*Women's Studies*

# Kissing the Revolution: The Riot Grrrl Movement under Third-wave Feminism and Its Failure

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**Abstract**

This article examines Riot Grrrl, a feminist movement in the early 1990s US punk rock music industry. Since the movement is being perceived as the precursor of third-wave feminism, this research examines the extent to which the Grrrls successfully embodied the third-wave value and what factors contributed to its failure. The purpose of this study is to reflect on the subcultural movement within its cultural and sociopolitical context and provide a theoretical backbone for similar-minded campaigners advocating for women's rights elsewhere in the current world. By closely analyzing the lyrics of the grrrl's music, performance styles, zines (self-publications), and interviews of the grrrls, this article illustrates how they rebelled against the misogynistic punk rock music industry and the capitalist patriarchal society as a whole by breaking the gender barriers, adopting punk's Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos, and acknowledging the intersection of class and race with gender. However, the analysis also reveals its failure. Though Riot Grrrl manifested the spirit of third-wave feminism of defending gender equality in the private sphere, forming individuality, and upholding pluralism, the movement was unsuccessful largely as a result of the institutional constraints exercised through power asymmetries in class, race, and gender in the early 1990s US society.

*When she talks, I hear the revolution*
*In her hips, there's a revolution*
*When she walks, the revolution's coming*
*In her kiss, I taste the revolution*
– Bikini Kill, "Rebel Girl," Verse 1.

## Introduction

The grrrls were on a riot. They wildly screamed, sang, and played the Riot Grrrl Anthem – "Rebel Girl" – in the US punk rock music industry that condemned their involvement. Punk rock came to the US from Britain in the 1970s, carrying its Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos, anti-status quo spirits, and, more importantly, the male-dominated nature of rock music. While rebellious American men began to perform in the punk rock scene, women's roles were restrained to girlfriends of the rockers, and they experienced gender discrimination, sexual assaults, and rapes. In the meantime, second-wave feminists that fought for women's rights in the workplace began to decline in the 80s. As a result, "angry at a society that [told them] Girl=Dumb, Girl=Bad, Girl=Weak," several girls interested in punk rock music in Olympia, Washington, decided to take the lead and rebel against the current misogynistic, male-dominated punk scene in the 1990s.[1] Naming themselves Riot Grrrl, they started a new *wave*. These grrrls formed all-female punk bands and established a Riot Grrrl community that embraced every girl, aiming to increase female representation and navigate their belonging and identity under the current patriarchal society. They exemplified the philosophy of third-wave feminism by dismantling traditional cultural taboos on women, advocating for individuality, and upholding a pluralistic mission. However, due to institutional constraints, this new *wave* faded away because the Grrrls failed to overpower the capitalist patriarchal mainstream press and preexisting racism, nor did they take physical actions to diversify their community.

## The "Anti-Women" Punk[2]

In the 1990s, although women's rights had improved significantly compared to the beginning of the 18th century, gender discrimination was still prevailing in US society. In the 19th century, first-wave

[1] Kathleen Hanna, "Riot Grrrl Is...," 1991, in *Riot Grrrl 1990*, comp. Howard-Tilton Library, accessed April 26, 2022, https://exhibits.tulane.edu/exhibit/copies-creativity-and-contagion/influential-art-from-second-and-third-wave-feminism-movements/.
[2] Kevin Dunn and May Summer Farnsworth, "'We ARE the Revolution': Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Self-Publishing," Women's Studies 41, no. 2 (March 2012): 138, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2012.636334.

feminists advocated for women's suffrage and succeeded with the 19th Amendment. Second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1960s, focused on eliminating gender discrimination in the legislature, specifically regarding the workplace, but waned in the next decade because of its intensifying internal division. Since the second wave, women's participation in the workplace has started to increase. Sandra Day O'Connor, for example, was appointed to be the first female associate justice on the Supreme Court.[3] However, such progress did not apply to marginalized subcultural or private environments.

