

# THE FEMGUIN

*a feminist newsletter*

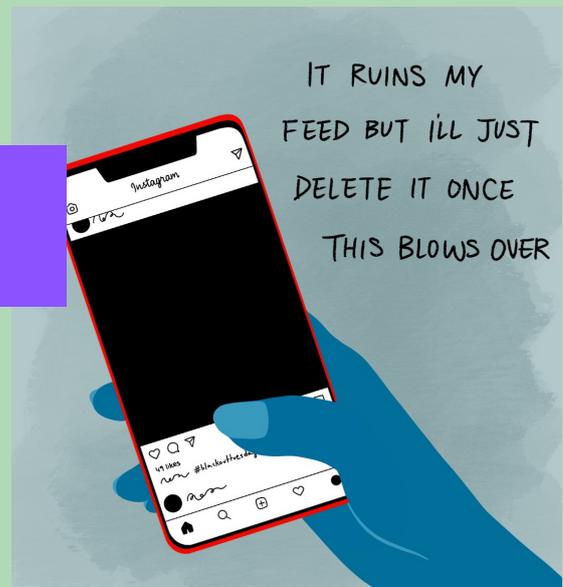


## LET'S START THE CONVERSATION

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# The Founders

Elle  
any pronouns

I love spending my money on crystals and stationery, researching random things on Wikipedia at 3am and, surprise surprise, feminism!

Olivia  
she/they

My life is entirely made up of debating and feminism. I'm honestly not quite sure how anyone puts up with me.

Lara  
she/they

I love singing, debating, public speaking, crystals and, shocker, FEMINISM. If you need me, I'll be in Waitrose buying sushi.

Zoe  
any pronouns

I like to waste my life away on the internet and spend too much time on my phone. Almost as much as I like feminism.



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# Let's Start the Conversation

*By Olivia*

I left my house, wearing jeans and a t-shirt. As I walked down the street, I heard someone catcall me. I felt uncomfortable. I felt unsafe. I felt dirty. I knew as well as anyone that this was not a one off; I was not in a unique situation.

For too long now, women and girls have had to deal with the constant worry of just walking down the road. We hear students, schools and even the government saying we need to start 'open conversations' about harassment but we're still waiting. The horrific murder of Sarah Everard brought to light the severe anger and fear women have surrounding rape culture and safety, but in the last few months, the media has gone completely silent. Two weeks ago, Sabina Nessa, a primary school teacher, was found dead, the details of which are still under investigation.

If the murder of multiple women is not enough to create change, then the burden must fall to us to act.

Change must happen now. We cannot sit back and watch the next generation be raised in the same, harmful society that we live in now. Yet the question remains: how do we create change? I agree, in the long term, it comes from conversations but currently the dialogues are happening in the wrong places. It's all very well writing a feminist magazine for a feminist school like South Hampstead, but no change comes from that. To create a long term, meaningful understanding, we must engage with other viewpoints from a young age.

The problem with the culture we live in today, is that too much gets pushed aside at a young age.

We don't address problems when they arise; instead, we cover them up and address it when it's too late. We cannot live in silence, burying issues, and then act surprised when nothing changes. The conversations that we need to have can't be aggressive, and they're definitely not designed to attack. They must be proactive, but they must also be supportive and sensitive.

So, what are we going to do about it? The Femguin Team actually pitched this idea to school; that we should start conversations with schools such as UCS to help form connections and build awareness and understanding of what girls go through on a daily basis. We were told that South Hampstead has initiated a programme of workshops to facilitate

these types of conversations between UCS pupils and South Hampstead pupils and this is a great first step to creating a better future for everyone.

The Everyone's Invited movement has helped thousands of teenagers and young adults tell their stories and open up in a way we have never seen before. It's hard to talk, and put your thoughts out there, but these conversations need to happen. Talk to your parents, talk to your friends, talk to your siblings. The first step to a better future is to make people aware of how we feel and how unsafe we truly are. We cannot hide from the truth; we must work together to create a better future.



# Performative Activism

*By Zoe*

Performative activism is a harmful type of activism in which you don't care about the movement or cause you are protesting for, instead, you are just doing it to make yourself more liked or popular. The term is often referred to as 'slacktivism'.

