

living



TEAM FEMINISM

The *In The Moment* team have got quite the collection of feminist slogan t-shirts! We found ours at various high street stores.

Why we should all be feminists

If you believe in equality for women, you are a feminist. It's that simple. And with the advent of social media, we have a platform to make our voices heard – to say no to everyday sexism, sexual harassment and inequality for good

Words: Rachel Avery

There was a time, not so long ago, when women were encouraged not to label themselves as 'feminists' because of the assumptions people might jump to ('man-hating', 'frumpy' and 'gay' are just some of the choice phrases heard in the past). All very convenient for the men who enjoyed and wished to maintain the status quo. But we've wised up to that game. Actually, it's pretty simple: if you believe in equality for women, you are a feminist – whether you are a woman or a man.

While you may not consider yourself to be a victim of gender inequality, the thing about casual, everyday sexism is that it often goes unnoticed, or worse, is completely disregarded. Sexism and gender inequality can come in many guises, from being negatively stereotyped as being 'emotional', to being side-lined for certain roles, or not getting paid equally for the same job.

But now, through the medium of the internet, more and more women are speaking out about these inequalities and uniting for common causes. Social media has given us a megaphone to the masses and our voices are being heard. ▶



“Women are sharing their personal stories, backing online campaigns and speaking out on a global scale”

The history of modern-day feminism is often described in ‘waves’, each with a different focus. But the reality is that, with every step forward, the feminist debate has continued to broaden and grow, to challenge and to question. When the first passionate feminists came together in the late 1800s to protest against legal inequalities, in particular women’s suffrage, their fight was part

of the wider question of women’s roles within society. This was a debate that continued and became part of the ‘second wave’ of feminism in the 1960s–1980s, when women challenged cultural inequalities, gender norms and stereotypes. ‘Third-wave’ feminism (1990s-2000s) was a movement that recognised that women’s issues were far from over – seeking to redefine what it meant to be a feminist and embracing individualism and diversity.

The development of the internet, in particular social media, has globalised communication and created a sense of interconnectivity. You can learn something new from a video that someone has posted halfway around the world or affiliate with

someone’s views from a country you’ve never been to, all thanks to technology. With the ability to connect with people the world over, the force of a new wave of feminism is building. Women are sharing their personal stories, backing online campaigns and speaking out on a global scale.

Enter ‘fourth-wave’ feminism. Born in 2012, the use of social media that defines this new feminist movement has made it possible for women to protest en masse about the gender pay gap, sexual harassment and the continued gender inequalities that exist today. Heenali Patel is the

WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYHAT?

At last year's Women's March in Washington, many women wore knitted 'pussyhats' as a symbol of support and solidarity. Read more at www.pussyhatproject.com



Photography: Clarke Sanders



AN ONLINE REVOLUTION

Heenali Patel harnesses the speed of social media to spread a message of solidarity and equality in her role as Communications Officer at The Fawcett Society. "You can send a tweet, share a Facebook video – the revolution is at your fingertips."



Photography: Nicole Adams

Clockwise from top: social media helps to bring women together in protest; Oprah Winfrey wears all black at the Golden Globes; women and girls of all ages from all over the world are standing up to sexism.



Photography: Yvael Tchernopolov

Communications Officer at The Fawcett Society, the UK's leading charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights (www.fawcettsociety.org.uk). "Social media platforms can be great tools for spreading solidarity and opening up political debate," she says. "Women's rights organisations like ours are still relevant because women still face discrimination at work, school and in their daily lives."

The power of the cyber feminism movement is clear across globe. In 2016, the Twitter hashtag #IAmMyOwnGuardian went viral when women in Saudi Arabia joined voices to petition to abolish the male guardianship system. A lifting of the ban on female drivers in September last year was a small step in the right direction. The fight goes on.

In October last year, the hashtag #MeToo also went viral, denouncing sexual assault and harassment in the wake of sexual misconduct allegations against the film producer Harvey Weinstein. Launched as a movement in 2006 by civil rights activist Tarana Burke, the hashtag is now being included in almost 2,000 new tweets per week. It was praised by Oprah Winfrey in her rousing speech at January's Golden Globes, where almost all female attendees wore all black outfits in solidarity with #MeToo and the recently-launched 'Time's Up' campaign, which offers support to women who are victims of sexual harassment or misconduct.

