

FEMINIST COMEBACKS

BY

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One of the first things that happens when you publicly declare yourself a feminist is that you start getting asked a lot of questions. As soon as you clip on the phone case or wear your T-shirt loud and proud, you are seemingly declaring yourself open for enquiries. If you're anything like me, these probes into your political beliefs will leave you a mumbling mess. I have read enough books and academic essays on feminism to fill a fairly substantial library, and yet as soon as I'm asked to sum it up I start sweating and string together a few unintelligible sentences before loudly shouting

'BECAUSE
BEYONCÉ'

and running to get another drink.

To save you from this embarrassing fate I have put together a collection of the feminist comebacks that I wish I'd thought of in the moment. Rip out this page, keep it in your back pocket and whip it out next time you're at a party or stuck in line for the loo with a drunk man at a party.

WHAT EVEN IS 'FEMINISM'?

Great question! It's actually something I'm really passionate

about. Feminism is a centuries-old social movement fighting for the equality of the sexes. Intersectional feminists (I'm one of those) believe that all people are entitled to the same rights, and they fight to end all discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, skin colour, ethnicity, religion, culture or lifestyle. I think bell hooks said it best when she said that 'feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression'.

**WHERE I LIVE, WOMEN ARE ALLOWED TO VOTE
AND DRIVE CARS AND RUN FOR PRIME MINISTER!
WHY DO WE EVEN NEED FEMINISM?**

Great question! Thanks for asking! You're incredibly lucky to live in a place where women have such a great quality of life but the sad fact is that those rights aren't universal. 50% of all sexual assaults worldwide are against girls aged fifteen or younger; one in seven girls in developing countries is married before the age of fifteen, and 131 million girls worldwide are out of school. In fact girls are 1.5 times more likely than boys to not attend primary school – that's 15 million girls of primary-school age who do not have the opportunity to access a basic education and to learn how to read and write, compared to about 10 million boys.

A feminist who only fights for the lives of women like herself isn't fighting for everyone, so I'm going to keep going

at this feminist thing until *all* women have the same access to human rights. Also, in the UK, women earn 18.4% less than men do for the same work, and only 32% of MPs are women, so I wouldn't say our job is done here quite yet.

DON'T YOU WORRY THAT ALL THIS 'FEMINISM' IS GOING TO MAKE YOU REALLY UNATTRACTIVE TO MEN?

Great question! Glad you asked! The thing is, I'd rather not snog a boy who doesn't believe in women's rights or understand that the fight for women's equality benefits every human in the world, not just girls. Also, Margot Robbie's a feminist, and she seems to be doing just fine.

ALL THIS FEMINISM IS POLITICAL CORRECTNESS GONE MAD! CAN'T YOU TAKE A JOKE?

Great question! Thanks for checking! You're mistaken – I love jokes. I've actually got one for you . . .

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Annie.

Annie who?

Annie thing you can do I can do for 18.4% less pay!

Ha, ha, ha. But, jokes aside, political correctness gets a bad rap, but all it really boils down to is minority groups asking that they not feel marginalized and hurt by everyday conversation or the media. I love comedy – in fact it is one of my favourite things. But I'm afraid that jokes that offend women, people of colour, disabled people, trans people, or others in the LGBTQ community just aren't funny to me. Let's chat when you come up with some better material, preferably something that doesn't offend my friends!

I'M A MAN AND SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE ALL THIS FEMINISM IS MAN-HATING. CAN MEN BE FEMINISTS?

Great question! I'm so sorry that a misconception of the feminist movement in the mainstream media has led you to feel this way. Of course men can be feminists! In fact, the first British member of parliament to introduce a bill calling for women to receive the vote in 1866 was an amazing male feminist called John Stuart Mill. Daniel Radcliffe, John Legend and Prince Harry are also among the millions of brilliant male feminists, so you're joining a great gang.

The sad fact is that we've all been socialized from birth to accept sexism as a part of life and, as a result, women can actually be just as sexist as men. Institutionalized sexism (we like to call it 'the patriarchy') hurts men as well as women. It

tells men that they aren't allowed to show emotions, that they have to be successful and powerful in order to succeed, and that they aren't allowed to like the colour pink!

Feminism is the fight to overcome all these things and also to ensure that women are given fundamental human rights like education, access to their own money and reproductive freedom. Feminists truly believe that if we lived in a world without gender-based oppression we'd *all* be so much happier – so, even if you're only joining for purely selfish reasons, we'd love to have you as a part of the gang!

DATA SOURCES:

www.globalpartnership.org/data-and-results/education-data
girlup.org/impact/why-girls