



Women in an Equal Europe

BOOK

CREATED AND EDITED BY MARY MOYNIHAN



Women in an Equal Europe

EDITOR: Mary Moynihan

PRODUCED BY:

- Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company, Ireland
- Iniciativas de Futuro Para Una Europa Social, Valencia, Spain
- Mirovna grupa mladih Dunav, Youth Peace Group 'Danube' (YPGD), Vukovar, Croatia
- DAH Theatre Research Centre, Belgrade, Serbia

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FOREWORD

By Lynn Ruane

Firstly, allow me to express my gratitude, as it is my honor to contribute the foreword to this most important and timely book *Women in an Equal Europe*. As I sat down to read this volume and its breadth of opinion and expertise, I became worried as to what view I would bring to it – my own scepticism maybe? If anything, the experience of reading these inspirational women and men reminded me to show some restraint in my pull away from the idea that Europe can be a positive effect on the equality of ALL of its women. I have at times thought this idea might be an overly romanticised undertaking and one that risks becoming weightless rhetoric. In its place I have tried to favour a realistic, ‘ground up’ approach to policy development. I have never wanted to feel this way, proclaiming a type of feminism for the ‘some’ rather than the ‘all’. I do know however, that we should not allow this approach to paralyse us. Nor should we allow it to cloud our collective vision. But the feeling is there – the feeling of exclusion and being let down that sits underneath my ambition for women like me to be equal partners in the local, national and European level feminist movement. Feminism unites us by speaking the language of all and this book has been a timely reminder to me of that. The underlying connection of perspectives in this book is one that, I think, is greatly needed.

We must create the space for women such as single mothers, women with disabilities and traveller women to have meaningful participation in shaping each nation’s narratives and stories of who we are as women. Europe has changed the economic, cultural and social fabric of Ireland and we must be relentless in our efforts to drive this change down and into the pockets of those from all corners of Ireland. As I spent hours with the interviews and contributions in this book I was reminded that each and every one of us share a common objective: to reach our full potential as women. Whether that be our potential as Catalina Valencia who travelled to Spain from Columbia with the hope of experiencing a new culture, Milena Babic who left her job as a teacher to serve the United Nations as an interpreter, or Marina Mitic who works to implement the highest quality of healthcare standards possible from her platform in Serbia. Whether it be through the arts, the tech industry, parenting (or not) or politics, our objective is the same: to be valued as women and to have the same opportunity to shape our environments as anyone else.

We must acknowledge that this is more difficult for women weighed down not only by gender inequalities, but who are living with racial and poverty concerns also. In accepting this, we must look to building as many feminist responses as there are varying layers of oppression of women.

As my life in education advanced, my understanding of feminism – my own feminism – flourished. I had little connection to my own citizenship at a domestic level, let alone at a European level. Truly harnessing the power of my gender occurred first at Trinity College, by an awareness that I had been too busy to connect with who I was as a woman. Too busy working, some will ask. Too busy studying, say others. Rather, I was too busy surviving. Dil Wickremasinghe, in her interview, speaks about never having to queue as a child in Italy and this brought an image to my mind of women in poverty and minority groups spending a life-time trying to get not to the front but rather striving, often failing, to reach the back of the queue.

Disadvantaged women experience the most harmful impacts of gender inequality. For large majorities of these women the struggle is simply staying alive, condemned to the back of the queue and feeling the positive impacts of European directives and policy initiatives only when all others have had their chance. My class and my gender are intertwined and until my class ceases to stand in my way of exercising my rights as a woman, feminism and gender equality has not and will not reach ALL women. To this end I recall the words of Natasa Milankovic who sternly argues that women are still in no satisfactory position. I share her frustration, and in truth it’s a fire we need to keep close if and when we need to reach for it. There is much work to be done to empower women who experience marginalisation to both recognise and exercise their own rights. I am happy that today I can vocalise my feminist vision and voice but I cannot shake the presence of guilt that the privilege of my education and my election to Seanad Éireann has allowed me a platform – something many from disadvantaged groups do not have access to.

This does not mean that working-class women are not feminists, or that being a member of the European Union has not had positive impacts on the advancement of women’s rights and participation – we know it has. Working class women possess a deep understanding of intersectionality without ever hearing its language or studying its theories. For instance, women like me know that our traveller women, migrant women, and LGBTQ+ women endure many more obstacles than we do. We know this because we work and live in the same communities. We can see the varying layers of disadvantages for women first hand. I finished school with a Junior Cert, which is a clear indicator of my educational disadvantage. However, I have done extremely well in comparison to my traveller friends, and it seems to me that the gap between us and more well-off women is growing.

LYNN RUANE is an independent Senator in Seanad Éireann, representing Trinity College Dublin, and is a member of the Civil Engagement Group and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills.

50/50 representation across all sectors must deliver 50% of female participation that is representative of ALL women – only then can we truly say we have achieved equality. In saying this, I do not wish to play down the impact of women currently in politics in Ireland. It is nothing short of inspirational to watch the impact of the women in power on the type of legislation currently being brought to the Irish parliament. The conversations have changed too. In her interview, Mary Butler considers what were taboo subjects of old; abortion, homosexuality, contraception. Her recollection of how you ‘just didn’t talk about them’ in her time is a reminder of how far we have progressed. Today we speak openly about many subjects relating to women, and while issues such as the state marriage ban in the civil service may not seem so far in the past, as we can now stand next to our male counterparts demanding a standard of equality devoid of misogyny, sexism and exclusion, we can remind ourselves of the progress we are making.

I worry that the global political sphere is polarising. As such I feel the need to stress that not all men in political life and wider society are open to this change. Many are, but it seems that some are being dragged into an equal Ireland kicking and screaming. As a working-class mother with little education I could not see or feel the impact of being a European Member state, however, as a politician I can see very clearly the vital role it has played. In her interview, my colleague in the Oireachtas, and Labour Party Senator, Ivana Bacik, shares her reflections on the EU’s impact as a positive force on women’s lives in Ireland and how she too had a scepticism in the beginning.

In human rights terms, much of these advancements are very clearly demonstrated in the pages of this publication. Unfortunately, Europe’s drive for social equality was stalled during the period of austerity. However, it is not lost on me that I am in the lucky position to have been asked to write this foreword in the days following a most significant referendum for the women of Ireland. The referendum on 25 May, 2018 was a clear indication that Ireland is changing. When Ireland walked themselves into the voting booth to remove article 40.3.3 from our constitution, the message was clear: Ireland supports women, Ireland values women and Ireland trusts women. The role of Europe in abortion care for pregnant people has meant that women in Ireland have had more rights when it comes to reproduction as European Citizens than they had as Irish citizens. Ireland sealed that right into the constitution in 1992 with the Thirteenth Amendment that allowed for Irish women to travel elsewhere in the European Union to access abortion care. Two-thirds of Irish people on 25 May voted to welcome Irish women home. The role of the European Union in liberalising abortion laws in Ireland has at times been a contentious issue. As far back as 1991

with the Maastricht Treaty and up to more recent times with bodies like the European Commission repeatedly affirming its criticism of the restrictiveness of the Irish abortion regime, we have seen the important positions the EU has taken on Ireland’s abortion debates. We need look no further than other EU member states to see how far we were lagging behind in access to abortion care – but lagging no longer.

In 1991 the intention of the Maastricht Treaty and Protocol 17 was promotion of monetary and political ties between member states. It may not have been foreseen that it would be abortion that became the issue that could result in this Treaty being voted down by the Irish people. Both sides of the abortion debate had their reasons to vote against the treaty. In simple terms, the fear was that the treaty denied women rights to information and travel while from the anti-choice perspective, it allowed for terminations to be performed in Ireland. Abortion was quite literally interfering with an economic unification of the European Union. After lengthy negotiations packaged with the promise of a referendum on abortion the treaty eventually passed but with it came the guarantee that Irish women had a right to access abortions in other European states¹. Skipping ahead a couple of decades later, we see a constant critique of Ireland as Europe plays a pivotal role in challenging and potentially changing the face of Irish abortion law. Nils Muižnieks (Human Rights Commissioner) pointed to Ireland as having laws on abortion that ‘can have a broad range of physical, psychological, financial and social impacts on women, with implications for their health and well-being’².

As Irish women take in and shape the new Ireland they woke up to on this May weekend, we can be sure that gender equality is hard fought for and we must fight together at every level. From the grass route movements right to top of the European agenda, our mission must be to encompass all the diversity that exists in our member states. From the poorest communities of Serbia, to the reproductive rights of our sisters in Northern Ireland, Poland and Malta. We must look beyond our own environments and into the lives of traveller women, LGBTQ+ communities, migrant women, and any woman who is being forced to sit on the fringes of society, not quite feeling the benefits of all the amazing work that has been done to advance gender equality in Europe. It is clear from the pages of this book that the advancements are there and we must look to a future together where all women can access an equal Europe.

The next question is how we achieve this. So I will leave you all with this thought: how can we ensure that all women reach their full potential? I recall words in the book shared by Marina Illic: feminism is our philosophy of solidarity and sisterhood. As we often say in Ireland: ‘Ní saoirse go saoirse na mban’ (there is no freedom until the freedom of women).

Lynn Ruane
Dublin, 2018.

1. <http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=iclr>
2. <http://www.thejournal.ie/eu-report-womens-health-abortion-3732024-Dec2017/>



Women in an Equal Europe

CITIZENSHIP AND GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH CREATIVE PROCESSES

This book is published as part of **Women in an Equal Europe**, an innovative project with four European partners from Ireland, Spain, Serbia and Croatia.

Women in an Equal Europe uses a feminist framework and creative processes of theatre, film and online digital resources to reflect on the experiences of women living in Europe and the power of EU policy to promote gender equality and human rights. This transnational civil society project uses creative processes of theatre and film and online resources to promote a greater understanding of women's rights and the positive changes that have come about in relation to gender equality as a result of belonging to the European Union. **Women in an Equal Europe** is co-funded by the Europe for Citizens programme of the European Union and the four European partners are:

- **Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company** (lead partner), Ireland www.smashingtimes.ie
- **Iniciativas de Futuro Para Una Europa Social**, Valencia, Spain www.ifescoop.eu
- **Mirovna grupa mladih Dunav**, Youth Peace Group 'Danube' (YPGD), Vukovar, Croatia www.ypgd.org
- **DAH Theatre Research Centre**, Belgrade, Serbia www.dahteatarcentar.com

Using the arts and political activism, **Women in an Equal Europe** resulted in the creation of a book, a documentary, a theatre workshop model and a series of creative events held across Europe engaging 1,400 citizens in discussion and debate on gender equality, human rights, the role of the EU in promoting gender equality and the kind of Europe we want for the future. An on-line questionnaire was completed by 101 citizens from Ireland, Spain, Serbia and Croatia and a range of communication and dissemination activities were conducted reaching 377,321. The final project reach was 378,721 citizens.

Women in an Equal Europe Book

Twenty-one women were interviewed – six from Ireland, five from Spain, five from Croatia and five from Serbia. The interviews are contained in this book, which can be read by everybody to promote a remembrance of women's equality and experiences of life in Europe ensuring women's voices and stories are equally heard and acknowledged. The interviews are a fascinating insight into women's experiences capturing the uniqueness and strength of the women as they speak about their lives and the importance of gender equality for all.

The book's content was generated by the four European partner organisations with a special thanks to Freda Manweiler, Company Manager, Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company, Dublin, Ireland; Fernando Benavente, European Project Manager, Iniciativas de Futuro Para Una Europa Social, Valencia, Spain; Saša Bjelanović, President, YPGD, Vukovar, Croatia and Dijana Milošević, Artistic Director, DAH Theatre Research Centre, Belgrade, Serbia.

The women interviewed from Ireland are:

- **Dil Wickremasinghe**, Journalist, Broadcaster and Co-founder of Insight Matters

- **Mary Lawlor**, Human Rights Activist, former Director and Chair of Amnesty International Ireland, founder, former director and current board member of Front Line Defenders
- **Ivana Bacik**, Barrister and Reid Professor of Criminal Law at Trinity College Dublin and Labour Party Senator
- **Olwen Fouéré**, Actor, Director and Creative Artist
- **Mary Moynihan**, Writer, theatre and filmmaker, Artistic Director, Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company and Theatre Lecturer, DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama
- **Sinéad Burke**, Writer and Academic

The women interviewed from Spain are:

- **Catalina Valencia**, Coordinator, Start-Up Europe Awards initiative and Communications Officer, Finnova Foundation
- **Pilar Mena**, Specialist in Labour Relations, Teacher and Human Resources Consultant, European University of Valencia
- **Mercedes Acitores**, Studied law and European policies. Works in the area of European cooperation, European Union
- **Yolanda Trujillo**, Student with an interest in European politics, history, aeronautics and writing; recipient of a grant from the Antonio Gala Foundation for creative young people
- **Lourdes Miron**, Social Educator, Journalism Student, President and General Director, Jovesolides

The women interviewed from Croatia are:

- **Natasa Milankovic**, Pedagogue in primary schools, EVS Mentor, Academic Operations Administrator
- **Milena Babic**, Civil Society Development Practitioner
- **Senka Nedeljkovic**, Journalist
- **Tatjana Romic**, Social Worker and Youth Worker
- **Biljana Gaća**, City Councillor, City of Vukovar

The women interviewed from Serbia are:

- **Dana Gasic Gouveia**, Student of Fashion Brand Management
- **Ivana Novakovic**, Professor of Human Genetics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- **Marija Mitic**, Senior Professional Associate for Accreditation Standards and Standards Development in health care systems in Serbia
- **Marina Ilić**, Logistics and Fundraising Manager, Social Margin Centre and Global Human Rights Forums



Smashing Times Artists

- **Manja Marinkovic**, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Social Margin Centre, Belgrade, Serbia

Alongside the interviews, this book contains articles relating to gender equality in Europe today. The articles, written by Lauren Guy and Ruth Deasy, Ireland, and Kilian Cuerda Ros, Spain, explore the history of the European Union with respect to its role in promoting gender equality through the years and in the years to come; the history of gender equality in the four partner countries; the history of Europe and its position on gender equality dating back to the French Revolution; and the challenges for gender equality that lie ahead. Also discussed are issues such as domestic violence, gender equality in decision-making roles, and pay gaps.

Women in an Equal Europe Creative Documentary

As part of the Women in an Equal Europe project, a new **Women in an Equal Europe Creative Documentary** was made exploring themes of women, feminism and Europe.

The documentary is directed by Mary Moynihan, theatre and film maker and features interviews with women from Ireland, Spain, Croatia and Serbia along with a series of Vox Pops or statements from women and men exploring women's lived experiences of life in Europe and the intersection between the arts, feminism and equality. Women interviewed in the documentary are:

- **Olwen Fouéré**, Actor, Director and Creative Artist, Ireland
- **Dijana Milošević**, Artistic Director, DAH Theatre, Serbia
- **Mary Moynihan**, Writer, Theatre and Film Maker, Artistic Director Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company, Theatre Lecturer, DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama, Ireland
- **Dil Wickremasinghe**, Journalist, Broadcaster and Co-founder of Insight Matters, Ireland
- **Orla O'Connor**, Director of the National Women's Council of Ireland, Ireland



*City of Dublin Winter Solstice Celebration Festival
presented by Smashing Times and Slí an Chroí*

- **Sinéad Burke aka Minnie Mélange**, Writer and Academic, Ireland
- **Mirjana Renduli**, Actor, Writer and Facilitator, Croatia
- **Constance Short**, Visual Artist, Arts Organiser and Cultural Conduit, Ireland
- **Vanessa Ogida**, Broadcast Journalist, Motivational Speaker, Writer, Trainer and Entrepreneur, Ireland
- **Pom Boyd**, Actor and Writer, Ireland
- **Róisín McAtamney**, Actor and Theatre Director, Ireland
- **Dr Shirley Graham**, Visiting Associate Professor of Practice in International Affairs at George Washington University

Vox Pops

- **Fernando Benavente**, European Project Manager, Spain
- **Ave Newman**, Teacher, actor and drama facilitator, Germany
- **Raya Stanachkova**, Media Specialist and European Project Co coordinator, Bulgaria
- **Javier Gonzalez**, Actor and Film Maker, Spain
- **Raymond Keane**, Actor, Clown and Theatre Director, Ireland
- **Peter Sheridan**, Playwright and Theatre Director, Ireland

- **Africa Dias**, Lecturer, Drama Facilitator and Actor, Spain
- **Breda Gahan**, Health and HIV Global Advisor, Concern Worldwide, Ireland
- **Gerda Nijssen**, Feminist Project Coordinator, Netherlands

A broad range of women and men from various backgrounds and countries across Europe are interviewed about their opinions on feminism, gender equality, and the role and capacity of the European union to promote gender equality. The large majority of the individuals interviewed are artists, but also included are gender equality and human rights activists and those working on a Europe-wide level. Interviewees were asked about themes such as their childhood; the role of the arts in promoting human rights, gender equality, diversity, democracy, and peace; and their direct or indirect experience of gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, interviewees were asked how they would advise their younger selves, what makes them happy and how being a woman has affected their lives or career.

Equality Workshop Model

As part of **Women in an Equal Europe** Dijana Milošević, Artistic Director of Dah Theatre, Serbia has designed a theatre workshop model that actively involves citizens in EU-linked fun activities and raises awareness of gender equality and ways to influence EU public policy. The theatre workshop model is available to download from the partner websites and is a fun and creative way to explore themes of gender equality and human rights in a European wide context.



Conclusion

As part of the **Women in an Equal Europe** project, a series of cultural events and performances were held by the four partner organisations across Europe bringing 1,400 citizens, artists and activists together to explore gender equality, human rights, the role of the EU and the kind of Europe we want for the future. Events used creative processes of theatre and film and on-line digital resources to promote a greater understanding of women's rights and the positive changes that have come about in relation to gender equality as a result of belonging to the EU. We extend a very special thanks to the Europe for Citizens programme of the European Union, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation Fund and the Arts Council Young Ensemble Scheme for support with the events and activities.

Members of the partner organisations came together for two transnational project partner meetings held in November 2016 in Dublin, Ireland and in February 2018 in Belgrade, Serbia as well as attending a transnational **Women in an Equal Europe Creative Arts Symposium** held at the Samuel Beckett Theatre, Trinity College, Dublin on Friday 27 October

2017. The symposium gathered together artists, human rights activists and citizens to explore how we can engage citizens in a debate on the kind of Europe we want for the future in relation to gender equality, diversity and peace. The symposium featured a young ensemble performance, guest speakers and parallel theatre workshops to explore the role of the EU in promoting women's rights and human rights as shared values for a peaceful and prosperous future for all.

Guest speakers were Marian Harkin, MEP, Ireland, Mary Duffin, Theatre Maker, Theatre of the Oppressed Practitioner and Screenwriter, Ireland, Sasa Bjelanovic, Youth Worker, Youth Peace Group Danube, Croatia, Dijana Milošević, Dah Theatre, Serbia and Mary Moynihan, Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company, Ireland.

The **Women in an Equal Europe Book, Creative Documentary** and **EU Equality Theatre Workshop model** can be found on the following partner websites:

- www.smashingtimes.ie
- www.dahtearcentar.com
- www.ypgd.org
- www.ifescoop.eu

We hope you enjoy reading the book, watching the documentary and taking part in the theatre workshop. It has been a pleasure working on this project and we extend a sincere thanks to the partner organisations and to all those who contributed to the project. We extend a very special thanks to the women and men who were interviewed for the book and documentary. These are extraordinary and fascinating interviews offering insights into women's lives and experiences at a time when there is a need, now more than ever, to actively promote gender equality and human rights and for people to come together to create a better society for all.

Mary Moynihan,

Editor, Women in an Equal Europe Book

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Book design by EM Creative, Dublin, Ireland.

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Co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union

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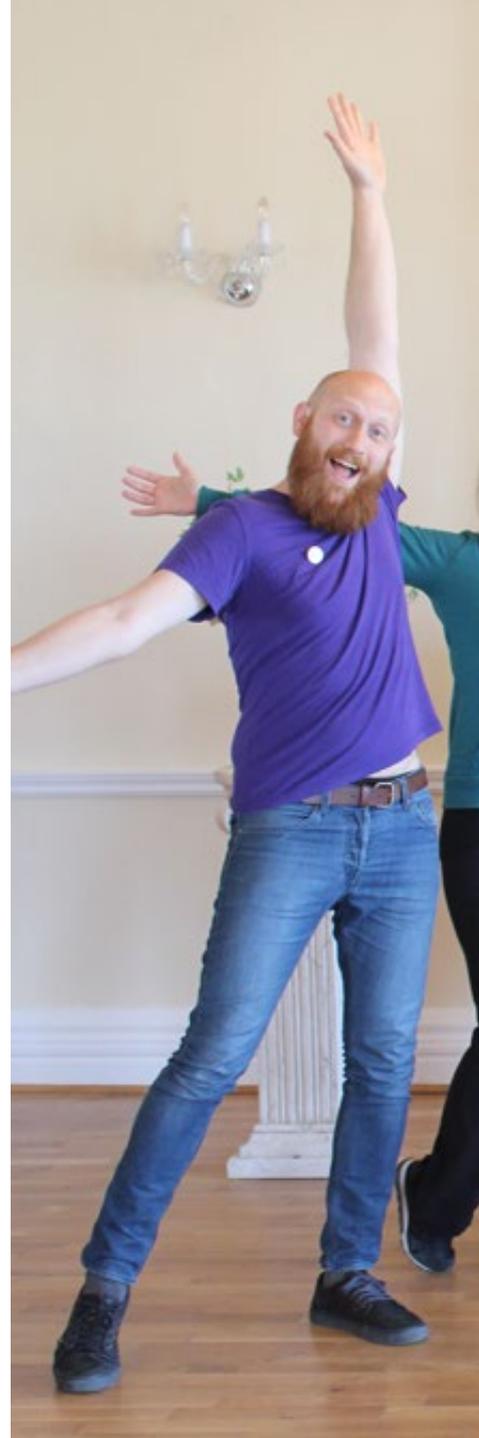
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WOMEN LIVING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

By Lauren Guy

When the European Union (EU) was established in 1993, its main *raison d'être* was to help promote and cultivate harmony, peace and prosperity among the nations of Europe in the hopes that this would reduce the probability of conflict and disagreement amongst these countries. However, the concerns of the European Union reach far beyond this more fundamental function. One of the key areas which the EU focuses on and which is at the centre of EU policy is equality - specifically gender equality. Over the past decades, the European Union's achievements in cultivating gender equality between men and women has helped to improve the lives of countless European citizens all over the world. The EU has crafted objectives on gender equality whose function is to ensure the equal treatment of men and women and to foster equal opportunities for both sexes. Whilst the battle against gender discrimination and inequality is still being waged, the European Union has made some significant victories and has placed gender inequality firmly in the spotlight in European countries and cemented them in the forefront of European citizens' minds.

Gender equality is a human right and one which is deemed inalienable by the European Union. As such, all institutions, agencies and member states within the European Union are required to observe and honour this right, along with the remaining rights set out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Gender equality will be realised when both men and women profit from the same rights and opportunities and are equally favoured and recognised in all areas of society. Achieving this means ensuring that women and men are given the same educational opportunities, that they are both given a voice in decision-making roles and that they both have equal treatment across all sectors of society. It means protecting women from violence, harassment and mistreatment. It means ensuring women are given the opportunity to leave the homestead rather than staying at home to raise children under the guise of this being their natural role as a mother. It means fighting to secure wages for women which are on par with their male counterparts. It means adopting a feminist standpoint in order to stand up for all women. Feminism is often perceived to be a threatening word- often feared and avoided by both men and women.





Smashing Times Drama for Change Training Workshop

However, all that being a feminist entails is simply believing that women are equal to men, are as important and capable as men, and advocating for this belief. We need people with a feminist perspective in order to help others realise that there should be no differing treatment of men and women. Both should be treated equally and receive equal opportunities, because women are as worthy and capable as men.

A dedication to addressing women's rights and women's position in politics, economics and society has been at the heart of European Union operations since its inception. Between the period of 1975 to 2010, fifteen European directives were adopted which aimed to improve the lives of women in European Union countries. Some of the noted changes included the introduction of measures which encouraged improvements to the health and safety of pregnant women in the workplace and to those who have recently given birth or are currently breastfeeding. In 2006, a directive was adopted which implemented the principle of equal opportunities and treatment of men and women in employment whilst 2010 saw alterations being made to the

guidelines on parental leave with the hopes of reconciling professional and family responsibilities between men and women and allowing women to break out of their traditional role as care-giver. The European Commission is currently focusing on five key areas for its programme, which runs from 2016-2019. These priority areas include:

- Increasing women's engagement in the labour market and promoting equal economic independence for men and women
- Reducing the gender pay and pensions gaps
- Championing equality between men and women in decision-making roles
- Combating gender-based violence
- Promoting gender equality and women's rights around the world

The need for a European Institute for Gender Equality as a site for research and an information source on gender equality was first recognised in 1995 and eventually came to fruition in May 2007. The organisation's mission statement and vision is 'Making equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans and beyond.' The site informs and educates and is available for the public and institutions alike. In addition to the establishment of this institution, the European Union routinely participates in funding projects which seek to raise awareness of gender discrimination. Examples of such projects include a project carried out in Italy, which focused on women and men sharing housework and care responsibilities in the home. Other projects focused on dissolving the gender pay gap and bringing issues of gender-based violence to light.

Whilst the EU may have adopted numerous gender equality directives with good intentions and with the view to penalising countries that infringe upon them with penalties which are 'effective, proportionate and dissuasive' (Council Directive 2010), this is difficult to translate into practice. Despite the EU exerting pressure on Member States to implement these policies, Member States have often overlooked and failed to uphold them. The EU's approach is often a soft measures one and this leaves the directives open to discretionary interpretation by individual countries and thus the directives have often failed to be translated into practice as intended. The Commission itself has acknowledged their shortcomings with respect to gender equality in decision-making roles, saying that 'despite progress towards a gender balance in political decision-making, much remains to be done' (European Commission 2010). The extent to which the European Union has changed and improved the lives of women varies from country to country. This is evident amongst three of the European Union's current member states: Ireland, Spain and Croatia, and also in Serbia, which is still undergoing discussions for its acceptance into the EU.



Dublin, Ireland

Ireland

Many of the women who make up Ireland's population today are not old enough to remember what life was like in Ireland before we joined the European Union in 1973. We hear tales from our mother's mother about how women were tied into the homestead and were tasked solely with reproducing, caring for their families and looking after the home. Today we live in a very altered society in which women have more opportunities to pursue the role they want for themselves, such as the powerful career woman, the single mother capable of raising children on her own, or the young student with dreams and aspirations.

The EU has engendered multiple changes to the lives of women living in Ireland. Its policies and directives have instigated a revision of Irish legislation which has brought us closer to bridging the gap to gender equality. These legislative developments include the obligation for employers to give equal opportunities to men and women when recruiting for a position, ensuring that women cannot be simply overlooked



Tell Them Our Names

for a job in favour of men. This legislation puts pressure on companies to ensure they cultivate an environment of diversity and equality in order to attract the best applicants from the candidate pool.

A major hurdle was cleared in Ireland in 1973 with the abolition of the marriage bar for women in public service jobs, which previously obligated women to resign from their jobs once they got married. This major change, enforced through the European Union, meant that more women could now access the labour market and from 1973, Ireland's employed population of women rose from just twenty-seven per cent to over sixty per cent by 2007. This hugely altered the lives of Irish women as it allowed them to leave behind the more traditional roles of caregiver and mother, which were enforced upon them at marriage, and take up positions which allowed them to exercise their autonomy and agency.

This autonomy is something which Ireland is looking to pass on to today's women and girls. In May 2017, the then Tánaiste, Ms Frances Fitzgerald TD, launched the 2017-2020 National Strategy for Women and Girls. The motto of this strategy is 'if you can see it, you can be it' (National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020) and aims to see women in equal roles in all aspects of society- including research, education, leadership, business, sport and science. This strategy will reflect that of the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 which focuses on the key areas outlined above. Its six objectives are:

- To advance socio-economic equality for women and girls
- To advance the physical and mental wellbeing of women and girls
- To ensure visibility of women and girls in society, and their equal and active citizenship

- To advance women in leadership at all levels
- Combat violence against women
- Embed gender equality in decision-making

This strategy has the potential to enhance the lives of women and girls in Ireland and ensure that they get equal treatment throughout all areas of society.

The representation of Irish women on state boards is something which has improved over the decades. In 1993, only fifteen per cent of the Irish Government board was made up by women. This figure has now risen to 36.2 per cent. Ireland is also now being forced to adhere to the European Commission's demands that all parliaments must operate with a balance of at least 40 per cent female members. The under-representation of women in decision-making roles is considered problematic from both a democratic and human rights perspective. The EU's gender-balancing resolution hopes to ensure that women are given more opportunities for career advancement and more consideration for positions of authority and decision-making roles. In order to make this work, Ireland needs to ensure women running for election are supported from the nomination and candidate stage. It has been calculated that 47 per cent of Irish women running for election have no female TD to represent them whereas 100 per cent of Irish men have a male TD to represent them (McGing, 2010). Similarly, when faced with the decision to choose between a man and a woman, most parties are more likely to choose in favour of the man, from the belief that he will be more appealing and acceptable to the electorate.

Whilst European Union membership has come with its benefits for women in Ireland, there is still a long way to go before gender equality is actualised. Areas in Ireland yet to see the benefit of the European Union's push for gender equality include violence and abuse against women and



gender balance in positions of power and decision-making roles. However the new strategy, inspired by European influence, should see these areas coming into the spotlight in the ensuing years.

Another area in which gender inequality is present in Ireland is in the region of bodily autonomy. Until recently abortion was illegal in Ireland. The only exception to this was where the life of the woman was threatened, which included the threat of suicide. The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland, added to the constitution following a referendum in 1983, recognised the equal rights to life of a foetus and a mother during pregnancy. However, public opinion on this issue shifted greatly since the 1983 referendum, with many calling for women to be given the right to choose what to do with their own bodies. In 2017, the United Nations repeated its criticism of Ireland's 'cruel and inhumane' abortion laws. In May 2018, Ireland eventually had a referendum on the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, which was passed and which now sees the legalisation of abortion up to 12 weeks. This represents a step in the right direction for women's rights in Ireland.

Spain



When Spain embarked on their European Union membership in 1986, it witnessed a rapid progression in gender policies and in the pursuit and awareness of gender equality. In the space of three decades, it moved from being under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1892-1975) who had little regard for gender equality policies to having a period of concentrated advancement in this area. In 2010, the former Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, spoke at a conference on 'Women for a Better World' where he stressed the important figurehead which the European Union represents. He said the EU was not only an important reference for Spain, but was also a serious international player that other regions of the world look up to and are inspired by. Zapatero argued that equality begins with the eradication of both structural and direct violence against women, saying 'when we cut back on discrimination, we are gaining ground for the dignity of everyone'.

One of the most significant changes which European Union membership has brought to Spain is the complete reconstruction of its formal labour market. The paradigm of labour activation which is espoused by the EU was wholeheartedly adopted by the Spanish authorities. This resulted in a period of monumental acceleration in Spain

during which eight million jobs were created. This in turn encouraged higher numbers of women into the labour market. In 1977, female participation was less than half that of their male counterparts whereas by 2000 it was almost 85 per cent that of corresponding male employees. Between the years 1976 and 2009, the percentage of women employees aged 25-49 almost trebled in size. By 2010, nearly 3 in every 4 Spanish women were involved in the formal labour market. Additionally, they were employed on a full-time basis- an unprecedented success for EU assistance in a member state.

However, fulfilment of gender equality is still a long way off for Spain. It seems that old attitudes die hard and in recent years Spain appears to have taken a U-turn with regard to gender policies. The economic crisis has had consequences for all European member states but none more so it seems than Spain and it seems that women are the scapegoats burdened with these consequences. Spain has been forced to adopt austerity policies which promote budget cuts and institutional restructuring. This in turn had endangered and threatened to reverse the progress made in gender equality in Spain. A lack of financial support and resources dedicated to the promotion of women's rights has hindered the relative continuity in equality which Spain had achieved thus far.

Croatia



Since 1996, Croatia has been working hard to establish gender equality policies and procedures. Its efforts began with the establishment of the Gender Equality Commission whose purpose was to promote and empower women in all areas of public life. In 1997, the Croatian government produced the First National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality. They got multiple non-governmental women's organisations to participate and facilitate with the making of this policy which solidified a relationship and cooperation between the government and these NGO's, ensuring they would work together to empower women. In 2001, the Committee for Gender Equality in the Croatian Parliament was organised which comprised of five men and six women- incorporating both genders and hoping to ensure equality among the board. The Committee has a duty to promote and monitor the implementation of gender equality policies and mechanisms in Croatia. In July 2003, Croatia had a false start with the adoption of the first Gender Equality law which was later abandoned due to an insufficient vision for implementing it. It took until July 2008 to re-established this Law on Gender Equality, which applies to all public spheres where discrimination is most likely to

occur, including employment and work, education, politics, media and official statistics. Croatia also solidified a more comprehensive institutional makeup for gender equality with the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality established in 2000, the Gender Equality ombudsman/woman introduced in 2003 and the Governmental Office for Gender Equality set up in 2004.

From 2008, the European Union became the major influencer of Croatia's policies and advancements. During this year a new Gender Equality Act was adopted which signalled the introduction of the gender quotas in government. This stipulation required a 40 per cent gender-balanced quota in politics to be attained within three election cycles. The EU were also the driving force behind the Anti-Discrimination Act being implemented, as Croatia needed to make these changes in order to be deemed suitable for European Union membership. This act provides for the protection and promotion of equality as the highest value of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia. Furthermore, in order to bring their policies in line with those of the European Union, Croatia introduced individual entitlement to parental leave. One of the European Union's key strategy areas is equality in decision-making and equal economic independence and treatment in the workplace. This strategy informed Croatia's National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015, which saw a focus on equality and equal opportunities in the workplace, including the elimination of discrimination and the reduction of female unemployment figures.

