

FOR EVERY WOMAN THERE IS A MAN...???

By Luis Bonino, Dani Leal, José A. Lozoya and Péter Szil © July 2002

In the last years, and especially for the last few months, the following anonymous text has been circulating on the internet, and was very well received by persons who work in favour of new ways of being women and men:

FOR EVERY WOMAN THERE'S A MAN...

For every woman who is tired of having to fake weakness although she is strong,
There's a man who is tired of having to appear strong.

For every woman who is tired of having to act as if she was silly,
There is a man who is overwhelmed by having to pretend he knows everything.

For every woman who is tired of being qualified as an "emotional female,"
There is a man to whom it has been denied the right to cry and be vulnerable.

For every woman catalogued as not enough feminine when she competes,
There is a man for whom competence is the only way to prove he is masculine.

For every woman who is tired of being a sexual object,
There is a man worried about having to fake that he is always ready to have sex.

For every woman who feels tied up to her children,
There is a man who has been denied the pleasure of paternity.

For every woman who has not had access to a satisfactory job and fair salary,
There is a man who must assume the economical responsibility for another human being.

For every woman who is ignorant about the mechanisms of an automobile,
There is a man who didn't learn the secrets of the art of cooking.

For every woman who takes a step towards her own liberation,
There is a man who rediscovers the way to be free.

Many feminist women and even men who are sensitive to gender issues like this text. It exists even in a variant which swops the comparison:

For every man who is tired of having to appear strong,
There's a woman who is tired of having to fake weakness although she is strong.

For every man who is overwhelmed by having to pretend he knows everything,
There is a woman who is tired of having to act as if she was silly etc, etc.

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We think that this text is attractive because it expresses that men are also suffering from traditional gender roles imposed by patriarchy. But...

We feel uncomfortable when reading it, because we think that it is deceitful, as it only talks about differences and not about inequalities. By making the terms of the comparison equal, this text turns invisible the excess of suffering and subordination which the traditional gender model imposes on women.

For that reason we propose as a material for reflection the following alternative text:

FOR EVERY WOMAN THERE'S A MAN...

For every woman who is tired of having to fake weakness although she is strong,
There's a man who enjoys protecting her in exchange for her submission.

For every woman who is tired of having to act as if she was silly,
There is a man who pretends to know everything because this gives him power.

For every woman who is tired of being qualified as an "emotional female"
There is a man who appears as strong and cold in order to maintain his privileges.

For every woman catalogued as not enough feminine when she competes,
There is a man who does not care who he treads on as long as he is the first.

For every woman who is tired of being a sexual object,
There is a man who enjoys using women for his own pleasure.

For every woman who feels tied to her children,
There is a man who enjoys his free time at her cost.

For every woman who has not had access to a satisfactory job and fair salary,
There is a man who takes advantage of housework done for free and who does not move a finger to claim equal labour rights for women.

For every woman who is ignorant about the mechanisms of an automobile,
There is a man who, when he arrives home in his car, has a laid table and bed.

For every woman who takes a step towards her own liberation,
There is a man who is afraid of losing his privileged status to her.

For every woman who is a victim of domestic violence,
There is a man who commits it and denies it, who presents himself as a victim of the woman's "provocation" or "psychological abuse" and there are many others who look away in silence as accomplices.

For every woman who trusts that men want to have equal rights for women too,
There are hundreds of men who trust that "everything will change just a little, so that everything remains the same."

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If we want things to change and inequalities to disappear, it's time for us men to let go of feelings of pity for ourselves and to take our responsibilities.

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