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PANEL V

**Future perspectives on the promotion of gender equality:
through the eyes of young men and women**

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* The paper has been reproduced as submitted.

"I do not mind living in a man's world, as long as I can be a woman in it."

A few years ago these words were relayed to me by a revolutionary woman who, of the time, was deemed by our mutual male acquaintances as a controversial nuisance

Admittedly, my knee-jerk reaction was to simply turn a cold shoulder over her convictions; I had found contentedness in my blind ignorance, and saw no particular reason to go about eradicating gender inequality which I believed was intangible, out-of-context, and perhaps even inexistent.

From that moment on, I've regretted having done so. Throughout my adolescence, I often find myself randomly returning to what she had said, and each relapse brought forth in me a stronger drive to elicit meaning in her words, to breathe in the ardency that fanned her flames.

It took me, without exaggeration, my entire teenage life to understand what being a woman in a man's world meant. It means that she must ever settle with what is

lipstick, our lives will magically transform into oblivion. Quite obviously, these are fake promises, and it is my sincere hope that young women my age are aware of the flagrant lies behind gender propaganda. However, it is simply not enough to ignore the mainstream media, because the word 'mainstream' in and of itself entails large masses subscribing to what sexist TV shows and magazines endorse. We simply cannot allow teens to be exposed to such messages, because they trivialize the intellect and overemphasize the importance of the superficial self. We simply cannot proceed with this dire, shockingly apparent lack of respectable female role-models in the public eye.

on TV serve as puppets to perpetuate chauvinistic agendas, catering to a predominately male audience – men, after all, are 97% of the entertainment world's directors.

We are hereby witnessing the commodification of women. Strongest evidence of

women who say, "*I don't work, I'm just a housewife*". They are, quite bluntly, mistaken (or dangerously modest, at the very least). Such a statement blatantly dismisses all the important tasks these women do at home as trivial. I am in no way implying that we should revert to backwards marital divisions of labor in which women remain faithfully at home, while men bring bread to the table. I am simply saying that feminism is a matter of choice. And the power of choosing, indeed, is a role model in and of itself.

It is absolutely crucial that we inform young people of their basic human rights which, of course, simultaneously include gender rights as well. Two things need to be done in order to achieve this:

First, we must encourage governments to push for gender-fair education. Girls in rural outskirts should have the exact same equal access to education as boys in urban areas do. In the past, governments have ignored the lack of *any* form of education

amongst the former let alone sex and female rights education. Now is the time for them

to adopt the notion that schooling is *the* quickest means to economic, social, and personal progression in a highly gender-biased world.

Secondly, the education itself needs to undergo a series of reformations and changes. That is, it should aim to highlight women's rights as issues of primary importance. As a global community, we have a moral obligation to see to it that the universal definition of female abuse does not only encompass incidents at the most basic levels (i.e: visible scars of battery), but also includes mental and emotional brutalities. We cannot begin to foster a sense of responsibility to gender equality in young men,

summer school in the picturesque, well-to-do regions of France; sexism of any sort was conveniently tucked away from my view. Only a few years later, I moved to a remote part of Brazil, where wife-beating and homelessness were literally outside my front porch. The juxtaposition between one economic extreme and another struck me as disturbing, but it soon became apparent in my mind that regardless of where I lived and what I witnessed, there existed gender issues that millions of poor *and* rich women have to endure.

So it truly is a shame that the majority of young girls I grew up with had the preconceived notion that when women come to the United States, they magically transform into one of those happy, lucky people who lead luxuriously carefree lives. The first world, to them, already carried with it an envy-worthy mystique; it was thought to be a swanky, glamorous place in which women moved freely in laissez-faire metropolises with soaring salaries.

the first-world as well, and women of the third-world like myself, economically disadvantaged as we are, still carry the moral obligation to keep close watch of this.

In spite of assimilating to new surroundings every three years, I never once forgot the repercussions of being a woman from a third-world country. My gender has and

to understand what true equality is. We must see to it that these oppressions do not

snowball over time, tiding over to the next generation.

“Why were men better than women when you were young? Why were there so

many inequalities when you were young?” my daughter will ask me. I will not know what to tell her.

I’ve dedicated the greater bulk of my political agenda to procuring an answer for her. And so after years of fruitlessly turning to dead-ends and undelivered promises, I found the answer right where I began: my own self, or rather, my generation. I am

~~“And I think that inequality is, though we see the primary equality of gender~~