

No, Taylor Swift. No.

by Guest Contributors - Tuesday, November 27, 2012

<https://politicsrespun.org/2012/11/no-taylor-swift-no/>

[Here is what some of us have been wanting to say about Taylor Swift, but didn't because [A. Lynn did it first](#), and perhaps best, reposted her with [her](#) kind permission. Thanks to [Jarrah Hodge](#) for pointing us to [this piece of brilliance!](#) Enjoy! - seb]

I've been mentally composing this blog for forever and now I'm finally trying to piece it together. Hm. How do I say this?

Y'all...Taylor Swift is the worst.

Whelp. There it is. That's my thesis and let me now back it up.

I've long argued that [girl on girl hate](#) is awful and counterproductive so I'm truly trying to stay away from that. This isn't a complaint about something nit picky like her hair or her clothes or her voice--I could take or leave it all. I mean, it's true that something just rubs me the wrong way about her but I'm putting all that aside because I really do have legitimate feminist concerns with Swift and her place in pop culture.

1) Swift is peddling dangerous messages to girls.

I've [written about this before](#) so I'm not sure I need to rehash it all. Basically, the bulk of Swift's music is focused on boys and them being her Romeo or her knight in shining armor. But Swift's brand and its messages for girls goes beyond that. In a [piece for the Huffington Post](#), Andrea Lampros detailed her experience at a Swift concert with her children. She said,

If you're thinking you'll see a sweet Southern singer/songwriter on stage with her guitar, a few

pretty dresses, and simplistic but heartfelt lyrics, you won't. The overwhelming message of the Swift concert to the sea of girls ages 5 to 55: be pretty, be conventional, be quiet (well, it's OK to scream for me), and definitely put on some lipstick.

...The scene was sweet until you got to the CoverGirl stands (Swift is a CoverGirl) where girls of all ages sat on stools before stage mirrors to receive makeovers -- perhaps selecting the lip and eye colors that Taylor wears.

...The message -- you're not really beautiful until you cake your tiny, pre-pubescent face with makeup -- wasn't the empowering one I had envisioned.

...I didn't expect Taylor Swift to make any radical, edgy, feminist remarks, but I also didn't expect Gidget meets the Little Mermaid. What an incredible platform for Swift to say something as simple as "Girls rock!" or something even crazier like "Love yourselves!" Instead, she finished each song by looking wide-eyed into the crowd and noting how "amazing" it was that so many people came to the show and how "beautiful" everyone looked (incredible how she could see people with all those lights in her eyes).

2) She believes in the post-feminist myth.

Lampros wrote that piece in 2009, and now having heard Swift's recent comments about feminism, I'm not surprised that her concert in no way challenged the super typical pretty, pretty princess messages that girls receive in their daily lives. When asked about feminism Swift said, "I don't really think about things as guys versus girls. I never have. I was raised by parents who brought me up to think if you work as hard as guys, you can go far in life."

This type of post-feminist nonsense is commonly peddled by people who have never really examined gender but who are asked about feminism and taken off guard. I expect that Swift is in that boat. Knowing her songs and persona, it's no surprise that Swift doesn't "get" feminism (It would have been really shocking if she DID, especially given that there are so many voices, specifically [other pop singers](#), disparaging it as well.) Jessica Wakeman at [The Frisky](#) pretty nicely summarized my thoughts on Swift's comments.

Are we surprised that Taylor Swift doesn't really consider herself a feminist? Not really. But it's still completely dismaying that "guys versus girls" and that when women don't succeed it's because we just didn't work hard enough is apparently what she thinks feminism is.

And you see, this is but yet another message that Swift is saying to girls...she's quite literally telling them that she's not into feminism because it views men as an adversary. It's absurd. And if you think her audience *isn't* listening or paying attention to her every action, you obviously haven't been around a tween girl lately.

3) Swift is specifically marketed at the youngest girls.

The real kicker as to why I'm worried is because Swift is widely considered a "safe" option for tween girls. There are so few tween-friendly acts that when someone nice and sweet comes around, parents just assume that their girls should be listening to her. I remember when I went to the [Miss Representation screening](#) and one of the super concerned parents said something to the effect of, "It just feels like the only singer I can trust is Taylor Swift!"

I almost screamed. Like I mentioned when I blogged about that screening, too many of the parents were looking for ways to shield their kids from everything instead of actually helping their kids become *critical* consumers of media who analyze and question the messages they receive.

I have a feeling that if more parents actually stopped and thought about what Swift is peddling, they might not like what they'd see (like Lampros.) I remember having a discussion with my friend Myranda the last time I was home in Indy about how we'd take Nicki Minaj over Taylor Swift any day. I know it's a controversial viewpoint, but it's not a joke. When I stop and really think about the messages each of them are sending, I do have more concerns with Swift.

And, again, because Swift is specifically marketing at and intended for teen girls, adults far too often give her a pass without actually *thinking* about what they want for those girls. It's not OK. Just because something appears innocent or cute, like Swift's persona, it doesn't mean that it's not perpetuating the same sexist BS.

I understand that finding empowering pop role models for girls is nearly impossible, but perhaps we shouldn't be looking to pop stars to be role models at all. Yes, girls will continue to consume pop music regardless, and that's why **it's our duty as adults to have actual conversations about it all.**