. These activities are carried out by a certain non-governmental organization or individual and known as activism.

Activism

Activism is a movement born within modern social movements. For this reason, its activities and topics differ from those of earlier actions. The activist movements that began to appear towards the end of the nineteenth century were shaped by myriad global problems that began with modernization, and were able to improve their activities as much as possible. Any topic can be the subject of activism.

Early-period social movement researchers used the concept of *gang psychology* instead of activism. Subsequently, with the emergence of different opinions, a literature was developed in Europe that regards social movements as *new*.⁶ The aims, methods, and actions of social movements change and vary under the influence of historical developments. Freedom, equality, and fraternal discourse, as the symbol of the 1789 French Revolution, was the basic question of activists at that time, but today social movements are oriented towards issues such as identity and cultural values.⁷

Activism in Women's Movements

The women's rights struggle has been waged for centuries against the inequality between women and men. Women have achieved certain gains over a long period of time, yet this has never made them exactly equal to men. This

³ James M. Jasper, *Ahlaki Protesto Sanatı: Toplumsal Hareketlerde Kültür, Biyografi ve Yaratıcılık*, 29.

⁴ Demiroğlu, “New Social Movements,” 133–44.

⁵ See Jonathan Christiansen, “Four Stages of Social Movements.”

⁶ Brian Martin, “Theory for Activists,” 22–41.

⁷ Nuray Yılmaz Sert, “Aktivizmin Kavramsal, Gelişimsel ve Araçsal Açından İncelenmesi,” 11–43.

situation lasted until the eighteenth century, when the accumulation of years and the struggle for women's rights was theorized as Feminism as a result. The attainment of women's rights, selection, and election rights were targeted. For example, Margaret Brent wanted to take part in the House of Maryland in 1647 and was rejected by the parliament, but this event was important for women because it raised the possibility of entering parliament.⁸

It is not possible to define Feminism with a few words, as is the case for many philosophical concepts. Like many existing ideologies, Feminism constantly transforms. Although it defends women's rights, Feminism is rejected by some women's rights advocates. The feminist point of origin is the inequality between men and women and the aim is gender equality. Feminism's desire for equality begins with gender, and later focuses on ethnic, social, and class issues by expanding its field of struggle. This is why many of the leading feminists are active in human rights and anti-slavery movements.

In 1792, the British writer Mary Wollstonecraft argued that politics is not the only field of women's advocacy, but that women's social values should also be understood. She published the first important work of feminist theory, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In this period, the idea that a woman only has a role as a wife and mother in the home was almost universal; masculinity was seen as a tool of mental rationalization.⁹ Even in this pioneering work, there are debates on how we can make women useful for society, rather than "how can a woman be elevated as an individual." Considering the existing situation of the era, a major step was taken for the development of women's rights.

In 1920, after the adoption of the Anthony Amendment to the US Constitution, which vested selection and election rights for women in America, there was a process whereby feminist theory developed slowly but the theories established in the past were put into practice.¹⁰ The advocacy of women's rights granted in the period up to the 1960s was called *First-Wave Feminism*. After the 1960s, there was worldwide mobility in the field of feminism, which was called *Second-Wave Feminism*.

Second-Wave Feminism was anti-war, human rights-centered and concerned about ensuring the self-consciousness of various minority groups. In this period, the feminist movements that took place in America largely directed the constitutional amendment on the basis of equal rights without regard to gender, and their main agenda was related to sexuality and fertility.¹¹

⁸ History, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton."

⁹ Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Teori*, 19.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Martha Rampton, "Four Waves of Feminism."

The Miss America beauty contest, held in 1968, was protested by feminist organizations, and this action was the new form of feminist movements. The protests criticizing women's commodification with the "Welcome to the Miss America Cattle Auction" banners expressed human rights and all kinds of discrimination.



Figure 1. 1968 Miss America Protest.¹²

Third-Wave Feminism began in the West in the mid-90s, shaped by postmodern ideas. As with every great narrative, feminism and its values were questioned and discussed in postmodernism. Contemporary women following this trend have argued that absolute or relative information is not possible, that all information is contextual and historical, and that feminism has considered the results of reductionism.¹³ Advocates of women's rights in this period claimed that the past struggle cannot escape patriarchal discourse because it ignores many values of women.¹⁴ Since postmodernism did not see any categorization

¹² Associated Press, "1968 Miss America Protest," 1968, digital image, *Womennews*. <http://womensnews.org/2005/09/september-1968-women-protest-miss-america/>. Accessed August 10, 2019.

¹³ Zekiye Demir, *Modern ve Postmodern Feminizm*, 47.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Wright, *Lacan ve Postfeminizm*, 4.

as healthy in its essence, many concepts of sex were open to question in this period. The universally accepted meanings of concepts such as “femininity, heterosexuality, body, sex, sexuality” were questioned,¹⁵ and it was argued that no sex can be limited by a general definition. With the biological structure of a person who has been reversed from the gender perspective, it had been argued that their position within society could not be determined; in short, what every person feels is their gender.

The development of the women’s struggles that theorize the concept of feminism can be summarized as above. Since the struggle for women’s rights has made a great deal of legal progress now, this struggle has become popular. As we will examine in more detail in the following sections, some non-governmental organizations are concerned about how they can use it commercially, rather than showing sensitivity to the issue.