Despite Croatia's improvements in gender equality and women's rights, the current Croatian government are posing the threat of reverting Croatia back to its former state. In November 2015, parliamentary elections saw a conservative right-wing government elected who are insisting on the reduction of women's rights and gender equality initiatives in Croatia. This government is comprised of merely 15% women which is the lowest figure of female participation Croatia have seen since 2000, when an amendment to the constitution of Croatia placed gender equality as one of the highest values of its constitution. Some of the retrogressive actions of the current government include the reduction of women's reproductive rights- prohibiting the right to abortion. The government are also reducing the state's financial support of non-governmental organisations, feminist institutions and LGBT societies, destroying the relationship which had been built between these groups and Croatian government.

Serbia

Serbia is one of the five countries that are currently hoping for accession into the EU - alongside Albania, Macedonia, Turkey and Montenegro. The country is a viable candidate for European Union membership and is in negotiations with the EU with the hopes of establishing its membership in the near future. In February 2016, Serbia produced its first Gender Equality Index - the first country without current EU membership to implement this index. Serbia scored 40.6 per cent, meaning that it is almost halfway towards gender equality. While this may seem like there is still a long way to go, the European Union average is only 52.9 per cent, which means Serbia, is gradually becoming on par with other member states. Domains in which less inequality



exists in Serbia include the health and power domains. Serbian women enjoy relatively equal healthcare to men with accessibility and small gender gaps. Serbia has also excelled in the area of women in power thanks to the introduction of quotas for women's political representation in the National Assembly.

Unlike Croatia and Spain, Serbia does not have a significant absence of women involved in decision-making roles and processes. Serbia recently appointed its first female and openly gay prime minister. According to the Serbian constitution, the prime minister or premier is more powerful than the president with the former in charge of running the government and the latter not allowed to interfere with this. In line with the European Parliament's resolution of January 2001, parliaments must aim to reach a minimum of 40 per cent representation of both sexes in their legislative bodies (Council of Europe Rec, 2003). This quota for gender balancing in parliamentary elections has resulted in more women in Serbia joining the political sphere. This is an important step for gender equality in Serbia, ensuring that women have a voice in the making of the rules and policies which could alter the lives of fellow women for the better.

The aforementioned key areas which the European Union is particularly concerned with have guided and influenced Serbia in the making of various legislation and directives which benefit Serbian women. Their current Strategy on Gender Equality, which covers the period of 2016-2020, focused on three main aims:

- To improve the culture of gender equality and alter gender stereotypes and patterns
- To increase equality between men and women through the application of equal opportunities
- To ensure systematic inclusion of a gender perspective in the adoption, implementation and monitoring of public policies

In response to the European Commission's stipulation that Serbia's protection of women against all forms of violence needs to be strengthened, in 2016 Serbia produced its law combatting domestic violence. The purpose of this law is to prevent domestic violence and offer support and protection to victims of such violence. Under this law, any authority working to combat domestic violence must have undergone appropriate training performed by the judicial academy. Within the law there exists an important provision which states that if any judges or public prosecutors neglect to act

within the time frame provided by the law, this will be treated as a disciplinary offense. Police also have the authority to protect the victim through removal from their living situation or the enforcement of a temporary restraining order on the offender.

In spite of this progress in relation to police and institutions, domestic violence against women is still high in Serbia, with a number of cases reported in 2017. There are many reasons for this, one being that men who return from war and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder in some cases may turn on their families. Certain institutions like social centres, where people go to discuss custody of their children, are still without the security to prevent crimes that sometimes occur at their doorstep. Workers at such centres can be faced with armed abusers who attack. Further laws are thus needed in addition to the progress heretofore made.

The Future

The European Union has played an important role in supporting the subversion of women's subordination in a patriarchal world. An analysis of the impact the EU has had on Serbia, Croatia, Spain and Ireland has demonstrated that the European Union has instigated positive change in these countries. It has brought the topic of gender equality into the political arena for all countries and is ensuring that all EU member states address and promote the equality of the sexes and battle against discrimination. While the full realisation of a gender equal world is still a dream, this dream seems to be slowly becoming more attainable. Throughout the coming years, member states must collaborate closely with the European Union for gender equality, with the interest of all its citizens in mind. There is still much to be done. For example, violence against women is sadly still a reality for a lot of women within the European Union and this is something which needs to end.

The European sphere is going through many changes with the advent of Brexit, the large surge in migration, the persistent economic uncertainties and the rise in intolerances. In this context, it is more important than ever to continue the commitment to equality. In the foreword to 2017 Report on Equality Between Men and Women in the EU, the first vice-president of the European Commission Frans Timmerman's comments on the worrying trend of member states moving in opposing directions and fears that regression may be happening in some countries. In light of this, it is important to reaffirm the importance of equality, to analyse the underlying causes of inequalities and to look to our citizens to encourage them to take responsibility for the pursuit of gender equality.

Something which is often overlooked in this pursuit of equality and in the excitement of new policies and initiatives is the need to address the root of the problem. The origins of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity and the reasons for discrimination against women need to be considered and overcome for gender equality to become a reality. Hegemonic masculinity is here understood to be a cultural norm whereby men are routinely connected to power and economic achievements. This gender system routinely places women in positions of disadvantage and oppression. It is not simply the politicians and world leaders who perpetuate

this cycle of hegemonic masculinity- it is the journalists, advertisers, designers, playwrights, film makers, actors, novelists, academics, musicians and sportsmen. It is the men who weave the fabric of our culture, who articulate their lived experiences and perspectives on the world. It is therefore important that we champion those playwrights who are deconstructing gender norms in their work, the actors who represent marginalised characters, the advertisers who refuse to objectify women. It is important to equally recognise the cutting-edge work of female designers, actors, film makers etc.

One of the cruxes around which hegemonic masculinity pivots in the notion of breadwinning and how this is tied to masculinity. It is therefore important to alleviate the societal pressures which men feel are forcing them into this position. We need to endorse female breadwinners and reconfigure society's bias towards men in the home. Men need to feel that being a caregiver is a viable position for them in society and one in which they will not be discriminated against. The mission for gender equality is therefore something which needs the participation of both men and women. The Council of the European Union, in their 2006 press release noted that 'in order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the well-being of society as a whole' (Conclusions on 'Men and gender equality'). In 2015, the European Commission produced a study which collated research carried out on men in the workplace and in the household and gave recommendations for producing policies which improve the role of men in gender equality. This study is publicly available on the European Commission's website. Their recommendations include changing workplaces from male-dominated to gender-balanced environments, support measures to increase men's participation in female-dominated sectors, integrate gender awareness into the educational syllabus and learning materials and fostering the notion of caring masculinities. Traditionally, the term 'care' has been associated with women. However, the EU wants to widen this term to encompass men's involvement not just in childcare but also in the emotional support of others. They are producing both legislative and non-legislative measures to support this. These measures include the introduction of paternity leave such that fathers- and second parents for those in non-heterosexual relationships- will be entitled to take at least ten working days around the birth of their child, compensated at the rate of at least sick pay. There will also be an extension of the right of flexible working arrangements such that parents can request flexibility in their place of work and their hours of work. Non-legislative measures include protecting against the discrimination and dismissal of employees after leave- meaning that men will be less reluctant to take parental leave. Measures also include the encouragement of gender-balanced use of entitlement to leave and flexible working conditions.

Feminism is an important agent of change in the promotion of gender equality and is something which needs to be incorporated into a gender equality strategy. No gender equality initiative should be made without a feminist perspective to inform it. While the need for the presence of women in decision-making roles is a prevalent concern,



the need for feminist women in these roles should be even more important. Often when campaigning for election, female candidates try to obfuscate or omit any interest in gender concerns or feminism out of fear of being perceived as a threat to male voters. They prefer to choose topics and commitments which are common and appeal to the public at large. These women may downplay the importance of women's issues in order to gain more credence in the political arena. Many women who enter the political sphere and gain decision-making roles hail also from an elite class of women who are often more privileged and less disadvantaged than their fellow women. This may result in them overlooking issues which are important to those in more disadvantaged positions. This is why it is important for these women in positions of power to have a feminist political agenda in which women of all classes, ethnic origins, religions and sexual orientations are taken into account. We need women who not merely assimilate themselves into a role traditionally reserved for men, but who work tirelessly to overturn this gender stereotype and other harmful stereotypes. These

women need to be willing to challenge the status quo, they need to refuse to settle for the current situation. We need women who will inspire and set an example for their male colleagues. We need these feminist women to use their voice and make decisions in the best interests of those women who do not have a voice and who cannot make these decisions themselves.

The European Institute for Gender Equality, who are an autonomous body of the European Union and act as a knowledge source for the public, launched a campaign in 2016 which assists in gender mainstreaming and provides toolkits for carrying it out in practice. Gender mainstreaming involves the 'integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination' (European Institute for Gender Equality). Gender mainstreaming is intended to analyse current situations and put measures and policies in

place which aim to avoid the reinforcement of inequalities and discrimination. It is not only the European Institutions which should be responsible for gender mainstreaming, but also governments at national level and the staff of all public institutions. These toolkits can be found on the EIGE website and focus on areas such as gender equality in research, gender equality training for public administration employees and how to produce gender mainstreaming in institutions and organisations.

We do not need to rely solely on women in positions of power and on the European Union or our governments to make changes. Gender equality is the responsibility of every individual in society and we all have the capacity to become agents of change. Women in society need to demand change and accountability from our politicians and those in positions of power. Women's groups and organisations can be powerful agents of change in the pursuit of equality. These can include non-governmental organisations or simply local women's groups who band together to raise awareness of discrimination and inequality. This can be done through the organisation of charity events in aid of causes such as domestic violence, sexual assault and others. These groups can also rally support for petitions and put pressure on governments to make changes and implement new policies. It is important that these women's groups remain dedicated to change and do not become complacent once they feel their goals have been achieved. This is a failure which we saw with the women's organisations in Croatia who gave up their project once laws and policies had been put in place. Instead, they needed to ensure these policies were enforced and implemented and place accountability and pressure on their government to ensure this was the case.

Another way in which ordinary citizens can play a role in perpetuating gender equality is to consider their positions in the home. Both men and women should take an interest in breaking out of their restrictive sex roles. For example, men should take advantage of their right to parental leave and take time off work to care for their children. Equally, men can choose to adopt the home-making role whilst their partner assumes the breadwinning role. This is something which is becoming increasingly more popular and we need to encourage the acceptance of this new model of raising a family. Men and women should share caregiving responsibilities equally and ensure there is a gender-balance in the home. Something else which women can do to perpetuate this gender-balance in the home is to refrain from taking on the full burden of the emotional workload. The emotional workload refers to the responsibility women feel in the home to ensure its smooth running. This can include remembering things like restocking the fridge or making sure the children's uniforms are washed or ensuring the library books are returned and the packed lunches are made. Men and women need to share these responsibilities and this is something which should be established from the outset of any relationship. Traditional gender roles are no longer a viable option and we need to create a society where it is seen as the norm for either the man or the woman to stay at home and mind the children or for both parents to choose to work. Additionally, it should be recognised that couples are under no obligation to reproduce at all and may choose to simply focus on their careers instead of deciding to raise a family.

The Arts, Gender Equality and Human Rights

Theatre, film and the arts can also play a crucial role in promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion and combating marginalisation, discrimination and inequality. Forum theatre can be a particularly powerful tool in educating and enlightening an audience to the types of oppression and discrimination in their lives and teaching them how to change the world around them by contesting and critiquing the social organisation of gender. The concept of forum theatre was first created by the Brazilian Theatre practitioner Augusto Boal (1931-2009) as part of his 'Theatre of the Oppressed' in which the audience become active participants in the performance. Thus, practicing forum theatre on the topic of gender equality can enable the audience to actively engage with the topic by asking questions, voicing their opinions and responding to the performance. This prevents the spectators from merely becoming passive receptors and encourages them to think critically and act freely for themselves.

As a professional theatre organisation, Smashing Times have created a form of theatre called 'true fiction' using original source material, research, interviews and new writing to create professional theatre performances and creative films that are shown to the general public to engage audiences in a quality arts experience as well as using that experience to raise awareness of and encourage discussion around key themes such as remembrance, women in history, gender equality, human rights and peace. Performances and film screenings are followed by post-show discussions and are often accompanied by creative workshops and symposiums for direct audience participation. The company have created a range of projects including **Acting for the Future** which uses theatre to promote positive mental health and **Women War and Peace** which uses theatre and film to promote gender equality, peace and a remembrance of women's stories from history.

In *Acting Together on the World Stage*, Dijana Milošević, Artistic Director of Dah Theatre, Serbia writes:

'Through common participation (i.e. projects, performances, meetings) theatre can be one of the most powerful mediums for creating live contact between individuals from opposing sides of a conflict. In this way, theatre helps remove barriers between people and nudges them to face the truth and overcome harsh experiences, thus directly contributing to reconciliation. Theatre can answer people's need to understand the moment they live in, and it can help them meet the fear, anger, prejudice, pain, and suffering in safe surroundings. It can remind people of the suffering of others. It can influence people profoundly without political pressure and propaganda. It can give the energy of life manifested in the dancing, singing body of an actor. It can make people smile together again.

One of the fundamental aspects of theatre is people of all different backgrounds working together—and this is also what is most needed in Europe and the world. Theatre is an attempt to share the space. Every country in our region faces the same important questions: can we create a shared space? What would it take?

Through theatre work, tolerance and the possibility of creating new life from the ruins can be explored. Theatre can be a way to gently initiate discussions about a country's troubled history, opening the door for facing truth and reconciliation. Creative theatre techniques and programs can support participants in beginning and continuing the process of reconciliation. Theatre creates a safe zone and safe environment for the expression of individual needs and the overcoming of traumatic experiences through creative work. In this way, theatre can play a vital role in society.

Also, theatre done with social awareness has an important role as witness. Sometimes, it is more important just to be present, in silence, than to act.¹

The arts should also support gender equality by bringing recognition upon female artists and promoting their work. Female artists often have to operate in a hostile domain which is still predominantly male-oriented. One only has to watch the Oscars and see male after male actor, producer or director receive awards for their efforts whilst, comparatively, women receive very little. Women are often met with consternation and discouragement when deciding they want to pursue their ambitions as an artist. They are questioned about whether this will mean side-lining their families or choosing their work over having children. The same questions are never asked of men. Women also have to work harder to gain recognition for their work since they are routinely overlooked in favour of what their male counterparts may be producing. Additionally, women will find it harder to obtain leading roles in films or even diverse roles outside the traditional stock characters of wife, mother etc. which simply reinforce stereotypical gender ideals.

In Ireland, a movement broke when the Abbey theatre's programme for 2016 was met with consternation by the public. Out of the ten plays planned, only one was written by a woman. The fact that the Abbey theatre is Ireland's national theatre and therefore supposed to represent a

nation, was a particular sticking point. The movement - Waking the Feminists - which was born from this debacle, had rippling consequences throughout the world. It had created a space for women in theatre and the arts to talk about the discrimination and inequality they were faced with on a daily basis in the sector. In response to the movement, Abbey theatre published eight guiding principles on gender equality, the Arts Council awarded 20,000 to Waking the Feminists to carry out research on gender diversity in theatre and The Irish Film Board published a six-point gender equality plan with the intention of receiving 50/50 gender parity funding over the following three years. The effects of Waking the Feminists show that not only can challenging the status quo bring about changes in policy, it can also bring confidence, solidarity and strength to women throughout the world.

In conclusion to this article, an analysis of the commitment the European Union has made to eradicating discrimination and perpetuating gender equality has shown that progress is being made in this field. Women from European Union member states are benefitting from the policies and directives which have been put in place by the EU. Across all member states, governments are curating strategies which aim to bring discrimination against women to an end and ensure women and girls receive equal treatment across all sectors of society. Influenced by the European Union's own strategy, these campaigns seek to bolster women's position in decision-making roles, expose violence and abuse against women and ensure women receive equal wages to that of their male counterparts. They are doing this by providing greater access to childcare, better healthcare, more flexible working arrangements and more. Countries are also following suit on European directives and producing legislature which makes discrimination on the basis of gender illegal and ensures equal treatment of women and men in job applications. All of these small changes made in the footsteps of the European Union bring us closer, as European citizens, to gender diversity and equality. We must not falter along this path, we must persist. Our women and girls are counting on us.

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THE EU AND IRISH WOMEN

Source and Special Thanks to:
Ruth Deasy, Head of Press, European
Commission Representation in
Ireland www.euireland.ie

There's no doubt that Irish women have more rights than their mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers, but gender equality in Ireland has yet to be achieved in many areas. Men still dominate the workplace and are the main decision-makers in business and politics while women often find themselves lagging behind when it comes to equal opportunities and income.

Equality between genders is one of the fundamental principles of EU law, and legislation for equal rights between women and men has existed since the very early days of the European Community.

In fact the basic principle of equal pay for equal work was included in the Treaty of Rome back in 1957, and while great strides have been made in fostering equality, gaps still exist. The European Union is the driving force behind several pieces of important Irish legislation that are narrowing those

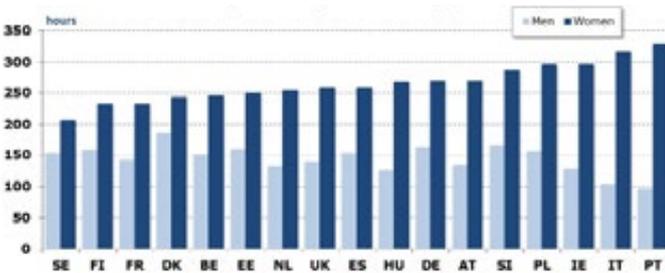
gaps, covering areas like equal treatment when applying for a job, equal treatment at work, protection of pregnant workers, protection of breastfeeding mothers and rights to maternity and parental leave.

However, challenges remain in fields such as violence against women, reconciling work and family life and gender balance in decision-making and positions of power. Progress is continuing and the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 will help promote equality between women and men through key actions to be implemented in five priority areas. Those five priority areas are equal economic independence for women and men; equal pay for work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and promoting gender equality beyond the EU. See below for more information on the following subjects: employment; career advancement; education; politics; gender-based violence and strategy.

Employment

European Commission statistics published in 2016 show that Ireland's gender pay gap has started to fall back a little again, from 14.4% in 2012 to 13.9% in 2014 - it was 12.6% in 2009 and 2008. The average gender pay gap in the EU stands at 16.7% (2014). The gender overall earnings gap, which takes into account disadvantages women face in terms of lower hourly earnings, working fewer hours and lower employment rates due to caring for children or relatives, stood at 34.7%.

Time spent in unpaid work by gender:



Source: OECD Gender data portal

Despite the pay gap, the situation for Irish working women has improved radically since Ireland joined the then EEC in 1973. More women can now access the labour market, thanks to the abolition of the marriage bar for women in public service jobs, and stronger equality legislation from the EU.

In 1973, there were 287,800 Irish women in employment, representing 27% of the total employed. In the years following accession to the European Community the figures began to improve rapidly. By 1997 the employment rate for women of working age was 42% and by 2007 it was more than 60%. However, during the economic crisis the figure dropped significantly, falling to 55.2% by 2012. In 2014 the rate increased slightly to 55.9%.

The female unemployment rate was as low as 4% during Ireland's boom years but it more than doubled during the crisis to 8.3% in 2009 and rose to a peak of 11.4% in 2013 before falling back to 9.9% in 2014 and 16.9% by summer 2016.

Although the situation for women in employment is improving, inequalities remain. Women are far less likely to be covered by occupational pensions than men and they also make up the majority of part-time workers in Ireland. In some cases women also suffer direct discrimination where they're simply treated less favourably than men. Or they may be treated unfairly due to a policy or practice that's not designed to discriminate, but still results in unequal treatment. However, it's worth remembering that any discrimination, regardless of whether it's deliberate or not, is banned under EU legislation.

Key Actions

Under its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality the European Commission will:

- Carry out an assessment of the Equal Pay Principle Directive to improve its implementation and enforcement;

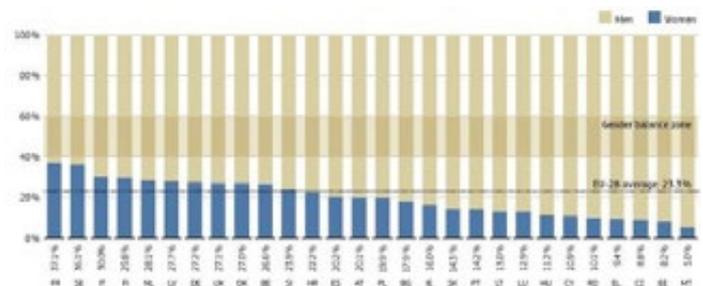
- Consider sanctions to improve the deterrent effect of the prohibition of pay discrimination;
- Look to improve the efficient and effective functioning of equality bodies to facilitate access to justice for victims of discrimination;
- Support Member States in their efforts to ensure equal pay and address the root causes of the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps through the European Semester.

Career advancement

Compared to their male counterparts Irish women work fewer hours, earn less money and are inadequately represented in business, the Oireachtas and in local and regional authorities. Statistics show women still face many difficulties when it comes to career advancement to decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors.

Women are seriously under-represented when it comes to the boards of management of Ireland's top businesses too. Irish women make up just 13.2% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies in Ireland, significantly below the EU average of 21.2%.

Representation of woman and men on the boards of large listed companies in the EU, April 2016:



Source: European Commission, Database on woman and men in decision making

Female representation on Irish State boards is much better, at 36.2%. The Irish Government set a target of 40% in 1993, when the figure was just 15%. In October 2013 MEPs backed a European Commission proposal to ensure gender balance on boards for publicly-listed companies. The measure calls on Europe's top firms to ensure at least 40 per cent of their non-executive board members are female. Listed companies will have until 2020 to reach the target while public ones will need to do so by 2018.

Throughout Europe sectorial divisions also continue. Male workers dominate in their traditional sectors like construction, utility services, communication and manufacturing. Women are dominant in health and education and also outnumber men in the wholesale and retail trades as well as other service related industries. In Ireland workers in the health and education sectors are more likely to be women than men, while the opposite is true for workers in agriculture and transport.

Key Actions

Under its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality the European Commission will:

- Modernise the current EU legal framework to ensure better enforcement and legislation in the areas of leave and flexible working arrangements;
- Continue monitoring and supporting Member States in attaining the Barcelona targets on childcare;
- Support Member States in their efforts to increase female labour-market participation, and closely monitor national reform measures under the European Semester in line with employment guidelines;
- Support companies in their efforts to increase female labour market participation by facilitating Diversity Charter platforms;
- Use the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs to support measures enhancing digital skills among women and girls and promoting female employment in the ICT sector.

Education

Former European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, says the advancement of equal opportunities for women and men in Ireland over the past half century has been transformational, and the success of women in higher education bears testimony to this. She was speaking in her role as chair of a Higher Education Authority (HEA) expert group tasked with reviewing gender equality in Irish education institutions.

The expert group's report published in 2016 found that despite better educational outcomes for women compared to men, significant gender inequality remains in higher education as well as across wider society. The report pointed out that as far back as 2001, the European Commission had concluded that the under-representation of women threatened the goals of science in achieving excellence, as well as being wasteful and unjust.

However, women continue to be vastly under-represented in top positions within the higher education sector as well as in top academic decision-making positions across Europe. The HEA report found that numerous cultural and structural factors mean women face a number of barriers, not experienced by men, to progression in Irish higher education institutions (HEIs). The HEA expert group also concluded that gender equality would only be achieved when the most talented women and men are employed at all levels in Irish HEIs, in both academic and non-academic roles.

Representation on HEI governance and management structures also needs to be gender balanced, according to the report.

The European Commission's Education and Training Monitor publication from 2015 states that fewer women (5.7%) are early school leavers compared to men (8%) while more females (58.6%) than males (45.1%) go on to third level education in Ireland. However, women face barriers when returning to education as access to full-time childcare remains limited and expensive in Ireland.

Key Actions

Under its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality the European Commission will:

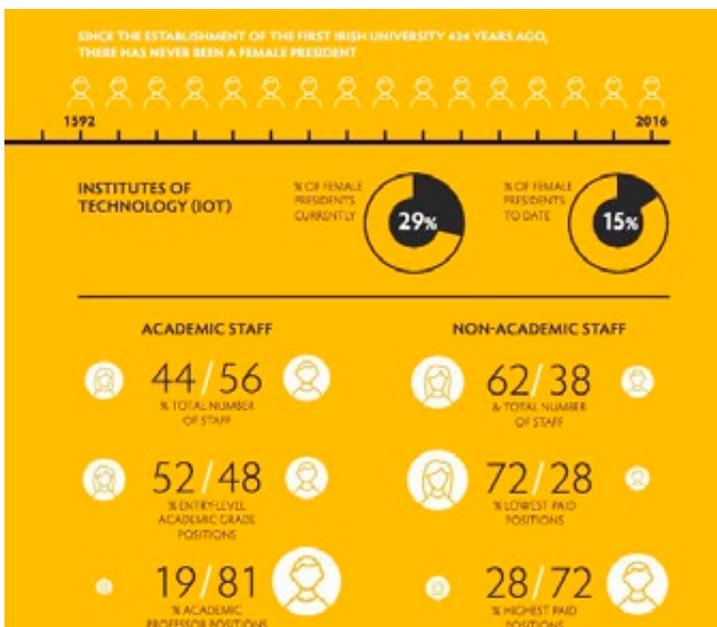
- Support activities to raise awareness of educational and vocational training choices for women;
- Promote gender equality in all levels and types of education, including in relation to gendered study subject choices and careers;
- Use existing policy cooperation tools and funding instruments to foster gender equality in line with priorities set out in the Education and Training 2020 framework.

Politics

Politics is another area where Irish women aren't adequately represented. Following the 2016 general election, the share of women TDs in Dáil Éireann rose to 22% (from 16.3% in the previous Dáil). Ireland exceeds the EU average of 37% when it comes to female representation in the European Parliament. Six of the 11 (55%) Irish MEPs are women.

The Irish Government has introduced measures to try and rectify the gender imbalance in the Dáil. Political parties were required to include a quota of at least 30% female candidates at the 2016 general election, and that figure rises to 40% for the next one.

With regard to the European Commission, nine out of a total of 28 commissioners are women. Ireland's first, and so far only, female commissioner was Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, who was head of Research, Innovation and Science from 2010-2014. Another Irish woman, former Irish Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly, was appointed European Ombudsman in September 2013. Irishwoman Catherine Day was Secretary General of the European Commission for almost a decade,



Women in leadership

Although the level of female representation in the **boardroom** is still low at **22%**, the rate of progress has picked up since 2010 thanks to a combination of political pressure, intense public debate and legislative measures.



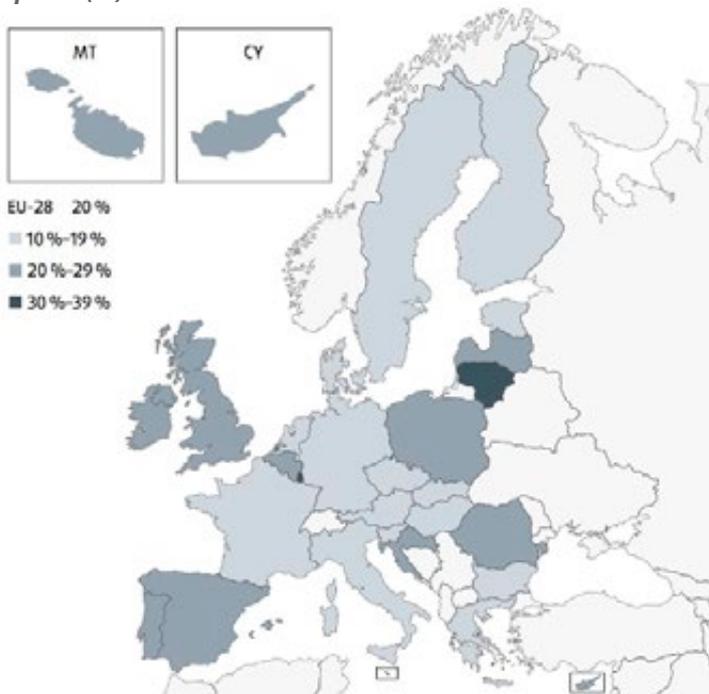
As regards **national politics**, parity is more than **three decades away**. While some EU Member States display among the best performances in the world, three countries in the EU have an all-male Government in 2016.

from November 2005 to September 2015. She is now Special Adviser for Strategic issues regarding the Multi Annual Financial Framework. The European Commission database on women and men in decision-making includes a section that covers the gender balance amongst politicians at European, national and regional level.

Gender-based violence

Statistics on domestic and sexual violence from national and international surveys tend to shock those who are not familiar with them. In a 2014 study entitled 'Violence against women: An EU-wide survey' by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), it was reported that 14% of women in Ireland have experienced physical violence by a partner since age 15.

Victims of physical and/or sexual partner violence who say that the most serious incident came to the attention of the police (%)



Six per cent of Irish women have experienced sexual violence by a current or former partner while 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner. 12% of Irish respondents in the FRA study had experienced stalking (including cyber stalking). In 2015, there were 16,375 incidents of domestic violence against women disclosed during 12,041 contacts with Women's Aid Services.

The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Ireland, Cosc, published the country's Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 in January 2016. The strategy envisages a range of actions to be implemented by State, voluntary and community sector organisations aimed at preventing and responding to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims is also a priority of the European Commission and it's included in its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019.

Key Actions

Under its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality the European Commission will:

- Continue progressing EU accession to the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention);
- Continue to enforce the Victim's Rights Directive and laws on European protection orders, in particular to ensure access to protection and support for those exposed to gender-based violence;
- Further improve the availability, quality and reliability of data on gender-based violence through cooperation with Eurostat, the European Institute for Gender Equality and the Fundamental Rights Agency;
- Continue focused actions to end all forms of gender-based violence and raise awareness.

Strategy

Promoting gender equality is a fundamental EU value and the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 is the main driver in making it a reality. Progress made during the Commission's 2010-2015 Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men now needs to be developed further to narrow the gender gaps that still exist.

Improvements in recent years can be witnessed, for example, by the highest employment rate ever recorded for women (64% in 2014) and their increasing participation in economic decision-making. However, this upward trend is offset by persistent inequality in other areas, such as in terms of pay and earnings.

Member States, the European Parliament and a wide range of stakeholders have all contributed to the current Strategic



Smashing Times workshop

Engagement for Gender Equality, including through a public consultation which attracted almost 5,000 replies. An overwhelming majority (94 %) of the organisations that replied consider the priorities laid out in the current strategy are still valid for future engagement. Europeans feel strongly about promoting gender equality: three quarters of respondents of a recent Eurobarometer survey (76%) think that tackling inequality between men and women should be an EU priority. And around nine in ten (91%) agree that

tackling inequality between men and women is necessary to creating a fairer society.

Ireland has some work to do to meet the objectives of the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality. There have been improvements, such as the introduction of two weeks paid paternity leave, but we're lagging behind when it comes to provision of affordable childcare and the number of female decision-makers in business and politics.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND GENDER EQUALITY A CONQUEST IN PROGRESS

Kilian Cuerda Ros,
Historian, Spain

It is very common in our political, social and cultural environment when discussions, reflections or proposals are raised about democracy and human rights, that we consider these issues as major items or fundamental challenges to be addressed through thinking, politics, activism or governance. However, issues such as gender equality or feminism are often raised, interpreted or conceived as somehow 'sectoral', occupying a 'secondary' step in the struggle for the great progress of humankind.

The demands for equal rights, opportunities and participation for women have often been postponed in favour of more important issues that supposedly already encompass demands for equality, such as the class issue, the classic struggle for democracy or the civil rights issue. Furthermore, it has been suggested that once these more important issues such as class or democracy are satisfied, all those 'feminine concerns' can then be addressed given that 'the important thing' would have already been achieved. However, how can we speak of democracy



*Adam Traynor in Testimonies from
Acting for the Future, Smashing
Times Theatre and Film Company.
Photo Credit Keith Jordan*



and all that accompanies it, if we forget about the rights to full equality for half of the population particularly as these rights have been historically violated in a systematic way. Women's rights have been denied and women have been discriminated against because of their gender. It is worth remembering that democracy (and the rights that accompany it) cannot exist, if one half of humanity continues to experience active or passive discrimination.

Discriminatory social malpractices occur as a result of a world-view that can be present even without us even being aware of it, and this world-view exists as a result of centuries of patriarchy that have been imposed on human societies. In Europe we have been able to build up and maintain a certain standard in relation to liberty, social welfare, equality, democratic progress, economic development, peace and solidity of the rule of law and despite the numerous problems and shortcomings that still exist, these standards far exceed anything historically achieved both within Europe and the rest of the world. These achievements came from the post-Second World War period, arising from social and political pacts that led to the construction of the welfare state and the process of political and economic

integration that led to the implementation of the European Union. In this sense, intrinsic to all of this, has been the recognition of the right to full equality for all women, the right to occupy public spaces, and an increase in visibility and empowerment in the workplace and in social, cultural and political environments. However this struggle is still on-going particularly as it is operating within a system where the remnants and defects of machismo and secular patriarchy still exist.

The issue of gender equality and women's rights was a fundamental idea in the first treaties of the European Union in 1957, including for example the recognition of equal pay for work of equal value between men and women as referred to in Article 119 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, followed in successive years by the Directive 79/7/EEC of 1978 which obliges member states to progressively apply the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the field of social security. Furthermore, in 1997 the Treaty of Amsterdam took a leap forward in the fight for gender equality far beyond the labour sphere, when it established that a key mission of the European Union is 'to eliminate inequalities

between men and women' and to 'promote their equality by introducing this principle into all policies and programs developed'.

