

## **PROSPECTIVE FUTURES – OUR WORLD, OUR IDEAS, OUR MILLENIUM**

Dr Jocelyne A. Scutt  
Barrister & Human Rights Lawyer  
Visiting Professor, University of Buckingham

‘I would not be in this room today, if it were not for the dreams of women and men who kept dreams alive. Dreams when few would listen. People such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Harriet Tubman come to mind. I stand on the shoulders of those brave people.’<sup>1</sup>

When appointed to the US Supreme Court in 1993, Ruth Bader Ginsberg was the second woman in the entire history of the United States to become a Justice of that Court, the highest court in the country. Around the world, in every country, women are similarly only now or in the latter half of the last century being appointed to courts and tribunals, particularly at the highest levels – if women are there at all. It is neither brains nor intellect, capacity or ‘not being qualified’ that have kept women out, or resulted in so comparatively few women in such positions. This goes, similarly, for Parliaments and corporations, ministries and government departments – indeed, all positions that throughout the ages have been reserved ‘for men only’ or carried the label: ‘no woman need apply’.

Yet standing on the shoulders of women going before, millions of women have, through the centuries, endeavoured to change this imbalance, to challenge and alter the assumptions and presumptions, perceptions and prejudices, stereotypes and false standards that have stood in women’s way. The work undertaken in the lead-up to this conference stands as a tribute to the wish and the will of women – and those men who have participated – to change the way the world is, and to make a better world. This is, however, still part of the beginning. How do we bring the goals to fruition?

Some suggestions:

Women and girls’ autonomy through education, training and resources:

- Mandatory, dedicated resources for literacy and numeracy for all women and girls;
- Access to non-traditional fields of education and training, including sciences, engineering, and all fields currently restricted to men and boys or where assumptions deny women and girls’ access;
- Actively re-valuing fields where women and girls excel or have been ‘permitted’ to enter and work, to ensure these fields are equally valued as those where men and boys have pre-eminence.

Ending violence against women and girls:

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Bader Ginsberg, upon appointment to the US Supreme Court by President William Jefferson Clinton in 1993.

- Equal numbers of women promoted into positions of power and authority in courts, tribunals, police;
- Equal economic power for women in the home, in paidwork and in unpaid or voluntary work, including equal pay and equal rights to marital and family assets;
- Notions of ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ as ‘excuses’ for crimes of violence against women and girls must be eliminated;
- Violence against women and girls must be named as ‘crimes’ – as criminal assault at home and other forms of domestic violence, NOT ‘family violence’ or ‘domestic violence’; ‘murder’ NOT ‘honour killings’ – there is no honour in ending the lives of women and girls.

#### Health care:

- Health care based on medical and scientific grounds only, so religion and ‘culture’ cannot dictate, direct or determine women and girls’ access to proper medical and health care;
- Women’s right to access family planning and right to abortion without religion or ‘culture’ used to deny women and girls’ health care and medical treatment;
- Adapt the ‘Flying Doctors’ scheme/approach to remote and rural communities around the world, simultaneously ensuring that women and girls have access to internet technology to access health care, including internet conferencing.

#### Societal transformations:

- Encourage and fund small, local initiatives in creative arts and crafts – including film, video, internet technologies by women and girls, about women and girls, and for women and girls through arts and film funding bodies and international development funds;
- (Re) establish Women’s Film Funding/Finance bodies with proper and adequate resourcing to encourage and fund women’s film/video and internet technologies including feature films, documentary and internet games.

#### Women’s Added Value:

- Affirmative action and quotas in all institutions so that:
  - ✓ Women and girls gain education, training, experience and expertise in economics and finance, science and non-traditional trades and professions, in order to access these fields;
  - ✓ Women and girls gain education, training, experience and expertise in political lobbying, political party organisation, Parliamentary processes and practices, in order to gain equal power and power-sharing.
- Public funding of elections must require sex/gender equality, with political parties entitled to public funding only when selecting women for safe and winnable seats at all levels of the polity – national, regional and local;
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 must be implemented by and in all nations, all nations reporting to the Security Council and under CEDAW

(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) their plans, programmes, and progress in their own countries, with examples of applying SC Resolution 1325.

Structuring and relaying Millennium 2015 strategies to achieve and implement Millennium Development Goals:

- CSW 57 should provide a forum open to all member states and NGOs/Civil Society for showcasing and reporting on Millennium 2015 strategies;
- The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) must incorporate Millennium 2015 strategies into their provisions and requirements for all member states and recipients of funds/finance;
- All governments at all levels (national, regional, local) to incorporate Millennium 2015 strategies into their programmes and tendering processes.

### Conclusion

The assumptions and presumptions, perceptions and prejudices, stereotypes and false standards standing in women's way throughout the centuries have led not only to women and girls being denied education, work in trades and professions, *places* in Parliaments, in government, in business, corporations and on courts, and *representation* through Parliaments, in government, in business, corporations and on courts. They have created false images and imaginings in the minds of boys and men, too.

As feminist writer Adrienne Rich says:

‘If I could have one wish for my own sons, it is that they should have the courage of women. I mean by this something very concrete and precise: the courage I have seen in women who, in their private and public lives, both in the interior world of their dreaming, thinking, and creating, and the outer world of patriarchy, are taking greater and greater risks, both psychic and physical, in the evolution of a new vision.’<sup>2</sup>

The failures of a world where women and men, boys and girls, operate under the diktat of inequality and a denial of power-sharing and power shared are evident all around us – in sex/gender discrimination, in violence against women, in cultural denial of women and girls' rights to freedom of expression, freedom of the psyche and physical freedom.

Through Millennium 2015 we have had the opportunity to express our psychic and physical freedom, and our wish for that freedom to extend to women and girls the world over. It is for men and boys to step away from the boundaries imposed on women's freedom, to step back from holding the ties that bind women and girls, to support women and girls' bid for freedom and hence to free themselves.

JAS © November 2012

---

<sup>2</sup> Adrienne Rich, Quoted Carol McPhee and Ann FitzGerald (compilers) *Feminist Quotations – Voices of Rebels, Reformers and Visionaries*, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, NY, 1978.