

ZEROMACHO
MEN FOR EQUALITY

**EQUALITY
BETWEEN
WOMEN & MEN**

*Are you really
against it?*

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against it?***

**Zeromacho refutes
some common objections**

Zeromacho — international network of men
working against prostitution and for equality

***In a world of equality,
there would be no prostitution.***

Translated and adapted by Regan Kramer

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1. Equality exists now! There are all sorts of laws about it.

Yes, after decades of feminist struggle, laws defending equality between men and women have finally been passed. Nevertheless, women's rights have systematically lagged behind men's across the globe. Women in the USA did not obtain equal voting rights with men for almost 150 years, and for British women, it took nearly a century. Full voting equality was only achieved in Portugal and Switzerland in 1976 and 1991, respectively, and women in Saudi Arabia were only able to vote for the first time in 2015. Laws promoting equality do exist. The trick is getting them respected. In the USA, the Equal Pay Act was signed by President Kennedy in 1963... and the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was still necessary... in 2009.

Equality's actually becoming reality will require political determination, strategic action, and investing real time and money into getting the laws respected and changing social norms through education and public debate. Until then, equality will only exist on paper, if at all.

In the 21st century, in some developed countries, theoretical equality has been achieved. Here is Zeromacho's contribution towards bringing it into real existence, and showing how social norms and expectations can evolve, and get beyond what the French sociologist and theorist Christine Delphy calls the "*illusion of achieved equality*".

The subjects addressed below are questions or objections that Zeromacho has been asked or confronted with. We wrote the answers ourselves, collectively.

We are not specialists; our knowledge is no different from that of the general public that we are speaking to. Statistical data can be found in research books or on specialized websites.

Our standpoints and our replies reflect our stance as men committed to working towards equality. One needs only to scratch the surface to realize how superficial the veneer of rationality is on many of the objections raised; we go further, offering answers based on careful reflection nourished both by our experience and by our sensibility.

2. Equality, sure, but we're still different.

Why “but”? What’s the connection between “equality” and “different”? The opposite of “different” is “identical”, and the opposite of “equal” is “unequal”.

The equality we’re discussing here is about human rights. In a democracy, we are all equal in rights, and should all enjoy equal opportunity.

We are all different, and each one of us – male or female – is unique: why should that make us unequal? Who doesn’t remember that trick question: “Which is heavier, a pound of lead or a pound of feathers?”?

No two human beings are identical, so why make such a fuss about gender? It is only one of the many differences between individuals. There is such diversity within our species that it doesn’t make sense to judge people based on gender alone.

The differences between men and women can be physical (strength, see point 4), physiological (related to pregnancy) and mental (due to cultural norms), but only the period of time around pregnancy, childbirth and nursing demands specific treatment and protection for women.

Equality is the most elementary form of fairness and justice. It is compatible with all differences.

3. Equality? Sure, but let's not overdo it.

“Overdo it”? What does that mean? Equality either is or it isn't. We are currently in a situation of inequality, and we want to help usher in equality.

What does “overdo it” mean when you're talking about reducing the gender wage gap (the gap between men's and women's wages)? Some people might be fine with the idea of women's wages going up, but are afraid that men's might go down. Others are worried that “*the way things are going*,” women's wages might wind up higher than men's, and that would be “overdoing it”: that's just a bogeyman.

Is it “overdoing it” that women now represent almost half the medical students in the USA (48%, up from 42% in 2005)? Wasn't the real problem that Harvard Medical School (among others) didn't accept female students until 1945?

Is it “overdoing it” to expect men and women to share equally in housework and care of children and other dependent people? There is no legitimate reason for women to take on 80% of those tasks, as is now the case in many developed countries. The point is not to make a rigid schedule, taking turns doing the dishes, but to be able to negotiate. Who makes the shopping list? Who takes the car in? Who gets up at night for a sick child? Who cares for aging parents? The tasks to be shared are many, and it is overall equality that matters.

Perhaps you feel like, “*it's all changing too fast*”? Are you afraid that “*men are becoming more feminine*,” that, “*we'll all be dressed alike soon*,” that “*our distinctions are going to fade away*”? In sexual terms, are you uncomfortable with the idea of “*women coming on to men*,” or treating men the way some men treat women, “*like Kleenex*”?

