THE SCHOLAR

Independent Research by Sixth Form Students

THE GENDERED GUILLOTINE: WHY WOMEN ARE OFTEN TARGETED FIRST IN POLITICAL REVOLUTION

The French Revolution slogan was "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" (liberty, equality, fraternity). However, as the guillotine became a key part of this political change in the 1790s, it represented a gendered subtext to these 'universal' ideals. I have found that the persecution of women during times of political upheaval is rarely accidental, as they were often not just punished for treason, but for female 'deviance'.

A significant political theory is the Social Contract, which is the idea that citizens trade certain freedoms for state protection, but historically this idea rarely extended to women. During the French Revolution, women were key in showing a public desire for change, as thousands of Parisian working class women marched on Versailles in 1789. Despite this, when the revolutionary government was established, they were forced to return to the domestic sphere.

The execution of Olympe de Gouges in 1793 shows how women were targeted in this situation. She was executed for her royalist sympathetic attitudes, but also for her audacity at that time in writing the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen. The Revolutionary Tribunal's justification for her death was that she had "forgotten the virtues which belong to her sex". In this case, the guillotine was used as a tool of political correction as her authority was seen as an unnatural threat to the stability of the state by disrupting society's attitudes on women and the traditional nuclear family model.

There also was a more recent successor of this in Hispanic history. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the subsequent Franco regime, women who supported the Republic (also known as Milicianas) were often subjected to specific punishments by the Nationalist faction who viewed them as not only political enemies but "biological errors". Thousands of these women were subjected to 'rapadas', meaning having their heads shaven. By forcibly removing their hair which is a symbol of Hispanic femininity, the regime stripped them of their identity and attempted to portray them as "fallen" or "unnatural". Also, Las Treces Rosas (the Thirteen Roses) were a group of young women executed by Franco.

This represents a historical pattern. In the 17th century, "witches" were often shaved to find the "Devil's Mark" (a belief that physical marks indicated a pact between people and the devil). In 1930s Spain, women were shaved to be marked as political opponents. Whether in 1612, 1793 or 1936, the state used the female body to display its power and to humiliate them into a state of 'el silencio político' (political silence).

Overall, this targeting is not only in the past. It is a metaphor for how women are treated in Politics today. Even in the 21st century, female politicians are not criticised for only policies, but also their likability, appearance or 'hysteria'. When societies are in crisis, women often become the scapegoats for this anxiety. The true extent "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" applied universally can certainly be questioned.

Daisy Gebbett

HOW SLEEP CAN DIRECTLY IMPACT WELLBEING

Sleep; it takes up a third of our lives and, yet, none of us seem to really think much of it, or its importance in our daily lives. Sleep is not merely a way for us to relax after a hard day, but is a state in which the brain undergoes distinct and essential mental processes whilst the body undergoes physical restoration. But not only is it vital biologically, but for our own mental wellbeing, too.

The reason sleep is so good for our mental wellbeing is largely due to the amygdala, one of the centerpiece regions for generating strong emotional reactions, specifically detecting threats. When you have a good nights sleep (for 12-18 year olds this should be 8-10 hours of sleep), the amygdala has an appropriate, moderate degree of reactivity, which therefore helps you regulate your emotions and manage them appropriately, whereas studies have shown that after healthy adults were sleep deprived, their amygdala was hyperactive, and was found to be around 60% more responsive than usual, meaning any small negative occurrences throughout your day, your brain will perceive as a big threat, therefore leading to decrease in mental wellbeing as your chronic stress increases. Interestingly, this is due to the prefrontal cortex, which is the more rational part of your brain. Upon having a good nights sleep, the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala form a strong connection which then leads to the amygdala generating consistent and moderate reactions. However, with sleep deprivation, the prefrontal cortex and the amygdalas connection has been weakened, and as a consequence of this the amygdala responds far more reactively, leaving you to think and act with less logic and control over your emotions. For example, imagine you miss the bus to school in the morning . Ordinarily, you may be slightly annoyed, then find another way to school, either getting a later bus or parents dropping you off. But, after a bad nights sleep you may overreact and get very upset about the situation, as your amygdala is far more overreactive and you perceive this as a big issue rather small inconvenience. Therefore, it is vital that a good nights sleep is achieved almost every night.

