

The turn to men in gender politics

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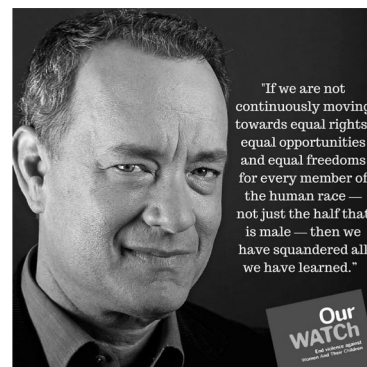
The 'turn to men'

- Increased programming and policy attention to men's roles
 - In such fields as sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, violence against women, fatherhood and parenting, and HIV/AIDS.
- International commitments on the need to engage men
- Popular discourses of male feminism
- High-profile campaigns focused on men

Memes about feminist men (e.g., US actor Ryan Gosling)



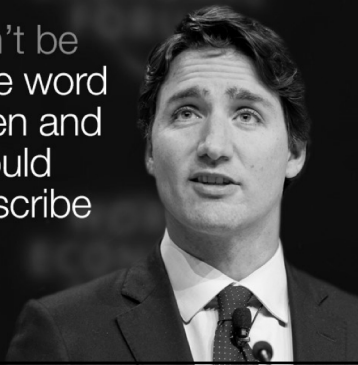
Tom Hanks, US actor



Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

We shouldn't be afraid of the word feminist. Men and women should use it to describe themselves

Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada



HeForShe

"Men - I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue, too."

HeForShe

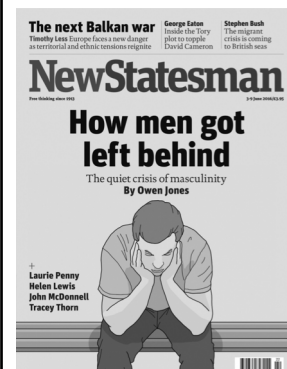


Emma Watson
UN Women Goodwill Ambassador

Emma Watson,
United Nations,
September 21, 2014

The 'turn to men'

- Wider contexts: Profound shifts in gender, 'men in crisis', 'the end of men', etc.



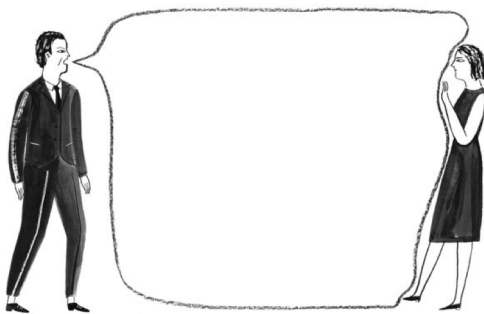


The 'turn to men' is good because it:

- Correctly locates responsibility for gender injustice with the group who benefit from it.
- Generates practical programs and policies.
- Gives men practical steps for change
 - What men should do...
 - What men shouldn't do...

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Popular language regarding men's sexist practices: 'mansplaining'



Popular language regarding men's sexist practices: 'manspreading'



Source: <http://www.citymetric.com/transport/new-yorks-transit-authority-has-launched-campaign-against-manspreading-532>



Case study 1: HeForShe

- A very limited vision of men's roles in relation to gender equality
- Protectionist and individualist discourse
- Appeases men

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(More) Feminist critiques

- A 'softly softly' approach to men is ineffective, and does not lead to change.
- Too much deferring to men, treating them with undeserved reverence and authority, and reassuring them.
- Feminist anger at men is legitimate.

Case study 2: The White Ribbon Campaign in Australia

- A feminist project. But...
- Much of the work is done by women;
- The campaign has less focus than other countries on *men's* roles in prevention;
- The campaign's efforts focus on awareness-raising, and far less on movement-building;
 - Good at getting men to the door. Good at 'brand awareness'.
 - Poor at mobilising men as activists.
- White Ribbon Australia has weak relations with feminist groups and the sector.

The 'turn to men' and pop / marketplace feminism

- Feminist critiques of 'pop feminism', 'feminism lite', or 'marketplace feminism'
- Is the 'turn to men' related to this?

Pop / marketplace feminism

- 1) Feminism has become popular.



Beyoncé performs in front of a Feminist sign at the MTV Video Music Awards, 2014

Pop / marketplace feminism

- 2) Feminism has been stripped of its political and ideological force.
 - Feminism has come to mean everything, and, thus, nothing.
 - 'Anyone can be a feminist'.
 - Feminism as personal identity, not social movement
 - Feminism has been co-opted and de-fanged

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So...

- This 'turn to men' is on the agenda. Its future is an open question.
- Men should:
 - Ally with women's movements and other movements for social justice.
- We should:
 - Politicise men and masculinities
 - Continue to assert the substance of feminism

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Resources

- Online resources on men's roles in gender equality:
 - <http://www.xyonline.net>
- Dr Michael Flood's publications:
 - <http://www.xyonline.net/category/authors/michael-flood>
- Contact:
 - mflood@uow.edu.au