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Gender, Diversity and Inclusion: The Red Tent Menstrual Movement

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Abstract

The Red Tent menstrual movement, established in 2007 in the USA, represents an important form of breaking the menstrual taboo. It could be placed within the sphere of feminist-spiritual menstrual activism, which is striving to reclaim menstruation as a spiritual and empowering experience for women. It serves as a tool for menstrual-positive activism which has radical potential to deeply unsettle assumptions about gender, political activism, embodied resistance, and feminist coalition-building. Although contemporary spiritualities present themselves as non-hierarchical and gender equal, spirituality and wellbeing in the women's circles is pre-dominantly practiced by cisgender, heterosexual and white women excluding lesbian, gay, transgender, queer and others (LGBTQ+). This paper discusses if the Red Tent in Slovenia is open to more diverse identities by including transgender and non-binary people and answers if it reinforces or challenges essentialist constructions of womanhood and the hegemony of the essentialized gender binary. The research is methodologically based on ethnographic fieldwork by participating in 15 Red Tent gatherings in Slovenia, 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants and hosts, and in-depth content analysis of interactions manifesting through digital communications (newsletters, Facebook etc.). The paper argues that by creating alternative domains of representation in which non-normative bodies can exist we disrupt the sex/gender system and dismantle normative femininity and masculinity and subvert the dominant ideology of gender binary.

Keywords: Menstrual Activism, Red Tent, *Trans* and *Non-Binary* Inclusion, Feminism