

Gender Inequality in America: Is it here to Stay?

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Equality has many dimensions and is constantly evolving throughout the years. The reason why it is so dynamic and changing is because it is being accustomed to society's needs and cultural norms. Specifically, gender equality has come a meandering way to where it is today. Women have struggled to obtain not only voting rights in their own nation, but also reproductive rights. During the 20th and 21st centuries, gender has become multifaceted after stemming from the accepted male and female identities. People have established that gender is socially constructed rather than being biological. Transgender, pan-sexual, and gender-fluid all have been gradually accepted, but it is going to be a tedious process due to previously accepted traditional norms. Gender equality has been consistently modeled by the United States as a solid platform; however, it is staggering during the 21st century. Politicians have made it more difficult for women and gender minority individuals to obtain basic human rights due to biased views. Religion is constantly used as a backbone for legislative decisions when it comes to women and the LGBTQ community. There should be no justification to use religion in legal decision-making to implement laws. In the United States, basic rights for women and non-traditional gender identities are being wrongfully discriminated against based on a patriarchal society through abusing the separation of church and state which, in result, is regressing not only rights for these minority genders, but also modern-day progression as a society.

In retrospect, the United States Constitution established the term known as, "Separation of Church and State" which was coined by Thomas Jefferson. What this respected Founding Father yearned for America was to have no law pass based on religious views in any shape or form. Unfortunately, this stance is not as concrete as one would believe for it to be in a capitalistic, Western society. Separation of Church and State is a widely accepted interpretation of the phrasing in the Bill of Rights; however, it is not specifically there. Religion is used as a

moral authority in American society instead of being non-existent, let alone not allowing for it to be influential in any political decision. According to Carol J. Greenhouse, she believed that religion, or specifically Christianity, was used as the emotion and identity of what America is all about. “Thus, the prevalence of churches as the primary voluntary association for most Americans had the effect of coloring American society with the “ethos” of Protestant asceticism—what Weber elsewhere calls “the spirit of capitalism”— the “individualist impulse” fused through church membership to the institutional spectrum (personal, social, economic, political) of moral value (Greenhouse, C.J. 2006. p 7)”. If America was founded on “freedom of practicing religion”, then how did religion become the “ethos” of not only our society, but also our political decisions and political party platforms?

The 2016 Presidential Elections has defined American society more than it ever has before, specifically in modern times. The reason why is because it has catapulted a certain sect of the Republican Party’s interests and agenda to become a reality; specifically, the radical social conservative. President Donald Trump is working in the radical social conservatives’ favor by pushing for limitations on women’s and gender minorities’ rights. One example is how the Trump Administration is trying to pass a law that will allow employers to deny their female employees of birth control and could more than likely override LGBTQ rights and medical needs based on their religious beliefs (Crary, D., Alonso-Zaldivar, R., 2017.). As described by *Chicago Tribune* article, it was considered a “great day” for conservatives since Trump is “restoring religious freedom” which seems too ironic and twisted. How is this restoring religious freedom when an employer would be discriminating their women and gender minority employees based on their gender? In my opinion, Trump and this specific sect of the Republican Party are forcing

their ideologies and beliefs which limits the freedoms and free will for women and LGBTQ persons living in America.

I believe that the women's and the LGBTQ community's rights are being taken as a gamble, like betting "all on red", in a casino game at Las Vegas. Picture this. The corrupted politicians are congregating in the Capitol building to start their day of "living the dream". The corrupted are throwing their cards down to state how their beliefs and agenda is the only correct way to go. The other congressmen, who are the rarity in this room, plead to the corrupted to reevaluate their decisions and consider the outcomes of them. Instead of thinking strategically, the law-making decisions are made impulsively because they are based on power and leverage.

The question that is lingering is how can this be potentially solved through successful communication? If implemented, organizational communication would be a great start when it comes to understanding how our leaders interact and if they are communicating effectively. Organizational communication can help direct our institutions to reach a better understanding of its citizen's needs and concerns to improve the quality of the lives, specifically women and the LGBTQ community. Organizational communication is an open system where individuals come together to achieve a common goal. This type of communication can be to inform, persuade, and/or promote goodwill. Since organizational communication is an open system, it is supposed to have permeable boundaries which allows inputs and outputs; however; it is determined by the power structure regardless if it is corrupt or not. The structure of a society is based on its hierarchy which consists of established roles and interactions. This sets the tone of the communication that will be utilized between the leaders and its citizens. Unfortunately, this opens avenues and opportunities for institutions and its leaders to accumulate wealth and power for the wrong reasons if acted upon. "The common goal of critical organizational communication

is emancipation (whether this is of persons, values, and/or beliefs) and/or problematizing control, identity, and/or boundaries” (Gasser, A., 2017. p 130). These are questions that are necessary for the institutions and its leaders to ask themselves to keep themselves in check. Does effective mean to “get the job done” or that the “people understood and felt recognized? What are the consequences for this outcome and for all who are involved? Is this beneficial for our citizens or is it beneficial for ourselves and our agendas?