It could happen. Old norms are breaking up, and new ones are taking their place: men who live equally with women are losing some of their traditional power and may have a little less leisure time, but they are coming out ahead in many other ways, from shared financial responsibility to the joys of more involved parenting, via the higher quality of time spent with an equal. Women have been demanding equality for centuries. And it's still going to take a long time. So no, it's not going “*too fast*”.

Equality is just equality, and it's only fair. How can that be overdoing anything?

4. Physically, women aren't as strong as men.

So what? What's the connection between physical strength and equal rights?

Besides, for that statement to be entirely true, the weakest man would have to be stronger than the strongest woman.

While it is true that **some** women aren't as physically strong as **some** men, there are plenty of men who are less physically strong than some women. We denounce the same kind of reasoning when people say, "*Black people can't swim.*"

If the statement about women's lack of strength were true, many professions – like nursing, delivering mail, working as a cashier, etc. – would be male only, because they require a lot of strength and energy. The existence of elite female athletes proves that women can be very strong.

Many of today's jobs do not require great physical strength. Since the construction of the pyramids, engineering has been supplanting the need for it.

Physical strength has nothing to do with equal rights.

5. Women are naturally (pregnancy and nursing) more inclined to raise children, to take care of them and be affectionate with them.

Everything in our culture predisposes women to take care of babies and young children: from childhood, girls are given dolls, and are conditioned to fill the maternal role that society expects them to play. Conversely, men are under greater pressure to succeed professionally. Yet fathers can perfectly well both want to and believe it is important to take care of their children. This can require convincing mothers to allow them to, and to share what society considers to be their role as mothers.

If the relationship to children truly were “*natural*” and therefore innate, based on “*maternal instinct*,” women wouldn’t require so much advice, aid and preparation for pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, newborn care and child-rearing. In fact, knowledge in these fields is transmitted, as well as being acquired through experience. When men learn to perform those tasks, by working in day care, or taking care of children at home, they manage just as well as women. If a man declares, “*I wouldn’t know how to raise a child*,” it can express a certain bad faith that may suit him if he doesn’t really want to make the effort.

Of course, no one is denying that pregnancy and nursing create a physical proximity to children – which can be enjoyable or stressful for women. Some women are unhappy about being pregnant, and others refuse or are unable to nurse; they are still women. Conversely, believing that a man is less inclined by nature to be affectionate with a child, just because he is a man, is actually quite demeaning towards men.

Men can change a baby’s diapers, and feed, care for and raise children and still be men.

6. Wage differences aren't men's fault. It's because women choose professions that pay less.

It isn't a question of individual responsibility. Men as a group enjoy higher wages on average than women, as well as other advantages. Since girls and young women are encouraged to train for a smaller number of less-well-paying professions (beauty, health), cases of identical jobs are relatively rare: but for comparable jobs, the average wage gap in the USA is about 20% (in men's favor), which can only be explained by sexism.

With the same level of education, there are also inequalities in favor of men in terms of how their careers evolve: wages, responsibilities, promotions.

Because employers believe that motherhood will make women be less invested in their careers (because of maternity leave, and later time off for sick children) they are less likely to hire or promote woman of child-bearing age (even though men are more likely to change jobs on short notice, which is equally or more complicated for human resources to handle, but it isn't held against them).

What's more, social norms and expectations about work are often affected by male-chauvinist prejudice, for instance: "*the woman's wage is extra income for the household;*" "*you are less of a man if your wife earns more than you do;*" "*men don't do well when they have a female boss;*" "*it's women's job to take care of children, so they're more likely to take time off when their kids are sick.*" These discriminatory clichés affect women's careers and therefore, their wages.

Professional inequalities take root in the barriers thrown up by sexism.

7. Equality at home is a personal issue for couples to work out for themselves.

The equality that we're talking about means equal rights and equal opportunity, which all citizens of democracies are supposed to enjoy.

