

# Is gender equality good for men?

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## The talk and the speaker

- I ask:
  - What *role* do men have in progress towards gender equality? Is gender equality *good* for men? Is gender equality *bad* for men?
- I wear three 'hats': academic, activist, educator

## Men and gender

- (1) Men are gendered.**
- *Gender*: the meanings we give to being male and female, and the social organisation of men's and women's lives.
  - Men's lives are shaped, as much as women's are, by gender constructions and gender relations.



## Gender inequalities

- (2) Many men sustain gender inequality
  - Men are part of the *problem*. And men are part of the *solution*.
  - There is systemic gender inequality.
  - Gender inequalities are sustained in part by *men* – by men's attitudes, behaviours, identities, and relations.
  - Gender inequality involves a systematic pattern of female disadvantage and *male privilege*.

## Men at the top

Male share, March 2015 or latest, %

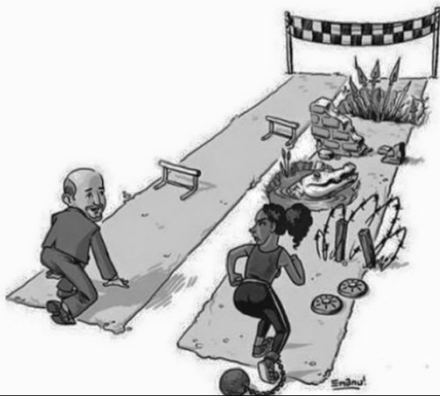
Forbes self-made billionaires	97.6
Fortune 500 CEOs	95.2
Heads of government	92.8
Central-bank governors	91.4

Sources: *Forbes*; *Fortune*; Inter-Parliamentary Union; Central Bank News

## MORE MEN NAMED JOHN RUN BIG COMPANIES THAN ALL WOMEN



"Quit whining. It's the same distance."



## Gender inequalities

- Male privilege is personal: most men have perpetrated privilege in our lives.
- Men benefit from male privilege, whether we want to or not.
  - Men benefit from the unearned advantages of an unequal system.
- But men are also part of the solution...

## Men and gender equality

(3) Men have a vital role in building gender equality.

- Many men already live in gender-just ways.
- Men have a stake in gender equality. Men will gain from gender equality.
- Men need feminism

## Men and feminism

- Feminism frees men from narrow, restrictive gender roles.
- Feminism is *good* for men: good for men's health, men's working and family lives, men's friendships, and men's relationships and sex lives.
- Men should support gender equality because:
  - (a) it's the right thing to do, and
  - (b) men will benefit from change.



## Men will gain from gender equality

- Men will gain from progress towards gender equality, in:
  - Personal well-being
  - Relational interests
  - Collective interests
- Men will gain. And there are some things men will lose.
  - Men will lose unfair privileges and unearned advantages.



## The 'turn to men'

- Early feminists called on men to help end gender injustices.
- 1990s: 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.
- Wider contexts: Profound shifts in gender, 'men in crisis', 'the end of men', etc.



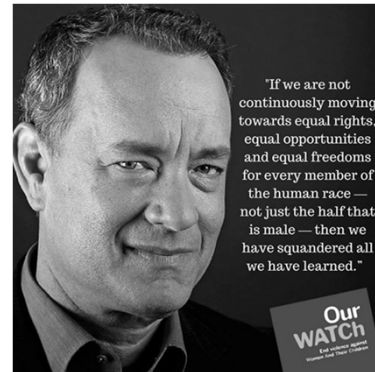
## The 'turn to men'

- Popular discourses of male feminism
- High-profile, men-focused campaigns
  - White Ribbon Campaign
  - HeForShe
  - Etc.

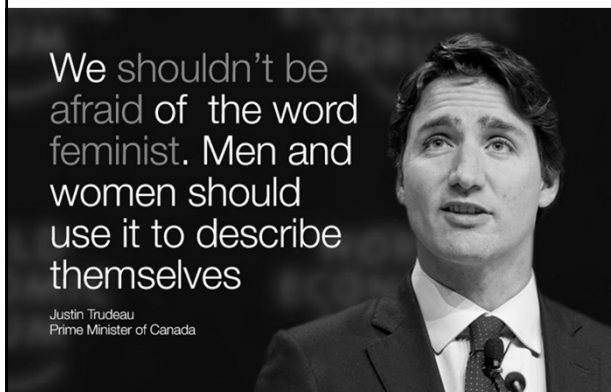
### Memes about feminist men (e.g., US actor Ryan Gosling)



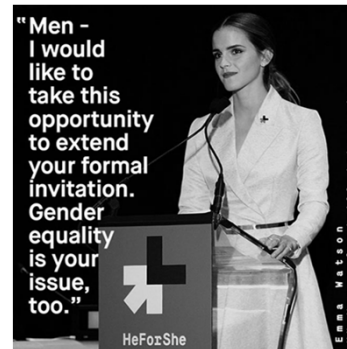
### Tom Hanks, US actor



### Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada



### HeForShe campaign



### 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.



### The 'turn to men' is limited because :

- Men may receive praise and status out of proportion to their efforts.
- Some campaigns don't ask very much of men.
  - Does HeForShe ask too little of men, individualise sexism, or frame men as kindly protectors of women?
- There is too much effort to reassure men.

### What can men do?

- Put your own house in order
- Address sexist and dominating behaviour: in the bedroom, the kitchen, in the workplace, and on the street.
- Challenge other men's sexism.
- Listen to women and learn from women.
- Don't fund sexism.
- Be a gender-just role model
- Educate yourself
- Give your time, money, and votes.  
(See the report, *Men Speak Up* (Flood, 2011).)

### What can men do?

- But also take up *collective* change.
  - Join in collective advocacy and activism, in partnership with women.
- Avoid some common mistakes:
  - Walk the walk, don't just talk the talk.
  - Don't expect women to educate you.
  - Don't expect praise from women for behaving like a decent human being.

### So...

- We won't see much progress towards gender equality unless men change too.
- If we can make progress towards gender equality, then women will have better lives, and *so will men*.
- So, make noise and make trouble. Change the world.

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### Resources

- Online resources on men's roles in ending violence against women:
  - <http://www.xyonline.net/category/article-content/violence>
- Dr Michael Flood's publications:
  - <http://www.xyonline.net/category/authors/michael-flood>
- Contact:
  - [mflood@uow.edu.au](mailto:mflood@uow.edu.au)