

DEAR
WOMAN

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Just over a year ago in 2021, I started writing. Just little bits here and there. I wasn't sure what the words were at first - lyrics maybe? Then I realised they were stories, reflecting both my inner truth and my imagination.

In this time I wrote over 60 stories, some just a couple of lines, some more detailed. When it came to this project, I realised I was not alone in my stories. They were my voice, but they spoke for others. They spoke for women.

The 'Dear Woman' project aims to give women the space to use their voice to tell their stories. This book contains my poems and images, as well as participants' answers to a series of questions I posed them.*

Navigating this world as a woman can be tricky. I am still on the path to finding myself as a woman, by learning more about myself and unlearning what society has been telling me. I am on this journey with other women. They teach me constantly. These relationships are so important.

At the end of the first shoot in this project, the women involved and I were reminded of why projects like this need to exist - why women need to be given a voice. Walking back from the location, a car slowed down. The men inside rolled down their windows to shout comments about our appearance to us. In broad daylight, on a busy road. This is not an isolated event. Women deserve better.

I hope this book resonates with you and makes you feel seen and heard if you identify as female. I hope everyone can learn something from this book.

With thanks to all the women who used their voices and took up space, bringing this project to life.

*Answers are the participant's words, although some have been lightly edited for readability.

Learning to use her voice

What does feminism mean to you?

‘What feminism is to me is equality, getting equal opportunities regardless of your gender. There [have] been a lot of inequalities that women have faced in the past. Feminism encourages me as a woman to go [down] the path I want, not having restrictions or limits to what I can do.’

‘Equal rights and equal respect for women and men.’

‘Equality, power, support.’

‘Equality, the end of gender-based discrimination.’

‘Equal rights whether I’m a woman or a man or identify as something else entirely.’

‘Being treated equally.’

‘Girl power, equal rights and opportunities.’

‘The empowerment of women while finding the balance of equality between both men and women.’

‘Equality for all genders.’

‘Equality for women and embracing everything wonderful about women.’

‘Feminism is belief in equal rights for all sexes and genders.’

‘Staying true to myself, while empowering other women.’

‘Feminism for me is about how I feel empowered being a woman. It is about how much a woman is respected and accepted for who she is in her truest, purest element. Even when the standards don’t fit according to the society, a woman should be accepted regardless. That feeling of being empowered in being able to stand headstrong is feminism to me. It is establishing equality in all senses.’

‘Feminism to me is freedom. The freedom for women to live without restrictions based on gender. Feminism is working towards equality for everyone. It’s giving a voice to women when they didn’t have one before and amplifying that voice so it’s as loud as all the others.’

‘Feminism to me is being able to choose your own path and do that freely without judgement of limitations placed on you solely based on your gender. I hate that feminism has negative connotations and saying “I’m a feminist” could start a barrage of abuse thrown your way for just saying it out loud. This harmful attachment to the word needs to be altered as the desire to be treated equally and with respect should not be seen as something that is negative.’

‘Feminism means strength to me. The strength and fortitude to conquer any work or activity assigned to a woman and do so with ease.’

‘Feminism to me is for everyone to be treated the same. It is not about saying that women [are] better than men but rather that everyone should be treated equal[ly] in all aspects of life.’

‘A strong voice for women in the world advocating equality and respect.’

‘Feminism for me means women being viewed as the CEO’s of their own life, both personal and business-wise.’

‘A range of movements and ideologies that establish gender equality. Its idea in origin was that society prioritise male point of view and that women are not treated as equal to men, but nowadays, since things in regards to this have improved and come a long way, it’s more about maintaining equality between the sexes.’

‘To be able to take hold of your own life and not be pushed into something.’

‘Feminism to me means allowing women to take up as much space as they want, in whatever way they feel most comfortable, in order to express themselves.’

‘Standing up for equality.’

‘Girl Power.’

*Stop putting my voice in a box and locking it up
It was given to me for a reason and it needs to breathe*





*My words fly maybe a bit too sharply but they hit your shields
and fall like stone
The action steals the air from me*

*Being pushed down, down
Like all the others before me*



*But we push back a little harder every time
I know change will come
It's on the horizon now*





*My mind and my thoughts
Are not yours to manage
They're mine and their strength will break your locks*

*Your censoring is tiring
But reclaiming my power gives me strength*



*My body is not yours to cover, strip or use as an excuse
To discuss and decide
How I should live my life*





*'Feminism to me means
empowering women in
every aspect in life through
encouragement, through
understanding every women's
needs and supporting and
cheering on one another.'*



*'Women wanting to be treated
equally.'*

And finally, thinking of the future

What are your future hopes for equality?

