

Barcelona Alumni 2018: Tuning in to gender realities

Petit Palau, Palau de la Música

Vice-presidents,
speakers,
Director General,
board of trustees,
Alumni president,
alumni,
friends,

The comedian George Burns said, "the secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible!"

Do you know what the greatest mistake in speech-making is? Apart from being boring and long-winded, the main problem is that speakers often know less than their listeners, yet can't help but pontificate as if they had special insight into the truth.

If we were being honest, we should always start by recognizing, as in the lyrics of Raimon, the only certainty is the depth of our doubts.

Therefore, this president will not only try to avoid being tedious and long-winded, I can also assure you I have not taken the stage to enlighten you on issues of gender, or reveal some magic solution to discrimination.

I will instead reflect on the contributions and reflections of the speakers before me and to promise that I – we – will make the UOC work, or work even harder, towards tuning in to gender realities.

Because inequality between men and women must be understood as a structural and systemic deviation.

Inequality whose form and manifestations differ depending on the culture, country, society or context in which it arises, but always with the same constant element: less

access for women to rights and resources of all kinds.

As we are in the Petit Palau concert hall, allow me to illustrate this musically. Everyone has heard of Mozart: the child prodigy, musical genius, young, unequalled virtuoso performer, composer of astonishing pieces of music and a star who toured the great courts of Europe.

But possibly not everyone knows the first name preceding the famous surname: Maria Anna, Maria Anna Mozart.

The older sister of another composer you might have heard of: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

The younger brother was never in doubt: his big sister was the best. But when she turned 20, her father forbid her from composing or performing.

And her name has left no trace in the history of music.

I would like to think that today this silence would be impossible. I'd like to think that someone, or all of us, would raise our voices.

Protesting and denouncing is always a first step, the most urgent... but it is not enough if unaccompanied by actions and policies that bring about evolution in society, change its assumptions, and integrate and mainstream feminism.

And to be honest with you: we need help. We need help because we realize, myself above all, that we are working on sensitive, yet urgent, ground; where this uncertainty must not hinder us, but spur us on to become a standard-bearer for hope, social progress, equality and justice.

Because, institutionally, we know you are right, but we must first overcome caution and resistance to make way for proactive actions, based on firm convictions.

Historically, all progress in human, civil and political rights have been driven by small, aware vanguards from ethnic, social or cultural minorities.

However, today we are talking about a revolution that involves over half of humanity and which, due to its relevance, challenges every human being.

This is the great revolution still to come.

And its potential for change undoubtedly makes it one of our last hopes for renewal and improvement.

We face opposition of all kinds, some arising from well-known, traditional sexism, some camouflaged in shiny costumes.

But we also know that by our side we have allies and, if you pardon the expression, the times are on our side.

Today, mainstreaming a gender perspective in our thoughts and actions is not weird or exotic, ridiculous or barbaric.

It is the persistence of sexism which we must start to see as strange, exotic, ridiculous or barbaric.

The essayist E. B. White, a writer for The New Yorker and creator of Stuart Little, wrote, "Prejudice is a great time saver.

You can form opinions without having to get the facts." We would rather not save time. Given the choice, we place greater value on forming opinions based on fact and acting accordingly.

Aware that we are not ideal institutions, we seek to become active participants, acting decisively to ensure the University corrects today's gender discriminations and, through education, prevents those of tomorrow.

Because it is not a matter of fixing our own immediate environment, but of transcending it and making an impact on society.



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When the UOC establishes one of its goals for 2020 as strengthening the gender perspective as a value, we must do so looking both inwards and outwards.

Inwards because it involves every aspect of the organization: teaching, research, communication, management, human resources and data collection.

Outwards because the University is a transformer of society, thanks to its anti-systemic and disruptive character, not to mention its critical spirit. Without these traits, there would be no university.

If I may, I'd like to ask a favour of everyone here: do not change, because what we all must do is change society.

In the words of the philosopher Marina Garcés, who will be a professor at the UOC from the next academic year: "we do not need a new world: we need a world, this one, where we can live and fight for a decent life."

Therefore, for tuning in to gender realities to become more than just a slogan, it needs to be demonstrated in theory and in action, in goals and in practice, in daily life and in the future.

Because what has to change, to evolve, is society, not the women of today, and even less so those of tomorrow.

Thank you very much.