



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE - GLOBAL COMMUNITY: -

An Oakland University Symposium -

Benjamin Eveslage

Introduction

Women and girls are the world's largest minority, a minority that continues to face wide-ranging inequality and discrimination in work, politics, and family life. This discrimination is often fostered by existing social and cultural norms that require reassessment. This continued inequality remains a poignant and looming moral imperative for awareness and change, a need that catalyzed the 2012 symposium on "Empowering Women in the Global Community." This report of the symposium is designed to keep these issues on the minds of those in the Oakland University community.

Women living in developed nations continue to face a host of gendered and sometimes "transparent" barriers in life such as "the glass ceiling" in business and additional inequalities of equal pay, political representation, and reproductive health. These limitations are "transparent" because they allude to the social norms, structures, and mindsets that have fostered gender inequity, but not identifiable laws or policies necessarily. As a result for women, the *possibility* for success has been

equalized—which was not always the case in the United States—yet women are still disadvantaged by cultural attitudes and prejudices. This has created transparent but strong blockages that have remained generally unnoticed by large segments of society, business leadership, and political representation. For nations with these patriarchal societies, barriers have eroded the value of equality, limited economic growth, and diminished their image as role models for other aspiring societies.

Further, the gendered inequalities found in developed nations are combined with severely expanded and more apparent barriers for women in poorer nations. The immediate issues facing women more globally and transnationally include sex trafficking, lack of economic opportunity, and a heightened rate of domestic abuse, childhood pregnancy, less education, and many other hardships. Patriarchal societies the world over demonstrate the lingering structural blockages for women, blockages that call upon each one of us to act to counter the oppressive prevailing realities for women.

Responding to this systemic issue, an army of dynamic and inspiring solutions is progressing globally. Human rights advocates are beginning to use the power of the media and international institutions to achieve common goals by pooling their resources. Economic empowerment through micro-loans provided by organizations like *Kiva* is an example. Other solutions include providing vocational training for women, childhood education for girls, and legal representation and health-care options for women of lower socio-economic status.

In wealthier nations, some programs have pioneered the use of social media, education, and networking to harness the social capital of empowered men and women to act for the benefit of those less empowered. In early March 2012, *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* hosted the “Women in the World Summit¹” in New York City attracting women’s rights advocates

¹ Data source for “Women in the World” and for future summits: <http://womenintheworld.org/>.



Oakland University Student Congress
and symposium organizers

such as Hillary Clinton, Angelina Jolie, Meryl Streep, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee, among many others. From all corners of the globe, these advocates appeared on one stage, hand-in-hand with corporate donors and the media, to raise awareness and motivate actions on behalf of women's equality. Five Oakland University students, Joana Allamani, Michelle Alwardt, Benjamin Eveslage, Elisa Malile, and Samantha Wolf, attended the summit in New York and brought their experiences back to Oakland University to plan and host a similar event to educate and empower fellow students and community members.

On March 21, 2012, Oakland University students—through the Oakland University Student Congress—hosted the inaugural “2012 Oakland Symposium” on “Empowering Women in the Global Community.” The symposium brought together academics, business professionals, and some of metro Detroit's foremost gender equality leaders and advocates. Nine panels were formed to focus on specific aspects of the broad topic of global women's empowerment (see Symposium Program at the end of this article).



Figure 3. The 2012 Oakland Symposium Main Logo
(Graphic Designer: Alejandro Herrera)

Notable panelists included Auburn Hills Council Woman Anne Doyle, author of the book *POWERING UP!*; former Oakland University Board of Trustees chair and Detroit lawyer Henry Baskin, J.D.; Pulitzer Prize winner and co-author of *Half the Sky*, Sheryl WuDunn; director of the University of Michigan Law School's Human Trafficking clinic, Bridgette Carr, J.D.; and a number of professors and other community leaders with expertise on these issues.

The 2012 Oakland Symposium hosted at Oakland University became the place to learn about *Empowering Women in the Global Community* and to inspire a positive difference in our own Oakland community.

Sheryl WuDunn delivered the keynote address at the symposium at Meadow Brook Theatre, which was followed by eight discussion panels and workshops free to Oakland University students, faculty, staff, and community members. The night concluded with a benefit dinner and panel on "Shattering the

