

Feedback on: CAN MEN BE FEMINISTS?

The women of Isis International-Manila ask if men can be feminists.

For me, encountering that question raises more questions than answers.

One. What is a feminist? Are there any minimum requirements to becoming a feminist before one can enjoy sporting the label? Who judges these things?

Two. Do men need to be feminists? Do feminists want to have feminist men around?

Three. Do I want to be a feminist? Will anyone believe me if I do decide to become a feminist?

Romel Lalata

Policy Review and Editorial Services, Inc., Quezon City, Philippines

Dear Romel,

We are not from Isis International-Manila but let us share some thoughts:

There are many perspectives to this question. People from the "mainstream" fear the feminist label. Many times when we have forums with so-called "mainstream" people, they say, "Oh, you do very good work" when referring to our Women's Action Hotline service. Then they would add, "It's a good thing that you're all feminine unlike many feminists who look like..." (???)

They say feminist have tight assholes who need to loosen up.

Yet, it is true that many feminists lack a sense of humor. But hey, is rape funny?

Then there are those who ask: What does a feminist look like? We say: Who cares, as long as she gets an equal say. And to those who say "You don't look like a feminist," we respond: "Watch out—we disguise ourselves as **human beings.**"

So, do men need to be feminists? Do feminists want to have feminist men around? We do. Especially if in addition to being feminists they're handsome too. We also say "Your boyfriend bakes

cookies? Marry him..."

*Anonymous
Arugaan ang Kalakasan, Inc.
Quezon City, Philippines*

Yes, I believe that a man can be a feminist. The philosophy one chooses to adapt is not necessarily limited to one's gender. It is the person's state of mind, the way he or she perceives things, that matters. One need not be a woman to be a feminist.

*JC Mendoza
University of the Philippines*

I think the word feminist is quite sexist. If we are striving for the equality of men and women then gender should not be an issue itself. The important thing is we regard and treat people based on their merits, character and capabilities and not because of their color, race, religion or gender for that matter.

*Anonymous
Philippines*

A feminist is someone who upholds the rights of women. Being a feminist doesn't require one to be a woman. A man can also be a feminist just as long as he believes that women should be treated equally with men and are regarded with dignity and respect instead of discriminating them and treating them as second-class citizens.

*Anonymous
Philippines*

No, the macho image of men will always be a hindrance. Men still doubt the capabilities of women.

*Regi Reyes
Statistical Coordination Officer of
the National Statistical
Coordination Board
(NSCB) Philippines*

Can't be, because if men become feminists then that's an outright admission that women are superior. But men can respect the

thinking of women. Men will always believe they are on top of the situation. It is a weak man who agrees to feminist views.

*Ruben Litan
Information Researcher
NSCB*

OPPOSING VIEW ON IRAN

Contrary to reports in western media that Iranian women are abused, treated as appendages to men and are useless, we found them to be the opposite, as we toured Iran recently at the invitation of Fatemeh Hashemi, president of the Iranian Women's Solidarity Association, and daughter of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Half of university students in science and medicine are women. At the large Blood Transfusion Service of the Blood Research and Fractionation Center, half of the doctors in a team of 140 are women. A woman, Dr. Huri Rezvan, is the manager.

If the Philippines has the National Commission on Women, Iran has its Women's Affairs Office headed by a brilliant lawyer, Shahla Habibi, who is also the President's Adviser on Women's Affairs. The Women's Affairs Office prepared the agenda for the women's participation in the Global Forum in Beijing where Iran sent 100 women headed by Fatemeh Hashemi. From all accounts, the Iranian women made a hit with their 20 position papers.

Iran has 42 women's national organizations. Among the more prominent ones are the Women's Solidarity Association, Women's Society Against Environmental Pollution, Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development.

We noted that rural women, about 21 percent or 11.5 million of the population, are major players in the economy of the country. They are well-educated and literate and not only do they produce food for the people but that they contribute substantially

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