Evolution of Women’s Rights from Ancient Turkish Communities to the Republic of Turkey

Women’s rights in the west evolved as indicated above, while this progress had a different rhythm in Turkish communities. In order to understand the reasons for these rhythm differences, we must examine the development of women’s rights in Turkish communities. In this part of the article, first the position of women in pre-Islamic Turkish communities, then the position of women and women’s movements in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic era are scrutinized.

Women in pre-Islamic Turkish communities are seen as “mothers” as well as “heros.”¹⁶ Since these two attributes both demand respect, women had an important role in the state authorities and a voice in the decisions that were taken.

The ability to bear children ensured women a holy position within the community, therefore many of their rights were valued. Woman, in the Creation Epic, is the being which is the source of inspiration in the creation of earth.¹⁷

The political existence of women is mostly seen in Hun Turk communities. The orders of the khan only came into force after the approval of the khatun and important guests were hosted with the kahtun’s attendance.¹⁸ The first

¹⁵ See for example Rampton, “Four Waves of Feminism.”

¹⁶ Ahmet Gündüz, “Historical Process And The Importance Of Women In The Turkish Society And The States,” 129–48.

¹⁷ Abdulkadir İnan, *Makaleler ve İncelemeler*, 277.

¹⁸ Gündüz, “Historical Process,” 131.

peace agreement between the Great Hun Empire and China was signed by Mete's khatun.¹⁹ In the European Hun Empire messengers arriving from other states were hosted by Atilla's wife Arig-Khan. The khatun always sat on the left of the khan, and state affairs were always discussed in this way. The khatun always had the right to state their ideas and join the battle assembly.²⁰ It can be seen that Huns not only burdened women with the home and motherhood, but heeded their political views as well. Among Gokturks and Uighurs women bear the chief responsibility for the house and family, where khan and khatun have equal rights in the state class.²¹

It is possible to paint a democratic picture for the women who gain elevation to the ruling class in the ancient Turkish states; however, among other social classes women did not share the same rights. A woman with the identity of mother and the manager of the house was respected, but also exposed to various social pressures. For example, a woman was not allowed to pronounce the name of a man from the family of her husband.²² There is a general view that ancient Turkish communities had a monogamous family structure; however, ruling or upper-class men often had a second wife.²³ Even though the importance given to women was based upon holy values, there were situations where women were deferred to in both the lower and higher classes.

Even though women's position and importance in Pre-Islamic Turkish communities was superior to that in other cultures, the changing society and cultural structure caused equality between men and women to deteriorate. Women started a movement to obtain their rights during the disintegration period of the Ottoman Empire.

While women's rights were developing in the world, the geography of the Ottoman Empire was also influenced by this progress. The Ottoman Empire experienced massive land losses with the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) and Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) and the superiority of the West became increasingly influential. The Ottoman State, which wanted to protect its territorial integrity, started to develop modernization movements under the influence of the West. The "Tanzimat Reform Era" (Reorganization Reform Era) starting in 1839, brought reforms for the military and bureaucracy, but also in social and political areas, which were different from previous reforms.²⁴ French

¹⁹ M. Cihangir Doğan, "Eski Türk Ailesinin Yapısı ve Fonksiyonları," 73–81.

²⁰ Gülçin Çandarlıoğlu, *Türk Destan Kahramanları*, 64.

²¹ Gündüz, "Historical Process," 132.

²² Abdulkadir İnan, *Makaleler ve İncelemeler*, 359.

²³ Gündüz, "Historical Process," 131.

²⁴ Cemile Burcu Kartal, "The Republic's Heritage of second Constitution: 'Ideal Women,'" 215–38.

legislation was taken as an example in the Tanzimat Reform era, with progress for women's affairs beginning with the opening of a midwifery school in 1843. The "İrade-i Senniye Law" (Imperial Decree) accepted in 1849 allowed boys and girls to share an equal right of succession. The regulation of "Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi" (Statute on General Education) in 1869, legislated an increase in teacher schools and junior high schools for girls.²⁵ In this way, the first Girl Teacher's School was opened in 1870 and an important step was taken for women's working lives to develop.

While the Ottoman Empire took steps towards democratization, the most important leap in the women's movement started in the First Constitutional Era (1876). Women's rights gained importance with the start of the Second Constitutional Era and the severe pressure in women's education and social life diminished over time.²⁶ A mass women's movement came in sight, seeking to improve women's social status and to change the contemporary perception that a woman has a role only within the house as a mother and a wife.²⁷ The discrimination between girls and boys were partially resolved and women started to get organized. With the change in the main constitution in 1909, the right to form associations and the right of assembly led to an explosion in the number of parties, associations, newspapers, and magazines.²⁸ "Mudafaa-i Hukuki Nisvan" (Countrywide Resistance of Women), defending the equality of women and men, and "Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi" (Ottoman Islamic Association of Working Women), marking the existence of women in working life, were established.²⁹ Even during the disintegration of the empire, political, social, and cultural advancements were achieved.

The westernization movement that marked the era formed the basis of a campaign, beyond education and politics, for women's position in society to be esteemed. In the Second Constitutional Era, the need for society to undergo a radical transformation in order for the reforms to bear fruit, the reestablishment of women's value, and the hold of family life over women began to be appreciated.³⁰ This understanding, which defended educated women, had the potential to be the source of a better family and the foundation of society, and created an important place within the structural ideology of the Republic.

