

Notes taken by students

International Symposium

Education and Gender Equality

Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

Plenary Session – Friday, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. – What is Gender Equality?

Speakers:

- Geneviève Fraisse, Philosopher and emeritus Director for Research at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS, France)
- Shira Tarrant, Professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies at California State University
- Virginia Sapiro, Professor of Political Science and Dean Emerita of Arts & Sciences at Boston University
- Manon Garcia, Edmund J. Safra Post-Doctoral Fellow-in-Residence at Harvard University

Moderator:

- Susan Reverby, Professor Emerita in the History of Ideas and Professor Emerita of Women's and Gender Studies

Main points:

- Everyone is affected differently by gender inequality. Therefore, we need to be intersectional in our practices and acknowledge differences in class, race, age, etc.
- We need to interrogate masculinity; men must be on board for gender justice, and must use their privilege to fight for gender equality.
- We need to discuss the differences in the conception of gender in different countries. In the US, for example, it is a political issue that is frequently divided along party lines.
- When students arrive in college classrooms, they generally lack basic knowledge of the structures and systems of power against which they argue. This makes critical and effective discussion difficult.
- When examined closely, gender as a significant distinction between men and women becomes fluid and contextually driven.
- Legal equality is not the same as factual equality. Feminism is not just an agenda of laws to pass and measures to take.

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

- Include men and the youth in feminist strategizing – both groups are integral to the success of the feminist movement.
- Overcome foundational gaps in knowledge and education systems rooted in test-taking.
- Address issues of sexual harassment in public spaces.
- We must have more women and gender studies courses in universities, and possibly require women and gender studies courses, so that students, who already recognize injustice, have the tools to fight it.
- Be aware of the effects of social media on the conception of gender and gender inequality. Social media provides a limited understanding of intersectionality (another example of the lack of foundational knowledge).