The Fawcett Society has also been harnessing the power of the hashtag to promote women's rights post-Brexit. Heenali explains: "Our #FaceHerFuture campaign, a coalition of over 20 women's and equalities organisations, has been a great success. It's resulted in hundreds of people tweeting or emailing their MPs to support amendments defending maternity and paternity rights, part-time worker rights and access to domestic violence services after we leave the EU."

But the strength of social media doesn't just ➤



lie in spreading the message – it's about bringing people together and gaining insight from all over the world. Girls' Globe (www.girlsglobe.org) is an online platform set up to educate and inspire people to take action on issues related to human rights, social justice and gender equality. Their Editor, Eleanor Gall explains how the web is so integral to the work they do: "By working online we're able to harness the power of diversity and bring voices from all over the world together as a community – where everyone can make a fundamental impact."

MAKING PROGRESS

The theme of 2018's International Women's Day is #pressforprogress: "Now, more than ever, there's a strong call-to-action to press forward and progress gender parity."

Instagram is now emblazoned with inspiring quotes, often in the form of feminist slogan apparel, and the feminist agenda is all over mainstream social feeds. Emma McIlroy of Wildfang (www.wildfang.com), a US online store selling apparel for modern feminists, believes in the power of clothing:

"These slogans offer people community and a way to express their feelings right now, at a time when women still have so much to fight for." She also acknowledges the importance of the internet for feminism. "Even if you live in a very conservative town or country, you can now be connected to other people who have similar values to you, from all across the world. The internet has made it much easier for you to find your tribe."

Danielle Newman is the co-founder of F equals (www.fequals.com), a company dedicated to women's empowerment and a retailer of feminist slogan fashion. "A 21st-century sisterhood has been born through social media [and] slogan tees are a key way of spreading the message of empowerment," says Danielle. Not only do F equals t-shirts provide a positive message, they

Top: You're never too young to be a feminist! Below: keep up to date with important events.



Key dates for your diary

4th March 2018
March4Women

8th March 2018
International Women's Day

26th August 2018
Women's Equality Day



Eleanor Gall of
Girls' Globe.

Photography Eleanor Gall

Photography F equals

Photography Simon Buck

also raise funds. Danielle explains: "We are very proud that our GIRL POWER tees raise money for Worldreader (www.worldreader.org), a charity which gives eBooks to poverty-stricken children around the world."

Not all missions to end inequality start by looking at the bigger picture though; standing up for your rights can simply be you sharing an example of the everyday sexism that you experience. Noa Jansma, a 20-year-old student from Amsterdam uses her Instagram feed @dearcattallers to illuminate the prevalence of catcalling by taking a selfie with every man who verbally harasses her on the street. She writes: "This Instagram has the aim to create awareness about the objectification of women in daily life." Her site already has 346k followers.

"As long as you have an opinion, an idea and an internet connection, you have the power to raise your voice," says Eleanor Gall of Girls' Globe. And when we raise our voices in unison, we have the power to change the world. This is our moment – so let's stand up and stand together, as feminists, as equals. @

21ST-CENTURY SISTERHOOD

F equals has become about more than just clothes. "We want to become the first platform fully dedicated to female empowerment," says co-founder Danielle.

Get involved

INSPIRED TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT? HERE ARE A FEW SIMPLE WAYS TO TAKE A STAND

* JOIN UP

Join the Women's Equality Party. Bringing feminism to the forefront of the world of politics, WE was co-founded by author and journalist Catherine Mayer and broadcaster and author Sandi Toksvig during a debate on women in politics held as part of the Women of the World (WOW) Festival in London in March 2015. The party is a collaboration uniting people of all genders, ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, beliefs and experiences in the shared determination to see women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men. Their manifesto is simple: "Equality for women isn't a women's issue. When women fulfill their potential, everyone benefits. Equality means better politics, a more vibrant economy, a workforce that draws on the talents of the whole population and a society at ease with itself." Hear, hear.

* SHARE YOUR OWN STORY

Share your story on social media, or start your own blog or hashtag. Like, comment and share women's rights campaigns on your social media too.

* STAY IN THE KNOW

Sign up to receive newsletters from feminist organisations such as www.fawcettsociety.org.uk and www.girlsglobe.org to keep you in the know about relevant issues and campaigns.