

## **Gender Equ(al)ity**

### Reflection Paper on Gender Equality

For many years, people have come a long way to achieve equality – to be specific, gender equality. According to an article by the University of Edinburgh:

“Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and no less favourably, specific to their needs, including areas of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and age.”

Through those years, it is undeniable that there has been progress on women achieving gender equality. An example is the women’s suffrage. Historically, women have been excluded from political life and decision-making processes. Women’s campaigns for participation in the public and political arena date back to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continue today. Here in the Philippines, there has also been a case of exclusion to the political life. The Filipino women won the right to vote before the 1935 constitution was adopted. Another example is in the workforce. Nowadays, women are doing almost the same jobs as men.

However, it is also undeniable that this progress is not enough and we still have to come a very long way to achieve full gender equality. But is equality even attainable? Is there even such thing as equality? Or is it all just an illusion?

In Goldberg’s book *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, he defined patriarchy as a structure of power relations which endorses male supremacy and female subordination. Patriarchy has been a part of the Philippine society for a long time. What makes equality seem impossible is because the root of inequality is patriarchy and it is alive in today’s society. If we look closely, we could see that almost every facet of life constitute into serving the interests men and disadvantaging women.

Women are usually thought to have a lower position than men. Women are seen as merely objects that can be used to satisfy the sexual urges of men. The sexualization of women is evident in today’s advertisements and can be observed through pornography and prostitution. Women who are in the line of work of

prostitution are often seen as disgusting and worthless because some people seem to forget that prostitution is nothing but a profession and that a lot of women end up as prostitutes not because they want to but because they have no choice. It might just be their only way to get by in life and support their family and what do they get? Sexual abuse.

Growing up in a patriarchal country, some people have very little knowledge on why equality is important that they themselves unconsciously support and/or promote inequality. We are already on the 21<sup>st</sup> century but victim-blaming is still prevalent. Women are put at fault for getting raped because their shorts were too short, because their clothes were too revealing, and because they were asking for it. And the sad fact is that some women even support this kind of thinking because ever since, girls are always taught to be careful in this world but seldom the boys.

Gender equality might be hard to achieve but it is not impossible. One way to build a gender-balanced society is to dethrone patriarchy. The patriarchal nature of our society continues to shape gender inequality that it has allowed male domination and female subordination. Another is that current laws and policies must be amended to be truly effective and not biased. Women should not be blinded of the culture which imprisons them. Both men and women must start questioning traditional practices that discriminate against women. Even the children who are to be the future leaders of our country should already be taught that men and women are equal, that no gender is dominant to the other, and that the perception at birth - the sex we are assigned - should not dictate who we are, who we love, how we act, and what we do. Because in the end, no matter what gender, we are all the same.