

7/6/19

Who Runs the World? Girls.

In today's day and age, it is important for us to recognize women for who they truly are, super humans that do it all. To this day, women everywhere continue to be undermined by men, especially in the work place. While we as a country have made progression toward equality between men and women in terms of rights, we continue to have social norms that prevent women from receiving equal pay and overall similar treatment in comparison to men in the work place.

The stigma is that men are the hard-working bread winners, while women should be at home cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children. Right? Wrong. However, this is the historical idea of gender roles that society has set in our community that still exist in some ways to this day. According to the article, "How Women's Role in the Labor Movement Helped Create Labor Day" by Melissa Cruz (2018), women's role in the U.S. workforce began to change during the Industrial Revolution. Instead of the traditional homemaker role, women began to take on jobs in factories, mills, and coal mines to help support their families. Women were given more dangerous tasks, were paid less, and worked grueling shifts. Amongst being treated unfairly, women were some of the first to unionize in support of safer, more humane working conditions (Cruz, 2018). Unionizing allowed women to express their opinions during a time in which they were not allowed to vote. Additionally, they organized strikes that were first of their kind and some of the largest known in the 19th century that demanded more reasonable hours, safer working conditions, and equal pay. According to the article, "Breaking the Gender Barrier: A Woman's Place is in Her Union" by staff at the University of Maryland, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union formed in the 20th century. This union organized a massive walk

out, in which they convinced male co-workers to participate in, after a preventable fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory that killed 146 workers. This event led to new laws for better and safer working conditions. Throughout the 20th century, women worked tirelessly to make gender equality central to the union movement.

During World War II, women were able to demonstrate their capability in the work place and proved that they could do “men’s” work. According to the article, “American Women in WWII” by editors of history.com (2010), 350,000 women served in the U.S. armed forces, both at home and abroad. Between 1940-1945, the percentage of female workers in the U.S. workforce increased 10%. In 1943, women represented 65% of the U.S. aircraft industry in which they only represented 1% of in the pre-war years. The munitions industry also heavily recruited women workers in which was represented by the U.S. governments “Rosie the Riveter” propaganda campaign (“American Women in WWII”, 2010). This campaign became one of the most successful recruitment tools in American history and remains an iconic image to this day. Women then had to learn to balance at home responsibilities on top of working a paid job. Unfortunately, women’s employment was only encouraged during the duration of the war making their new roles/jobs temporary; however, this time-period empowered women to fight for equal pay and equal rights in the workplace. On June 10th, 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed into law the Equal Pay Act in which prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women performing the same job in the same workplace. While there has been progression toward closing the gender pay gap since, we have yet to be fully successful in doing so.

The future for women in the work force is bright and continues to move in the right direction toward equality. In the article, “Women and Work: Then, Now, and Predicting the

Future” by Susan Heathfield (2019), it is said that in 1950, only 1 in 3 women participated in labor force. In 2008, women made up 48% of the total labor force. Data shows that on average, women earn \$0.77 cents for every dollar earned by men. Other data suggests that women won’t reach equal pay until 2152. Not only do women have to fight for equality in the workplace compared to men, but they now must worry about losing their jobs to advanced AI technology and robots. 54% of workers employed in high risk occupations such as: secretary, cashier, etc. are women. In other words, women face higher risk of automation than men. In the meantime, unions help create an equal playing field for women in the work force. To help address the challenges ahead in the future of work for women, it is important to confront social norms, policies, and inequalities that are barriers to women. According to the article, “Women in Unions” by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (2019), “unions have led efforts to break occupational segregation, close the gender pay gap, enhance women’s access to social protection, and promote women’s access to paid formal work”. Within unions, wage is based on skill, effort, and responsibility, not gender. In 2014, women made up 45.5% of union members. According to the article, “What Do Unions Do for Women” by Jill Braunstein, Lois Shaw, & Robin Dennis (1994), women represented by labor unions earn 30.9% more per week compared to women in non-union jobs. Additionally, women experience a smaller gender wage gap in which they earn \$0.88 cents for every dollar earned by men. While greater earnings for women is a prime benefit for being a part of a union, women’s leadership and different perspective is critical for promoting issues such as: affordable child care, paid maternity leave, and more (Braunstein, Shaw, & Dennis, 1994).

Although a small pay gap remains, and women will continue to take on primary responsibilities at home on top of working a paying job, they will also continue to persevere and increase their position in the work force.

Bibliography

Braunstein, J., Shaw, L., & Dennis, R. (1994, March). What Do Unions Do For Women?

Retrieved from

https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1444&context=key_workplace

Editors, H. (2010, March 05). American Women in World War II. Retrieved from

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/american-women-in-world-war-ii-1>

Editors, H. (2019, February 26). Milestones in Women's History: A Timeline. Retrieved from

<https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/womens-history-us-timeline>

Heathfield, S. M. (2019, June 25). What's the Future for Women in the Workplace? Retrieved

from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/women-and-work-1919356>

How Women's Role in the Labor Movement Helped Create Labor Day - J-1 Journeys. (2018,

November 14). Retrieved from <http://j1journeys.org/how-womens-role-in-the-labor-movement-helped-create-labor-day/>

McDermott, A. (2018, July 02). How World War II Empowered Women. Retrieved from

<https://www.history.com/news/how-world-war-ii-empowered-women>

The Future of Work for Women. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<https://www.newamerica.org/work-workers-technology/shiftlabs/blog/future-work-women/>

Women and Labor Unions. (2016, August 25). Retrieved from

<https://womenandlaborthestoryofmolliewest.wordpress.com/early-activism/women-in-unions/>

Women and Work After World War II. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/tupperware-work/>

Women in Unions. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://statusofwomensdata.org/women-in-unions/>

Women's Rights. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.lib.umd.edu/unions/social/womens-rights>