

# The Twitter surge #YesAllWomen is a useless weapon against endemic misogyny

Opinion: Blowing off steam may make you feel better - but it doesn't change anything

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Fionola Meredith



**T**here's no doubting the rage, pain and frustration behind the Twitter trend #YesAllWomen, in which women across the world have been sharing their own experiences of sexual harassment, violence and everyday misogyny. In a single period of 24 hours, more than 250,000 tweets were sent using the hashtag, which is intended as a defiant rejoinder to "Not All Men", an online handle frequently used by men aggrieved by blanket accusations of sexism. Not all men may be guilty of misogynist behaviour, goes the thinking, but every single woman can cite an instance when she has been on the receiving end of it.

It all started after the killing spree carried out by Elliot Rodger in the California college town of Isla Vista on Friday night. A video emerged of Rodger claiming that he would "slaughter every single spoiled, stuck-up blonde slut I see". In a particularly distasteful development, the father of Monette Moio, a former schoolmate whom Rodger accused of ridiculing and rejecting him, found himself having to defend his daughter against insinuations that she might have played a part in Rodger's descent into chaos, and might thus bear some responsibility for his murderous actions. Challenging this culture of blaming and shaming women, twisting the narrative to deflect male culpability, is exactly what the YesAllWomen campaign is all about.

And it's true that there's barely a woman alive who couldn't come up with an example of sexist behaviour she has encountered, from the relatively trivial to the terminally damaging. We could all add something to this list. As I have found, something as simple as publicly giving your opinion – especially if it ventures into territory deemed to be exclusively male – can be enough to bring hideous threats and abuse crashing down on your head. The ancient urge to shut women up, or more accurately, to shut them out, to silence them completely, is still a potent force in society, lurking behind the required veneer of tolerance and respect.

But the sad fact remains that Twitter surges like YesAllWomen are useless weapons against endemic misogyny. They change nothing. You might as well go outside now, jump up and down in the street and yell "sexist men are bastards". It'll make about the same difference.

Such campaigns, if sustained and developed, are not entirely without benefit, of course. The Everyday Sexism online project, a similar initiative in which women share anecdotes about demeaning treatment they have come across, provides a forum for women to connect, finding comfort and solidarity in shared experiences. Sometimes they can even have a laugh about the blundering stupidity of the sexist barbarians, and that's as cathartic and as encouraging as anything.

So why doesn't YesAllWomen work? For a start, it's a social media phenomenon: one of those angst-fuelled storms that tend to blow up out of nowhere, catch public attention for a moment, and then disappear again, forgotten while we hare after the next big outrage we need to get collectively offended about.

Another problem is authenticity. Who are the people making these claims of terrible oppression, and how do we know they are telling the truth? I have no doubt that many of the stories are genuine, and some will be verifiable, but quite a few could be pie in the sky. And then there's the tendency for the whole thing to become one big melting-pot of indiscriminate whinge, a repository for every – tenuously sexist – negative experience that women have ever had.

Certainly, it's annoying when certain clothes shops don't stock anything bigger than a size 16, when that's the average dress size, but it's hardly comparable to being sexually assaulted in your place of employment, is it?

Far from disturbing the sexist status quo, the YesAllWomen drive actually helps to maintain it. Blowing off steam, getting stuff off your chest, has a neutralising effect. It's a bit like signing an online petition against injustices in other countries. You feel better, you've stood up for the values you believe in, but you haven't actually changed anything, and the world – blithely indifferent to your bat-squeak of protest – goes spinning on exactly the same.

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**Isaac Hoppe** Rank 4870

It isn't just "blowing off steam". It's women communicating what they experience to those of us who don't understand. Communication is powerful. If a journalist doesn't get that, then...

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**Con O'Driscoll** Rank 14

@Mongy Smellybeard I'm on a chair Dave. Feel free to start hurling them now you've run out of all other arguments even your favourite ad homs.

1 year ago 0 Likes

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**Melissa Honey Bee** Rank 5485

@Isaac Hoppe Can someone please explain this "Gay agenda", that is not sarcasm - I genuinely want to understand the comment. I have heard the phrase before but not sure of the meaning.

1 year ago 0 Likes

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**Malleus Maleficarum** Rank 64

Meredith,

You may as well complain that skis are useless for climbing stairs! They were never made for that and anyone who pretends they were is really just pushing a barrel.

The twitter surge that will change the world? Probably not, but it may well give some people pause for thought, which is what it's intended to do.

You choose to misunderstand the medium? Your choice.

Is it a bar to critical-mass-building? A great steam-vent or dyspepsia-relieving blast? I don't think so.

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**Backpack Pressure** Rank 246

Outlaw guns.#

1 year ago 1 Like

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**Con O'Driscoll** Rank 14

@BarneyMcO - how many school/church/street massacres have there been in the Republic (since the terrorist outrages in 1974)? Answer: none. Why? Because it has been (with a brief exception due to a loophole in the law) impossible to legally hold a handgun or semi-automatic or automatic weapon or heavy calibre weapon since then, except for certain highly trained police or army personnel.