Several amendments in the U.S. Bill of Rights protect individuals' privacy (of beliefs, the home, their person and possessions) and the 14th amendment is often interpreted as a broad protection of individuals' privacy. It was the basis of the U.S. Supreme Court's defense of legal abortion, in 1973, and in the Court's striking down a Texas anti-sodomy law, in 2003. At that time, Justice Kennedy, writing for the Court, stated that, "*the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime, choices central to personal dignity and autonomy, are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment*". Nevertheless, individuals' and couples' life choices, even in private, may not go counter to the law: domestic violence is illegal, for example.

The law has a say in a couple's private life, requiring both spouses' to provide financial support for raising children born of the marriage, for example. Until 1972, under Article 1220 of the Texas Penal Code, a man could murder his wife and her lover if he found them '*in a compromising position*' and it was considered '*justifiable homicide*.'

The border between private and public life is not entirely clear-cut. But "*the personal is political*" as feminists have been saying for decades. Tax systems can affect women's wages, and therefore have an impact on women's work choices and on how households are run. When couples declare their revenues jointly (either by choice or as required by law in certain countries, such as Luxembourg, Portugal and France), it penalizes the spouse with lower wages (the woman, three times out of four).

Through taxes and the existence or lack of (paid or unpaid) maternity leave and affordable child care, as well as access to contraception and safe, legal abortion, laws have an impact on couples' decision when and if to have children.

To get a sense of the inequalities women suffer, all you have to do is think about the expression "*working mothers*" (no one ever discusses "*working fathers*") or consider how it is always women who are asked how they "juggle work and kids". The issues these ideas reflect often lead women to accept part-time work, or jobs close to home, in order to cope with their greater share of child care. Another example of male domination is that women traditionally take their husband's last name (even though it is not a legal requirement in most countries), with all the complications that entails.

A society's degree of male chauvinism can be judged by the advertisements visible in public, and the sexist clichés in its popular TV shows and video games. All of that contributes to explaining why 80% of housework and dependent care is done by women, and there is little momentum for change on that subject.

Equality is one of the foundations of democracy, even in private, because the personal is political.

8. The fact that so many women loved the book and film Fifty Shades of Grey shows that not all women want equality. A lot of them like to be dominated.

It is true that some women are reticent about equality, as are some other groups who are discriminated against. You can't force people to accept their rights, any more than you can force people to vote, even though others fought for that right. Throughout history, a certain number of oppressed people have rejected the emancipatory discourse of abolitionists, unionists and feminists. Some people will always prefer an unsatisfying or unfair situation out of fear that change will lead to a deterioration of their situation, which is often the case in the short term.

Becoming aware of inequalities, which are often presented as natural, requires a mental process and some political reflection – sometimes even a determination to escape the life a person is destined for. Our sexual practices are influenced by the unequal nature of our society.

In this context, and based on a norm of heterosexuality, many women are conditioned from a young age to seek the protection of a man whose strength and wealth can defend her against want and aggression. Marriage (and the title “Mrs.”) can provide a social identity and guarantee a woman's financial security. Women who believe that their place is in the home will accept an unequal division of housework: convinced that men can't do it as well, they assume that equality would mean a less well-kept home, which would reflect badly on them.

Using a work of fiction as an argument means changing the debate, by going from real life to imagination – **do** all men who play first-person shooters intend to go out and kill people in real life? Our society, which is violent towards women, eroticizes that violence in order to excuse and justify it. There is no shortage of books celebrating sado-masochism, including *The Story of O* and *9 ½ Weeks*. Sexual play may include inequality, men may wish to be dominated, couples sometimes practice reciprocity, alternating the roles and postures of dominant and dominated.

Nevertheless, there is an essential difference between fantasy and real life. Working for equality does not mean codifying desire or imposing sexual norms. Sexuality can involve relationships of power and even alienation, but it can also be a place of freedom.

The existence of voluntary servitude, including in couples' erotic lives, does not excuse domination. Working for equality is part of a desire for social justice. We are concerned with real life, not fiction.

9. Women don't want to give up the privileges of chivalry in exchange for equality.

What “*privileges*”? What is so important about the traditional gestures of chivalry? Men kiss women's hands, bow to them, open doors or pull out chairs for them, walk on the outside of the sidewalk, help carry their suitcases, etc. When you consider that women earn over 20% less than men, those sure are some expensive “*privileges*”!