²⁵ Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını 1839-1923*, 4.

²⁶ Ayten Can Tunalı, "Türkiye'de Feminizm Hareketi," 47.

²⁷ Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, 23.

²⁸ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Gelişmeler (1876-1938)*, 128.

²⁹ Tunalı, "Türkiye'de Feminizm Hareketi," 48.

³⁰ Nalan Ova, "The Discourse of Devout Muslim Women as a Counter Hegemonic Discourse: Conflicts and Refractions," 36.

With the declaration of the Republic in 1923, a secular and nationalist ideology, fully modelled on the West, was adopted, erasing the traces of the Ottoman Empire in every field. The republicans, who made a great effort to keep their distance from sharia, did not aim to use secularism to disconnect religious and state affairs, but rather sought to keep religious affairs under state control.³¹ The Directorate of Religious Affairs implemented this policy and the process was successfully concluded for that era when secularism became a part of the main constitution in 1937. Women in the Turkish Republic were content to establish associations until the change in the constitutional amendment in 1934 which allowed women to elect and be elected. Rights in the Republic Era in the political field start with the Tevhid-iTetrisat Law (The Law on Unification of Education). This law allowed educational equality between girls and boys. The Turkish Civil Code, accepted in 1926, allowed women to divorce, perform tutorship, and request rights on assets. In 1930, women were granted the rights to select and be selected in municipal elections and maternity leave conditions were issued. Women were encouraged to deliver nationalist policies for population growth in this era.³²

The post-1980 feminist movements came into action with the efforts of small groups and were shaped by these groups over the long run.³³ Women's associations' media organs were established in Turkey, basic resources in the field were translated into Turkish, and articles were written.³⁴ Western movements of thought progressed with social events, while there is a disengagement in the case of post-1980 Turkey. After the 1980 coup, radical politics were suppressed. Feminist activities had been aroused but could not be articulated within the era's political climate.³⁵ The era from the 1980s until today brought subjects to campaigns such as the pressure women's bodies were under and exposure to any form of violence. The era's problems, such as control of chastity, violence within the family, rape, sexual harassment, and honor killings, became the focal point of the women's struggle.³⁶

Women's status in Turkish communities was regulated according to religious community rules in earlier eras, but in the modernization era it was reformed according to the requirements of western-style policies. Women's rights were developed by the government in this period, but in the period after

³¹ Ibid.

³² Cemile Burcu Kartal, "The Process of Granting of Women's Rights in Turkey and the Municipal Elections of 1930," 18.

³³ Aksu Bora, "Kadın Hareketi: Nereden Nereye."

³⁴ Tunalı, "Türkiye'de Feminizm Hareketi," 56.

³⁵ Serpil Sancar, "Türkiye'de Feminizm ve Kadın Hareketi."

³⁶ Şirin Tekeli, "On Maddede Türkiye'de Kadın Hareketi."

the declaration of the Republic women's movements played an important role in the struggle for women's rights.

ACTIVIST PHOTOGRAPHY

Even if hunger, sexual abuse, terrorism, etc. in geographically distant countries is described in the pages of the global press, the influence of a single frame photograph can be much stronger. Since photographs have the power to visually reveal the truth, they have had great influence throughout history on social consciousness and decisively shaped public opinion against various government policies.³⁷ The visible frame not only stimulates people to feel pain, but also encourages them to act in order to change the situation they are in. The photos of the Syrians who fled from Syria in the end of the civil war in 2011 became an effective means of announcing the voice of refugees to the world. In 2015, the photo "Aylan Baby," shot after the sinking of a boat which was carrying Syrian refugees from Turkey to Kos Island, showed the tragic consequences of war all over the world. The photograph, taken by Doğan News Agency photographer Nilufer Demir, has become the symbol of the Syrian refugee crisis and has been influential in changing state politics towards Syrian immigrants. After the boat accident, Abdullah Kurdi, the only surviving member of the Kurdi family and Aylan's father, received offers of citizenship from Canada and Turkey. The asylum requests of Aylan's uncle, aunt, and cousins to Canada, which had previously been rejected, was accepted and they settled there. In the European Union Refugee Summit held in 2016, the decision to admit up to 72,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey to European Union countries was taken.³⁸

A photograph is not always able to change a situation on its own. Changes take place slowly, accumulating over time, and each photograph taken is a part of the change. Witnessing is conveyed to the person through the eyes of the human being, and those who see the photograph acknowledge the witness. According to Bogre, an activist photographer uses the power of the camera not

³⁷ İsmail Ferdous, "Photography as Activism," 22–25.

³⁸ BBC, "AB mülteci zirvesi: Türkiye - AB anlaşmaya vardı."



Figure 2. Aylan Baby.³⁹

to punish the crime but to capture and freeze it, and make it infinite, so that the photo becomes proof of the crime — a document of fault to be corrected.⁴⁰

Lewis Wickes Hine, a US photographer known for his photographs of child laborers and immigrants, describes two of his goals as a photographer as being “to show things that had to be corrected, as well as to show things that had to be appreciated.” These are two points on which activist photographers converge. They summarize the aims of activist photographers to encourage others by showing people who are doing good things and by putting the wrongs that are taking place in the remote places of the world in front of the eyes of humanity.

