

Proposterone



By [Criss Noice](#), Image Consultant (2008/09)

Thursday 7 February 2008

Thursday 7th February – Men’s Committee? Probably not a good idea

It is common to see controversy over whether women’s meetings should be open to male students, I believe this is a terrific opportunity to get a Men’s Committee going under the radar.

Think of the possibilities – men could gather exclusively and do manly things, like reading FHM whilst doing push ups with one arm and drinking a pint with the other. Men would have a place where women would not be allowed. They’d be able to counter today’s metrosexual, gender-equality based society. They’d be able to reclaim some pride after losing out to women everywhere else.

The gymnasium, once a festival of testosterone – has lost it’s status as a manly place since the recent takeover by girls looking to shed that extra pound by drossing around on a cross trainer for twenty minutes. Even the mens’ toilets in Ziggy’s are overrun by the lady types on a typical Wednesday night.

Give the men a place on campus where they can have phone conversations that last less than three minutes. Give them a Men’s Committee.

If on reading this you think that the whole idea is ridiculous – you’d be right. Any hint of a formation of a significant mens only committee on campus would be under fire immediately. It would be shunned for being sexist, misogynist and backward thinking.

In which case, why was there such a fracas over the Women’s Committee vote this year? Those campaigning for a women only committee had circulated frankly offensive notes around campus suggesting that all men are rapists – a claim that is both ridiculous and irrelevant to the motion in question. Much like the posters condemning the male populous of YUSU presidents in fact. I very much doubt that in her early years, Margaret Thatcher threw a tantrum and told her colleagues that she didn’t want any men in her meetings.

Women aren’t the introverted, weak characters that they once were perceived as being back in the 1800’s. For those against the motion to attempt to block men from entering Women’s Committee meetings is simply reactionary and unacceptable in today’s society, and this has been seconded by the student population on campus.

Tuesday 23rd January – IAAF run from

the amputee crisis
The world has had a needless and unnecessary turn recently when Oscar Pistorius was disallowed entry into the Beijing Olympic Games because, according to a scientific study – he had an advantage over able bodied competitors.

Somehow I don’t think that Pistorius sees having no limbs below the knee as an advantage. If instead of carbon prosthetics he was wearing rocket powered hover legs, or perhaps tied himself to a small hyena

then I would freely admit that he had quite the leg up (excuse the pun), after all the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations) have banned the use of any outside interference from wheels, springs and wild animals. That's fair enough, but the South Africans' "blades" are designed to replicate the power transfer of an actual leg without the use of springs or wheels. They are designed to level the playing field for athletes like Pistorius who are less able bodied.

The reasoning given in the scientific study into whether the "blade runner" gained an advantage was that when sprinting, he used up less energy and produced less lactic acid. I'm not sure about you, but surely common sense should kick in a little here. The man burns 25% less energy and produces 20% less lactic acid because he's got no legs. He's 25% less person than able bodied athletes. It's not even as though he's actually gaining wild advantages over the able bodied field - his 46.34s Paralympic World Record in the 400m is still slower than many of the able bodied athletes competing in Beijing.

It seems to me as though the IAAF are trying to save themselves the apparent embarrassment of having an amputee compete at the able bodied Olympic games, given that he has a realistic chance of beating some of the other athletes. A man with blades for feet should be the last thing on the minds of the IAAF in light of the recent Marion Jones scandal. Let the man compete.

On a side note, for anyone wondering about preposterone and what in the blue hell it actually means - check out [Powerthirst](#) on Youtube. Good times.



38 comments

Anonymous

7 Feb '08 at 7:03 pm

Hehe, now this is amusing.

I do hope everyone has the sense to see this as the dark humour that it is :P

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Holly Thomas

8 Feb '08 at 12:02 am

I would contend with the notion that were all women removed from the gym it would be rendered a 'festival of testosterone'. Otherwise beauty. Go equality!

[▲ Report](#)

Liz

10 Feb '08 at 11:59 pm

I'm sorry, but those notes didn't say anything about all men being rapists. What the whole thing was about was that women who HAVE been raped may feel uncomfortable and unhappy expressing their views in front of men in a WOMEN'S committee, perhaps because of pdsd or some general fear of men. What I think really happened here is that some men on campus felt that they are entitled to enter a women's space because they are MEN. Men's issues are the most important in this world - women's issues are relegated to the pages of women's magazines, or women's sections in newspapers. I will be very surprised if large amounts of men are going to turn up at women's committee or support their campaigns, because for many, they are just not IMPORTANT enough to these people, as women's issues are not serious enough for them. If men like Dan Taylor or male chauvinists start turning up at women's committee and drowning out the voices of women, then I think the women's officer will sorely regret her motion.