So, how does this negatively impact movements? Well, I'm sure lots of you will remember when people began posting black squares on their Instagram to raise awareness about the Black Lives Matter movement. However, this was not very effective as most people doing it didn't fully understand the meaning behind it, causing the Black Lives Matter hashtag to be spammed with black squares, making it harder for people to educate themselves. But this is just one example of how performative activism damages movements.

Feminism is an idea that has been around centuries, and the overall goal is to achieve equality between all genders. This means that not only does it help women, but it also helps men. How many times have you been in an argument with someone, and you are talking about women's issues and they reply with 'men struggle too'? Lots of people assume that feminism is about tearing down men,

but that is simply not true. 'Men's struggles' should be its own conversation, not just to be used as a point in an argument to shut down feminists. Feminism is about equality and understanding that men face struggles too.

Social media has had a huge effect on feminism. While it has been able to give women a voice and allow them to raise awareness about a lot of issues, it has also become a way to gain social capital and popularity. Many popular creators are urged by fans to speak out on issues such as feminism, and often do minimal research and end up spreading false information as a result. Yet, people have heard what they want to hear and aren't interested in the actual message being spread, simply the fact that there is a message out there.

Performative activism has been damaging to society and the feminist movement for too long, and it is about time that we try and make a real change that propels us forward into a world with more equality. The change starts with rallies, protests and petitions, not a black square on your Instagram story.

# The Problem With Transphobia

*By Zoe*

A common misconception about feminism is that it aims to portray women as the 'better' gender. This is not true. The aim of feminism is to achieve equality between all genders, including those that do not conform with society's outdated expectations.

Legally in the UK there are only two recognised genders: male and female. Everyone is born, and then slapped with a letter on their birth certificate and must live with that letter forever. This is a flawed system for several reasons. Firstly, it blurs the lines between sex and gender, which are two different things. Sex is the biological differences between men and women, whereas gender is the social expectations applied on sex, as well as personal feelings towards self-expression.

According to anyone that you ask, your sex is defined by chromosomes, xx being female and xy being male. Sometimes, however, a child will be born with, for example, female genitalia, and the nurse will label them as a girl. What cannot be seen immediately, however, is that this child produces a greater amount of testosterone, the hormone seen more in those assigned male at birth. This child also has xy chromosomes. So legally, this child is a boy, right? But they were labelled as a girl when they were born when they are in fact neither. They are intersex; meaning they do not properly align with male or female.

Gender and sex are different things, meaning gender is not confined to the two genders that the government believes in.

There is something called the gender binary, and it encompasses both male and female, but there are gender identities that do not fall on the gender binary, and these are non-binary identities. Non-binary can be used as a term to describe your gender identity and an umbrella term for lots of other identities that do not present as either male or female.

Some examples that fall under that umbrella are: agender (also known as gendervoid), genderfluid and bigender. There are so many more; I could write a whole book about all genders and why every one of them is valid, but there are a lot of other things to address.

As I mentioned before, the UK only recognises male and female genders. There was a petition going around in March with the aim to make non-binary a legally recognised gender identity.

The goal of the petition was to reach 10,000 signatures before October 26th, 2021, so that the government would have to respond to it. The petition currently sits comfortably at 140,035 signatures, and the government has responded to it. Unfortunately, it was not the response many people wanted to hear.

“As set out in the response to the Gender Recognition Act consultation, there are no plans to make changes to the 2004 act.”

The main reason for this outrageous response was, to put it simply, that the non-binary identity seemed “too complicated.”

I would like to mention that the government had not spoken up about banning conversion therapy until the eleventh of May 2021. In fact, the Queen had to be the one to address the problem leading to the government finally agreeing to ban it ‘after further consultation.’

You would hope the government would recognise that they cannot be battling transphobia if not all gender identities legally exist to them. To make matters worse, 'gender critical beliefs' are protected under the freedom of speech laws and must be tolerated. That means that transphobia is no longer considered hate speech.

Unfortunately, it gets worse. It is currently illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to use hormone blockers. If you are unfamiliar with what those are, their main purpose is to delay puberty, and is used for all sorts of reasons in the medical industry. They are also used by transgender youth so that it is easier to transition later when they start hormone therapy or have gender reassignment surgery. Hormone blockers used to be the only thing that transgender youth could use to feel more comfortable in their body, and they are even reversible if necessary.



