

IS IT OKAY NOT TO BE A FEMINIST?

Even the controversial, headline-grabbing Lady Gaga claims she's not a feminist, adding, 'I hail men. I love men.' Has feminism lost its appeal? And is it okay to admit you don't want to be part of the global sisterhood?



YES
Lusanda
Ngcaweni

Freelance journalist

For years now I've had a secret longing to be a housewife. I realized early on in my career that climbing the corporate ladder wasn't a success I aspired to. I've shared this with (female) colleagues and friends, but the response is almost always the same: disapproving looks; a lecture about what a waste of my talents it would be; and, depending on my relationship with the confidante, an expression of her disappointment in my lack of ambition. It seems the role of the traditional housewife has been denigrated.

While I appreciate the feminist movement, I believe that at the core of its triumphs is a woman's right to make her own choices, rather than have a man make them on her behalf. But that doesn't give feminists the right to make (pro-feminist) decisions on behalf of women either, nor to accuse those of us who aren't interested in 'taking over the world' of dishonouring the feminist movement.

I don't believe that traditional relations between men and women are merely a matter of domination and submission. I think chivalry is

an attractive trait in a man - offering to carry heavy stuff, open doors and give up his seat. I do the same for elderly people. It's good manners. I am perfectly capable of changing a tyre and doing basic home improvements (I'm particularly fond of using of my power drill), but it's great when men take charge. Other chivalrous niceties include offering his jacket or calling to check I'm home safe. I guess it's the need to feel taken care of. As my friend Pearl-Gene says, 'Gone are the days when women had to prove they were capable. I'm a girl and I enjoy being treated like one.'

And for the record, I do have ambitions. They just don't involve glass ceilings and corner offices.



NO
Jennifer
Thorpe

Feminist researcher

Someone once said feminism is the radical notion that women are people. We may take being recognized as 'people' for granted from our position of economic empowerment and legal liberty, but for many, the notion remains a radical one.

Perhaps you think feminism is irrelevant because today we have



Larger-than-life pop star Lady Gaga says she's not a feminist.

equality. Maybe you don't want to be a feminist because you imagine a world of bra-burning, armpit-hair-growing fanaticism and don't know how you'd fit in. Perhaps you don't have the time to commit to the cause. Why should you change your mind and make the time? Because a world without feminism is a world where a woman's place as a second-class citizen goes unchallenged. The bottom line is that if we are not going to fight for our rights, nobody is.

Ignoring the suffering of other women, and denying that it is related to your life, is a powerful act of double-think. Such suffering is not simply theoretical - it is a reality for many women in South Africa. When you don't speak out, you miss

an opportunity to change a system that silences women.

Feminism is not a dirty word or a chore. By choosing to be a feminist you are making your day easier. If you are a feminist you are supported by a network of women across the world who all want your life to be better and are willing to work hard to get you there. You will be making a statement that this is your world, your body, and women are here to stay.

If you're not a feminist then the highest future aspiration that you can have is to be 'one of the boys', leaving men and masculinity as the benchmark for success. That is not enough for me, it won't be enough for your daughters, and I hope it's not enough for you either. **mc**