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**DON'T BE A  
FEMINIST**

# Don't Be a Feminist

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**Essays on  
Genuine Justice**

# What Is Feminism?

- The lead essay of *Don't Be a Feminist: Essays on Genuine Justice* is “Don't Be a Feminist: A Letter to My Daughter.”
- Most people and dictionaries say something like, “Feminism is the view that men and women should be treated equally.” But this violates actual English usage.
- Washington Post/Kaiser 2016 survey: 33% of men said they were feminists, yet 94% of men agreed that “men and women should be social, political, and economic equals.”
- My better definition: “*Feminism is the view that society generally treats men more fairly than women.*”
- This fits actual use, and accurately distinguishes feminists from non-feminists.
  - Almost all feminists do in fact believe that “our society generally treats men more fairly than women.” Can you imagine one denying this?
  - Almost all non-feminists at least doubt that “our society generally treats men more fairly than women.” Either they say the opposite, or “it's complicated.”

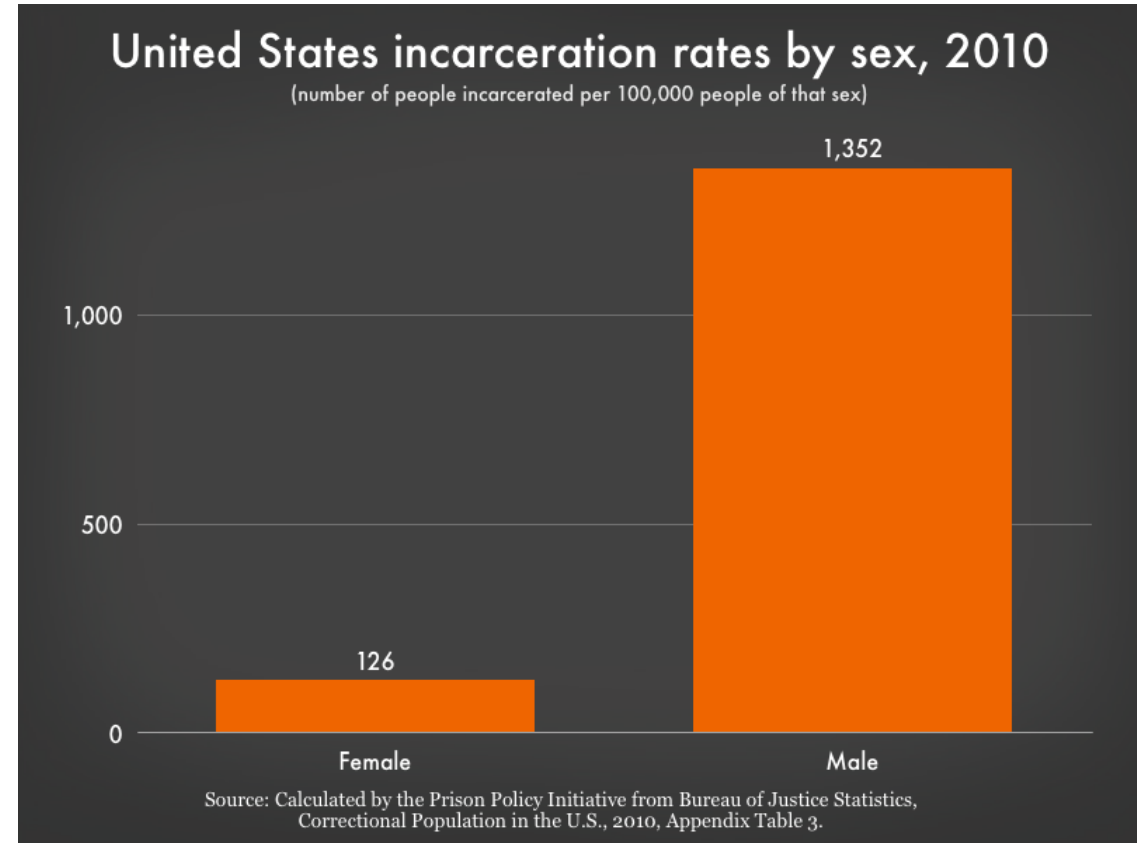
# Alleged Excess Unfairness Against Women

- Men make more money than women.
- Men are overrepresented at the top levels of business, government, science, and beyond.
- Men do much less childcare and housework than women.
- Non-custodial fathers provide little financial or parental support for their children.
- Men are the perpetrators, and women are the victims, of the vast majority of sexual violence.
- Men view women as “sex objects.”



# Alleged Excess Unfairness Against Men

- Men are overrepresented at the *bottom* levels of society. They do most of the nasty, dangerous work, are much more likely to be homeless or imprisoned, and much more likely to kill themselves.
- Men spend much more time on the job than women.
- The law heavily favors women in child custody and child support disputes.
- Men are more likely to be victims of violent crime.
- Men are much more likely to die in combat; in fact, during serious military conflicts, they face military slavery (“the draft”).
- Women view men as “success objects.”