The first war and documentary photographs taken carry activist meanings due to their social influence. In the photo “The Valley of the Shadow of Death” by Roger Fenton in 1855, shot in the Crimean War that began in 1853, the skulls on the ground showed the scattered face of the war to the rest of the world. The photograph’s ability to influence the perception of reality for humans, as well as the ease with which it forms an impression in the mind, bring it to the forefront among other news media.

During the American Civil War in the 1860s, photography was used in many new areas, such as in medical settings, in the military, in official government documents, and in espionage, but in none of them was it as effective as in

³⁹ Nilüfer Demir, “Aylan Baby,” 2015, digital image, DHA, <https://www.dha.com.tr/haber-arsiv/aylan-bebek-yilin-fotografi/haber-1179055>. Accessed January 30, 2019.

⁴⁰ Michelle Bogre, *Photography as Activism: Images for Social Change*, xii.



Figure 3. In the Valley of the Shadow of Death.⁴¹

photojournalism.⁴² The Civil War photographers Mathew Brady and Alexander Gardner forever changed the world's view of war. The potential for war photos to hold artistic value and create a society more sensitive to war was realized by these photographers. Traditional war photos taken by the government and military photographers do not even come close to the work of these artistic photographers. According to Sontag,⁴³ knowing that people will not be able to change what they see causes them to become desensitized and show a sensual interest in war images that contain as much nudity as pornography.⁴⁴ Controlling this situation depends on the ability of the photographer to show pain and suffering without the brutality. On the other hand, the display of brutality does not even benefit governments. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of being a war photographer is to balance the depiction of war away from visual pleasure without censoring the truth.

The aforementioned Lewis Hine was one of the most accomplished photographers when it came to using photographs to defend human rights. Hine took photographs of child workers from 1908–1914, showing children working in inhumane conditions, that raised awareness in America, and led to many legal changes on the issue.⁴⁵ The photograph, which was seen as a

⁴¹ Roger Fenton, "In The Valley of the Shadow of Death," April 23, 1854, digital image, Getty. <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/60602/roger-fenton-valley-of-the-shadow-of-death-english-april-23-1855/>. Accessed July 10, 2019.

⁴² Kevin Morrow, "The Birth of Photojournalism," 40.

⁴³ Susan Sontag, *Başkalarının Acısına Bakmak*, 10.

⁴⁴ According to Sontag, pornography is not about sex; it's about death. People say they suffer when they look at the dead and broken body, but they cannot tear themselves away from it.

⁴⁵ Gisele Freund, *Fotoğraf ve Toplum*, 99.

means of making money in its first years, became an artistic activity over time and it was understood that the photograph means much more than money. As developed countries are vulnerable to human rights violations, the activists of these countries turned their attention to issues such as hunger, violence, sexual abuse, terrorism, and warfare in third world countries or in famine regions. Photographers showed that it is possible to organize large campaigns with a photograph and thus save the lives of hundreds of people.

ACTIVIST PHOTO ANALYSIS IN FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS

Guerrilla Girls

Guerrilla Girls came together in New York in 1985 to protest the phenomenon of women falling behind in art. Members of this feminist group, attracting attention with their gorilla masks, perform their protests by raiding art galleries. Their aim is to reveal corruption in art, cinema, popular culture, and politics, as well as sexist and racist bias. The protests are realized by using facts combined with humorous and outrageous visuals.

Guerrilla Girls attracts attention with accepted segregationist dialects, symbols, and deliberate errors. For example, feminism defends the usage of the word “woman” instead of “girl,” while Guerrilla Girls prefer to use the word “girl.” The aim is to demolish the values loaded onto the word girl, and prevent the usage of this word. The word “gorilla” is combined with “guerrilla,” and dictionary boundaries are exceeded. Guerrilla Girls debunk the imposition of features such as innocence and passiveness and aim to enhance the perception of combative and insurgent women. Similarly, the color pink, which represents the innocence of girls, is used by Guerrilla Girls in their designs to change its cultural meaning.⁴⁶

Guerrilla Girls performed their first activity in 1985 in New York City, organizing a night in which the work of hundreds of female artists was exhibited. From this date on, activists have protested against the underrepresentation of women in the arts by raiding art galleries in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Mexico City, Istanbul, London, Bilbao, Rotterdam, Shanghai, and various metropolises with gorilla masks. MoMa,⁴⁷ established in New York City, agreed to make an

⁴⁶ Anne Teresa Demo, “The Guerrilla Girls’ Comic Politics of Subversion,” 133–56.