But how is this achieved? Getting a good nights sleep is important, but becomes increasingly more difficult as other stresses invade our mind, but it is crucial to take sleep seriously. Even if you don't have time for a nighttime routine of long showers and meditation (although those can help for many people), here are five simple habits you can integrate into your daily life that will help with your sleep schedule. Firstly, getting more sunlight is essential. Though it may seem unrelated, sunlight (especially in the morning) helps regulate your body's internal clock, which is called the circadian rhythm. Sunlight signals to your brain that it is daytime so it suppresses melatonin (the sleep hormone), which helps set a timer for your body to know when to release it, and so, by evening,

Sofia Barnes

melatonin is released, which makes it much easier to fall asleep. Secondly, naps, although can be beneficial when brief and earlier on during the day, can also disrupt your sleep schedule when longer than half an hour and close to the evening. This is due to these naps disrupting the circadian rhythm, which makes it much more difficult to fall asleep as you are simply not tired enough. Another thing that may affect how tired you are is caffeine; caffeine must be limited to the mornings only. Due to the lengthy time it takes for caffeine to get out of your system (depending, of course, on how much you consume) even having a caffeinated drink in the afternoon may keep you up, therefore disrupting your natural flow of sleep. It is important to stick to this natural flow as, over time, this causes your body to develop a 'muscle memory' for when you sleep and when you wake up, making it both easier to get out of bed in the morning and get to sleep quicker in the evening. In order to ensure this occurs, it's a good idea to have a time in which you go to bed and a time you wake up to, which you should try to stick to as best as possible, as this way your body knows when to sleep or when to awaken, and begins to prepare itself. Finally, it is important not to go on your phone an hour before you sleep, as phones trigger behaviours that lead to dopamine release. Social media gives the brain an instant dopamine that is both addicting and dangerous; how many times have you fought against your body's desire to sleep to be on your phone for longer? Instead, replace your evening phone time with a healthier substitute, like reading or journaling; something that stimulates your brain but not as much as your phone does.

By applying even one of these habits throughout your life, you will have not only a healthier sleep schedule, but a more optimistic attitude throughout the day, as sleep is much more than relaxing after a hard days work; it can either enhance or worsen your wellbeing, depending on if you maintain it or not.

Sofia Barnes

CAROLUS REX - THE LAST OF THE GREAT WARRIOR KINGS

In the late 1690s, the burgeoning Empire of Sweden was at its peak. Its last king, Charles XI of Sweden, had revolutionized the military, with sweeping reforms that led to Sweden possessing one of the most ruthless and modern militaries in the world at the time. Despite its lack of natural resources and low population, the Swedish Empire stretched from the Karelian Isthmus in modern-day Russia down through the Baltics and Finland, and into Germany and the Prussian lands in central Europe at the time. Ever since its victory half a century prior in the 30 years' war alongside its partner, France in 1648, Sweden now held a grasp on all of Northern Europe, and the Baltic sea that stretched from modern-day St. Petersburg in northern Russia down to the British Isles and Scotland on the other side. The Empire had some of the highest literacy rates of any developed states of the time, with a structured political and economic system. However, although it was at the zenith of its strength, trouble loomed on the horizon. The rapidly modernizing Russian state, under the leadership of the man who would become known to history as Peter the Great, with an economy and population roughly 6 times that of Sweden. Furthermore, Poland-Lithuania, who had been the victims of most of the Swedish expansion in the 1600s, losing territories in the Baltics as well as in Central Europe, now looked to reclaim their lost lands. All they would need was the slightest show of weakness.

