

Emilia Stowe

March 1, 2019

The Berkeley Institute

BPS Short Essay Contest in Honor of International Women's Day

"What does female empowerment mean to you?"

So often women are belittled and reproached for the simple things we take pleasure in.

Whether it be shopping, our love lives, women's talk shows, anything, we are constantly being put down for what we enjoy. This is not a new occurring problem, it has been around since the beginning of time and is still being experienced. To me, female empowerment means the acceptance and embracing of **all** women. Female empowerment means giving them a voice, validating their existences, and not shunning them for life choices that they make.

With that being said, I feel that I need to address the stigmas that even us as women place on our sisters. It is important to recognize that we are living in a dominating masculine society where there is little to no room for our femininity. So for us to place added pressure on each other is not acceptable. If us women cannot accept each other, how do we expect our counterparts to? We must exist in duality and realize that each one of us is unique.

Acknowledgement and validation of our differences is key to us cooperating harmoniously.

Take for example the woman who has had an abortion. Abortion in Bermuda and around the world is met with a disturbing array of stereotypes and prejudice, mainly from older or conservative individuals. They justify their opinions with either religion or personal beliefs. While everyone is entitled to their ideals, we should be careful that we do not impose it on others. Not everyone has the same values and it may happen that they are in dire circumstances in which an abortion is truly necessary.

Another example is the female immigrant. As a daughter of one, I am no stranger to the xenophobia that is running rampant in Bermuda and globally. We are quick to turn a blind eye to the ugly truth but in order for us to progress as a society, we must dispose of all anti-immigration mentalities and instead have room for acceptance and compassion. In many occasions, women leave their countries with their families or even by themselves, to escape poverty and/or give themselves or their children a better opportunity at a successful life. Not everyone is as fortunate as us, and it is imperative that we consider their trials and predicaments first with empathy and an open heart, not just from a superficial economical standpoint.

In closing, I believe that is important and relevant that I share this message of acceptance and duality. We simply cannot expect this patriarchal society to empower us if we do not empower one another. So for our first step, we must all lock hands with females island and worldwide in a show of solidarity and embrace each other for the amazing individuals that we are.