⁴⁷ Modern Art Museum in New York City, Manhattan, opened in 1929; one of the most important art museums in the world since Van Gogh, Picasso, Dali, Monet, and Kahlo are exhibited there.

exhibition featuring only works by women artists due to pressure from the Guerrilla Girls.⁴⁸

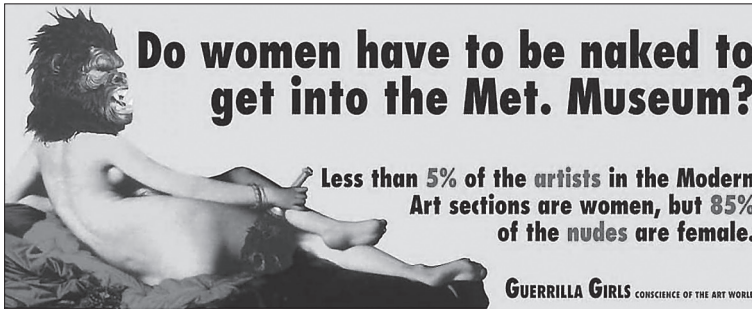


Figure 4. Guerrilla Girls Poster.⁴⁹

In 1992, Guerrilla Girls launched a campaign in response to a rumor that all the pieces in the opening exhibition of the SoHo branch of the Guggenheim Museum, whose center is in New York City, would be the work of male artists. Acting with the WAC,⁵⁰ Guerrilla Girls succeeded in calling attention to the table of Thomas Krens, the organizer of the exhibition, by pasting thousands of pink stickers on it. The sculptor Louise Bourgeois decided to support the campaign. At the opening night of the museum, the WAC performed a large and loud protest. All of the protesters, including the artist Bourgeois, wore gorilla bags on their heads. The museum was closed for a while in 2001, after a shady introduction to the art world due to the protest, whose effects spread rapidly to the public. SoHo, despite exhibiting renowned modern artworks, could not get the attention it expected and was completely shut down in 2002.

⁴⁸ Artslant Team, “MoMA Announces 2015 Focus on Women Artists, Gagosian to Open Yet Another Gallery, Jemima Kirke Quits Girls, and Putin Reveals His First Solo Exhibition.”

⁴⁹ Guerrilla Girls, “Do women still need to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?” 1989, digital image, *Guerrilla Girls*. <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/naked-through-the-ages>. Accessed September 1, 2019.

⁵⁰ Women’s Action Coalition is a feminist organization founded in 1992 in New York City that conducts street actions.



Figure 5. Guerrilla Girls Guggenheim Museum Action.⁵¹

Guerrilla Girls' target is not only modern art museums, but also sexism in every aspect of art. In 2002, the Academy Awards⁵² became the focus of their attention, and the Guerrilla Girls produced billboards that criticized sexism and all forms of discrimination. The Academy Awards were protested by writing "He (Oscar award) white and male, just like the guys who win!" next to a slightly fat, white, and naked version of an Oscar statuette. Guerrilla Girls choose the targets of their protests according to statistics. They primarily target

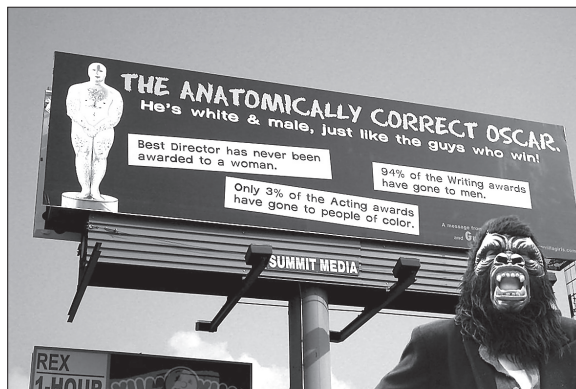


Figure 6. Guerrilla Girls Academy Awards Protest, 2002.⁵³

⁵¹ Teri Slotkin, "Guerrilla Girls Guggenheim Museum Action," 1992, digital image, *Guerrilla Girls*. <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects/>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

⁵² Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences: one of the most respected film awards, known as the Oscars, which began in Los Angeles in 1929.

⁵³ Guerrilla Girls, "The Anatomically Correct Oscar," 2002, digital image, *Guerrilla Girls*. <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects/>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

institutions where the gap between the number of female and male artists is high. They also use statistics in their posters and in the research they publish.

Guerrilla Girls became one of the loudest feminist groups shortly after its foundation and became an authority on the rights of women artists. The Venice-Istanbul Exhibition, which was held in Istanbul Modern in 2006, bringing a selection from 51st International Venice Biennial to Istanbul, invited Guerrilla Girls to participate in the exhibition — the first time the group received such an invitation. Guerrilla Girls joined the Biennial, as well as artworks, with a banner message to women artists in Turkey.



Figure 7. Guerrilla Girls Venice-Istanbul Exhibition.⁵⁴

The Future for Turkish Women Artists as revealed to the Guerrilla Girls:

Beware of females from beyond the Bosphorus: Over 40% of artists shown in Istanbul galleries are women... a much better percentage than in Europe or the U.S. Soon hordes of women artists from abroad will seek refuge here to improve their careers. Male artists will relocate to be better appreciated.

Don't count on museums, trust banks instead: The Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture has only 17 women hanging in its permanent collection. The Istanbul Modern is just as bad. The Pera did an exhibition "The Image of Women in Turkish Art" with only 2 female artists. Your artistic destiny may rest in a bank... some of their galleries have much better records.

One Turkish Curator will live forever. Others will be exiled: The curator with the best record for promoting women artists will be cloned and his duplicates sent all over

⁵⁴ Guerrilla Girls, "The Future for Turkish Women Artists," 2006, digital image, Guerrilla Girls. <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects/>. Accessed August 17, 2019.

the world. The curators who forget women when they organize museum exhibitions or biennials will be banished to the US and EU where such backward ideas belong.