Human nature is human nature, and allowing for the possibility that there is a certain type of rage in... » more

1 year ago 1 Like

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**Backpack Pressure** Rank 246

@BarneyMcO [http://anthonyuu.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/sermon\\_john-oliver.png](http://anthonyuu.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/sermon_john-oliver.png)

1 year ago 0 Likes

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**Oireachtas Retort** Rank 2803

The little people start a hashtag on twitter. A national newspaper writes about it.

Must be good for something.

1 year ago 4 Likes

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**Niall o' Sullivan** Rank 474

7 men were killed by him, including himself, and two women. He was treated for schizophrenia and was clearly mentally ill. Yet, misogyny, get the headlines moreo than gun laws, the underlying medication, and the brutal murder of 6 men. Misogyny indeed.

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**Darragh McHugh** Rank 868

@Ruth Nic Ghiolla Chóilín

Again, if you think that these incidents should be analysed by profiling the killer, then do so, and don't refer back to the meeja in doing so.

If you don't think they should be analysed purely by profiling the killer, then don't do so, and don't refer back to the meeja in doing so.

If you don't want to analyse the incident but want to analyse the meeja's reporting of the incident, fair enough. I don't think that's what you've been doing.

If you want to... » more

1 year ago 0 Likes

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**Lynda Murphy** Rank 91

@Niall o' Sullivan

Eh I think you have not done any research before commenting Niall. It was 4 men and 2 women. If you read his 137 page manifesto, and I have, and perused his youtube channel you will find that the primary focus for his irrational hatred was women. Blonde white women who 'denied' him the sexual favours he deserved to be precise..his intentions that day were as follows:

1. Kill his male roommates to use the flat as a killing zone for people he enticed in 2. The all female... » more

1 year ago 1 Like

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**Tim Hinchey** Rank 4957

I had my children stolen from me by my ex wife. Taken, so I could never see them. And the courts made me pay for the priviledged afte years of verbal abuse at her hands. Yes, I do think it is time for equality between the sexes. This was not some vague comment. This was my life being destroyed. You'll forgive me if I haven't a lot of sympathy for women.

1 year ago 6 Likes

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**Lynda Murphy** Rank 91

@Tim Hinchey

What does an individual's child custody or maintainence case have to do with #notallwomen? We could all have a right old whine here but it would not be relevant.

1 year ago 1 Like

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**Gov Infos** Rank 98

@Tim Hinchey; your wife stole your children. I didn't and neither did my sister, my mother, my girlfriend or indeed any other woman alive. Grow up and deal with it.

1 year ago 1 Like

Like Share

**Margo\_Sweetbread** Rank 32

#All women are not feminazzies.....not by a long shot...

1 year ago 0 Likes

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**maximillion** Rank 295

Fionola, most every man can cite an example of being made feel inadequate and is nothing but a failure as a male. I suggest that being made to feel as if you are a meaningless hole in the tapestry of the world, is worse than being occasionally objectified. Hence the 500% higher suicide rate. Women dont understand mens lives or mens psychology. Like everything in this paper, its all about the victimhood of Women without an iota of introspection. There are two sides to this modern world Fionola... » more

1 year ago 2 Likes

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**Ruth Nic Ghiolla Chóilín** Rank 1703

@maximillion Present away. Yes, me and a quarter of a million other women taking part in a movement called YesAllWomen are just a tiny fringe element of lunatic weirdos. Bit of pot and kettle action there, accusing me of meaningless sentences. The fact that you are dismissing me as a loon while admitting to your ignorance of a single instance of misogyny makes me think you haven't really given issues of sexism and gender much thought. You're just coming across as bitter and angry and utterly... » more

1 year ago 7 Likes

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**Melissa Honey Bee** Rank 5485

@Ruth Nic Ghiolla Chóilín Wow. You write eloquently and compassionately and with great clarity and intelligence.

1 year ago 0 Likes

Like Share

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**Dave Furlong** Rank 8826

Just like the #bringbackourgirls was just a social media phenomenon. Except it got the attention of US First Lady. Was at least partly responsible for highlighting their plight when mainstream media had seemed strangely mute. And a catalyst for getting other governments involved. A useless weapon?

1 year ago 5 Likes

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**Paul O'Neill** Rank 748

When we realise that we are not equal as we are so different then we will get along!

1 year ago 1 Like

Like Share

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**Gov Infos** Rank 98

@Paul O'Neill; 'equal' is not the same as 'alike'. Four is equal to twice times two, but four and twice times two are not alike. I am equal to my Nigerian neighbours, but to say that we are alike would be pushing it.

1 year ago 0 Likes

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