



Community Conversation/Genesee County July 23, 2019

Gender Equity

Session Summary

A community conversation on gender equity was held in Grand Blanc. The event, a small gathering of over 50 influential women, took place for the purpose of sharing experiences, insights and ideas on a topic important to the lives and contributions of women, their families and society overall. The objective - to facilitate meaningful dialogue for the collaborative identification of key issues and opportunities for taking constructive and positive action for long-term impact.

While there are numerous important women's issues, the focus of this first conversation was gender equity. It is hoped this approach to community conversations will serve as a model for use in discussion on other important topics in the future.

Planning Team: Jay Kommareddi (Host/Convener & Community Activist), Cheryl Bergman (Office of the Governor), Annette Rodgers (Office of U.S. Senator Stabenow) & Karla Kretzschmer (Facilitator, Principle Consultant/CEO of Lumency Group)

Session Highlights

Arrivals/Mix & Mingle –

Question: What is one impact gender inequity has on your community?

Responses:

Professional:

- Less work, pay and respect; higher personal risk
- Pay inequality/disparity in the workplace – increased pay gap for women at all levels, especially women of color
- Women's unique voice and perspective is lost – stifles women from being the best valued contributors they can be
- Impacted the way I think about what I'm going to do in my future
- Prevents me from attracting diverse candidates (women & minorities) to come and work for my organization
- Women should only be CEO of small organizations or be second in command in government positions
- Board appointments being top heavy with men; prejudicial bias when selecting board members for certain board positions
- Many large institutions, non-profits, school boards are led by men (often white) and employees are women and minorities

- Lack of opportunities for leadership in male-dominated organizations; Women are viewed as helpers, not leaders so their perspectives are not represented in decision-making
- Lack of women in high level executive positions - More men in power
- Regardless of the strides that have been made, we are still operating in a “man’s world” with continued “good old boys” network in evidence
- Negative impact in law enforcement community – in almost every aspect from recruitment to the way cases are evaluated
- Discouraging women from entering financial services

Personal & Society:

- Feeling that women are subordinate to men even though they may be equally educated and financially independent – ingrained belief
- Less able to influence because of restricted opportunity
- Stopping great ideas from moving forward
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Flint is supported by a slew of social workers (majority are women) making a difference
- Significant impact on our economy and growth to move forward
- Overall – divisive, internalized, resistant and diminishing/degrading

Education:

- Women are not achieving the education they need to be self-supporting
- Opportunities available in education for girls vs. boys in schools

Male Roles:

- Do not expect men to play an active father role in the home
- Deportation of fathers leaves women and children behind
- Men’s voices are heard and listened to – ours are ignored – our ideas become their ideas

Welcome by Jay Kommareddi & Introduction of Governor Gretchen Whitmer

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
Message with Q&A



Sharing Experiences – Panel Discussion

Panelists:

- **Dr. Nita Kulkarni MD**, OB/GYN - Healthcare
- **Dr. Sara Soderstrom**, Associate Professor UM Ann Arbor – Academia
- **Natasha Thomas-Jackson**, Co-Founder & Executive Director at RAISE IT UP! Youth Arts & Awareness - Community Advocate
- **Kathleen Vogelsang**, Vice Chair of Michigan Women’s Commission and Chief Investment Officer, Van Andel institute - Not-for-profits & Corporate Boards

- **Jane Worthing**, President/CEO at The Genesee Group, Inc. - Small Business Owners

Topics covered

- Personal examples of gender equity challenges faced in life, family and career (*healthcare, academia, financial sector, small business & non-profits*)
- Effects of gender inequity on our communities
- Critical issues or aspects of gender equity needing attention
- Implications for women's health and public health
- Need for gender and racial diversity on boards and governing bodies
- Intersectionality
- Insights from relevant research and information (*on above topics*)

Generating Ideas for Action for Progress Against Sexism – Small Group Activity

Best ideas for action with thought to this group collectively, individual spheres of influence and ways the Governor can help.

