

To Mr. Mike Buchanan,

I hope this letter finds you well.

My name is _____ and I am a feminist. To some people, the fact that I am a feminist labels me as someone who gets rid of her high heels and torches her bra, someone who completely disregards the presence of males in society. I understand that you, Mr. Buchanan, feel the same as these people. However, there is a significant difference between feminists and radicalists. In her United Nations for the He For She Campaign, Emma Watson asserted, “I have realized that fighting for women’s rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop.” Feminism is often misconstrued. Many (typically males) believe feminism connotes that females should have better or more rights than males. However, that is certainly not the case. In fact, feminism can be defined as a form of “activism that criticizes patriarchy and male privilege on behalf of women as a group” (Botting 467). It demotes ‘patriarchy’, a system in which society is led by men. Therefore, by definition, feminism is an act of progression for *equality* between genders, not an act of “man-hating.”

Nonetheless, feminism is a concept that both adults and adolescents do not entirely understand. Over the summer before my junior year in 2015, I participated in an academic training program to help me prepare for my ACT test I was to take that upcoming October. During one particular class, the instructor had asked me to pick any topic for the class to write an argument about. I chose feminism. When asked to discuss the topic first, one student, Dan, immediately exclaimed, “Feminism is just like radicalism. It’s when women want to get rid of men.”

I was astonished. While organized feminism has become a tremendous trend globally, never did it occur to me that feminism could be compared to something as draconian as radicalism. However, here was Dan, justifying his claim that, apparently, feminists were people who simply wanted to rid the world of men. Upon further research, I discovered that you, Mr.

Buchanan, have similar views to my peer, Dan. There are certainly several extreme feminist movements or groups in the world. Organizations like the Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists and Cell 16 certainly exist and often “over-dramatize” the need for women supremacy in replacement of a patriarchy, but these groups exist in considerably minute numbers. Furthermore, these groups are represented in an entirely different category: radical feminism, the ideal in which women should separate themselves entirely from the patriarchy because of previous “inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, social dominance of women by men” (Lewis). This particular category of women can further be categorized as feminists who follow “a tendency to contrast civilized peoples” with more barbaric reforms. While the number of radical feminists is low, these barbaric reforms have given rise to issues such as the abolition of gender roles, the support of LGBTQ rights, and economic changes to end any gendered privileges (Botting 468). Feminism, on the other hand, is a much more delicate yet substantial concept. It deals with the desire for women to be able to work alongside men without prejudice against them because of their gender. So, yours and Dan’s mindset that feminists “hate men” and that feminists think of themselves as “divine creatures” (Nianias) was entirely incorrect in his statement.

The feminist movement has brought significant attention to how women rank -- in terms of their income -- alongside their male counterparts. Men have typically held the highest positions of authority in large corporations. It is fairly uncommon to see females being CEOs. As a result, the significant discrimination against women in the workplace has stimulated more and more of a desire to enforce equal pay between males and females. Women are just as capable as men to achieve great feats, regardless of the role they choose to be in society. Therefore, they should receive just as much compensation as their male counterparts.

Radical feminists believe that women should replace their male counterparts in these roles of authority. However, feminism reflects two distinct types of sexism: benevolent and

hostile. One follows hostile sexism when he or she showcases an active dislike of women. The stereotype under hostile sexism asserts that women are simply inferior to men: they are not as intelligent, physically strong, and competent. One follows benevolent sexism when he or she appears favorable to women but actually have patronizing intentions. Feminists, in general, have developed in response to benevolent sexists' positive yet demeaning perspectives on women: they are kinder and more warm-hearted than men. Jobs have become more categorized as being masculine or feminine. For instance, there are fewer female doctors, but many female nurses because nursing has come to be a more feminine profession (Larson). Over 75% of total employed in nursing are women ("Most Common Occupations for Women," Chart 1), and these women make 9.6% less than male nurses do ("Most Common Occupations for Women," Chart 2). However, underneath the romantic view of the gentleness of women, is still the perspective that women are weaker and less competent than men (Aronson) reasoning why women have had a more difficult time achieving more notable positions in the workplace.

