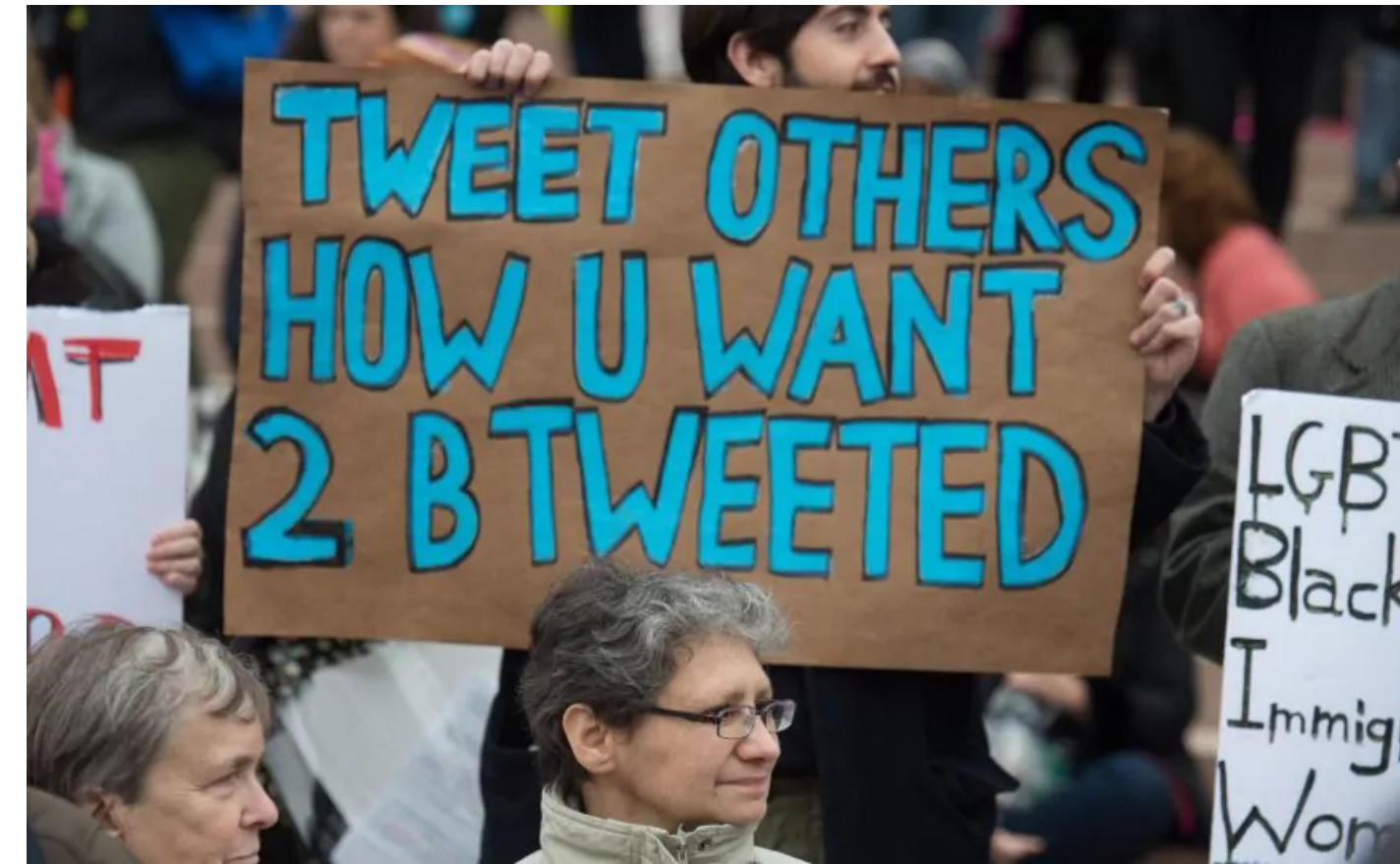


I've had enough of MeToo 'hashtag feminism' and its intellectual laziness

ZOE STRIMPEL



17 OCTOBER 2017 • 3:23PM



Unfortunately, tweeting about it won't make much difference CREDIT: REX/SHUTTERSTOCK//CSM/MIDDLEBROOK

I was walking home from the station last night – lost in my phone – when...you can tell what's coming, right? A tale of male predation, in which some bloke did something threatening/inappropriate/disgusting to me.

You've heard a lot of these stories since the Harvey Weinstein harassment claims hit the news. And you're about to hear a lot more. Since the weekend, women the internet over have begun [posting under the #metoo hashta](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/10/16/metoo-thousands-women-identify-victims-sexual-harassment-assault/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/10/16/metoo-thousands-women-identify-victims-sexual-harassment-assault/>)g and – like the fury over Weinstein's misdemeanours – this "movement" is only gathering force.

“The inescapable whiff oozing off all this is that women are, fundamentally and essentially, victims”

“Me too” refers to sexual harassment. It is intended to demonstrate just how widespread this aspect of female experience is. It is also intended to galvanise as many women as possible to “speak out”, to “tell their stories” – curiously dated phrases that echo the consciousness-raising lingo of the 1970s feminist movement.

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Except that unlike the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s, this is just hashtag feminism. It's full of grievance but utterly lacking in solutions or even ideas.