Women's participation was limited in many subcultures because of the traditional gender norm and men's exclusion. The second-wave feminists did not discuss gender inequality in unconventional communities like the punk rock music industry, and, due to the patriarchal society's suppression of the development of young females, girls in the countercultural rock music were perceived as "passive and consumerist," whereas "boys were [perceived as] 'active, productive, and performative.'"[4] Women were expected to perform domestic work and had more societal limitations in participating in the subversive punk rock subculture. Their involvement, therefore, was limited to being girlfriends, groupies, and visually appealing lead singers that bolstered men's performances. Moreover, though women were not prohibited from attending concerts, the audiences and the bands posed a threat to many women. Punk rock concerts, according to Jennifer Miro from the band The Nuns:

> [had] a lot of women in the beginning. It was women doing things. Then it became this whole macho, anti-women thing. Then women didn't go to see punk bands anymore because they were afraid of getting killed. I didn't even go because it was so violent and so macho that it was repulsive. Women just got squeezed out.[5]

In a typical punk rock concert scene, the audience would form mosh pits with violent actions – including but not limited to wall of death and crowd surfing – that physically marginalized women to the edge.

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[3] "Timeline of Legal History of Women in the United States," National Women's History Alliance, accessed April 24, 2022, https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/resources/womens-rights-movement/detailed-timeline/.

[4] Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald, "Smells Like Teen Spirit: Riot Grrrls, Revolution, and Women in Independent Rock," Critical Matrix 7, no. 2 (1993): 21, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/smells-like-teen-spirit-riot-grrrls-revolution/docview/1307822238/se-2?accountid=5771.

[5] Dunn and Farnsworth, "'We ARE the Revolution,'" 138.

Observing these destructive scenes, those on stage not only did not stop the audience but also reinforced this intimidation.

Through lyrics, the performers manifested violence, hatred, sexualization, and objectification of women. FEAR, an all-male punk rock band from California, screamed, "I wanna fuck you to death / I wanna smell your breath / Piss on your warm embrace / I just wanna come in your face / I don't care if you're dead / And I don't care if you're erect" in "Flesh Flesh" (1982); Big Black from Illinois shouted, "Holding my hand while I piss in her face / She'll do it with love, sitting in a cage / She loves it more if you treat like a race / I keep fucking up, so it's you I disgrace" in "The Power of Independent Trucking" (1987).[6/7] These male performers sexualized and objectified women into sex toys for their uses and explicitly exposed their misogynistic mindsets through lyrics. However, women did not submit to these oppressions; led by Allison Wolfe, Tobi Vail, Kathleen Hanna, and many others, the Riot Grrrl sprang up in 1990 to revolutionize the punk rock music scene.

**Smashing Gender Barriers**

The Grrrls de-objectified themselves and expanded the definition of femininity beyond the patriarchal structure as their participation shifted from consumers to producers of the music. Utilizing the advantage of punk's amateurism, these grrrls, who had little access to music education, gained a chance to be actively involved in the scene and avoid criticism of being unprofessional. Kathleen Hanna formed the all-female band Bikini Kills, and Allison Wolfe started her Bratmobile in 1990. With many other newly formed Riot Grrrl bands, their presence reconstructed the decades-long history of the male-dominated punk rock industry. Moreover, they managed to embody their anger throughout their band activities further. First and foremost, they redefined "girl" to "grrrl," which incorporated their anger by imitating growling ("grrr") and romanticization of their infant age before the intrusion of patriarchal control.[8] Such resistance could be found in their lyrics as well. Hanna, wearing a mini skirt and velvet tank top in a concert, would sing "Candy": "I swallowed my pride / […] / I swallowed your cum / It's just my part in it" to demonstrate sexism and male domination sarcastically.[9] Similarly, 7 Year Bitch's "Dead Men Don't Rape"

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[6] FEAR, "Flesh Flesh," on *The Record*, Slash Record, 1982, compact disc.

