

Published: 10 March 2015

Country: UK



In the week ahead of the International Women's day, 8<sup>th</sup> of March, the [Women Of the World Festival](#) (WoW) in London celebrated women and girls and their achievements in art, media, film, education. Since its foundation by the theatre director and producer Jude Kelly in 2011, the success of WOW has counted on a number of event locations around the world, a rapid ticket sale, and big names such as Malala and Annie Lennox. The Media Diversity Institute reporter visited WoW in order to explore how this kind of events can have an impact that goes beyond the 8<sup>th</sup> of March and what are the best ways to boost a change towards gender equality.

WOW might be a one-week event, but associations and individuals attending the debates strive for equality 365 days a year. As [Toni Stuart](#), South African poet and performer who attended the festival as a guest of Digital Women UK, said for MDI: “*It is not just one day. This space is a showcase of what people are doing all year round.*”

Men were also encouraged to attend and to be involved in discussions. Seeking a contribution

from men as a counterpart in the women's fight, several of the sessions brought them into the conversation, both as speakers or chairmen. One of the debates was dedicated to the shift of expectations around maleness and the stereotypes that affect men, discussing the 21st-century masculinity - from sex and relationships to fatherhood and feminism.

The BBC programme [Woman's Hour](#) broadcast live from the Royal Hall Festival for the whole week. “

Beverly Purcell, producer of the programme. “

*We're here to meet with existing audience and attract new listeners.*

” Still, her broadcasting company is not at the forefront of equality in the media. In 90 years, the BBC has never had a female director general. But the BBC is not the only outlet in the UK to hold women back.

[Women and Journalism](#) , a recent study by Suzanne Franks for the Reuters Institute, has revealed that female journalists are less likely than men to achieve the more senior and well paid positions. Those women who do secure jobs at a senior level in journalism are more likely than men to be childless. Furthermore, the percentage of female by-lines in print national newspaper goes from the 50 percent of the Daily Express to the 16 percent of the Independent.

A way to overcome this status-quo is to skip the step of traditional media deciding who gets to talk, write, and shape the debate. [Digital Women UK](#) , an initiative aiming to help female creative practitioners raise their profile online, was present at the WOW festival with [one stall, four guests, and plenty of useful advice](#)

. Witnessing a male-dominated digital landscape, Digital Women UK seeks to give women the right digital confidence to succeed online.

Toni Stuart, one of their guests at WOW, built her career using the digital media. “*In the traditional media, the space for artists is very limited,*” she said. “*The digital media are more democratic, especially for artists of colour. Women are not waiting for someone else to create something - they do it themselves*

.” Her tip for emerging women artists is simple: “

*Don't be on your own. Find an online community where women and men support each other.*

”

According to the WoW founder, this London festival represents an effort towards a better and equal world. “*Somebody got me the vote, somebody got me education, and I had a feeling that I*

*also had to make life better for future generations of women, so they have the best chance of reaching their potential. So I thought let's have a festival, that's really celebrating everything that girls and women have done, but also asking the frank questions about why we still have an unequal world* ”, said the founder Jude Kelly to the [Huffington Post](#) .