SYMPOSIUM AGENDA	
8:00AM	CHECK@NIO PENS, MEADOW BROOK THEATRE
9:00 – 10:30AM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS& BOOKSIGNING BY SHERYLWUDUNN
9:45AM	CHECK@NIMOVES, BASE OF STAIRCASE, OAKLAND CENTER
10:45 – 11:45AM	INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOPS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOT FOR SALE II – SEX TRAFFICKING AWARENESS, BANQUET ROOM B WITH SHERYL WUDUNN & BRIDGETTE CARR • WOMEN OVERCOMING SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY, GOLD ROOM C WITH ADRIENE LIM & JOCELYN GIANGRANDE
12:00 – 1:00PM	LUNCH OPTIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LUNCH & DEBRIEFING, BANQUET ROOM B • LUNCH AND PANEL: WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES, FIRESIDE LOUNGE
1:15 – 2:15PM	CONCURRENT PANEL SESSION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HALF THE GLOBE - GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES 101, BANQUET ROOM B WITH SUZANNE SPENCER-WOOD, LAURA LANDOLT, & LINDA BENSON • EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH THE LEGAL SYSTEM, GOLD ROOM C WITH DIANE HARTMUS, HENRY BASKIN, & KATHERINE STRICKFADEN
2:30 – 3:30PM	CONCURRENT PANEL SESSION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THE FACE OF SOCIETY – WOMEN IN POLITICS & MEDIA, BANQUET ROOM B WITH TERRI TOWNER, ROBIN SCHWARTZ, ANNE DOYLE, & JOANNA VANRAAPHORST • BREAKING THE CYCLE – IMPOVERISHMENT TO EMPOWERMENT, FIRESIDE LOUNGE WITH CHARLES SPURLOCK, BETH MORRISON, DEIRDRE GREENE GROVES, & VENKATESH CHANDRASEKARAN • RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES – ISLAM, CATHOLICISM & JUDAISM, ROOM 129 WITH CHARLES MABEE, DORIT EDUT, LAYLA SAATCHI, & LISA BROWN
3:30 – 5:00PM	QUIDREAM DAY – NETWORKING AND INSPIRING, OAKLAND ROOM
5:30 – 7:00PM	WOMEN IN BUSINESS BENEFIT DINNER, MEADOW BROOK I
	WITH MOHAN TANNIRU, MAMATHA CHAMARTHI, VANKATESH CHANDRASEKAREN, & CAROLYN WOZNICKI
7:30 – 10:00PM	GRIZZPOSÉ: BENEFIT FASHION SHOW, GOLD ROOMS



OAKLAND SYMPOSIUM: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2012

Symposium Program -

Glass Ceiling” about women breaking barriers in the American corporate world.

Six panelists who presented at the symposium have composed written portions that describe their speaking topics and represent the diversity of the program’s topics. The first four

pieces are arranged to sequence from a global perspective about Sheryl WuDunn's presentation to a corporate focus in pieces written by Jocelyn Giangrande, Mamatha Chamarthi, and Robin Schwartz. The next two pieces written by Henry Baskin and Deirdre Greene Groves place the topics of empowerment in a Michigan and Detroit context. Adriene Lim of Oakland University wrote the concluding piece, which serves as an inclusive abstract summarizing many of the issues introduced throughout the symposium.

Sheryl WuDunn on “Why Women Are The Key To The Future”²

Sheryl WuDunn was the keynote speaker for the 2012 Oakland Symposium and panelist in the “Not For Sale II, Sex Trafficking Awareness” panel. She was the first Asian American reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize, awarded for her reportage of the Tiananmen Square protests in China. She is also president of TripleEdge, a social investing consultancy; Senior Fellow at Yale University; senior managing director at Mid-Market Securities and the best-selling author of Half the Sky with her husband Nicholas Kristof. Her keynote presentation at Oakland University focused on the global picture of women's empowerment and she challenged the audience to engage in a more active role in this vital movement.

Half the Sky, co-authored by Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof, investigates the harsh realities women face globally. As a result of WuDunn's research for *Half the Sky*, she found overwhelming evidence pointing to the fundamental moral challenge of our century—gender inequity.

The stories of resilient and courageous women described in *Half the Sky* were vignettes pointing to the larger reality: that

² Benjamin Eveslage compiled the written contribution from WuDunn's talk at Oakland University along with additional content from previous talks by WuDunn and Kristof.



Sheryl WuDunn at Oakland University
speaking about Dai Manju

women and girls are significantly disadvantaged simply because of their gender. However, as her research findings also supported, this challenge was more than just a moral problem; oppression of women is an economic problem too. WuDunn argued that the most effective way to fight global poverty is to unleash the potential of women.

In her presentation, women were not simply victims of this worldwide problem, but rather women were also the solution—*the key to the future*.

As WuDunn and Kristof described in a 2009 talk in Col-



Sheryl WuDunn signs her book
“Half the Sky” for keynote attendees

orado³, the inspiration behind *Half the Sky* started in 1989 after they reported on the Tiananmen Square protests. At that time, the whole world focused on the youth who were killed in China. However, it was their experiences after the Chinese government violently cracked down on the protesters that led them to uncover the real story of the century.

WuDunn noted that Mao Zedong was quoted as saying “Women hold up half the sky.” He not only educated girls, but he also advocated for girls to move from remote villages to work in factories. That is why China is the largest producer of clothes, at 26.6% of the world supply in 2004.⁴ The Chinese economic juggernaut we are now familiar with was literally jump-started on the backs of women.