Find good fortune in the Navy. If you insist on having a museum exhibition try the Navy. 75% of the artists shown at the Naval Museum Art Gallery have been women.

This poster had been prepared by Guerrilla Girls as a result of serious research and included statistics and interpretations that women artists can benefit from. Guerrilla Girls indicate that Turkey is much better at supporting women artists compared to western countries, and state that it would not be possible for Guerrilla Girls to receive such an invitation from any institution in the United States.

Guerrilla Girls' other disturbance in the field of culture and art is the representation of women in video clips. The representation of female bodies in many popular music videos makes activists ask, "Should women be naked to be in video clips?" This banner is an updated version of their first poster with various changes.

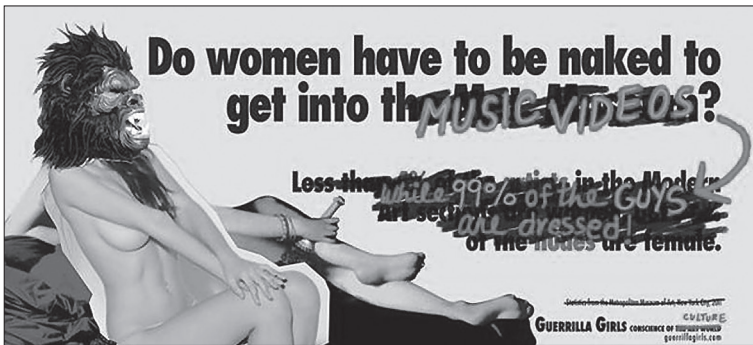


Figure 8. Guerrilla Girls Protest Video Clips.⁵⁵

Guerrilla Girls states that the goal of using masks is both to prevent activists from passing in front of the protest and to ensure that the identity of the activists is kept secret for security purposes. According to a survey conducted by Guerrilla Girls in 1989, the proportion of female artists in exhibitions in the Museum of Art in New York City is 3%, while the percentage of females in exhibited works who are naked is 83%. Nowadays, the proportion of female

⁵⁵ Guerrilla Girls, "Do women have to be naked to get into music videos while 99% of the guys are dressed?" 2014, digital image, *Guerrilla Girls*. <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/projects/>. Accessed August 14, 2019.

artists in this exhibition is 4%, while the percentage of females in exhibited works who are naked is 74%. Directly or indirectly, Guerrilla Girls have influenced this progression. Guerrilla Girls have sent inquiries to four hundred art galleries from twenty-nine countries, spreading the research showing that more women are needed in the arts and culture across Europe, but only one hundred of these galleries have replied.⁵⁶ Although data on the targeted scale cannot be obtained as a result of the research, the interest shown in the research provides important information about the prescription given to female artists. In the light of this dark picture, Guerrilla Girls say that there is a long way to go and that too many galleries to protest are waiting in line.

Although the number of members is fifty-five today, the organization has been active in many different regions of the world, effectively using media tools and photographs to announce its voice worldwide. Just as it is at the heart of activist goals, Guerrilla Girls is constantly in action, contributing to progress in matters that are problematic.

Although Guerrilla Girls have a stable line in terms of their research and the strategies they have developed, they have ignored some points about art and culture. Sometimes Guerrilla Girls go beyond the line of equality, to increase the proportion of female artists in galleries and defend the supremacy of women. When Guerrilla Girls appreciate NAVY, this is inequity for men because 75% of the NAVY art is by women. Another problem is the possibility that the evaluations made by looking at the numbers can cause injustice for the artists. In spite of this, Guerrilla Girls' independent stance on funding distinguishes it from other popular organizations. As stated by the member nicknamed Kathe Kollwitz, no member makes a profit from the organization. Since all members have their own careers, they earn their money independently of their activism.⁵⁷

FEMEN

One of the feminist organizations that has succeeded in calling attention to its actions and using media tools effectively is FEMEN, founded in 2008 in Ukraine. FEMEN leaders Anna Hutsol, Oksana Shachko, and Inna Shevchenko, who started their activities in Ukraine, moved to Paris due to the pressure they were under in Ukraine, in order to establish the organization formally. FEMEN started a new feminism trend called sextremism, where the naked body is used for protests. FEMEN activists claim to be the doorkeepers of democracy, having

⁵⁶ Charlotte Jansen, "The Guerrilla Girls Have Data Proving the Art World Needs More Women Leaders."

⁵⁷ Guy Adams, "Guerrilla girl power: Have America's feminist artists sold out?"

gained fame by their topless activities as representative of the desired and charming femininity.⁵⁸



Figure 9. FEMEN, Arts et Métiers Subway Station, 2012, Paris.⁵⁹

FEMEN emerged to protest sex tourism in Ukraine, and continue their actions against all kinds of sexist discrimination. The organization, which defines this as a humanitarian task, indicates that its goal is to achieve a complete victory against the patriarchal regime and psychologically and physically educates its members for any kind of action. The organization sets its main objectives as follows:⁶⁰

by strength of courage and personal example, to initiate global women's mob law over patriarchy as the historically first, and last, existing form of slavery.

to provoke patriarchy into open conflict by forcing it to disclose its aggressive antihuman nature to fully discredit it in the eyes of history.

to ideologically undermine the fundamental institutes of patriarchy - dictatorship, sex-industry, and church - by putting these institutes through subversive trolling to force them to strategic surrender.

to promote new revolutionary female sexuality as opposed to the patriarchal erotic and pornography.