With this qualitative leap, following the advances of the second half of the twentieth century and in the first decades of the twenty-first century, very relevant objectives and achievements in favour of gender equality have been achieved within the European Union, as well as substantial growth in pro-equality policies. Both the European Parliament and the Court of Justice of the European Union have been two fundamental elements of construction and materialization in relation to these achievements. Thus, in separate EU directives and judgments of the Court in 2004, 2010 and 2011 for example, it was established on top of the aforementioned right to equal pay, the right to equal access to goods and services, the fight against sexual harassment, trafficking and violence against women, and the principle of positive discrimination in favour of access to professions previously de facto precluded to women, among other things.

Similarly, the EU has actively participated in the Beijing Platform for Action of the United Nations to promote these same principles and objectives. In 2006, the European Institute for Gender Equality was set up and its activities started in 2010 to raise awareness among EU citizens about gender equality and to support and assist the Union's institutions and Member States to develop effective policies in this regard. Between 2010 and 2015, a five-axis plan was developed for the struggle for gender equality, focusing on five key action points: Equal economic independence for women and men, equal pay for equal work and equally valued work, equal decision-making, dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence, and equality in external action. Today, despite having achieved the highest rate of female employment to date and higher participation quotas, many objectives remain to be met, with a persistent problem of inequality in pay and income. Therefore, the objectives mentioned and the tasks to be followed in the action plans for 2016 to 2019 remain valid.

However, the struggle for the equality of women was not born at this time, nor was it a gift of the member states involved in the formation and construction of the EU. During the period of enlightenment and the French Revolution from which came our worldview of democracy, human rights and principles of liberty, equality and solidarity, we find that the struggle for gender equality and the emancipation of women was already ongoing. But the struggle for the emancipation of women was often in conflict with the processes of change taking place at the time. The political changes and progresses taking place were born out of and remained part of a patriarchal society - the assassination of Olympe de Gouges¹ in the guillotine by her own French revolutionary companions is a clear example of this.

Later on, we find that, during the process of profound changes and the construction of a new society taking place as part of the industrial revolution, that the workers' movements were in combat against the injustices of capitalism as well as being against the liberal suffragist movement. Despite the changes taking place you had a system in which exploitation of salaried labour and patriarchy came together hand in hand to ensure the continuation of discrimination and inequality over half of the population by reason of their sex, both in the labour market as well as in the political sphere, with the refusal to allow women's participation in democratic processes despite the construction of liberal, constitutional and rule of law nation-states.

In the construction and development of what became known as the Welfare State, which took place after World War II following the defeat of the Nazis and Fascist forces, there was a focus on state stimulation of the economy and a promise of the state playing a key role in the promotion and protection of a citizen's economic and social well-being. As part of the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957, leading to the European Union in 1993, the claim for equal rights for women would take a leap forward as part of the process of growing and building the EU.

1. Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793) was a French political activist and playwright whose feminist writings reached a large audience. She was executed by guillotine during the Reign of Terror for attacking the regime of the Revolutionary Government and for her close relationship with the Girondists.

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Women in an Equal Europe

INTERVIEWS
FROM IRELAND
CONDUCTED BY
SMASHING TIMES
THEATRE AND
FILM COMPANY,
DUBLIN, IRELAND

Dil Wickremasinghe // Mary Lawlor
Ivana Bacik // Olwen Fouéré
Mary Moynihan // Sinéad Burke



DIL WICKREMASINGHE

Biography

Dil Wickremasinghe is a social justice and mental health broadcaster and journalist and co-founder of Insight Matters. As a broadcaster Dil presented her weekly award-winning programme Global Village every Saturday with Newstalk 106-108 until 2017 when her show was unexpectedly cancelled just weeks after she spoke out against a colleague's victim blaming comments. She is also a regular contributor on RTE, TV3 and in print media.

Dil is an activist and campaigns for equal rights and has served voluntarily on the boards of numerous NGO's. She is a passionate Mental Health Ambassador for One in Four, Suicide or Survive and See Change and shares her story of recovery to break down stigma around mental health. Dil is a social entrepreneur and set up Diversity and Equality Works in 2006 and since then they have provided equality training in the Irish workplace. In 2011 Dil co-founded the mental health support service Insight Matters with her partner Anne Marie Toole. Along with a team of 13 psychotherapists they provide low cost, inclusive and culturally sensitive personal development, psychotherapy and counselling in their city centre based centre. Together they hope to 'inspire change in self and society.'

Dil is also an occasional stand-up comedian and in 2012 she made her debut in Irish theatre in the See Change production of *Box of Frogs* with Mary McEvoy and John Moynes. In 2014 Dil was honoured with the Frederick Douglas Award as part of the Lord Mayor's Awards for her outstanding contribution to Dublin civic life.

Question: You are an Irish citizen born in Italy to Sri Lankan parents. Could you talk a little bit about your own experiences growing up in Italy and then going back to Sri Lanka where your mother was from?

Dil: I might just give some background to how I ended up in Italy. My mom's first marriage was a forced marriage to a Sri Lankan man who was about twenty years older than her who worked for the UN based in Rome. I always find that so ironic. There is someone who's working for the UN who is actually involved in a forced marriage. My mother was seventeen when she was married off and the marriage lasted about thirteen years. And then she divorced him much to her parent's disgust and she was told, 'don't come back to Sri Lanka whatever you do. You stay there, as far as we're concerned, we don't have a daughter!' So she settled in Italy and became a fashion model and then went into fashion design and then set up a business and then she met my father, and that's how I ended up being born in Italy. So, growing up in Italy was actually great fun, because by the time I came around, my mom was well established as a fashion designer. She had a chain of high-fashion boutiques and it was a very privileged upbringing. We had cooks and I had a nanny and drivers, and it was really, really quite privileged. When I was young, I suppose the feeling I had was that the Italians kind of looked at us as a novelty. My mother was looked upon as some kind of Asian princess-type-character. She never had to queue, you know, because of her stunning looks and she was on *Vogue Italia* and she was a bit of a celebrity, so we never had to queue. Her friends and the circles she ran with were 'privileged', that is the word that comes to mind.

But then immigration soared in Italy and I remember it was around the time that I left. The reason why I left Italy and went to Sri Lanka was because my parents separated and I was sent back to Sri Lanka to live with my grandparents. And it was around that time that there was a huge amount of immigration (into Italy) especially coming from North Africa. And there were reports of people being, you know, attacked and there were racist attacks. And the Italian immigration system really tightened up, and I could feel that traveling back and forth as a child. I was quite young and I was alone. I would travel on my own, shuffling back and forth between my parents in Italy and my grandparents in Sri Lanka. And even though I had a passport which said 'born in Italy' and I had it when I was going back to Italy from Sri Lanka to be with my parents, I still had to carry this big folder of documents that had copies of my mother's working license and this and that document, and my mother would say 'don't put that folder in the overhead, because if you lose that, they may not let you back in'.

And sure enough, they were very strict. They pulled me aside when I was maybe six or seven with this big folder . . . this big immigration officer; I'll never forget it. Because at that time it was the Civil War in Sri Lanka, so the Italian authorities were worried that a lot of people were coming over to claim asylum. And we were pulled aside just before immigration, and we were sitting all in a row. You had all these adults and you had me, sitting on my own with this big plastic sign saying 'UN - Unaccompanied Minor'. And this immigration officer storms out of one of the rooms and just points at all of us and says, 'You are all liars!' He was obviously in some

kind of state, something obviously had angered him in the interview room and he said 'you are all liars . . . you are all coming here to take our jobs.' I'll never forget that. And I think that's really stuck with me.

So when I became an adult in Sri Lanka, I suppose I was looking to leave Sri Lanka. I knew eventually I would settle back in Europe, but not in Italy, because I felt that I was not welcome there, even though I was born there, my first language officially is Italian, I am not welcome there. And recently I went back to Italy the day I got my Irish citizenship; I went back to Rome, which was about a month later. It was my way of saying, 'Look, you missed out! You didn't want me here.' But I am so happy today, because things haven't changed there, immigration wise. . . when you go on holidays you see the menial jobs are done by migrants so I really think I made the right choice.

Q: Did you see positive changes here in Ireland in relation to human rights?

Dil: When I moved to Ireland it was June 2000. The timing was perfect, because looking back now, if I had come a couple of years later, it would have been a completely different ballgame. When I arrived I was a little bit ahead of the trend of migration. I first came over in October 1999 to have an interview with the National College of Ireland and I was flying (working) with an international airline at that stage, flying in and out of European Cities. I was walking around Dublin thinking, 'gosh, could I see myself living here?' and the thing that struck me was 'why am I the only brown person here? Where are the other migrants?' But then when I moved over in June 2000, just in that very short span of. . . I think seven to eight months, there was a big difference. I saw migration.

When I came to Ireland I was viewed as an unskilled or semi-skilled worker, because I failed my Junior Cert. I got expelled from school. So academically I didn't have any qualifications. All the experience I had was very much life experience, working in the retail industry or the flying industry. So I started as a kitchen porter, but I think it was all positive, I wouldn't be talking to you today if I hadn't had a good experience. Along the way of course I experienced negative stuff as well, but I think I experienced more positive stuff than negative stuff. But I think that's down to the fact that I'm a woman and also I'm Asian. Now I keep saying that if I were a six-foot Nigerian man, I wouldn't be sitting in the position that I am in now. So I'm very mindful of that. And also the fact that I spoke fluent English, and I have a bit of a sense of humour. And because I lived in Italy, I had the experience of living with Europeans, of integrating. And actually, my mother really taught me a valuable lesson about how to integrate and how to get ahead and network. So I had a lot of skills that maybe other migrants in my position would not have. And I also believe that a big 'positive' was that Irish people respect someone who is hard-working and is committed to what they are doing . . . they might not really look for qualifications or who you know if you can work hard for yourself.

Whereas in Italy, it would be all about your qualifications. . . and then there's such a hierarchy, people don't call each other by their names, it would be very much 'Mr so-and-so' or you would be addressed by your profession. So if you were

a lawyer, they would be calling you 'the lawyer', and 'there's the architect', and 'there's the accountant'. Whereas in Ireland there's a more equal footing. . . It worked well for me because I was able to, for example, get a job in media and to present a show without having a single qualification. I am sure that anywhere else in the world, before I could even get in the door and audition for a show, they'll be like, 'okay, where are your qualifications, where's your degree?' So that's a huge positive.

And of course there's openness in Ireland, and I felt that from the day I got here. The day I arrived coincided with Dublin pride, the week of June, and I had no idea. I had just arrived and someone told me, 'by the way, it's gay pride week', and I was like 'what!' And within twenty-four hours, I found myself marching down O'Connell Street with several Israeli men, which I thought was very ironic. I was 25. I had come from a religious family, I had been kicked out of my family home at seventeen, been homeless for four years, got fired from my first job in radio because of my sexuality, and then worked and lived in the Middle East for five years where, you know, you just didn't breathe a word about your sexuality. And then suddenly within twenty-four hours of coming to Ireland, I was surrounded by at least a few thousand LGBT people in broad daylight, in hot pants and feather boas and I was like, 'oh my God, this country rocks!' So with that kind of introduction, I think that kind of gave me the hope I needed. 'Right, this is the place where I am going to give my 110%', and I think that played a big part in where I am today, absolutely. I am a hard worker and I'm very sociable, all of that kind of stuff, so I have to take some credit for the work, but I feel if I'd been in any other country I would have come across more face-to-face racism or sexism and they maybe would have beaten me down and made me give up my dream to do well and work in media. So I have to say, Ireland rocks.

Q: Do you feel that the EU has any positive effects on your life as a woman in Ireland?

Dil: Hands-down, yes. For example, from an LGBT point of view, I think the marriage referendum was conducted on the back of European legislation around discrimination towards LGBT people in the workplace and so forth. And as a woman, a number of laws in Ireland in relation to employment and gender equality in the workplace have originated from the EU.

I believe that laws can be there, but the reality may be different. Unfortunately, from working in media, I see gender inequality every day in relation to numbers for male versus female presenters; you just have to turn the radio on, it is an issue. From a maternity point of view, Ireland still views women as being primary caregivers, so there is a lot of work to do there also. It is very disheartening because in many ways, Ireland is so progressive and in many ways we are still in the dark ages.

We are still looking to appeal the Eight Amendment (of the Constitution of Ireland which gives explicit recognition to the right to life of an unborn child, effectively introducing a constitutional ban on abortion in Ireland). For me, I was so focused on marriage equality that I only became aware of just how negative the Eight Amendment can be, not just

for women who are experiencing crisis pregnancies, but for all childbearing women¹. I experienced the Irish maternity services just two years ago, and it was appalling. I had a succession of really horrible experiences with the maternity hospital that I was in, that it shook my confidence in the Irish maternity services. I felt that I had no voice, especially as a migrant woman in the Irish maternity services. And then of course there were stories such as that of Savita Halappanavar (who died in an Irish maternity hospital in 2012 aged 31 after being refused a termination), this woman were very present in my mind when I was assisted by maternity services, and I decided to have a home birth. Because I felt they weren't listening to me, I was just a number, they weren't looking at my chart between appointments, and I considered myself quite a vocal and confident person, and I still couldn't get through to them. I had a feeling that when I went into labour they would say it's probably going to be a C-section, that they were putting all these labels on me, I was a geriatric pregnancy, I was too old, and it was an IVF pregnancy and because of that it was going to be a C-section and it has to be a hospital pregnancy. I felt that in the thick of it, I would lose complete power.

The week before Phoenix was born, I was fearful that they would actually get a court order to force me to have a hospital birth, even though I was fully cleared by my homebirth midwife who had been visiting me on a weekly basis from week four. She was confident that I was going to have a perfectly healthy birth. However, I was summoned to the hospital a week before the birth and the head consultant in the maternal hospital said, 'you are going to have a hospital birth, or you will bleed to death', that was pretty much what he said to me. And I said, 'look, thanks very much for your opinion, but I am quite happy with what my homebirth midwife has said, and I will go with it!'

For that whole week I didn't answer the door, I was scared of picking up the phone because I thought that they could, on the basis of the Eight amendment, very easily take me to court, that they could get a high-court order and try to give me a C-section. It's so interesting that only four or five months ago, that exact thing happened to another woman. But thankfully the judge ruled that you couldn't just pick a woman off the street and cut her open! So in many ways Ireland is progressive, but in so many other ways it's quite frightening, such as the way women are suffering within the maternity services, they are voiceless. Women are not able to even take an active role in their own care and that is just disgraceful. And it has come out that Ireland has one of the highest post-natal depression rates in the world, because the maternity services are all about having a healthy baby and a healthy mother, and that's really all that matters, but that's a very low bar to set. Why can't we talk about or ask 'did the mother have an empowering, positive experience? Did she feel more confident as a mother? Giving birth is life altering and if you go into it in a bad way and you end up having an unwanted C-section or any unwanted medical

intervention, then you're going to feel shaken by it all. You have to feel that any decision you make is the right one and that you are able to give birth in the way you want. We need change. Big time.

I think being a part of the EU is brilliant. But it is sad that, as a nation, we have to constantly go back to the EU to encourage things such as marriage equality in Ireland or the fact that the EU has to put pressure on Warsaw in Poland (the EU launching legal action against Poland's right wing government over a new law that it fears will erode judicial independence). Now with the Eight Amendment, we again have to defer to the EU. I do wish that Ireland could just see that it is the right thing that we need to do and to just get on with it.

Q: At this stage in your life, what does being a woman mean to you?

Dil: Wow. I have to say that since I've become a mom I've become more comfortable with the concept of being a woman. Before I had my son I struggled with that label, because for me, and I think any little girl will sympathise with this, because we all look at our mothers and think, 'that's what a woman should be'. As I described her earlier, my mother was a fashion model, she was very feminine, she was very vain, and even now to this day very vain even though she's eighty-three years of age, and so those qualities stuck with me. But she was also very strong, very ambitious, and didn't need any man to look after her. So those are the three qualities that I definitely have. But she always made me feel bad about how I looked and how I dressed and how my hair was. And of course when I came out as a lesbian, it just made things worse. Because for her I suppose, she internalised that I was not a real woman in her eyes. She would always be like, 'why can't you be like this or why can't you be like that, or why can't you marry a good man,' and I found it so contradictory, because here's a woman that at one point told me, 'don't ever get married, because all men are bastards,' because she had three failed relationships. When I did take her advice and I fell in love with a woman she just couldn't handle it.

Then when I moved to Ireland I experimented with the way I looked, because of my background, my growing up, and then working as a flight attendant. There were very strict rules for how I dressed, how I looked, the makeup had to be on perfectly. It was three in the morning and you were going to work, and the heels. . . And for me when I was twenty-five, it was the first time in my life that I felt I could look the way I wanted to and not care, not worry about what other people think. And it's interesting, because when I did that I used to go to the barbers and get my hair cut really short, and I would wear my suits and ties and go into the women's toilet, and get pulled out by a security guard, because they thought I was a man in a women's toilet. So that really made me uncomfortable, and again it was about how I should look. I have always struggled with what

3. This interview was conducted prior to the abortion referendum held on 25 May 2018 in Ireland to repeal the 8th Amendment (Article 40.3.3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland. The referendum was passed (66.4% voted yes). The original amendment was voted into the Irish constitution in 1983 by referendum and it acknowledged the right to life of the unborn child, equating it with the mother's right to life. The amendment equated the life of a pregnant woman with that of an embryo or foetus and created an unworkable distinction between a pregnant woman's life and her health.



a woman should look like. Am I really a woman? Do I feel that? I think that, over the years, lots of therapy has helped. But I think giving birth and having a really wonderful home birth where I was able to drive the whole experience has made me. . . just love my body and who I am as a person. Yes, I am a woman. I am not the same kind of woman as my mother is, or I'm not the same kind of woman that is pretty much plastered in Irish media, uber-feminine. Maybe that is the reason why I never really made it into prime time TV or radio, but I don't care, because I am comfortable with who I am, and I think it's other people's loss if they let the pathogen of a person stop them from actually enjoying a person's talent. The environment's loss, not mine, because I am very happy with who I am. I am very proud to be a woman, and I am very proud to be a public figure, because I feel that the more diverse women are in the public eye are, the better it is for young girls growing up in Ireland right now who are desperately looking to the media for people to identify with. For myself, I didn't identify with anyone in the Irish media, and that's what made me go into Irish media. So hopefully they might come across my work and think, "hey, she seems happy, she is funny, she's intelligent, she has something to say, and she loves her suits and dinky boots, great!" So I can give girls across the country some hope, because I think if you're not comfortable in who you are - you only have this one life - and if you spend all your life worrying about what people are going to think and how you look and what shoes you're going to wear, it's just going to be over in a heartbeat. So I say, wear comfortable shoes, because that's the least you can do!

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Dil: Feminism for me has always been very much what it is - equal rights for women and equal rights for everybody. It's not about taking the rights off men and giving them to women or it's not about elevating us over men, and that's why I have an issue with Peppa Pig. I don't know if you watch it,

but when you're a parent you see this whole other subculture that you don't think about. And in Peppa Pig, they're trying to make her really assertive, but they made her actually be the opposite. She's always putting her father down, like 'silly daddy, oh silly daddy,' and she's always putting her little brother down 'silly George'. So now she annoys me. Of course be assertive, but don't put men down. Some people feel that that's what feminism is, and it's not. It's just correcting the imbalance that's there.

I'm delighted to see, especially in the last three years, I've seen a real revival of feminism in Ireland. I've been very familiar with the feminist movement, and been very connected with the LGBT community, because lesbians that were campaigning for marriage equality would be very much at the forefront of the feminist movement as well, like Ailbhe Smyth, just to mention one. So that's what being a feminist is, it's just correcting the imbalance and making it fair for everybody. Now having a son, I can see so much of what the benefits would be, if we as a society, like Justin Trudeau, who is the prime minister of Canada, he openly says he is a feminist. And that is so going to help men, because I worry for my son in many ways. There are expectations of boys and of men. We were going to try to home school him, because I feel that the Irish education system is at the root of all of this, when we expect boys to behave a certain way and girls to behave a certain way, and the pressure for them not to show any emotion. And again, working in mental health services, I see this every day. The people who ring us, a lot of them are men, and they are in pieces, because they have been trying to put on this whole "macho bravado" for most of their life, and they are in pieces, and they can't talk to any of their friends or family and they want to come to a counsellor. So I feel if we as a society really valued the quality of feminism and nurtured it in every person, whether male or female, everybody would benefit, and probably create a more compassionate society. Full stop, right away.



MARY LAWLOR

Biography

Mary Lawlor has a background of over 35 years' experience in human rights and she is widely respected in the international human rights movement. She has a BA in Psychology and Philosophy and postgraduate degrees in Montessori Teaching and Personnel Management.

Mary was Director of the Irish Section of Amnesty International from 1988-2000. She became a Board member in 1975 and was elected Chair from 1983-1987.

Mary set up Front Line Defenders – the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders – in 2001, to protect people that have the bravery to stand up for the rights of others, non-violently and despite the great personal risks that they face. The aim is to protect defenders of human rights and provide them with 'round the clock' practical support so that they can continue their work to build civil and just societies. Mary was director of Front Line Defenders from 2001 until 2016 when she decided to step down and is currently a board member.

Mary Lawlor was awarded the Irish Life WMB Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2008. In 2011, she received the Irish Tatler Woman of the Year Special Recognition Award. In 2014 she was awarded the French insignia of Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur and an honorary degree of Doctor in Laws from Trinity College Dublin. In 2015, she was appointed Adjunct Professor in the School of Business Trinity College Dublin. She also got the inaugural 2016 Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

Question: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Mary: I spent all my life, since my 20s, working in human rights. I started out by doing my degree in Psychology and Philosophy, then I did a post-graduate degree in Montessori teaching, and I set up my own school. But I also did a postgraduate in Personnel Management. So I actually worked as a personnel manager for a couple of years. When I worked as a personnel manager, I became pregnant, I was having my first baby, so I decided to set up a Montessori school in the house, and that's when I got interested in human rights. I had been involved before that, but it became very intense from then on. I was on the board of Amnesty International for fourteen years in Ireland, and was Chairperson for the last four. Then I stepped down, and I was just a volunteer that year. The next year the position of Director came up, and I became Director. I was the Director from 1988 to 2000. I left Amnesty at the end of 2000 because I wanted to focus on human rights defenders at risk, and so I set up Front Line Defenders. I was Director of Front Line Defenders until November 2016. I'm on the board now of Front Line Defenders, and I'm an Adjunct Professor at Trinity College with the lead on business and human rights.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Ireland, in relation to your practice and your work?

Mary: I was thinking about this, I am 64. So I was born in 1952, and it was a completely different place then. It was very insular-looking, it was very homogeneous, and it was purely white. But we had an odd medical student from some other country, and they were regarded as 'exotic' . . . there was always racism against travellers, but the odd student who was studying in Ireland was more of an 'exotic'. So the thing was that we were a small island on the periphery of Europe, and it wasn't outward looking. I remember it was very inward-looking. The only thing you really heard about in school was about peacekeepers or Irish missionaries going to Africa for example. It was a charity model, it wasn't a rights-based model, and even the language was terrible . . . with 'helping the black babies'. So that was the kind of context in which I grew up.

And of course there were taboo subjects, abortion, homosexuality, contraception - you just didn't talk about them. And Ireland had the death penalty and so it was a really backward country. So that's the kind of thing that was there when I was growing up. Another thing was the marriage bar¹. My mother was a doctor, and she had to resign when she got married, and she had no pension entitlement then. There was a rule that anyone that worked for either the civil service or the public service - and my mother was in the Eastern health board - had to resign upon marriage. So that affected all women who worked there.

Another thing I remember is an incident when my friends and myself were in college. We went into the pub, and my friend wanted a drink. And women could only have half-pints and were not served pints. My friend drank Guinness and she said, 'I'll have a pint of Guinness,' and the bar tender said, 'I can't give you a pint, but I can give you two half-pints!' She said, 'I don't want two half-pints. I want a pint. Either you

give me a pint or nothing'. And so he did give her a pint! And there was another very funny story; there was a group of Irish feminists around at that time and Hilda Tweedy who was a most amazing woman who founded the Commission on the Status of Women². A group of them went into a pub; there were about thirty-two of them, and they ordered thirty-two brandies. And they got their brandies, and they ordered a pint, and the bar tender wouldn't give them one pint. So the women said they weren't paying, because the order hadn't been fulfilled. So they didn't pay for thirty-two brandies. There were other things also for example, you couldn't get a barring order against a violent partner, or you couldn't sit on a jury, because you have to be a property owner. There were all those kinds of things that were in the ether, I suppose.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU has had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Mary: I think the most important thing was the psychological lift that happened gradually over time. Prior to that, the only two countries that mattered in Ireland were the United Kingdom and the United States. Everything in the States was bigger and better. I had cousins who emigrated to the States just after I finished school and when they'd come home they would just keep talking about how everything was so much bigger and better - and that was the feeling in Ireland. There had always been this relationship with the US and UK, because so many people had emigrated there. In the case of the UK it was complex because of our history of being colonised. The Northern Ireland war started in 1968 and there were horrible killings and terrible injustice. So there was a huge preoccupation with Northern Ireland. Basically that was the way it was. When we joined the EU, it lessened our relationship with both the US and the UK. It showed us that there was another entity that could be equally as important, and I suppose it broke the bond to a certain extent, and that was huge. That was absolutely huge at that time. In terms of something very positive, obviously equal pay for equal work was very positive; it didn't affect me because I always assumed that I was equal anyway. My mother was fiercely independent, she had been a doctor from the early 40's, and had forged a trail herself, so we were brought up to be independent, to assume equal pay for equal work and to be able to rely on ourselves. And also contraception, contraception was a huge issue. Up to that point, there was no separation between church and state; and the church laid down the rules about everything and contraception was forbidden.

It wasn't all to do with the EU. Certainly the equal pay legislation was a result directed by the EU, but I think it was also the continuation of a feminist movement that had begun years before, that was gradually trying to expose

injustice and work for women's rights. The Commission on the Status for Women and Women's Aid for example, were working hard to get advances for women. So what I think the EU did was give them a framework in which they could place themselves. And it allowed them to use whatever legislation in the EU that is applicable. . to enhance the way they lobbied for these things. And then very specifically there was the case of A, B and C, which was taken to the European Court of Justice, where three women wanted an abortion for different reasons³. At the end of it, the EU said that Ireland had to legislate for abortion. So there are very concrete things.

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Mary: I have mixed views about the EU'S effectiveness. For example, human rights are one of the pillars on which the EU was founded. The rhetoric is great, but the implementation is pretty awful, and it's to do with a lack of political will. Gender equality is still not seen as important enough. Of course things have improved hugely - who would have thought that in Ireland now, in a party like Fine Gael of all parties, that the leader is an openly gay man. Who would have thought even twenty years ago, that legislation for marriage equality for gay people would be passed? So I think that it's very different but I think the EU should become more focused on what really matters and really work to implement that and not get side tracked into so many bits and pieces of things that really don't matter. Economic independence for women is really important, and there should be a proper plan for that. Yes, there is supposed to be equal pay, but we know that the pay divide between men and women here in Ireland has actually grown. There needs to be a real push by the EU to ensure that proper plans or benchmarks are implemented. And again, women in decision-making is another area that is very poor. And as always with any country, the women on the margins like the poor, people with disabilities, the prisoner, the traveller, the asylum seeker or refugee are not protected and given their basic rights. I personally think that is an area where the EU has played lip service, but doesn't really dig down to try and ensure that equality legislation is implemented.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Mary: I spoke at a conference in Galway two years ago; it was on arts and human rights. It was the best conference I ever went to. It was quite extraordinary. They had different workshops: music and human rights; drama and human rights; literature and human rights. It was fascinating. I came

1. The 'marriage bar', which was abolished in 1973, forced women who were working in the public and civil service in Ireland to give up their jobs once they got married.

2. The Council for the Status of Women was set up in Ireland in 1973 by a group of feminists with the goal of gaining equality for women. It was an umbrella organisation for women's groups, run by a voluntary committee. The first chair of the Council for the Status of Women, a precursor to the National Women's Council of Ireland, was Hilda Tweedy, one of the founders of the Irish Housewives Association (IHA).

3. A, B, C v Ireland was a landmark case where three anonymous women, known as A, B and C challenged Ireland's restrictive abortion laws at the European Court of Human Rights. The three women had travelled to the UK to have abortions because they were illegal in Ireland. In 2010, the judges, as part of the case, ruled unanimously that Ireland's failure to implement the existing constitutional right to a lawful abortion in Ireland when a woman's life is at risk violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

away from that thinking that the arts can be an entry point. It can make human rights accessible to people. I think that is the beauty of the arts. Ireland has a rich culture of arts in writing, poetry, storytelling. To me, it seems that it is a point of entry that can be used to bed down human rights in an accessible way.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Mary: I suppose being a mother is the most important part. Part of the reason I wanted a partner was because I wanted children. I adore children. That whole business of giving birth, seeing your children grow and become independent is the most extraordinary part of life for me. I was too young for my class in school and I was very shy when I was a teenager so both brought challenges but I never felt that men were better. I think this helped me develop my career on my own terms.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Mary: I think that's just about equal opportunity and equality between men and women. It's very simple. I think people make a big deal out of it, but that's what it amounts to.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Mary: Happiness for me is being able to bring the right attitude to life - I think you can choose that yourself. There's very little in life you can be sure of because you don't know what's going to happen and you don't know how it's going to happen and you don't know when it's going to happen. You're going to have ups and downs all through your life, but the thing you can control is your attitude towards life. I think if you can foster a good attitude in yourself, a good

resilience in yourself, and gratitude for what you have - people forget about that - you become happy. For me, happiness is obviously being with my family and my friends. It is when a human rights defender is released or given temporary emergency relocation because they may be killed; it is seeing Front Line grow in strength and effectiveness. Listening to music makes me happy as does having a bath! I remember going for a meal with two very dramatic friends with carrying voices- one an actress and the other a musician - and it was like going to a show. They started talking about cosmetic surgery they had done and all of a sudden I heard this hush through the restaurant. I looked around and the whole place was riveted by the two of them.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your potential, and what would you change about that?

Mary: Well it's a bit late in the day to be asking me if I reached my potential, because I think I've been extremely lucky. I set up an organisation which has been extremely successful. I started with one other person. I had a vision, I had a plan, and I got money. I remember walking down the first day to the office and going into this bare room and saying, 'now what will I do?' I knew what I wanted to do, but all of a sudden it seemed very bare, and it was only me and one other person. But I've watched that organisation grow and develop, and we have thirty-five plus staff now all around the world and in Ireland and it's down to the staff and how talented and committed they are, that we have become so successful. And we've learned a lot along the way as well. I think that was, in a way, the height of my potential.

There's nothing I regret. I kind of feel that I was extremely lucky to be able to build this organisation and make it succeed. The EU calls it the best organisation for the protection of human rights defenders. So for me, I'm content. I am absolutely



content and happy with my life. Now I'm doing this stuff in Trinity, and it's a whole new area, it's very different, and it's a new challenge, but I know based on the steps I have taken in my life that I will be fine.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Mary: I have to tell you no. Thinking back, I had my own Montessori school, so I was the person in charge. I was the personnel manager with this other guy in a start-up situation, and he was perfectly fine. Then I went into Amnesty, and I became chair and director, then I started Front Line Defenders, where I was director. So that was kind of taking control of my own destiny. I think you always have to think about that as well. So I have no recollection of sexism in my career or with anything that I've done.

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having feminist women in decision-making roles'.

Mary: It is true. I actually rang, as a result of this interview request, the Institute of European and International Affairs. I said I was on their website, and I was looking for whatever work they did on women, and I could find nothing or no staff member who had any brief on women's rights. So I rang the Director General whom I know and asked him about it. I also said that I looked at the board, three women on the board and fourteen men. I said, I'm just ringing you to call you up on this, you're the Institute of European Affairs, you promote EU stuff all the time. I'm looking for anything on how the EU has improved and impacted women's rights. I had to look at your board to see if you actually believe in equality. Great fun. So anyway, he said that he better look into that. But if you don't have decision makers, you don't get a broad perspective. You just get a single perspective, a dominant perspective, which comes from the man. No offense to them, but in my opinion, a strength of men is that they are able to focus, hone in, and concentrate on whatever the thing is at hand. What I have found in my life is that they don't have a real emotional intelligence. Some of them do, but a lot of them don't.

What I think women have is that extra empathy and emotional intelligence which can see a broader picture. Obviously you need men as well, but the fusion of both would make for better decisions. If women are excluded from decision making either in government or in civil service at a high level or on boards, (apart from the fact that it's half of the population or probably more in Ireland) it means that you're not getting the best decision-making process.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Mary: I think the thing for me, the biggest block was shyness, and I've taken a particular interest in young people who

are shy who come to our office, trying to get them out of themselves a bit more and to develop more social skills. The trouble is that you need to be able to communicate in this world. So for example, one of the things I suggest to them is to go to Toastmasters. I don't know if you know about Toastmasters, but I came across it. Toastmasters is this group who hold regular meetings in different place and whose goal is to empower people to learn how to communicate effectively and develop leadership qualities. At these meetings, as soon as you are comfortable, you eventually get up and speak for one minute. If you're shy, you can just sit there forever and not say a word, but eventually, what tends to happen is even the shyest person gets up and speaks for a minute. You get a topic, so it's not code. You get a topic each week, and you speak for one minute, two minutes, three minutes, then at the end when you feel comfortable they might give you an on-the-spot topic. It's a really good way of getting past shyness.

My children were very shy when they were young, and I used to get them to do all these little jobs. They hated it. I'd send them to buy something in the shop, ask a neighbour for sugar when we ran out, little things to get them to not be so fearful and shy in doing things that were out of their comfort zone. I also sent them to public speaking and drama. That's the thing I would've changed about myself, if someone had said to go to Toastmasters. I remember the first talk I did as chair of Amnesty International, it was to a group of very sympathetic women in Dún Laoighaire Golf Club. They were all very polite, and they listened with interest. But my voice was shaking so much, I thought I'd never get to the end of it, and I was trying to take water every few minutes. I could feel them willing me on. It was only through practice over and over again that I began to be able to speak without being a complete basket case. So that's what I'd do for my younger self.