With these ostentatious signs of respect, bourgeois men, who enjoy a great number of advantages in our male-chauvinist society, make a few small concessions to women of their own social rank. They are lingering traces of chivalry and of rigid class hierarchies: gentlemen bow to ladies – and only to ladies, not to lower-class women. But we live in a 21st-century democracy, and we want equality.

Of course, for some bourgeois women, traditional male manners may well make daily life more pleasant. Good manners do indeed make human exchanges – i.e. exchanges between any two people – nicer. But why be polite to women only? It isn't as though men's backs never hurt or they never have trouble lifting a suitcase. Nor is it

any more difficult for a woman to hold a door open for the person – male or female – behind her than it is for a man.

Criticizing chivalry, which is fundamentally unequal, does not mean we are against good manners, which everyone display towards everyone else, whatever their gender.

Those who worry about the disappearance of hand-kissing and other signs that “chivalry is dead” are choosing superficial advantages over the respect that comes with equality, and which does not exclude good manners.

10. A lot of young women don't like when men whistle at them in the street. But they'll miss it when it doesn't happen any more, they'll see!

Rather than answering for women, let me ask you: what do you honestly think about men who whistle at women in the street?

I don't know any women who enjoy being whistled at or catcalled by strangers in the street. But I do know plenty who feel angry and humiliated when it happens. Most of the time, we whistle at dogs, to make them obey. If some women choose to interpret whistles and catcalls as compliments, that's their right. And if they miss them when they're older, it's because our culture only offers women two roles: “mother” and “whore”.

Positive social interaction requires respect and empathy for the person being addressed. Whistles and catcalls do not fit that definition.

11. Women have a lower sex drive than men.

What makes you so sure? How did you measure it?

Do **ALL** women really have a lower sex drive than men? At all ages, in all situations? Have you never noticed that women are not all alike, and neither are men? Some men feel tremendous desire, others less, just like women at all ages, including after menopause.

Maybe what you're basing yourself on is the *expression* of that drive. While sexual excitement is natural, making it clear to the person who inspired it, i.e. expressing desire or suggesting sex, is cultural, and influenced by habits and social norms. "*Slut*" "*tramp*" and "*nymphomaniac*" are insults aimed exclusively at women – of all ages – who dare to make sexual advances. Even within established couples, social norms create an expectation that the man be the one to initiate sex.

Before safe, effective contraception became widely available, fear of unwanted pregnancy put a tremendous damper on women's desire. By extension, pressure to protect women's reputation was much higher, and often still is, even today, especially in conservative families.

Having children can affect couples' sex lives, whether it's because the child's presence is a damper, because the woman becomes more focused on her role as a mother, because the man comes to see his wife as a mother first and foremost, or because he feels like he has to compete with the children for her attention.

Even if some men fantasize about women coming on to them, or complain about their partner's restraint, experience shows that a lot of men are uncomfortable with women's advances: they worry about not "*measuring up*", a typically male expression. One proof of this is the myth, which exists in several cultures, of the terrible "*vagina dentata*" or tooth-filled vagina. Another clue: aphrodisiacs are almost always reserved for men, as though erection were the main issue, genital penetration were mandatory and satisfying a woman required supernatural prowess.

Male orgasms can come very quickly, while women's orgasms usually require more caresses, and therefore taking more time, and above all, being aware of the existence of the clitoris, that organ whose external section is so small, but whose only purpose is pleasure.

Women have neither a greater nor a lesser sex drive than men. Each person's desire is different.

12. Women used to be inferior; now they want to be superior.

In what way were women “*inferior*”? Less physically strong, yes, generally (see point 4), but what about other things, like dexterity, endurance, discernment, etc.?

In much of the western world, until the 21st century, women were indeed inferior in terms of legal rights. For example, women were not allowed to serve jury duty in Mississippi until 1968, and married women in the USA and the UK could not open a bank account without their husband’s permission until the 1960’s and ‘70s, respectively.