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Liz

11 Feb '08 at 12:00 am

ptsd, sorry.

[▲ Report](#)

Laura Payne

11 Feb '08 at 1:04 am

I would disagree with the idea that this motion came about because men felt they had the right to enter women's space. The motion was originally put forward last year by the YUSU LGBT Officers, who had opened their own committee to straight students and saw how beneficial this was. It failed because it wasn't quorate, although of those who voted the vast majority were in favour. It was then resubmitted by me as women's officer. Indeed, when we consider both these points it is very difficult to argue that the impetus for this motion was from men at all.

Secondly, the motion was never about persuading large amounts of men to come to the committee, but was more about being open for (and being able to make use of) the ones that do. I can't see this as anything other than a positive move and very much doubt I will sorely regret it.

Finally, I'm just throwing a thought out here... If women's issues are relegated to women's sections of magazines and so on as you suggest then surely any move towards an intergration of the genders is thus a move towards women's issues being accepted as mainstream and, accordingly, a very positive thing.

[▲ Report](#)

Chris Northwood

11 Feb '08 at 1:20 am

Liz: What about the situation where a man may feel uncomfortable speaking about a specific situation in front of women, does that not matter? Where do you get this ridiculous notion that men think of women as inferior to them, and that only male issues count, especially in a University environment where the majority of students are female? And why would a woman be discussing the issue of rape in a womans committee? Surely a female welfare officer would be the most appropriate place to deal with that?

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Liz

12 Feb '08 at 3:24 am

Rape is an important issue that women's committee needs to campaign for - for example, better lighting on some parts of campus or in York, raising awareness of the issues surrounding rape etc.

Do you want proof that men think of women as inferior to them? You just have to look at porn, the content of lads mags (which, incidentally, I have done a short study on in context of male and female sexuality), the popular press (the Sun, etc), people bandying about such comments as 'that women needs to be taught a lesson' (believe me, I've heard quite a few of these - in the media, from general company etc), the fact that rape and violence against women is individualised and not seen in context of a much larger problem of male violence.

No, I am sure most men don't think women INFERIOR to them, but they most likely hold mainstream views on many things to do with women influenced by the media and dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity.

Look at all the statistics that show that large amounts of men rape and beat up women, or think that rape is okay in certain contexts (ie. she was wearing a short skirt! she provoked me!). Most rapes against men are also male perpetuated.

If people bothered to look – there is a large amount of literature, feminist press, articles, blogs and other information about all these issues. The mind boggles, really, why certain people think that feminists are ‘man haters’, ‘crazy militant bra burners’ (incidentally, feminists never did burn bras, they were just put in a bin and fire regulations prevented any such thing taking place), who say that all sex is rape or all men are rapists. Read up on some real feminism if you want the real deal.

Laura – I am thinking that most of the people that voted for your motion were men, and women that didn’t have the full picture of what it means to have a women only committee, and also most of the conservative band that think feminism should die a particularly nasty death.

I know that you may personally feel more comfortable in the company of men, but so many women DON’T. Women only space is recognised as a political right and forum on a national (international) governmental level. Particularly, it functions as a space where women can find their voices on issues that they have previously not spoken about before. Only when women’s rights and issues are taken seriously on the level of media (culture and social spaces) and government and there is true egalitarianism between men and women will there not be a need for women only space. I find it unbelievable that as a women’s officer, you do not understand this. I find it quite ridiculous that this is being conflated with the LGBT committee as sexuality and women’s liberation may be similar in many respects, but the clue is in the title: ‘WOMEN’S committee’.

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Liz

12 Feb '08 at 3:33 am

Also, with Grace gone – do you think that Dan Taylor had the welfare of women and men needing her help in mind? If someone has been raped – now where do they go without that support?

I would strongly disagree that women’s issues are seen as the most important on campus. Campus is not the whole world, and of course men’s issues are seen as the most important ‘out there’ as it were. Women’s committee is meant to be a way of involving women with national, international and campus politics – and many women do not get that opportunity anywhere else. Men have so many chances to be political – look at all the political parties on campus and social groups dedicated to other political aims. Men can be involved with pretty much anything if they want to.

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tinderbox

12 Feb '08 at 7:00 am

Liz,

Unfortunately I think you’re a bit confused on the purpose of YUSU committees.

If someone does have PTSD as a result of any violent attack which means they cannot associate with a specific gender/racial/other group then they need professional psychological treatment; something which YUSU committees cannot, and should not be providing.