One thing I would do differently looking back would be to take proper maternity leave. I was in work up to the day the three children were born and back at work within a month, and you never get that time back. I should have implemented a better work-life balance when the children were smaller and had more time with them.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Mary: I'm often asked this. If you want to get involved in human rights and gender equality, it depends on what part you want to be in. If you want to work for a non-governmental organisation it seems to have got so much harder. So you need to have field experience. You need to do an internship abroad in a developing country. I sent my daughter to Kenya because she was interested in human rights. It builds up some experience, which will stand to you. Nowadays, everybody has several languages so I would advise a second language. Do an internship, but don't spend your life doing internships, that's also a bad idea. Some people tend to just go from internship to internship. Do no more than two six month internships before you get a job. Get varied experience in different countries if possible, and have another language. That's what I would say in terms of human rights and gender equality.



IVANA BACIK

Biography

Senator Ivana Bacik is Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology at Trinity College Dublin (previously held by presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese). She is a Labour Party Senator for Dublin University (elected 2007, re-elected 2011 and 2016). Her research interests include criminal law, criminology, feminist theory of law, human rights and equality law.

She co-authored a study on gender in the legal professions titled *Gender Injustice: Feminising the legal professions* (Bacik, Costello and Drew, TCD Law, 2003) and her other publications include *Kicking and Screaming: Dragging Ireland into the 21st Century* (O'Brien, 2004).

She is a qualified Barrister, and a Senior Lecturer and Fellow of Trinity College Dublin (elected in 2005).



Trinity College Dublin

Question: Could you talk a little about your early career?

Ivana: I studied law at Trinity College Dublin and was elected president of the Student's Union in my final year. I was taken to court and threatened with prison for giving information on abortion to women in crisis pregnancies in the late 80s and early 90s – a long running court case for a group of us. I subsequently went to London and did my Masters in LSE and trained as a barrister there, and then came back to Dublin because I wanted to combine teaching and practice. I did that for many years here, and only gave up practice a few years ago; it was becoming harder to manage it all with two small children.

Q: Could you talk about your experiences growing up as a woman in Ireland in reference to your practice and your work?

Ivana: I suppose my mother is a very strong feminist, and we grew up in London and then in Cork. While we lived in Cork, mom was very active in a women's rights group and distributed condoms with a feminist group on the streets in Cork in the 70s, so she has great stories to tell. I remember in 1983 when I was in school, I was the only girl in the class to argue against the amendment in '83, which of course was the 8th amendment of the constitution, which was passed overwhelmingly. Unfortunately, it has led to so much trauma for so many women and men since then. So I suppose I was steeped in feminism from an early age from my mother, and when I was in college I became active myself politically in the women's group and then in the student's union and the labour society and social society and all of that, so I was kind of leaning to the left always.

Q: Could you tell us of a positive story of change that you experienced as a result of belonging to the EU?

Ivana: I think the EU has been a very positive force for women's rights in Ireland. I suppose like many on the left, I was quite sceptical about the EU for a long time, but gradually came to the awareness that there had been so much positive change in Ireland as a result of particularly EU equality measures for women. As a practicing barrister, I was advising clients about things like parental leave and maternity leave, and being conscious that a lot of those have come in through EU directives. Even between my own two children, I saw that maternity leave benefits were greatly enhanced as a result of the EU directives being passed and giving longer leave, I was able to take off longer for my second child than my first. Very practical benefits for women and for children.

Q: What role could the EU play in the future for supporting change in relation to gender equality, human rights, and diversity?

Ivana: I think the EU has a huge job to do in that area. Again, on the left we always argue for a social Europe - this vision of Europe that's based on museums and kindergartens, and not banks and financial institutions. The Italian Prime Minister

made that point, actually, at the time of Brexit. He said that there is a problem with the EU, that the disconnection with citizens has become so marked; that people don't see the benefits that being a member of the European Union has brought them. Of course we saw what that led to in Britain where people simply didn't believe there was any positive value to remaining in the EU. I found the Brexit vote very disturbing, especially as someone who has lived in London. And of course in London there is a majority in favour of staying in the EU, but you can see in areas where there has been a lot of disadvantage, where there is high unemployment, in fact in typical labour heartlands, that people there are voting for Brexit, because they believed the alternative facts and fake news stuff about the downside.

I think the EU has a lot of work to do, as well as all of us in it, to ensure that we push and promote that vision of a social Europe, more than we push the Europe of prosperity. I think that's the problem, actually, in that there has been a move away from the progressive social directives on maternity leave and parental leave and so on in the 80s, and we've seen more of a focus on fiscal prudence - the language and the rhetoric from the European central bank, from Angela Merkel, who I am a great admirer of in terms of immigration, but who has certainly been driving a very strong economic agenda at a European level against allowing states to invest in public services and that's been hugely detrimental to the social European vision. To go back to your question, I think there's a lot of work to do to ensure we return to that vision of Europe that's built on progressive social democratic values that is around a strong state investment in public services, and away from the austerity-driven economic agendas.

But certainly in the 90s when the former soviet block countries were coming in, there was a concern that this was going to slow down the push for gender equality that had been driven quite a lot by the Nordic countries in the EU. So things have slowed down in relation to equality measures. I was talking to some very senior people in the EU at a conference in Brussels, and they said it's actually stopped the drive for equality. The drive for more equality-based measures and worker's rights measures has really slowed with all of the accession countries coming in, partly because they just needed time to settle, partly because their agenda was a different agenda. So I think we need to return to that, and I hope we'll see Nordic countries and countries such as Ireland that play a driving role in that - to all work together in pushing forward equality measures.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, diversity, and peace?

Ivana: I think a huge role. When I was president of Trinity Students Union, when we had all this drama over being threatened with jail, some of our biggest backers and supporters were the NCAD students (visual arts) with whom we had a very strong connection. The students came to a lot of the demos and gave us a lot of visual backing, because NCAD had this real capacity to deliver these visual, symbolic statements, and they'd bring out costumes and posters and so-on, so that's a very practical example of the arts being a real driving force behind social change - pushing for social

change using different tactics and strategies. So with any campaign I am very conscious that art can play an important role. We had a successful campaign for the last few years for new multi-denominational schools in our area, and one of the driving forces in it (I was the chair and my co-collaborator is a graphic designer and copywriter) was visuals, attracting people into the campaign visually and making a mark with politicians through visual processes. Art doesn't do it alone, obviously. Art for Repeal has been great as well; they're a hugely important part of the Repeal the Eighth coalition. Ultimately, we have to persuade the majority of people in Ireland to back a referendum on Repeal the Eighth, and that's a reality that sometimes is lost, but with persuading people, art clearly has a huge role to play.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Ivana: Well, I suppose because I was the oldest of two girls and two boys, there was always equality. My brother is a better cook than my sister or me, I think that's fairly safe to say. And in my own house my partner and I have equal roles in terms of childcare and everything else. I think you have to live equality as a feminist and as a woman, but obviously you'll want to be very conscious still of on-going issues. And frankly, that's often the way we want it to be, too. We want to be the people who are in charge of that in our own home. So it's a difficult thing to balance, but it's about trying to manage things if you have children and if you are a woman. But I think increasingly you see, like with my younger brothers recently, playing as big a role in child rearing as their partners, and that's absolutely positive. So I think we're seeing a change in parenting attitudes, and that really is where the dividing line is, that increasingly women experience equal treatment in the workplace until they get to child-rearing age.

We did some studies in the legal profession - gender and justice - in 2003, and what we found was that women were actually on an equal level with men in the legal careers until their early 30s, and at that point there was a marked divergence, and the reason was that women were having children and taking time out from careers, and that was obviously holding back development of careers. We made a lot of recommendations, actually.

I was at a meeting last week and we were talking about what still needs to be done. There's a growing awareness in the law and other professions that you need to take positive action measures to keep women in. It's not just about bringing women forward because women are not equal with men, but it's actually about keeping them in and stopping attrition of women in the crucial mid-career years. In academia we have the same issues, and in politics we brought in gender quotas. I did a report in 2009 and, as a result, in 2012 we have gender quota legislation. Because again, political parties weren't doing enough to bring forward women, and the constant refrain was, 'women don't come forward'. Women don't come forward because more women are dealing with kids in the early 30s, which is the crucial time when parties are choosing candidates. Women aren't getting the support, and meetings are at night in pubs, and there's a whole range of issues holding back women's advancement, so you have to have positive action measures.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy?

Ivana: My kids, playing with the kids, being away with them, hanging out with them, sport, swimming, cycling, all that stuff. Hobbies. Also work, though. I love it, I do, you have to, or else you wouldn't do it.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your full potential, or from doing what you want to do in your life, and how would you change that?

Ivana: Everyone should try to reach their full potential as much as they can. It's important to identify the things that are holding you back - in the study of women and politics we called it the five C's: lack of cash, lack of confidence, old-boy's culture, childcare, and candidate-selection procedures, these are holding women back in politics. The five C's are now buzzwords, we actually adapted that. There are four C's and then we adopted a fifth C, because in politics with political parties, there is a very particular obstruction holding back many women candidates from reaching their full potential, which is going for election. So the gender quota legislation was brought in and in the last election, we saw 22% of women elected, which was up from 16% from the previous election. It's a big jump, because of political parties being forced to put women out there to face the electorate¹.

So they are very practical things that can hold women back from achieving their full potential, it is these hidden structural barriers, like confidence and culture, the old-boy culture, like



I talked about earlier, having meetings in pubs. In our study, we found golf outings were a huge cultural barrier for women, they just weren't invited on them, and it was on the golf course that the deals were being done with the small firms, and the partners were being decided upon, and all that. So those are the things that hold people back. How you change that is becoming aware of them, and awareness is key. When we started that study and came up with women lawyers associations there was a huge resistance. Some of our fiercest opponents were women. Women who made it in politics and said, 'well, I made it', but yes, you made it in spite of those barriers and you are in a tiny minority. I have a great friend, Kathleen Lynch and she was Minister of State for Disability, Equality and Mental Health for Labour in the last government, and she says that all her life she's voted for mediocre men, and she wants the chance to vote for a mediocre woman. She says anyone that makes it to face the electorate tends to be really superb. So there's this discrepancy, because men are much more likely to be advanced, even if they aren't held to the same level of merit.

Q: What do you think of this statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having women in decision-making roles'.

Ivana: Yes, absolutely. We're not there, clearly. Everyone has heard of the glass ceiling, but we often call it the sticky floor, where you get women in, but they tend to stick at the lower levels in any profession or career or job, and the decision-makers remain predominantly male. So you see that in professions that are really feminising, like nursing or teaching, and yet you see the top levels of management are very clearly more male-dominated.

Q: I think we might've touched on it earlier, but how has having children affected your career?

Ivana: Generally it has made me much more feminist, probably. Obviously I make more decisions based on the need to spend more time at home.

Q: Have you ever had a direct or indirect experience of sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Ivana: Yes. Yes, many times over the years, yes. Some obviously I won't be sharing, but I did lots of waitressing and loads of jobs all through college. At one job in particular we had a manager at a restaurant, it wasn't in Ireland, who was what we would now describe as a serial sexual harasser who was just outrageous

1. There are 35 women out of 158 TDs in the Dáil (22%) and 19 women Senators (32%) out of 60 senators in the Seanad. The figure of 35 women TDs places Ireland in 76th place in the world tables of women's representation in the lower or single house of national parliaments (www.ipu.org). Ireland is placed 25th out of 28 in the EU. The percentage of women TDs increased from 16 per cent in the 2016 election, a very welcome shift in Irish politics towards a more representative parliament. The Dáil had previously remained at least 84% male. However while change has taken place, Irish women are still under-represented in Irish politics with one obstacle identified from research as "candidate selection procedures". www.ivanabacik.com/womeninpolitics/

In 2012 Ireland introduced the Electoral (Amendment Political Funding) Bill which, for the first time "introduces an electoral gender quota into the Irish political system. Section 42 provides that any political party which does not have at least 30% of its candidates of each gender at the General Election on February 26th 2016, will have its State funding cut by half. The quota rises to 40% seven years after the 2016 General Election.

in his behaviour. But luckily we banded together and made sure there were never any young female waitresses left alone with him. I think it's rampant. I think anyone who suggests it isn't has obviously never worked in a minimum-wage job for starters. But obviously it's not confined to minimum wage jobs, either, you find it in law, and certainly we've found some really horrendous examples of harassment and discrimination and sexism in legal careers. We did a big survey and got about 800 responses, and again found lots of direct experiences there.

Q: Do you feel that women's lives are better now compared to 15 years ago?

Ivana: Yes, definitely. I think there's much more awareness, and you see many more women as role models, which is crucial. So I think the culture is changing, and I think men are taking more roles in the house and in the home and caring for children.

Q: If you could give your younger self any advice, what would it be? Or what advice would you have for younger women and men today in relation to human rights, diversity, and gender equality?

Ivana: I think generally, for women or men, it's important that they do what they want to do, and don't feel constrained or driven into a career or path in life that isn't their chosen one. It's hugely important. That is what I always advise my own students here. They feel that they should go into a big city firm since they got the grades and the money is good, but they're not passionate about it, so why do it? Do something you really want to do. Obviously if they want to do it that's great, and loads of people love that stuff, but if you don't then do what you actually want to do. Take a year out and decide all of that.



Dublin Castle



OLWEN FOUÉRÉ

Biography

Olwen Fouéré is an actor, director and creative artist whose extensive practice navigates theatre, film, the visual arts and music. Born in Connemara of Breton parents, she works internationally in English and French. She has appeared in numerous leading roles at the Abbey Theatre and the Gate Theatre in Dublin, the Royal National Theatre, the Barbican, the English National Opera, Sadler's Wells and the West End in London, the Bouffes du Nord in Paris, and several theatres in the USA and Australia.

She has received an Honorary Doctorate (Doctor of Philosophy - Honoris Causa) from Dublin City University in 2016 for her enormous contribution to the arts and culture in Ireland, the Herald Archangel Award of the Edinburgh festivals in 2014, the Irish Times Special Tribute Award 2013 for outstanding achievement and contribution to Irish Theatre, The Stage Award for Acting Excellence 2014, the Irish Times Theatre Award for Best Actress 2010 and the Dublin Theatre Festival Samuel Beckett Award in 1998.

In 1980 Olwen formed Operating Theatre, an avant-garde theatre company with composer Roger Doyle and in 2010, she established an artistic entity called The Emergency Room for the development of her ongoing projects which have included the creation of her internationally acclaimed *riverrun* (from *Finnegans Wake*); a staging of *Lessness* by Samuel Beckett; a film project *Cassandra* (with Kevin Abosch from a script by Anne Enright); her translations and performances of two plays by the French writer Laurent Gaudé: *Danse, Morob* (in association with Project Arts Centre) and *Sodome, My Love* (in association with Rough Magic). Her numerous film appearances include opposite Sean Penn in Paolo's Sorrentino's *This Must Be the Place*, and in 2015 she played a central role in the multi-award winning feature *The Survivalist* written and directed by Stephen Fingleton (IFTA nomination 2016 for Best Supporting Actress).

Question: What does feminism mean to you?

Olwen: The first thing that I have to admit is that it's a word I've never liked. I've always felt that it implies an exclusive activism... if someone declared themselves a 'masculinist', what would we think about that? It sounds like an exclusive term. However, I know the official definition of feminism is about equality: equality on every level between genders. And my whole relationship to feminism and gender is complex because I'm particularly interested in non-binary gender, the areas in between genders. In fact I have just been looking at this fantastic article about a young Galwegian boy, a 23 year-old who has embraced a kind of complete intergenderness¹. He is male, but he wears high heels, he looks female and he is now getting work as a model. I've always been interested in the blurring of gender boundaries and the fact that, even scientifically and biologically, there are several inter-genders. So, feminism, for me, is not really an adequate term for what feminism actually wants to achieve which is basically gender equality, such as equality of pay and the removal of any kind of gender-based discrimination.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Ireland, personally, artistically and politically?

Olwen: I think my experience as a female child in Ireland was very different to my peers because I was born into a Breton/French family. My family were the only foreigners in the far-west of Ireland and there were very few foreigners in Ireland at that time. So my perspective was different to my peers and my formative experiences were related more to my cultural alienation than to my gender. We were very much the French family, even though we were a Breton family, and we spoke French in the house and English outside of the house. And in relation to equality, there were obviously issues around gender inequality in France at that time but they were somewhat different to the ones in Ireland.

I had a very free upbringing really, in terms of my place within society, and to whether I identified as female or male. I was also a tomboy, always rejecting being 'feminine' and wanting to do all the boys' stuff. I was fairly free of the restrictions that I started to see around me. Then I went to an all-female boarding school and I found it to be a very oppressive and disturbing place, actually. The enforced separation of the female from the rest of society made me feel very alienated. So I think I was trying to pull away from the female in order to become integrated with the rest of society and I think the main gender issues I faced would have been in the context of my work. Certainly when I was starting off as an actor, there was definitely a pressure to interpret certain female roles in a certain way. That would be the first thing that I noticed. Why do they want me to play it like that? You know, traditional theatrical ideas of what a female response would be. Why do they want me to play the victim, to be all soft and weepy and childish? Etcetera. And I was trying to pull against that.

I think the key gender issue that women have to face relates to reproduction and children. Because becoming pregnant and having children is when you really feel your life is going to change utterly and irrevocably, as a working, developing person

1. Ivan Fahy (23) from County Galway, Ireland, who is considered to be Ireland's "first androgynous model, a young, spirited trailblazer challenging societal norms about gender, dress and appearance". *Irish Times*, April 22, 2017

and certainly as a performer, because your body changes and your body is your instrument. The natural, biological desire to want to have children and to be with your child for the formative years of their life. I know I would have wanted to be there for the first several years, to breastfeed, help them take their first steps, to be there for them, all of those things. And you just can't do that as a working person, especially as a working actor. Or some people seem to manage it but I know I couldn't. Unless, well, in a completely different system that we've never really seen in human society since I don't know when, perhaps when we were nomadic . . . So I would say that is the big thing, reproduction, childbirth and children, and I think that is still the big thing.

Q: Can you tell us about a positive story of change for you as a woman that you experienced because of Ireland belonging to the European Union?

Olwen: I actually asked my brother who has worked with the EU what the big changes were and he said the stated EU policies were always based on equality - of gender, race and so on. For me, the effects of our connection to the EU are being felt mainly in our culture. I think the EU has connected us, even just symbolically, to Europe and its cultures in a way that we were not connected before. I have always felt that the Irish psyche is fundamentally far more connected to Europe than it is to Britain, yet, within the arts, and definitely within theatre and film, Ireland is constantly comparing itself to Britain or America. It is a colonisation of the mind that has continued.

Q: Do you think the EU has a role in supporting gender equality and human rights?

Olwen: Well, absolutely it does but obviously the implementation of that is another thing. I think it has a very important role to play. However, it is also important to avoid an overly paternalistic relationship in any big organisation like that, where it just comes in and tells another country what it must do. And certainly the accession countries have to go through that kind of process because there are certain rules they have to fulfil and if they don't fulfil them, they don't get in. I see it in microcosm within the arts, where you get a 'paternalistic' artistic director who comes in and who tries to rupture certain artistic relationships to create other ones, so that he can be in control as the person who has initiated and engendered that artistic relationship. So you can be looking at another type of colonisation in the whole structure of artistic relationships.

I think a vigilance has to exist between member states who are in a relationship with a big body like the EU, where there has to be a constant exchange of what it means culturally, socially and politically for each particular country, on every level. For instance, the banning of the veil in France. I think it was an absolute disaster, a really repressive thing to do, forbidding women to wear the veil who want to wear it, when it's very much within their belief system. Why say 'because you're in France you can't wear the veil?'. I've never understood that one. I can understand some of the reasons behind their decision to implement it, but I've never understood how they think it will make things better for women.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self

in relation to gender equality and democracy?

Olwen: I thought about this question. It is a really difficult thing to come up with but I think I would say 'Never let anyone define what you are, who you are, or what you should do'.

Q: How has being a woman or having children or not having them affected your personal life and your career?

Olwen: When I was a young woman I very much wanted to have children. How much of that was a strong biological desire or how much of it was social conditioning, I don't know. I have a lot more to say about social conditioning and I am increasingly against the concept of family but at the time I very much wanted children and a partner. All of those things that I just took for granted, I didn't really question whether I should or should not have them. And then when I was 30 I had a child, a little girl, who was born premature and died after two days and, a few years later, a little boy who died in the womb. We never knew why the little boy died but the little girl, basically, was caught between technology and nature. I think if I'd given birth to her at home and kept her by me she'd have been fine.

So you know, that was a kind of crisis, a time of great emotional difficulty, but I look at my life now, and I couldn't have lived the life I have now if I had children. And there's no doubt about that. I'm not a multi-tasker, I'm not one of those people who can split themselves. When I'm working on something, I'm working on it. Everything else has to be cleared away. Aside from the enormous socio-economic aspect of having a child, there are at least two years where your body is in the process of childbearing, from pregnancy, birth, to early weaning, and how does that affect you as a performer, your body as your instrument, how does it deal with that without taking a long pause? And I think this is a big thing for a lot of actors that I know. I know a lot of female actors who, once they became pregnant and people knew they were pregnant, their lives changed. And a lot of them feel they'll never work again after that time. They scramble to get back. There are some really gifted actors out there who are still scrambling to get back years later, feeling 'I am still an artist, I am still a performer'.

Q: It's such a sad story what happened to your daughter.

Olwen: Yes. It was a devastating time for me and my partner. And she suffered. Childbirth has become so controlled and birth is so medicalised. My generation of women were very aware of this problem, there was a great deal of activism against the medicalisation of child birth. Of course a home birth can go wrong, but it can go wrong at the hospital as well. Childbirth is one of the most extraordinary experiences that a woman can have, it is a transformative experience, physically and spiritually, yet so many women are robbed of those aspects of the experience. Having childbirth controlled, with women having elective caesareans or inductions, and this idea that the baby has to come out at a certain time, I mean, it is totally crazy because the baby will come out when it's ready! The whole idea that a baby has to be induced because it is two weeks overdue - by whose clock? By a doctor's clock? And induction itself can be very problematic, more often than not it will cause a woman to lose control over her labour and rob her of the actual experience of her baby's birth.

There can also be a problem with the treatment of premature babies as in my case, when I had a premature baby, she was 30 weeks, she was only 10 weeks premature, thick black hair, fat, healthy. She was, I think, caught between technology and nature after her birth. I went into labour while travelling so we had to go to the closest hospital where she was born a few hours later. They didn't have the kind of facilities that they do in the National Maternity Hospital. When she was born, they took her away from me, even though my instinct was very much to hold her and keep her close to my body and that is probably what you would have done in another era. They insisted on putting her in an incubator and babies, when they are born, they get lonely very fast, so she was crying, crying, crying, and as a result of the crying, with her lungs being still underdeveloped, she started to have breathing difficulties and then they put her on a ventilator which was for a much bigger baby. I could see that immediately, her chest was heaving like it would burst. After a day on this too strong ventilator, one of her lungs did burst. The following day she got a form of pneumonia and eventually collapsed. A midwife did actually say to me . . . if she had been born ten years ago at home, you'd probably have breastfed her straight away and we would have kept her in a shoe box by the fire and wrapped her up warm, and . . . she just felt that she would have survived if she hadn't been caught in the whole technological system which proved inadequate for her needs.

We went back to the hospital a year later and saw that they had replaced the ventilator. So, I think there's a big conflict between medical technology and nature. I don't know what the answer is for maternity hospitals. Sometimes I think they should be eliminated completely, and everybody just has to have their babies at home, and that a system should be in place for that kind of support.

Q: You mentioned about the social constructs of family and that you had more to say about that.

Olwen: Yes, I do. Look at the social conditioning we experience from the moment we're born. In terms of gender, it's huge . . . the colours, pink, blue, the clothes, the dress, the trousers, all of those things . . . and then, your role models. I think all that social conditioning is incredibly powerful while you're growing up. 'Partner, Children, Family, House'. And your whole life is to be spent in that. So I think for me . . . I warn my young friends, I say 'Look, if you fall in love don't necessarily move in together, don't necessarily have a child, don't necessarily get married and don't go and buy a bloody property'. I think property and family have become 'the opium of the people'. People get a partner and have children and buy a house. Property and ownership is the biggest thing, actually, in Ireland, and it is the biggest poison. People are forced into buying a home as opposed to renting because rents are so ridiculously expensive, there is no rent control and tenants have no rights. And we are a living under an enforced capitalism. People's lives end up completely concentrated on maintaining ownership of a roof over their heads, and the capitalist system in this country forces them into it. And the concept of ownership seems to be all tied in with the construct of family. I really believe the idea of the nuclear family has become a huge threat to individual rights and freedom. For instance, on a very basic level, why is it assumed you should support someone or have a duty to them, emotional or otherwise, just because they are your family? I think we've got to relate to people as people, and not because you have an stated

duty to this person or they have a duty to you. And the whole idea of a family having a duty to its members has become all tied in to laws of inheritance and property and the money-property thing, all mixed up together with emotion and sentiment, it is a very active cell in the entire system. I don't know what the alternative is but I think there is something about maintaining oneself as an individual without it being about individualism, that we see ourselves as part of a communal system, but where the ideas of gender, family and duty are dissolved. I guess I'm talking about a very healthy form of communism. I really think that property ownership is destroying this country, not just economically, but also intellectually and culturally.

Q: Have you had a direct or indirect experience of discrimination because of your gender?

Olwen: Yes. Definitely I would say that I have been discriminated against because of my gender. Not all the time, by no means, and I haven't experienced violence but I have experienced severe bullying in my profession, which hasn't always been gender specific. One situation I'm thinking of is very complex actually but I will talk about this one because it's kind of interesting. A director, from whom I experienced the worst kind of psychological bullying, was in his late fifties and gay and had only come out about four or five years previously. He had a wife, a family and the whole thing and he was clearly still experiencing some kind of unresolved conflict. I was playing the central role of a male who turns out to be a female, a kind of inter-gender role. And everyone could see there was something very subtle and destructive going on in how the director was behaving towards me. I can't quite describe it but it became a fundamental undermining of me on a gender basis. He was trying to twist around and get at something, which was probably something in himself, but doing it by humiliating and undermining me on a daily basis. I am not an arrogant person but I know that I was supremely well equipped to play that role. He did everything he could to dilute and destroy what I was doing. I became quite ill as a result because I didn't fight back until it was too late. This wasn't in Ireland, by the way!

In any case, that experience was probably the worst form of gender discrimination and bullying I've encountered. I've always felt that psychological bullying is the worst form of bullying, worse than physical violence. The oppression of the mind. And I think a lot of people experience it in the theatre, because it's a profession where people often just put up with it for a number of reasons. I have worked with another male director who's supposedly and famously misogynistic and he kind of is, but he is also a kind of a genius, and I was able to just put up with it because of the quality of the work that he was doing. But severe bullying seems to be everywhere, gender based or other, and I've heard of a couple of other situations recently, one being a woman and the other one being a man, both of them terrible bullies in the workplace.

Q: Why do you think people put up with that?

Olwen: I think in theatre it is partly because it is such a short period of work, four weeks of rehearsals, and there is so much you need to achieve in that time without wasting your energy in having to fight a bully, so you just find ways of dealing with it. Certainly in my case, with one of those directors that I mentioned, for me it was 'I've got four weeks, I'm going to do the

best work I can, I'm not going to get involved with that conflict because it's going to waste my time and my energy.' That's one side of it. The other side is because there may be actors out there who don't have the degree of independence that I have and who know that if they are going to complain, there's going to be a knock-on effect and they may not work for that theatre again and possibly it's going to affect them even being employed elsewhere again. Depending on who the people in power are, of course. It's very interesting in Ireland now, we have had the 'flipping' of two big institutions, with the new directors in the Abbey and in the Gate, which is fantastic. Bullies are often the symptom of a systemic abuse of power, a rot which moves down from the top. I've been reading an interesting book by the radical feminist Jessa Crispin called *Why I am not a feminist*. And what she is saying is that radical feminism was about overthrowing the entire system, not just fighting for women's rights. She is now arguing that feminism has become like a badge of honour in a club for the privileged white middle-class female. She argues that in many ways it's about empowering themselves to get into a system but it is the system itself that needs to be overthrown. So while you are working to get into that patriarchal system you actually end up supporting it, and then you're in it, and then you become just another part of the whole power structure you had been fighting.

Q: And have you lived your life and your personal relationships differently than the so-called norm because of that kind of thinking?

Olwen: I have had the luxury of questioning what I think and how I see things, because it's part of what you do as an artist. So, yeah, I've never really cared about what society would think about how I live or what I do. Although I do encourage younger people that I'm close to to be free of some of the automatic reflexes or social conditioning that I grew up with.

Q: What were the reactions to your own relationships?

Olwen: I have two relationships. There was a certain point in my life where I had one partner and then I fell in love with another and I felt it was wrong to make a choice of one over the other. Why is there this idea that you've got to choose one or the other? I had previously been very absolutist in emotional terms but then this experience dismantled all of that. The hurt was the only thing that was difficult to deal with, the hurt I felt I was causing. But at the same time I felt that it wasn't right for me to make a decision either way. I felt strongly that this was a truer way to live, if I was to deny one or the other I would somehow deny a whole aspect of myself and of life experience. That said, being split between two people is not something I chose and I would never recommend it!

I have always demanded honesty and I am very honest as well. I simply can't live with any kind of lie or deceit, I just feel it is so disrespectful to your partner to not tell them if something is going on, it's a terrible form of humiliation to lie to them or not tell them what may be happening. From women, the reactions were interesting, they were mostly supportive. The men I knew were less supportive. The women were 'Aren't they great, those two men?'. And the men were more like 'What about those guys? What kind of men are they?

How can they be putting up with that?'. These might be the same guys who have an affair on the side and never tell their partners. Of course sometimes I might get that reaction from a woman too, but far less.

Q: Can you talk about your views on art and politics?

Olwen: Before I talk about art and politics, and in relation to feminism, even though I got involved with *Waking the Feminists*, I don't actually like wearing the badge, even though I am totally supportive of the movement. I guess I have a natural resistance to being part of anything that might demand that I conform to it. I do feel there is an area in feminism where, if you do not conform to certain ways of thinking, you are attacked for not being a feminist or you are not supporting feminism, and this is perhaps part of my resistance to the actual word feminism.

In my lifetime there have been various feminist actions which could be incredibly separatist and anti-male, which I am not. I don't think women are more special than men, although I know some women who do think that. I definitely think that women should be in positions of power just as much as men are. But I think the more fundamental problem in the overall structure of what we call the patriarchy is not directly to do with men but with how systems of power and governments have evolved over the centuries. And that is the thing that I want to overthrow. The whole system which is all tied up with capitalism, property and family, as I said earlier. I mean the whole concept of marriage in Ireland was about ownership, owning the woman, and for a long time she had no rights except in relation to marriage. Of course it happens the other way as well. A man sometimes does not have any rights to his children if he isn't married. I think there are still some issues around that, which are not talked about enough. It's less fashionable to talk about men's rights than it is about female rights, and I think men's rights often get lost in the whole feminist argument.

With the rise of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement, feminism is really 'trending' at the moment and it's a great thing. But I have to say I wouldn't like to be a man right now, I think I would start to feel paranoid. I think there are so many ways we have to remain vigilant as feminists and as women working for equality. The movement has joyfully swung the pendulum but we have to be careful that we don't become the oppressor, that we are still capable of listening and hearing and responding. It happens, when you're breaking through, fighting for a new system but, in the heat of the struggle and centuries of rage, the new system slowly becomes a replica of the one before, where the balance tips over to the other extreme in the same way that the colonised can so easily become the coloniser in retaliation. That is not a feminism that I would support.

In relation to art for political action, I think that's why I ended up becoming an artist. Art is an act of resistance. It's our weapon, it's our tool to transform reality, other ways of thinking, other ways of seeing. And it's not only a form of resistance, it's a form of envisioning, it offers a space for envisioning. So I see art as a fundamentally political act, it is probably one of the few virtual spaces left where we can be truly revolutionary. Artists carry a huge responsibility. Art can be very powerful.



MARY MOYNIHAN

Biography

Mary Moynihan is a writer, theatre and film-maker, and Artistic Director of Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company and a Theatre Lecturer at the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. As Artistic Director of Smashing Times, Mary specialises in developing innovative, cutting edge, state of the art projects that promote human rights, peace building, gender equality and positive mental health through high quality artistic processes. Award winning projects include *Acting for the Future* which uses theatre to promote positive mental health, run in partnership with the Samaritans and the highly successful *Women War and Peace* using theatre and film to promote equality and peace. As a playwright, Mary's work includes the highly acclaimed *The Woman is Present: Women's Stories of WWII* by Mary Moynihan, Deirdre Kinahan, Paul Kennedy and Fiona Bawn Thompson; *In One Breath* from the award-winning *Testimonies* (co-written with Paul Kennedy); *Constance and Her Friends* and *Grace and Joe* - selected by President Michael D. Higgins for performance at *Áras an Uachtaráin* for Culture Night 2016 - and *May Our Faces Haunt You* and *Silent Screams*.

As a theatre director, professional directing credits include *The Woman is Present: Women's Stories of WWII* on Irish and international tour (co-director Bairbre Ni Chaoimh); scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, Abbey Theatre, Dublin; *Uprising* scripted by Tara McKeivitt, Project Arts Centre Dublin and national tour; *Thou Shalt Not Kill* by Paul Kennedy, Project Arts Centre Dublin and Lyric Theatre Belfast; *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, Samuel Beckett Theatre; *Orphans* by Dennis Kelly, Focus Theatre; and *In One Breath (Testimonies)* for Smashing Times at Project Arts Centre and Helix Theatre, Dublin. As a film director, work includes the hour-long television documentary *Stories from the Shadows*, the short film *Tell Them Our Names* (selected for the London Eye International Film Festival and Kerry Film Festival) and the creative documentary *Women in an Equal Europe*.

