# Anne Hailes challenges Northern Ireland’s media gender biases through bold activism and style



In the often tumultuous arena of Northern Ireland’s media landscape, Anne Hailes has carved a niche for herself as a pioneering journalist, tackling not only pressing social issues but also confronting deep-seated gender biases that have pervaded the industry for decades. Referred to as the "first lady of journalism" in Northern Ireland, Hailes has recounted her unique approach to challenging sexism during her career, a journey marked by both resilience and defiance against established norms.

In a time when women were not always afforded seriousness within the media, Hailes made headlines not just with her stories but with her wardrobe choices. She often donned a shirt and tie, a sartorial statement that sparked conversations about traditional gender roles. The visual rebellion was perhaps as impactful as her writings, symbolising a need to dismantle barriers that confined women to outdated expectations, such as the societal obligation of domestic duties. “Women were expected to prepare meals and iron shirts for their husbands,” Hailes reflects in her commentary, underscoring the necessity for shared responsibilities in contemporary relationships.

Despite the progress made since her early days, Hailes points out that the ‘glass ceiling’ persists, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles across various sectors, including media. A recent study indicates that women remain significantly underrepresented in political reporting, with only 24% of editorial staff in Belfast newspapers being female and just 13% occupying management positions. This underrepresentation is compounded by systemic issues where women’s contributions are often relegated to 'soft' news areas such as health and lifestyle rather than more prestigious political coverage, a phenomenon described as 'ghettoisation' by industry observers.

The cultural dynamics within the media further exacerbate these challenges. Women, including Hailes, have often found themselves under scrutiny for their appearance, an expectation that is starkly contrasted with that faced by their male counterparts. This distinction not only reflects societal biases but also highlights the ongoing struggle for equal recognition and respect in a field dominated by male voices.

Hailes has actively spoken out on these issues, participating in events such as the recent International Women’s Day gathering in Belfast. Organised by Women in Media Belfast, the event focused on 'Embrace Equity,' shining a light on the hurdles that women in journalism continue to encounter and advocating for greater representation. Her presence at such forums underscores her commitment to advancing gender equity and her belief in the collective power of women advocating for change.

Moreover, the discourse surrounding gender equality has evolved, with terms like 'misogyny' often surfacing in conversations about sexism. However, Anne Harris, in an opinion piece, cautions against the overuse of such terminology, arguing that doing so could dilute its significance. This notion reflects a broader need for precise language in addressing the complexities of gender discrimination and the varying degrees of sexism that can manifest in different contexts.

As Hailes continues her work, her influence extends beyond mere journalism; she is a catalyst for change within an industry that still needs to reckon with its gender biases. The legacy she has built enables newer generations of women journalists to forge their paths, emboldened by the progress she has made as both a pioneer and a role model.

In this ongoing struggle for equality, Hailes exemplifies how one can challenge conventions—through both actions and words—creating ripples of change for women in media and beyond. The path may remain fraught with challenges, but leaders like Hailes remind us that persistent advocacy and visibility are vital to addressing entrenched inequalities.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1, 5
2. Paragraph 2: 1, 2
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/how-ni-journalist-used-shirt-and-tie-to-challenge-sexism-in-1980s-people-thought-it-wasnt-very-ladylike/a1994223607.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/columnists/2023/03/05/news/anne-hailes_the-glass-ceiling-is-still-up-there-3102170/> - In this article, Anne Hailes reflects on the persistent gender inequality in Northern Ireland, discussing her experiences with domestic science education for girls and the challenges women face in the workplace. She highlights the outdated expectations placed on women, such as preparing meals and ironing shirts for their husbands, and emphasizes the need for shared responsibilities in modern relationships. Hailes also addresses the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the ongoing struggle against the 'glass ceiling' that limits women's advancement in various sectors.
3. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ni-women-journalists-ghettoised-in-soft-news-equality-report-says-1.32062> - This report from The Irish Times discusses a study revealing that women journalists in Northern Ireland are significantly underrepresented in political reporting, often relegated to 'soft' news areas like education, health, and the arts. The study found that women constitute only 24% of editorial staff on Belfast newspapers and hold just 13% of management positions. It also highlights the challenges women face in broadcasting, including being judged more on appearance than male colleagues and the dominance of male political correspondents in major media outlets.
4. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/anne-harris-the-word-misogyny-is-losing-all-meaning-1.4867531> - In this opinion piece, Anne Harris examines the evolving use of the term 'misogyny' in contemporary discourse. She argues that the term is being overused and losing its meaning, cautioning against labeling every instance of sexism as misogyny. Harris discusses various incidents, including the controversy surrounding UK Labour Party deputy leader Angela Rayner, to illustrate how the term is applied in different contexts. She emphasizes the importance of reserving the term for situations that truly fit its definition to maintain its significance.
5. <https://www.irishnews.com/author/anne-hailes/> - This is the author profile of Anne Hailes on The Irish News website. It provides an overview of her career as a journalist in Northern Ireland, highlighting her role as a columnist and her contributions to the media industry. The profile includes links to her recent articles, showcasing her work on various topics such as language use, historical events, and social issues. It also notes her longstanding presence in the media, indicating her influence and reputation in the field of journalism.
6. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/belfast-lord-mayor-and-broadcast-legend-anne-hailes-attend-international-womens-week-event/1690183175.html> - This article reports on an International Women's Day event held in Belfast City Hall, organized by Women in Media Belfast. The event featured Belfast Lord Mayor Christina Black and journalist Anne Hailes, who is also the branch chair of the National Union of Journalists in Northern Ireland. The theme of the event was 'Embrace Equity,' focusing on the challenges women face in the media industry and advocating for greater representation and support. The article highlights the participation of various women from Northern Ireland and beyond, emphasizing the collaborative effort to address gender inequality.
7. <https://intelligentrelations.com/journalist/anne-hailes/> - This profile provides an overview of Anne Hailes' career as a journalist based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It details her work with The Irish News, covering topics such as health, lifestyle, current events, and local issues. The profile highlights her engaging writing style and her unique perspective on issues affecting the Belfast community. It also notes her contributions to various media outlets and her role in providing insights and commentary on matters pertinent to the people of Belfast and the wider community.