The Cracks

Despite enormous military success over the 17th century, the Empire of Sweden was very much a hollow empire in the year 1697. It was well organized, stable, and had highly capable rulers. However, the Empire had major demographic and strategic issues in the long term. It stretched a vast area across Europe, however, compared with many rival Empires and powers of the time, had a very low population, as well as a single dimensional and fragile economy based on Baltic trade tolls and the manufacturing of copper and iron. This economic mismatch can be highlighted in the comparison of their militaries at the time - The Swedes had a small, highly trained professional army of 80,000 Caroleans - soldiers that were perhaps the most elite and disciplined soldiers in the world at the time, they were highly capable, expertly drilled and trained, and fanatically brave. By contrast, the armies of Russia and Poland were enormous, poorly trained and equipped forces - numbering at least 200,000 per country, outnumbering the Swedes at least 4 to 1 - of hastily trained and unmotivated peasants. However, the population mismatch meant that while Russia and Poland could afford to replace their losses, any major defeat to the Swedish army would almost certainly mean ruin for the entire state.

In 1697, Charles XI died. He had ruled over Sweden for a long period of time, and was the guarantor and stability and safety for his vast Empire. His son, Charles XII, was only 15 years of age at the time, and

Leon Widell

many believed too young and too naive to take the throne. By 1700, Poland and Russia had formed an Anti-Swedish coalition, and began an assault on Swedish-held Finland.

The Great Northern War and the Lion of the north

However, both Russia and Poland underestimated the abilities of the 18-year old Charles XII and his army to an unbelievable degree, and with catastrophic consequences. Charles had been brought up in war, living his life in a highly militarized society and enduring years of physical training in the harshest of conditions. Despite his age, Charles would become one of the most brilliant and ingenious military minds of the time. Within days of the beginning of the war, he marched on Denmark-Norway, another country in the Anti-Swedish alliance, and knocked them out of the war within 6 weeks in a legendary 'lightning campaign' that reduced the numbers of the Anti-Swedish coalition and proved his extraordinary speed and decisiveness. Then, he wheeled around to face the Russian army, which was laying siege to the Estonian town of Narva. Despite being outnumbered 4 to 1, Charles led a full frontal assault in the middle of a snowstorm, and shattered a Russian army many times their own size. By the end of 1700, the Russian army had effectively ceased to be a fighting force.

Following his defeat of the Russians, Charles then turned his attention south, towards the Poles, led by King Augustus II. In 1701, he invaded Poland, looking to take the throne, and over the course of the next 5 years, he won battles at Kliszow in 1702, Pultusk in 1703, and Poniec and Oderbeltsch in 1704. By 1706, Poland was no more.

Charles' war against mathematics

By 1706, Sweden was triumphant in the Great Northern war. Against all odds, young Charles had fought and won 12 battles in a row without a single defeat, knocking out all three major opponents of the Swedes in just a few years. Sweden stood poised to secure a favourable peace treaty, establishing itself as hegemon of northern Europe for the foreseeable future. However, Charles had become blinded by obsession and fanaticism with war. His entire adult life had been surrounded by it, forged by it. By 1708, Charles would embark upon the defining campaign of his life - and the first inexorable step towards the end of the Swedish Empire.

Charles' invasion of Russia can, in many ways, be seen as a precursor to Napoleon's invasion of Russia almost exactly a century later. Both great military leaders, fanatical about war, believing themselves to be invincible. In both cases, the outcome has been the same. Throughout Charles' campaign in Russia in 1708 and 1709, the Swedish army, already limited in its numbers, was brutally ground down in slow attritional warfare, against a Russian enemy that was far more well trained and well prepared than the force that they had demolished in Narva in 1700. Although Charles' tactical skill and his Army's quality continued to win battles against Russian forces far larger than their own, even the best soldiers needed to be fed. With every retreat, the Russians, under Peter the Great, managed to retreat without

being destroyed, forcing the Swedish force to continue to pursue them deeper and deeper into Russia and then south into Ukraine, stretching their supply lines. And while the Swedish forces dwindled, unable to replace the men they lost in every battle, Peter could call upon the vast Russian population and industrial might, and replaced all the losses he took and came back stronger. In this way, Peter used Russia's geographical strength to ensure that Charles was not just fighting him, but also the size of Russia itself in his campaign, while Charles, blinded by his determination that victory was near, pushed his army further and further into the Russian sinkhole.

