

# Christian Activists Set Their Sights on Hollywood's Latest Deception: 'Fifty Shades Darker'

Christian feminist and activist Natalie Collins will not allow the deception perpetrated by *Fifty Shades* to be ignored.

"*Fifty Shades* is more than just a fiction series; it is a social phenomenon. Its success evidences society-wide ignorance about abusive behavior, normalizes abusers and perpetuates damaging stereotypes about BDSM sexualities. As the recent Women's Marches demonstrate, gender equality continues to be an unachievable goal, whilst powerful, abusive men gain greater power. *Fifty Shades Darker* is further normalizing abuse, and we are seeking to peacefully protest its messages and educate people about abusive behavior," Collins says.

Her campaign, co-run by Emma Tofi, launched in 2012 after the fiction series started topping best-sellers' lists. By 2015, the series hit the big screen. Come Valentine's Day this year, *Fifty Shades Darker* will attempt to sweep the sins of abuse and sexual immorality under the rug and normalize the filth.

Collins, who identifies herself as a radical evangelical, uses her faith to combat abuse, particularly as it applies to feminism.

She sees feminism and Christianity as counterparts.

"Jesus saved my life. Feminism made sense of my life. So in many ways, no there hasn't been a personal fight between the two," Collins says. "However, I totally get why feminists find

Christianity incompatible with women's liberation. Feminism works as an ideology. Christianity only works as a relationship with the living God that leads to the way of life. I have to wrestle with the Bible and Christian culture and Christian people (I don't literally wrestle with Christians, only ideologically, or metaphorically). But on a fundamental level, feminism and faith have never been a difficult thing for me to hold as true for my life and for the world."

Often, Collins says, churches are so focused on the connotation of the word "feminism" that they fail to see the work feminists do, especially fighting against some of the sexual evils in the world.

"I'd like to see a reshaping of the focus on trafficking, pornography and the Christian white savior complex. The issues of trafficking and pornographies are massively complex, and the response must include a deep feminist analysis of the issues, which is sadly lacking in the majority of Christian responses to these issues. I guess the ideal would be that feminist analysis and practice would be mainstreamed through the social justice elements of Christianity," Collins says.

But the battle is difficult, especially while Hollywood and secular culture glorify abusive, pornographic films like the *Fifty Shades* franchise.

Tofi, the campaign co-chair, says the series normalized her abuse.

"I had believed the hype about *Fifty Shades* being a love story and thought it might rekindle my broken faith in romance. As I read the books, I was horrified to find myself reading about an abuser exactly like my ex-partner, and he was being repackaged as 'sexy and romantic.' Only by discovering the Fifty Shades is Domestic Abuse campaign did I begin to realize I was not alone in being triggered by the books. This

realization strengthened my resolve to speak out against the dangerous abuse myths perpetuated by *Fifty Shades* and to begin educating others on the reality of abusers.”

Together, they’re asking fellow believers to stand up and #dontbeblindtoabuse. {eoa}