So, what does this mean for the non-binary community in the UK? Well, legally they do not exist and are allowed to be discriminated against as ruled by the very people who swore to protect and keep them safe, making it even more crucial for them to be included in activism, and for cisgender allies to do all they can to make life better for those who are non-binary.

What does this mean for feminism specifically? Until every gender is equally recognised, feminists cannot say that equality has been reached. It is just as important for us, as feminists, to fight for non-binary and transgender equality as it is for us to fight for women's equality. So how can we help? Change can start by doing as little as introducing yourself with your pronouns or putting them in your email signature (even if you're cis). Inclusive language is important as it helps both closeted and openly non-binary and transgender people feel more comfortable with who they are and stops people just starting to discover their identity from feeling like they need fixing. Equality is not just about women and men being equal, it's about everyone – regardless of gender – being equal.



# Interview with Mrs Bingham

*By Elle*

*First of all, who is your feminist role model?*

I suppose I take different people for different things. I really admire Jacinda Arden's leadership of her country, New Zealand. I think she's warm, empathetic and decisive. I really admire the quiet stoicism and dignity of Angela Merkel, Germany's president. But professionally, somebody I really look up to is Ms. Burgess who was headmistress for 18 years at South Hampstead. And what I admire most about her is her kind of common sense, can do, positive attitude and the fact that she gave such long service to the school.

*We decided to research some former heads of SHHS and we came across Mary Benton who was very much a feminist icon. Whilst head of South Hampstead, she backed a teacher who went on trial for violent suffragette activism. So we were wondering, if you had been headmistress at that time instead of Mary Benton what would you have done?*

I think I would have supported any colleague who cared about women's suffrage. I'm not sure if I would have condoned violence, and somebody I've always admired is Millicent Fawcett who was the figurehead for the suffragist movement. And I think, arguably, that

was a more effective approach, to work with Parliamentarians, to listen to people, and perhaps she got more change. So, I probably wouldn't have condoned that teacher, but I would've supported her passion.

*Moving back into the present day, you went to Oxford and hold a very high-positioned job. How much sexism would you say that you have faced on your path to getting to where you are today?*

I've been lucky that the education sector is a really good place for women to thrive professionally. The majority of teachers are women, although the majority of headteachers and senior leaders are men. But have I actually faced sexism? I'm not sure I have, or maybe we just didn't talk about it as much. I think the times when I found I was frustrated was actually some of the well meaning, slightly stupid things people say. I remember when I was on maternity leave, I would get all sorts of questions from other women, making assumptions about the fact that maybe I'd be going part-time, despite the fact I was the main breadwinner but my husband didn't have to face any of those questions at all. And that was probably one of the first times where I thought, maybe things are different for women. Maybe I am being treated differently.

*Just to lead on from that, how did you deal with these microaggressions that you describe?*

By going back to work and cracking on with it! I did become conscious, when I was in my early 30s, that my path was quite different and I was always clear that I was on a different path from women that had made different choices than me. It did make me think about what it means to be a woman and what happens when you get to your 30s, because that's when some of the biggest gender pay gap issues arise; when women take time out to bring up children or to take maternity leave. I think one of the best things to do is for people to pay men more when they go on paternity leave. It's common for a man to take paternity leave that's only for about two weeks, but they're actually entitled to take up to a year's leave. The parents can easily just share it out between them but it often seems that that still falls to the mother, to take that time off to care for a family and I think that that's because we don't pay partners enough.

*Our generation faces a lot of sexism which is primarily in the form of sexist jokes from people around our age. So what would you say is the best way to respond to someone who does say something sexist, for example: women belong in the kitchen?*

Oh, has someone said that to you?

Yes.

It is quite incredible that someone would say that in 2021. I would say, call them out on it. I'd probably say that they ought to get back to the 1950s because that's where they belong, not in the 21st century. There's nothing wrong, obviously, with enjoying cooking but that's an outrageous thing to be saying and if anyone says that, they need to be called out on it.