Poltava - The turning point

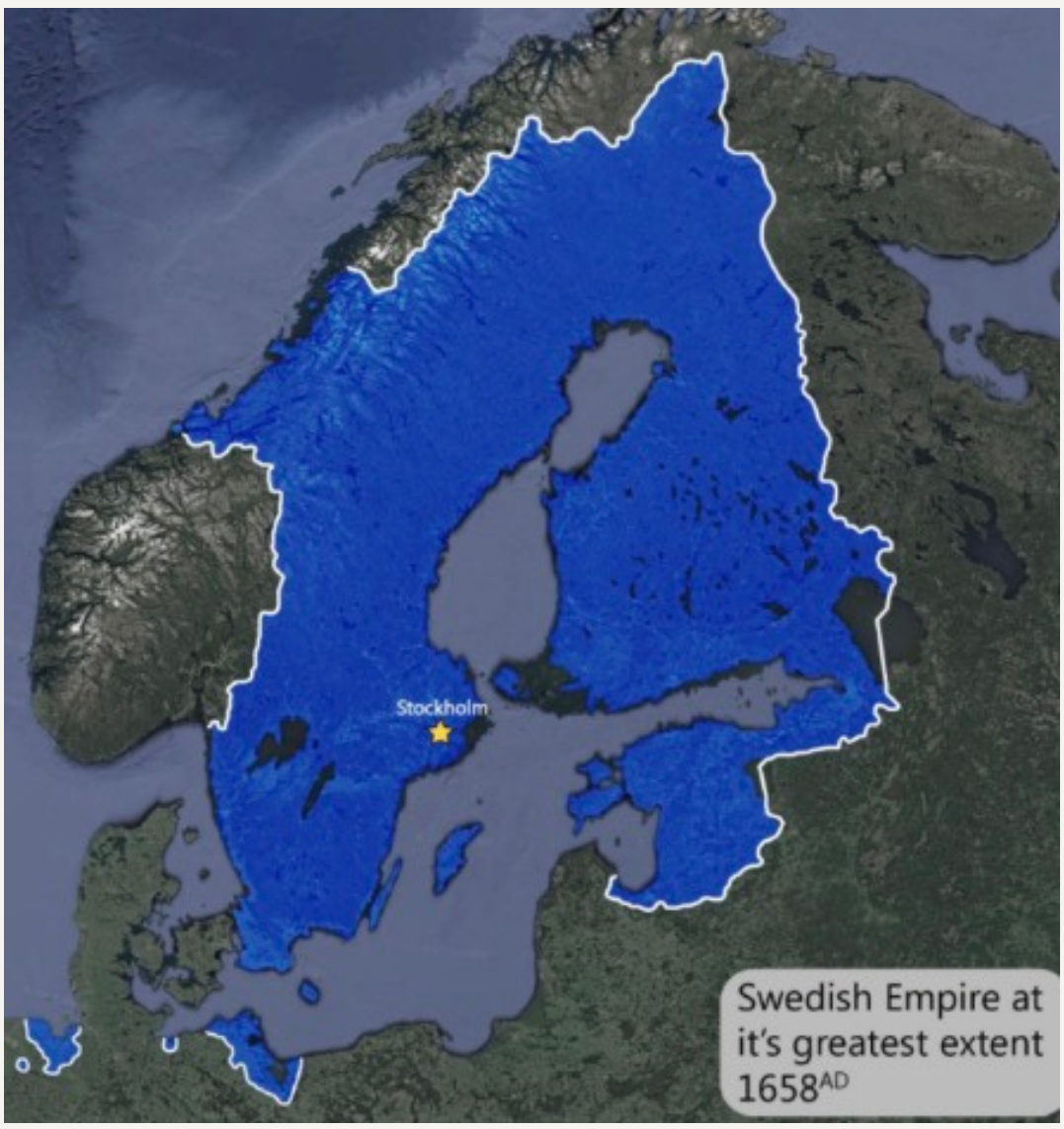
The biggest and most decisive battle of the entire war was to be fought on the steppes of the Ukraine, on the 8th of July, 1709. It was at Poltava where the back of the Swedish army was finally broken by the Russians, and was the death knell for the Empire as a whole. The Russians had been able to reform and rebuild their army to the point where they now no longer faltered when under fire from the enemy, and a full frontal assault by the Caroleans was repulsed several times in the battle, before being ground down and annihilated. Without her army, Sweden's only major advantage in the war had been taken away, and the invasion petered out. Charles himself also fled to the Ottoman empire, where he stayed until 1714, unable to return to Sweden. Sweden did not have the economic nor human resources to produce another army, let alone one with the training and experience to form an army capable of standing up to the Russian forces, and without their head of state, over the course of the next 10 years, the territorial gains of Sweden under the first decade of the war were reversed, the Anti-Swedish coalition reforming almost instantly - and the Swedish Empire was dismantled, piece by piece, unable to defend itself with its best army lying dead in Russia, without Baltic trade that was now controlled by Russia, being attacked on three sides by nations with a combined population ten times their own. When Charles returned, he refused to sue for peace. Backed in on all corners, without his legendary army that he had led in years prior, he embarked on a series of campaigns to save Swedish territory in Germany and Norway in 1715 and 1716 respectively, with mixed results. In the end, he refused to sue for peace until the end. While besieging the Norwegian fortress of Frederiksten in 1718, he was struck by a projectile, killing him instantly. By 1721, the Swedish Empire was no more.