Mary's theatre and film work is physical-based and focuses on primal, visceral and intuitive responses to vulnerability and conflict and an exploration of self and the other. She focuses on the interconnectedness of the body, voice and imagination and the use of creative physical and spiritual energies, revealing the inner life through physical and intuitive engagements.

Q: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Mary: I work as a writer, director, theatre and filmmaker. I am Artistic Director of Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company and a Theatre Lecturer at the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. As Artistic Director of Smashing Times, I specialise in using the arts to promote human rights, peace, gender equality and positive mental health. I have an honours MA in Film Production from DIT and an honours BA in Drama and Theatre Studies from the University of Dublin Trinity College. I originally trained at Focus Theatre under the direction of Deirdre O'Connell, my friend and mentor. And I am the mother of four children Féilim, Naoise, Éanna and Ella.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Ireland, in relation to your practice and your work?

Mary: My mother Helen Moynihan (nee Brennan) was from Clogh in County Kilkenny and emigrated to America where she met my father Edmund (Eddie) Moynihan who was originally from Kilmacrane, Banteer, County Cork. My partners met and married in New York. My father joined the American Army and after serving his time, he left and my parents returned to live in Dublin. I was born in 1965, my brother Joseph in 1966 and Edmund 16 years later in 1981. We had a very happy childhood apart from losing my sister Eileen when I was about 10. My parents were unable to have more children after my brother and I, and my mother wanted a large family. My parents adopted Eileen and she lived with us for over a year before the natural mother changed her mind and took Eileen back. It was a tragedy as my family had fully bonded with Eileen and she was, in every way, a daughter and sister, a core member of our family who was loved very much and is still missed. I hope the adoption laws have since changed in Ireland so something like this cannot happen.

Several years later my mother became pregnant, she was absolutely delighted and had a beautiful baby boy, my younger brother Edmund, but my mother died a week after the birth. It was sudden and devastating, no words can describe it. We loved her so much, her love of life and kindness, and suddenly she was gone. A lack of proper care in the maternity service played a part in her death.

We were always close as a family. The death of my mother shattered or fragmented our family for a number of years with everybody attempting to cope internally if you like with the grief and pain, there was no counselling back then. As a family we became close again as the years went by and found a way to carry on. I remember my mother as an independent woman who loved my father. Although my mother was the primary homemaker, my parents had an equal relationship, both in charge, with equal access to finances. My mother played a key role in helping my father build their business (he was a building contractor), she did interior design for the houses they developed and was always busy. In terms of housework I remember her going 'on strike' one time, as she believed the rest of us had to help out more. I regularly had 'chores' to do. She loved tennis and when Wimbledon was on, she dropped everything, we had to do all the work while she watched the

tennis. She was involved in the local GAA club, went to all their matches, she played camogie herself and became the first woman Chairperson of the club at a time when it was rare to have a woman in Ireland in such a position. She was a Set-Dancing champion and trained the younger set-dancing team who were Dublin champions several years running. She loved life and lived it to the full, her family and friends remember her laughter and her love of friendship and fun. Growing up, our home constantly had visitors calling, it was a happy place. My mother was a wonderful, kind woman who never let anyone tell her what to do so I imagine I developed my own independent streak from her.

The death of my mother had a profound effect on all of us in so many ways. Unfortunately women are still dying today in the Irish maternity service and this needs to be addressed with women's voices and needs put centre-stage in a 'woman centred' maternity service. Currently if a woman dies in childbirth in Ireland there is not an automatic inquest into her death and this has to change. As a family we reared Edmund, having a small child to mind kept us going and my father did re-marry.

When I was growing up during the 1970's and 1980's it was 'traditional' for men to work and women to stay at home. I saw men as natural 'job earners' and women as natural 'home-makers'. This changed when my father went from being the 'male earner' to also being 'home-maker' and 'child-minder' for a week old baby and two teenage children. He took these roles on because he had no choice but also because he wanted to and did an excellent job. We had a child minder during the day but after school, in the evenings and weekends, my father, brother and I reared a baby and looked after the home. Years later I learnt about 'gender stereotyping' and the way society imposes 'roles' that many accept as the 'norm'. After my mother died, as the only woman in the house, a lot of the cleaning roles were passed to me but after a while, I rebelled and soon there was a sharing of these tasks. My father showed me that men are equally capable of minding children in the same caring way that some women can.

After my mother died, I left school without going on to college (I did that later). I spent a few years minding my little brother and then spent a year working in the south of France at various jobs. When I came home I trained as an administrator and worked at the head office of Seven-Up in Ireland. I was offered a permanent job but realised I wanted a career in the arts. I discovered the Focus Theatre where I worked for over ten years with the Artistic Director Deirdre O'Connell who was a fantastic actor, director and teacher. Deirdre trained with practitioners including Erwin Piscator and Lee Strasberg at the Actor's Studio in New York before coming to Ireland to set up the Stanislavski Acting Studio in 1963 based on the techniques of the Russian Theatre practitioner, Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), actor, director, founder and theatre administrator of the Moscow Art Theatre and creator of the Stanislavski system of actor training. Deirdre wanted to train a permanent company of actors and in 1967 she set up the

Focus Theatre in Dublin, which went on to produce over three hundred plays by playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, Lillian Hellman, Doris Lessing, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. Other members of the company included Declan and Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy, Tom Hickey, Tim McDonnell and Sabina Coyne. I had a fantastic time working at Focus. There I met Margaret Toomey and Gillian Hackett and with Una O Laoghaire we set up Smashing Times in 1991 with Deirdre's blessing and support. We wanted to create new work for and by women and to bring theatre out of the traditional theatre space into the wider community. The Focus Theatre closed in April 2012 however Deirdre's legacy lives on. Working with Deirdre was special. The training we received at Focus Theatre enabled us to build Smashing Times into the award winning company that it is today. In Smashing Times we are committed to a sense of truth in performance and using creative processes to promote human rights, working in Ireland, north and south, and on an international basis.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU had had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Mary: Up to the 1970's and 1980's Ireland was extremely conservative in relation to women's rights. Irish women working in the civil service or as teachers had to resign once they got married. This was known as the 'marriage ban' and was only removed in 1973. During the 1970's women were discriminated against in many different ways, for example contraception was illegal, children's allowance was only paid to fathers, women were unable to get restraining orders against violent partners, a husband could sell the family home without a woman's consent, rape within marriage was legal and women were paid less than their male counterparts. There were no laws prohibiting gender discrimination in employment in Ireland until 1977. Many rights that came about for women from the 1970's on were fought for by Irish women and feminist activism that put pressure on successive governments to start changing laws that discriminated against women. In addition to this, the development of gender equality in Ireland benefited from Ireland's membership of the EU with its focus on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Ireland joined the EU in 1973 and membership of the EU has definitely proved beneficial for women's rights. In a report titled *Review and Reform of EU Equality Law: Ireland* by Ursula Barry, the report states that 'equality legislation came into effect in Ireland as a direct result of membership of the European Community'¹ and positive changes in employment law in Ireland particularly for women are directly influenced by EU directives on equal pay and discrimination. Pauline Cullen, National University of Ireland, Maynooth in an article titled *The Irish Women's Movement*, states that: 'In 2014 over 30 pieces of Irish legislation with a bearing on gender equality had origins in EU membership'². Today the EU, the European Court of Human Rights, and the UN all support gender equality but much more needs to be done.

1. *Review and Reform of EU Equality Law: Ireland* by Ursula Barry, Research Assistant Joan O'Connor, Women's Education and Resource Centre, UCD, (2003), http://www.research.mbs.ac.uk/ewerc/Portals/0/docs/gendersocial/CNE_IE.pdf, page 19

2. *The Irish Women's Movement* by Pauline Cullen, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, page 3

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Mary: The EU has a fundamental role to play in promoting gender equality and human rights. Like most governments, the EU needs to be more accountable to ordinary people, to listen and be at the service of the people, to promote a diverse, equal society and to be transparent. There is a strong focus in the EU today on promoting women at leadership levels including on state and corporate boards which is positive however it is important to not focus solely on 'economic activity' but give equal support to all areas affecting women including social reproduction, gender based violence, etc.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Mary: The arts can raise awareness of what is unspoken or hidden; they can transform and make connections. The arts are a great way to connect, to see all kinds of people dancing together to a wild piece of music or going to the theatre to share each other's stories. In theatre and film we create the 'soul' of a character, with a connection between the physical lived experience as well as the imaginative, spiritual life. Through my work we tell stories and create connections to each other, to ourselves, to a friend or enemy, to the life force or energy that exists around us, from nature or from our ancient past. We are connected in many ways but modern life can destroy those connections, particularly in a world that seems to be for the benefit of some over others and is devoid of a deeper form of communication. The performance artist Marina Abramovic talks about emptying the body in her work 'boat emptying, stream entering' – to empty the body/boat to the point where you can connect with the fields of energy within and around us. Artists can play a vital role in exploring the world we live in, creating new connections and raising awareness, which is what we do in Smashing Times. It has been an incredible journey telling stories of peace, of positive mental health and in more recent years, telling women's stories from history. There are incredible women's stories that deserve to be acknowledged by a wider audience and this is about creating connections to women's lived experiences from the past and how they influence us today.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Mary: It means being me. I'd prefer to be a woman than a man! I loved giving birth, a difficult yet special experience. I often joke with my sons that women are the ones who give birth because the pain is much for men to handle! However giving birth should not define women. It is a choice and having full reproductive rights and control over our bodies is essential including the right to choose. Men make great mothers and can rear children too. Men and women are a combination of feminine and masculine so why do we even allow ourselves to be defined by labels. I feel I am both male and female. I certainly never felt I fitted into a traditional notion of what a woman is or should be.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Mary: Feminism is about advocating for equal rights for

both men and women on the grounds of political, social and economic equality for all.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Mary: On a core level, my children make me happy and family members, I love them all. Spending time in nature makes me happy, the sea, mountains, trees, rivers, rain, flowers, being near the earth especially when you are with people you love. I enjoy swimming and dancing, I'd like to paint more and to learn how to play the drums, and to spend more time doing what makes me happy! Going on holidays to a beach with golden sands, blue seas and skies or to Valentia Island in Kerry, wonderful! Happiness means being at peace within myself and the world around me. I'd like to see a world without violence or poverty, that would be an extraordinary place to live in. And I love my work.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your potential, and what would you change about that?

Mary: Discrimination can stop people from reaching their potential. I believe I am equal as a woman, however I recognise subtle forms of discrimination that I experienced. I've also experienced that dark voice in my head that puts me down, myself not believing in 'me' enough, letting negativity dominate over positivity. Getting older is great because that voice has less power. I am convinced of the need to teach young people to love and respect themselves and others. What I have changed is developing an internal monologue that has plenty of positive self-talk and to be supportive.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Mary: I have experienced discrimination, a lot of it subtle. Indirect or 'unconscious bias' is a real problem that has to be addressed and gender stereotyping of women in pop cultures, in media and in society only encourages this. Unfortunately I experienced gender-based violence because I am a woman. I suffered a violent assault in my late teens by a man that could only be described as a predator. The man's sole intention was rape. I managed to fight him off. I was 'lucky' if you can call it that. It made me aware of how vulnerable women and young girls can be and of the vileness and completely destructive nature of gender based violence. It's shocking that young girls and women today still experience physical and sexual gender based violence and not nearly enough is being done to stop this heinous crime. I believe men should not be able to 'buy' their way out of doing time in prison when they have been found guilty of gender based crimes. When a state fails to hold the perpetrators of sexual violence accountable, this not only encourages further abuses but also gives the message that male violence against women is acceptable or normal. Sexual violence is pervasive. It is still difficult for women to take cases in court or for women to speak out. Too many women still feel shame or embarrassment about reporting these crimes and this 'shame' is perpetuated by the way society has treated women. We need zero tolerance for gender based violence and to work with young people in schools, both boys and girls, on a

consistent basis about the effects of gender based violence and how to stop it and to support women and men to not be afraid to report sexual assault when it happens.

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having feminist women in decision-making roles'.

Mary: I agree with this statement. Women continue to be paid less than men, about 23% worldwide. One in three women experience gender based violence, and we still do not have equal political representation. In Ireland having 22% political representation for women is not equal, having gaps in pay is not equal, having unequal representation in decision-making and management positions is not equal and the fact that gender based violence continues to be a serious issue is not equal. Why do we accept a second rate form of equality? No one would advocate for slavery to be eradicated gradually, 20% today, 30% tomorrow, so why put up with a 'gradual' reduction in inequality which is part of the continued presence of a patriarchal structure. The aim is to have equal representation on a fifty-fifty basis for women in politics, on state boards, in business, for feminist leaders (men and women) to challenge patriarchy and a society that objectifies female sexuality, to end gender based violence and to create alternative role models. Many brave women spoke out through campaigns like #Me Too. The way forward is to put new structures in place to guarantee equality for all men and women. Alongside gender equality we need to address racism, poverty, war, rights for people with disabilities and ethnic minorities as intersectional feminism is of benefit to everybody.

In 2017 the Irish Government refused to acknowledge if they voted for Saudi Arabia to join the UN Commission on the Status of Women! Saudi Arabia is a country that treats women as second-class citizens and the property of men; they have 'guardianship laws' that prohibit women from accessing education, work or travel without the permission of a male! They segregate public space, women on one side, men on the other, they arrest women if they don't wear the hijab! And European political representatives think it is OK to vote this country onto a commission on the status of women! There is something seriously wrong here!

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Mary: The advice for my younger self is to be who you want to be. Love and care for yourself while building interdependent relations with others, 'seek first to understand, then to be understood' (Stephen Covey, American author). Don't let fear of what you imagine others think about you hold you back, however care about people and the world you live in. Positive self-esteem, resilience and acting instinctively are important. Constantine Stanislavski, the Russian Theatre practitioner, said that the longest and most exciting journey is the journey inward so walk the path of your own heart, be true to your deeper self. On a practical level, have positive mentors and, as an artist, learn about business and networking. I really enjoyed setting up my own company. When I was young and my mother died there was no such thing as counselling, you just got on with life. I eventually went back to college at the age of 30 and also had

a baby, it was tough but I got through it. I loved college and I'm a great believer in education. Sometimes you just have to get out there and make the most of what you have. Years later I did go to counselling, I'd recommend it to anyone, it's good to talk.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Mary: Educate yourself in relation to gender equality and human rights, learn about how the world is governed and who has power. We need systematic change at structural levels in society, to ensure governments and institutions commit to gender mainstreaming. I'd like to see gender equality taught as a core module in primary and secondary schools. We often have 'masculinised' versions of history and while this is changing, young people need to be taught about women's stories on an equal basis to men in primary, secondary or at university level. History curriculums currently tell an average of 20 to 30% women's stories compared to men. Advocate for gender proof curriculums at schools and universities. Remove the 'invisibility cloak' and you realise so many ordinary women were extraordinary, refusing to accept oppression, creating change, making great art. We need more women journalists and broadcasters and to challenge pop culture and the media in terms of the fake and highly sexualised images of women that are consistently portrayed. Waking the Feminists brought to light sexism against women in theatre in Ireland. We need women artists on stage, radio, television and film screens on an equal basis to men. This encourages young women, 'if they see it, they can be it' and supports the emergence of a new narrative in contrast to the 'narrative of maleness' we currently live under. In my work I enjoy creating women characters that have active agency as opposed to being reactive, drivers of their own story, doing things beyond what is traditionally expected, working outside of gender norms. We need to honour more women at national levels, such as Dr Kathleen Lynn (1874-1955) a medical doctor and social and political activist, or Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946), one of Ireland's foremost suffragettes or Cork woman Mary Elmes (1908-2002), the first Irish person honoured as 'Righteous Among Nations' for her work saving Jewish children from the Nazi gas chambers during World War II. Mary's story is part of our theatre performance *The Woman is Present: Women's Stories of WWII* and can also be read in the brilliant book *A Time to Risk All* by another extraordinary woman Clodagh Finn.

Q. How has being a woman or having children or not having them affected your personal life and your career?

Mary: I have four beautiful children, and I love them so much. If you want children go for it, it is not something to ever take for granted, there are many people who cannot have children. If you want children and a career make sure you have someone who will mind your children for you. I never married through choice, I have four children but I was never a stay-at home mom and that is normal too, you can have children without being the primary care-giver, just make sure you have that sorted otherwise it is tough! However, I am still the one responsible. Children take up a huge amount of time as teenagers, you have to be there for them, I have found teenage years the most challenging, but it's worth it. It is amazing to be present as they grow into adults, they are extraordinary and I love them all.

SINÉAD BURKE

Biography

Sinéad Burke is a writer and an academic. Through writing, public speaking and social media, she highlights the lack of inclusivity within the fashion industry and encourages the industry to design for and with disabled people.

She visits schools, workplaces, government agencies and the White House to facilitate honest conversations about education, disability, fashion and accessibility. She advocates for the inclusion of all and challenges officials to legislate with the most marginalised in our communities.

She is currently undertaking a PhD in Trinity College, Dublin on human rights education and is an ambassador for the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Irish Girl Guides.

Q: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Sinéad: My name is Sinead Burke and I am a PhD Candidate in the School of Education in Trinity College, Dublin. My research is on the voice of the child and giving children a say in matters that affect them in Irish primary schools. Besides that, I'm a primary school teacher, a broadcaster and an advocate.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Sinéad: Feminism means an array of different things. I have to be honest in that it wasn't really part of my rhetoric or my vocabulary when I was growing up. I was very proud to be a young Irish woman but it just wasn't part of my local environment. But as I got older I became much more comfortable with it and I would now define myself as an intersectional feminist. And that aspect of feminism is something that I think is vital for the development of feminism and gender equality throughout the world.

If I had to give a definition for my feminism, I think it is the social, economic and political equality of the sexes whilst also keeping in mind that gender is a social construct and trans women and trans men need those rights too and need their voices to be heard. And also, people of colour, in particular women of colour. I say that I'm an intersectional feminist while also conscious that I'm a white, disabled feminist. Whilst I might be oppressed in some ways, my experience is laced with privilege in many other ways. I'm conscious of that and continually question how I can use my privilege to amplify other people's voices and to constantly challenge what I believe in or think are right, and I think two particular experience come to mind about that.

Growing up I consumed media in voracious amounts but I was constantly frustrated by the way in which the media talks to and about women. I think I was 18 or 19 years of ages and I read a headline in the New York Times that said

Mick Jagger's girlfriend had died. The woman in question was Lauren Scott, she was a fashion designer that I greatly admired. She died by her own hand and yet America's paper of record decided that the only relevance for that story was because of who she was married to! And we have a long hallway in my house and I paced up and down and was very frustrated. My sister who is two years younger turned to me and said 'if you're so annoyed, do something about it'. And I said 'I will!'

And I set about interviewing women who I admired, those who I deemed to be extraordinary. I framed the conversations with them in such a way that there was no sensationalism, to not talk to them about who they are married to, how they achieve a work-life balance, whether or not they have or want to have children and what they wore to work, despite my insatiable interest in the domain of fashion. So those things have been really important to me and I think I'm constantly re-assessing and trying to re-define my feminism whilst also keeping myself in check and my preconceived notions.

Q: Can you talk about your experiences as a woman in Ireland, personally, artistically and politically and any key milestones or turning points in your life?

Sinéad: I'm very fortunate to grow up in a family where my father is a little person like myself. I stand at the height of three foot, five inches tall or one hundred and five and a half centimetres. My mother is average height and I am the eldest of five children. I have three sisters and one brother and they are all average height. And in many ways even though I am the eldest, I am in a kind of pseudo-mature position within my family because, as a result of my height, there are some things with regard to the physical environment that I just cannot do independently, like an eldest sibling would do. And I rely on my siblings for that assistance.

But I am so incredibly lucky that I've always had my dad as a role model. I'm sometimes asked 'when did you realise that you were small?' and there was never an opportunity or moment in my life when I was sat down and told that I was different. I was just like my dad. But in many ways, as helpful as that was at a young age, I began to notice the way in which society treated us differently purely because of our gender and sex and in many ways we both experienced street harassment and people taking photographs of us or people jeering us or calling us names and slurs that are not appropriate.

But the framing of that and the way in which those conversations occur are slightly different for my father and I. Mine is either completely sexualised because I'm a woman or infantilised also. And I straddle that boundary quite differently because I'm the height of perhaps a six-year-old but then because I have the physical maturity of a woman, assumptions are made in relation to that too. And that's a conversation that my Dad has never really been privy to and something that he's been made more aware of purely because of my existence. So, even though from the outside we may look very similar, our experiences, even in terms of discrimination, are very different.

Q: Can you tell us about a positive story of change that you, as a woman, have experienced as a result of membership of the EU?

Sinéad: I've been very fortunate to do some work with the EU intellectual property office. I'll be honest and admit that prior to an invitation to visit them in Alicante, I didn't really know that they existed. I didn't know what relevance they would have, particularly for an individual and for an island as small as ours. But social media has been a transformative vehicle for my own experience and existence. Not only has it allowed me to build a platform and an audience outside of traditional media, traditional media that always wanted to frame my narrative through the most sensationalist lens, social media has given me the autonomy to narrate both my own story and my interests whether it be fashion, education or political activism. But it also gave me the most authentic insight into other people's experiences, ones which I never would have known existed without the use of social media. So deliberately following women of colour or trans women or understanding that hair is laced in privilege and whilst I might get out of the shower in five minutes, wash my hair and blow-dry it and leave the house and be somewhat, you know, comfortable or normal by society's definitions, that might not be the same for women of colour.

But going to the EU intellectual property office and realising various things such as copyright and what your rights and responsibilities are as regards to your digital footprint and the legislation that is involved there to protect you. And also in terms of discrimination, what can be done outside of those boundaries and on an EU level. And how it's not just us on a tiny little island in Ireland, you know, deposited between Brexit and Trump, that there is a wider support network out there that we can very much avail of and experiences that we can replicate and mirror.

Q: What role has and can the EU play in supporting change in relation to gender equality?

Sinéad: The EU is a legislative body. It defines policy and law initiatives that EU countries then mirror and invest in. But the questions I have are 'who is sitting around the table making those decisions? Who is forming that law? What are those individuals' biases and unique experiences?' Whilst I think quotas and various other initiatives need to be invested in and incentivised to ensure that gender equality is promoted, and those women who deserve those roles in senior positions adhere to them and receive them, I would also love for the EU to authentically listen, to amplify and spotlight the voices that perhaps they haven't heard from before.

And not only to listen but to invite them to the table and get them to use their personal experiences, education and legislative backgrounds to inform policy. You know, if she can't see it, she can't be it. But there is also an initiative that says 'nothing about us, without us', and for so long that was the experience of women, in terms of history it's what feminism grew out of. Things such as policy, legislation, and

culture were defined without the female voice ever being considered. It's now 2018, and I would love for that table to be more inviting, more accessible and more authentically diverse.

Q: What would you change in your life as a woman, based on what you know now, and what advice would you give your younger self in relation to gender equality, democracy and peace?

Sinéad: What would I change? There's this concept in Ireland called 'notions' and it is (supposedly) the worst thing that you can have. You cannot have 'notions' about yourself. What it means is that you are above your station, you think better of yourself or at least that's what we say it is. We usually define 'notions' as people who are proud of themselves, who are lacking in a little bit of modesty and we say that that's a bad thing. I disagree. I think that we should revel in our successes. So often we are told to just take it in and perhaps perform that happiness of congratulations internally and I think we need to be able to do that a bit more explicitly and take pride in the hard work, resilience and dedication that it took for us to get to in that moment.

But I also think a change in thinking needs to occur. Both women and men and those who sit on the spectrum of gender, we're often told that as regards to rewards or success, there is one pie and one slice and if your friend has it, you do not and cannot. And that's a fable, that doesn't exist. And this idea that we must feel envy or jealously against somebody else because they are a success, I think is untrue. And I think if there is one thing that I could do differently or tell my younger self, I think it would be to make sure that you find the people who make you be the best person you are and to surround yourself with them.

Now, they are not those who fill you with grace and compliments but they are those who you trust implicitly, who, in your darkest, most vulnerable moments you admit to them your challenges, you empathise with them and they understand you. But they are also those people who critique you when you say something that might be hurtful to others or when you have a way of thinking that's incorrect. They are your safe space and for me they are my sisters, my mother and a circle of my very closest and dear friends.

And if I was younger, I think I would tell that person to not be so infatuated with social media. As much as I enjoy it, I think that there's a performance of friendship and happiness that exists there to fulfil a currency of 'likes' in order for others to perceive you as popular or culturally active or interesting. And what I'm trying to do now as I approach my thirties, is to do less of that and instead spend time in person or on the phone with my friends, asking them how they are. Not expecting the response to be 'I'm so busy', but expecting the response to be 'I'm struggling at the moment' or 'I had a really amazing day' or 'somebody said something and it really upset me or made me think differently' and being there for that person in a really authentic way so that they can do the same for you.

Q: How has being a woman or having children or not having them affected your personal life and your career?

Sinéad: I am 26 years of age. I was born in 1990, which puts me in the category of a millennial. Depending on who you talk to, millennials have all sorts of reputations. We can be entitled, we can be ungrateful, we can be handed all of these opportunities that are in abundance in our society now and have never said thanks for them or been diligent or worked hard for them.

But then you talk to a millennial, and that's not their perspective at all. I am currently living in a society and in a political and economic climate where it's very difficult to move out of my family home despite social commentary saying that I should have done that many years ago. I'm disabled and can't move into rental properties due the height of a lock on a hall door. No landlord is going to lower that lock for a twelve-month lease. Which means I physically can't get in and out of buildings that I want to live in and acquire. I cannot have that independence. So, I am waiting until I have the financial independence to afford a mortgage. A bank only gives you three times the amount of your salary. And at the moment that doesn't equate to housing prices. I'm also in a position where I am highly educated, see there's my lack of modesty showing, and yet the salary that I can obtain does not meet all of the different things that society demands I need to pay or to acquire.

So, for many reasons, as someone without children, it's not due to choice. It's due to not being in a financial or social or economic position to be able to have children. And who knows when that might be? Will it be in my thirties? Possibly. And then what does that mean with regards to my own health as a woman? Do I need to look into other sorts of treatments and what expense does that cost? And I think in many ways those voices and those stories are not being told. And as much as I would like to have children, my mother had five children and almost at my age now with her generation, it's not possible. Or at least, I don't think it is for me. Who knows when.

Q: Have you ever had a direct or indirect experience of discrimination because of being a woman?

Sinéad: Sure. I have had a number of experiences that have made me feel very uncomfortable. I suppose not only uncomfortable, but vulnerable and unsafe. When I had just turned eighteen or nineteen I was in university and along with my friends we went out on occasion, of course, as you do and we went to nightclubs. But when I was with other passers-by and other strangers in a nightclub with alcohol in their system, their attitude to me changed. Particularly, I think, because I was a woman. Young men with a certain amount of alcohol in their system walked up to me, one lifted me up by the armpits, lifted me into the air, went 'woohoo!' and put me back down. Now, I know that sounds a little bit humorous but I felt so unsafe. How dare they?

In another instance I was trying to emerge from the nightclub and leave and three young men who couldn't have been

older than eighteen to twenty stood in front of me and attempted to unzip their fly in my face because they thought it made them the 'man' or 'cool' or at least scored them social points with their friends. For a sense of bravado or whatever trope of masculinity they were subscribing to. And I think feminism has a role there too. It has a role in deconstructing what men think they need to be or their performance of a kind of masculinity that they think they needed to show and exhibit.

I think there's limitations within that too and understanding the oppression and opportunities for feminism on both sides of the spectrum of gender can really encourage that. But it's difficult. What do you do in that situation when you are eighteen or nineteen? In that instance, I just left. I was upset. And a couple of months later, I found a safe space within the LGBT community in nightclubs there. I was nervous and thought, will I get up on stage here and dance? How will this community react to me? And it was so encouraging to see, in many ways, that I was just left alone. I was allowed to dance to Madonna's Vogue. In a way, everybody was different and that was the normality. And feeling that acceptance was so genuinely tangible, it was extraordinary and transformed my whole personality I think, and my whole insight into going out and socialising with people. But that oppression is difficult and I'm doing some work with the policing system here in Ireland as regards to that. We have not had a nuanced discussion as regards to hate crime and hate speech.

We talk about it within a race and perhaps ethnic background and those minority voices most definitely need to be heard. But also, within the disabled community. There has been constant oppression that we have not explored. So, working with them on legislation and policy and challenging An Garda Síochána's views, both those who were in senior positions and those who were just newly recruited. It's been a little bit nerve-racking. I'm deliberately putting myself in a vulnerable position, deliberately charging my stories with emotions and putting that emotional labour into the work. But I think and hope it's going to be rewarding, for both parties.

Q: And finally, what does being a woman mean to you?

Sinéad: Being a woman . . . I heard a quote recently and it said 'sex is what's between your legs and gender is what's between your ears'. And I had never thought about that before. I'd never thought about what that meant, and what being a woman means to me. I'm very proud of being a woman but if I had to drill that down and ask why, I'm not sure. I have the most amazing sisters who are empathetic, considerate, kind, tenacious, but also terribly irritating at moments when they borrow lipstick without consent, my lipstick, I should specify. But that idea of being connected to a sisterhood of individuals is something that I am so incredibly proud of and grateful for. If I'm a success it is because of those things that I learned from my mother and sisters and my female friends. But I think as regards to being a woman, you're often positioned within a caring role. You're often defined by a husband or partner and your achievements are always put in context in a way that a man's isn't. I think there's a huge amount of work to be done there.

As regards to being a woman the qualities that I am most proud of, is that I'm curious and kind. And kindness is not really a quality that we value in society. It is deemed meek and weak. But the idea that you could be kind to somebody and deliberately put yourself in a space where you don't want anything back and you are not benefitting from the gesture or the words is something that really interests me. I have been the recipient of so much kindness, it's why I'm here today, I think. But also, curiosity. I sit with a friend or a stranger and know everything about them within fifteen minutes. It's not deliberately explicit but just part of my nature that I ask who, what, why? I'm genuinely interested in people and things. And I think that curiosity and kindness is what will propel me through. Fingers crossed.

Q: You mentioned Intersectional Feminism, can you elaborate on that?

Sinéad: One of the best parts of my job is that I get to go out to schools and facilitate conversations around difference, disability and marginalised voices and I was with one hundred and sixty seventeen-year-old girls last year. We had an amazing discussion and at the end, a young woman put up her hand, she was seventeen also, and she said 'Can I just ask, are you an intersectional feminist?'. It was the first time I was asked that question, particularly in a space that open. And I said 'yes, or at least I hope so'. And I looked around the room and there were lots of facial expressions that I kind of detected as suggesting people were a little bit lost. And I said 'does anybody know what intersectional feminism means?' No hands were raised. 'Does anybody know what feminism means?' And two hands were raised. This is a cohort of young women who from a lower socio-economic background but were very much ready to enter the third level education space and university or go out into the workforce.

So, I did my best to attempt to explain it. And I talked about how, with the Women's Liberation Movement in the 60s and 70s, we were fighting for rights. We were fighting for education, political and social rights. But so often those sole voices that were leading those campaigns were white women from either affluent or middle-class backgrounds and gave little consideration to poor women, black women, women in other jurisdictions, disabled women, Muslim women. Their voices and their individual oppressions were never considered. They then asked me 'what does privilege mean?'. It's not a concept I think I'm qualified to answer but I attempted to. I said 'if I'm running down a busy street, running at top speed and I run into a member of the police, what do they say to me? They ask me if I'm ok. But if I am, typically and using a caricature of perhaps a man of colour or someone who looks like they are from a different socio-economic background and they run, physically, into a member of the police the response is not the same, but yet the action is. Why is that?'

And having those conversations and not necessarily providing all of the answers but being an instigator to the debate is something that I think is really necessary within education. And not just the education of seventeen-year-olds but of four and five-year-olds. As a little person and as a disabled teacher I am almost a natural instigator for those conversations. In my very first day I had junior infants and they are four years

old and I was in the room ten minutes and a little boy put up his hand and he said 'why are you so small?' and I said 'well, why are you so big?' and he said 'I dunno, I was just born like this.' And I said 'Well, so was I' and he said 'OK, what page are we on?' and I said 'Page four, if you could do the maths please.'

But often we say that children are too young, that we can't have nuanced or interesting or difficult conversations with them. They're not yet mature enough. I disagree completely. You just need to find a way in which to access their level of maturity and you will be so surprised and inspired by their answers. What can we do within classrooms to have conversations around gender equality? Simple things. The culture of a classroom – if you're talking with four or five or six-year-olds about careers, you're talking about farmers you're talking about teachers, you're talking about astronauts. The images that you use, what gender are the protagonists? Usually, the teacher will be female. Usually the astronaut will be male. Usually the engineer will be male. But even the symbolism of that and a slight alternation of challenging that can have an enormous impact. But also being conscious of your word. Language does not just name our society but it shapes it. And if a young girl is struggling with maths, don't say 'maybe this just isn't your subject. Maybe English is for you or Art is for you.' 'And maybe it is, but sometimes those words can have lasting effects. And that young girl who perhaps wanted to be an engineer or go into a career in STEM choses something else. That's what I'd do.



Women in an Equal Europe

INTERVIEWS
FROM SPAIN
CONDUCTED
BY INICIATIVAS
DE FUTURO
PARA UNA
EUROPA SOCIAL,
VALENCIA, SPAIN

Catalina Valencia // Pilar Mena // Mercedes Acitores
Yolanda Trujillo // Lourdes Miron



CATALINA VALENCIA

Biography

Catalina Valencia is a coordinator for the Start-Up Europe Awards initiative promoted by the European Commission and the Finnova Foundation. She is a Communications Officer for the Finnova Foundation in Spain, specializing in innovation and entrepreneurship. Catalina is originally from Medellin, Colombia, where she worked as an Audio-Visual Director until the beginning of her international training in Valencia, Spain, where she completed three masters: in Television Scripting (FIA-UIIMP Scholarship), in Cultural Management and in Strategic Management for Communication (Santander Bank Scholarship). In 2014 she was chosen to represent Spain in the Summer School of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in New York, where she facilitated a workshop titled 'How to communicate a project'. Later she worked as Communication and Public Relations Manager for the co-working space Wayco. She has been a speaker at events such as Colombia 3.0 (Bogotá, 2015) invited by the ICT Ministry, and Colombia Transforma (Valencia, 2014) for the Consulate of Colombia in Valencia, among others.

