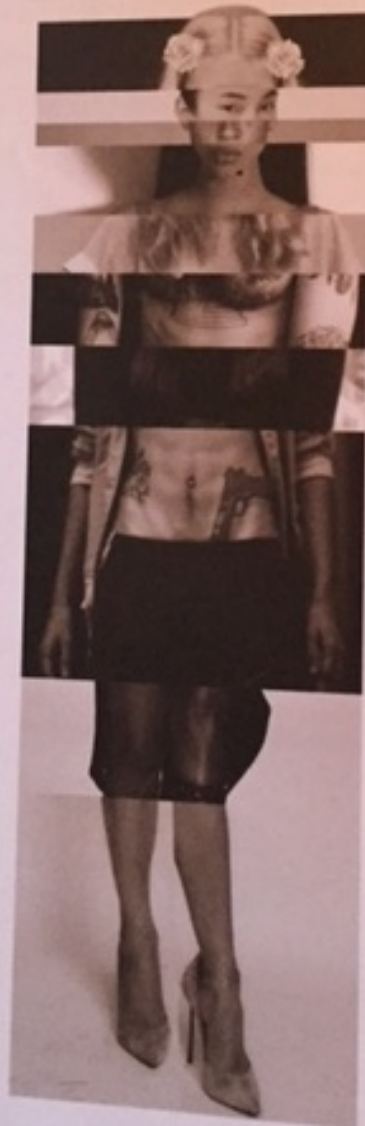


8 SIMPLE WAYS TO FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUALITY



There's no denying that in many countries and cultures, women's rights have advanced: women enjoy an almost universal right to vote, widespread equal pay laws and the largest ever representation of women in government. Yet, despite these advancements, women across the globe face uphill battles — both large-scale and via internalised acts of everyday sexism — for true equality.

The collective feminist spirit is strong, and time and again, women and their supporters prove resilient and fierce opponents to misogyny. But on an individual level, these struggles can feel overwhelming and leave you wondering what, if anything, you can do about it all.

This sense of powerlessness is very easy to give in to, to truly believe that as one person you cannot affect change. As tempting as it may be to feel defeated in the face of widespread inequality, the truth is there are very simple steps you can take to become active on an issue and help alter the course of politics/history/what-have-you.

CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE.

Before embarking on any activist journey, it's important to check your privilege: whether that's cisgender identity, skin colour, or economic or educational advantages. Once you understand your privilege, critique it and reject it. Solidarity and collective, forward progress cannot happen otherwise.

BE TARGETED.

There are, frustratingly, a million rights issues that need addressing. But it's extremely difficult, not to mention overwhelming, to try and take on everything. Pick an issue (or two or three) and really dedicate yourself to it/ them; doing so makes activism much more palatable.

GET INFORMED AND GET ENGAGED.

It's one thing to be incensed, but it's another thing entirely to be incensed and armed with information. Knowledge is power. Read the news, relevant blogs and reports on the issue(s) you're interested in. Engage in online commentary and talk about these themes with your friends, colleagues and family. The more you read and talk about it, the more confident you'll be in your ability to take action.

LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA.

Tweet it, Facebook it, blog it, YouTube it. You have a voice and valid opinions so don't be afraid to blast them beyond your immediate inner circle. We live in an era in which social media reigns and if online activism has taught us anything, it's that these tools are our friends.

WALK THE WALK, LITERALLY.

March in protests and participate in rallies. This may sound like an outdated form of activism, but it's not. It is extremely empowering to be part of a crowd demanding justice and accountability for something you believe in. You can also let your fingers do some walking, so to speak. Successful activism has both verbal and visual components, including the written word. Don't like the way your local paper is covering an issue? Write a letter to the editor. Hate that sexist billboard in your neighbourhood? Email the company whose ad is offensive. Think that rapist should get the maximum sentence? Write to the judge and tell him/her why.

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GET INVOLVED WITH GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS.

Find the local chapter of a gender equality or women's rights organisation and get involved! Not only is this a wonderful way to network with other like-minded feminists, but it will also provide you with ample opportunities to take concrete action in your community. This is particularly helpful for those of us who need some direction and guidance. If you're not keen on physically going to meetings, sign up for action alerts.

VOICE.

In many instances, women fought and died to secure the right to vote. Do not squander it. Vote locally, regionally and nationally because women's voices, like all voices, deserve to be heard — and represented — at every level.

DON'T GET COMPLACENT.

This one bears repeating: do NOT get complacent. You can't depend on others to be your voice or your vote.

M.S.