

Standard Double Standard

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“At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial - and any queestion about sex is that - one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can only give one’s audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker.”

Virginia Woolf

Election night 2016: the pent-up breath that went from being an indication of excitement to being released as a sigh and then a sob. In one particularly memorable moment that night, a female peer of mine and I were lamenting the role of sexism in the election. A male peer of mine listened in on the conversation and stated that he didn’t think sexism was relevant. When I explained why I thought he was wrong, he slowly started nodding. He had heard it from her, but hadn’t concurred until he heard it from me.

I face a little existential crisis every time someone takes my opinion about feminism seriously. On one hand, I feel like I am making a difference by painstakingly convincing a person at a time that sexism is in fact still an insidious and prevalent issue. On the other hand, I worry that they are only taking my opinion seriously because I am a dude, and thus I’m perpetuating the problem. After all, what could I (as an affluent 18 year old Indian boy) possibly have to say about sexism that every female out there hasn’t already personally experienced? And yet, females who raise legitimate concerns are too easily dismissed, whereas I have never experienced anything but rapt attention (from both men and women) when I posit the same claims.

I don’t know what to do other than employ the unfortunate authority my gender grants me to advocate for feminism when given the opportunity. But that doesn’t change the fundamental problem: we as a society have somehow convinced women that they are not *allowed* to complain about sexism. Any attempt to do so is at best met with apathy and at worst meet with ridicule and scorn.