

---

UCF Forum

---

11-18-2015

## The Conversation That Determined My Views on Gender Equality

Elizabeth Santiago  
*University of Central Florida*

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum>

Information presented on this website is considered public information (unless otherwise noted) and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate byline/photo/image credit is requested. We recommend that UCF data be acquired directly from a UCF server and not through other sources that may change the data in some way. While UCF makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, various data such as names, telephone numbers, etc. may change prior to updating.

---

### STARS Citation

Santiago, Elizabeth, "The Conversation That Determined My Views on Gender Equality" (2015). *UCF Forum*. 19.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum/19>

This Opinion column is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in UCF Forum by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).



## The Conversation That Determined My Views on Gender Equality

By Elizabeth Santiago  
UCF Forum columnist

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

I will never forget the first time I had to think – and I mean really think – about gender equality.

It was after class during my senior year of high school and I was having a casual conversation with my literature teacher. I always enjoyed listening to her perspective on life and this time was no different. One topic led to another and somehow we landed on the topic of how a woman's clothing held the power to define her sexuality.

Up until this point I had never given it much thought. She asked me if a rape victim was at fault because she was wearing a skimpy top and a miniskirt. I remember answering that she wasn't at fault, but that she could have prevented it by wearing more conservative clothing.

She then flipped the script and asked me if a male rape victim was at fault because he wasn't wearing a shirt and his jeans were tight. Though the circumstances remained similar, my answers were not.

Those two questions impacted the way I thought from that point on.

I had never considered the double standard that seems to be an innate feature within us, as if it is a default setting that we need to switch off. We are so quick to judge a woman for her appearance but think little to nothing about a man's.

Why is it that when discussing whether Hillary Clinton would be suitable for the presidential office, her looks are brought up on national television news outlets?

Why is it that body shaming in the media is more prominent in females, or that the length of one's skirt gives anyone the right to determine the promiscuity of a woman?

CNN recently featured a story on Ariel Winter, an actress on the TV cast of *Modern Family*. In the article, she was praised for defending herself to the obscene comments made on an innocent picture of her wearing a bikini on a boat with her two nieces. People apparently thought it was acceptable to pass their own judgments about how she looked and what it said about her.

Instead of ignoring the comments, she took a stand for the many women who are tormented and judged on how they dress and look. Whether it is in politics, the entertainment industry, or even in the way we are seen in public, this double standard affects every woman.

This isn't anything new; one would think that this is a battle that has already been fought and put to rest. Yet there are more people with their default setting on who don't think consciously about the impact they have on this ongoing war.

It's time to change the notion that feminists are people who go around burning their bras and swearing off men. Feminism is defined as "advocating social, political, legal and economic rights for women equal to those of men" and it should be something that one is proud to be, regardless of gender. It makes me incredibly happy to see women confront reporters asking prejudiced questions, and defend themselves when they are unfairly portrayed. These are the simple actions that move us closer and closer to the equality of genders.

So, feel comfortable correcting people when necessary and make it a conversation among peers until it no longer needs to be one. Do not just brush this issue aside and think that it is an outdated topic.

Women, support one other instead of tearing each other down to get to the top; when one succeeds, we all do.

Men, don't just be bystanders to this cause for it is not a battle against genders. It is important to note that not all women are feminists and that not all men are sexist. This is about enlightening people and getting rid of the ignorance that restricts women.

In time, we will all reach a point where we are judged and paid by our qualifications and not discriminated dependent of our anatomical parts. One day, women can dress how they like without having to worry that they are "asking to be a victim."

Until then, we continue the fight.

*Elizabeth Santiago is a UCF junior majoring in psychology and a member of the President's Leadership Council. She can be reached at [easantiago7@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:easantiago7@knights.ucf.edu).*