I’m not trying to demean the seriousness of rape, or to suggest that its effects are not lasting and extraordinarily damaging. However what is effectively a legislative body made up of amateurs may serve more to enable and prolong than to help.

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Chris Northwood

12 Feb '08 at 10:30 am

Liz: Last time I checked Laboursoc, Torysoc, etc didn’t ban men from joining. Women are free to join these societies and many more if they wish. I find much of what you say offensive and sexist. Lighting on

campus doesn't just affect women - men are likely to be attacked too (I certainly haven't felt completely safe walking across Walmgate Stray on my own at night). I still fail to see why discussions about rape campaigning needs to discriminate against male involvement.

"Look at all the statistics that show that large amounts of men rape and beat up women, or think that rape is okay in certain contexts (ie. she was wearing a short skirt! she provoked me!)."

You make it sound as if a majority of men agree with rape, or are rapists (despite later saying that this isn't "real feminism"). Perhaps if you put forward a reasonable view, rather than stereotyping all men as violent sexual predators then you will get a better response. What is "real feminism"? In my view, equality is something that we should be aiming for, and in a University context is something that we've essentially achieved.

As for randomly bringing up the matter of Grace F-H into discussion, I'm not sure what point that served, but there is NHS help, or the University's own excellent counselling service available - which are probably more suited to dealing with such cases - as well as the extensive welfare networks the University, JCRCs, etc, has in place.

The point is that an internal student union committee is not the place for campaigning on a national or international level. If it was, People&Planet and other societies would be internal committees to YUSU, not external societies as there are now. If you desire a discriminatory committee for campaigning on an international and national level so much, set one up. There's nothing stopping you.

 Report

Liz

12 Feb '08 at 2:40 pm

That is my point, precisely - Men are not "banned" from joining those political societies. Women's Committee is meant to be for women, by women. If you respect women's autonomy from men, why oppose a women-only space? They are few and far between and have little power to cause true inequality.

Calling feminist points of view 'sexist' is to ignore the work they have done for many generations of women. I think the main problem is that you feel uncomfortable with how I feel that men that rape, hold derogatory views of women, and think it's acceptable to call feminists 'sexist' should be held responsible and called out on these views.

Women also hold views like this - I have met women that think it's okay for a woman to be raped if she somehow is thought to have provoked a rape. One in four women have been raped or are survivors of sexual abuse, coercion or harrassment.

I doubt you will find a woman(or man) on campus who, thinking about it, will say that she/he knows someone who has been discriminated against in this way. It is NOT sexist to call out this behaviour for what it is. Where have I said, or implied, that these issues do not affect men too?

However, the point of Women's Committee is that it is for WOMEN'S issues. There is more of an uproar when a man is raped than when a woman is raped - definitely in the media.

I apologise if you find my views sexist, but appropriating my arguement with "you're sexist! you don't acknowledge my view that men suffer too!". Feminism is about women - do you see anything wrong with that, particularly? Both men and women can be feminists, or pro-feminist. Feminists don't look for 'world domination' or anything ridiculous like that. Popular views of feminism come from distorted media information and ignorance of the main tenets.

My point of bringing the issue of welfare officer into the discussion is that she would often be the first stop for a woman who has been raped. As you said in one of your earlier posts, 'Surely a female welfare officer would be the most appropriate place to deal with that?'. Well, she is now gone - someone who was trained to manage such incidents, who would be able to successfully refer women to places that can help,

or help the person herself.

To say that an internal student union committee is not the place to campaign on a national or international level is to ignore the work that NUS Women's Officers and committees have done on a national scale. Organising participation in 'reclaim the night' marches, 'million women rise', anti-rape campaigns, abortion campaigns, support of local and global women's campaigns. It is one of the first places where women can begin to participate in politics and women's liberation.

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Liz

12 Feb '08 at 3:30 pm

I doubt you will find a woman(or man) on campus who, thinking about it, will say that she/he knows someone who has been discriminated against in this way. - I meant to say that I doubt you WON'T find a woman or man on campus who won't say they know someone who has been discriminated against in this way. Grammatical errors abound.

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Chris Northwood

12 Feb '08 at 4:33 pm

Liz: Apologies for that typo, I meant to say that *women* are not banned from joining those political societies, and are free to do so if they wish.

You're also misunderstanding me. I'm not calling feminism sexist, I'm calling your misguided views sexist. I always thought feminism strived for equality. I also don't oppose the idea of a woman only space, I just don't think that inside of YUSU is the place it belongs.

