

How to Get Blacklisted at *Feminist Philosophers*

[Feminist Philosophers](#) is a blog site whose main goal is to "... to help feminist philosophers keep up with philosophically relevant facts and examples." I have decided to unsubscribe from the site because I have apparently been blacklisted.

I inferred my blacklisting from the few curious interactions I have had with the site. In a recent post, a blogger objected to the use of the term "lynching" in response to some recent heated debates about academic misconduct. The blogger decided it was time to set the record straight, and wrote

"It's worth reminding ourselves what lynch mobs really were. Groups of white people became so afraid of encroachments against white supremacy – and so terrified of the black male bodies they had formerly been able to own – that they would 'take matters into their own hands' and brutalize black men. Sometimes in lieu of due process. Sometimes just to set an example. Lynch mobs were ways in which those with power (white people) reinforced the status quo (white supremacy)."

I sent a response to this post in which I pointed out that the blogger is mistaken concerning the origin and use of the term "lynching". A lynch mob by any dictionary definition is "a mob that kills a person for some presumed offense without legal authority." In the U.S., this usually means without due process. The exact [etymology](#) of the word is unclear, but most likely sources are the Lynch law, likely named after William Lynch (1742-1820) who led a vigilance committee to keep order during the American Revolution. I also (helpfully, I thought), indicated that the [New World Encyclopedia](#) and numerous other legitimate sites on the web describe examples of lynchings from various times in history and locales around the world. I suggested correcting the post because, as it stood, it detracted from the credibility *Feminist Philosophers* as a reliable source of information and informed opinion. To my surprise, my comment was not posted, but others in support of the post were.

In another case, a blogger posted a link to an article she lauded as "well worth the read" in which a Duke University student who is a sex worker ranted about women who judge her for what she does even though being a pornography actress makes her feel empowered as a woman. I responded by making three points. First, many women felt it was not in their interest to be supportive of pornography because they likened it to any potentially addictive substance: Just as it can become difficult to feel satisfied with a couple of beers or martinis when you've been exposed to cocaine and smack, it can become difficult to feel satisfied with typical female bodies and appetites after watching porn stars in action. And so men pressure their partners to get breast implants and tummy tucks, and to engage in sexual activities that often have degradation of women at their core. Second, women's economic and political power has traditionally been curtailed by making access to these things dependent on pleasing men, particularly sexually. Yet, ironically, in every generation of young women, there are those who think they've "beaten the system" by engaging in the sex trade, that is, by doing exactly what the system wants women to do—please men sexually to get money. This is not news, and it is not what we had in mind when we did all that marching for economic and political equality in the '60's. Finally, I asked why *Feminist Philosophers* felt it important to draw so much attention to the plight of sex workers but were remarkably silent regarding the plight of adjunct professors in the profession and in

academia in general. This is indeed an issue of inequity that is gaining national attention—including a strike at UI-C. It would seem to be of particular importance to Feminist Philosophers given that, according to [Mary Ann Mason](#), Co-Director of the Center for Economics and Family Security at the UC-Berkeley School of Law, this adjunct class primarily consists of female PhDs with young children. Once again, my comments were not posted, although others were, and most of them consisting of complaining that the student seemed to be ignorant of the philosophical literature on pornography.

Most recently, a post was circulated in which a student asked for advice. She had just returned from a recent campus visit, and was quite upset over the way the school representatives "*marginalized her through efforts to demonstrate their 'inclusiveness' and 'commitment' to diversity.*" The blogger was requesting help with the following:

- 1. The economic incentives and research opportunities are substantial, but she's concerned about working with and being mentored by people who treat her this way. What thoughts do you have on navigating this conflict?*
- 2. How to respond to the program. She is considering turning down the offer, but also wants to explain why. How to do this without being reduced to an "ungrateful other"?*
- 3. "Is grad school even worth it?"*

I responded to this blog by pointing out that this is the kind of thorny issue women faced when we began entering graduate programs (and managerial positions in the workforce) in large numbers thirty or so years ago, so many of us have a good deal of experience with it. The most important thing, in my opinion, was recognizing that much of the bad behavior is simply a reflection of awkwardness and clumsiness on the part of those who don't know how to interact with someone who is "different from us." I pointed out that if she accepted the offer of admission, she would need to accept the fact that she would be a trailblazer who "taught" others how to think about and interact with people like herself. That doesn't mean lecturing or complaining, which would likely lead to shunning because "no matter what we say, she just takes offense". Instead, her challenge would be to learn to speak with confidence and authority, to emphasize human commonalities (rather than constantly drawing attention to how one is different), to deflect thoughtless comments with snappy comebacks and humor, and most importantly, to do quality work so that they came to realize that she was indeed a credit to the program. I also pointed out that this would not be easy for her, but it would make it easy for those who came after her. Finally, I gave her a heads up not to be surprised if those who came after her were not grateful but instead targeted her for competition. This rather disconcerting development usually follows the first wave of challenges to the current social order. Again, to my surprise, my comment was not posted but others were—others that advised her to reject the offer and to complain anonymously to the institution or anyone else who might listen.

The only conclusion that I can draw from these odd encounters is that *Feminist Philosophers* is a closed circle of like-minded individuals who do not take kindly to "outsiders" who seem to be criticizing them. I find it very odd that they hide their identities; nowhere on the blog can one find out who these "moderators" are nor what credentials they hold which entitle them to decide who is a feminist and who is not, whose opinion is politically correct and whose is not. I don't hide my identity when I try to post a comment to their site; I not only use my real name, but I include the URL to my website

which includes my vita, my media interviews, my Psychology Today blog [link](#), and so on:
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Why don't they do the same?

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