Women compose approximately half of the labor force. Not only do they serve as the primary caregivers and domestic workers in a household, but also they receive more college and graduate degrees than men do. 37.5% of women between the ages of 25 and 34 have a bachelor's degree or higher while only 29.5% of men in the same age group have a bachelor's degree or higher (Feeney). Yet women continue to earn a considerably smaller income than men. For example, in 2015, full-time, year-round female workers only made 80 cents for every dollar earned by men, indicating a gender wage gap of 20 percent ("The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation," Sec. Earnings Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity).

Women, on average, earn less than men in nearly every single occupation for which there is sufficient earnings data for both men and women to calculate an earnings ratio. In middle-skill occupations, workers in jobs mainly done by women earn only 66 percent of workers in jobs mainly done by men. In a survey of over 2,000 nannies, housecleaners, and caregivers

(occupations performed primarily by females), the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) discovered that female workers received an average of \$6.15, \$1.10 below the federal minimum wage (Flanders 21). The Institute for Women's Policy Research developed a report on sex and race discrimination in the workplace that shows outright discrimination in pay, hiring, or promotions. IWPR tracks the gender wage gap over time in a series of fact sheets updated twice per year. According to its research, if progression continues to be as slow as it was for the previous fifty years, then it will take 44 years -- or until 2059 -- for women to finally achieve pay parity. For women of color, the rate of change is even slower. To specify, hispanic women will have to wait until 2248 and black women will have to wait until 2124 for equal pay ("The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation.").

Women have made tremendous strides during the last few decades by moving into jobs and occupations previously performed almost exclusively by men. The median annual earnings (adjusted for inflation) for women have increased from a mere \$23,107 in 1960 to \$41,256 in 2015 (an \$18,149 increase), whereas the earnings for men have increased from \$38,084 in 1960 to \$51,858 (a \$13,774 increase). To further analyze, the female-to-male earnings ratio has improved from 60.7% to 79.6% from 1960 to 2015 ("The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation," Table 2). Yet, despite this supposed progress, the female-to-male earnings ratio has increased at a gradually decreasing rate, there has been very little further progress in the gender integration of work for the past six decades. In some industries and occupations, like construction, there has been no progress in forty years. This persistent occupational segregation is a large contributor to the lack of significant progress in closing the wage gap.

Similarly, the more the women there are that remain unemployed, the larger negative impact there will be on the mortality rate. According to an independent study by the European Commission, moving towards a full employment society and in particular the upward trend in the number of women participating in the labor force leads to decreased mortality. European

countries have shown that a growth in per capita wealth is the principal long term factor in a mortality rate decline (Watson). In other words, the more the people there are in the workforce -- no matter their gender -- the more people are able to thrive and have live long and healthy lives. When placed in the labor force, females are more active than they typically would be if they were to remain at home and perform the chores that society associates women with, such as stay-at-home moms.

While women are making tremendous strides to achieve pay parity, some proponents would argue against the cause because companies and organizations would lose value when women go on maternity leave. Under the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations, passed in April 2000, mothers are able to take up to forty weeks of leave before returning to their positions (McGill). Therefore, companies are essentially paying for "empty" labor. If they choose to replace the employee on maternity leave, then there are still several other costs to consider including the costs of advertising, interviewing, screening, hiring, and training. These costs, however, are a small sacrifice of time and ultimately will not cause companies to lose value.

Because women are just as capable as men and are on average more educated than men, they should achieve pay parity. Feminism may be a controversial topic, but it is a movement with a simple concept: to have females receive the same rights and compensations as their male counterparts. No matter what role they choose to partake in society, whether it be a loving wife, a life-changing doctor, or a lively businesswoman, they can achieve success through hard work and dedication.

Thank you for taking the time to read through my letter.

Regards,