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Introduction: Feminism and Global Tipping Points in 2021

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Introduction: Feminism and Global Tipping Points in 2021

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Tipping point: “the critical point in a situation, process, or system beyond which a significant and often unstoppable effect or change takes place.”

-- Merriam Webster (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tipping%20point>)

An argument could be made that 2020 itself was a tipping point for the world, and it also could be seen to have contained numerous tipping points. This issue considers the former, 2020-2021 as a major global tipping point that thrust populations and subpopulations into unfamiliar behaviors, procedures, and situations and forced immense, sometimes irreversible changes on their lives. In our call for the special issue “2020-2021 and Feminism: Global Tipping Points,” we sought to bring together conversations about feminist response and considerations of tipping points and discussions of how COVID-19 shaped and influenced feminisms and feminist movement.

From the pandemic to global climate crises, massive employment and economic hardship, new definitions of work and health and safety, and critiques of gender equality, the transformations and adjustment to daily life across the globe would have been unimaginable in December 2019. Yet a few short months later, the global community was caught up in a pandemic of unexpected strength. During the year that followed, newspaper and magazine articles suggested critiques of and opportunities for feminism. For example, “[Don't Call the Pandemic a Setback for Feminism](#),” published in *Time* (2020), asserted that Covid-19 has revealed “key fissures in white-feminist ideology” (i.e. “the ways in which mainstream feminism has not evolved beyond [an empowering anthem](#) for white women and those aspiring to their privilege”) ways that open the possibility for “mainstream feminism” to evolve and take into consideration the views of those in more marginalized communities. “[The Coronavirus is a Disaster for Feminism](#),” in *The Atlantic* (2020) pointed out the detrimental impacts on women that the pandemic has had, but also argues that it has provided the opportunity to make visible women’s disproportionate performance of unpaid care work within the household. In a similar fashion, an opinion piece in *The New York Times* (2020), titled “[Feminism Has Failed Women](#)” argued that the changes brought to women’s lives by the pandemic “require a new feminism, one that understands that the politics of motherhood are inherently intersectional for the simple reason that while not all women have or want children, those who do come from every race, sexual orientation and socioeconomic background.” This new feminism, according to the author, would be “grounded in solidarity as opposed to ‘success.’” And, the *African American Policy Forum* (2020) featured “[Under the Blacklight: The Intersectional Vulnerabilities that COVID Lays Bare](#),” moderated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, examining the financial, social and political inequities that impacted lives across the United States.

We invite you to engage in this special issue that features five distinct responses that contemplate the idea of “tipping points” and how feminisms, feminist theorizing, and feminist activism has responded – or not -- to this period of time marked by the pandemic.