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Feminism is defined as "the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes". So, why was black history month such a busy time for feminist club? Why did I find myself, the VP, spending late nights making posters and purchase orders for a pride day, when my club is in no way affiliated with LGBTQ+ rights? Feminist club, the club ensuring the "advocacy of women's rights", and yet my favorite gel pen is running out of ink because I filled up three pages in my journal writing about what we can do for men. My schemes to abate toxic masculinity smudge the papers with colorful, glittery letters.

Women's rights advocate Mahnaz Afkhami once said "The connection between women's human rights, gender equality, socioeconomic development, and peace is increasingly apparent", and I couldn't agree more. What my feminist club is working towards isn't just intersectional feminism. Gender equality and progress are inextricably linked.

Women comprise 50.8% of the population (1), and yet, are just 19% of Congress and, 0% of all presidents in US history. For such a "progressive" country, America ranks 105th for female representation in government (3), behind countries including Kenya and Indonesia. It would do us some good to elect more female officials. Women in legislation promote gender equality as well as children's rights, and are more likely to advocate for and give back to their communities (4). Women are traditionally considered more empathetic and peaceful, whereas men are thought of as more violent and stubborn.

So, let's assemble these statistics. This is not to say that all men are inherently cantankerous, or that women would make superior governors. The disparity between the genders needs to be looked at in the context of society: the patriarchy is unquestionably detrimental to both genders, and society as a whole. Women are more apt to be peacekeepers, while men are generally more pugnacious, but these traits aren't woven into the fabric of our DNA. Men are told from birth to be manly and unyielding to the

point where it becomes pernicious to their mental health. Toxic masculinity is a real problem for men. Females comprise only 24% of the STEM workforce (5), while conversely, just 6% of registered nurses are men (6). In a truly egalitarian society, girls wouldn't feel like they didn't belong at a robotics competition, and mothers wouldn't hesitate to hand their precious little Timmy his first sewing kit instead of a toolbox. Gender equality goes much further than legislation.

Women hold the key to an improved society. But they shouldn't have to. When the patriarchy no longer exists, when negative stereotypes and expectations no longer inflict both men and women, we won't have to advocate for gender equality, and society will have become that much closer to achieving the peace and civility of which Afkhami speaks. But until that day, my sparkly gel pen will keep on writing, plotting ways in which I can make a difference.

References

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