

## **Notes taken by students**

International Symposium

Education and Gender Equality

Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

Plenary Session – Saturday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. – “The impact of role models: three stories of female leadership”

### **Speakers:**

- Aminata Touré, Former Prime Minister of Senegal
- Christiane Taubira, Former Justice Minister of France
- Susan Windham Bannister, President, CEO, and Managing Partners of Biomedical Growth Strategies, LLC

### **Moderator:**

- Catherine Wearing, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Wellesley College

### **Main points:**

- Need comprehensive education starting early on that encourages gender equality.
- Need to show how improving women’s rights leads to greater economic development.
- Young people are frequently left out of such conversations, but they are the key.
- Diversity is important for several reasons: social justice, personal and professional fulfillment, and especially business impact.
- Perceptions of women in STEM affect the opportunities available to them, leading to a lack of women role models in STEM.

### **Best practices evoked regarding public policies, corporate actions, civil society or academic initiatives:**

- Violence-against-women counsellors who would be able to support women as they take legal action.
- Loan programs for women entrepreneurs.
- Need for structural change – we must question the systems in place, ask what more we can do, then strive to do it.
- There are sectors of society left out of the conversation entirely. Adolescent girls from diverse backgrounds tend to be one of those groups.
- Cities and states should take initiatives such as science clubs for girls or more internships in STEM fields meant for women. More initiatives that focus on fostering the educational needs and personal needs of women and girls from diverse backgrounds are needed. This could take form in offering better transportation to schools, more sexual and reproductive health materials and access to them, and offering scholarships and internships.
- The United Nations should be at the forefront of upholding justice for all women, not just women in developed countries or middle and upper-class women within developed countries. This is

especially true for refugee women. Camps are not designed to cater all basic needs let alone those of adolescent girls. NGOs can also step up in this sector and cater to individual needs. The UN could set up programs for adolescent girls such as access to sanitary pads, transportation to school, and classes to teach sexual and reproductive health.

- Obligation to act *before* and not *after* violences. In France, women are not taken seriously when they complain about men stalking/harassing them, and the police wait for something bigger. But then it's too late. We have to act before, and police have to take into account every complaint and support those women.