In what way do women want to be “*superior*”? Do you really think that all women want to wrest power from men? That they want to reverse the situation in order to avenge centuries of injustice?

Politically and economically, the vast majority of positions of power are still held by men, and laws promoting equality have not done much to change that. Just look at the world’s decision-makers: they are still overwhelmingly male.

Gender equality is now the law, but it is still a far cry from existing in real life. Even if girls now do better at school, most men still enjoy higher wages for comparable jobs, while women still take care of 80% of housework and dependent care.

“*Inferior or superior*”: is that the only choice? What about equality? The fact that women’s status is slowly — very slowly — improving doesn’t mean that they want to dominate men. When men express that fear, doesn’t it really mean that they don’t want to have to share power?

Men and women building a fairer world together: it is possible. Coming from a time of injustice, we are heading for a time of equal responsibilities: it is a long march, and one that is filled with obstacles.

Sharing power between men and women is possible with equality.

13. Men and women aren't equal, they're complementary.

Men and women are indeed complementary when it comes to procreation, but nothing allows us to generalize that notion, which creates a hierarchy between them, to other domains.

You never hear anyone say, “*Men complement women.*” That shows how women are defined in reference to men, and not the other way around; men are the reference point, women the exception, the separate or lesser entity. It's like when you hear someone specify “*a woman doctor*” or “*a woman lawyer,*” when they never specify when a professional is a man. The supposed “*complementarity*” of the sexes has nothing to do with equality: it is based on a division of labor and a specialization of tasks that are presented as natural.

Tunisian women understood the problem perfectly when, in 2012, as the country's new constitution was being written, they demonstrated in the streets against an article that stated: “*The nation guarantees protection of what women have acquired according to the principle of their complementarity with men within the family, and as men's associates in developing the fatherland.*”

Extolling women's “*complementarity,*” as Pope John Paul II did and other religious leaders still do, stems from an essentialist approach, one that assigns tasks to each sex according to their so-called “*nature*”: this prevents any kind of evolution, freezing women in a position of being dominated. This binary view of men's and women's roles allows the dominant group to avoid having to reconsider the privileges they enjoy.

Yet different natures (see point 2) are no basis for different legal rights or treatment.

Rather than focusing on complementarity in order to justify inequality, defending equality is both fairer and more straightforward.

14. As far as domestic violence goes, some women batter their husbands. So equality does exist.

Is that supposed to be some kind of a joke? The vast majority of violent spouses are men. Yes, some women are also violent towards their husbands, but our goal is not to achieve equal-opportunity domestic violence, with as many husbands killed or injured as wives! Far from such a macabre tally, we affirm that equality has nothing to do with revenge, hatred or the desire to inflict pain or bodily harm.

We want to put an end to domestic violence, a phenomenon that is only gradually revealing its prevalence: it has no place in an intimate, close relationship.

We hope to achieve this by developing mutual respect.

As long as we consider our partner or spouse as our property (“*S/he is my wife/husband, s/he belongs to me, I have a right to know what s/he is doing, thinking, planning, texting...*”), we aren’t respecting them as human beings with their own lives, needs, fears, desires, ambitions — as another person, separate from oneself.

On the other hand, if one sees one’s partner or spouse as an equal, and treats them as such, then there is no need to dominate them. When there is a disagreement, we find words to discuss things – as long as we are sincere about wanting to find a compromise that will suit both people.

Equality requires mutual respect, and domestic violence is simply unacceptable.

15. Amongst younger people, men now do more housework than women.

Some men might do more than **some** women, but **men** in general don't, not even younger ones. In television commercials, which reflect social norms, women are always the ones doing the cleaning. Even the cleaning product "*Mr. Clean*" is always shown being used by a "*housewife*" who sprays it on, looking thrilled to make "her" kitchen shine.

The situation is evolving, but very slowly. Some men think they're doing more, others really are doing a lot more housework than their fathers did, but the reality described by surveys and statistics is not very encouraging: we're still far from having achieved equality, and at the rate we're going, it's going to take decades, and even centuries for certain chores...