I'm not going to discuss some of your other points because they're irrelevant to the discussion - this is about men being allowed to sit in women's committee, not Grace F-H leaving (you do realise that she was only part of, admittedly an important part of, an entire welfare network, right?), or a more general discussion about women's rights. You say both men and women can be feminists, but yet you are insistent that letting men attend women's committee meetings is the wrong thing. I've still not seen a good argument about Why this is such a bad thing. In the interest of equality, would you support a male-only Men's committee?

"I think the main problem is that you feel uncomfortable with how I feel that men that rape, hold derogatory views of women, and think it's acceptable to call feminists 'sexist' should be held responsible and called out on these views."

You're completely wrong there; you obviously don't know me in the slightest. I don't feel uncomfortable with the view at all. I just think it's misguided and wrong.

"Popular views of feminism come from distorted media information and ignorance of the main tenets." - do you care to enlighten me then, as I said earlier, I always thought feminism was about equality of men and women (as is the popular view as made in the media). Obviously I'm wrong.

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Liz

12 Feb '08 at 9:02 pm

What exactly about my views are "misguided and sexist"? I'm a women's studies MA student and am being educated about the inherent sexism of our society. Is it sexist to call out rapists and men that are violent?

Do you think that male violence and misogyny is not a worldwide problem? You would do well to read my

usage of the words 'men' as meaning 'patriarchy' - a system that serves men much better than it serves women.

No, I do not believe that all men are to blame but it is important that men realise that they have power in society - that they are much more privileged than women in a great many things. Check out this link (incidentally, written by a man):

<http://www.amptoons.com/blog/the-male-privilege-checklist/>

The Women's Committee is ideally supposed to be a place where women find their voices without the presence of men, as I have repeatedly mentioned here and elsewhere. Why do you think it sexist that men are excluded from a women's committee? What do you think a women's committee does if not campaigning and calling out sexism on campus and nationally? Does it not occur to you that if there are women's committees all around the country, there must be some truth in what I have been talking about? These other women's committees are women-only and the general consensus is that women's rights and liberation should be led BY women, for women: as only women know what it is like to experience their particular oppression in society. Men can already take part in campaigns, but just not physically come to women's committees which should be a space for women to organise THEIR liberation.

The media is NOT positive about feminism. Women's 'empowerment', according to much of the popular press (and opinion) is all about spinning around a pole and stripping or 'laddette' culture (which is condemned by everyone, anyway, despite the fact that men also get drunk).

Liberation would mean that men and women are seen as, above all, individuals, with their own rights, not boxed in 'masculine' or 'feminine', that stereotypes will be smashed, that women's bodies are not controlled by the state and culture (medicalisation, sexualisation, objectification), that governments and wider society will blame rapists for rape rather than the woman (or man) - instead of the vitriolic rubbish in newspapers about women needing to not wear short skirts, not drinking, in fact not going out at all.

I am sorely sorry that you think my views are sexist - perhaps because they are coming from a radical viewpoint. I have men in my life, whom I consider very important indeed.

But they recognise the need, as supporters of feminism, that women do need women only space. Women's issues are marginalised beyond belief and education is the answer.

But why should women have to educate men about their issues - why can't men take the initiative themselves, if they really are interested? If men cannot listen to how women feel about THEIR issues, and not butt in with 'oh, but what about the men?' then how are women going to get anywhere? Men and women are important, but sometimes, just sometimes, you have to listen and try to understand why women like myself, and others that voted (all 361 of us) against the motion, feel we want or need a women only committee.

It is about equality, but we have a long way to go.

 Report

Liz

12 Feb '08 at 9:09 pm

Also, another good link on why Women's Committee's should be women only:

http://www.thefword.org.uk/blog/2008/02/university_of_y

 Report

Joseph Burnham

13 Feb '08 at 1:41 am

Actually, if you believe that most men partake in the above activities, a student body to combat those

stereotypes might be no bad thing.

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Joseph Burnham

13 Feb '08 at 1:51 am

Unless that was mostly sarcasm. It's late.

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Chris Northwood

13 Feb '08 at 11:02 am

That list is one of the most biased and laughable things I've read in a long time. I started making a list of everything that's wrong with it (men considered better drivers? Not by the car insurance industry, certain things about women having to conform to gender stereotypes in clothing – man wearing feminine clothing = big no, woman wearing masculine clothing = acceptable, etc), but then it got so long I decided it was pointless.

As for the sweeping generalisations you make in your comment – “everyone condemns ladette culture”. Erm, not everyone. I certainly don't, as well as my friendship circle. Perhaps I'm lucky because places I've been to, worked at and the people I know and call my friends don't exhibit most of the things you call on. Whilst in York, none of my female friends have been attacked, only my male friends; the biggest “slut” was a man, and we regularly called him out on it...