*As a school, we talk a lot about achieving equality in traditionally male dominated areas of work but teaching is a traditionally female dominated career path, so we were just wondering what is SHHS doing to help achieve equality in that field?*

Well actually, if you look at our teachers, about 35-40% of our teachers are male, which is quite a high figure. I think that it's very good to have a diverse workforce and we can definitely do a lot more to increase its diversity but I think that SHHS has quite a good gender balance. In terms of gender pay gap, the GDST published a report several years ago, which showed pay is 1% in favour of men. It was partly because certain senior roles were more commonly held by men. But how do you change it? I think it comes down to, when you're recruiting being really mindful of some of the unconscious biases that can play out. For example, directors of finance and operation within the GDST are more often male but they don't need to be; they could just as well be female.

*Recently, a lot of attention has been brought to the issues women face. So what is South Hampstead doing to help students start conversations, stay safe, and learn about combatting sexism?*

Our whole culture is geared towards instilling a sense of empowerment, initiative and confidence in young women, in all sorts of different ways. It's about that unseen and unspoken culture that says this is a school where girls can do anything that takes their interest and we always want to hear great ideas and I think that does build young women's confidence. So I think the school's culture is one of the things. In terms of what we explicitly educate about, I think it's really important that we talk about issues like consent, pornography (which, unfortunately, probably has a huge impact), and I think it's about recognising that some of the issues we faced as teachers are the same as the ones young people face today, but some are really different. So I think listening to pupils and giving them a safe space to talk about anything and everything, makes them feel heard and feel like we are listening to them. It's fundamentally all about hearing pupils' voices, and understanding their experiences.

*A lot of allegations have come out from the Everyone's Invited movement from schools such as UCS. As a girls' school, do you think we should be creating more communication and classes with boys' schools on these topics?*

We have planned some student workshops with UCS for next year. It's something we've been thinking about doing for a couple of years and the Everyone's Invited movement led us to return to the idea. If you talk to people, you develop a sense of mutual respect. I think the behaviour seems to stem from a lack of respect and not treating sexual partners or girls as equals or humans, instead just seeing them as objects that you can score points with to gain status with your friendship group. Talking with people is really good because it makes people see each other as humans and understanding the effects of these actions really brings it close to home and makes people reevaluate a lot. Sometimes to create change, all you need is a little catalyst and from that, you build up each step to a better world.

*As we all know, SHHS's mascot is the penguin, so we were wondering, what's your favourite species of penguin?*

[Long pause] Well I suppose it would have to be the Emperor Penguin - after all, I am a classicist!

## Charity of the Month

The charity of the month is The Fawcett Society. Campaigning for gender equality and women's rights at work, at home and in public life, it's the UK's leading membership charity with a vision of creating a society in which women and girls are equal and free to fulfil their true potential. It has been working at advancing women's equality since 1866, ever since Millicent Fawcett began collecting signatures for a petition for women's votes at the young age of 19. As is written in the history books, she went on to lead constitutional suffrage campaign and made this cause her lifetime's work, securing equal voting rights 62 years later.

The Fawcett Society works to achieve many things, including equal pay, equal power and a society where there are no more gender stereotypes. To help achieve this goal, they publish research in order to educate and inform as well as campaigning to help make change happen and bringing together politicians, academics, grassroots activists and civil society to develop innovative and practical solutions.

In order to help The Fawcett Society achieve their goal without spending money you could join a local group. There are groups all over London, including but not limited to: East London, South London and North London. Anything you do makes a difference, whether it is spreading awareness, donating money or taking your own initiative. No matter how small, everything helps us achieve change.



**Fawcett**   
*Equality. It's about time.*

<https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/>

# *A Note From the Editors*

*By The Editors*



Hey there! It is us, the editors (believe it or not). We hope you enjoyed the very first issue of The Femguin. In 50 years, you can brag to your kids that you were one of the first readers, and of course we will be a national corporation making multi-million figures by then.

But back to the present day for a second, we would greatly appreciate it if you could fill out this form, to give us some advice and feedback for future issues!

If you would like to submit an article for the next issue in the autumn term, there is also an option to do that, and we will get back to you.

<https://forms.gle/VYyo6YGmWS4vTSMAA>