- **Board Composition, State grants and contracts** – Boards composition requirements (including on grant applications and reports) - 12; State Resolution for diversity on Boards (non-profit & corporate) – 12; Pass a law for 50% women & other diversity on corporate boards – 2; State grant criteria is a diverse board – 4; boards must represent diversity of population you are serving – 7; State contracts not granted unless diversity track record is checked – 8; More women in public office and on Boards - 1 (**total 38**)
- *Policies in the State – Pay Equity & Board Representation (3)*
- **Pay Equity** – Annual audits; greater transparency/disclosure; legislation for penalties; make the business case for gender pay equity (strategies by industry) (**29**)
- **Education & Training (Workplace & Schools)** - Formalized training and practices for women's equity; educational component; Education on bias early – educate on what recourse can be taken if harassed; bias training within your own organizations - 7; Focus on equity in schools (including policy in schools) – 7; More training for teachers on Intersectionality and heterosexism; Name patterns of bias – 7; Empowering Women with education and educating girls to see all possibilities (no limits); Women in apprenticeship programs – 4; Educate boards of corporations; Educate police and firefighters (**total 25**)
- **County Women's Commissions** throughout MI (**24**)
- **Women's Health** – More women in the health field being brought to the table - as medical teachers, researchers, doctors, nurses; more funding for medical research; educating women on being their advocates on medical issues (**19**)
- **Financial Literacy and Independence Education for Women (14)**
- **Mentoring for Youth & Women Role Models** – Be One, Seek One; Identify individuals to be partners in leadership; Include advancement; Programs structured like “Undoing Racism” (**14**)
- **Self-advocacy & self-awareness** – Leadership; be proactive in equity issues - 3; Quit putting barriers (Ruth Bader Ginsberg)- 3; Don't self-select out - 3; Advocating - 1 (**total 10**)
- **Thoughtful/planned approach & leadership** - Brainstorm to identify problems and prioritize what to approach; Need qualitative and quantitative information (for global experience – scope); Be consistent in goals and message; Intentional; Talk about it – have more than one space to talk about it - 4; Need leadership team to help plot course of action – 3; Incorporate real, personal experiences -1; Serious action to break down barriers – 1 (**total 9**)

- **Reframe** - Consider issues typically seen as women’s issues as family and societal issues - 6; Frame as non-partisan issue - 2 (**total 8**)
- **Male Allies** - get men involved in these efforts/recruiting them; have them be part of the discussion; include our sons; Educating boys/men (**7**)
- Media campaigns regarding data – “You’re Not Crazy” campaign (6)
- HR Policies - Workplace Practices - Hiring equity; Evaluate women the same as men – on their potential; Workplace Sexist Comments – Report to HR or Leadership; Internal investigations (4)
- Involve labor unions (4)
- Collaboration - Women need to collaborate rather than compete; break silos; team alignment and framing; Women uplifting each other; Don’t feed into negative things that we say about each other (2)
- No gender tax on female products (2)
- Gender neutral language and giving boys/girls same toys; Men “babysitting” their kids
- Sports Funding – Title IV
- Avoiding tokenism

Numbers indicate votes/dots given for those of greatest importance with highest potential for traction and forward progress. Each participant was given six dots/votes.

Closing (Karla & Jay)

- **Top Priorities** (first four were shout-outs):
 1. Require Diversity in Board Composition, Grants & Contracts
 2. Pay Equity
 3. Women’s Health
 4. County Women’s Commissions
 5. Education & Training (Workplace & Schools) – *added given above results*
- **Articles available with links**
 - [Okay, mainstream media, prove your coverage isn’t sexist](#), The Washington Post Opinion by Jennifer Rubin, May 29, 2019
 - [Michigan Gov Gretchen Whitmer knocks Detroit Fox affiliate for putridly sexist story](#), The Washington Post Opinion by Erik Wemple, February 14, 2019
 - [Impact and Indicators of Sexism](#), Safe@School
 - [Sexism isn’t just unfair - it makes women sick, study suggests](#), The Conversation, Catherine Harnois & Joao Luiz Bastos, May 4, 2018
 - [Shedding light on gender and navigating academia](#), University of Michigan ERB Institute, Sara Soderstrom, Spring 2019
- **Next steps – Other opportunities**
 - Potential future conversations being considered, interest shared by Attorney General, Dana Nessel
 - This summary will be shared with Governor Gretchen Whitmer and her team
 - Progressive Women’s Caucus Town Hall being hosted by Rep. Sheryl Kennedy August 12 at Mott Community College (Clio)
- **Thank you** to all participants for your active engagement!