

Free equal rights for women term paper sample

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



The fight for equal rights for women can be said to have existed since the dawn of civilization and a stratified culture based on patriarchal ideals of male supremacy; despite the tremendous advances that have been made since that time, there are still many instances of inequality based on gender. Social, economic and political stratification based on gender are still alive and well, though the past hundred years have seen incredible strides being made on the part of women's rights. Many believe that gender equality has been successfully achieved, or that women should not get equal rights. These opinions are both inaccurate and outdated; women are still discriminated against in many facets of global life, and they deserve to be given equal rights to men in society.

There are still numerous problems to face in the realm of women's rights, not the least of which include wage inequality and domestic violence. American society currently experiences a substantial wage gap between men and women, with women earning only 81% of earnings compared to men in 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). The 'glass ceiling' is still a clear and present phenomenon within American working culture, as women are prevented from advancing in the ranks within public and private enterprises because of the organizational and social barriers that come from male-dominated workplaces (Berg 97).

Socially, sexism is still a highly prevalent phenomenon, though it may seem less apparent than it used to. Sexism typically takes two forms: first, there is hostile sexism, which is the type more easily identified and condemned by most (Glick & Fiske 109). Hostile sexism involves active antipathy towards women, and an inability to respect women's capacity to be independent and

equal in skill to men. While this is easy to spot, benevolent sexism is much more sneaky and insidious; this happens when men and women are celebrated and rewarded for behaving in ways that cater to patriarchal notions of women and traditional gender roles. For instance, benevolent sexism occurs when a man offers to offer a women protection and safety because they do not think she can accomplish things on their own (Glick & Fiske 109). While intentions may be honorable on the surface, those who perform benevolent sexism may be upholding patriarchal values that prevent women from getting the chance to show their equal status.

One particular barrier to women's equality is the enigma of what to do about pregnant women in the workplace; there are many instances of gender inequality present in workplace treatment in working mothers. According to Offer and Schneider, " despite similarities in total workloads by gender, the division of labor between men and women among dual-earner families remains inequitable," showing that, despite the same amount of work being done by men and women, the amount of work carried out by women is still immense and unequally rewarded (809). Furthermore, appropriate leave and care is not granted to pregnant women, and women will often be terminated or cut out of a prospective job because male supervisors presume they will stop working once they become pregnant (Offer & Schneider 810).

Despite the relatively uncontroversial nature of gender equality, there are many who resist the idea of granting equal rights to women. These individuals uphold traditional gender roles and norms, believing that men and women have certain inalienable differences that cannot be reconciled (Ickes 71). According to Ickes, the push for gender equality does not trump

the biological ‘truths’ of certain gender’s stereotypical attraction to masculine or feminine traits of the opposite gender; to that end, gender equality would ‘break’ relationships by eliminating the dominant or submissive factors people look for in their partners (71). Many argue, for religious or social reasons, that gender roles are good because they keep men and women in their proper places, allowing men to do their preferred duty of working and performing more manual tasks, with women focusing on being homemakers and mothers (Read 209).

While this argument may have some instinctive truth to it, this paints too simplistic and unequal a picture of relationships and gender roles. Icke himself notes that, despite the initial allure of traditional gender roles and norms, these relationships tend to become unsatisfying if the roles are kept up, as women become stifled and dissatisfied in their positions (Icke 83). The evidence surrounding the importance of biological differences between men and women are subjective and circumstantial at best, and not sufficient for maintaining the existing social and economic barriers that exist between men and women. If men and women are to be equal, they must be treated equally in relationships and the workplace.

One of the greatest hurdles that women must overcome to achieve equal rights is domestic violence, which is one of the harshest and most frequent examples of sexism that persists in American society. Domestic violence is more often than not male-on-female, with men attacking, raping and sexually assaulting women at epidemic levels (Alhabib, Nur & Jones 369).

While reports of domestic violence are high, projected rates are even higher due to the tendency for women to not report most cases of abuse for fear of

reprisal; to that end, domestic and sexual abuse is so prevalent so as to not even have accurate numbers to evaluate it (Alhabib, Nur & Jones 381). These instances of sexual violence affect more than just women; taxpayers must pay millions of dollars each year to fund the legal costs of pursuing domestic violence cases and prosecuting offenders. To that end, achieving equal rights for women is imperative for both sexes not just morally, but financially as well.

