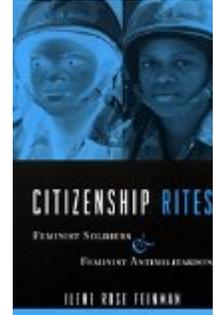


**Ilene Rose Feinman.** *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists.* New York and London: New York University Press, 2000. xiii + 285 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8147-2688-4.



**Reviewed by** Theresa Kaminski

**Published on** H-Women (June, 2000)

How is citizenship defined in the United States? What is the connection between citizenship, feminism, and military service? Ilene Rose Feinman poses answers to those questions in her finely detailed and thought-provoking study.

Feinman begins with definitions of feminist antimilitarists and feminist egalitarian militarists. The former "...oppose the military for its use of violent diplomacy, and associate that violence precisely with the military's culture of virulent masculinism" while the latter "...insist that it is women's right and even responsibility to perform martial service, because the military is the sine qua non of full citizenship and thus, equality"(p. 1). A feminist and a peace activist, the author admits her own antimilitarist bias (and interjects her own experiences), but argues that a dialog must be opened up among these two perspectives. Only then can we better understand the meaning of women's access to the military in connection with definitions of citizenship and women's roles as military citizens.

She devotes her first three chapters to theory: the positions of the feminist antimilitarists and

feminist egalitarian militarists; the impact of race, class, sexuality, and gender; and an analysis of the masculine underpinnings of military service from World War II until the early 1970s. In Chapter Four, Feinman begins outlining the debates over women's military service in the 1970s, focusing on the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment and the creation of the All Volunteer Forces. She looks at Phyllis Schlafly's emotional and successful attempt to torpedo the ERA and then moves on to important court cases, including the 1973 Frontiero case, which clarified women's positions in the military. Chapter Five begins with a recounting of President Jimmy Carter's 1980 efforts to include women in draft registration at the same time that the Goldie Hawn comedy "Private Benjamin" was a Hollywood hit. But the strength of the New Right, bolstered by Schlafly's continuing anti-ERA efforts and a conservative Supreme Court, defeated Carter's attempts. The rest of the chapter is devoted to the Reagan years, emphasizing the ironic fact that this conservative administration's determination to beef up the armed forces provided more places for women in the military. But the increased number of women in

the military raised concerns about sexuality issues, especially sexual harassment and homosexuality, topics that continue to plague the military.

Chapter Six explores women's involvement in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War, which heated the debate over the propriety of women in combat. These military conflicts, Feinman asserts, caused Americans to "grapple with the possible transformation of soldiering as masculinist culture to a realm of soldiering as ungendered professional work"(p. 154). Chapter Seven analyzes the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, first convened in early 1992, and the report it sent to President George Bush shortly after his re-election defeat that November. The report, Feinman concludes, "underscored the crude assumptions about sex roles and racial/ethnic roles in mainstream debates about the parameters of United States Citizenship" (pp. 176-177). The final chapter, applying feminist antimilitarist readings of contemporary films like "G.I. Jane", encourages Americans to "wrest the terms of citizenship from their current fastening in the first instance to martial service" (p. 206).

Feinman, who has a Ph.D. in the History of Consciousness, takes an interdisciplinary approach to her study. Examining a wide range of sources including congressional records and court cases, scholarly studies of women's history and military history, documents from peace activists, and Hollywood films (resulting in wonderful interpretations), she utilizes historical, sociological, ethnographic, and political analysis. The book is well organized, with subheadings in each chapter and brief and incisive chapter conclusions.

*Citizenship Rites* is clearly for an academic audience. Feinman is interested in theory and analysis rather than narrative, and she handles the material well. Students and scholars concerned with feminism, peace studies, and citizenship issues will certainly find her ideas fascinating. Feinman's book is a nice complement to Cyn-

thia Enloe's *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

However, anyone curious about how the women themselves viewed their military service will have to turn to other books such as Francine D'Amico and Laurie Weinstein, eds., *Gender Camouflage: Women and the U.S. Military* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999) and Melissa Herbert, *Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998). Although it was clearly not Feinman's intention to write from this angle, I missed these women's voices and believe their inclusion would have made this interesting book more accessible to a general readership.

The only flaw is Feinman's conclusion, which is a bit weak and wishful, made up of "Closing Thoughts Opening Thoughts" (p. 210) rather than an analysis of the issues raised in the book. It will do little to persuade those who have already made up their minds on this topic. Nevertheless, her book is a thoughtful addition to the growing body of works on women and the military.

Copyright (c) 2000 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-women>

**Citation:** Theresa Kaminski. Review of Feinman, Ilene Rose. *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists*. H-Women, H-Net Reviews. June, 2000.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=4252>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.