[7] Big Black, "The Power of Independent Trucking," on *Songs About Fucking*, 1987, compact disc.

[8] Emily White, "Revolution Girl-Style Now!", Chicago Reader, last modified September 24, 1992, https://chicagoreader.com/news-politics/revolution-girl-style-now/.

[9] Bikini Kill, "Candy," on *Revolution Girl Style Now!*, 1991, audiocassette.

suggested their condemnation towards rapists: "For those who get joy from a woman's fear / I'd rather get a gun and just blow you away / Then you'll learn first-hand / Dead men don't rape."[10] By using these words, they objected to the patriarchal fantasy that "good" girls should not use vulgar language nor talk about sex, as these behaviors would "tarnish" their purity and turn them into a "whore."

Along with the literal implication of lyrics, the Grrrls also evinced their anger when they performed. Instead of singing lyrically in a gentle way, Riot Grrrl screamed. As Gayle Wald and Joanne Gottlieb interpreted, screaming is an intricate articulation that implies orgasm, rape, childbirth, anger, and primal self-assertion all at once.[11] This form of expression allowed the grrrls to express the threats they faced daily and the jubilance they felt from the tabooed sexual desire and empower themselves and their female audiences. Their visibility in the scene offered a valuable opportunity for the Grrrls to express their anger toward sexism by breaking the traditional taboo and creating bonds with like-minded peers. The increased number of female performers also encouraged more girls to attend concerts since the presence of female bands provided them with a sense of security, thus allowing them to share their difficult past as a woman. For instance, Kristen Schilt observed that "at Bikini Kill shows, microphones were often passed around so that the audience could share stories of sexual abuse."[12] These incidents, once thought of as "shameful" and "private" stories that would besmirch women to "whore," were now brought into public discussions. The grrrls revealed their personal stories by not complying with the "good" girl standard. They transformed the narratives like body shaming and sexual assault into sociopolitical problems that needed to be addressed. In sum, the Grrrls formed a tight, mutually-supported community that challenged the traditional gender norms by attending punk rock concerts, discussing tabooed objects, and rewriting their definition of femininity. However, under careful examination, their reclaiming of femininity and opposition to patriarchy exhibited the dilemma that the Grrrls initially meant to overcome: how to participate in a male-dominated scene without becoming one of the guys.

Though the Grrrls challenged the traditional gender stereotypes, they were unsuccessful in defining womanhood within the sexist punk

[10] 7 Year Bitch, "Dead Men Don't Rape," on *Sick 'Em*, 1992, compact disc.
[11] Gottlieb and Wald, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," 29-30.
[12] Kristen Schilt, "'A Little Too Ironic': The Appropriation and Packaging of Riot Grrrl Politics by Mainstream Female Musicians," Popular Music and Society 26, no. 1 (January 2003): 8-9, accessed April 24, 2022, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0300776032000076351.

rock music scene. They indeed intended to increase female representation, attest to women's capability of performing off-limits activities, and cherish their girlhood, but they also accommodated masculinity into their performances. For example, the Grrrls' uses of historically masculine profanity and violent action merged their femininity with the machismo they aimed to resist. They also represented themselves in a traditional feminine fashion as they often wore "girly" clothing and makeup on stage. The Grrrls failed to consider the paradox of defining punk rock for girls. This specific situation mirrored the predicament of third-wave feminism, where women struggled to "balance equality and desire."[13] Whether their rebellious actions were because these were the only possibility to resist sexism within their capability or because they were motivated by their desires to perform like men or become an "erotic object-to-be-looked-at" – as Gottlieb and Wald coined – remains unknown. As illustrated, the Riot Grrrl movement did not clarify the ambiguity of femininity and gender equality in a patriarchal society. Accordingly, Gottlieb and Wald posed the question of whether the structure of rock music was meant to include women or whether its establishment in the mid-20th century by a group of non-compliant men in a patriarchal society predestined that its construct is misogynistic.[14] However, even though they failed to establish a distinct definition of femininity in the punk music scene, the grrrls' physical expansion of female participation in the punk rock scene and breaking of taboos set a foundation for future feminists to incorporate their ideology in a more holistic and practical approach to deliberate on more fundamental causes of gender inequality. Such considerations could also be traced to the Grrrls' criticism of capitalism that exploited women's rights.