⁵⁸ Emily Channell, "Is sextremism the new feminism? Perspectives from Pussy Riot and FEMEN," 611-14.

⁵⁹ FEMEN, "FEMEN Took Over Feminism," 2012, digital image, *FEMEN*. <http://femen.who-el.se/files/2013/06/femen-info-header-2013.jpg>. Accessed June 30, 2019.

⁶⁰ FEMEN, "About Us."

to instill in modern women culture of active opposition to the evil and of struggle for justice.

to create the most influential and combat-effective women's union in the world.

FEMEN explains its ideological stance as sextremism, atheism, and feminism. Sextremism is basically a new form of feminist action developed by FEMEN. Sextremism is a nonviolent, but extremely aggressive provocation method to attenuate and destroy old political morals and patriarchal cultures. The action is carried out differently and provocatively due to the activists' topless, painted, and flowered look. Atheism and feminism denote all the authorities' refusal stances, especially god, patriarchal order, dictators, etc.

FEMEN made its first action in 2008, protesting a one-month water cut in Kiev topless in the streets, and noticed the power of nudity at that time. FEMEN saw that managers and officers — in other words, the authorities — are quite uncomfortable with this situation, and from this date began to use nakedness as a weapon, a form of action. FEMEN stated that they made their second action to protest Turkish men in an interview with Hürriyet newspaper. After 2004, the weekly tours from Turkey to Ukraine, carrying large numbers of men and organized for sex tourism, encouraged FEMEN to get organized to protest this situation.⁶¹

FEMEN conducted its first activity in Turkey during 2012 at the Hagia Sophia. FEMEN targeted the sensitivity of Islamic culture to body exposure, delivering their message by performing nudity in front of an iconic place of worship, the Hagia Sophia Mosque. The selection of the Hagia Sophia as a place was used as a way of showing disregard for the holiness not only of Islam, but also of Christianity. Four naked women rushing out of a car with makeup to simulate the effects of acid being poured on them and a slogan of “stop acid attacks” protested violence against women. The act lasted only one minute, but garnered considerable attention in the Turkish and world press, enabling FEMEN to emphasize their provocative disposition.

⁶¹ Nerdun Hacıoğlu, “Türkiye’ye geliyoruz.”



Figure 10. FEMEN protest of violence against women in Istanbul.⁶²

Approximately one year after this act, in July 2013, FEMEN opened a Twitter account with the username “FEMEN Turkey” to call for support for FEMEN’s Turkish organization. The first reply came from a young model, Didem Dinc. The nude model Dinc posed topless with a Turkish flag painted on her body with “no to war” writing and FEMEN’s symbol, a flowered circlet, on her head. Dinc, conducting the first FEMEN act in Turkey as a Turkish woman, stated that the undressing was for Turkey and world peace.⁶³ Following this act, the frequency of FEMEN’s acts in Turkey and the number of activists have increased, with protests against female segregationist discourse. The message of the related acts coincides with FEMEN’s basic values, and topics such as world peace, female-male equity, and female solidarity were the focus. The ban on Twitter in Turkey during 2014 was one of the subjects FEMEN protested.

In 2013, FEMEN leader and activist Inna Shevchenko made an extraordinary protest by cutting a 4-meter (13-ft) cross with a saw, which was seen by the whole of Kiev. The organization invited the city’s punk masses as spectators and showed that the protest was against all kinds of pressures and authority based on religion. Shevchenko was subjected to death threats, her house was destroyed, and eventually she moved to Paris to ensure her safety.⁶⁴ Shevchenko continues her activism and FEMEN training in Paris.

⁶² “FEMEN kızlarından Ayasofya Camii önünde çıplak eylem” 2012, digital image, *Habertürk*, <http://www.haberturk.com/galeri/yasam/412983-femen-kizlarindan-ayasofya-camii-onunde-ciplak-eylem/1/6>. Accessed June 10, 2019.

⁶³ Cengiz Özbek, “FEMEN’in ‘üstsüz eylem’ çağrısına ilk yanıt.”

⁶⁴ Kira Cochrane, “The Rise of the naked Female Warriors.”



Figure 11. Femen protester Inna Shevchenko cuts down a 13-ft wooden cross overlooking Kiev, in tribute to Russian punk activists Pussy Riot, 2013.⁶⁵

FEMEN protested the Russian energy company Gazprom in 2013 due to fuel costs and an attitude they claimed to be colonial.⁶⁶ FEMEN, which carried out that protest at minus twenty-four degrees with its own topless techniques, showed that they do not separate other human rights from women's rights. In the protest, the activists, who poured insults on Gazprom and the Russian Government, managed to cheer for twenty-five minutes and succeeded in accumulating substantial space in the media. With this protest, FEMEN also expressed the imperialist pressures of the Russian Federation on the countries that separated from Russia following the dissolution of the Soviet Socialist Republics. FEMEN, using humiliating expressions to refer to Russian President Vladimir Putin, known around the world as a leader and authoritarian image, once again showed that they do not recognize any authority.

