

Elizabeth Hobson's Introduction at the Battle of Ideas, Barbican, 2 November, 2019, in the session, "From Peterson to incels: is there a generation of 'lost boys'?"

There is no generation of 'lost boys'. The picture is far more mixed. There is certainly a demographic of men and boys who I do view as tragically (if not necessarily permanently) lost. They move through their lives apologising for their "male privilege" and reciting mantras of consent like, "There is never any reason to touch another person without consent." Let me tell you now that, in the non-feminist sphere, there are many reasons – ranging from romantic intent to camaraderie to emotional support in difficult moments. The boundaries are so much more fuzzy than "never". This tragic demographic is typically a product of the university system, particularly departments like sociology (sorry Nikos, Jan and Ashley – trust me, some of my best friends are sociologists.)

It's no wonder to me that such piteous creatures exist *and it's not because 'patriarchy hurts men too'*. At the Battle of Ideas three years ago, a man I hold dear, John Waters, described life for men in our feminised society (by 'feminised', I don't mean more womanly by the way, I mean *more feminist*.) He said that, "It's like being mugged in the street, and the mugger is kicking your head in, and every so often he stops to say: 'you alright?'" The rights of men and boys specifically are assaulted by the actions and inactions of the state in a whole host of areas, here in the UK, today. We won't protect boys from genital mutilation, the education of boys and men, healthcare provision (including mental healthcare) for them, and their victimisation are secondary concerns compared to the education, health and protection of women and girls. They're discriminated against via quotas in education and the workplace and they're discriminated against in the criminal justice system where the presence of a Y chromosome is an aggravating factor that warrants harsher treatment. Worse than all of that combined, there are thousands of loving fathers who are prevented from fulfilling their responsibilities to their children by malicious women and an incompetent, if not ideologically corrupt, family justice system. And on top of this, men and boys find themselves the target of everyday misandry and vitriol on a scale that is so far beyond what is acceptable for women to be targets of – that it beggars belief.

And just like John Waters said in 2016 – this is no accident or oversight. This is the work of hate-filled female supremacists who masquerade as gender equality activists. Feminism has made a concerted effort *to lose our boys*. Feminism: the belief that women are disadvantaged compared with men, that there is a societal problem, and that it needs to be fixed. Feminism: the project to increase the power of women with no clearly defined end-point (regardless of the harm done to men and boys in the process). Feminism: the dominant culture.

However, there's a problem for feminism! With typical masculine resilience and innovation, men are carving out meaningful existences DESPITE the injustices they face. Petersonians, Men Going Their Own Way, Men's Rights Advocates, even the Incels, are building communities that provide support, and space to explore themselves and the world they find themselves in, liberated from the dominant *and demonstrably false* feminist narratives, as well as other politically correct dogmas. These communities are often accused of taking a victim-stance in relation to the impact of feminism on the lives of men and boys that actually mirrors feminism's victim-stance on women. The difference is that while women and girls are privileged as a sex, men and boys are genuinely disadvantaged – and pointing out the ways isn't revelling in victimhood, it's telling the truth. Furthermore, it misses the fact that so often the conversations that are appealing to men and boys focus on personal responsibility and being agents of change.

And it's not only appealing to men and boys, by the way, more and more women and girls are getting on-board with these counter-cultural communities every day. The Fawcett Society found, in 2016, that only 4% of men and 9% of women in the UK describe themselves as feminists. Feminism's dominance

is illegitimate. Buzzfeed commissioned YouGov to conduct a poll (published late July this year) which found there are more people in the UK today holding anti-feminist ideas (for example, that feminism is marginalising and demonising men) than feminist ones. Gillette got woke with their viral man-bashing ad and lost \$8 billion. If we *have* to define our younger generation with a generalisation, then they're not lost, more and more are becoming well and truly found every day. Feminists should be suitably terrified.

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