In 2015 she received the high-performance internship 'La Dipute Eurobeca' from the Diputación Provincial de Valencia, which allowed her to develop her career by working in Brussels in Belgium for five months. She was chosen as the person who most promoted the entrepreneurial community of the city of Valencia in Spain, in the Valencia Start-up Awards of the City Council in 2016. In November 2017 she received a scholarship for a Master in Innovation organized by H2i Institute. Catalina worked on communications for the Waycolmena project, a sustainable consumption platform that connects local producers and consumers, and she is part of the OuiShare community, a global network of independent professionals who study digital, social and collaborative transformation in depth. She has collaborated on a voluntary basis as a secretary in the association PROMIS (Professionals of the World for Social Integration) based in Valencia.

Question: Tell us a little about yourself.

Catalina: I was born in Medellin, Colombia and I have been living in Valencia, Spain, since 2005. I have both Colombian and Spanish citizenship. I work as a journalist, community manager and project manager. I am Entrepreneurship Communications Officer for Finnova Foundation and Manager of the StartUp Europe Awards initiative, promoted by the European Commission and implemented by Finnova. I help start-ups to get more visibility and to internationalise their projects, connecting them through networks such as Startup Europe Latam Assembly, where I am a founding team member. I am very interested in innovation, not only technological, but also creating communities and collaborative transformations in all fields. I love helping people to get connected and I used to collaborate in various initiatives in Valencia like Waycolmena, a community for a local and more sustainable consumption.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Catalina: I have been living in Spain for 12 years. I must say, I did not come to Spain because of security problems or the economic situation in Colombia, but because of the desire to know another culture, to have new experiences and to expand my professional horizons. I was able to come thanks to a grant from a foundation for audio-visual scripting, and when it finished I started a new Master in Cultural Management. After finishing this Masters, I won a scholarship for Latin American students to study in the UJI, a Masters in New Trends of Communication.

In those first years, it was not easy to get a job according to my professional profile, but I could find some things that allowed me to support myself financially, although not with the best working conditions. However, Spain and Europe in general have been such a different and positive experience for me that I decided to persist and continue studying while looking for a better professional opportunity. And this opportunity came in the form of a grant from the Provincial Council of Valencia, which allowed me to work for five months in Brussels at the headquarters of the Finnova Foundation. When I returned to Valencia, the foundation hired me to continue working for them there. Spain has given me a lot of opportunities to grow personally and professionally. I have felt very well received and I have adapted very well from the time I arrived. I have never felt discriminated against because of my immigration status or for being a woman within my closest personal sphere. During the worst years of the Spanish economic crisis, I would notice in some people, feelings of fear towards immigrants, because in some way they felt threatened or imagined that the immigrants were in Spain to 'steal their work'.

In my native country the way of working is different compared to Spain: back there people live by and for work. Work is the main thing in your life, there is a very deep sense of duty and responsibility. This is not the case in Spain or Europe. People are less responsible, a person's time is more diversified and it seems that in the working week there is more time for other things besides working. That attracted me because I've always liked to collaborate and get involved in initiatives, even if they have nothing to do with the work for which I receive a salary.

Q. Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU? If your country is not in the EU what positive changes will you see for women as a result of belonging to the EU.

Catalina: Thanks to my dual nationality, Spanish and Colombian, working for the social integration of immigrants in the PROMIS Association in Valencia, I had the opportunity to represent Spain in the Summer School of the Alliance of Civilizations in 2014, together with young people from more than 150 countries. That experience allowed me to know other realities, empower myself even more and be aware of problems or difficulties I did not originally know about. In Colombia, or at least in Medellín when I lived there, it was not common to see foreigners or immigrants. People in one social class tended to not relate to people in a different social class and it was more or less a closed society. When I arrived in Europe, a world opened up for me, enabling me to share with people from other European countries, from Africa and even Latin America. I love the multicultural wealth that exists in Spain and Europe. They are more open societies in which people with few support networks can still get ahead. As a woman, the tranquillity of being able to walk down the street and return home alone in the city where I live, Valencia, is unique. The fact that you walk and people do not shout things in the street, that you can dress as you want without thinking about what they are going to tell you or even chase you, that makes me feel like I am freer. Also, generally speaking, I see more empowered women in Spain or Europe than in my native country. Fortunately, that is changing a lot, but there is still a lot to be done. In Europe there is much more social debate, more questions, more talk and there are specific projects to support women's empowerment on many levels.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy. For example, what can the EU do to promote gender equality and human rights, are there any laws you want to see in place?

Catalina: I would like to see a Europe that speaks about and puts gender equality at the centre of the debate on the promotion of new laws to promote equality. For example in terms of salary differences between men and women for the same position, I would like to see more laws enacted to ensure equality in this area, or if the laws are already in place, to see more being done to ensure that those laws are applied. Also, I think everything starts with education. Although in Spain I see that much progress has been made, there is still a lot of ignorance, and in certain areas the macho culture persists. There is work to be done to break with those roles, to break with those speeches and that narrative of blaming women.

The media have an important role and a lot of power because they continue reproducing traditional models, echoing campaigns that continue to objectify women particularly in portraying women's bodies as a medium for

selling products. But increasingly, society is more awake and more critical.

It is necessary to make powerful women more visible in society, women who have already empowered themselves, to ensure that powerful women and women's networks are visible as examples for others. Not only to find support through women's networks but to also ensure that powerful women role models are present in all scenarios, so that there are no spaces where women cannot reach. There are still countries where congresses and seminars are held without a single female presence. And it is not credible that there is not a single woman who could be there.

The EU should support projects like Women in an Equal Europe and others that seek, for example, to encourage women's access to technological professions. In that sense I highlight the project Future Funded, the first and only crowdfunding platform that provides the necessary funding for women to learn tech skills - see <https://futurefunded.co/>

Finally, I believe that governments should take better advice when they perform all kinds of campaigns because machismo is something we have learned and internalized so that makes it fairly easy for example to fall into blaming the victims. There are quite unfortunate cases of campaigns recently launched in Spain, where the treatment of men and women differs based on stereotypes.

Q: How do you think citizens can influence EU public policy in relation to promoting gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Catalina: I believe that we can generate more and more spaces that advocate for equality, and to continue to be critical of everything that is not feminist, because men and women should have the same rights, even if biologically we are not the same. And as citizens we must denounce governments when they are wrong. Also as feminists, we must vote for people who share our values, who fight for feminism.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Catalina: For me, being a woman is having the opportunity to give the best of myself to others. It is what I am, I cannot imagine being anything else. I'm not a mother yet, but I understand that having the opportunity to create life within you is powerful. And if I become one, I will discover that power and that connection which makes women unique as creators of life.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Catalina: To fight for feminism is to fight for the recognition of the rights of women that historically have been reserved for men. For me, it is to fight for equal rights and opportunities for women.

Q: 'Equality is not just about having women but about having feminist women in decision making roles.' What do you think about that statement?

Catalina: I totally agree. Women who are not feminists do not work to help women's demands for equal rights and for me it is as if, in the end, you have the right but you decide not to use it. More women are needed to fight for that equality no matter where they are and especially those who do it from a decision-making position.

Q: What makes you happy?

Catalina: To be able to offer the best of me in my work, to my family and to my friends. To dream and build projects, to make them come true, to work for the things that I love and with which I share values. To have learned to enjoy life without guilt and without so much self-demand. To receive the love and support of my family that lives in Colombia, and to take advantage of opportunities in a society like Spain, which is so open, so diverse. Living between two countries makes me happy because I have twice the love and opportunities.

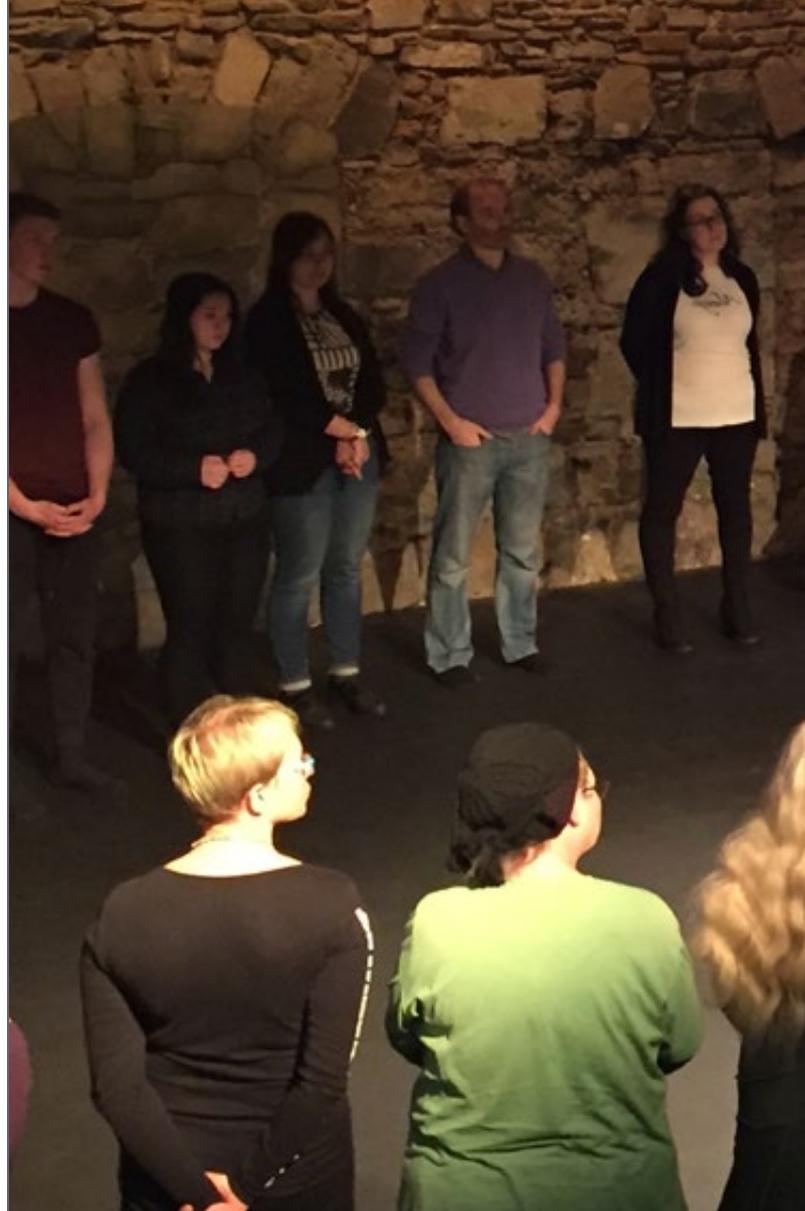
Q: What stops you from reaching your potential, from doing what you want to do in your life and what can you do to change this?

Catalina: Fortunately, few things have stopped me from doing what I wanted. For my perseverance, for my effort, and thanks to the unconditional support of my parents, I have achieved more than I could have imagined. And I will still keep going. A few years ago, when I wanted to leave Colombia, my parents wisely advised me to wait until I had a scholarship. At that time, I did not understand it, but in the end they were right. I left at the time in my life when I should have done it. Going while still very young from Colombia to Europe would not have been smart. In Europe, if you are not a person with credentials, you can go through many paths which weren't what you expected. Everything is so within your reach yet you can still get lost.

Q: How has being a woman affected your personal life and career?

Catalina: When you grow up in a macho society and in which there are such serious problems of insecurity and social inequality, you do not realize until much later how it has affected you in your daily life. I mean, the macho culture can be very rooted within a society. I grew up listening to comments on the street that made me feel uncomfortable, and I saw myself changing my route so I would not have to go through places where they could make me uncomfortable with a scream or shout about my physique, where I could feel somehow harassed. But back then in Colombia NO ONE talked about it, it was just part of life. Part of what a woman had to endure, something 'normal'.

Society was too permissive in relation to harassment. There were macho jokes, jokes that the women themselves laughed at. At that time I did not realize, but now with the passing of



time I look back and I remember annoying situations, verbal aggressions, unjustified jealousy and attempts to control me by ex-partners. But back then it did not look like something serious, it was how things were then. Now I make it very clear that I do not allow this and I will never allow someone to make me feel bad for being a woman.

Regarding my career, fortunately my first female bosses were feminist women. Totally empowered women, owners of their own lives and their role in society. I learned a lot from these women. But also on a daily basis I found myself with comments that had more to do with my physical appearance than with my work. And that in a sense continues to happen and also happens in Spain, but especially with older men. Fortunately, the new generations are being educated in another context, where there is more dialogue and more debate. I think that feminism is spreading more and more.

Q: Have you had direct or indirect experiences of sexism, discrimination or violence because you are a woman? If so, what were they, what did you do about this and what would you do now looking back?

Catalina: Yes, I have experienced harassment in the street, they have followed me, shouting at me and I have felt afraid.



Drama for Change Masterclass conducted in Ireland by Dijana Milošević, Dah Theatre, Serbia

They have touched me on public transport and even just walking on the street. I have had partners who have treated me as if I were their property. And when I was younger I did not do much about it. In Colombia I always defended myself by answering those men who told me things in the street, I did not keep quiet. But in relationships for example, I never did anything. It was something that occurred on a daily basis. Nobody talked about it. In the workplace I have never felt discriminated against for being a woman, but as I said earlier, I remember comments from people regarding my physical appearance before mentioning the results of my work.

Q: Do you feel that women's lives are better now or worse as compared to 15 years ago and in what ways?

Catalina: I think that we are advancing more and more, at least there is more open talk about gender violence. These situations are more visible and the victim is blamed less. However, because of platforms like social networks I also see that society is polarized, attacked and a lot of hatred is generated. On social networks there are debates about feminism that present us as radicals, with labels like 'feminazis'. There is still a way to go but the change is noticeable, both in Spain and in Colombia.

Q: What would you say to young women and men today about gender equality, human rights and diversity?

Catalina: Especially to women, to be themselves, follow their essence and fight for their dreams and make them come true, no matter who gets in their way. I would tell them to surround themselves with positive people, who share their values and contribute to their persona and inspire them in their day to day life. To not feel guilty of things they are not guilty of just because they are women, the problem is always from the one who judges. It is important that we know that we are not guilty of anything just because we are women. That we have the same rights. And to all, to embrace feminism.

Q: What role do you think the arts can play in promoting human rights and gender equality?

Catalina: I believe that through the arts you can touch the lives of people. You can reach places that are not consciously reached. Art is a trigger for change, it is an activator. Art is a means to express what we feel, and a means to expose things that are not right. Art is always critical, or at least it should be. And there lies its value to expose what still hurts, what should be said and what should be discussed.



PILAR MENA

Biography

Pilar Mena is a professional with specific training in Labour Relations and Human Resources, having more than 26 years' work experience in the training sector. She started working in the area of administration in human resources and then began working in the development and management of training plans as well as working on European projects. In recent years she has worked as a quality manager, a position that has allowed her to carry out best practice in the development of people, through the pursuit of objectives and opportunities for improvement that are aligned with the strategic direction of the company. Her passion for working in Human Resources has led her to join the Territorial Council of AEDIPE CV, the National Association for People Management and Development. Her work is always professionally linked to training and employment issues and she is a collaborator and consultant for an organization called Social & Talent and a teacher of the following modules - 'Training and Labour Orientation' and 'Entrepreneurship', at the Professional Centre of the European University of Valencia. She has a strong interest and knowledge in developing emotional intelligence and the benefits that emotional intelligence can bring in relation to the empowerment of people, particularly for people's well-being and employability. This has made it possible in recent years for her to participate as a volunteer in associations that support the development of these skills and competencies with vulnerable groups (ASOCIACIÓN DESATA TU POTENTIAL) and people with intellectual functional diversity (ASINDOWN). She has extensive experience in the management of work teams and has actively participated in the development of European Projects, always related to training and employability. At present she is part of a work team developing validation for training materials aimed at vulnerable groups, operating within the framework of the Erasmus + European Program.

Question: Tell us a little about yourself?

Pilar: My name is Pilar Mena. I have a professional career spanning thirty years. I am a mother to two teenage daughters and I have always made my work-life compatible with my training. Being a woman and also a mother of two daughters makes me a fervent defender of our rights. I started working at the age of nineteen because my family situation demanded it. I do not know whether it is because I started working within the training sector, and I have experienced a lot of growth because of training or it is because of my personal interest, but I have never stopped studying.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Pilar: Being aware of the reality of people's lives in other countries, I consider myself fortunate to live in a country like Spain, where studying at the university was affordable. This allowed me to get a qualification and find a good job in which to learn and develop, both personally and professionally. I have always considered myself a vocational teacher and nowadays it has become a reality. Currently I work as a professor at the European University and I combine my new profession with that of a HR consultant in a company called Social & Talent; a consultancy specializing in communication tools, work climate and employee welfare measurements. I am passionate about innovation in the field of training, and the development of new methods to promote employment for vulnerable groups, and for promoting people's development. To do this, I use tools that are in tune with emotional intelligence and I have discovered another way of doing things in positive psychology.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU?

Pilar: Belonging to the European Union has allowed me to pursue high quality, free training by taking part in courses co-financed from the European Social Fund. In addition, it has allowed me to work as a technician and to actively participate in the application of courses and in their subsequent development. Working on European projects from Leonardo to Erasmus+ has allowed me to travel, and to analyse training and employment in a Europe rich in differences. It has also made it possible to share information in relation to employment in my own country with workers of other nationalities and to learn about the reality of other women's lives, and the different lived experiences they have despite the geographical proximity within a European context. The trips have been personally enriching and have allowed me to build my own skills and capabilities in terms of training and employment and this has undoubtedly influenced the fact that nowadays I work as a teacher at the European University of Valencia, where I teach the subjects of 'Training and Labour Orientation' and 'Entrepreneurship'. My professional change from training management to teaching and HR consultancy would not have been possible without my experience working as a technician on European projects.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Pilar: I would like to see a Europe where women can reach positions of responsibility without the threat of the 'glass ceiling' effect, a Europe in which they can develop formatively and professionally and have the same opportunities as men, a Europe where there is no salary gap between genders, and in which women have enough help so that family concerns are not an obstacle to their careers. A Europe by the people and for the people.

Q: How do you think citizens can influence EU public policy in relation to promoting gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Pilar: In the case of women, it is not enough to simply encourage labour market agents to hire them. What happens once women are incorporated into the labour market? Women need more resources to be able to promote laws that allow them flexible hours, longer maternity leave, effective reservation of work, etc.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Pilar: Being a woman is one of the most rewarding adventures, but it also means growing and developing in a world initially created by men, for men, in which proving your professional worth is an extra effort.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Pilar: Feminism is about men and women having the same rights, but not only from a legal position but also in reality and in an effective manner. This can only be achieved with political-economic measures that allow equality and parity, but do so from the point of view of quality.

Q: 'Equality is not just about having women but about having feminist women in decision making roles.' What do you think about that statement?

Pilar: It seems to me that this is the only possibility for real change for us. Currently, I am part of the Territorial Council of AEDIPE, the National Association for the Development of People (which includes Human Resources professionals from all types of companies). Being in that Council allows me to know, advertise, promote and reward all those good practices in the field of 'people management' which occur in many companies. One of my main concerns is to value all types of good practice that enable family conciliation in terms of equality, as well as those that affect the professional promotion of women and the identification of their talent.

Q: What makes you happy?

Pilar: It makes me happy to have the feeling of being able to 'contribute' wherever I am, of contributing to a better world to the best of my ability. I am a volunteer teacher in two associations, I want to do something for others, something like giving workshops for people with functional intellectual diversity so that they gain skills and competencies that improve their employability. Being a volunteer gives me the possibility of receiving a hundred times more than what I can give, and that makes me happy. I am happy to give talks about emotional intelligence in schools or for people at risk of social exclusion. Promoting, learning and disseminating positive psychology issues makes me happy. Helping people understand that things can change, but that they themselves are the change, to talk about goal-finding, empathy, motivation, putting tools at their fingertips, all of these things make me happy.

Q: What stops you from reaching your potential, from doing what you want to do in your life and what can you do to change this?

Pilar: Thankfully because of the country I live in, these moments only occur because of a lack of time on a day-to-day basis.

Q: How has being a woman affected your personal life and career?

Pilar: Being a woman has given me the possibility of being a mother. I imagine that having a family, especially when your children are small, slows down your career for a few years and it should not be like that. Women who combine family and work, we are better able to manage our time during the working day. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that women are guaranteed a place of work, that we make their work hours more flexible, etc.

Q: If you have children how has that affected your personal life and career?

Pilar: I have been lucky to be able to make it compatible, but I am aware that for many women it has not been, and nor is it like that nowadays.

Q: Have you had direct or indirect experiences of sexism, discrimination or violence because you are a woman? If so, what were they, what did you do about this and what would you do now looking back?

Pilar: It has not happened to me personally, but of course I know cases where women, in a job interview, have been asked whether they had young children or were thinking about having children. These types of questions seem completely discriminatory to me, men are not asked these questions.

Q: Do you feel that women's lives are better now or worse as compared to 15 years ago and in what ways?

Pilar: In my opinion there is much more that needs to be done to achieve an effective equality but certainly nothing comparable to the situation we were living in 15 years ago. Being in the European Union has helped to increase the educational level of women, and to improve their employability. Without culture and without work there can be no economic independence and consequently, without economic independence there is no freedom.

Q: What would you say to young women and men today about gender equality, human rights and diversity?

Pilar: To mobilize, as we all have to be the engine. The situation or environment they live in today is the consequence of what others before them have struggled to achieve, the welfare state and the rights we enjoy today were fought for by those

who have gone before. And so it is the turn of young men and women today, it is up to them to take action, to condemn and denounce actions that are a violation of people's rights. Being born in one place or another is accidental and cannot be the reason that justifies the absence of rights. Diversity is a form of wealth for people and enriches people's lives.

Q: What role do you think the arts can play in promoting human rights and gender equality?

Pilar: The arts are about emotions and we can learn from our emotions. All movements are always accompanied by hymns that can bring identity to a group, the music, the lyrics of the songs influence us. But where we find a powerful tool for visibility is in the theatre. There you have the possibility of being a spectator and watching for example 'a dramatized situation of violence or inequality'. Watching the scene and being emotionally engaged can help us to understand what people are feeling when they experience these situations. Having an understanding of what is happening by watching from the outside can help us to see or understand what is inside.



Mary Elmes (1908-2002)



Ettie Steinberg (1914-42)



Marta Hillers (1911-2001)



Dolores Ibárruri, or La Pasionaria (1895-1989)

Women of WWII





MERCEDES ACITORES

Biography

Mercedes Acitores has a degree in law, an MA in European policy and has worked in the area of European affairs. Mercedes was born in the USA on the 18 January 1971. Her Spanish parents had settled in the city of Los Angeles to experience the 'American way of life' in the early 1960's. After several years in the United States, her parents decided to come back to Spain where Mercedes was brought up. From an early age, Mercedes travelled backwards and forwards on a regular basis to the US and the UK, and her contact with people from different countries influenced her decision to study European Affairs during her University years. Once in Spain, Mercedes would spend time with her maternal grandmother and listen on a daily basis to stories of family life in post-war Spain. Many husbands, fathers and brothers died during and after the Spanish War, very often leading to grandmothers and female members of families coming together to help each other to raise their children. These stories were full of anecdotes about women's solidarity and strength. None of the women were aware of how brave they were, none of them wanted recognition as they felt it was their duty. One of these women was Mercedes' mother, Manuela who, since a very young age, had to help bring up her brother and sister.

While Mercedes was living in the US, she was cared for by an aunt, her father's sister Marcy who had a very interesting life that amazed Mercedes. Marcy left Spain in the early 1930's with her American husband and travelled all around the world. Once she became a widow she came back to Spain and by then, Franco was in power. Because of the circumstances in Spain, Marcy decided to accept an invitation from her husband's family to leave Spain and to go and live in California. There she married again and had a son. She was a free and independent woman, well ahead of her time.

In comparison to other homes during the 1980's in Spain, Mercedes used to see her father sewing and doing the grocery shopping. In her family, there was equal and full respect between her parents and these values of equality were passed on to Mercedes by both her parents. Both parents always encouraged Mercedes to give her own opinion and to make her own decisions.

Mercedes has worked for seventeen years in the area of European affairs and has devoted four of those years to the promotion of equal opportunities between women and men, coordinating an Equal Initiative project. During this period, she took advantage of the professional opportunities available to her to put into practice all the awareness she had obtained from her childhood and youth. For the past 10 years she is working in the area of European Cooperation.



Question: Tell us a little about yourself?

Mercedes: I was born in the United States and at a young age I came to Valencia, where I was brought up. Here I got my degree in Law. Since I was very little I wanted to work in an International atmosphere, so I did my MA in European Policies. I have been working in the field of European funds all my life. Because of my work with different organisations I have seen many changes that have taken place in European policies and institutions. Since 2008, I have worked in the area of European Cooperation. I can say I am a European believer. I would like to highlight my experience coordinating an equality project for four years. Working in this area was a challenging task for many reasons but was also very rewarding. During this period, I started to become aware of women's inequality, including inequality that can exist in a very subtle way in today's society and is very harmful. After working on this project I can proudly confirm that I am a feminist.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Mercedes: I came to Spain at a very young age and I grew up here. My childhood was full of trips, back and forward to the US and the UK. I realised I loved travelling and knowing people from different countries. I also used to spend long periods of time with my grandmother, who lived in Madrid. She often told us stories about Madrid and her life as a widow woman during the post-civil war. In spite of the difficulty of her situation, she always kept a positive attitude. She was very brave. I enjoyed my youth very much, it was the end of the Movida (a socio-cultural movement that took place during the Spanish transition after Francisco Franco's death in 1975) and a sense of freedom as well as creativity was in the air. I have great memories from this period. By then, Spanish women were again starting to stand out and I was not aware of possible inequalities between men and women. Nonetheless, a large majority of Spain remained very traditional towards women particularly in relation to

a woman's private life. It was different for me with regard to my professional work as I was very motivated and I was encouraged to be economically independent and to have my own say and opinion.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU?

Mercedes: Spain joined the EU in 1986, during the Spanish Transition, after Franco's death. I am not sure if the life of Spanish women changed because of Europe or because of the new Spanish political situation. They were key times in Spain. In essence, Spanish social values and attitudes were modernized little by little. However, Spain still was, to a higher degree, very traditional and the roles between women and men in daily life were very conservative. It wasn't until Spain was part of the EU that a lot of legal changes started to happen. In 1988 the first Equality Plan was adopted in Spain, in 1989 violence against spouses was penalized and birth control was promoted, in 1992 maternity leave was provided and breast feeding was supported. Equal opportunities policies were developed in Spain from 2005 to 2015. During this period, the Gender Equality Act and other key strategies for equality between women and men were adopted. But despite all these achievements, from a practical perspective, the mind-set of women and men still needed to be changed and this only could be done through education. From a personal point of view, I was 15 years old when we became part of the EU. As I have stated before, I have always worked within a European context. My career and my life is based on being European. I believe we are much better together than on our own. There are many things that can still be improved such as having a stronger connection between the European institutions and the people of Europe and Europe's achievements need to be better communicated to its citizens.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Mercedes: I want a more social and caring Europe. The EU should be more accountable and responsible when it comes to the promotion of women's rights and gender equality and more incisive and committed when fighting against violence. This is one of my main concerns. I believe that this type of work and effort should be implemented through education and public awareness campaigns. These are the best tools to stimulate people's mind-set towards a more democratic and equal society. Young men and women should learn to understand that our world would be better off by respecting and caring for women, men, children and nature. Talking about laws, any directive that could improve the respect of human and social rights in Europe is always welcome.

Q: How do you think citizens can influence EU public policy in relation to promoting gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Mercedes: I believe we need to go back in history and

to remember and look at the original pillars of the EU. Unfortunately Europe has changed a number of its main goals. There needs to be more focus on promoting solidarity and social issues. Citizens could be more demanding. At the end of the day, we citizens vote for and elect the politicians who will decide how our countries will be run for the next several years. We have to be aware of this and remember the power we have. This is what democracy is about, isn't it? Currently, the rate of voting is not as strong as it was several years ago. People are not as interested in political parties as in the themes that affect them daily. In this context social activism is becoming more and more important as a way to influence public policy.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Mercedes: It is natural, I am a woman, I like it and I am proud of it. Often in our society, especially in our professional lives we have the tendency to behave with an attitude of manliness. Both men and women should try to conduct themselves in a way that has more womanly qualities such as solidarity, peacefulness, empathy, strength, creativeness and to be more communicative. I think the world would be much better. Woman means more than being a mum, as a matter of fact. I don't have children. In this sense, please allow me to express that even in our 'open minded' society, there are certain environments where both women and men judge this option. Some criticise my 'selfish' attitude and others pity me for my situation.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Mercedes: Feminism, in my opinion, should be natural to all people. I think there is a big misunderstanding in relation to what feminism is. According to the Cambridge dictionary, feminism is the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and should be treated in the same way, or it can refer to the set of activities intended to achieve this state. Who couldn't be a feminist? Being feminist does not mean going against men or disliking them. On the contrary, it is walking together to build a better society.

Q: 'Equality is not just about having women but about having feminist women in decision making roles.' What do you think about that statement?

Mercedes: I totally agree with this statement. In my opinion it is about having women in decision making roles able to take decision and apply them through womanly attitudes and qualities.

Q: What makes you happy?

Mercedes: Solidarity, empathy and human understanding. Being with my beloved. A smile. Friends. The sun in my face. Watching my cat. Dancing. Walking in nature. Endless discussions about life. A good piece of theatre or a film. What makes me unhappy: abuse, chauvinism and injustice.



Q: What stops you from reaching your potential, from doing what you want to do in your life and what can you do to change this?

Mercedes: To be honest nothing about being a woman has stopped me. It is more related to the availability of lifelong education and training possibilities. I am 46 years old and I would like to go back to University and increase my knowledge on certain concepts in order to be ready for labour changes. I think the labour market is changing a lot and jobs are not conceived the same way as they used to be, even within public administrations.

Q: How has being a woman affected your personal life and career?

Mercedes: In the first instance, I would say that I am not aware if being a woman had affected my life and career but thinking about it more, I would say yes, in a very subtle way. From a personal perspective, people make comments about me living a daring life, being divorced and not having children. I work in an organisation where women are highly represented in terms of staff, however, I think that our organisation could be more womanly in its behaviour and not driven by manly attitudes.

Q: Have you had direct or indirect experiences of sexism, discrimination or violence because you are a woman? If so, what were they, what did you do about this and what would you do now looking back?

Mercedes: I have not experienced sexism or discrimination when applying for a job or talking about salary, since I always worked in public administration. Nonetheless, there are always some kind of comments and jokes that I would consider sexist and they are never made about men. They are very subtle but still show that equal treatment is not 100% achieved. In these cases, I try to make them understand that I feel upset with the comment. I have to say that many times I have seen women who justify male chauvinism, and that confuses me a little. Again, I think that education and gender equality modules should be standard in schools.

Q: Do you feel that women's lives are better now or worse as compared to 15 years ago and in what ways?

Mercedes: Yes, for sure from a legal point of view. Since 2006 very important laws have been approved in Europe that apply the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the context of self-employed activity, in parental leave and in matters of employment and occupation. This gives legal guarantee to all citizens, men and women, which is already a first step. From a daily and sociological perspective, things are changing only little by little but every step is important.

Q: What would you say to young women and men today about gender equality, human rights and diversity?

Mercedes: Grow in your own self-esteem. They need to know that they are unique and valuable as they are, being carried away by others doesn't mean being accepted and respected, on the contrary. Show respect and acceptance if you want to be respected and accepted. In this context, teaching the correct patterns of behaviour is very important. Read, travel and learn, this way you will be more aware of differences and you will be able to understand them, accept them and respect them. Diversity is only understood and assimilated from education.

Q: What role do you think the arts can play in promoting human rights and gender equality? And any other comments you would like to make?

Mercedes: Art is a means of human expression, you can go further and have more depth, you can communicate through art what is difficult to do with words. Art allows us to reach nuances that we might otherwise not be able to reach and in doing so, this can raise awareness for different kinds of people. Though theatre, opera, performances, concerts and graffiti, you not only get people's attention but you can also break with traditional stereotypes and beliefs, sometimes even under a great provocation. Questioning our behaviour is a way to start. I remember seeing several pieces at the Avignon Theatre Festival that I will never forget.



YOLANDA TRUJILLO

Biography

Yolanda Trujillo has a background in politics, being involved in the Social Democratic Party (PSOE) in Spain, as well as in student representation, being a part of the European Students' Union, first as a Spanish representative and now as a member of the executive committee.

She has worked in the Aerospace field, where she did a research internship in the European Space Agency in Cologne, Germany. She is currently completing her senior year of an Aerospace Bachelor's degree in the Polytechnic University of Valencia. This year she will be based in Córdoba in Spain, as she has received a grant for an artistic residency to write a novel in the Fundación Antonio Gala with other young writers and painters.

Yolanda has worked on a range of different projects in Belgium, Germany, France, French Guiana, Morocco, Finland, Slovakia and Poland. Her main interests are European politics, history, aeronautics and writing.

Question: Tell us a little about yourself?

Yolanda: Well, I do a little of everything. I started out studying aerospace engineering, I was a student representative at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, then I participated in the coordination of student representatives for public universities at national level, and now I am a student representative at European level. I joined the Socialist Youth of Valencia at the age of 14 and at present I am responsible for the European area. I have enjoyed a grant from the European Space Agency. I have four subjects left to finish in my degree, but I have decided to take a break and, given my love of writing, I have decided to write a book. I have been awarded a grant from the Antonio Gala Foundation for creative young people. We are six writers and six painters, who are living together in a house in Córdoba and receiving visits from well-known artists to share their experiences with us. It is very exciting.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain.

