



The Equaliser News

Happy New Year from the Equaliser Foundation! In this newsletter, you can read more about Black Feminism and Toni Morrison to celebrate Black History Month. You can also find out about gender-related milestones in Hungary in 2021 and all over the world. Thank you for reading our newsletter, if you like it, you may share it with your friends and contacts too, so they can also subscribe [here!](#)

Recent and upcoming International World Days:

- February: **Black History Month**
- February 6th: **International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation**
- February 11th: **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**
- February 14th: **V-Day** is a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls
- February 20th: **World Day of Social Justice**

International outlook on gender equality issues and developments

- [The European Parliament elected its new president Roberta Metsola](#), who is the third woman that leads the Parliament. Metsola was criticized many times because of her anti-abortion views.
- The gender stereotyping notion that [women should be the ones who are responsible for the housework is still dominant](#). According to recent statistics, 65% of child-caring is done by women, while only 35% is done by men in the US.
- [The European Parliament jointly agreed on the importance of gender equality](#). The EP proposes suggestions for the reparation of gender wage gaps within the labour market and the pension. They also highlighted the need to ensure work-life balance, end domestic violence against women, and guarantee reproductive and sexual rights. In 2021 the EU member states have agreed on the 100-point system for the sake of the expansion of gender equality. Most European states do not even reach 60 points. In Hungary, this index is 53.4 points, which is the second-lowest in the EU after Greece.
- [MEPs have adopted legislation that tackles gender-based cyber violence](#). They suggest it should be considered a crime with minimum and maximum penalties. The commission will propose a law in March based on the decision of the parliament.
- [Catcalling and harassment in the public may be considered a crime in England](#). The Legal Commission examines the importance of legislation regarding public harassment.
- [In Germany, for the first time a sexual and gender diversity commissioner, Sven Lehmann, has been appointed by the Green Party](#). Lehmann's most important agenda will be to provide fundamental rights and propose reforms towards LGBTQ communities.
- According to British research, [female patients are 32% more likely to die after an operation if they are operated on by a male surgeon](#). The research explained that in the case of female surgeons there was not any difference between the two sexes.
- This short article by the [UN Women interprets the 16 defining moments](#)

[in 2021 that happened for the benefit of gender equality](#). It highlights the importance of power and politics, science and technology, laws and policies, arts and entertainment, and women leading actions.

- [Only 7% of European companies are led by women](#). The proportion of female executives increased by 1% in 2021. Among All the European countries the best results come from Norway, where in 2007, 40% of the companies assigned leadership roles to women. The European Union has set a deadline for 2025 to achieve at least 40% female representation.
- [When it comes to household work women perform the most cognitive and emotional side of the work on top of the physical work](#). Based on gender stereotypes women are alleged to be better household organisers. Because of the existence of these workloads, the gender gap tends to be even wider.
- South Sudan became independent only one decade ago, [however, the region is still suffering from very severe inequalities](#), for example, girls struggle to get a proper education.

Gender equality in focus: Hungary

- On March 10th, 2022 [Hungary will elect a new president of the Republic](#). The ruling FIDESZ party has announced its intention to elect Katalin Novák as the first female president of Hungary.
- Along the Romanian and Hungarian border in a small village called Tyukod, a [female registrar was harassed by the local mayor](#). The court convicted the mayor, however, the compensation payment does not help in this case. They must still work together most of the time, and the mayor is still in power.
- [This article has summarised the most important gender-related milestones in Hungary](#), from the Hungarian Government legislations and policies towards family law and liberal rights to the most important programs and campaigns by the NGOs.
- [A woman got the sack in a governmental organisation because of multiple pregnancies](#). The case went to court which resulted in a 5 million Forints compensation for the benefit of the plaintiff.
- [Dr. Zsuzsa Orsós is a Roma University lecturer and researcher](#). She was the first Roma woman who obtained a PhD scholarship. In the series of Incredible Women, she explained how she became a biologist and how her ethnicity helped her to observe the inequality in Hungary.

Black Feminism and Toni Morrison

The efforts of feminists and antiracists have long been perceived as two distinct initiatives and proceedings, as if discrimination based on race and gender had a strict “either/or” relationship. This simplistic perception failed to consider the [intersectionality of sexism and racism](#) influencing the lives of a large number of people: women of colour. These women experience gender-based and racial oppression simultaneously, yet somehow both the feminist and antiracial movements seemed to have neglected to properly address the aggravated struggles of this group for a long time. [As Crenshaw suggests](#), Black women are not truly considered and represented either in the feminist or antiracist theory and discourse since these are mainly formed by the narratives of white women and Black men.