## Grrrls' Individuality under Capitalist Patriarchy

"BECAUSE we hate capitalism in all its forms and see our main goal as sharing information and staying alive, instead of making profits or being cool according to traditional standards," declared Kathleen Hanna in the so-called *Riot Grrrl Manifesto* (hereinafter *Manifesto*).[15] With punk's DIY ethos, Riot Grrrl resisted the capitalist and thus sexist mainstream culture from the beginning of the movement. Similar to socialist feminists, the Grrrls attributed gender oppressions to "capitalist patriarchy," the structure of the US society that has a "mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structuring," as described by political theorist Zillah

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[13] Snyder, "Third-Wave Feminism," 259.
[14] Gottlieb and Wald, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," 26-27.
[15] Hanna, "Riot Grrrl," in *Riot Grrrl Is….*

Eisenstein.[16] To avoid exploitations of women's production – cheap labor in the workplace and free labor in domesticity – and reproduction – reproducing labor (i.e., children) – the Grrrls were determined to apply punk's DIY ethos to create their own identity instead of conforming to the mainstream capitalist patriarchy that would command them "women's etiquette" and suppress their revolution. Their bands, for example, did not aim to sign contracts with big labels like many successful rock bands did (e.g., Nirvana with Universal Music Group and Sex Pistols with EMI). In contrast, they were either completely independent or cooperated with independent record labels.

Instead of being constricted by major capitalist music labels that prioritize profit, indie music labels offered Riot Grrrl bands the freedom to pursue their interests in the industry. In Olympia, Washington, the two most active indie labels during the beginning of the '90s were Kill Rock Stars and K Records. As Bratmobile's drummer Molly Neuman explained, Kill Rock Stars "[gave] very intentional voice to things that are not aspiring to be mainstream."[17] K Records shared a similar mission. Collaborating with bands from Kill Rock Stars, K Records organized a week-long International Pop Underground Convention in 1991; it opened with *Love Rock Revolution Girl Style Now* as the theme for the first day, featuring groups of Riot Grrrl bands.[18] Aside from music activity, the Grrrls also published zines, a type of self-published fanzine in subcultural communities. Through zines, they "subverted standard patriarchal mainstream media by critiquing society and the media without being censored."[19] The grrrls were free to express their ideas and not be concerned with favoring the consumers for publicity. The *Manifesto* in *Bikini Kill Zine no.2*, for instance, documented the philosophy of the movement and was spread around through mail service. The Grrrls created works that discussed "taboo subjects, such as rape, incest, and eating disorders," which were otherwise deemed trivial and ignored by the prominent newspaper.[20] Thereby, the grrrls became less dependent on the capitalist patriarchy and began to develop individual

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[16] Zillah R. Eisenstein, Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 5.
[17] Jerad Walker, "Kill Rock Stars at 30: 'A Garbage Heap that Grows Nothing but Flowers,'" Oregon Public Broadcasting, last modified January 22, 2022, https://www.opb.org/article/2022/01/22/kill-rock-stars-record-label-30-years-anniversary-indie-music/.
[18] Sara Marcus, Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, [20]11), 89, Kindle edition.
[19] Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo, "Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from within," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 23, no. 3 (April 1998): 811, accessed March 25, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1086/495289.
[20] Schilt, "A Little Too Ironic," 6.

identities that strived to expel the impact of the sexist culture from themselves. They broke free from the women's reproduction role and male dominance within a household by denying the traditional gender role; they formed a utopia under the capitalist patriarchal society as they began to establish self-autonomy with their DIY ethos. Nevertheless, like many other small independent associations, the mainstream media penetrated the grrrls' utopian bubble.