I believe that the radical social conservative congressmen and the Trump Administration do not have genuine intentions to help the American people, especially for women and gender minorities. We were progressing fervently through the last few decades, especially during the Obama-era, when it comes to equality for these two groups. In 2011, health insurances were required to provide women with birth control without a co-pay, so they can have the means of family planning. Women were becoming more of a priority when it comes to reproductive rights and were receiving more access to medical care to continue to stay healthy and up-to-date due to the Affordable Healthcare Act. In 2013, the ban against women in the military to fight in the combat lines was overturned (Milligan, S., 2017.). For the LGBTQ community, the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” ban ended in 2011 which allowed gay men, lesbians, and transgender people to be open about their sexual orientation and gender in the military. Gay marriage became legalized in 2015 for the entire United States. In the same year, Boy Scouts of America removed a restriction that prevented leaders and employees to be openly gay. In 2016, the Pentagon ended the ban on transgender people to serve openly in the military (CNN Library, 2017.). There are countless milestones for women and the LGBTQ community through the United States government.

Currently, the Trump Administration and this specific denomination of the Republican Party are striving to overturn these past successes to the point of regression. In retrospect, this

2016 Presidential election has unearthed the camouflaged weeds of prejudices, racism, sexism, and extremist ideologies that we mistakenly believed were predominantly left behind. We were wrong. It has always existed beneath the cracks. President Trump has created an amiable atmosphere for the “weeds” to be accepted and to maintain its growth. This cannot continue because women and gender minorities will be left in the dust after losing their rights after decades of perseverance and grit. With certainty, we can draw a premise that the discourse of the American government versus the women and gender minorities is imbalanced and a power-struggle. Discourse is defined as a written or spoken communication. A type of criticism that we can quickly extract from this poor discourse is postmodern criticism. “Postmodern criticism examines the complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse. Fragmentation of identities, the importance of discourse and meaning, and complex understandings of power are central to many postmodern analyses of organizations” (Gasser, A. p 133). A postmodern criticism scholar and French philosopher, Michel Foucault, focused on how knowledge and power are correlated when it comes to power structures. He believed that knowledge and meaning are produced in discourse; however, if any linguistic practices are outside of this, then it will cease to have meaning. Foucault states how the discourse decides what is and is not included inside of the discourse between the groups. It establishes who can speak, and what is allowed to be said. This is what causes unequal power relations in power structures. Foucault discusses how we produce knowledge in a society that is based on that accepted knowledge. In question, how can we create new knowledge when our society is too accustomed and stubborn to seek a new perspective? What is stopping us to advance and accumulate contemporary ideas and norms? In my opinion, I believe it is fear. It is fear to accept society’s changes and beliefs. It is fear to abolish traditional ideas and beliefs. It can also be fear of white assimilation becoming a part of

the past. The United States has a deep history when it comes to racism and sexism. We are a fairly new country compared to the rest of the Western World. Although the process can be gradual, it does not leave room for excuses especially with the standards the country is upheld to. The citizens have become familiar with the laws and archaic ideals that it naturalizes them. They begin to believe that their voice does not matter and will not promote change. In result of this, society can become less willing to contest to unjust laws. A constant discourse, such as this, is a control mechanism to continue this immoral hegemony for women and gender minorities.

Arianne Gasser discusses how feminist criticism is also associated with organizational communication. She says how there are many types of feminism, but they share some constructs. First, gender categorizes identities and relationships. Second, work both reflects and creates gender identity. Third, masculinity is privileged. Fourth, gender, identity, and power are intertwined and constantly shifting. Fifth, gender, power, and organization are ongoing accomplishments, constantly achieved and destabilized in the mundane activity of life (Gasser, A. p 132). This all comes down to how America is a patriarchal power structure, and gender and power are consistent with each other. It proves that the discourse for women and gender minorities is an evolving and a strenuous process in organizational communication, but it is not unattainable.

In conclusion, the power structure we have familiarized and accepted has to come to a halt and promptly innovate. The power structure is evidently ineffective, untrustworthy, power-thirsty, greedy, and unadaptable. The discourse of the power structure versus women and gender minorities needs to become equal and have an absence of a hidden agenda by the leaders. It is time for women and gender minorities to be given the treatment, justice, and equality they deserve to lead not only a better way of life, but also help lead our country out of the darkness.

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