

Obama uses a women's magazine to talk to men

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

August 15, 2016

If you haven't read President Obama's essay on feminism in the September issue of *Glamour*, [do](#). It combines cultural analysis with personal witness—and on the latter front, the president writes as a father of girls but avoids the perils of high [dad feminism](#). It's great.

A friend notes, "now if we could get this type of article to be printed in men's magazines, too." Indeed. Obama addresses in detail the way sexism hurts men, not just women. He argues that men need to be actively involved in fighting it. Thomas Page McBee [calls the essay](#) "a step-by-step guide from one of the most powerful men on earth about how to be a better man." So why isn't it appearing in *Esquire* or *GQ*?

Yet a male president's byline on a *Glamour* exclusive makes a powerful statement before the main text even begins. "It's radical that he wrote it in a women's magazine," [writes Lucia Graves](#), "a category of media that's been written off as fluff by political literati for practically as long as they've been around." *Glamour* does a lot that is definitely not fluff, yet "they still, in 2016, have to fight to be taken seriously." This helps a little.

And crucially, men and other non-readers of *Glamour* read this essay, too. That's how media works now. In magazine terms the piece is from the September issue, which *Glamour's* website doesn't yet list as the current one. But in internet terms Obama's essay is already old (and I'm rather late to it). On the web, magazine articles have only very loose ties to magazine issues anymore—or to their target audiences.

I saw the *Glamour* link on Facebook. Others encountered it via posts at a wide variety of other media sites ([Esquire among them](#))—posts that recap before linking. This means that people who would never even click through to *Glamour* likely read summaries on more suitably manly platforms, summaries that proliferated because of the newsworthiness of the president's choice of *Glamour* in the first place. The

better ones distilled Obama's message to a few points that could be digested by twitchy, clicky readers who might not ever get through a whole earnest first-person thing about feminism.

In short, this was very deft. [Shefaly Yogendra observes](#) that by publishing in a women's magazine, Obama "neatly sidestepped men wondering why he is lecturing to them" while also getting "a standing ovation from women." He addressed himself to women and counted on others to relay his message to men more effectively than he could. Nicely done.