Similarly, the arrogance of that blog posting you made is astounding “Women are the only ones who get to determine what our liberation campaign is and isn't”, “Only women can understand what it is to experience oppression and discrimination as a woman in a patriarchy”. Yes, because all men don't understand women, and don't want to support and offer their advice into the formulation of campaigns :rolleyes:. If you're formulating a campaign to appeal to men, for example, perhaps having male input into the campaign is a good thing?

“Is it sexist to call out rapists and men that are violent?” – no, it's sexist to generalise it to all men. “Do you think that male violence and misogyny is not a worldwide problem?” – I've never claimed otherwise.

“Liberation would mean that men and women are seen as, above all, individuals, with their own rights, not boxed in ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’,” – would that also include dealing with people as individuals and considering the contribution they can make to Women's Committee based on them as individuals, rather than based on their sex?

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Liz

13 Feb '08 at 3:26 pm

That privilege list didn't include everything. Some of it may be naive and rather simplistic – for example it is a common ‘attitude’ that women are worse drivers than men – perhaps not in the insurance industry, but by wider society. Also, that blog post on the fword isn't mine but is the viewpoint of a woman that I respect and I think she is entitled to be angry.

Like I said, we still have a long way to go – and that you are picking on my views as sexist is laughable. I appreciate both men and women as individuals and do not ‘tar men with the same brush’ as it were. The only reason you think I am generalising is because I am using the word ‘men’ which you take to mean absolutely every man on the face of the earth. I in fact mean those men that think it's acceptable to be sexist and misogynist – lets leave it at that because you just seem to willfully misunderstand my meaning there.

I am not generalising and saying that “all men are rapists” which is what you seem to imply by your

remarks. The reason you may not know many women who have been raped, molested, coerced, or harrassed is because they often don't want to talk about it or because it is seen as a 'normal' part of culture that some men will stare at you (which I consider aggressive), touch you without your permission (often happens in bars or clubs), make remarks or shout at you in the street (which is often seen as a compliment, but its intimidating).

Women are denigrated to their sexual status far more than men are. If you want to ignore studies in sociology, women's studies and psychology, then fine, but its not a very learned thing to take your own experiences as the norm. For example, I don't assume that all women will feel the same way as I do, but know that we experience things in a similar way because of our culture and 'norms'.

I have NEVER stated anywhere that men cannot be feminists or be supporters of the women's liberation campaign. Before this motion was passed, men still could be part of campaigns, support them and read minutes etc online or ask for information. You are just reading in between non existent lines. Perhaps, yes, male participation in women's committee will be interesting and good, but if women are put off from coming to women's committee because they know men will be present, and won't want to discuss such sensitive things as menstruation, rape, abortion and sexual violence, then I think that is a real shame.

As for my comments "everyone condemns ladette culture" I meant that the media does. It is a popular thing in the media to chide women for supposed "bad behaviour" which can include drinking, having many sexual partners, and being loud. Non of these things are particularly bad - the old sexual double standard still exists. It is still more acceptable for men to ask out women even if some women DO ask men out. Teenagers still don't get enough sex education and young women are still not fully aware of how to take control of their own sexual pleasure and contraception.

The world doesn't end and begin with Campus - there are many issues out there affecting women that many people are not aware of. We are really privileged to be at a university that encourages open debate and is very much supportive of it's students. However, there is stuff going on that often remains hidden or isn't spoken about in wider society.

If women don't lead their own campaign - then would you rather men did it for them? I find that quite patronising. Just as a hearing person leading a campaign for deaf people without considering what the deaf people think or want (yes I am deaf, so I have felt patronised before).

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Liz

13 Feb '08 at 3:32 pm

Also, Chris, what is wrong with making certain generalisations when you have seen it happen often enough to know it happens alot? Or when you have read enough studies that show that something is very much true? That would kind of defeat the point of education, I think.

[▲ Report](#)

Chris Northwood

13 Feb '08 at 4:20 pm

Liz: You've kind of missed the entire point of my reply. I never, ever claimed that men should be leading the women's campaigns, just that we shouldn't necessarily be excluding them from doing so. On one hand, you say that's okay, but only as long as they don't attend women's committee. It's the hypocrisy there that I'm having a great deal of difficulty understanding.

Perhaps it's because I don't read traditional media and myself, the people I know and the people I work with are quite progressive, and I don't read many pieces of feminist media (I only subscribe to one blog written by a feminist, and feminist media is probably biased in itself) that I'm having a hard time seeing your point of view.