The legacy of Carolus Rex

Charles XII, now known to history by his latin name, Carolus Rex, was no doubt one of the most influential and important of the Swedish emperors, although the Empire of Sweden herself was relatively short-lived, and largely forgotten to history, his legacy remains to this day. His legendary invasion of Russia, a precursor to both the French and German invasions in following centuries, his lightning warfare tactics, and decisiveness when using a small, elite force forms the basis of all maneuver warfare to this day. He died much in the same way that he lived - as a soldier. He had lived more than half his life on campaign, living with his troops, sharing their rations. He had never married or produced an heir, writing to his sister that he was "Married to the army, in life and

n death". While he was often a master at winning battles, he lacked one critical quality which Peter the Great had which ultimately led to his downfall – the ability to survive defeats. To go from loss to loss, without loss of enthusiasm. Was he a brilliant general, striving to save an Empire that was doomed from the outside, with its resources human and natural stacked against it, surrounded by enemies, winning impossible battle after impossible battle? Or was his recklessness, his naivete, throwing the Empire headfirst into battle after battle, war after war, what led to his final downfall? It is up to you to decide.





Leon Widell

Independent Research by Sixth Form Students

GLOBALISATION AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Globalisation has contributed to cultural diffusion with an increased net movement of people, ideas and products across national borders. As travel, migration and international education expand individuals bring their languages, foods and traditions to new regions, helping enrich local cultures. One major driver is global media and technology, which allow cultural products to spread rapidly. Streaming services such as Netflix and social media platforms like TikTok create global audiences who consume films music and trends. This has helped lead to the rise of K-pop, anime and Hollywood productions which spread cultural values beyond their regions of origin. As a rest people have been increasingly adopting foreign styles, languages and behaviours which clearly show that globalisation greatly contributes to the mixture of cultures.

Another major contribution comes from international trade and the spread of global brands. Companies such as McDonald's, Starbucks and Apple operate worldwide spreading not only goods but cultural influence associated with the western lifestyle and trend of consumerism. Since western influence China has moved from under 8kg of meat per capita in 1980 to 78kg of meat per capita in 2012. This has had great impact of the environment and peoples health with an increasing rate of obesity in Asian regions. At the same time trade also spreads non-western culture for example, food items like sushi, tacos and matcha coffee have all become popular worldwide due to trade networks.

This cultural exchange causes a mixture between cultural practices as local cultures start to blend with foreign influence.

