

# Feminism and Difference: Women Activism in Vieques in the Post-Navy Period

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## ABSTRACT

Vieques is a small island-municipality of Puerto Rico. During the period 1941 to 2003, the U.S. Navy occupied two-thirds of Vieques, and used the island as a site for military training. While conducting fieldwork on the island in 2013-14, we arrived at a general observation: the post-Navy period had witnessed a shift in the gender of persons occupying leadership positions in community struggles, from male to female. The discourse produced by Vieques women activists will suggest that such shift was partly motivated by gender expectations of Viequense/Puerto Rican cultural arrangements. This essay collects and explores—through ethnographic interviews—the narratives produced by renowned Viequense women activists regarding their communitarian work. While we explore their discourses in their multiple intertextual connections with other discourses, we pay particular attention to the ways in which the label of “feminism” is discursively re-signified, and to the multiple interconnections with third-wave feminist ideas and approaches. [Key words: Vieques, women, activism, post Navy, feminism, difference]

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