In France, where Zeromacho started, ironing is one of the least shared chores: only 18% of men deal with it. That's why Zeromacho decided to organize an annual street-ironing event in several cities. The day before Mother's Day, men "iron out inequality," and teach other men to iron. The event's slogan is: "*Equality is the best present!*"

An equal division of housework is still far from having been achieved.

16. In case of divorce or separation, men have fewer rights than women: the mother always gets custody, and men have to pay outrageous child support.

Separations are always complex and painful. It is up to the judge to take the imbalance in the spouses' situations, income and living conditions into account, in order to correct unfairness and to defend the best interests of the children. It's true that mothers obtain custody 80% of the time, but do you know why? Because the vast majority of fathers don't ask for it. Very few couples even ask for shared custody.

The fact that custody of the children tends to be given to mothers can not be construed as a privilege. Although full custody certainly can bring pleasure, it comes with heavy responsibilities and consequences, including stress and scheduling conflicts that are hard to juggle and can negatively impact mothers' living conditions and professional, social and romantic lives and psychological health.

When custody is shared, mothers most often continue to take care of the less pleasant tasks: school meetings, signing up for activities like day-care, medical appointments, clothes shopping, laundry etc.

If a woman has to reduce her investment in her professional life (turning down a promotion for a job that would require her to be travel or to work longer hours, for example) in order to raise the children, then it is only fair that a father who stayed more invested in his work compensates her financially.

Considering how much it costs to raise children, child support is not a luxury. The amount is calculated based on the non-custodial parent's income. And did you know that (according to the Insee, the French national statistics agency's 2015 document *Couples et familles*, p. 48) in France, 20% of fathers don't pay? Think about: one in five fathers do not contribute financially to raising their own children!

Many of the fathers loudly demanding custody have actually been convicted of domestic violence. Their spectacular, media-friendly actions are an attempt to pass themselves off as victims, and to avoid paying the child support they are supposed to pay

Obtaining custody requires asking for it, at the very least.

If fathers were more involved in raising their children, even when those children are very young, they might be more inclined to ask for custody, or shared custody, in case of divorce.

17. Defending women's rights in particular is a kind of reverse discrimination.

“Reverse discrimination” would mean trying to reverse the situation and turn discrimination against women into discrimination against men, i.e. to give women the political, social and financial power over men that men currently have over women. No, we are calling for equality: an equal sharing of power, finances, rights and responsibilities.

Currently, women are collectively oppressed by patriarchy, the ideological system based on male supremacy. By working towards equality, we are not trying to reverse discrimination, but to erase it. Western society is currently living in a sort of false egalitarianism, in which males pretend to represent all of humanity, and females are some kind of exception or possession. You can see it in the language, with expressions like “man and wife”, or women taking their husband's last names, and in resistance to gender-neutral terminology like *mail carrier* and *fire fighter* instead of *mailman* and *fireman*. That male domination of language is reflected in people's mindsets and in society's norms.

We are not trying to turn discrimination against women into discrimination against men, we are trying to change mindsets so that the male is no longer the only reference, and so that our reasoning is no longer androcentric (male-centered).

Women as a group are oppressed by patriarchy. We are not trying to oppress men instead of women, we are calling for equality for all.

18. You feminists are worse than the Taliban!

(variations: “an ayatollah” or “a Stalinist”)

You’re really calling me “Taliban”? Do you realize how violent that word is? You’re actually comparing me to men who commit sexist crimes, who injure or kill women who don’t follow their rigid rules and prescriptions, including entirely covering themselves outside the home?

If it’s supposed to be a joke, I don’t think it’s funny. If you’re just trying to say that I have strong convictions, then I’d appreciate it if you’d say it that way!

Yes, I’m pro-feminism and committed to furthering equality, and I find it repugnant to be denigrated as extremist or intolerant.

The current situation is unfair: why should we let it endure? Think about slavery, or apartheid: do you think Blacks should have waited for Whites to decide it was time for them to enjoy justice and respect as equal human beings? Were they wrong to demand equality immediately? In the past, only a few utopian-minded people stood with them, and White society’s response was always “*Wait! You’re trying to change things too quickly.*” Saying “not now, later”, is just another way of saying NO.

