

“Wicked Witch of the West” and “The Cackle” were coined by male journalists to characterize Hillary Clinton during the 2008 election (Levy; Healy). Other media reports, written by men, similarly highlighted negative aspects of Clinton’s image, such as her cleavage showing (Givhan). Almost every media form sexualizes women, including television, music, movies, and advertisements (APA). With men outnumbering women in media and legal positions, women have minimal authority and are subjected to unfair treatment (Gray; “Women in the Law”). Because media outlets and legal issues are heavily influential in modern society, women and men must have equal involvement in order to uphold fundamental principles of a democracy.

In our democratic nation, equality is a core value, where every gender, religion, and race is equally represented. However, statistics prove otherwise; only about 36% of news writers, anchors, and reporters are women, yet our nation is comprised of approximately 51% women (Gray; Howden). The deficiency of female roles in the news industry affects a country’s culture, education, sports, economy, and politics. Female athletes, for example, are underreported and are portrayed stereotypically due to the domination of men in journalism (Shaller). Despite the rise of female participants in sports, media lacks coverage on female athletes, with merely 5% of Sports Illustrated covers from 2000 to 2005 featuring women (Shaller). Rather than being presented as strong and athletic, female athletes are often seen in stereotypical “sexy” poses (Shaller). Diversifying media employment is necessary to eliminate sexist treatment and provide adequate depictions of females.

Similar to gender involvement in the media, a disparity in legal occupations exists, with women constituting 36% of legal professions (“Women in the Law”). Legislature is essential to a democratic society because laws are applicable to everyone, provide protection, and specify

punishments. If women are unable to influence the lawmaking process, sexist laws could be established, such as one in Tuscon, Arizona: “women are not allowed to wear pants” (“Criminal Justice”). The underlying problem may be the treatment of women in this career. They tend to be paid significantly lower and are perceived as assistants, rather than equal to their male counterparts (Kitroeff). In addition, many women remarked on experiencing gender bias, harassment, lack of opportunities, and insensitive supervisors (Pounds). Gender imbalance in legal professions is a pressing issue, causing unreasonable legislation and sexism, and must be addressed.

The first step to increasing involvement of women in media and law is raising awareness, by promoting the equal importance of men and women in the workplace. This can be achieved through campaigns, programs, networking, and education. Programs will allow women to build confidence and engage in such roles. Further actions can be taken to mandate companies to hire a set percentage of women and provide equal treatment. These steps will empower women to participate and foster a nondiscriminating environment, ultimately closing the gap between men and women. Gender equality in media and legal roles is the embodiment of a democratic spirit and the freedom to express the unheard voices of women.

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