

Gloria Steinem delivers The 'F Word' in the Year 2000

In October, Gloria Steinem was brought to Cincinnati by the Cincinnati chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Steinem's visit was co-sponsored by the Center for Women's Studies.

Poised behind the pulpit at Cincinnati's Plum Street Temple, Gloria Steinem did not intend to preach. She spoke for awhile, then she opened the floor to organizational announcements, or "subversive organizational tactics," as she put it. "If I just stand up here in front of you and talk, and you listen, that's just too hierarchical and patriarchal. And that's never worked anywhere. Not even here," she said, gesturing towards the historic temple.

"The truth will set you free but first it will piss you off..."

gloria steinem



Steinem shared, with her characteristic passion and wit, goals that feminists might strive for in the year 2000.

She began with a reminder: "Feminism is a revolution—not a PR movement," in response to any criticisms that current culture might have that feminists are critical, hostile, or whiny. Later, she attacked the "Femme-Nazi" stereotype thrown around by conservatives, and without missing the irony or a beat, said, "The Nazi attitude is similar to the right-wing attitude—a woman's body belongs to the state."

One of Steinem's first recommendations for the millennium was that women congregate more in shopping malls. After all, this is the best way to reach a large, varied demographic of women, she argued. "A shopping center is to the women's movement what the church was to the civil rights movement," she explained.

During the evening Steinem touched on a variety of subjects—reproductive freedom, economics, racial equality and women's spiritual history. But Steinem tempered her more abstract goals for 2000, such as moving towards a new spirituality, with more concrete objectives. One such objective is that women be paid more for housework.

Steinem said, "Raising children is work. It should be counted as work and have attributed economic value. If two homemakers crossed the street, they'd be paid for working for each other's husbands." As she rattled off statistics, she also quipped, "And a homemaker is more likely to be replaced by a younger worker." The crowd again erupted into laughter.

Near the end of her address, she delivered a strong dose of practicality and inspiration to all women going about the work of creating their lives:

"The truth will set you free but first it will piss you off" and, on a more positive note, "The human imagination couldn't imagine anything that can't come true."

World-renowned feminist writer and activist. Gloria Steinem was one of the co-founders of the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971. She also helped found and has been a long-time supporter of *Ms.* magazine.

~ by Heather Smith