



For any woman waking up rough, walking out the door minus her wallet or coffee like I did around 6:30 this morning, Beyoncé's "***Flawless" is a motivational dream. It reminds us all that no matter what we woke up like, we remain in a state of constant, unmerited perfection. I just wave a hand up in front of my face, lace up my Dr. Marten's, and say a big "stuff you" to the world. Or I wish it worked like that. But it doesn't. Because before I even get to the "Flawless" bit, I am told to bow down. Bitch.

It's not even the word "bitch" that gets me about "***Flawless." Fem-queens have been using the term freely and often since Meredith Brooks unchained it for pop radio in 1997, and to me its just another word unless slung around in a derogatory manner. But "bow down?" Let's talk about that for a minute. It is obvious that Beyoncé has made some serious strides for feminism over the last few years, bringing its concept, theory, and practice to the forefront of media and minds the world over. Her August 2014 VMA performance even boasted a big broad Femi-nist banner and the empowering words of Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. But even in the face of all this empowerment, the words still ring through my mind, "Bow down."

This sort of hierarchy is exactly what the movement for gender equality doesn't need. "Hierarchy?" you say, "But there's no hierarchy, everyone acknowledges Bey is Queen." Hate to burst your bubble but no she is not. Neither is Emma Watson. Or Caitlin Moran. Or Simone de Beauvoir. Or Alice Walker, or Lena Dunham, or Sandra Cisneros, or even Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. And neither am I. The problem I have with the elevation of Beyoncé is the same problem I have with the elevation of any "feminist icon," elevation shouldn't exist, because no one should be bowing down.

Undoubtedly, Beyoncé's song and now infamous command in "***Flawless" is addressed to her haters. She lets them know where they stand before they even think to try and step to her. But here's the problem, some of those haters are most likely women. And here's where the movement gets tricky. While most can agree that Beyoncé has marched Feminism forward, some would also argue that she's also taken some steps to the contrary. A majority of people would find the whole of her 2014 VMA performance empowering, while others, myself included, would see creating a stair step backdrop of faceless women with their rear ends exposed as not so helpful. Would these women be determined haters? If so, telling them to

bow down isn't exactly very feminist, is it?

I'm picking on Beyoncé here as an example, but she's not the only problematic figure in modern feminism. There are plenty. In fact, all feminist figures are problematic in some respect or another because they are each different and all human. Take any of the publi-cized feminist with recent attention. The arguments are endless. Late last year, Lily Allen added to the gender conversation with "Hard out Here," a catchy pop song which reclaims the word "bitch," and attempts to dismantle ideas about motherhood, fame, body image, and female stereotypes; however, only a few media moments after the music video's release, the feminists of the internet at large berated her for racism, citing that the video's imagery insinuated lily-white Allen was superior than the cast of Black female dancers she hired for the shoot. Allen claimed that the racial homogeneity of her dancers was attributed to the fact that she was unable to convincingly perform the twerking required for the video's satire of pop music, but "the feminists" were already decided, she was out.

Another media darling, Lena Dunham, the writer, creator and star of HBO's *Girls* among other credits, was only a few weeks ago knocked off her throne over debate about a whether or not a passage in her memoir contained an account of sexual abuse between younger versions of herself and her sister. Both Dunham and her sister have since released statements denying the incident as abuse, and instead classing it as a strange byproduct of being children, but the debate still rages across the vast pages of the internet, threatening to discount the work that Dunham has done in the last few years to free up body image and

sexuality.

None of these incidents are surprising because in fact all of these women are fallible, much like the women they fight for, and these discrepancies are destined to arise because, horror of horrors, all women are different. The beliefs and values that I hold, was raised around, or have chosen over the course of my life, differ from the values, cultural or otherwise, that other women have encountered in theirs. While I can identify with Emma Watson more than say, Alice Walker, I am fully aware that Watson does not represent every woman's experience, nor does her voice minimize that difference. Some feminists are pro-choice, some pro-life. Some feminists are religious, some are not. Some women express their sexuality through stair steps of female dances, some do not. We all come from different places, physically mentally, spir-itu-ally, but the value that we all share, or are supposed to share as feminists, as human beings, is the belief in equality.

So why are we quibbling and forcing people to their knees? While feminists are out trolling the web to decide whether or not Beyoncé or Emma Watson or Lily Allen is a "good feminist," women are getting raped, boys are getting bullied, people are being discriminated against. No one is going to be the perfect example of equality until we start living it in our society. Make no mistake, I think discussions about pop culture and gender are important, and ones that we need to be having especially if they press on issues of racism or abuse. But any given pop star is a good feminist or not, doesn't cross my mind when a twelve year old boy finds it appropriate to interrupt a peaceful walk through a public park by shouting "you wanna suck my cock" at myself and a friend. What's important in that moment, is that I am aware that I am equal with him, and do not have to put up with his condescension, which doesn't have all too much to do with Beyoncé.