# Unfairness Versus Inequality

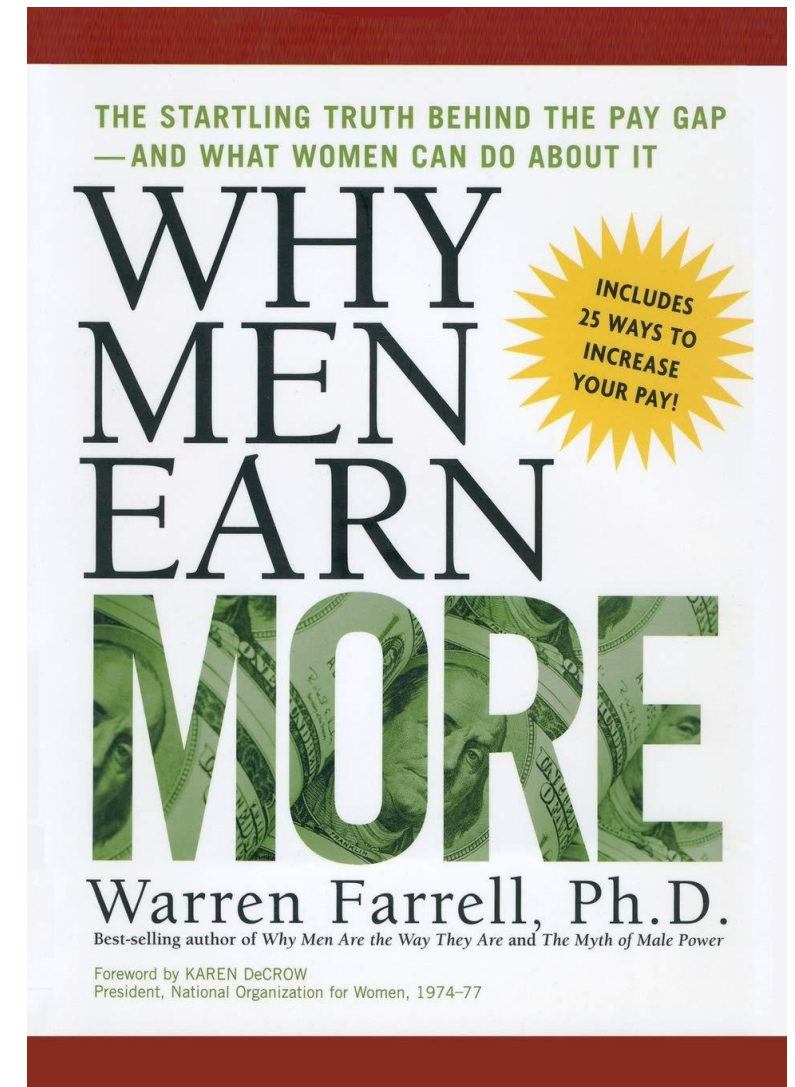
- Just getting *both* lists greatly clarifies the debate and avoids confirmation bias. At minimum, the lists in the same ballpark.
- Big problem: Inequality need not imply unfairness.
- Ex: Thoughtful feminists could easily protest that men are vastly more likely to be imprisoned because they are vastly more likely to commit serious crimes.
- Great, but this goes both ways.
- General issue: Perhaps success gaps reflect *performance* gaps, so there's a lot less unfairness than meets the eye.
- Economists have been analyzing such success gaps for decades, so what do we know?





# The Economics of the Earnings Gap

- Women continue to earn about 20% less than men. But why?
- Pure unfairness is highly implausible. Could firms really just fire all their men, replace them with equally qualified women, and pocket a massive profit?
- Researchers who statistically adjust for job performance strongly confirm these doubts.
  - Ex: If you compare single, childless men to single-childless women, almost all of the gap goes away.
- Farrell's *Why Men Earn More*: Men focus heavily on money; women balance money with quality-of-life. STEM, long irregular hours, danger, etc.
- Isn't lack of tax-funded childcare deeply unfair? No, that's a crazy high bar.



# The Violence Gap

- Women probably endure more sexual violence, though prison rape makes even this unclear.
- But men definitely endure more violence overall.
  - Male/female murder ratio in the U.S. is about 4:1.
  - This is also roughly the global ratio.
- Part of the reason, though, is clearly that more men are criminals, and being a criminal is a strong predictor of being a crime victim.
- Men are also *much* more likely to die in war.
- Virtually all conscripts on Earth are male.
  - Most recently, see Ukraine. Men 16-60 can't flee even if they aren't soldiers!



Ukrainian refugees



# Summing Up

- Not enough time to review all of the cases of alleged unfairness, but the general pattern is:
  - Men and women have parallel complaints on virtually every major issue.
  - Both sides' complaints are, on inspection, greatly overstated.
- Last big difference: Men endure far more false accusations of unfairness.
- Why are we so wrong about this? Because both men and women typically care *more* about female well-being and suffering. “Women and children first” is the norm in virtually every culture and era.
- Caveats: Some non-Western cultures treat women very unfairly in some awful ways: Saudi, China, India.





# Lingering Questions

- Isn't patriarchy bad for everyone?
  - Not if you define "patriarchy" reasonably.
- Doesn't patriarchy cause suicide?
  - No sign of this.
- Aren't we getting fairer?
  - It's complicated.
- What about pressure for gender conformity?
  - This pressure is *stronger* for men.
- How can so many feminists be wrong?
  - The ideas are emotionally appealing.
  - There's an active community that promotes feminism and stigmatizes dissent.



# Who Cares?

- False belief in feminism leads to:
  - Self-pity
  - Antipathy
  - Unjust treatment of men and skeptics
- Self-pity: Even if feminism were true, self-pity would be not a constructive response. But since it's false, it's misguided, too.
- Antipathy: Again, even if feminism were true, antipathy for men in general is not constructive. Friendship rules the world.
- Injustice: Feminism is debatable *at best*, so meeting challenges with anger is wrong.

