



# REDEFINING FEMINISM: ADICHIE'S *WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS*

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## **Abstract:**

Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* is a guide to understanding what feminism is. She talks about her own experiences as well as those of her friends and family with gender-based prejudice in Nigeria. The issues brought up in the book are still relevant today and universal. The two aspects of the books are the normalisation process and the stereotypical idea of feminism and the term feminist. The author also discusses issues such as raising boys and girls differently, gender, culture, and the pay gap. Feminism, in contrast to common opinion, advocates for the breakdown of the gender hierarchy rather than the triumph of women over men. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provides an excellent explanation of the same. She urges us to picture a just society in which everyone is content and She urges us to picture a just society in which all people—men and women alike—are content and loyal to who they are.

**Keywords;** Feminist, feminism, gender, culture, upbringing.

Feminism, a word with negative baggage, is misunderstood by both sexes. It is not an insulting word, rather it is a label that can be accepted with pride. In her book review, Lisa Wan comments that being a feminist means establishing and achieving the sexes' political, economic, personal, and social equality. The opponents of feminism believe that feminism is a social movement that focuses on reversing gender roles and making men inferior. (Wikipedia contributors).

In her long essay *We Should All Be Feminists*, Adichie attempts to define feminism in layman's words using concrete examples. She does a good job of explaining how we are conditioned to accept the patriarchal system. Her 2012 TEDx talk was reworked and published by Fourth Estate in 2014.

Adichie makes a strong case in *We Should All Be Feminists* that gender stereotypes and ingrained ideas that support the gap between men and women have to be challenged. She explains how a cultural shift is necessary to achieve gender equality and how every one of us may play a part in bringing about this transformation. To put it succinctly, we should all be feminists to support women's emancipation and to encourage males to have discussions with women about roles, looks, sexuality, and success. Advocating for women's rights and working to improve the world for women are hallmarks of being a feminist. Feminism's primary goals are to improve the world for women, provide opportunities for them, and address social inequalities that affect them rather than question biological roles.

Adichie's childhood friend Okoloma mockingly referred to her as a feminist after a heated debate. She was not aware of the definition of a feminist at the time. A journalist told her not to identify as a feminist after reading her book *Purple Hibiscus*, arguing that feminists are just unsatisfied single women. Feminists are stereotyped as being negative and detesting men.

Of course, much of this was tongue-in-cheek, but what it shows is how that word *feminist* is so heavy with baggage, negative baggage: you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you're always angry, you don't have a sense of humour, you don't use deodorant.

(07)

Adichie remembers another instance from her time in school. Even though she met the requirements for being a monitor—getting the best grades—she was not allowed to oversee the class. Her teacher said that girls cannot be appointed as monitors; only boys are eligible for such positions. Whether we realise it or not, our mentality is built up to tolerate male dominance. Adichie remarks, "It starts to seem 'natural' that only men should be heads of corporations if we keep seeing only men in that role." (08)

There are a lot of people in the world who support gender equality. They believe that since both sexes are equal, feminism is no longer unnecessary. They grant women the same freedoms that males do. Louis, one of Adichie's close friends, was an advocate for gender equality. Until he saw it for himself, he could not comprehend the precise differences in treatment between men and women.

Louis is an intelligent, forward-thinking individual. Adichie and Louis went out to dinner one day in Lagos. A young man in the parking lot assisted them in finding a spot and parked the car. Adichie was impressed with the particular theatrics of the man and offered him money as a tip. After giving Adichie the money, the appreciative and joyful man turned to face her companion and said, "Thank you, sah!" (08). Because Louis was a man, the man assumed that any money she had ultimately came from him.

Men and women differ from one another in terms of hormones, sexual organs, and biological capacities. Physical strength was once thought to be a crucial component of survival. Physically, men are generally stronger than women. Physical strength is not the only quality in the modern era to establish superiority. Rather, becoming

outstanding requires, having knowledge, creativity, and innovative ideas are required for survival. Even though humans developed, gender norms have not.

Hotels, clubs and bars do not allow women to enter alone. When a woman walks into a hotel alone, she is assumed as a sex worker. Men are acknowledged and women are neglected in public places. Women cannot express their anger against social injustice because anger is not good for women: “Anger, the tone said, is particularly not good for a woman. If you are a woman, you are not supposed to express anger, because it is threatening.” (09)

Aggression from women at work is intolerable to men. They anticipate her working with a "woman's touch." Compared to men, women receive less recognition and attention during team meetings. Teaching girls that they can't be as angry or aggressive as boys is a widespread practice. The majority of books written centre on the actions that women must take to please men. Less advice exists for guys on how to win over women.

Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we should begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently. (10)

Adichie thinks that this kind of definition of masculinity is affecting humanity in boys. It is expected that boys should be free from fear, weakness and vulnerability. They need to be a hard man. It is our thinking that if a boy goes out for a date, he must pay the bills and, in this way, prove his masculinity. Adichie is of the view that only boys should pay to prove themselves they are men. She cries about why masculinity is attached to paying the bills. Masculinity and money are two different things. The boys are loaded with the pressure of proving their masculinity through monetary gains. This kind of pressure makes them fragile and handicapped. Not only girls but also boys, consciously or unconsciously, get pressured by irrational thinking.

Marriage is an important stage in the life of a girl and a boy. Marriage is a source of joy, love and mutual understanding. The girls are taught to be familiar with the notion, but not the boys. The woman, without a ring symbolising she is unmarried, is not respected in society. The wedding ring is immediately a symbol of respect. To put it in Adichie's words, “I know an unmarried woman in Nigeria who, when she goes to conferences, wears a wedding ring because she wants her colleagues to – according to her – ‘give her respect’ (11)”.

It is expected to build a social atmosphere for women that may ensure safety for them. If a girl is not married in a particular age, she is considered as a failure. Respect is the right of both men and women and not only the men. The language of a marriage is often a language of ownership and not of partnership. This scenario must be changed. Women are expected to make more compromises in their lives. They have been taught to wear good clothes, to cover them, to be homely, to cook food for male members and to be good wife material. Adichie strongly objects to this kind of mindset:

The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we *should* be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how

much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations. (12)

Feminism is also related to human rights in general. It would be a means of maintaining the illusion that women have not been marginalised for ages. It would be a means of negating the fact that women are the target of the gender issue. Humanity was split into two groups for centuries, with one group being excluded and subjected to oppression. The concept of feminism intimidates some men. In the guise of culture, they treat women like objects to be taken for granted and ignore the fact that culture is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving. In the end, culture serves to guarantee a people's survival and continuance. "Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture." (15)

*We Should All Be Feminists* as a starting point to learn about feminism. Adichie discusses the experiences she had with gender-based discrimination in Nigeria, as well as those of her friends and family. The problems raised in the book are still universal. The stereotyped notion of feminism and the term feminist, as well as the normalisation process, are the two facets of the books. The author also touches on topics like gender, culture, pay gap and raising boys and girls differently. Contrary to popular belief, feminism calls for the destruction of the gender hierarchy, not the supremacy of women over men. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie does a fantastic job of explaining the same. She exhorts us to imagine a just society where everyone is happy and true to themselves, both men and women.

To sum up, Adichie's article is a potent call to action that is deftly written to encourage readers to support gender equality and embrace feminism. She does a good job of explaining the importance and urgency of the feminist movement. Her essay acts as a powerful call to action, inspiring readers to consider their values and join the effort to create a more egalitarian society. Her capacity to engage a wide range audience, break down barriers, and promote a common commitment to gender equality is what makes her so persuasive in addition to her eloquence.

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