

## Women in the Workforce: “Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better”

Recently, I was scrolling through Facebook and stumbled upon a video under the title of “Gavin McInnes Battles Tamara Holder: 'You'd Be Much Happier At Home with a Husband and Children.'” I grudgingly submitted to the clickbait and pressed play. Immediately, I was bombarded with phrases from the speaker on CNN, Gavin McInnes, who flung statements such as “[Women] would rather go to their daughter’s piano recital than stay all night at work, working on a proposal...they are less ambitious,” “this is God’s way, this is nature’s way of saying that women should be at home, they’re happier there, and “they are pretending that they like working...they’re not making money because they don’t stay all night at the office, they don’t go the extra mile.” I was taken aback. However, the wheels began to turn as a result of the crass remarks.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, women have made huge strides, earning respect amongst their male peers, a voice in the world, and equal rights. Due to the advent of the women’s suffrage movement and the jobs that needed to be fulfilled during World War II that allowed women a channel into the workplace, women have made advances for their own generation and the ones to follow. So, when I hear misogynistic remarks like the ones by Mr. McInnes, that discredits the capability *and* passion of women in the career force, it greatly troubles me. Ideas like this one pervade the professional realm and are prevalent in cases where we see harassment, unequal pay, and male-dominated sectors. There is still a barrier that prevents women from reaching their full potential.

For the reasons listed above, there is a dire need for more women in the workforce. Although there has been a steadily growing number of our female counterparts in the workforce since the 1960s, during the beginning of the feminist movement, there still is a shortage of women. The increased visibility of women in the workplaces is not only beneficial to females, but to all of corporate America. There is an untapped potential of the female labor force that can bolster the economy and productivity of companies alike. An increase in the female labor force can reduce poverty in developing countries, helping better the lives of individual families and the general economy for those countries. Additionally, research shows that gender equality has a positive correlation with per capita GDP, further contributing to the idea that women in the workforce can improve the economy. Furthermore, women in the workplace attracts more talent. A company or a sector that is heavily comprised of males is not as appealing to women looking to enter the workforce or a particular field. By increasing diversification and seeing a presence of both genders, companies are able to increase their talent pool. In doing so, a company is armed with a full talent pool, providing them with robust ideas and perspectives since they are equipped with individuals from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Women holding prominent positions in the workforce of very successful companies such as Indra Nooyi as the chair and CEO of PepsiCO, Marillyn Hewson as CEO of Lockheed Martin, and Houston’s own Vicki Hollub as President of Oxy Oil and Gas are proof of this.

Not only do women in the workplace help create successful companies and a thriving economy, but there is something that the presence of women in the workplace does for us women specifically – it empowers us. For centuries, women have taken a backseat to their male counterparts, rearing children and taking care of the home. However, when women began to enter the workforce, women began to take ahold of the reigns of their own destiny. They controlled their economic fate. Women found their voice and their confidence. Being able to have children and raise a family is a blessing. Staying at home to raise children and take care of a

family is a noble choice. My mom was a stay-at-home mom for sixteen years. When she became pregnant with me, my dad and she jointly decided that she would become a stay-at-home mom. For almost two decades, she raised my brother and I. She was at every school function, took us to every practice, drove us to every doctor appointment, and nursed us back to health when we were sick. She never has called it a sacrifice, but a choice that she willingly made and would do a hundred times over. However, as we grew older and became less dependent on her, her attitude changed. Her schedule was not chock-full of doctors' appointments, PTA meetings, Little League practices, and picking us up from school. With a new void in her life, she realized that she had lost her identity over those sixteen years and her sense of who she was. The less she felt needed, the more that her confidence dwindled away. When my younger brother began driving, my mom went back to work. Yes, she was nervous and scared of entering back into the workforce, but once she made the transition, she rediscovered her sense of who she was as an individual. Her confidence in herself and in her talents changed her personality for the better. She walked with her shoulders held higher and a new stride. She found something that I believe is the most important thing that the workforce can give us – a sense of independence and pride in who we are as women.

Reflecting upon the comments made by Gavin McInnes, I do not believe that women are less ambitious, do not go the extra mile, or are necessarily happier at home with a husband and children. Each woman has distinct path that she is the sole creator of, and no one choice is wrong. However, I do believe this – that by women saturating the workforce we can move closer to a true definition of equality, earning the respect of our fellow man and proving that our capabilities are not defined by our gender, while empowering other women along the way.

So, to those who sit on the board of the Texas Business and Professional Women's Foundation, what I am asking you to do is to help empower me. As an undergraduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, I have proven myself that I can defy the odds and wear many hats. I have successfully maintained a 3.76 GPA in Government while competing as an NCAA D1 athlete of the University of Texas Women's Track and Field team, completing two internships for Texas legislators in the Texas State Capitol, working for a presidential campaign, and interning at a law firm. I have held my own in a male-dominated world and plan to continue to do so after graduating Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service with an M.P.P.A. and concentration in Energy, Environment, and Technology Policy Management, entering back into the energy sector in Houston upon graduation. While obtaining my graduate degree in College Station, no longer as a Longhorn, but as a fightin' Texas Aggie, I will be taking my last year of eligibility in track as a javelin thrower which will consume twenty hours a week of my time while transitioning to the rigorous curriculum of graduate school. After completion of my first year, I will be able to work to pay for my schooling. However, as I am sure you all know, there are not many scholarships available for graduate students, and there is a rising cost to attend a professional school in the United States. Student debt has become a heavy burden in this country. The cost of my attending school in addition to living expenses comes out to about \$22,000 annually. I will be paying for my graduate degree on my own. I will be working in the summer and during my second year of school in order to try to graduate debt free. In the meantime, I will take out student loans if necessary. What I am asking you, Texas Business and Professional Women's Foundation, is to help me alleviate this burden. If I was fortunate enough to be granted this scholarship, not only would it empower me, but by investing in my education which allows me to enter the workforce as a qualified candidate, it puts one additional female presence in the workforce, empowering other females as well.