One way in which equal rights for women must still be attained is in granting them a safe, comfortable status in the US military. Currently, women in the military face significant issues, not the least of which includes unprecedented rates of rape and sexual assault – often by superior officers (Ash, 2013). Military culture amplifies the already-significant attributes of rape culture in America with its uniquely male-dominated structure and tendency to condition officers and soldiers to become aggressive and physically fit. Rape statistics and military sexual harassment of women are unusually high, with a large culture of silence that leads women to have no resources or recourse when seeking help from a sexually abusive encounter with their superior officers (Ash, 2013).

Both in and out of the military, rape culture has a significant effect on women's ability to feel comfortable and equal in modern society; men are often able to get away with sexual misconduct due to the expectation that men expect sex from women, and that women should be forced to wear more conservative clothing or not travel alone in order to be safe. Men are thought to be blameless for their actions in the culture of rape, thought to be victims of women who entice them and falsely 'cry rape' in order to get out

of trouble, or who are thought to secretly want sex from men even when they say no (Cole 78). These instances blame the victim, and only serve to absolve the rapist of responsibility. The culture that facilitates this kind of sexual assault must be addressed comprehensively and aggressively in order to secure equal rights for women.

Many people believe in equal rights for women, but believe that women have largely already achieved it; for all intents and purposes, sexism is dead. In the last hundred years, women have achieved equal suffrage, and the feminist movement of the 1960s has led to an increasing of women's rights, including having more women in the workplace and in higher positions of power, and so on. With these strides, it is easy to say that women have the same rights and opportunities men do (Berg 17). Efforts since these major strides have involved second and third-wave feminism, which many men feel is hostile and anti-men, leading them to oppose any more equal rights for women. If women are given any more rights than they already have, that would place them above men, which would constitute reverse sexism. Again, these perspectives are mistaken – no changes are being advocated for that would actually put women above men in the social order, just reduce the remaining instances of gender inequality still existing in American society. Despite the minor and misguided objections of some who would argue otherwise, equal rights for women is something that is both valuable and something we still need to achieve. Domestic violence, sexual abuse and wage inequality are still extremely prevalent and ongoing phenomenon within American culture, not to mention the world, and so the fight for gender equality must continue apace. While there are those who believe that

equal rights has already been achieved, and that those who continue to argue for equal rights are making a big deal out of nothing, these ideas could not be any more mistaken. No longer does society have to tolerate the systemic intolerance of men against women; only when women are granted the same opportunities and are treated the same way as men will true equality be reached.

Works Cited

- Alhabib, S., Nur, U., & Jones, R. " Domestic Violence Against Women: Systematic Review of Prevalence Studies." *Journal of Family Violence*, 25(4), 369-382. 2010. Print.
- Berg, Barbara J. *Sexism in America: Alive, Well, and Ruining our Future*. Chicago Review Press, 2009. Print.
- Cole, J; Logan, TK. " Negotiating the challenges of multidisciplinary responses to sexual assault victims: sexual assault nurse examiner and victim advocacy programs." *Research in Nursing and Health* 31 (1) (2008): 76-85.
- Glick, Peter and Susan T. Fiske. " An Ambivalent Alliance: Hostile and Benevolent Sexism as Complementary Justifications for Gender Inequality." *American Psychologist* 56(2), pp. 109-118. 2001. Print.
- Ickes, William. " Traditional Gender Roles: Do They Make, and Then Break, our Relationships?"
- Offer, S., & Schneider, B. " Revisiting the gender gap in time-use patterns: Multitasking and well-being among mothers and fathers in dual-earner families." *American Sociological Review* 76(6), pp. 809-933, 2011. Print.
- Arab-American Women." *Sociology of Religion* 64(2) (2003): 201-222.

U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “ Women in the Labor Force: A Databook.”

U. S. Department of

Labor, December 2011. Report 1034.

Violence against women: health consequences. World Health Organization, 1997. Print.