

## BPE Global Hot Topic – August 2022

### Best Time to be a Woman



All my life I've been told that this is the best time in history to be a woman. I guess that was because women were granted the right to vote in 1920 and life for us women has gotten nothing but better since then.

Since my birth, the Civil Rights Act was passed prohibiting sex discrimination in employment. Women were able to obtain law degrees and go to ivy league colleges beginning in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Women were finally allowed to legally open a bank account in the 1970's. Title IX of the Education Amendments prohibited sex discrimination in all aspects of education programs that receive federal support. Sex-segregated "help wanted" advertising was banned. Housing discrimination on the basis of sex was outlawed by Congress. The Supreme Court denied states the right to exclude women from juries. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act banned employment discrimination against pregnant women. And the U.S. Supreme Court banned sex discrimination in membership for onetime all-male groups like the Jaycees, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs.

I guess that makes it the best time to be a woman because I could work, keep my own money, play on a college team, serve on a jury, have a job and be pregnant, and join an old boy's club. These are all things that white men have been allowed to have since the founding of this country. And although it might be the best time to be a woman, as a woman I have never had equal rights.

This June wasn't the first time in my life that I've had my rights taken away from me when the U.S. Supreme court overturned Roe v. Wade with their decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization. For every advancement that I have seen in my life, I've seen setbacks. In 1989, the Supreme Court affirmed the right of states to deny public funding for abortions and to prohibit public hospitals from performing abortions. In 1991 the U.S. Congress sent a very clear message that women would be punished if they accuse a man of sexual harassment when Anita Hill testified at Clarence Thomas' confirmation hearing. In the 1990's, the Violence Against Women Act funded services for victims of rape and domestic violence and allowed women to seek civil rights remedies for gender-related crimes only to be eviscerated six years later when the Supreme Court invalidated those portions of the law permitting victims of rape, domestic violence, etc. to sue their attackers in federal court. And the Paycheck Fairness Act, meant to fight gender discrimination in the workplace continues to fail every time it comes up for a vote.

I was raised on the fact that my rights as a minority would always be at risk and could be taken away at any moment. I have always known that although I might have a "right" to do something I might never be allowed to access that right depending on who was in power. I was raised to stand up for my rights and the rights of others. And by doing this, I quickly learned that I would be targeted as being nonconforming at the very least and being prevented from having a voice in the worst cases.

I'm afraid that I don't understand why my gender and my desire for equality for all is such a threat. I am at a loss as to why my rights aren't guaranteed. I do not understand why I must continue to fight to get rights that are guaranteed for a certain class of people for hundreds of years.

What I do understand is that with a knee on my neck I have managed to become the woman that I am in the face of daily inequalities. I live in a country where I have been able to create a successful company that eliminates those inequalities. I have been able to establish some of the best corporate values that I have ever



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seen. And I can share those values with many large and small companies every day. And I am grateful that I can fight every day for the advancement of women and minorities without repercussion. I've been fighting for my rights all my life – and I'm good at it.

Historically, women like me have been the primary drivers of change – despite all the barriers that our world puts in our way. Women like me drive change - despite the fact that we are paid \$0.82 for every dollar a man makes. Women like me drive change - despite the fact that we rarely get an equal seat at the table. Women are a super majority – and we vote. This situation is ours to change – just as it has been my entire life.

I am dreaming of the day when I don't have to fight. I am deeply saddened to know that day hasn't come yet but I am not defeated. I know that I have untapped reserves and will continue the fight for justice and equality for all. I've done this by founding my own company. I've done this by supporting small businesses. I've done this by building communities. And I've done this by organizing. And I've done this by voting.

What I am hoping is that you will join me in this fight for equality for all. And I am hoping that you will bring your energy and support to this cause. What I do know is that together, we will make this time the best time for women.

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