Yolanda: One of the aspects that has most attracted my attention is the educational issue. I interact with other students from countries that do not belong to the European Union. I belong to the Bologna generation and that makes it easier for me to work in any EU country without the need to process anything, work permits or visas which other students from countries outside the EU have to do. For me that mobility is extremely important and I have the feeling of being a European citizen.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU?

Yolanda: Since I was little I wanted to be an aerospace engineer, it was my great dream. And when I had the opportunity to submit to a research contest, I did not think twice. I got a scholarship to work in the European Space Agency in Germany which was a great experience, very interesting and positive.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy.

Yolanda: My concept of Europe is federalist. I believe that there should be an Equality Law at a European level, just as there is in Spain. Mainly because, although the culture and the sensitivities are different depending on the country, agreements could be reached on common points, independent of political ideology. That is to say, a social policy should be agreed at a European level.

Q: How do you think citizens can influence EU public policy in relation to promoting gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Yolanda: To have education from childhood in relation to the European Union, to have information on the European Union included on school syllabuses, what it is, what it is for, how it is structured and what are its governing bodies. As a student representative of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, I applied for merchandising to the European Commission and they sent it to the University without any problem. We developed a series

of training workshops to explain to the people when the last European Parliament elections were called and everyone showed great interest, although it was quite a surprise. It does not make any sense that there is a European body and people do not know what it is worth. That is why it is essential to inform citizens, but not only online, all available channels must be used, especially considering the high percentage of elderly people that do not have the same ease of access to new technologies that young people have. And this work needs to happen in all languages, not just English, as language can constitute a barrier in itself. There should be national awareness raising campaigns, promoted by each country in their own language and reaching all areas of each country. I have never understood why there are no EU announcements on television.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Yolanda: Being a woman is hard to describe. As I have told you before, I consider myself a citizen of the world.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Yolanda: For me, feminism is equality, it is the consideration that we are all human beings, living on the same planet and with the same rights. What should not be confused is equality with equity. That is, to reach the same destination some people need more than others and the important thing is that you all have the same opportunities to get there. That, for example, is what the zipper system represents in politics, so that women can reach positions they would not reach if there were no such thing as positive discrimination. (The zipper system imposes a gender quota, mandating political parties to alternate female and male candidates on candidate lists). Because of the education we have received we are all indoctrinated into a macho culture and that has to change.

Q: 'Equality is not just about having women but about having feminist women in decision making roles.' What do you think about that statement?

Yolanda: In my point of view, any woman who arrives at a managerial position should want equality and should put it into practice. But it is also true that there are women who do not believe in quotas, nor in positive discrimination. However, not all women have enough capacity or character to overcome adversity, sexist comments, discriminatory attitudes, and the belittlement of women that can take place. Therefore, I do believe that a woman with power should be a feminist.

Q: What makes you happy?

Yolanda: Well, after having travelled and seen other cities, I have to admit that Valencia makes me happy. And especially the sun in Valencia.

Q: What stops you from reaching your potential, from doing what you want to do in your life and what can you do to change this?

Yolanda: I have never had problems or barriers, but it is part of my attitude towards life, to insist on something until I get it.

Q: How has being a woman affected your personal life and career?

Yolanda: Something that has happened to me on many occasions and which has always bothered me is having to report certain comments but when I report these comments, the issue is not taken seriously. And yet those comments said at a later stage by particular men have had greater repercussions. And I know that these kind of instances are not exclusive to Spain but happen in all other countries.

Q: Have you had direct or indirect experiences of sexism, discrimination or violence because you are a woman? If so, what were they, what did you do about this and what would you do now looking back?

Yolanda: In Spain, aerospace engineering has been closely linked to the military since it was set up and this creates an environment that has conservative thinking and that has made it a career traditionally 'for men'. That is not the case nowadays, but there are still many chauvinistic memories. I have not had any experience directly, but I know about some of my classmates who have gone through violent situations due to the fact that they are women. I do not understand those types of attitudes, but they are still more inexplicable coming from young people. Something is wrong.

Q: Do you feel that women's lives are better now or worse as compared to 15 years ago and in what ways?

Yolanda: I sincerely believe that their lives are better but not enough. That is, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Q: What would you say to young women and men today about gender equality, human rights and diversity?

Yolanda: I would say to young women and men today that it is very important to know the reality of what is happening and to be open minded. That it is important to travel and to meet other people in different environments, with other social realities. And to realise that our thinking is not always the best, and that the world is very big and diverse.

Q: What role do you think the arts can play in promoting human rights and gender equality?

Yolanda: Because I am immersed in the process of writing a book I now have more of a connection to the artistic world. I have realised that we have one of the best Faculties of Fine Arts in Europe, promoting culture and critical thinking. I believe that culture is the basis of everything, of human rights, gender equality and many other things.



LOURDES MIRON

Biography

Lourdes Miron was born in Elche in Alicante, 39 years ago, but has lived in Valencia for 20 years. She graduated in Social Education from the University of Valencia and her professional career has focused on the management of non-profit organizations, and the promotion of social innovation and communication.

She is currently manager and the President of Jovesolides, a non-profit organization based in the neighbourhood of 'La Coma'. In addition to the role of President and General Director of Jovesolides, she dedicates herself to issues related to development and organizational building such as strategic planning, fundraising, transparency and accountability, economic and financial management, human resources management and especially communications.

She is also currently a student of journalism. She has a strong interest in communication skills and aims to apply her knowledge of communications with a range of organizations within the third sector that she has collaborated or worked with. She sees journalism as a powerful tool for social advocacy and periodically publishes reflections and articles on various topics in her personal blog www.ahoravuelvo.me.

Q: Tell us a little about yourself?

Lourdes: I was born in 1978, the year the Spanish Constitution was approved. I am a social educator and have practically dedicated my entire professional career to the NGO sector, either working or through volunteering. Working in NGOs is something that I am passionate about. I work on issues of youth, inclusion, women, development for cooperation and social entrepreneurship. I have recently started to study journalism, as a hobby, since I am also concerned about issues related to communication.

Q: Talk about your experiences as a woman growing up and living in Spain?

Lourdes: I work in an NGO (Jovesolides) that participates in European projects. This has allowed me to travel and make contact with people from other countries and other cultures, which has enriched me greatly. I was involved in a project called La Coma University College, in which I had the opportunity to live with people of more than 30 different nationalities, and this allowed me to verify that we are all very similar and it played a part in eliminating existing prejudices. That experience marked me a lot.

Q: Tell us a positive story of change you have experienced as a woman that has happened to you as a result of belonging to or living in the EU? If your country is not in the EU what positive changes will you see for women as a result of belonging to the EU?

Lourdes: Within the European Volunteering program we have welcomed fifteen volunteers from different European countries, who are doing a great job and this has allowed us to get to know their different cultures. This type of European program opens your mind, they are very interesting. And as a woman, I would also highlight the programs on social inclusion in which we participate. In other words, my assessment of belonging to the European Union is very positive.

Q: What kind of Europe do you want for the future in relation to gender equality, human rights and democracy. For example, what can the EU do to promote gender equality and human rights, are there any laws you want to see in place?

Lourdes: On gender issues, Europe must guarantee at least equal access for women, including quotas within institutions. It is the 'zero point', the starting point. Regarding human rights, my opinion is very negative. Thousands of people are dying in the Mediterranean and Europe is not doing enough. It should guarantee the right of asylum seekers and refugees. As for democracy, it is absolutely essential to guarantee freedom of expression, which has been decreasing and that makes democracy suffer a lot.

Q: How do you think citizens can influence EU public policy in relation to promoting gender equality, human rights and democracy?

Lourdes: Citizens have different instruments that they can use. Organised civil society can achieve things without necessarily thinking of big objectives. For example, we recently just managed to change the Law of Cooperation.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you and what does feminism mean to you?

Lourdes: Both concepts are closely linked. I do not consider myself a very feminist person, I am rather a low intensity feminist. Feminism is built day by day, in small parts of your life. If you can take a more active stance on things, so much the better. In my organization, until nine years ago, the vast majority of people in positions of representation or power were men. Then I decided to take a step forward and I managed to assume a position of representation, to value and promote the role of women in the organization.

Q: 'Equality is not just about having women but about having feminist women in decision making roles.' What do you think about that statement?

Lourdes: As I have told you before, in many organizations there are positions of power that are hoarded by men and these positions of power are not made available or released in any way. In those cases, we women have to assert ourselves. You have to give women an equal voice. In that sense, I agree with the phrase.

Q: What makes you happy?

Lourdes: It makes me happy to be with my family. And also the feeling that my work has served a purpose. To realise that what I do serves people is very satisfying.

Q: What stops you from reaching your potential, from doing what you want to do in your life and what can you do to change this?

Lourdes: The truth is that I cannot point out anything in this regard. I'm satisfied. But I know that there are many barriers and that many women suffer because of them every day. But that is not the case in my situation.

Q: How has being a woman affected your personal life and career?

Lourdes: Here also, I don't have anything to point out. Apart from a few incidents, it has not affected me at all to be a woman. Maybe the fact that as a woman I had to fight more than if I had been a man to get certain things.

Q: Have you had direct or indirect experiences of sexism, discrimination or violence because you are a woman? If so, what were they, what did you do about this and what would you do now looking back?

Lourdes: Not directly, but indirectly. Recently a colleague of the neighbourhood association of La Coma, who was qualified, hardworking and highly regarded by all, she was elected to the second highest position on the board, but after further internal voting, she was shifted from the post of vice because a man wanted to occupy that position. She did not want to cause any problems and she accepted it. This unfair and sexist situation bothered me a lot. That is not the right attitude or the solution. I reported the case, but to no avail.

Q: Do you feel that women's lives are better now or worse as compared to 15 years ago and in what ways?

Lourdes: I believe that women are worse now, because the crisis has created a more precarious work situation and women have suffered more because of this. In addition, gender violence is increasing, and especially in young people, which is something that I do not understand. Therefore, although many things have been achieved, the balance is negative.

Q: What would you say to young women and men today about gender equality, human rights and diversity?

Lourdes: That we must fight to maintain all the gains achieved so far. That has not been easy at all. You have to do pedagogical work. Historical memory is very important.

Q: What role do you think the arts can play in promoting human rights and gender equality?

Lourdes: We live in a time when communication is central in so many different ways. Visual language is very direct and has a lot of strength and impact, more than any other type of action. Art is a very powerful tool. In addition, combining the world of artists with the world of activism, provides a very different vision for society, I think it's great. Here in Jovesolides, everything we do is for social promotion, some methodologies that we use in the classroom have a creative and therefore artistic component.



Women in an Equal Europe

INTERVIEWS
FROM CROATIA
CONDUCTED BY
YOUTH PEACE
GROUP DANUBE,
VUKOVAR,
CROATIA

Natasa Milankovic // Milena Babic // Senka Nedeljkovic
Tatjana Romic // Biljana Gaca



NATASA MILANKOVIC

Biography

Natasa was born in 1983 in Vukovar, Croatia. She finished a Master degree in Pedagogy in 2011. Natasa was a member of Youth Peace Group Danube (YPGD) where she was active in the promotion of reconciliation between young Serbs and Croats through organising workshops, various art activities and hosting lectures. From 2012 to 2013 she was a European Voluntary Service mentor (EVS) for the Youth Peace Group Danube EVS volunteers programme which involved the provision of assistance to volunteers in order to help them adapt to new surroundings and a different cultural environment. For many years Natasa worked in a primary school as a pedagogue where Natasa's main responsibilities were working with teachers in relation to developing organisational skills and assisting teachers in their teaching practice.

Natasa also worked with pupils assisting them in problem solving at school and with parents, counselling pupils in different areas such as what secondary school they should choose to go to, what to do if you are a victim of bullying, and guidance on what to do in relation to cases of depression, grief and anxiety. Natasa also worked conducting councils for pupils and councils for parents and cooperating with different government institutions such as health institutions, social welfare institutions, employment offices and NGOs to improve schoolwork and to help teachers, pupils and parents. In 2015 Natasa moved to Dublin, Ireland and currently works at the Dublin Business School.

Q: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Natasa: I moved to Dublin in 2015. For the last couple of months, I have worked at the Dublin Business School. Before this period, I worked in Croatia as a pedagogue in a primary school and as a European Voluntary Service (EVS) mentor for EVS volunteers¹. My most successful period was working in primary schools. I was there to help and to provide assistance to teachers, pupils and parents. Furthermore, the greatest pleasure I have experienced was to be there for children, to guide them, counsel them and to offer support in every possible way. Moreover, the greatest pleasure of mine was to volunteer with the Youth Peace Group Danube, YPGD, and later to work as an EVS mentor. To feel that you are able to change something and that you are actually making change meant a lot.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Croatia, in relation to your practice and your work?

Natasa: Being a pedagogue in Croatia was not that difficult. I would say it was harder for men in that field. In most schools, women are employed as a pedagogue. The reason why that happens is something that needs more research. Anyway, to achieve or make progression in your career was hard and it is still harder for us women. If you take a look at the job positions in schools, principals of schools are most of the time men, then you have pedagogues in the hierarchy who are women. Somehow it is difficult to progress and to be in a top position.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU has had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Natasa: I do not think that the EU changed anything for women. Women are not in a satisfactory position, still. Our salaries are lower, compared to men's salaries, there are no women in managerial positions. In some part of Croatia, women still suffer domestic violence and they are not aware they can do something about that, that they have rights. The best thing the EU has brought is a freedom of movement. By that, I mean relocating to other parts of the world and spreading your horizons.

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting a change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Natasa: The EU should have more influence on other countries, on Croatia. It should pressure us as a country to develop laws about human rights. It is going to be hard for the EU to achieve this task. For example, if you take a look at our gay marriage legislation and the referendum about gay marriages which was passed as a ban on gay marriages². It should be clear that we are far away from preserving basic human rights.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Natasa: This is a very interesting question. I would say that art is freedom. Whoever has any bond with art should feel free in every possible way and should promote that freedom.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Natasa: I am proud to be a woman. It means that I want more, I can do more and I will do more, always.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Natasa: It means equality which is what it actually is. Nothing more.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Natasa: I am chasing something all the time, in this stage of my life. Happiness means to stop chasing and to live in the moment, to be satisfied with what we have, not to live in the future and to strive for something else constantly.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your potential, and what would you change about that?

Natasa: Since I moved to Dublin it takes time to settle in, to learn rules, legislations of another country. I need to develop my knowledge about matters which are important here. Furthermore, to gain experience in Third Level Education which is different, compared to Croatian education, and which is something I want to deal with in the future. Moving to another country is a big thing and brings a lot of new and different stuff which needs to be overcome. In my opinion, this is something that stops me from reaching my potential for now. Hence, obstacles which will be defeated.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Natasa: In Croatia, it is a custom to shake hands when you meet someone as it is in Ireland. I noticed something annoying and sexist in relation to this. Men shake hands only between each other, they never offer a hand to a woman with the intention of shaking hands. If they approach a group of people they shake hands with each other and skip women. I do not understand why this is happening.



Róisín McAtamney
as Margaret
Skinnider in *The
Woman is Present
Women's Stories
of WWII*

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having women in decision-making roles'.

Natasa: It should be like that; however, Croatia is still far away from that kind of motto. Politicians, laws, everything and everybody respects this slogan, but barely few are living it.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Natasa: I would not do anything differently. I am satisfied where am I going and who am I becoming. The advice that I would give the younger me is not to be shy. There is no barrier. Do not give up and try to accomplish whatever you set in front of yourself.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Natasa: You are unique, do not let anybody try to back you down or advise you there is something you cannot do. It is really important to believe in you and to provide help to others. Try to learn as much as you can, knowledge is a fortune. Travel, meet other cultures, countries, nationalities. Be tolerant and try not to judge.

1. The European Voluntary Service (EVS) forms part of ERASMUS+, a European Union programme that promotes the mobility of young people through international activities with a non-formal education dimension such as youth exchanges, voluntary services, youth initiatives and training of youth workers.

2. In December 2013, a constitutional referendum was held in Croatia defining matrimony as a union between a man and a woman. The referendum question was "Do you agree that marriage is matrimony between a man and a woman?". 34% voted against this statement and 65% voted for, and the referendum was passed, effectively creating a constitutional prohibition against same-sex marriage.



MILENA BABIC

Biography

Milena Babic, originally from Vukovar, Croatia, has been working in various domains of civil society for nearly 20 years. In 1991 she graduated in Technical Education at the Pedagogy Faculty of the Osijek University, Croatia to become a teacher of technical education. Working in elementary schools for several years, she discovered that being a teacher was not an ideal job for her. She wanted to do a more dynamic job. Deciding to leave her job, she joined the United Nations Civilian Police (UNCIVPOL) as an interpreter for the English language at the time of the peaceful reintegration of the eastern Slavonia into Croatia. Two years later she leaves UNCIVPOL and starts a different career path. She completed two years at the PRONI Centre of education for youth workers. It is here that she starts her journey within the area of civil society work.

Working with several international and local civil society organisations, she gained experience in various areas of civil society development and social inclusion work for marginalised groups. She then obtains an MA in Social Development practice with the London Metropolitan University and completes several practical and developmental courses, including courses at the Demo Academy of Volunteer Centre Osijek, in Croatia. For the past several years she is working in the domain of Roma integration, helping local and national stakeholders to contribute to the integration of the Roma community, Europe's largest national minority, into the societies of European countries, primarily in Croatia, but also in other countries where Roma people live in greater numbers.

Q: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Milena: I was born in a time, less turbulent than this in which we are living now, but yet an exciting time with humanity striving for technological progress and freedom of choice. I was born and raised in Vukovar, the former Yugoslavia, in the time between two wars, WWII and the civilian wars of the Yugoslavian territories. I was lucky to experience the feeling of blissful security and confidence in the greatness of the country that was my homeland. Then, one day, unimaginable things happened and I discovered that all that I believed in was no longer. The plans I had were also no longer and I was thrown into a completely new situation, into a completely new environment and I discovered that the country I considered to be mine was unrecognisable. I am marked by those events and that discovery like many other people who were unfortunate to experience war directly. I could not get back to the life I was living before; I could no longer be a school teacher. I had to do something else, more meaningful. I was brought, step by step, into civil society development and over the course of time I began working in various civic organisations. I joined CARE International and worked with that organisation for five years in Vukovar and in Zagreb. That enabled me to gain experience in various fields, including experience in capacity building for women's organisations. Now I am working in the area of Roma integration, with a particular focus on education of Roma. Gender mainstreaming is something that is important in this work – girls and women are important beneficiaries.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Croatia, in relation to your practice and your work?

Milena: I was born and raised in a part of the former Yugoslavia that gave myself and other young people a very strong sense or feeling of security in every aspect of life. In addition, this community was rather advanced in many areas among which was the perception of women. Women were the pillars of the families, but at the same time, a majority of women were employed. There were no particular restrictions with regards to what women could do. We did not think in terms of female restrictions related to education, employment and choices in life. It was up to the individual what choices they made. At least, that is the experience I lived through. Only later did I develop an awareness of the fact that women were being restricted more and more, that it was becoming much more difficult for example for women to find employment.

In the Yugoslavian system, women were usually employed long term and when they would decide to have children, it was not a problem. They would get maternity leave for one year and return to work without fear of losing their jobs. Today, women can find employment and then fear that their contracts will be terminated if they decide to have children. I started noticing injustices. Violence against women was increasing, women were becoming more and more disadvantaged, their rights to make decisions about their lives and their bodies was being questioned more and more. There are parties who want to have control over

women and their decisions. I was working on strengthening the capacities of a range of women's organisations. Through my work I wanted to empower any woman I saw in need of empowerment. Helping women to become aware of their own value became important to me and still is.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU has had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Milena: I do not have such an example or a story to share. I do not think that the position of women is improving in my country. In fact, quite the opposite.

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Milena: Perhaps there could be a role that the EU can play in supporting change in relation to gender equality and human rights, but at this moment I cannot say what that role could be. The EU is not a homogenous part of the world as such. It is diverse and each country has its own ways and approaches to human rights and gender equality. If you look at, for instance, the migration crises, you can see that each country has had its own approach and solution. Sometimes not so nice to see. We should be realistic about that.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Milena: The arts are powerful tools that can have a strong influence, positive or negative, depending on how they are used. We see different kinds of arts influencing the minds of people, especially young people, sometimes in a negative sexist way. We should be careful in relation to the type of art and images we allow into our lives. Music in particular can be very influential, as it directly affects the brain and when accompanied by words, it can have a subliminal influence. The positive influence of the arts should be utilised in kindergartens to develop positive feelings and values of the younger generations. Beautiful images, positive words, and music that evokes positive feelings, that is what young people should be exposed to if we want to develop positive mind sets and positive attitudes towards each other, and towards equality and diversity.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Milena: Being a woman is challenging. It always has been challenging in different ways throughout history. Women faced so many difficulties throughout the history of humanity. Whenever men would play war, women and their children would be the first victims – of rape, of slaughter, of slavery. Whenever men decided that they would have enough of family troubles and leave, women would stay and provide. Men were traveling the world, women were waiting, sometimes for years. Women were sold, sacrificed, used

for ensuring political power. There were rare civilisations in which women were equal. In order to survive, women had to develop skills which would help them stay alive, they had to be resilient, yet soft, patient, wise, sometimes cunning. They needed to develop intuition. I grew up in an environment in which developing such skills was not so necessary for survival. In some societies women are still struggling to survive. Oppression of women is re-emerging and we will have to gain new skills to survive in the world. Otherwise, being a woman is wonderful and difficult at the same time.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Milena: I love feminism. It is often wrongly understood, though, both by women who consider themselves feminists and women who don't consider themselves feminist. Many of those who belong to the first group are fierce and tough, they want women to overpower men and to be on top and ruling. Women that belong to the other group usually very loudly say that they are not feminists and will deny any connection with that 'disgusting group of men-like women'. A century, century and a half ago some women had to be strong and loud in order to be heard. The first feminists suffered a lot in order to achieve simple things which many of us today take for granted. Women were not allowed to vote, to inherit property, to choose a profession – it was a restricting life. The situation is different for women now. We do not need to enslave men in order to achieve better conditions for women.

In my opinion, every woman who wants a good life for other women is a feminist. Feminism is actually a belief that women should live a dignified life, be treated with respect, be supported and encouraged to face life with grace, be taught to accept and love themselves. I think of myself as a feminist and I am always proud to say that. I want the best of everything for women, but in a way which will include men, not exclude them. Such women who have experienced betterment, will raise better sons, but also empowered daughters.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Milena: Happiness is very important if you want to live a good life. When I was younger, I thought that sadness, sacrifice, pain, and sorrow were sublime ideals. The more pain and sorrow, the more a person lived a noble life, that was what I believed. We grew up on literature that depicted the misery of a human being. Romanticism was based on suffering. Russian classics provided a wide range of characters who were suffering and it seemed a natural human existence. Love stories could only be good if they emanated from a great deal of heartbreak and pain. Music was full of unhappy lyrics; sad notes were so much more appealing. Who would want to live a happy life story? It seemed to be so mundane. Over time I have learned that heartbreak, sorrow and misery are overrated. A happy, blissful life is what we have to strive to achieve. We should teach children how to be happy and how to live happy and healthy lives, to respect and support themselves firstly with love, and out of the root of their own happiness, to then respect and love other people as well. Families should be the first place where children learn

happiness and also schools. Institutions that preach about Gods should be places where children and adults learn about kindness and how to live good and happy lives. Alas, those are often the last places to spread that type of knowledge. What makes me happy is peace of mind, being confident that I have done something good and useful in a day, interacting with people I love, flowers in my garden, the smell of roses, lavenders and sage... small things. It might sound like a cliché, but it is often the small things that make us happy.

Also, when we attach our happiness to other people, it never makes us happy. Other people come and go, other people have their own needs and interests. They are not responsible for our happiness. It is only us who are responsible for our own wellbeing. So, people should laugh more, forgive more, and let go more often. It is a reminder to myself as well.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your potential, and what would you change about that?

Milena: Only I stop myself from reaching my potential. We are always our own biggest obstacle in life. It is not that we are guilty and to be blamed. In many cases we were raised that way. From early childhood we learn that we need to comply to the environment. We are taught to be modest, not to brag about ourselves, we learn to fear things, we learn to restrain ourselves from many things. Sometimes it is a cultural thing. Some societies are generally more pessimistic than others. I have spent many years restraining myself, trying to talk less, trying to become less visible, trying not to be in the way of other people, believing that I am simply not good enough and that other people are much better, more capable, more deserving. That is what stopped me in many occasions. I am changing that in my life. I understand that I am responsible for what is created in my life and I am taking that responsibility. I take one step after another, learning to give more love to myself, to praise myself for good things that I do, not to blame myself when I make a mistake. There is a little neglected child in each of us and we should pay attention to that little girl or boy, the relationship with her/him is the most important relationship in our lives. When that relationship is good, when the little child within is happy and supported by us, all obstacles are easy to overcome. That is what I am changing.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Milena: Yes, but it did not really affect me. I do not really care about male domination. I shall stop here.

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having women in decision-making roles'.

Milena: Feminist women in decision-making roles can also very quickly adopt the same behaviour of men. Therefore, it depends on the quality of feminism that those feminists

promote. As I said before, any woman who has the wellbeing of all women at heart is a feminist. Women in decision-making roles should think of what is beneficial for women and at the same time not forget what is beneficial for all. You cannot have a real, healthy equality for women by oppressing or excluding men. It never works if it is one-sided. A one-sided approach produces resistance. Again, it all comes from our early years. Children should be taught to understand each other, meaning boys and girls should from early childhood be taught to respect and support each other. Girls should be taught to develop healthy self-respect. When you have girls who within themselves have a healthy feeling of self-worth and self-respect, those girls do not accept disrespectful approaches or behaviours from boys, or later on, men. That changes the entire energy between two people of the opposite sex. There is the root of the balance that is needed, not in a forceful demand for power. That is how I see things. However, we should do lots of work on awareness raising and expanding minds in order to achieve that.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Milena: I would do many things differently. I would advise my younger self not to worry too much, in the first place. Worrying vacuums up lots of energy and the life force from a person. It makes you see the world in grey shades. One misses so many good things in life when worried. I would advise myself to laugh more, not to obsess about small things, not to feel embarrassed or apologetic for being around. Self-love and self-acceptance are crucial.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Milena: Can you give them any advice hoping that they would really take it and do something useful with that? Well, maybe I would advise them to turn away from the models promoted by mass media. Mass media increases tolerance to violence and sexism and all sorts of other deviant behaviours. It also decreases the sense of respect towards other people and the opposite sex. Turn away from the screen and look around yourselves. You will see human beings, similar to you, with worries and concerns, sometimes desperate for understanding and support. Empathy and kindness can heal many wounds and you can help that. Start with yourself.

A FILM BY MARY MOYNIHAN, SMASHING TIMES THEATRE AND FILM COMPANY



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ELLA
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MARY
MOYNIHAN

TELL THEM OUR NAMES

CREATIVE REIMAGINING OF MOMENTS FROM THE LIVES OF **FIVE POWERFUL WOMEN DURING WWII**



DIRECTED BY MARY MOYNIHAN SCRIPT BY PAUL KENNEDY, MARY MOYNIHAN AND FIONA BAWN THOMPSON FROM
A DEVISING PROCESS WITH THE CAST EDITOR MARK QUINN LIGHTING CAMERA KEN O'MAHONY AND MATT KIRRANE
PRODUCED BY SMASHING TIMES THEATRE AND FILM COMPANY IN ASSOCIATION WITH HIGH WIRE LTD. WWW.SMASHINGTIMES.IE





SENKA NEDELJKOVIC

Biography

By profession Senka is a journalist and she has worked at a local radio station for twenty years. Throughout her years working as a journalist, Senka has done various projects and shows. Senka played a significant role in the period of reintegration of Eastern Croatia after the war, and was leading and editing numerous shows on reconciliation, human rights and the promotion of democracy.

Q: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Senka: I am a journalist and I work at a local radio station for more than twenty years. Throughout all these years, I have done various projects and shows. I played a significant role in the period of reintegration of eastern Croatia after the war, and I was leading and editing numerous shows on reconciliation, human rights and the promotion of democracy.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Croatia, in relation to your practice and your work?

Senka: I grew up in a small community, and I also worked in that small community and there was often prejudices against women, in relation to their success, abilities etc.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU has had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Senka: Many women have the possibility of employment in one of the other EU countries, which in some ways improves the experiences of women. There are also a number of projects for women in the community that can assist in promoting women's rights and in promoting education.

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting a change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Senka: The EU should work much more on improving gender equality and human rights through the implementation of various programs that can potentially raise awareness of the issues and offer possible solutions.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Senka: The arts are great. Through the use of creativity, people recognise differences, accept them and know how to use them in a positive sense, not in a destructive way.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Senka: An Equal person in the community, successful, with attitude and a career.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Senka: Stimulating 'women's' issues and protecting women by having an equal approach, but there is no thesis that says feminists should not have lunch!

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Senka: Health and peace.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Senka: I never had that kind of experience.

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having women in decision-making roles'.

Senka: In theory, it should be like that, but in practice... I don't know.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Senka: There is always a reflection on the past. If you are absolutely satisfied with everything from the past, you definitely have not made any progress. Every mature person tries to correct their actions from the past, and therefore I believe that in our mature years, we can often say that something could have been done differently.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Senka: Take it from yourself. Consider what rights you need and you should fight for them and fight for yourself.



Smashing Times Street Performance



TATJANA ROMIĆ

Biography

Tatjana was born in 1990 in Vukovar, Croatia. She finished a Master degree in Social Work in October 2017. Tatjana has completed one year's work experience as a social worker with people with intellectual disabilities. Through her education she has gained competences in the field of social work, prevention programmes, working with parents and children with disabilities and working with institutions related to social work. Since April 2017, Tatjana works in the Youth Peace Group Danube, YPGD, in Vukovar, Croatia as a head of the Youth club and as a European Voluntary Service coordinator.

Question: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Tatjana: I work at YPGD as a head of a Youth club which is for young people who want to spend their free time in a creative way. We organise sport events, social evenings, creative workshops and intercultural evenings and we promote EVS programmes and opportunities for young people in our local community. I started working here in April 2017. Since YPGD are a sending and hosting organisation for EVS volunteers, this summer we received 11 volunteers on our games project for children and youth and it was my first time working as a coordinator of volunteers. For me it was an interesting experience. Recently, I was engaged in finishing my Master's degree in social work, writing a thesis titled *Women's position in the Croatian labour market*. I'm also a researcher for a project about children's safety on the internet run by European House Vukovar, a citizen organization in Vukovar, and an advisory volunteer in an organisation of foster parents in Vukovar.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Croatia, in relation to your practice and your work?

Tatjana: It was not hard growing up as a woman in Croatia. I never had problems regarding that, but I'm well aware that some female children, and female youth and adults in Croatia are having these problems. They are discriminated against on multiple bases, they are facing the 'glass ceiling' in companies where they work, they are underpaid and they are not receiving equal payment for the work they do, on an equal basis to men.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU has had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Tatjana: I don't think the European Union is doing much for women's positions. For example, they should speed up the process of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in every country that has signed it. The Istanbul Convention is a Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. We have high rates of domestic violence against women and it's rising every year. The European Commission has strategies for gender equality and equal employment for men and women but they are missing some concrete steps to achieve them.

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting a change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Tatjana: The EU should have a stronger influence on countries and on Croatia. They should pressure us into implementing certain laws, and to change those ones which are bad. We saw the suggested proposal for a new Family law which was a scandal in our country¹. These types of laws should be brought forward by experts and not by some conservative right sided organisation and the Catholic church.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Tatjana: I could say art can promote human rights, gender equality and democracy very well.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Tatjana: It means I can do everything I imagine and make the changes I want.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Tatjana: It means equality between man and women and fighting for it. We should all do that.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Tatjana: Happiness means enjoying everything in the moment and being grateful for what you have.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your potential, and what would you change about that?

Tatjana: I think laws in my country and bad government are stopping me from reaching my full potential because people here are hired not because of their competences but because they are members of specific political parties. And

that's the main problem, because of that we have such a high unemployment rate in Croatia.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Tatjana: No, I didn't have such problems.

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having women in decision-making roles'.

Tatjana: I agree with that statement but unfortunately, we still can't discuss nor do we have full equality and full participation of women in the labour market.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Tatjana: I would tell her not to be afraid to get out of her comfort zone.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Tatjana: As individuals you can make or do something every day as a step toward gender equality.

1. A draft proposal for a new law defining a 'family' that was proposed by Croatia's centre right government in September 2017 but then withdraw after civil society protests.





BILJANA GAĆA

Biography

Biljana was born in 1990 in Vukovar, Croatia. In 1991, when Biljana was one year old, her parents escaped from the ruined city because of the war taking place. Overnight she became a refugee. In exile, she enrolled in elementary school where she finished the first three years of primary education. She returned from exile to Vukovar, together with her family, in 2000 where she continued with her education. Upon completion of her education in Vukovar, she enrolled in the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb and gained the title of Master of Political Science. She is very active at local level as a politician, but also as a volunteer in numerous non-governmental organizations in Croatia and is involved in numerous activities on reconciliation and multiculturalism. Biljana currently holds the duty of city councillor of the City of Vukovar.

Question: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Biljana: I am a long-time volunteer and activist in various associations, especially in the area of work with children and youth, and in education policies, human rights protection, gender equality, advocacy of peace policies, migrants and other socially engaged activities. I am also the winner of the 'best Volunteer in 2015' prize in the category of the Youth of Volunteer Centre Vukovar. I have completed the first level of a course in oratory and education for cross-border cooperation, and I have been conducting public performance training and talking about education on volunteering, activism and human rights. Currently I hold the second mandate as a councillor at the City Council of the City of Vukovar and I am a recent chairperson of the SDP Croatian Youth Forum. I have recently been elected as the President of the Youth Forum of the Croatian Social Democratic Party, the largest political party of the Croatian centre-left.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your experiences growing up as a woman in Croatia, in relation to your practice and your work?