"The world doesn't end and begin with Campus " - no, it doesn't. But we're talking about YUSU here, something which should be representative of the *whole* student body, not just women. Where in any democratic body can we justify excluding a gender from attending meetings? I'm not at all suggesting taking away your right for a female safe space - set up Womansoc (or something) if that's what you so desire. My point is that within a democratic body representative of *all* students is *not* somewhere where we should be discriminating against *anyone*.

[▲ Report](#)

Anonymous

13 Feb '08 at 7:13 pm

Chris,

I just thought I would clarify something about women-only committees in democratic organisations.

You stated that: 'My point is that within a democratic body representative of *all* students is *not* somewhere where we should be discriminating against *anyone*.' I absolutely agree with you.

However having women's committee women-only is a positive action to prevent discrimination against women in political representation.

We know that women are massively underrepresented in politics both nationally and locally (only 11% of MPs are women, and we have only had 8 YUSU presidents since 1964). Thus women are less likely to hold positions on YUSU, so women at York will be underrepresented at YUSU political levels (56% of the student body here is women).

Having a women-only women's committee is a way of redressing the discriminatory balance between men and women within the Union and allows women's opinions and views on YUSU activities and campaigns to be heard, perhaps more than they would have otherwise.

Even though all the positions on women's committee are still women-only, the fact that men can now attend women's committee is undoubtedly going to affect the discussion and the dynamic of the committee - the whole point of it being women-only is to allow women a chance to speak about what they want to in an environment which does not discriminate against them because they are a woman.

Every major political party in this country has women-only women's committees, most other universities do, the national Gender Equality Duty, which YUSU is bound to follow, says that women-only space is to be encouraged where it actively supports women's representation.

Therefore whilst you are correct in saying that YUSU should not discriminate against anyone, supporting a non-women-only women's committee is an active step towards discrimination.

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Chris Northwood

13 Feb '08 at 10:47 pm

Anonymous, as I said above, I do support a woman only space (and from what I gather, one is now being established independent of YUSU). I trust that this new women's space will converse with the more inclusive committee inside of YUSU on behalf of women who feel as if they are unable to address a mixed audience so that that voice is not lost, but new voices and support is added to the women's committee to hopefully further the cause.

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JM

14 Feb '08 at 6:57 pm

Fantastic article!

Where the hell is this womens "space" you keep banging on about? I've never seen it before.

There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that men wanted to invade womens' "space" at all, stop making blind accusations about 50% of the population of this campus, please.

And if there's a womens committee, why not a men's committee? Men have welfare issues too you know, but there's no outcry about a gents only "space" not existing.

It seems to me a single welfare service (incidentally called the academic and welfare service!) with both male and female volunteers is the solution. We could remove the womens office thus cutting a budget, and a woman would still be able to listen to confidential womens only issues if necessary.

I don't believe for a second that "chauvinists" will intrude a womens meeting anyway, just as LGBT hasn't been infiltrated by straight people out to cause trouble.

Incidentally, Chauvinism means prejudiced belief in the superiority of one's own kind. Doesn't automatically apply to men - it's perfectly possible for women to be chauvinists too. Infact many famous feminists are.

 Report

Liz

15 Feb '08 at 3:09 pm

Who are these 'many famous feminists' who are 'chauvinists', please? Feminism is the belief that an egalitarian society would be to the benefit of all.

It seeks to abolish conditions in which women are subordinated, oppressed and denied basic rights (for example, for equal pay, the right to live without violence, the right for their voices to be acknowledged as important and their issues to be considered important). It is perfectly possible for women to be chauvinists, both against women and men just as it is possible that men can be chauvinists against men and women. Women's issues are still an ongoing project which is why there are Women's Committee's around the country, feminist networks and groups around the country, and an NUS Women's Officer.

Incidentally, the society you are speaking of is a FEMINIST society which is ironic because it should be as follows:

Women: only women can be women

Feminists: Men and women can be feminists

But it is now as follows:

Women's Committee: Open to men and women

Feminist society: Women only.

(this was pointed out by an acquaintance of mine).

Don't you think that this is ironic?

Feminism is also a diverse and mixed melting pot of ideas and all feminists are individuals with their own ideas and concerns. They just happen to diverge on particular issues, such as women only space, an end to violence against women, and many other things besides. I think I will stop commenting here because it really does not seem to be doing anyone much good. If you are really interested in feminism, then go and do some reading about it - on blogs or in books (a good site for those new to feminism is:

<http://finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/>).

 Report

Dan Taylor

15 Feb '08 at 5:01 pm

Well said JM!

[▲ Report](#)

Student

17 Feb '08 at 9:30 pm

I often find satire is very useful for getting a message across. Good job!

