

Shouting About The Silence Book Club

We Should All Be Feminists

Book Club Discussion Questions

Intro-----

Chimamanda went into her Ted Talk about feminism suspecting that it would be met with resistance. What kinds of preconceived notions do you think people have about feminism? What preconceived notions have you had about feminism?

When so many discussions about feminism are met with resistance, what do you think makes Chimamanda's book and Ted Talk different?

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"If we do something over and over, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over, it becomes normal. If only boys are made class monitor, then at some point we will all think, even if unconsciously, that the class monitor has to be a boy. If we keep seeing only men as heads of corporations, it starts to seem 'natural' that only men should be heads of corporations."

What roles/careers/titles are predominantly male?

What roles/careers/titles are predominantly female?

Chimamanda's experience paying her car attendant showed her skeptical friend Louis that there still is a disparity between men and women. *"These are little things, but sometimes it is the little things that hurt the most."*

What kinds of everyday experiences have you had where this disparity was made obvious either to you or someone you were with? What did you do?

Chimamanda talks about female Americans caring strongly about being "liked." *"'Being likable' does not include showing anger or being aggressive or disagreeing too loudly."*

Do you agree? Why do you think this is? Realistically, how valuable is it to be liked? Is this the same for men and women? If you're not American, do you notice this in your own culture?

Chimamanda says that in order to have a fairer, happier world, gender needs to matter less. And for this to happen, we need to raise our sons and daughters differently. What does this look like? What resources or parenting strategies have you seen being used to achieve this purpose?

“We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. .. We teach boys to be afraid of fear, of weakness, of vulnerability.” She then goes on to say that this leaves men with very fragile egos, and women are then taught to cater to this ego. To always let the man be more successful.

Do you agree with this? How can we address this topic without making men feel “emasculated?”

In Nigeria, being married is an expectation that women are supposed to aspire to. Married women receive more respect. Why do you think this is? Do you see this in your own culture?

Why do you think women are encouraged to aspire to marriage when men are not?

“We teach females that in relationships compromise is what a woman is more likely to do.”

Have you seen this? What kinds of compromises have you seen women make for their marriage? How can we change this to level the playing field?

Chimamanda references rape culture by telling the story of a Nigerian university student who was gang raped. *“The response of many young Nigerians, both male and female, was something like this: yes, rape is wrong, but what is a girl doing in a room with four boys?”*

Why do you think “victim blaming” has become so pervasive?

“The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn’t have the weight of gender expectations.”

How would your life be different (for better or for worse) without gender expectations? What aspects of your life would be different?

Chimamanda says that things like being good at house-hold chores are not gender specific; rather, women are just raised doing them. Do you think there are any skills/ qualities that are gender specific? What skills/ qualities does your culture make gender specific? (ie yard work, math, automotive work)

"What if, in raising children, we focus on **ability** instead of gender? What if we focus on **interest** instead of gender?"

What are things that your culture pushes on children from a small age that are gender specific rather than interest specific?

Chimamanda mentions that she is "trying to unlearn many lessons of gender [she] internalized while growing up." What gender lessons have (or should) you or others unlearn?

In what ways are you unapologetically feminine? (Or masculine?)

Do you agree with Chimamanda's justification of the word "feminist?"

Like Chimamanda's friend Louis, many people today think that gender inequality is a thing of the past. What kinds of things can you say to them to have a discussion about it rather than an argument?

Chimamanda said that her great-grandmother wouldn't have known the word feminist, but that doesn't mean we wasn't one. What stories do you have of your ancestors who were feminists?

"My own definition is a feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better." Everyone has a little different definition of feminism. What's yours?

Thanks for Joining!

Don't forget to head to the Facebook Group "Shouting About the Silence Community" to share your answers to these questions and pose other questions and discussions!

This book club episode will premiere on the Shouting About the Silence Podcast on July 29th.

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