

SHAKE IT HARD:  
FEMINIST IDENTITY AND THE BURLY-Q

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ABSTRACT

Can a woman remove her clothes knowing about the gaze of the other and still maintain feminist ideals? Can she legitimately use her body to further her feminist and political ideals? I will examine the historical rise, fall, and revival of burlesque in the United States and how burlesque has been both reinvented and reinforced by the neo-burlesque movement. I will also look at public performances by Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue, a queer/ feminist neo-burlesque troupe residing in Columbia, MO, a Midwestern college town, to show how social activism and feminism can and do line-up with historical burlesque ideals. By applying the social movements model for assessing cultural forms of entertainment of Rupp and Taylor, an argument for Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue's engagement in social protest could be outlined in terms of contestation, intentionality, and collective identity. It was found that the local troupe did follow the model and that while having stepped away from the origins of burlesque appears to be a part of the evolution of burlesque.