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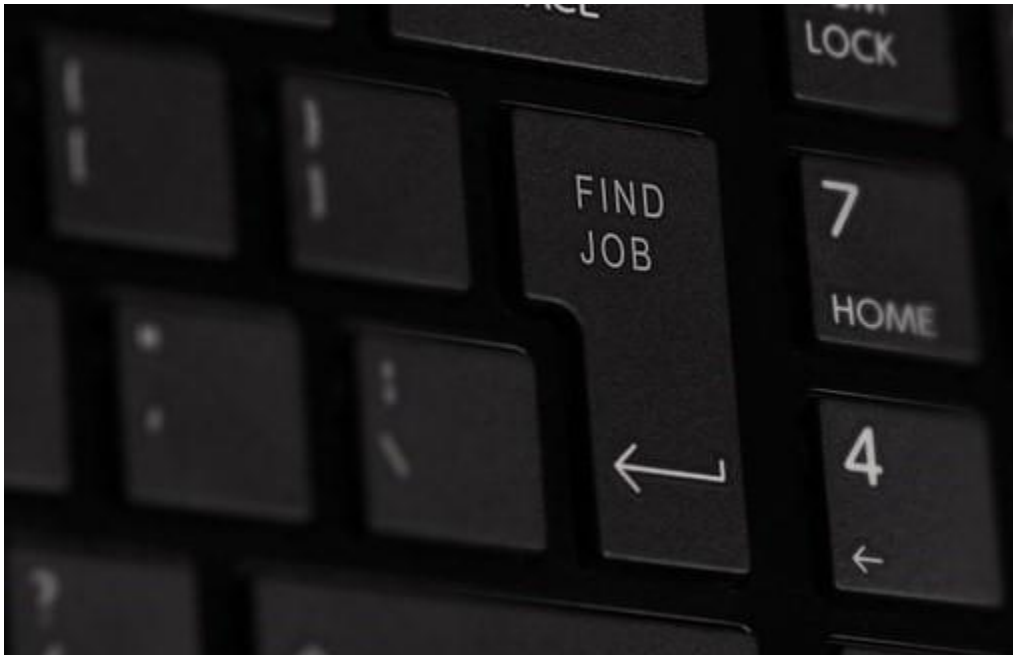
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The Irony: My Wife is Criticized for Some Career Decisions I'm Praised For

By Curtis Proctor
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, April 3, 2019



(Photo by Niekverlaan at pixabay)

We are living in such interesting times. For much of my life I can remember being able to have a conversation with someone, and whether we agreed or disagreed we walked away maybe not seeing eye-to-eye 100 percent but having heard each other.

Today our world is so polarizing and few take the time to hear a different point of view, so allow me to discuss feminism from my perspective.

I like to think of myself as a loving husband to an amazing wife, yet for the past six years I have watched her be far more amazing for far less professional compensation than she's worth. I've seen where choosing motherhood has caused her to have to make a zigzag of choices to fit into a system that doesn't fully support her as a professional or as a mother, eventually choosing to walk away from the maze and focus on graduate school with the hopes that would level the career playing field.

I could write a whole other column about that, but it would also be written by me and I didn't want to have to mansplain for anyone.

However, there is a bit of irony in the fact that when it comes to choices and sacrifices. It's amazing how I would be praised for making half of the decisions my wife has to make but is criticized for, such as choosing a schedule that allows more time with family and to pursue educational opportunities or changing from an overly time-consuming career for one that provides flexibility for our ever-changing family needs. Instead, she is labeled and considered to be "settling" or "unstable" in her career for recognizing that the demands don't allow our kids to have the kind of present parents we want.

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As I reflect on her experiences as a woman, woman of color and immigrant, I often think about when we met: We were teaching the same courses in the same department with the same credentials. We both had great evaluations and she even had a few awards and recognition that I didn't have. Yet when we divulged our salaries for the first time in order to plan our wedding, we learned that I made \$7,000 more.

She was disappointed. I wasn't. I can't say that I have always been appreciative of the differences of her experiences, but I can say that I am becoming increasingly more aware of her special brand of resilience.

Having two daughters requires me to pause and think about what my wife's experience will mean for them in the future. I realize that the role I play will mean more than being a good dad; it will be convincing them that they are great before the outside world tries to undermine that concept.

It also means that I have to raise their brother in a way that supports this greatness, as well. I will have to teach him that there is fine line between masculinity and toxic masculinity.

As I reflect on my thoughts and sort out my feelings on the gender pay gap, feminism, #MeToo and toxic masculinity, I realize that still I have some work to do in this area. That work begins at home, yet I recognize the responsibility to be an active ally and use my platform to draw attention to these paradigms every chance I get.

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