Why Is The Word “Cunt” Still Such A Big Deal?

I admit it: I have a filthy mouth. I drop F-bombs like they're nothing, and I make use of the word "cunt" pretty often, on a daily basis even. I think because I live in a fishbowl surrounded by other cussers, I sometimes forget that my foul language might actually, you know, offend people. This is particularly true with regards to the word "cunt." Some people think it's one of the dirtiest words in the English language—unspeakable, even. Maybe I'm a little looser with it because I lived in London for a bit, and over there, "cunt" is on the same level of offense ("offence") as, say, "asshole." Or maybe not even that extreme.

There — and in the rest of the British Commonwealth —, the word is used so much that maybe I became desensitized. (It's also interesting to note that the Brits use the word to describe men in addition to women.) But it wasn't until I began covering The Fashionista Diaries and called PR bitch Mandie Erickson out on her cunt-y behavior and rechristened her "Cunt Face" that I began to notice that people are still very much offended by the word. Someone in the comments even said that it was inappropriate for us, as feminists, to use the word when describing a woman.

The history of the word and a bid for its reclamation was explored back in the late '90s in Inga Muscio's book Cunt. (Which I read in college, but don't remember much from it. I was always stoned back then.) I thought as feminists we were beyond this. I mean, when I call someone a cunt, I'm not doing it to offend them, or to try to make an extra impact, because the word is just as common in my vocabulary as "fuck" or "like." Doesn't assigning extra significance to a word make it more powerful? Like, if we use it a lot, don't we take away some of the "badness" of it? Just the other day, I called a jar of roasted red peppers I couldn't get open a "cunt". The way I see it, using the term doesn't make me a bad feminist, it makes me a good one. How's that for some twisted logic?

Cunt [Amazon]
Earlier: Mandie "Cunt Face" Erickson: To Know Her Is To Loathe Her

Contact Tracie Egan Morrissey:
I don't think using the word "cunt" makes you a bad feminist. But if you are using the same word for female genitalia and for "person or object I dislike" that might indicate some problem...