[Black feminists](#) emerged from the feminist movement as a distinct subgroup and spoke up for the multi-angled discrimination they suffered from in many areas of life. They expressed their critical opinion regarding the gender equality initiatives as well as the black liberation movement. To this day they continue to raise awareness of the Black female identity, emphasising the importance of giving equal recognition to belonging to both of these

marginalised groups at the same time. [The activists](#) of the movement are considered to be foundational for its success. Several female writers, journalists and authors of colour were brave enough to step up and let their voices be heard in favour of Black feminism, such as [Alice Walker](#) and [Maya Angelou](#).

The question is whether only those who openly declare themselves as such are considered black feminists. Should one publicly commit to and engage themselves with the movement to be able to contribute to it? [Toni Morrison](#), the first Black woman ever to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature never labelled herself as a Black feminist or a feminist at all. She primarily claimed to be a writer, refusing to take on any [“closed positions”](#) or to belong to categories that would be off-putting for a certain type of readership resulting in her stories possibly not reaching them. However, these stories themselves speak louder than Toni in her interviews about her views of feminism. In her books, she gives a true account of the Black American female experience. She illustrates how racism, segregation and discrimination influenced the lives of Black women.

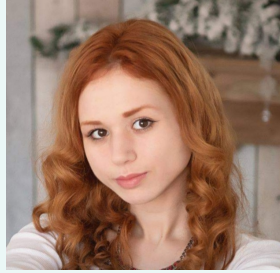
Her novels were not only praised by the critics but the general public also favoured them. As a result, a vast readership gained knowledge and developed higher awareness of the constant struggles of Black women. Toni seemingly distanced herself from the Black feminist movement and did not appear as a Black women’s rights activist per se. Although it might have been a decision on her part that confuses many to this day, it did have a deeper message that one should not overlook: Toni mainly saw herself as an artist, a creator. It was never about her race or gender, but her talent to write, free of any limitations that openly belonging to a group or movement would have possibly had imposed on her. In spite of all that, her literary work, as a whole, undoubtedly helped the movement tremendously by spreading the raw and often shocking truth about the hardships of Black female lives. Although her means of contribution were more subtle than the open activism of other Black female writers in favour of Black feminism, she consciously chose her characters and her narratives to take a stand.

As the author of the current article, opting to write about Toni Morrison was a rather personally driven decision of mine. Before reading about her, it is safe to say that I had very little understanding of the Black female identity, the struggles Black women face and how their hardships are different, and often more aggravated, than those faced by white women. Being a white woman who was born and raised in central Europe, I had very little exposure to this topic prior to picking up *Love*, one of her later novels. Similar to most Hungarians, I learnt about racism and the fight against it at school, but these were only history lessons full of facts and figures, not stories of how real people’s lives were affected. Reading about these and seeing the world through the eyes of Toni’s female characters put everything I previously knew into a different perspective – it all seemed far more relatable. Probably it is impossible for many of us to ever get a full grasp of the challenges Black women need to put up with throughout their lives, however, Toni’s works at least offer an instrument to raise our awareness and understanding, and to ultimately feel less distant from each other as women, as humans.

Upcoming activities and events by Equaliser Foundation

On **8 March**, we will hold our **Women’s Day Conference** in Budapest, proudly sponsored by **Coca-Cola, KPMG, Telekom, and TESCO**. It will be a very exciting conference with many speakers who will cover topics such as Girls in STEM, Women and Success, Why Men Need

Equality and Women in Retail. You can attend the conference in person or online, and there will be an English-Hungarian interpretation. Follow us on [our website](#) and social media, where we will share details soon.



Introducing the lead article's contributor

Boglárka Lilla Demir-Wessely is a student of the MSc program of Strategic Human Resource Management at IBS. She is a member of the Equaliser Club and strongly identifies with the Equaliser Foundation's core values of gender equality and talent-based (rather than gender-based) career choices. She obtained her BA degree at the University of Pécs in the field of English Studies and wrote her BA thesis on the topic of gender linguistics. She previously worked in the private education sector as an international student recruiter. Within the field of HR, she is highly interested in managing workplace diversity and multicultural teams. She enjoys learning about people from different cultural backgrounds and various walks of life.

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