[▲ Report](#)

Male-Student

17 Feb '08 at 10:17 pm

Liz, I just read the mass of comments below this and was astonished by your views.

Although you have slightly altered your arguments, by claiming "men" meant "men who rape" to point out one; it seems you have a serious issue with men in general in that you stereotype them all (whether you intended this to come across, it did).

The point Chris, I believe, was trying to get across is that some men want to help battle for women's issues and thus it would be an asset to have them at the women's committee meetings. Why are you against that?

In the unlikely event a male chauvinist turned up, they could be asked to leave if they misdirected the discussion.

Also, I wasn't under the impression women went into these meetings to announce they had been raped. Surely that would be better suited to a one on one environment; although I know that is the case already, you just used it as a poor example.

You also used a lot of "statistics" in your arguments. You are aware that most statistics, around 76% I believe, are made up on the spot? How can people know that "1 in 4 women have been sexually assaulted" or that a certain percentage of women have been assaulted but not reported it? If it isn't reported then how do they know about it? I know you didn't mention the latter, but I thought I'd bring it up as it is frequently used.

This discussion seems to have taken into the direction of discussing women being sexually assaulted, even my reply has. I don't think this is an issue for the women's committee meetings. It is an issue for the welfare officers, the police and counsellors who can aid them properly.

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Sam

17 Feb '08 at 11:14 pm

"But why should women have to educate men about their issues - why can't men take the initiative themselves, if they really are interested?"

Surely that's the reason someone might think women-only public space is more a part of the problem than the solution. Any meaningful progress towards gender equality requires the co-operation of men, and I'm pretty sure that's what Chris and others are getting at here - nobody disputes that women's issues are pressing and important, they just disagree on how they should be approached.

There seem to me to be sensible arguments for keeping the committee women-only as well as opening it up, but making sweeping psychological and sociological claims about what men do and think doesn't help

your case in the slightest.

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Will

18 Feb '08 at 8:07 pm

Like the satire, but –

“simply reactionary and unacceptable in today’s society”

I assume by this you mean that today’s society is equal and women don’t need to be so suspicious of male motives, but you’re looking at it from a campus perspective. Campus is very, very different to the outside world. I was at a Smashing Pumpkins gig the other day; for those who aren’t fans of them they have a female bassist, Ginger Reyes. At the gig, the lovely blokes behind me spent the time in between the support act and the Pumpkins’ set showed their appreciation of her by discussing the various ways they’d like screw her – and they couldn’t even remember what name was (“That bass one, Ginger whatsit? Whatever, she’s fit...” – I’ll leave the rest to the imagination). About half way through the gig Billy Corgan asked the audience to congratulate Ginger on getting engaged, before joking that if anyone fancied trying their luck she wasn’t actually married yet, to which another group of blokes shouted “get your pussy out then”.

Thankfully campus is a little more of an enlightened place than that, and I think it’s fair to say that jealously guarding womens space from campus men does smack a little bit of reactionism. But to imply that “todays society” generally has moved beyond sexism is wrong; women are also statistically still paid less than men despite the law. In short, things like womens committee as women-only are sadly in the wider context still necessary.

Or I could have typed all that and completely missed another level of irony...

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Rob

19 Feb '08 at 11:12 am

The article was completely ironic and not meant to be taken seriously at all. He was mocking the uproar about this whole thing by implying there should be a men’s committee.

Even though what he is saying isn’t meant to be taken literally, it does point out a few things.

As for your Smashing Pumpkins story, I’m guessing the audience was mainly male? Imagine a boy band being watched only by girls, do you think they don’t shout things out to the guys on stage? It works both ways...

[▲ Report](#)

Rinky Stingpiece

19 Feb '08 at 11:48 am

This is deeply amusing: the Balkanisation of minority “rights” and “interests” groups.

What you’ve got here is minority interest groups tying themselves in “rights” knots like snakes in a pit.

Another aspect is that of students taking themselves FAR too seriously.

What’s next – hermaphrodites groups? What? Haven’t got any hermaphrodites (check the Psychology department; still no luck?) – have a campaign, and create preferential conditions to engineer the poesis of the group you need rights for to complete your “rights rainbow”!

The real problem is a conceptual one.

It's not that you haven't got enough groups with enough rights; it's that you are focussing on encouraging people to form "rights groups" on the basis of their existential differences: gender; ethnicity; etc..., rather than on the actual issues in question.

There are no specifically "women's" issues: rape is a problem for the whole of society. The reason why we have so many womens' rights is because they have the support of most men.

