

January 21st, 2019

The Power of Pink

“You’ve been doing a wonderful job here and we really appreciate you,” my boss says through her smiling teeth. As I hear her words my heart starts to beat faster and faster.

Oh no, I think to myself: Here we go again.

“We would love to give you a raise for all of your hard work,” she says to my new coworker Nate as I brush past her trying to hide the tears of frustration welling in my eyes. I go straight to the bathroom, put my hands in fists so tight that my knuckles turn white, and sit on the floor trying to take calming breaths. Questions fly through my mind: “Why don’t they like me? If they liked me, why haven’t they given me a raise? Am I not doing a good job? Why does he get a raise when I have been working here for two years and he has been working here for two months? Why did the last three boys get multiple raises and I have had none?”

Women just like me face this same sort of frustration throughout their lifetimes. Some of them experience it in the workplace like I did. Some experience it as they check out tampons at the department store. Some experience it as they watch the “bombshell babes” on their favorite Saturday night T.V. special. Some experience it as they walk quickly with heavy breaths of fear to their car parked half a mile away. Some of them experience it as their power over their own bodies is ripped away from someone who is only looking to please their own.

Some of the greatest inequalities between women and men are seen in the workplace. Women are often associated with staying at home to take care of the kids while men are

associated with being successful by working and making lots of money for their families. This stereotype for women sets a precedent that women cannot be equal to men because they were not meant to be in the workplace. This is shown in the difference between men's and women's salaries. According to the Nation Committee on Equal Pay, in 1960, women made an average of 60.7 percent of what men made. In 2017, women made an average of 80.5 percent of what men made. Due to this inequality women are not set up as well as men to be successful. Women have less money to support themselves and their families. It is a good sign that the wage gap has decreased by almost 20 percent since the 1960s, but the fact that women are still only paid 80 cents to the dollar for men shows that we still have a long way to go.

Proof of the inequality between genders is very clearly seen in the difference between the cost of womens' products and mens' products. The differences in living costs appear at birth. At Target, a set of four baby bodysuits labeled for boys is \$8.99 while the same set labeled for girls is \$9.99. The only difference between these two sets is that one is filled with blue and green bodysuits, and the other pink and purple. This difference in price between men and women's products is called the pink tax, the phenomenon that relates to the difference in the cost of products marketed to women and gender neutral or products labeled for men. Frequency in use of the pink tax peaks in adulthood. Necessary products such as razors, body wash, and shampoo can all be found colored pink, labeled for girls and price bumped to cost more than the same product labeled for men. Pink razors labeled for women are notorious for being one to two dollars more than comparable razors labeled for men. There is no explanation for this difference except for the color and packaging. Another difference that carries a lot of controversy is the tax on tampons. Viagra, a drug used to control erectile dysfunction in men, is not taxed because it is

deemed as a necessity by the U.S. government. Tampons and pads, products necessary for controlling menstrual bleeding, are taxed due to the fact that they are not deemed a necessary. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf touched on the absurdity of this situation when she wrote, "Managing menstruation is a critical aspect of the lives and civic participation of more than half the population and should be considered when making policy." The proof behind the pink tax is disturbing, but it is a prime example of how women are treated differently than men.

Women are also faced with emotionally draining circumstances every day. Books, T.V., and movies bombard girls with images of skinny, long haired, feminine girls from the time that they are born. The major film company, Disney, is notorious for enhancing the femininity of its characters. One of the more famous Disney films, *Cinderella*, features a teenage girl with a tiny waist, perfect blonde hair, and dainty hands and feet. She is portrayed as helpless and in need of a man to save her from her life of poverty and oppression. The film lacks the portrayal of her as strong or independent or natural. This film and others like it show young girls that they should look beautiful, act helpless, and find a man to save them from every difficult situation that they face.

Another major contributor to the emotional cost that women pay is related to sexual assault. One in five women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. When asking girls from my high school, I discovered that on average they thought about sexual assault and defending themselves against it five or six times a day. They thought about it when getting dressed in the morning, when walking into school, when driving alone at night, and at their workplace. When adding this time, girls are losing an average of five to ten minutes a day thinking about the potential of sexual assault. This time could have been used for studying or having fun with

friends or relaxing. It is unacceptable that women and girls have to consider self defense so often. No one should be scared or stressed like this.

I call on you, women and men, to take action. Stand up for the wrong doings that face half of the world population. Stand up for equal pay. Stand up for fair pricing on women's products. Stand up against sexual assault. You have many options to help this problem, some small and some big. You can go to rallies. You can call your representatives and describe your experiences. You can explain to someone why they are wrong when they make a sexist comment. You can work with schools to create sexual education programs that accurately teach boys and girls about sexual assault. You can do anything that you put your mind to. Take your passion and spread it to others. Your first step can cause a reaction that causes an entire march. Take the step for you. Take the step for your sister. Take the step for your mother. Take the step for the world. *One small step for women, one giant leap for humankind.*

Word Count: 1240