

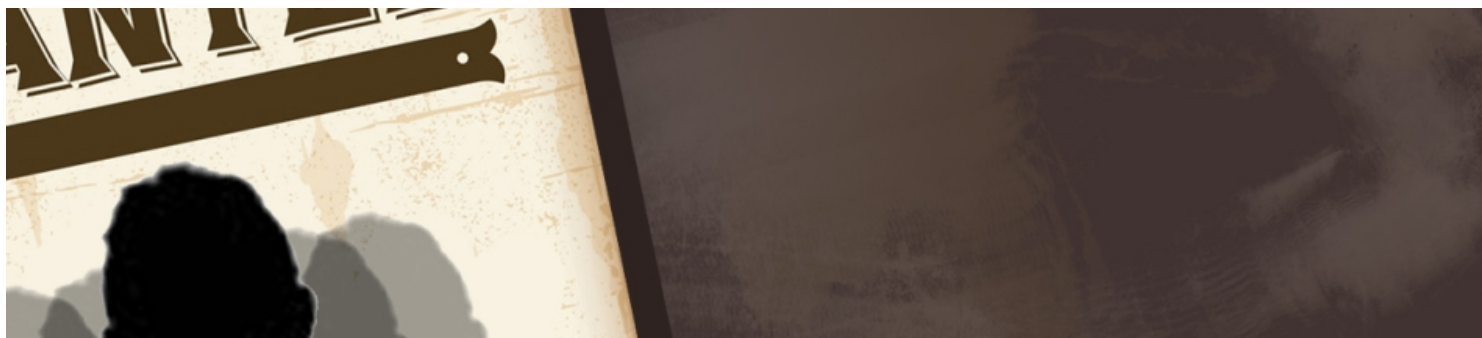


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Wanted in #MeToo: A Slew Of Good Men As Allies Against Patriarchy

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OPINION 7 min read



Some weeks ago, I participated in an internationally-acclaimed conference attended by delegates from all over the world. The curator of the conference boasted that forty percent of the delegates were women. (I'm not sure what technicalities prevented full gender parity.) One of the side events was a panel

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on #MeToo, which I wanted to attend in part because I have been an active contributor to the [#MeToo movement in academia](#) and because the panel's organisation intrigued me.

It was moderated by a western European, white, cis-male, while one of the four panelists was a north African male tasked with expositing the #MeToo experience of African women, despite the presence of numerous African women in attendance who could have spoken for themselves.



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Allyship Requires Action

The dynamic of a white male moderating women's experience and the male [ventriloquation](#) of African women's voices disquieted me. While some of the observers shared my

disquiet, others were more moderate. I was grateful that the panel was

less moderate our voices.

Too busy to read? Listen to this instead.



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After hearing me grouse about this panel and its other untoward sequelae which included being ushered out after explaining these problems, numerous men asked how they can be better allies.

I dedicate this column to those men who are genuinely trying to figure out how they can help mitigate the misogyny—big and small—that we endure as the cost of daring to exist.



First and foremost, exhibiting sympathy or empathy does not make you an ally. Allyship requires *action*. In the context of the afore-noted panel, had the gentlemen chosen to act as allies, they would have explained to the organisers that such roles are best executed by women. I can think of no intellectual defense



on #MeToo, exposit how you've learned to fight the sexism rather than repeating your perception of what we endure.

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Also Read : [#Metoo Is the Single Most Important Political Movement: Shobhaa De](#)



What Male Allies Can Do To Mitigate Misogyny

The public sphere affords numerous opportunities for men to step up. Every day, men observe other men and boys who make our lives difficult. There is the rube who remarks upon our bodies, jokes about how we look or objectifies us, or engages in other demeaning behaviors that reduce our humanity to things that either please or displease the male gaze. They make crude remarks as we walk, run, or ride our bikes past them. They make crude comments to us or proposition us. They grab our bodies on buses, planes or on the street. These events render quotidian activities a gauntlet of predation.

Allies tell their friends and associates that this behavior is repugnant. Allies do not stand by silently as this goes on. Allies teach their sons, nephews, brothers, uncles, fathers and grandfathers that these behaviors are loathsome.



There are myriad things in the work place that male allies can do irrespective of where they are in the food chain. First, take us seriously. Hire us. Pay us as you pay men for the same job. If there are no women working with you, ask why that is. Whether



generally decline upon marriage and again upon childbirth is that employers assume we will assume the bulk of domestic production.

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In turn, men's wages typically increase upon marriage and childbirth because these steps indicate maturity without the assumption of increased commitments away from job.



As An Ally, Call Out Harassment & Discrimination On The Job

Don't cut us off and chide men who speak over us. Listen to us and our ideas. Don't passively observe as men try to take credit for them. Every working woman has had the experience of putting forward ideas only to be met with silence followed by a male colleague voicing pretty much the same idea and being met with approval. When this happens, state clearly that your female colleague said it first. Don't let ideas become important or valid only once they have been #HeSplained.

When you see sexual harassment and discrimination on the job, call it out. Don't force your female colleague to deal with a predator on her own. It's not that she cannot do so; rather, it is likely to be more effective for a man to



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from another man.

Research supports this claim. In 2014, Drury and Kaiser found that “[relative to women who confront sexism, men who act as](#)



allies are evaluated more positively, while their confrontations are taken as more serious and legitimate efforts to combat sexism.”

How Misogyny Is Compounded

Remember, gender is only one kind of discrimination that women encounter. In the United States, gender operates along with other forms of bias such as racism, homophobia, and religious discrimination. Elsewhere, misogyny may be compounded by similar factors such as caste, ethnic as well as religion-based discrimination. Be attentive to these concerns.

Even perceived competence motivates bias against women: Inesi and Cable found that “competence signals as a threat to the traditional gender hierarchy, which leads to a negative bias when evaluating women’s on-the-job performance.”



Also, do not assume that [female managers will fix problems with harassment and discrimination](#). It is an unfortunate fact that some women, viewing themselves as competitors for the meager crumbs of patriarchy, will [undermine other women](#). One of the

have long colluded with men. Men could not have disempowered women for the long durée of human civilization if women had not been complicit in perpetuating the power structures that harm women generally, while affording collaborators specific benefits.



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Being an Ally Is Demanding, But Worth It

While some men feel threatened by **women's economic empowerment**, our families and even our countries' economies benefit when women have equal access to opportunities and outcomes. I helped my husband understand this concept by helping him build spreadsheets that calculate the net present value of my accumulated wage discrimination. I also explained to him that by marrying me, he endogenised these accruing economic disadvantages. Had he married another white male, he could retire many years earlier than he can by marrying me or any other woman.

These actions may make you uncomfortable. Being an ally is demanding. It's so demanding that the US Marine Corps put together a helpful set of guidelines for bystander intervention.



There is also **evidence** that the humiliation of bigotry is **mitigated when bystanders intervene**. Such interventions signal that the person experiencing the biased behavior is not being “overly sensitive” or “imagining an offense” when there is none. In intervening, you are both witnessing and attesting to



As women, we cannot eliminate the perduring impacts of patriarchy, rape culture and misogyny on our own. We need men who not only sympathise with our experiences, but who become our battle-buddies in a war we neither started nor wanted to fight in the first place, but which we cannot win without you.



*(C. Christine Fair is the author of [In Their Own Words: Understanding the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba](#) (Hurst/OUP, 2018) and [Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War](#) (OUP, 2014). This is an opinion piece and the views expressed above are the author's own. **The Quint** neither endorses nor is responsible for the same.)*

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