The movement of people through migration and tourism further deepens cultural diffusion. Migrants bring languages, religions and festivals, as well as food. These communities introduce new foods, celebrations like Diwali and Chinese new year and different styles of clothing. Cities around the UK have seen an increase in cultural diversity, for example the town of Southall in London or Brook St in Chester. These areas have cultural social varieties and collaboration with Polish, Bangladeshi and Indian communities all working together. Tourism further strengthens this diffusion as travellers experience new cultures abroad and bring back clothing styles, foods and behaviours. International students can be cultural carriers with sharing traditions through university societies and events. Overall this constant flow of people creates multicultural societies where cultures interact adapt and blend, making human movements a powerful mechanism of cultural diffusion in an increasingly globalised world.

However, although globalisation strongly accelerates cultural diffusion, there are limits and inequalities as some cultures spread more widely than others. Particularly western and American consumer culture due to a strict dominance of western media and global brands, hyperglobalisation can lead to cultural homogenisation where local traditions are weakened or overshadowed rather than shared equality.

THE "BEAUTIFICATION" OF ENOCH POWELL

Enoch Powell, one of Britains most controversial Conservative politicians, is currently having his reputation rehabilitated by the media and other politicians, having him turned into a political martyr overnight as many believe what he said was "right". The notorious politician, who was dismissed out of the shadow Cabinet by Conservative leader Edward Heath, for his emotive and racist speeches in 1968, is now being held to be "misunderstood" and regarded to not have provoked violence upon minority ethnic groups. The instant tsunami of political magnitude this speech caused illustrates the extent at which people reacted to this news being delivered and the opposing views it also concerned. Powell's invitation to provide such a controversial speech to the Conservative Association in Birmingham 1968, was to oppose Labour's new Race Relations Act and criticise mass immigration from Commonwealth countries. He also warned of social unrest which ultimately led to increased racial tensions and violence.

Not even 25 years before, British troops gathered up commonwealth soldiers to help with the war efforts, particularly Indian soldiers, with over 2.5 million Indian men fighting for the Allies. From exploiting their resources with the Commonwealth troops, to suddenly a shift in political attitudes and deeming them to be "unfit for work" illustrates the modifications made to the mindsets of British politicians after it was these very people who helped to save the country. The stark contrast from wartime reliance to later anti-immigration policies further illustrates this. Powell, then Shadow Defence Secretary, argued that the existing immigration policy was "piling up the nations funeral pyre" insinuating the death of a nation or more explicitly, the suicide of a country.

Powell's prejudices and discriminatory behaviour were clearly highlighted through his Rivers of Blood speech, stating, "like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood". Many believe that Powell took inspiration from the race riots simultaneously happening in America at the time and the racist ideologies that followed through it, through the voices of Governor George Wallace who stated: "two four-letter words hippies did not know were 'w-o-r-k' and 's-o-a-p'." the discriminatory prejudices were already becoming prevalent in the mouths of politicians to the extent at which they were not afraid to let this be heard. A Dagenham constituent deplored: "What do the British people have to do to make their voices heard? Grow our hair down our backs, take dope, look as if you have not had a bath for six months?". Dismissive imagery used against immigrants who came willing to work for better life prospects elucidated the discouragement that polticians supports and the willingness to portray them negatively and inaccurately. Simon Heffer, a member of the House of Lords till date has openly supported Enoch Powell's viewpoints and even went to the extent of writing his biography, where reviewers have deemed the book to be "openly sympathetic" towards his ideologies and even stating Powell to be "the best right-wing conservative politician". For Powell was, according to Heffer, no racist. He 'was as much a racist as Mother Teresa of Calcutta.' The dangers of spreading information which critically jeopardises the lives of many immigrant families, particularly in present day where extremist parties such as Reform UK and other support groups such as the English Defence League

Sona Jacobs

gain mass momentum and vocalises these same opinions, making others believe that "Enoch was right".

