

---

# Here's how you can be #boldforchange every day. Read more women. Read diverse.

DIVERSITY OPINION PASSION

CLARE MCALPINE, STRATEGY DIRECTOR 08 MAR 2017

I'm a feminist. But I've realised something. Most of the books on my bookshelf are about men, written by men. So I'm doing something about it.

It's International Women's Day today (#IWD2017) and the theme is #BoldForChange.

I'm about a quarter of the way in to a challenge that I've set myself to complete over this year. It's a simple example of how you can be bold for change every day.

My challenge is to discover 52 female creators in 52 weeks.

This means that I'm going to be discovering a lot of musicians and poets, authors and activists, artists and innovators, movers and shakers, protagonists and narrators. All who are women.

Actually, to get through that many creators in a year, it means I'm going to spend the whole year only enjoying the creations of women (pretty much).

So this is my year of women.

I decided to do this when I discovered how lacking in diversity my own bookshelf was. I noticed the similarities of the tomes lining my walls after reading an article by author Nicola Griffith. A disability advocate and champion of women's writing, Griffith decided to [analyse the winners of six major literary awards](#). Her findings were stark. Books about women were less likely to win prizes. The male narrative gets more recognition.

So, here is what my bookshelf looked like when I started this challenge.

Lots of stories about men. Mostly written by men. Hmm. Not good. I blame my penchant for medieval fantasies.

By the way, this is my bookshelf post a Kondo method cleanse. It's not all the books I've ever read, and the non fiction I've read for my studies would increase the gender ratio of female authors. But I've focused on my bookshelf as it currently stands.

But! The good news is that now I'm on my 14th female creator and have more lined up, which means the balance of my bookshelf has already changed significantly.

Which in graph format, looks like this.

So still mostly narratives about men written by men, but I've made quick progress. And by the end of the challenge it will be suitably stacked towards women's narratives.

**What female creators would you recommend?**

I've been very consciously seeking out female creators that reflect a broad range of identities. I want this project to be intersectional. Being intersectional means recognising

where two or more different social identities overlap, so female + ethnicity, disability, religion, LGBTQ, different age, different class systems, motherhood, immigration status...

I've been asking for recommendations, including from the authors themselves. Like a domino effect of women recommending women. Disabled feminists have pointed me towards books like 'Don't Call Me Inspirational' by Harilyn Roussou and 'Geek Love' by Katherine Dunn. Black feminists have pointed me towards books like 'You Can't Touch My Hair' by Phoebe Robinson and 'We Should All Be Feminists' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

But I need more of your recommendations

I've lined up another 26 to read. I've got space to include another 12. I'm particularly looking for recommendations of female creators from different religions, older women's narratives and women representing different socio-economic grades/class systems. Please make recommendations in the comments below!

Here are some lessons I've learnt from the first 14 female creators:

So far I've got familiar with: Lori Petty + Rachel Talalay, Jazz Jennings + Jessica Herthel, Alison Bechdel, Kate Tempest, Tyler Feder, Phoebe Robsinon, Elisabeth Krohn, Maya Angelou, Harilyn Rouso, Ana Lily Amirpour, N.K.Jemisin, Jessica Bennet, Jeannette Winterson, Amani Al-Khatahtbeh and Esme Weijun-Wang. Here is what I've learnt:

- Not only are books written by women less likely to win literary awards, if you layer in extra diversity – ethnicity, sexuality, disability – the chance of winning is even less

Books about diversity are also more likely to be banned. [This](#) book about transgender child is one of the most banned books in the US last year

You need to check your microaggressions, and yes, [touching Black women's hair is a microaggression](#)

[Witch](#) is a thriving feminist identity

Maya Angelou seems to have [beautiful words of advice](#) for every situation  
You need to think very carefully before you [call a disabled person  
inspirational](#)

You probably have a [white as default bias](#) where you assume all  
characters are White until you are told otherwise

We should all form [feminist fight clubs](#), and there have been many  
women before us from all walks of life who did exactly this

It's worth getting to know the person behind the work. I feel so much more  
connected to the creators when I've seen what they look like and read into  
their backgrounds

Once you start putting your feminism out there, you will attract lots of like-  
minded people who want to go on the journey with you  
**To be Bold For  
Change we need to set ourselves a challenge. A specific change. So  
here's the change I've set myself. I'm challenging bias and inequality. I'm  
celebrating women's achievements. I'm going to transform my bookshelf  
into a wall of women's narratives!**  
This story was first published on  
Huffington Post, Wednesday 8 March. Click [here](#) to vie the original article.

DIVERSITY OPINION PASSION