Biljana: Being a woman in Croatia and engaging in public affairs such as politics or some other form of public activity in Croatia is not easy. According to all data and relevant research, women that are doing the same job as their male colleagues in Croatia, with the same qualifications, are paid less. Unfortunately, we are following European trends, where the difference in salaries is 16%. As a woman in a profoundly patriarchal society like Croatia, I have to prove my knowledge and skills more than my colleagues have to, usually with them not taking me seriously and talking to me with expressions such as 'small', 'young lady' or 'lady'. These are clear values of appreciation and authority, and clear indicators of simplistic discrimination, which extend beyond discourse into practice.

Q: Out of that, do you have a story you could tell or what is your opinion on how the EU has had a positive effect for a woman living in this country?

Biljana: When Croatia joined the EU, things did not start to change by themselves. Changes in society must come from within that society and not be imposed from the outside. But certain pressures exerted by the EU in the form of a 'carrot and stick' have had a positive effect. In addition to declarations and opening up issues in relation to multiple forms of discrimination against women, and in relation to pay differentials, low political representation, labour exploitation of both men and women, there are also certain financial resources available in the form of incentives for positive discrimination including incentives for women entrepreneurs. These are the small steps, but are important. However, I still think that the European Union cannot change because at that level, there is a clear problem of women's discrimination that I have spoken about before.

Q: Today, what role do you think the EU can play in supporting change in relation to gender equality and human rights?

Biljana: I believe that the EU must be much clearer in combating

discrimination; especially in the private sector where salaries are often a 'business secret', enabling discrimination to be even greater. Then there is the sexist appearance and attitudes of public figures and politicians so it is necessary firstly for everybody to 'clean' up their own act, but it is certainly better for discrimination to be countered at a European as well as national level and for the EU to support less developed states.

Q: What role do you think the arts play in promoting human rights, gender equality, democracy, and diversity?

Biljana: Art can successfully promote human rights, gender equality, democracy and diversity, especially through the representation of different cultures, nations, beliefs, customs, etc. In addition, through the different types of art, it can present different types of discrimination and the fight against it. It can identify the problem, but also the solution. Art is a universal and creative way of expression - a language that has no barriers.

Q: What does being a woman mean to you?

Biljana: For me, being a woman in today's society is my responsibility and the responsibility of all men and women for future generations. We have a responsibility to fight for and raise awareness of the importance of equality and the prevention of discrimination. Women in the past have enabled our lives today, by campaigning for the right to be educated today, to have the right to vote and it is up to us to continue to work for equality, to be paid for the same work, but more importantly, in this struggle for equality and workers' rights, we go along with our colleagues. Because it is a universal battle.

Q: What does feminism mean to you?

Biljana: Feminism is a theory and practice. There are many types of feminism but definitely original feminism is a matter of class struggles and a struggle for human rights and gender equality. I consider myself a leftist and a feminist, and in my work, I try to support and connect with marginalised groups of women who are discriminated against on multiple levels, such as young Roma women, women that are doing the same job for a lower salary than men, women of other sexual orientations and religious affiliations, etc.

Q: What does happiness mean to you, and what makes you happy in your life?

Biljana: Happiness is one of the most important segments in life. Being happy and fulfilled is a goal that is tough and not easy to grasp, and even when you grasp it, due to the circumstances in which we live, it can disappear very quickly. Fortunately, we have to look for it all the time and I think we can experience full happiness if people around us are happy and satisfied. The feeling of happiness for me is not isolated, but it depends very much on my environment. Therefore, I am happy with the little things, and every help I give makes me very happy and fulfilled. I try to live an altruistic way of life because it fills me and makes me happy.

Q: What do you think stops you from reaching your potential, and what would you change about that?

Biljana: There are many circumstances that limit me in terms of reaching my potential. Even though it is a struggle and, although I still experience obstacles, and those obstacles are trying to stop my journey, I will not give up. I know that each of us has a purpose, and this is a fulfilment of personal potential, that is a form of self-actualization that we all need to strive for.

Q: In your career and your life, have you had any direct or indirect experiences with sexism or discrimination because of being a woman?

Biljana: Sexism indirectly affects women every day, through non-religious jokes, commercials, films, textbooks in schools, different literature, public performances, etc.

Q: What do you think of the following statement? 'Equality is not just about having equality for women, but about having women in decision-making roles'.

Biljana: Most of the time I agree with that sentence. In my opinion, it is necessary to work to ensure that men understand equality as an indispensable concept and to behave accordingly. Definitely it is not just about having a woman in politics, it is important what kind of attitudes she has, because we are witnessing women, both at a European level and in Croatia, who do not fight for women's rights, for gender equality or the improvement of a woman's position in society at all levels. These women are guided by patriarchal and conservative patterns and values. That is why the concept of feminism is important and it is horizontal, including a management model.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self? Is there anything that you may or may not do differently?

Biljana: There are some things that I might have done with more patience and perhaps been wiser about but I am generally happy with myself, with all the flaws and virtues.

Q: What advice would you give to younger women and men today in relation to human rights and gender equality?

Biljana: First of all, it is necessary to educate young men and young women and to raise awareness of the issues and concepts. The concept of gender equality and the struggle for human rights must become universal, it must have a consensus, otherwise the human race will never experience self-actualization. The domination of one part of the population over another is not sustainable in the long run, sooner or later it will collapse. When we realise that we are all born equal and start living from that premise, everyone will be better off. When we realise that when we underestimate someone or discriminate against them, we are not achieving anything. I hope the world will become a better place. I do not get the impression that this will happen soon, it may never happen, but that is definitely something we should strive for in order to enhance our existence.



L to R: Ivana Milenović Popović and Uglješa Majdevac in Perchance to Dream performed by Dah Theatre, Serbia. Photo: Una Škandro

Women in an Equal Europe

INTERVIEWS
FROM SERBIA
CONDUCTED BY
DAH THEATRE
RESEARCH
CENTRE,
BELGRADE,
SERBIA

Dana Gasic Gouveia // Ivana Novakovic
Marija Mitic // Marina Ilic // Manja Marinkovic



DANA GASIC GOUVEIA

Biography

Dana Gasic Gouveia was born in 1997 in London and is a student of Fashion Brand Management at the Accademia del Lusso in Belgrade, Serbia.

Knowledge is the only real fight against violence

Dana Gašić Gouveia – even my name speaks of my Yugoslav and South American roots. My mother is Yugoslav, my father from British Guiana. I was born at a 'neutral territory', in London, where I made my first steps and learned my first words, but spent my school days in Belgrade, where I still live and study at the fashion academy Dell Lusso. I've always had a love for music and theatre, and I have been surrounded by artistic worlds since childhood. When I was a child, I used to dream of living in Belgrade, and when I finally got here I felt like a part of it, as if I had always lived here. Foreigners who were merely passing through Belgrade often felt the same closeness and attachment to it as I did. I suppose this is one of our city's secrets. But I wasn't merely a passer-by, a stranger – Belgrade has always been my home.

Nevertheless, at the time we moved here, people who were from mixed marriages, like I was, were rare. At first, I had a hard time walking through the city by myself, which I liked more than anything – walking the streets and breathing with the city, because I attracted unwanted attention. I was different in the minds of passers-by – I could see it in their faces, their looks, their postures. I never blamed them, as it was difficult to accept a different individual in a sea of uniformity. Sometimes I was angry because the city I loved, like I loved a home, discarded me for being a stranger, yet sometimes I was just sad and frightened. And it even got worse at times. Ignorant people would discriminate against me, thinking I was a Roma person. The time when I was willing to share my life with the city was the time when the city was isolated and diseased, intolerant of diversities, so I had to distance myself from it. I was hiding, and that brought a feeling of confinement and isolation. But everything changes, and we were created to endure when we're unable to fight.

The situation is far better today: since the start of the talks on Serbia's accession to the EU, various nationalities of all skin colours, tourists and foreigners, began to feel the joy, as if relieved, with a wish to visit Serbia's capital. We are far from Europe with regard to equality, but Europe is far from us when it comes to some other matters. Belgrade accepted me and I accepted it, and I am free today to do what I feel. Time passed since that moment when I first came from the big city of London to the smaller Belgrade. The years that passed brought tiny, almost unnoticeable steps towards a better future. An occasional newspaper article, a theatre performance that created an illusion more real than reality, stood behind the values that had been untold of until then. If you listened carefully, you could hear Serbia starting to breathe more freely. Being a single parent is no longer a tragedy in this country, to give birth to a child and raise it alone no longer means living a nightmare. Homosexuals no longer live in fear, and with each new day I can see in people's faces a rising of understanding and acceptance for those who differ. There are many gay clubs today and cafes where any passer-by may come in freely, get a drink and feel like home. Primitive opinions and comments have always been and always will be, but I do not believe that this problem is solely Serbia's. Wherever people may live, there will always be those who don't accept and don't want to accept a change. It is different in England than it is here, but do not be fooled by its nobleness – discrimination dwells there in every field, too.



L to R: Ivana Milenović Popović and Uglješa Majdevac in Perchance to Dream performed by Dah Theatre, Serbia. Photo: Una Škandro

My parents' calling is theatre in education and I was fortunate to have had an opportunity to participate in many youth programs that they organised. Through these I've learned a great deal about discrimination, preventing violence, children's and human rights. Due to neglect and a bad home upbringing, many young people are prone to criminal activities, whereas learning about and understanding gender, anti-racism and the rights of all people is the only real fight against violence and an obligation for all of us. Shame on you parents who don't teach your children these values, because that is the duty that makes you human! I have recently received a job offer, the ad read that fluency in the English language was mandatory. I replied to the ad, and the fact that I was born in London and that I lived in an English-speaking environment must have been crucial for getting the job. The company promotes corporate events throughout Europe, and I was fortunate to work in a working environment where European laws are respected, and yet in no other place than the city where such workplaces are the most luxurious and almost unreachable. I am conscious of the fact that for many reasons this is not the best place to live in and that discrimination and intolerance are not the only, nor the biggest, issues to be the talk of the streets these days. Poverty, inability to access proper education, poor standards of living, below-average incomes, illicit work in the shadow economy, exploitation and abuse of all possible kinds – these are the thoughts that my co-citizens wake up to each morning. But in order to get better and stronger, we have to work hard, on all issues at the same time, tirelessly.

I would like to see more women in business, councils and politics, we have to reassess the quality of our government

institutions and qualifications and operations of private companies. A great deal needs to be changed in England as well. For instance, women in England are entitled to up to six months of maternity leave, while men can have no more than several weeks. On the other hand, women who are mothers enjoy more protection there than those in Serbia. In order to communicate equality, we must analyse everything and see the whole picture. For a long time, art was for me a trait I was born with, a point of resistance to everything that was bad, but as we grow up, art, which was always the one thing that was personal and untouchable, becomes a part of reality. Ugly differences and injustice exist even in art, those that concern all people and not just artists. Too often have I seen female artists that dazzled with their talents, but were also highly unhappy. The cause of this is gender inequality, many people observe them as sexual objects, thus shamelessly undermining the integrity of their gift. How can we freely enjoy the beauty given to us by birth, if we live in fear that somebody will destroy it. It is difficult in all fields. We carry the enormous burden of the times we live in, but it is only a sign that we must never stop fighting. To be a woman means to be a person, to forget untouchability and hold on to life stronger than those who wish to keep us within the frames of the fairy tales they told us when we were children. Being a woman means deciding on your own life and body, making your own choices freely and standing firmly behind them when time comes to share responsibility. Feminism is merely a support to us, a short rest when we tire in our individual fights, a fight for the rights of women which is inevitable in the time that we live in, a fight for equal rights for everybody. A hope for a healthy existence of a new era.



IVANA NOVAKOVIC

Biography

Born in 1961 in Belgrade, Novakovic is the professor of Human genetics at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Belgrade. She graduated from University of Belgrade earning bachelor degree in Medicine in 1984. She works for more than 30 years on the Faculty of Medicine at Human genetics department, first as an assistant professor, now as regular professor (highest university title in Serbia). She earned a master's degree in Human and Medicine Genetics in 1991 and PhD in 1998. Novakovic is an author and co-author of more than 50 scientific and expert works, books and manuals. Since 2014, she is the president of Medicine genetics section of Serbian Society of Geneticists.

Feminism cuts through the vines of pseudo-values of a patriarch society

I was born in Yugoslavia, the country with socialist state-mandated regulations that prescribed equal working conditions for both men and women, and a right to university education for people from working-class families. Nevertheless, I recall many women not working at the time, devoting all their time to their homes and children. They were known as housewives - the occupation that has long carried negative attributes of a lack of ambition, an absence of education and subordination to male imperatives. I am 55 today, I live in a torn-away Serbia that was unable to sustain its coexistence with its neighbours, while the smouldering bigotry directed at the "brothers from the neighbouring countries" peaked in bloodshed wars of the 1990s. Disintegration brought many other tearaways and changes, a transition towards the capitalistic society, where not only does everybody have the right to work regardless of their gender and ethnic origin, but where it is an imperative for survival for the majority. Born in that particular moment when non-working women raised their daughters by leading them towards economic and social independence, I devoted my life to medicine, the healthy religion of the modern world. To discover a way to help somebody change their life, somebody who had not been able to be helped before, or to help them resurrect as a whole person, brings the highest joy that existence can offer.

A part of my job involves working with young people on the topic of human genetics, whereas another part is practical research work in a laboratory. Things change fast in the world where each year a new technological breakthrough is reached and carries a gigantic change in all aspects of life. From my point of view, one of a medical worker, the most beautiful thing brought by the new age, from the launch of the process for Serbia's accession to the European Union, is affirmation of the youth from vulnerable groups, enabling them to enrol in the Faculty of Medicine. By implementing affirmative measures, young Roma people get a chance to pass an entrance exam at the Faculty of Medicine and the way has been paved for them to advance in their work and to develop their abilities in science, in ways that they could not dare to imagine would have been possible under previous living conditions.

Europe's support and the hard work of organisations seeking affirmation and support for vulnerable groups, all this has contributed to bringing about another great change. Young people with disabilities may also opt to enrol at universities, and many graduate with great success. The new social order brought new values and protection for those who had no support, and thus no chance of becoming a part of the academic society. From the socialist era in which I was born, when mothers – housewives – fought and won the battle for their daughters' autonomy in all fields, to the time of shifting towards capitalism in which we fight for the marginalised to be given a chance to work in healthcare, education, economy . . . we move fast, and the fight for human rights and equality seems to be more important by the day.

The most significant change for me as a scientist when it comes to relations between Serbia and the EU is donations from the EU IPA funds for procurement of equipment in

the value of several hundred thousand euros. It is this we need to extend thanks for - now being able to unveil various hereditary disorders, especially in childhood, and even before birth. This meant an enormous progress in scientific research, which opened doors to many who hitherto believed that they could not have children for various reasons. And that, you will agree, is a truly great thing. Once, a woman with dwarfism condition called to the genetic council for expectant mothers, with a wish to bear a healthy child. We determined that the risk for her baby to be born with a short stature was 50%. By using a genetic chip we discovered a mutation of the gene that caused the disorder in the mother, and then determined that the baby did not inherit the mutation. Thanks to this acknowledgement, the pregnancy was continued and a healthy little girl was born.

Today women are an integral part of the management of the Faculty of Medicine, at the Department for Human Genetics the ratio between women and men is 11:2. Nevertheless, throughout the century-long history of the Faculty, women were deans only several times, which speaks of a less than favourable solution when it comes to accessibility to the

highest social positions for women. Still, positive changes are happening, and I speak from longstanding experience that I expect progress in the fight for the implementation of gender equality and human rights to continue. I expect the EU to strengthen the fight against abuse and discrimination in our country, because it still exists and no matter how hard we try to resolve this issue by ourselves, it seems to me that we are in need of support from stronger and more developed countries. The spunk we've shown on our own initiative is the highest hope we were able to give to ourselves that single-mindedness and the iron shackles of patriarchy would soon break. Because today even the youngest have an opportunity to learn that being a woman means to be a free human being, and that means a possibility for motion through all fields of life. We still require more fearlessness and spirit for this, but does it not make us feel an even greater joy of reaching the goal? We are fighting because we are comprehending the lies and the deceits that traditional values are rooted in, and feminism is the tool we use to free the path blocked with overgrown weeds of pseudo-values, and to cut through to the way towards our maximum self-realisation.



L to R: Ivana Milenović Popović and Uglješa Majdevac in Perchance to Dream performed by Dah Theatre, Serbia. Photo: Una Škandro



Orla O'Connor



Raymond Keane



Vanessa Ogida



Dijana Milošević

**Women in an Equal
Europe documentary**



MARIJA MITIC

Biography

Marija is a Senior Professional Associate for Accreditation Standards and Standards Development in health care systems in Serbia. As an experienced professional in standardisation and standards development in the health care system in Serbia, Marija has over ten years experience. She is a coach of healthcare professionals and members of special working groups and is skilled in working with government and non-government organisations and in negotiations and public speaking. She is an experienced business development professional with a Master's Degree in Psychology.

Gender is irrelevant only when it is on an equal footing

I am a completely ordinary woman in Serbia. In the morning I am a mother and a wife, the head of the household that I protect from bad things and influences. By noon and in the afternoon, I am a healthcare worker, fighter for a better healthcare system in Serbia, better standards and good practice. In the evening I am support and relief to my children and my husband. And beyond all of that, I am Marija Mitic, my own person and independent, special in every sense and in all the ways that make me who I am. I grew up through joyful and rough times, which are but the substance that makes the life. It is only a question of how we treat them. I put myself among those who make choices wisely, and that is how I grew up. Upbringing and environment are important, yes, but the manner in which I used them was mine alone. The greatest unpleasantness happened in my relationships with other women. No matter how much I tried to change that, something inside of me always attracted these kinds of problems. I felt in my own skin the true meaning of mulier mulieri lupa est (A woman is a she-wolf to another woman). But I've learned to overcome the burdens that I was given to carry.

The moment when I personally felt our country's progress towards the EU was the day when I applied for a job. I was not treated differently from the male candidates. We were being observed through our skills and abilities – colour of hair, eyes or skin was of no consequence then. That day, gender was irrelevant because genders were treated equally. That was one day. A nice day, a ray of light in a dark fight, but still not the full picture. A great deal has still to be done for gender equality, and once I see more women in management as opposed to being stuck as clerical workers, I will know that we are one step closer to reaching the goals that we have been fighting for, for a long time. We, the 'ordinary women', are good organisers, dedicated workers, skilled communicators. We are strong and stronger than many hoped we would be, but we need support. We must promote our abilities and the strength that is our natural gift, we must awaken our competitive spirit in all fields, which has been hidden away for centuries in this country through culture and religion. We must become even more aware of our own virtues and talents. We must break the chains of patriarchy, because a woman's place is shoulder to shoulder with a man, in all social functions and at home. Our fight is a long and exhausting one, but we must not forget who we are. We have proven to be capable of performing more than one function, because being a woman means being able and being strong to do good for oneself, one's family and one's community. Feminism is a balance sheet – a statement of results achieved every day in the field of women's influence in all aspects of life.



MARINA ILIC

Biography

Marina Ilic is a Logistics and Fundraising manager for the Global Human Rights Forums, a series of international conferences designed and organised by the Serbian voluntary, non-party, non-governmental and non-profit association, the Social Margin Center in Serbia. Marina is a mentor, lecturer and performer. She is a senior undergraduate at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade.

Feminism is our philosophy of solidarity and sisterhood

There has always been something that was wrong in this country. Since I was a little girl, I have been noticing small things in relationships between men and women which I knew had big and horrible things lying in the background. I would observe Roma people in the streets collecting cardboard, waste and various other items on their tricycles. People passed by them – the monuments of human injustice – and paid no attention to them. Yes, since I was a child I knew that something was wrong. As I grew and learned, I learned about activism, feminism, violence, marginalisation, and became an activist, feminist, an SOS volunteer of the Autonomous Women's Centre for women who survived male violence, and the co-founder of the NGO Social Margin Centre. With all that I had learned, I took on these roles wanting to learn even more and to help those that I had passed by as a little girl, those that I felt needed help.

But it was not just about special people who needed my help, it was about the necessity to correct the things that poked you in the eye with their deviation and injustice. And so I participated in the European Union IPA project Empowering Young Women to Monitor Government Commitments in Gender Equality, organised by World Vision (Ireland), with its office in Tuzla, Infoteka in Zenica, Women's Safe House in Podgorica, and DAH Theatre in Belgrade. Many people of all generations, many ideas, much enthusiasm and knowledge. Through the process of the project's implementation, I met a young woman who volunteered for the SOS hotline of the Autonomous Women's Centre for women who survived violence from men. She told me about the experience she gained there, her work with women, feminist work principles, prejudice about men's violence against women, and about verbal communication skills. I realised that behind the work of this organisation lay strong will, persistence, education and learning. I wished to become involved in the work of these people, invisible for the majority that sip their morning coffee while reading in the newspaper about cases of abuse and violence as if reading a crime novel. These were actual people, with real pain and trauma that they went through, and were aching for real people to help them. I applied for training to work at the SOS hotline and that was my start at actively working in what I actually always wanted to do.

I continued to network with feminist organisations in Serbia and Europe, got familiar with the feminist ethics of care, nonviolent communication and nonviolent resolution of conflicts, promotion of human rights of women on an individual, legal and institutional level, empowering women to overcome trauma of family violence, partnership and sexual violence through psychological and professional legal support, in order to enable the women to reach autonomous decisions and exercise their right to life without violence. I studied sensibilisation and education of institutional professionals in procedures of protection from violence, prevention of all types of violence against women, active reduction of multiple discrimination of women (Roma women, women with disability, women with psychological impairment, history of psychiatric and/or prison institutions, refugee and displaced women, women from the countryside, women without a residence, women of homosexual orientation, women who live in poverty or unable to find employment, elderly women etc.),

giving an active impetus to the development of a civil society through strengthening women's autonomy and supporting them to bring autonomous decisions on themselves, the social and political environment they live in, improving relations between genders through sensibilisation of the youth for the values of nonviolence and gender equality, supporting each woman's right to a choice, respecting the ethics of diversity and opposing all forms of discrimination (on the grounds of gender, mental and physical competences, race, class, religion, nationality, age, physical appearances, sexual orientation or any other personal feature), and developing solidarity among women.

I learned a great deal. Experience and the moments spent with the people I worked with and the people I was helping left permanent imprints and made unbreakable my childhood decision to participate and help. While I was working on the EU IPA project, we were unable to stay immune to all the things that we saw and learned. We developed many ideas and seven of us founded the Social Margin Centre (CZM) – the non-party, nongovernment and non-profit citizens' association, founded with a purpose to realise goals in the field of protection of human rights and improvement of the position of marginalised social groups. Our mission is to work on changing the social system of values in line with the values of tolerance, equality, solidarity, nonviolence and similar, and to construct a democratic, civil and responsible society where human rights and the principle of equal opportunities for all citizens are respected.

The initial activity of CZM was an exhibition *Mirror of a Woman – Reflections of Her Reality* within the project *Mirror* organised by Reconstruction Women's Fund. The exhibition presented works of young female authors who participated in artistic photography workshops, where they explored the issue of gender. This was followed by an exhibition *Feminists and the Government* within the Women's Media Forum Zenerama. This exhibition was taking us through critical reflection of the feminist activist fight of today, represented through the visual propaganda material on gender equality in a modern, popular and accessible fashion. We became so bold as to have raised disputable questions, such as: Is activism of today motivated by changes and materialism? Are donors the ones who dictate the quantities that we can truly change? Are real fists replaced by digital ones?

Following this, we carried out the project *My Voice Is Online* as part of the Reconstruction Women's Fund project titled *Mirror*. The goal of that project was to empower women in the field of Internet safety with regard to handling psychological threats and to learn how to be protected from technology, and how to use the Internet at a more advanced level in order to engage in cyber activism. Last year the Social Margin Centre launched a series of conferences titled The Global Human Rights Forums. The series was designed to raise awareness of burning issues in the field of human rights, achieving dialogue and finding solutions for key challenges. By initiating the forums we wish to establish an influential brand with an option of becoming a catalyst of future change and to enable the creation of an efficient platform for networking amongst participants from different cultural and social contexts and opinions.

All of these projects were successful thanks to the support

of EU funds as well as our own personal engagement and the carrying out and advancement of new ideas. In a society where the presence of discriminatory behaviour is still great and where local institutions and organisations are underdeveloped and vulnerable, every type of inclusion in the process of creating a society that exercises human rights is preferable and I want to continue making my own contribution to this work. Instead of dreaming of a future without gender inequality, without men's violence against women, without femicide, I strive to make this dreamlike future accessible through action. This is why I will mention the position of gender equality in the EU from a 2015 analysis. The analysis showed slight progress had been made and that many challenges remained. In spite of the crisis and rising unemployment, the highest level of economic activity for women (64%) was recorded. However, they had much smaller incomes within the labour market, they are more likely to be working reduced hours, they are paid 16% less than men on average, and the gap in the incomes of men and women during their respective active years reached 41%, leading to the gap in pensions, which totals 40%. Women spend two to ten times more time on unpaid labour than men, which is one of the main obstacles to economic and political empowerment for women.

Gender-based violence expanded throughout the EU – one out of three women over 15 years of age experienced physical or sexual violence. By analysing the effects of the previous strategy, the European Commission affirmed its dedication to reach equality between women and men by focusing on five areas:

1. Raising women's participation at the labour market and equal economic independence of women and men
2. Reduction of the 'gender gap' in wages and pensions, which is a fight against poverty of women
3. Promoting equality between women and men in the field of decision-making
4. Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting its victims
5. Promoting gender equality and rights of women throughout the world.

Progress will be measured by a series of well-defined values and indicators. Special attention will be paid to the needs of groups that face multiple obstacles, such as the elderly, migrants, Roma people, women with disability, single parents. It is hard, challenging and very demanding, but these are all the more reason for us to never stop. In order to give myself to this fight, which I've only briefly presented to you, firstly I had to accept myself in entirety, to break the illusion that was imposed on me through tradition and the environment about what I, as a woman, should or should not accept. I had to strive for an exercise of my own rights before I could eventually advocate for rights for all vulnerable persons and to go forward with the exhausting but inevitable fight against patriarchy. Feminism is our movement, our philosophy of solidarity, sisterhood, political theory and practice that represents the fight for the liberation of all women.

MANJA MARINKOVIC

Biography

Manja was born in 1990 in Negotin in Serbia. Today she lives and works in Belgrade in Serbia. Manja graduated in Sociology from the Philosophical Faculty at Belgrade University. She is a co-founder and Executive Director of the Social Margin Centre, a voluntary, non-party, non-governmental and non-profit association based in Belgrade, Serbia. Manja is Programme Manager for The Global Human Rights Forums and a volunteer coordinator at the Centre for Youth Integration.

Fight for equality is a continuity
– there's never a break

For me, Serbia has always been the place that needed something done, changed, corrected. In order to have that achieved, first I had to learn to change myself, and this is the most difficult lesson, which we need to study every day. Then I started doing for others. I am a part of the fight for the marginalised, I represent the position and the rights of citizens of the Republic of Serbia. All of this required a great deal of self-discipline and education. I graduated in Queer Studies and Gender Studies, I am a final year student at the Sociology Department of the Faculty of Philosophy. I succeeded in reaching a position of executive director of the civil association the Social Margin Centre, which brought even harder work, riskier decisions and responsibility. I also give all of myself to children from informal settlements in Belgrade by educating them. The highest motive for the hard work that I've been striving to do is growing up in this country during the 1990s. At the time, Serbia was a dark place that left you with merely two choices: withdraw into oneself or step forward and pave the way to a better future. Some people who survived the medieval Serbia of the 90s will say that living is easier today, but many came out of it exhausted.

A change for the better did occur: the sanctions-free society, without inflation and total isolation certainly breathes more



freely than the society from 25 years ago. But no matter how tired we may have become, we must not delude ourselves that the Balkans rest on solid grounds. The line of stability of the social system is still thin, and economy and culture are still trotting behind the pacing world. Rights of marginalised groups, gender equality and issues of the LGBT community hold a significant place today, but we still have much to do, we mustn't show signs of exhaustion. Continuous work is a necessity in these issues. Permanent results don't exist, at least for the time being, we have to fight for human rights over and over again. By learning, I've succeeded in becoming aware of the privileges of being a white woman in Serbia, but on the other hand I became aware of all forms of infringement of my human and civil rights based on other grounds and identities. The project Empowering Young Women to Monitor Government Commitments in Gender Equality was of great significance for my personal progress in learning about manners in which human rights are undermined. This project had not only young women, but also young men as its target group. It was then that I learned that feminist education is of extreme importance for men, and this was one of the few projects that enabled it. When you remain true to your beliefs, you meet others who share similar ones. I met six people with whom I formed a group Male and Female Comrades, and soon went for realisation of the project *Mirror of a Woman – Mirror of Her Reality*, and on the same day we presented the film *Empowered Women*. We had a great deal done then, but it is important to continue.

The future brings complete gender equality, the possibility for everybody to be included in political life, putting a stop to discrimination in the market of labour. Since the start of the process of Serbia's accession to the EU, another thing that became of great significance for me was a possibility for the LGBT community to stop hiding. The first step towards freedom is a possibility of free movement and free choice, without concealing one's identity, and this is the door that this process opened for us. Feminism and a manner in which it works in society is much talked about today. I believe that the fight for equality must not be founded on invasive techniques of overtaking powers, but that men should also be included in education because they are equally trapped in the shackles of the patriarchy. They should not be evened with this ideology, but seen as its victims. When it comes to support, the bright spot of this story is the European Union, but it needs to solve a great deal in its own backyard first, too. I do not see feminism as a fight for equal rights of women, but much more than that. To me, feminism is the structure that brings into question every undisputed given in a society, the structure that liberates us from the illusions of the "natural laws" and shows us their true imposed and enforced face. Feminism is the road towards freedom for both genders, and a woman is a human being with all her faults and virtues, as much as a man.



Róisín McAtamney as Mary Elmes in *The Woman is Present Women's Stories of WWII*



Women in an Equal Europe

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

SMASHING TIMES THEATRE AND FILM COMPANY

DUBLIN, IRELAND

Smashing Times is a professional theatre and film company involved in performance, training and participation. The work of the company is underpinned by a rights-based approach and a commitment to artistic excellence and social engagement. As a leading award-winning professional arts organisation the company develops innovative, cutting edge, state of the art projects that promote social justice, peace, gender equality, human rights and positive mental health through high quality artistic processes, merging art, culture and politics to interact and engage with contemporary society and the world we live in. The company was established in 1991 by a group of women actors who met at the Focus Theatre Dublin. Today the work takes place at local, national, and international levels in a range of settings – on screen, on stage from the professional arts and theatre space to local schools and communities where we are invited to work with people collaboratively, and at European and international levels.



INICIATIVAS DE FUTURO PARA UNA EUROPA SOCIAL

VALENCIA, SPAIN

Iniciativas de Futuro Para una Europa Social is a non-profit cooperative which belongs to FEVECTA, a representative organisation of the cooperative movement whose main task is to act as a lobbying organisation in order to gain support for the promotion of worker cooperatives. Iniciativas de Futuro Para una Europa Social also cooperates with the regional and local Public Administration (Regional Government and City Municipalities), Social Partners (Trade Unions and Employers Associations), as well as many other institutions and organisations in different fields, mainly related to adult education and vocational training. As a training provider, Iniciativas de Futuro Para una Europa Social offers tailor-made training programmes for developing and upgrading skills and professional qualifications of workers and unemployed people, thus improving their employment opportunities and supporting their personal and professional development.



MIROVNA GRUPA MLADIH DUNAV – YOUTH PEACE GROUP DANUBE (YPGD)

VUKOVAR, CROATIA

Youth Peace Group 'Danube' is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. The organisational goal is, through self-development, character building and networking, to promote the work of young people, as well as the emancipation of individualism and personal freedoms. YPGD has more than 20 years' experience in the field of youth work, volunteerism and activism. The following are a key part of YPGD activities: education of high school students for the Youth Council, establishment of a youth club and youth information point, implementation of various campaigns and researches which improve the life of the community and its citizens, organisation of concerts, exhibitions, education seminars, workshops (photography, music, digital drawing, comic, origami, graffiti, art and creative workshops), training and international work camps with the aim of the construction and strengthening of our society, action against drugs and alcohol, organisation of trips and excursions, preparation and broadcasting of various radio shows, and publishing bulletins and youth newspapers.



DAH THEATRE RESEARCH CENTRE

BELGRADE, SERBIA

DAH Theatre Research Centre is an independent professional theatre organisation founded in 1991 in Belgrade, Serbia. The mission is to create profound and courageous theatre art through dedicated team work, provoking, inspiring and encouraging personal and social transformation. It is a Belgrade-based, contemporary, engaged, independent professional artistic collective that examines social issues built on the principle of social action and excellence in arts production and projects. DAH Theatre was the first leading organisation from the civil society sector in Serbia to take part in the EU Programme for Culture 2007-2013 with the project In/Visible City. Since then, it has been a partner in numerous projects for several EU programs (IPA, Europe for Citizenship) in cooperation with partners from Ireland, Norway, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Macedonia, Germany, France, Italy, Croatia, Greece, and others. DAH Theatre's numerous awards speak best of the company's success and importance in Serbia and internationally, as well as a newly published book about the work of DAH Theatre – *DAH Theatre: A Source Book* published by Lexington Books, USA.



Women in an Equal Europe

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

All at the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation Fund, The Arts Council Young Ensemble Scheme, Smock Alley Theatre, Mark Quinn, Mike Quinn, Highwire Ltd, Edel O'Brien, Oda Carroll, Féilim James, Patryk Skowronski, Niamh Clowry, Róisín McAtamney and Tamar Keane. A special thanks to all those who took part in the project and interviews and to those who contributed to the creation of this book.



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