The objectives of these little gaggles of hens should not be to construct notions that "rape", "abortion", "equal pay" are solely womens' issues; they are all issues that intrinsically and critically involve and include men (and hermaphrodites to an extent!).

Similarly, we don't need special laws or groups to specify particular categories of exclusion, oppression, and violence against any other socially constructed groups: it is the very act that is the offence; not the motivation.

Raping someone who is: female; black; muslim; ginger; fat; smelly; does not require the balkanisation of rights to serve each as a contrived "community"; it is the rape that is the problem, for all.

If silly student girls are going to resign over this; then let's "celebrate that diversity" (or whatever the correct NewSpeak term is... I forget... whoops! back to room 101).

[▲ Report](#)

Liz

25 Feb '08 at 7:58 pm

Why am I not surprised by some of these comments?

I was pretty angry when I first started defending the need for a women only women's committee. Perhaps some of my comments re. rape and women's only space got conflated, but what I said is relevant because if a campaign involved talking about rape and male violence against women (sorry, this does exist, despite a lot of people sticking their head in the sand), survivors of rape may want to talk about their experiences, and may feel unhappy/uncomfortable about talking about this with men present. THAT was my point - not that women's committee is a space for rape survivors to deal with the aftermath of rape (although they are welcome to if they feel this is their only means of support).

I can't believe that feminists and advocates of women's rights and issues have to deal with justifying their statistics which have come out of legitimate and time consuming studies. As someone with a BA in Sociology and an ongoing MA in Women's Studies, I would like to think I know a lot about validity of statistics.

As for whether I said that it is mostly men that rape and are the perpetrators of abuse and domestic violence, I refuse to apologise for that because, on the whole, it is true. It is not a case of saying 'all men rape' because, no, they don't, and I don't see all men as being rapists at all. But male violence is a problem; indeed, any violence is a problem. So don't try to take my words out of context. It is not the same as saying that 'all men are naturally violence and aggressive' which is not true at all. It is just that much violence is male perpetrated and this needs to stop and the issues around it need to be addressed.

If you want to see the more well rounded argument for women only space and committees then see the facebook group 'we support a women only women's committee': the arguments are much more well rounded and fully covered than it is possible to type and cover on a blog like this.

Will is right - there is much more discrimination and opinion that needs changing off campus - we are privileged, like I said before - that campus is relatively good on calling out sexism. Equal opps are important at York - but it is important NOT to be complacent about this as it is not the same off campus. Be careful about thinking that *your* experience is the same as everyone else's.

[▲ Report](#)

Liz

25 Feb '08 at 8:04 pm

Also - comments like 'Rinky Stingpiece' surely highlight the need for feminist politics ;)

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Jack Sparrow

25 Feb '08 at 9:27 pm

"I can't believe that feminists and advocates of women's rights and issues have to deal with justifying their statistics which have come out of legitimate and time consuming studies. As someone with a BA in Sociology and an ongoing MA in Women's Studies, I would like to think I know a lot about validity of statistics."

Why can't you believe that? For someone who has studied Sociology you are one of *the worst* debaters I have ever come across.

Do you think people should just accept statistics without questioning where they came from or how they were obtained? Do you even know how the were obtained? Or did you just hear them and accept them because they told you exactly what you wanted to hear?

Before you turn this around, I have nothing against equality. My problem is with you making ridiculous comments about men and coming out with statistics you have no evidence for. To quote wikipedia, "Citation Needed".

Also, "advocators" isn't a word.

[▲ Report](#)

Liz

7 Mar '08 at 4:02 am

The person who gave the stats wasn't me anyway (the anonymous comment), even though I think that the stats are relevant. I do respect the importance of critiquing the validity of statistics, which is kind of the point I was making in the quote you used. Yet again I will not apologise for talking about what I believe in which is equality and diversity. And grow up and stop being so petty about spelling and whether I am a *good* debator or not - this is hardly an academic ground for debate, in which case I would modify much of my argument anyway. I have apologised already for my comments that seemed to generalise "all" men - I was just talking about the fact that men that do or think certain things need to change or be held responsible for their actions or beliefs (for example, raping a woman, beating up a woman or thinking that all women are like this or that). But I am really not surprised that my comments received the so called shock that they did, because there is a general strand of thought that thinks that we are now all equal and don't need feminism anymore. We do still need feminism, and feminists.

[▲ Report](#)

Liz

7 Mar '08 at 4:09 am

Also, I have a point to make - no man has turned up at women's committee since the motion got passed. Where are all these men on campus that want to take part in women's liberation?

[▲ Report](#)

Anonymous

7 Mar '08 at 1:08 pm

No, we need more egalitarians - both men and women. Not more feminists.

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