

Gender Inequality

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With the advent of the #metoo movement, and the recent trials of known sexual predators, one might believe that women are equals. Unfortunately, as the recent Supreme Court decision shows, women are not. Women's bodies are still regulated in ways male bodies are not. Women still suffer financial inequality.

The facts are still astounding. For example:

- Women with full-time jobs still earn only about 83 percent of their male counterparts' earnings. African-American women earn 64 cents and Latina women earn 57 cents for every dollar earned by a Caucasian man.
- On average, 30 percent of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their partner.
- Women hold just 27% of seats in the House and 24% in the Senate. Both numbers are similar to the percent of women in the House of Bishops.
- There are 3.6 million open technology jobs in the U.S. and, at the current rate of students graduating with degrees in computer science, men continue to outnumber women 4:1.
- One in five women on U.S. college campuses have experienced sexual assault.
- Women currently hold 15 percent of CEO positions at S&P 500 companies.

Why does gender equality matter?

Gender inequality has left a legacy in which women are more likely to be disadvantaged than men, to have less access to resources, benefits, information and decision-making, and to have fewer rights within the household and within public life.

By sidelining women's voices, we lose up to 50% of the potential talent and knowledge. Women become disproportionately burdened by poverty, lack of access to services and lack of services to health care. For example, before the Affordable Care Act, women were charged up to eighty percent more for health care, and certain plans did not cover reproductive or maternal services. The "pink" tax is also real. Women pay more for toiletries, clothing, girls' toys, and home health care products. How much more? About \$1,351 more a year in extra costs. That is money women, who are already being paid less, don't have.

What about The Episcopal Church?

There is a pay gap between women and men clergy. As reported in a 2013 report, it can be anywhere from 7 to 13% and I am sure those numbers are lower than the reality. Our lowest paid Executive Officer is a female. Plus, how many women clergy hold positions that lead to upward mobility? How many are working two, three calls to earn

an acceptable income? The reality is the Church is not immune to gender inequality. Just as we cannot say racism is dead because we had a President who was a person of color, we cannot say that gender inequality is dead because we had a Presiding Bishop who was a woman.

How do we fix a problem that is so pervasive?

First, we recognize the problem. Take a class or training on gender inequality. Check yourself when sexism happens. Many have heard or thought the following: “She deserved it. Did you see her outfit” Check yourself. Does we care that a female politician changed their hairstyle or gained weight? Why is it when a woman is aggressive at work it is not a positive as it is with a man? Why do we blame women when they are abused? Why are women too emotional to be in roles of authority? Why, when women don’t have children, there must be something wrong that they don’t want to be mothers? Why must women be the sole caretakers of the house and children?

Next, take steps to change the culture:

- Stand up for your rights and the rights of others! If you are a woman, know that you have the same rights as a man. Do not let others step over you. Men, don’t try to bully or demean or use your privilege to trample the rights of women.
- Raise awareness. There are many facts and issues that the public at large is unaware of regarding gender inequality. Maybe this paper showed you something you did not know. Learn about what you do not know. Talk about what you know. Increase public consciousness.
- Don’t hinder the dreams of girls. No matter what they want to be, they can. Show them the sky is the limit. Math and science can be female professions. Being elected a Bishop is a reality.
- Watch your language. We all know not to use derogatory language when referring to women, but how often do we ask: So, your doctor/lawyer/priest, what is HIS name? Your teacher/assistant, what is HER name? Language matters. Pronouns show us that it is normal for a woman to be a doctor, and that we should not always use the masculine gender for positions of authority.

Finally, take note of what is around you. Is your place of employment male dominated? Why? Did your vestry recently search for a new clergy person? How many of the final slate were female? When you are in a meeting do you assume women will be the secretary at the meeting?

Actions such as these, whether small or large, can begin to change the culture of gender inequality.