The rehabilitation of Enoch Powell is seen through greater influential politicians such as Margaret Thatcher who believed that Powell was simply "misquoted" in the press and denies him being a racist. Society further supported this view as dockers took to the streets to strike against what was seen to be an "unfair" dismissal of Enoch Powell. Violent protests also broke out against minority ethnic groups in areas such as Wolverhampton and later in history waves from this speech were still prevalent in areas such as Toxteth and Brixton. This perception of Enoch Powell being reviewed to be seen in a positive light allows the public opinion to be seen as an appropriate response to these racist comments. Such actions being taken against vulnerable groups in society forced many to assimilate or to "downplay" their cultures and traditions for the sake of survival. Britain's multicultural community is as vital asset to keeping British society in the structure it thrives in. The reinvention of political ideologies which is detrimental to the lives of the 18% of those in the British population who are a part of a minority group. The diversity between languages and cultures help form bridges and stabilise foundations between communities, enhancing the collaborative and colourful nature of British society. Pessimistic talks which fight against immigration policy is used as a tool against the people, not for the people, camouflaging real problems with non-existent issues. Immigration has proven to be success for British history multiple times especially when it came to the stabilising of the NHS.

Ultimately, Enoch Powell's revitalisation of his racist speech is nothing but detrimental to the people who preserve in nurturing society into a blend of tradition and culture, allowing many to thrive and feel a sense of belonging in a place that may not be too familiar with them.

FEMINISM IN 2026

It has been over a hundred years since women in Britain won the right to vote, and it has been 60 years since the 1960s brought about a huge surge in feminism. It may seem to many like feminism should be over, by now women should have either won or lost the battle for equality. But that is not the case, and the fight for equal rights is far from over.

Today feminism isn't just about securing basic legal rights, it has evolved into a complex movement addressing inequalities in every aspect of life. From economic disparities and workplace representation to reproductive rights and online harassment, the modern struggle for feminism is as dynamic as it is necessary. Feminism does not limit itself to the rights of women in the West, it pushes for equal rights for women across the globe in all areas of life, independent of race, religion, class and sexuality.

The need for feminism in 2026 is just as prevalent as it always has been. In fact it could be argued that whilst women have gained in many aspects, the foundations of society are still built upon inequality and that system remains visible across the world. Up until 2018, women in Saudi Arabia could be beheaded for simply driving a car, women in Iran are beaten to death for showing any hair and Russia are erasing women's autonomy. But rarely do you hear about these injustices, instead the headlines focus on the rising oil prices and the gas pipelines. Not the basic rights and freedoms being stripped from millions of women.

This injustice is not just focused in the East, where many claim 'things are different' as an excuse for them to turn a blind eye. In the USA, the overturning of Roe v. Wade stripped women of their bodily autonomy, this took place in the same country with the slogan of 'freedom'. 54% of countries lack a consent-based definitions of rape, 44% of countries lack laws that guarantee equal pay for women and nearly 3 in 4 countries still permit child marriages. So whilst feminism may seem like a historical movement centred on the suffragettes and their fight for an equal vote, the struggle for equality remains very real and very prevalent today.

The modern digital era has brought about a significant rise in online misogyny, particularly attributed to the growing trend of the 'manosphere'. The manosphere is a mixture of different online anti-women groups, that are often led by male social media influencers, a key example being Andrew Tate. These groups particularly target young men and spread the idea of hatred towards women. Studies show that 45% of young men encounter misogynistic content regularly online. Social media algorithms are designed to push men further down these rabbit holes, reinforcing the idea that feminism is a threat, women should be blamed for men's frustrations and that men's anger should be weaponised.

Whilst this online radicalisation may been seen too many as theoretical, it has real world consequences. The TV series Adolescent has finally began to reveal to people the horrors that can come from the regular consumption of online misogyny. It's vital that platforms do more to take action against hateful content and do not allow these men to continue to have a space to share their violent messages. It's especially important for schools to educate students from the start about equality and its importance. Many women are scared of labelling themselves as feminists in fear that they will be viewed as man-haters. That is not the case, feminism advocates for social, political and economic equality for all genders. Its crucial more people engage themselves with the feminist movement in order for society to achieve comprehensive equality and for women everywhere to receive justice for hundreds of years of mistreatment.

Scarlett Quilty

THE SCHOLAR

Independent Research by Sixth Form Students

If you would like to submit an article for the newspaper or have an questions please email me at:

2k20-16461@wkgs.net

Established and edited by Scarlett Quilty

Edited by Sarina Bakhshian

16/04/2026