As the Riot Grrrl movement gained increasing visibility, major newspapers shifted their attention to the grrrls. Within the community, the Grrrls also faced a predicament of utilizing the mainstream media to increase their publicity, influencing more girls or remaining underground and resisting the social norm. A few chose the former and caused distressing consequences. As the grrrls feared, the media eluded the most essential intent of the movement and condescendingly depicted the movement. On July 8, 1993, *Rolling Stone* published *Grrrls at War* by Kim France. The article began with:

> Like she-devils out of Rush Limbaugh's worst nightmare, a battery of young women with guitars, drums, and a generous dose of rage stampeded into popular consciousness earlier this year. They do things like scrawl SLUT and RAPE across their torsos before gigs, produce fanzines with names like Girl Germs, and hate the media's guts. They're called riot grrrls, and they've come for your daughters.[21]

France was writing about a concert by Bikini Kill where Hanna wrote "SLUT" on her stomach. According to a personal interview that sociologist Kristen Schilt conducted with the founders of the Riot Grrrl movement, the grrrls "[maintained] that writing 'SLUT' and 'RAPE' on arms and stomachs was intended to draw attention to constraints placed on women's sexuality and to publicize issues such as sexual abuse and rape that were largely ignored by the media."[22] Whereas, France portrayed them as a real "slut." The Grrrls' activist movement was then misrepresented to the entire nation. Their self-made community was further threatened by newspapers' libels.

On January 3, 1993, *The Washington Post* – without any interview – claimed that Hanna's father raped her.[23] As Hanna described in an

[21] Kim France, "Grrrls at War," *Rolling Stone*, 1993, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/grrrls-at-war/docview/220149457/se-2?accountid=5771.
[22] Schilt, "A Little too Ironic," 8.
[23] Lauren Spencer, "Grrrls Only," The Washington Post, last modified January 3, 1993, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1993/01/03/grrrls-only/1ee1d5b7-587a-4c89-8477-ccd9b704582c/.

interview with Andrea Juno, she believed that it was merely "because [she'd] written a song about incest (*Daddy's Little Girl*)." The article caused her a severe crisis as many of her relatives lived in Washington D.C., where the *Post* was based; with immense embarrassment, she "had to deal with feeling that [she] wasn't sure if [she] could ever talk to [her relatives] again."[24] The grrrls' morale faced a devastating backlash. A few determined grrrls formed the *Riot Grrrl Press*, but they discontinued in 1996 due to economic difficulties.[25] Many other Riot Grrrl bands disbanded in response to media misrepresentations.[26] The decline of their movement indicated their inadequacy to disregard the mainstream capitalist society and therefore the patriarchy within the capitalist structure. Despite their failure, the Riot Grrrl movement still passed a legacy of forming a heterogeneous account through zine publication.

**Constructing a Polyvocal Community**

The Riot Grrrl upheld pluralism and inclusivity to welcome people with different personal histories and deny a single definition of the movement. These two notions emerged in the 1980s as second-wave feminists divided internally in the sex wars. Sex wars were a series of disagreements on sexuality between anti-porn feminists, who regarded pornography as harmful to women, and pro-choice feminists who believed women have the freedom to make their own decisions.[27] Third-wave feminism adopted the side of pro-choice feminists, aiming to "[embrace] a more diverse and polyvocal feminism."[28] In addition, they were against the hegemonic second-wave feminists that ignored racism, classism, and LGBTQ+ issues.[29] Riot Grrrl represented this belief and recognized the importance of self-reflection. Other than sexism and classism, they also fought against racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Such opposition could be found in numerous zines. Corin Tucker, the lead singer and guitarist of Riot Grrrl band Heaven to Betsy from

