**Beyonce Must Have Her Feminist Cake and Eat It Too**

 [](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/ellie-slee)

[**Ellie Slee**](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/ellie-slee)

Posted: 28/01/2014 11:18

Much has been written lately about Beyonce bursting out of the feminist closet with her latest album.["Did a baby make a feminist of Beyonce?"](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10520025/Beyonce-the-feminist-how-motherhood-made-the-pop-queen-come-out.html) wondered the *Telegraph*, and, in spite of her 2013 dig at other industry successes with the repeated command that those 'bitches' 'bow down', I wondered the same thing. Weeks later, her unarguably feminist essay for the Shriver report was revealed, and Bey's feminist babe status was cemented. Damn right, Beyonce! Gender equality *is* a myth - and you, the 3.6 octave spanning voice of your generation, might just grab that great big reality some much deserved airtime.

Nobody is perfect, but Beyonce's next public move was a bad one. She lost the feminist game she was playing in one fell swoop.

Beyonce and her husband, Jay-Z, performed their duet *Drunk in Love* at the Grammys on Sunday. When Beyonce released her new album in December last year, the song came under fire for Jay-Z's lyric "I'm Ike Turner, turn up/Baby know I don't play/Now eat the cake, Anna Mae", a reference to a moment of domestic abuse displayed in the Tina Turner biopic *What's Love Got To Do With It* when Ike forced Tina (who was born Anna Mae) to eat cake by shoving it into her face, and proceeded to assault an employee who tried to help her.

In an unprecedented feminist move, Bang, a London-based radio station removed the lyric from the song before playing it, stating that the lyrics: *imitate a scene of severe domestic violence... displaying promotion of domestic violence against women. In this light Bang [refuses] to play the song lyrics from henceforth on our station.*

I foolishly assumed, then, that in their performance at the Grammy Awards an all-repenting Jay-Z would have removed the offending lyric at his newly fiercely feminist wife's behest. He's an award winning rapper, after all; how hard could it possibly be for him to come up with three different verses that didn't reference a relationship that featured rape and brutal domestic violence?

Apparently, it would be really difficult. So difficult, in fact, that Jay-Z would proceed to rap the lyric onstage beside his wife to an audience of 28.5 million. And what's more? His wife, fresh from sampling the speech 'We Should All Be Feminists' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, stood next to him. She beamed as the line approached. And then... *She sang it with him*.

Screw that. Screw the glamourisation of a marriage that required a wife to have corrective rhinoplasty to realign a nose beaten to a pulp over a period of years; of a wife who decided, in 1968, [that suicide was her only refuge](http://www.thebiographychannel.co.uk/biographies/tina-turner.html); of a husband so delusional that in his own memoirs, he stated, "Sure... There have been times when I punched her to the ground without thinking. But I have never beat her."

Beyonce: when you smile affectionately and sing along with that lyric, you are propagating a cycle of humiliation, of rape, of violence that is still horrifically real for women all over the world. The fact that Tina Turner broke the cycle by no means makes it acceptable for you to try to make her situation a sexy one.

Know why? Because just like Tina, to this day, [85% of raped women know their attackers](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/maritalrape2.php). Because, although Tina reportedly narrowly avoided death, on average [two women a week are still murdered by their partners](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic_violence_topic.asp?section=0001000100220036). Because domestic abuse is an enormous societal problem.

And already, your huge influence has further normalised this; already, on Twitter, your fans are 'lol'ing at the lyric. The saddest part about this is that *they know what it means.*They're tweeting things like, "Eat the cake anna mae?" ... jay z is clearly beating on that hoe." About you. And they think it's funny. They're putting up giggly emoticons. They're saying it is #Boss. It is not #Boss. It is violence against women.

Your body confidence, your empowerment, is admirable, and really does have a place in the beautiful, evolving feminist fight that we find ourselves in. However, it is not about picking and choosing your moments; not at this level. Trivialising domestic violence, standing by your man whilst he makes Anna Mae's cake sound like something you want to eat, is not OK.