

Including men in our feminist discussion is the most vital part of the modern feminist movement.

By Maria Gilbane (2.2)

Whether women need men to be part of the modern feminist movement is a complex question. As society progresses the idea that women 'need men' is increasingly being challenged. Women now define their own roles and futures, whether that is to stay single, raise children or excel in a career – do we really need men to be part of the conversation?

Or do we need to further educate and empower young women to believe that they can be what they want to be, with hard work and perseverance. In a perfect world, this would, and should, be enough. However, we don't live in a perfect world, and every time we open our newspapers we read about the discrimination against girls and women in many countries across the globe. So yes, we need the men of these countries to understand the importance of mutual respect and equality that will allow these women to break free from outdated societal expectations.

By all means include men in the feminist discussion, it is important, but I think myself that by doing so we're missing the point, as men already know how educated, strong and empowered women can be, and, sad to say, I really think many men fear being overpowered by women and losing the power they've had over them. With modern technology, as it is today, women can do any job a man can because as we all know that with the press of a button all manual work can be done by machinery.

Are men threatened by women? In a lot of ways women are stronger mentally, and have a stronger work ethic, because from the day they were born they have had to juggle with having children, raising children, holding a job and housekeeping. However, there are many signs men are improving their attitudes, I must admit, and things are evolving.

A lot done, but a lot more to do in educating men in real life issues around women and maybe involving them in the feminist discussion might, and I say might, make a positive impact on the modern feminist movement.

However, I must say, that women can be their own worst enemies. For example, Kamala Harris in the American election, Women didn't vote for her, or, a large majority of women didn't vote for her, and we can't blame men for that. What happened to women empowering women??

Another example is the Church. The Church, have excluded women from the beginning of time and it would be a mammoth task to sit those men down and have a feminist discussion – it would require nothing short of a miracle. Some men don't want women to intrude on their masculine activities and even though they give it lip service, I think, they don't mean a word of it, as actions speak louder than words, and I think it will take forever for them to see women as their equal. When money and power come into the equation, men will be slow to hand over the reins.

The question is can we change the attitude of all men? Can we make them realise, that we need fair play, equal pay and the same rights as they have? Some men will never change, that I am 100% sure of. What would we have to do to get the men over in countries such as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and many, many more to 'allow' women the freedom to live as they want. My stomach turns in using the words 'allow' as we are not talking about children but grown women.

As I've said we have come a long way, such as times since the Suffragettes won our right to vote, and we have a long journey still ahead to reach our goal. Whether involving men in our feminist discussion is the most vital part in the modern feminist movement, I don't know, but what I do know is that women need to stand up and be heard.

However ladies, all we can do is try.

"Feminism is slowly recreating the beauty standards for young women and gender minorities"

By Lily Flood (1.6)

The current western beauty standard for women is unrealistic, harmful and, naturally, flawed. One of its biggest flaws being that it revolves almost entirely around men. How is it that what is and what is not acceptable for a woman's appearance is not determined by us?

I find it ludicrous that a young girl will obsess over her looks, try every beauty product on the market and develop an eating disorder for the purpose of captivating a boy, while the adults in her life trot along beside her treating it as if it is completely correct. Although, we cannot blame this self hatred epidemic all on the male species. In an ideal world, women would be there for each other when support is needed and agree that we are all equal. But that is not how the world is. Women put each other down and benefit off of the insecurity of others. We talk negatively about our own appearances, and believe that everyone else's appearance is our business too. We are just as destructive as the men.

Which brings me to my next point; A girl's self esteem and confidence is very much related to who she surrounds herself with and the media that she consumes. If her main female idol is say, for example, Kim Kardashian, this may not have a positive impact on how she views her self and people around her. Kim Kardashian ticks every box of the beauty standard. She's a slim woman, with large breasts, full lips and high cheekbones; except none of it is natural. She makes her money from a woman's hunger for attractiveness, being paid to promote cosmetic products online. She even has her own shape-wear brand, which, despite her absurd amount of money, she cannot even produce ethically. In 2016, she stated that she does not consider herself a feminist, yet in 2017 she started selling stickers which had slogans on them such as "full time feminist" and "my body my choice". She seems to have zero integrity, capitalising on the

movement; a feminists greatest nightmare. Thankfully, though, she is starting to fall slowly out of fashion.

In the last few years, feminism has started being considered “cool” and influencers defying the norms is becoming a lot more common. For example, the term “girls girl” became extremely popular online, with over 300,000 hashtags on TikTok. To be a girls girl is to support women no matter their appearance, race, weight or views. Young people started being kinder to each other, less judgmental and more open minded. All because of a hashtag. Young women were becoming feminists without even realising it. This shows perfectly how feminism is subtly seeping into modern culture, media, and mindsets. I believe that small things like these are what will really add up in the long run. If we intend to change our future, it starts with us. If we want our children to live in a world where they are allowed to be comfortable in their own skin, that is a responsibility of our own. The suggestion that this unhealthy beauty standard could be changed within fifty years by simply re teaching our principles seems unreasonable, but I promise you it is not. Beauty standards are changing all the time; people used to wear makeup made out of lead for goodness sake. The fact that we no longer do this is proof that these things can be resolved over time. It was only really fifty years ago that women started revolting against the patriarchy with their bra burning protests, and things have changed a lot since then. Of course, we cannot expect everyone to agree with the feminist ideals. It’s still far out to believe in the freedom to shave. But we’re indeed heading in the right direction. Internet fads popping up here and there is a step towards people listening to what feminists have to say. And what a feminist has to say is no matter who you are, where you’re from or what you look like, you are beautiful.