FEMEN has included nudity in its strategic action plan, as the action attracted more attention than expected with the accidental withdrawal of the photographs of the women who exposed their backs while protesting the water cut in Kiev. Despite their worldwide appeal, these organizations have been subjected to negative criticism by many groups, including feminists. One of them is that it is ironic to use naked bodies against sex tourism. Meghan Murphy,

⁶⁵ Sergey Dolzhenko, "Femen protester Inna Shevchenko cuts down a 13ft wooden cross overlooking Kiev, in tribute to Russian punk activists Pussy Riot," *Guardian*, March 20, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/20/naked-female-warrior-femen-topless-protesters>. Accessed August 10, 2019.

⁶⁶ Hacıoğlu, "Türkiye'ye geliyoruz."

founder and author of *Feministcurrent.com*, criticizes FEMEN for contributing to the sexualization and objectification of the female body.⁶⁷ With FEMEN acts, the female body is reproduced in the media as a commodity. Another criticism is that the organization is following in the footsteps of platforms that form a commercial structure in order to raise funds. Following the brief action by FEMEN in Istanbul in 2013, this criticism is justified by the participation of a famous underwear brand, the brand's introduction of the FEMEN series, and activists posing with the branded bags. The members of the organization make agreements in which they profit from the actions, causing the commodification of the female body. FEMEN has become the subject of debate regarding whether they are acting for women's rights or for profit.



Figure 12. FEMEN Gazprom Act, 2013.⁶⁸

FEMEN, with its sister organization in Turkey, from its first activity in 2012 until today, has realized a limited number of physical acts and included limited number of activists. Apart from the physical acts, the FEMEN Turkey Twitter account states their views and reactions and activism are mostly carried out on social media. The reason for this is mainly the socio-cultural structure in Turkey. The Islamic *modus vivendi* is in conflict with FEMEN's values, which prevents believers from approaching FEMEN. On the other hand, the values of feminists are also in conflict with FEMEN. Apart from being an ideological organization, FEMEN is seen as an organization which focuses on the victimization of women,

⁶⁷ Meghan Murphy, "There is a wrong way to do feminism. And Femen is doing it wrong."

⁶⁸ Associated Press, "FEMEN at Gazprom's Gates," 2013, digital image, *Hürriyet*, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/femen-at-gazproms-gates-395#photo-16>. Accessed August 10, 2019.

thereby becoming popular and even monetizing this victimization. FEMEN's exposure of the female body as a form of protest has been criticized from various points of view, which has prevented FEMEN from creating an effective organization in Turkey.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the effects of technological developments, which cause differentiation in every area of life, on activist movements have been revealed. With the development of digital technologies, the ability to easily produce and share photographs has laid the groundwork for their effective use in activist movements that influence the masses. The potential for activist photographs to reach the masses with the contribution of social media was discussed. The methods and activities that civil society organizations use to gain visibility were presented. Then, campaign and action photographs of the international feminist non-governmental organizations Guerrilla Girls and FEMEN, which use visual materials such as photographs and graphics, were analyzed. The general message, including the data in the visual content and whether or not it is related to the intent, was researched.

Guerrilla Girls, carry out acts to draw attention to women and gender inequality, focusing on artists' gender inequality. Therefore, the prepared visuals remind the majority of men and their domination, providing numeric data regarding women and other genders' minority and exclusion. The inequality between genders can also have an ethnic dimension, and instances in which white people are put ahead of people of color are also the subject of actions. The objectivity of the Academy Awards, in particular, was raised for discussion with the Oscar Award visual. The advantageous position of men against women, and white people against people of color have been criticized. Similarly, FEMEN also began as a reaction against the marginalization and commoditization of women. It criticizes various problematic politics throughout different parts of the world from a female perspective, and takes up a position on different subjects. By doing so, and by making use of photographs of topless women, FEMEN create an agenda and draw attention to specified subjects. Such acts increase the visibility of the organization; however they contradict its basic objective, which can lead to disputes.

The research has shown that Guerrilla Girls and FEMEN seem to be criticized by feminist organizations for their methods and actions. The first criticism of FEMEN is that they are carrying out their actions by commodifying the female body, exhibiting a similar attitude to the patriarchal understanding. Another

criticism is that — contrary to the purpose of activist movements — they are involved in activities beyond the advocacy of rights, such as advertising. Guerrilla Girls are not confronted with ideological judgments by feminist groups, but are criticized for the privileges they desire to give female artists in art galleries, and the inclination toward the right to violate the rights of the opposite gender. Both organizations have used photographs to influence the public and to call attention to a particular issue; however, their globally recognizable images are unable to protect them from criticism of their activist stances.

The use of photographs in the media has great importance because visual codes are perceived faster than written codes and are easier to remember. In fact, previously the news was supported by photographs, while today photographs are supported with short descriptions and have become the basic element of the message. As mentioned above, photographs' ability to shape public opinion has been experienced many times in the history of social movements. Today, as not just a supplementary tool but the primary method used to build public opinion, the photograph is one of the main propaganda materials of activist movements. Although photo-processing techniques have been developed in digital media, photography has not lost its cogency, showing that the photograph will continue to influence society for many years to come.

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