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[24] Andrea Juno, *Angry Women in Rock* (New York: Juno Books, 1996), 84-85, PDF e-book.
[25] Dunn and Farnsworth, "'We ARE the Revolution,'" 153-54.
[26] "'Feminism: The Third Wave' Guest Curator-Led Virtual Tour," lecture, National Women's History Museum, last modified October 14, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAUFCSe8gdw.
[27] R. Claire Snyder, "'Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of 'Choice,'" *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (2010): 258, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25698533.
[28] Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman, "The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave," Science and Society 69, no. 1 (2005): 87, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40404229.
[29] Kathleen P. Iannello, "Third-Wave Feminism and Individualism: Promoting Equality or Reinforcing the Status Quo?", in *Women in Politics: Outsiders or Insiders? : a Collection of Readings*, 4th ed., by Lois Duke Whitaker (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 316, PDF e-book.

Eugene, Oregon, wrote in her newsletter in 1993 that "I do think we should try and continue to […] question the bullshit, the racism, the sexism, the corporations around us and especially inside us."[30] Similarly, Hanna accounted in the *Manifesto*:

> BECAUSE I see the connectedness of all forms of oppression and I believe we need to fight them with this awareness…
> […]BECAUSE I am still fucked up, I am still dealing with internalized racism, sexism, classism homophobia, etc., and I don't want to do it alone.[31]

The Grrrls were aware of "the interlocking nature of identity – that gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class never function in isolation but always work as interconnected categories of oppression and privilege."[32]

By recognizing intersectionality, the grrrls were more reflective of the approach to diversifying the community. Hanna incorporated this understanding in the *Manifesto*, stating that "BECAUSE we are being divided by our labels and philosophies, and we need to accept and support each other as girls; acknowledging our different approaches to life and accepting all of them as valid."[33] Coming from different backgrounds, the Grrrls had their interpretation of life, and Riot Grrrl embraced all of them. They valued the importance of pluralism and avoided one voice dominating the community. The accessibility of zine publications also fostered this belief. As the grrrls created zines to find their voice under the hegemonic, mainstream narratives, other minorities also adopted this media to express themselves. Zines *Chop Suey Spex* (*Do you think I need these?*) and *FaT GiRL* were respectively sarcastic zines that criticized the racist Asian disguise glasses "chop suey specs" by lesbian Asian-American Lala and her friends and a "zine for fat dykes and the women who want them," that featured a black girl.[34/35] In addition, zine functioned as a medium to connect the Riot Grrrl community. It "[provided] an outlet for [grrrls] to get their feelings and lives out there and share them with others."[36] The Riot Grrrl thus established a diverse,

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[30] Corin Tucker, "Newsletter," in *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, comp. Lisa Darms, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Feminist, 2016), 147, previously published in *Heavens to Betsy*, 1993, digital file.
[31] Hanna, "Riot Grrrl," in *Riot Grrrl Is….*
[32] Iannello, "Third-Wave Feminism," 316.
[33] Hanna, "Riot Grrrl," in *Riot Grrrl Is….*
[34] Lala and Felix Endara, "[Frontpage]," in *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, comp. Lisa Darms, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Feminist, 2016), 314, excerpt from *Chop Suey Spex*, 1993, digital file.
[35] *FaT GiRL no. 3*, 1995, https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/fat-girl-no-3-1995-fat-girl/AAEqonuJSukqJw?hl=en.
[36] Rosenberg and Garofalo, "Riot Grrrl," 811.

inclusive community that valued every voice. Nonetheless, examples like *Chop Suey Spex* and *FaT GiRL* were exceptionally rare. Though the Grrrls aimed to embrace everyone, the larger societal restraints on other marginalized people hampered their inclusion, especially race and ethnicity minorities.

