

DAILY LIFE

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Feminists don't need to say 'but I love men'

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Is there anything more infuriating, more repulsive, more damn *insulting* than the recent drive to turn men into the true champions of feminism? [In a recent column for The Age](#), Wendy Squires calls on feminists to 'pass the baton' to men if we want to have any success in achieving change. The strength of her argument seems to rest on the fact her mate (and one of the 'strongest feminists' she knows) Eddie McGuire built a change-room for girls while a bunch of male comics agreed to perform at a charity gig for the St Kilda Gatehouse. What a bunch of Great Men! Quick, hand them the keys to the city and host a ticker tape parade!

It is embarrassing how eager we are to praise and celebrate men for doing so very little.

But Squires, you see, is tired. Like many feminists, she has been espousing the same messages and activism for years and to apparently little effect. Women are still being murdered and/or raped by men determined to control or punish them. The pay gap still looms, contributing to women's economic oppression. Our bodies are still scrutinised and regarded as public property, first by corporate agents determined to make money from the degradation of them and then by legislators who make political decisions about them in arenas where the gross underrepresentation of women means we are frozen out of those conversations.

The world is still overwhelmingly run by men for whom the concept of equality represents not just a threat but a substantial loss. And the more agitation for liberation that comes from feminists, the greater the backlash.

I appreciate that Squires is tired. I'm tired too. The list of things that has made me tired is long, so very long. For example, I'm tired of women's liberation being the source of so much anxiety for everyone, as if it is unreasonable to demand that women be treated like human beings. I'm tired of being urged to temper my justifiable anger with the kind of polite engagement that reassures those who most substantially benefit from patriarchal inequality - men - that they're not a part of the problem. I'm tired of those same men unironically threatening to withdraw their support and allegiance for women's rights if they aren't treated with reverential kindness all the time. I'm tired of the predictability of comment threads on women's websites, and knowing that beneath this column there will be yet more voices condemning me for 'painting all men as the enemy' - as if the most horrifying issue in play might not be the brutality inflicted on women but how the discussion of it might unfairly make men feel bad.

I'm tired of encountering the same horrific stories of men's violence against women week in and week out. I'm tired of reading emails from young girls and women telling me that they don't know how to stop their male peers from telling rape jokes, or from calling them names, or from touching their bodies without permission. I'm tired of watching as women are persistently sidelined from contributing to the public agenda and national conversation, to [make way for more men to speak](#). I'm tired of the constant undervaluing and in some cases [total exclusion of women as culture makers](#), in adoring lists that celebrate the work of men. I'm tired of male politicians using their unearned power and [playing their own gender inequality cards to try to further limit women's reproductive rights](#).

I'm tired of the fact that rape is still used as a tool of war, in both overt conflicts and the insidious, ongoing, male-led battle that employs terrorism to keep women afraid and compliant. I'm tired of commentary which seriously considers what it is a woman might have done to 'invite' sexual assault, and then absolves itself of the responsibility for perpetuating rape culture by arguing that of course "no one deserves to be raped, but". I'm tired of hearing that women have to be realistic about the world and the inherent danger it poses for us and then being told that naming that danger - men - is aggressive and 'sexist'. I'm tired of the confused, mixed messages women are forced to choke on; that we mustn't wear short skirts or drink alcohol or talk to men or kiss men or have sex with men or imagine that we can possibly be around men without our own behaviour encouraging one of them to violently invade us, but that we must also be quiet about the oppression of women because men are really nice.

I'm tired of watching as the lives of women of colour are pointed to by western men as an example of how 'lucky' we supposedly are in the west, with no attempts made to interrogate both the racism and the subtle threat that lies beneath those admonishments - that we should be grateful for the benevolence of our oppressors, thankful that they aren't like those 'other men', the unspoken message being that they could be if they wanted to.

I'm tired of women being denied an education, denied a living, denied the opportunity to determine the size of their own families, denied recognition, denied respect, denied safety, denied autonomy, denied denied denied everything except the opportunity to be another horrifying statistical legacy of violence, inequality and dehumanisation.

But most of all, I'm tired of this being the world we live in and yet still being beaten over the head with the boring "we love men" drum that feminists are forced to wield as a glorified speaking stick in order to negotiate being allowed to talk at all - as if the only way we can hope to be listened to is if we are careful to remind men that it's not really about *them* so therefore they don't really need to change or challenge anything about their own behaviour. And I wonder when it was we all agreed to sign this contract of capitulation, this agreement that our activism would be nurturing and gentle instead of rageful and uncompromising. My feminism isn't governed by how much I love men but by how much I love women. And it is because I love *women* that I want them to be free.

Women already give far too much time, energy and respect to those who exert power over us. As tired as we all are, women still work tirelessly for other women and receive no fanfare, no ceremony, no ostentatiously displayed ribbons, no acknowledgements and certainly very few newspaper headlines. The last thing we need in the fight for our own liberation is to hand control of it to the very people who are privileged most by our inequality, so that they can continue to reap the benefits of aligning themselves with it while doing very little of the actual work. Equality between women and men requires the latter to sacrifice power, not be given more of it. It cannot be wrought by appealing to male ego and need, and preferencing or appealing to those vanities will only succeed in reassuring the status quo of its own stability.

Women taking a back seat, handing over the microphone, offering praise to men where it hasn't been earned and isn't deserved and hoping beyond all hope or evidence that such acts of kindness will result in marginally less persecution from hereon out? Gosh, that sounds just like patriarchy.

And man, I am *really* f--king tired of that.

This story was found at: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/feminists-dont-need-to-say-but-i-love-men-20141020-118ukn.html>