Nowadays, the horrors of slavery are obviously unacceptable; soon, male-chauvinist violence will not be accepted either. In my opinion, it is urgent to denounce it now.

I believe in education; my action is part of a broader social movement: we are willing to bet that man can change. I have faith in our capacity for change.

So do you still think I’m an extremist?

I am committed to furthering fairness and equality: there’s nothing excessive about that.

19. You don't have to liberate me. I can take care of myself!

*feminist slogan from the 70s,
aimed at men who wanted to "help" women*

Absolutely! It is not up to me, as a man; it is not up to men in general, to "*liberate*" women: that would be a patriarchal attitude.

However, since I am a member of the group that benefits from inequality, I have certain specific tools and privileges. I can participate in causes that contribute to women's liberation in general: I can say NO to the prostituting system, I can demand punishment for men who use their money to abuse women who have no desire for them, I can ask for efforts to be made to help women escape prostitution situations. I can also attract attention to the crime of rape, by discussing human sexuality and by defining it as a mutual meeting of desires. I can join organizations that fight against excision (FGM or Female Genital Mutilation), stoning, and various kinds of abuse little girls are subjected to.

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of crimes whose victims are unable to defend themselves, and I believe that I should be doing my part to help change the world: I want a more just and less violent world, one that is making progress towards equality.

By sharing housework with my significant other, I contribute to liberating her time, although she can liberate herself, I'm clear about that!

I'm contributing to furthering equality in our world.

20. Men stand to lose a lot with equality.

Yes, furthering equality means men will lose out, because the male-chauvinist system tips the scales in their favor.

For example, there is no “glass ceiling” for men, they occupy most high-ranking business positions; and men are generally better paid than women for comparable work. So if the number of jobs stays the same, at static total wages, men will lose out with equality.

At home, men enjoy the benefits of the work that women do for free for their families and the unfair division of housework. Nobody likes scrubbing toilets, so it’s only fair to take turns doing it.

Some men will lose out on material advantages: higher wages or free maid service.

Other men, who saw the loss coming, have realized how much they have already gained in their relationships thanks to equality. They would rather talk things over with an equal rather than give orders to an underling, and live with a partner they can negotiate with rather than with a subordinate who obeys them.

When they do the dishes, they don’t say, “*I’m doing the dishes to help you.*” For them, sharing housework isn’t a loss, because it’s a step towards furthering equality.

They refuse the whole idea of prostitution, because they can’t imagine paying for a woman who has no desire for them.

They believe that freeing oneself from jealousy means progress: in a sexual relationship between two equal partners, there is no room for suspicion of the other or the motivation behind their desire.

They believe that living in a less violent and more harmonious society is a win-win situation.

Yes, in a world of equality, men will lose unfair advantages, but they will also see that they have plenty to gain.

21. There are more important things to worry about.

“Equality? There are more important things to worry about! Like the situation of women in Saudi Arabia, or polar bears, or famine.”

“You should be doing other things: the future of our planet is more important.”

To begin with, what do you know about the other causes I work for? And what do you do? What do you do for victims of rape? For the 2 million girls who undergo excision (FGM, Female Genital Mutilation) in the world every year? You’re using Saudi women and polar bears to try to make me feel guilty. You’re trying to preach to me, but I can withstand your reasoning: it’s not up to you to decide the hierarchy of my priorities.

Over the course of history, no other equally flagrant injustice has attracted so little attention or resistance as violations of women’s right to dignity, physical integrity and equality. It’s never the right time, there’s always something “*more important*” or “*more urgent*”. I’ve decided that I’m not going to wait any more, I’m going to act now. I am committed to furthering equality, and I choose my own actions: I try to set an example through them.

There is no hierarchy of priorities; everyone gets to choose their own field of action. I have chosen to work for equality.

Founded in 2011, **ZEROMACHO** is an international network of men committed to working against the prostituting system and towards furthering equality between men and women. It organizes meetings, training programs and consciousness-raising groups about masculinity.

ZEROMACHO is a member of Abolition, a collective of 62 organisations against the prostituting system.

ZEROMACHO is a member of the international MenEngage network of boys and men for gender equality www.menengage.org.

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