

Empowering Women for Positive Actions in an Era of Social Injustice & Gender Inequality

In recent times, the world of international relations, politics and diplomacy has changed. The old ways of doing things are being challenged. In what seems to be a mutiny against injustice, the oppressed and the marginalised sections of society are now beginning to stand up for their rights. Low paid/underpaid workers, students, women, minority groups, and other disadvantaged groups in society are now demanding that their political leaders and society as a whole listen and do something about the long-standing burning injustices, inequalities and unfair representations that exist in society.

We live in a world where many women still suffer physical and domestic violence and abuse. Women are more likely to suffer a life of poverty than their male counterparts with many single mothers struggling to feed their children. In many areas of life, gender inequality, means that women around the world don't have the same rights as men. Many women remain powerless against male-constructed social, economic and political systems that are rigged against women by keeping them subjugated. It is against this backdrop that the #MeToo movement needs to be understood.

The power structure in society has failed and is still failing to protect women and young girls from sexual harassments, grooming and abuse in the UK. Young women and girls who suffer sexual abuse are often left devastated with long term trauma, resulting in low self-esteem, substance abuse, mental illness and relationships breakdown. To tackle sexual exploitations, we must address the social, cultural and economic environment in which these abuses take place, the motivation of the perpetrators and a review of the power relations in society that influence how women abusers treat their victims and how the victim feel about reporting these crimes.

Across nations, in small, medium and large communities, people are getting organised. They are finding a new voice to stand up for themselves, challenge authorities and demand solutions to their problems. On 1 November 2018, staff from tech giant Google staged an unprecedented series of walkouts in protest of the company's treatment of women.

Women are saying No! to male domination, subjugation, objectification and sexualisation of their bodies. Brave and strong women and men are out to report historical cases of rapes and sexual exploitation at high places, as highlighted by the #MeToo movement. With the support of well-meaning people in society, the tide is turning against oppression, and the exploitation of women. More and more women are being heard, and getting the support they need to stand up to the subjugation, abuse and violence they have suffered for decades. The voice of reason is beginning to get heard and the invisible problem swept under the carpet are now being exposed. Since the #MeToo, public awareness of the issues facing women has risen.

The law, in general, has failed women. Women are still being judged by different standards from men. There is a need for institutional reforms, at all levels, to address the power structures that keep women subjugated. The system of laws need to address the imbalances in power relations between women and men. The #MeToo movement is taking positive actions to raise awareness of women's issues can be applied to other areas of society where social, economic and political injustices still exist.

With an effective people's actions, such as the #MeToo movement, we can use citizens' approach to make a positive difference in our community, in our nations and in the world. We are more powerful when we stand together against injustices, abuse and exploitation wherever we find. If the #MeToo movement is able to help change men's attitudes towards women, then we should use the same approach and join forces to expose other ills and injustices in our society. A just society is a fair society.

Towards this end, I applaud the United Nations in making empowering women the theme of this year's TEDx talk and I am delighted that the University of Derby has been invited, once again, to take part in this important event.

The main TEDxPlaceDesNationsWomen event in Geneva will bring together 10 diverse and distinguished speakers from around the world, all with powerful and inspiring stories to tell. These speakers are leaders, entrepreneurs, medical doctors, politicians, historians and students, who are committed to making our world a better place.

The Derby event will start at 12.30 p.m. prompt with Vice Chancellor Professor Kathryn Mitchel's opening address, followed by a keynote address by Vanessa Boon (Chair of International Women's Day and Chief Difference Maker). The keynote address will be followed by a discussion session by our panel of experts from academia and civil society. The panel will be required to discuss key issues relating to the theme of women's empowerment and answer questions from our audience that will consist of students, University staff, members of the press and local communities, NGOs and civil society. The keynote address and panel discussion will last for an hour, after which our audience will link up live with Geneva via webinar to listen to the UN presentations.

Women's empowerment is not just a women's issue. When women are empowered, everyone is empowered. Every girl and woman who finds and raises her voice in an unjust, patriarchal, male-dominated society speaks for us all. Likewise, every oppressed, forgotten, disadvantaged and vulnerable person that stands up against oppression, injustice, and exploitation speaks for us as a society.

I wish all the participants at this year's TEDx talk – including our distinguished speakers, discussion panellists, and our audience, a fruitful deliberation.

Until every oppressed person is freed, and men and women are treated fairly with dignity and respect, and discrimination is banished from our society, we cannot be said to be developed. Corrupt society produces corrupt leaders. The only way to create a just society is to stand up to injustice.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

Together, we can stand up against injustice, and raise awareness to help women around the world to fight for their rights, equal treatment and fairness in every area of life. This is one good cause that is worth fighting for and our political leaders need to understand this. The current state of our world produces political leaders who are taking politics to the gutters and dragging diplomacy through the mud. We need to stand up together against, oppression and injustice, wherever we find them.

[Link to TedX event.](#)

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