Their idealistic mission was not achieved in reality because of the institutional discrimination in society, particularly for people of color (hereinafter POC) who faced discrimination and microaggression on a daily basis solely because of their physical characteristics. According to the 1990 Census of Population in Washington State, 88.5 percent of the population was white.[37] Due to this geographical constraint, the grrrls in Olympia, first, could hardly include POC. Second, the gender norms that the Grrrls resisted were never the standards for POC. LaRonda Davis recounted in an interview with Gabby Bess from *VICE*, "[b]lack women were never allowed in the box [standard of womanhood]."[38] They did not echo the oppression that the grrrls faced. On top of this exclusion, POC had to bear double discriminations of sexism and racism, which discouraged them from rebelling like the white grrrls. Ramdasha Bikceem narrated in her zine *Gunk*:

> I'll go out somewhere with my friends who all look equally as weird as me, but say we get hassled by the cops for skating or something. That cop is going to remember my face [a lot clearer] than say one of my white girlfriends. I can just hear him now..."Yeah, there was this black girl w/pink hair and two other girls."[39]

The preexisting racism in society determined that the Grrrls could not be fully inclusive and truly understand intersectionality since they had never experienced the life of other minorities. But it is essential to note that, compared to the majority of second-wave feminists, the white grrrls attempted to diversify their scene and noticed its importance.

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[37] United States Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population General Population Characteristics Washington, 31, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1990/cp-1/cp-1-49.pdf.

[38] Gabby Bess, "Alternatives to Alternatives: The Black Grrrls Riot Ignored," VICE, last modified August 3, 2015, https://www.vice.com/en/article/9k99a7/alternatives-to-alternatives-the-black-grrrls-riot-ignored.

[39] Ramdasha Bikceem, "I'm Laughing so Hard It Doesn't Look like I'm Laughing Anymore…," in *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, comp. Lisa Darms, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Feminist, 2016), 153, excerpt from *Gunk no. 4*, ca.1993, digital file.

## Conclusion

As the pioneer of third-wave feminism, the Riot Grrrl movement settled and exemplified the essence of the third-wave by fighting for gender equality in the private sphere, forming individuality, and endorsing pluralism. Differing from the first and second waves that had clear missions for their revolutions, the Riot Grrrl movement did not have a clear definition because the grrrls and third-wave feminists "[preferred] disunity over homogeneity, choosing instead to embrace all their complexities."[40] Through punk rock performances and independent zine publications and music labels, the Grrrls reclaimed their girlhood and formed a community that "[shared] a collective consciousness by *rejecting* a collective consciousness."[41] This community consisted of independent grrrls who reduced their reliance on the authoritative mainstream institutions and gained the freedom to address gender inequality, particularly in situations like subcultural scenes that their precursor – the first and second wave – ignored. Yet, the Riot Grrrl movement was restricted within the capitalist, patriarchal society; their ambiguous interpretation of femininity overlapped with the machismo that they detested, and mainstream media distorted the Grrrls' motivation and thus misrepresented and impaired the movement as a whole. Numerous types of discrimination hindered the actual approach to intersectionality and pluralism. Perhaps, the rise of the internet and global communication could offset the formidable institutional discrimination based on class, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and more.

In modern days, through increasing globalization, the influences of the Riot Grrrl movement remains and has expanded from white girls in the US and Europe to other races, ethnicity, and nationalities such as the band Ratas Rabiosas (2013-present) in Brazil, the organization Girls to the Front (2020-present) in China, and Pussy Riot (2011-present) in Russia as they gained access to learn the movement. By understanding the mediums that the Grrrls utilized to fight for women's rights within the institution, those like-minded activists may learn from the Grrrls' success yet also adjust their strategies from the Grrrls' failures, "BECAUSE", as Hanna envisioned in the *Manifesto*, "a safe space needs to be created for girls where we can open our eyes and reach out to each

[40] Stephanie Gilmore, "Looking Back, Thinking Ahead: Third Wave Feminism in the United States," Journal of Women's History 12, no. 4 (2001): 218, https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2001.0009.
[41] Iannello, "Third-Wave Feminism," 315.

other without being threatened by this sexist society and our day-to-day bullshit."[42]

[42] Hanna, "Riot Grrrl," in *Riot Grrrl Is*….

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