‘What I see in the future is that all genders are being treated equally. No one has a disadvantage. Everyone can accept you for who you are.’

‘I hope for a society where men and women and people of all genders have equal rights and respect.’

‘They are limitless! I hope that both the pay gap and the wage gap cease to exist! I hope men can cry without being judged. I hope women aren’t always assumed to be the main caregivers. I hope women can walk the streets safely and unafraid.’

‘Equality in the workplace in terms of pay and board representation. A[nother] woman prime minister/leader. The end of sexual and domestic violence against women. To feel safe walking alone at night.’

‘Simply that equality is a peaceful thing.’

‘That we can be empowered to act however we want.’

‘Free sanitary products; men to have more paternity leave; equal pay and opportunities.’

‘I hope there will be no stigmas against women, no harassment within the workplace or online, that society as a whole can see both men and women as equal.’

‘More legislations are in place to help women. More needs to be done in making women feel safe within society rather than having to look over our shoulders every step of the way.’

‘I think there’s a long way to go but it will definitely happen. So much has happened already thanks to so many amazing women.’

‘Equal pay.’

‘Equal rights for women all over the world because in lots of disadvantaged countries, many women do not have any rights.’

‘In the future, I hope we can reach a point where women are respected in their careers, paid fairly and equally, and [that] we can accept when women aren’t as “nurturing” or don’t want children.’

‘I do believe that the smallest awareness has a huge impact on society and makes a lot of difference. If each woman would stand up for themselves and help the men around them understand and reflect on their actions, ask [them] for a change and treat women better and make them feel seen for who they are. One day, the world will be a safer place to be in.’

‘I hope we get there soon. I hope that everyone is treated equally and not treated in a certain way simply because of their gender, sexuality, or colour of their skin. I hope for equal opportunities for all and for understanding for all. I hope that everyone is treated with the same respect and that women finally have control over their bodies.’

‘I hope if I were to have children, maybe one boy and one girl, [that] they [could] grow up in a world where my daughter is given equal opportunities to my son. I would like more women in places of power and when you imagine high paid jobs [e.g.], doctors, lawyers, or vets, you don’t just think of a male figure but a female [figure] as well.’

‘My hopes are that regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or race, everyone should be treated fairly in work placements, schools, and other settings.’

‘More understanding in our thought processes and more support when certain people are being out of order to women in public or online. That men and women do not feel like it’s us vs them and a competition for equality. We are both human and should be treated with the same respect but I feel there should be a mutual understanding that we may have different needs and that differences are OK.’

‘I hope that in the near future all genders have the same rights and that society doesn’t bother with the construct of the heterosexual male being dominant in society. It is time that no matter who you are, where you come from or your gender identity, you should be able to all earn, live, and be accepted by the society that you live in.’

‘That men and women will be recognised equally for the roles that they have in life and that all voices will be heard equally, without prejudice.’

‘I wish that women [would] be called ‘assertive’ in the future and not other horrible [words] just because they are doing their best to achieve their goals. I wish that women [could] walk at night on the streets without a key between their fingers in case something bad [would] happen and they need[ed] to protect themselves.’

‘That women will feel more at ease when walking the streets. That there will be less pressure on having to follow beauty standards. That more women will see their self worth. That health care when it comes to women’s sexual and reproductive health will improve. For men to identify that being feminist means being a believer in equality, not just being some crazy lady who flashes her boobs on live TV to prove a point.’

‘I would like to see social media stopped and for young girls and women to feel safe in their own bedrooms.’

‘I hope that one day we can see more female leaders. I also hope for a world where everyone can love and accept each other for who they are.’

‘That our daughters have equal pay.’

‘Women being paid equally.’

I am still finding myself as a woman. I am constantly learning and unlearning. Navigating this world as a young woman can be complex and scary. I lose myself and find myself over and over again. I know I am not the only one. The women around me have helped me on the journey to finding myself. I am grateful to them. I am also grateful to the women who took part in this project. I have learnt a lot from every single one of you!

Thank you to all the women who fought and fight for us and our rights. Thank you for your fierce bravery.

I wish you well on your journey to finding yourself. If like me, you are a woman on this journey, and want a place to express yourself, find advice, gain support, or simply to visit, etc. the QR code on the following page will take you to 'Dear Woman's' online space for women.



dearwoman.space