Whereas the [likes of Gloria Steinem](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/authors/gloria-steinem-women-get-more-radical-with-age-men-get-more-cons/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/authors/gloria-steinem-women-get-more-radical-with-age-men-get-more-cons/>) and Susan Brownmiller – the latter responsible for getting rape laws changed in the US with her unstinting history [Against Our Will](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/1382563/A-brutal-weapon-of-ancient-and-modern-warfare.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/1382563/A-brutal-weapon-of-ancient-and-modern-warfare.html>) – were out tirelessly altering centuries-old structures of rank discrimination, women today just need to tell a personal sexual horror story tagged with a catchphrase plucked from an ever-shifting, ever-more-banal lexicon of "solidarity".

Me too.

Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."



Alyssa Milano
@Alyssa_Milano

Follow

If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet.

10:21 PM - Oct 15, 2017

59,853

21,442

44,251

So I won't be joining the #metoo movement. My Facebook and Twitter accounts remain free of all mention of sexual harassment. Instead of “Me too?”, try “not me, sorry folks” on for size. Why this outrageous, socially almost criminal recalcitrance?

First, I'm sick to death of hashtag feminism (and, indeed, hashtag a lot of things). It lacks the intellectual coherence put in place by our feminist foremothers in the 1970s and 80s. It is obsessed with sex and objectification rather than other forms of discrimination. And it doesn't make the kind of arguments that would actually persuade those who most need the persuasion.

By contrast, men who read, for instance, Brownmiller's scholarly yet gripping *Against Our Will* emerged with a whole new arsenal of ideas about gender and humankind at the end. No amount of divisive hashtagging will achieve this. It just validates and entrenches a bitter rhetoric that pits women against men in a way that seems to be merely regressive rather than effective.



Alexis Benveniste
@apbenven

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Reminder that if a woman didn't post #MeToo, it doesn't mean she wasn't sexually assaulted or harassed. Survivors don't owe you their story.

2:25 PM - Oct 16, 2017

630

45,078

121,871

#Metoo and its ilk are also futile – who exactly are these hashtags for? Seems to me this is yet another example of indignant performativity preached exclusively through tweets and posts and video clips to the converted rather than through ideas or action that might reach those beyond.

Would the man who appeared in the shadows last night as I walked back from the station (no: I won't tell you what he said) be impressed by the #metoo movement? He probably hasn't heard of it.

Nor do I like the inescapable whiff oozing off all this that women are, fundamentally and essentially, victims. Post-Weinstein scandal, it feels as though women are embracing a notion of ourselves in which we are bound by our own biology and men's biological drives to be perpetually on the receiving end.



Gloria Steinem's feminism carried intellectual weight behind it CREDIT: AP PHOTO

#Metoo is underpinned ideologically, if it can be said to contain any ideas at all, by the idea of ubiquity. It is meant to shock by showing how widespread the problem is. The implication? Women the world over are victims. But while sexual harassment and far more seriously, sexual assault, is hugely widespread, there is more to life, to womanhood, and to relationships between the sexes, than that.

“I don't like the way hashtags divide people into “Righteous and Aggrieved” and everyone else”

I can't help it. I just don't like the way hashtag “movements” divide people into “Righteous and Aggrieved” and everyone else.

In this case, are women who strongly feel their lives have *not* been marred by sexual harassment or even those – gasp – who think there are worse things in the world than lewd comments by randoms or ill-conceived come-ons by older, fatter male bosses, allowed to speak?

What about the women who secretly enjoy unlooked for attention – including catcalls? And what of the women who find it funny, and snicker, when a man does something sexually inappropriate? What about women who just cannot remember the last time a man harassed them? What about those who, perhaps overweight, perhaps handicapped, perhaps just not attractive according to the norms of the day, feel painfully *invisible*, rather than preyed upon?

Are these women also allowed to “speak out”? I'm not sure.

Yes: too many men behave badly towards women because of sex. But hashtag feminism is not the answer. So, until we come up with something more substantive, I'm afraid it'll be a "no thanks" from me.

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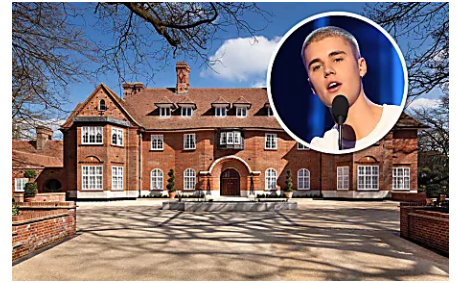
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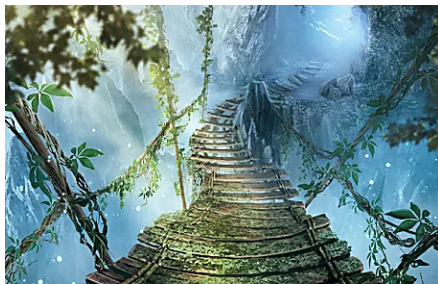
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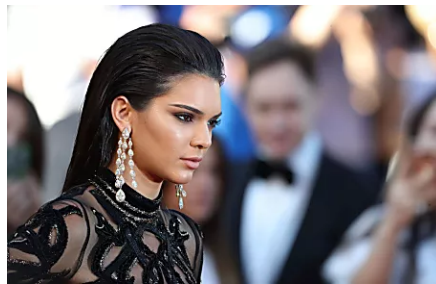
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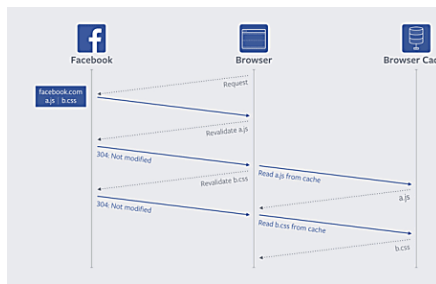
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