³ Video of Wudunn and Kristof speaking engagement: Vimeo source (2009).

⁴ Data source on China’s clothes exports: International Labour Organization.

Now, with the One Child Policy, many Chinese prefer boys to girls, especially in rural areas. As a result of the male-preference in China, the sonogram has been a particularly devastating innovation in its effect on female children. WuDunn said that because of this machine, you have peasants saying, “now we don’t have to have girls.’. . . That is not a sustainable model!”

In a TEDGlobal talk in 2010 WuDunn said, “demographers have shown that there are anywhere between 60 million and 100 million missing females in the current population⁵.” This is due in part to male gender-preference. Therefore, men actually outnumber women internationally, contrary to popular belief.

These astounding realizations led Nicholas and WuDunn to further their investigation of the dynamic of women’s oppression and later write *Half the Sky*. Included below are some notable points from WuDunn’s presentation at Oakland University.

While writing for the *New York Times*, WuDunn traveled to inland China on assignment. In Hubei province, she met a 13 year old girl named Dai Manju who lived in the remote mountains with her two brothers, both parents, her aunt, and a pig. There was no running water or electricity. Dai’s parents stopped sending her to class after 6th grade, despite her being the best student in the class. WuDunn wrote about Dai in the *New York Times* and readers contributed upwards of \$10,000. Dai was able to graduate from elementary school—the first in her family—due to the scholarships awarded by donors.

WuDunn later described that Dai went on to junior high, high school, vocational school, and found a job at a Taiwanese factory in Guangdong Province. Dai sent money back to her parents in the village and they built a house with electricity. She found jobs for her friends who also benefited from the

⁵ Video of WuDunn TEDGlobal Talk: TED source (2010).



Sheryl WuDunn speaks on a panel with Bridgette Carr
about sex trafficking

scholarships. WuDunn concluded, “That’s the power of girls’ education.”

However, it is not only education that is needed. For instance, WuDunn said that many people would not believe how well educated the women are in Saudi Arabia, yet the society still needs to incorporate women into the workforce in order for them to become productive members of society.

While in Ethiopia, WuDunn met Mahabuba. At the age of 13, Mahabuba was married against her will, got pregnant, and went to the bush to have the baby. As a result of childbirth, she had an obstructed fistula, from which the baby died. The obstructed fistula meant she was incontinent.

WuDunn described in detail to the audience at Oakland University the following story. The villagers believed Mahabuba was cursed. They put her in a small hut at the edge of the village without a door. At night she fought off hyenas with a stick, and by morning she crawled to a foreign missionary in a village 30 miles away. Staff at the missionary took her to a



Bridgette Carr of University of Michigan Law School's Human Trafficking Clinic speaks on sex trafficking

nearby hospital in Addis Abba where her fistula was repaired by a \$350 operation. In the process, doctors at the Addis Abba hospital found that she was not only a survivor, but also clever. She became a nurse at that hospital and she is now saving lives of thousands of other women and girls. Mahabuba has become part of the solution, not the problem. She moved out of a vicious cycle into a virtuous cycle.

Much of the poverty apparent in the developing world is a result of low incomes. We all know that, but poverty is also a result of poor spending decisions. WuDun said she calls this "the dirty little secret of development." Families that earn below \$2 a day per person spend about 2% on educating their children. However 20% of the low incomes is spent on a wasteful combination of alcohol, cigarettes, prostitution, sugary drinks, and extravagant festivals. If only 4% was transferred from the category of wasteful expenditures into education, it would have a transformative effect. Because women are shown to make financial decisions based on family needs, WuDunn

suggested that giving women control over family finances would precipitate this kind of effect.

In the 2009 talk in Colorado, Nicholas Kristof talked about how empowering women has also been shown to help remedy security issues and increase aid-effectiveness. He said that because girls were educated in Bangladesh, the society has been able to stave off fundamentalism and increase economic productivity. Now, “more high school students in Bangladesh are female than male, which is an extraordinary achievement for a Muslim developing country,” said Kristof. Also, aid organizations have found that a lack of iodine in the diets of inland villagers inhibits the fetal brain development of girls. This iodine scarcity results in an average 10–15 point reduction in IQ scores later in a girl’s life, explained Kristof. It would cost just two cents per person per year to iodize the food supply. These are just some of the many options researchers are finding that empowers women and entire economies, with relatively little investment.

However, WuDunn said at the TEDGlobal talk, “I want to give you a reality check, U.S. aid [and] helping people is not easy.” She suggested that aid does not always work and some researchers and writers point this out, including the book called *Dead Aid* (2009) or William Easterly’s book *The White Man’s Burden* (2006) that criticizes foreign aid. To a degree, WuDunn suggested that she could sympathize with such arguments. WuDunn herself experienced a number of failed initiatives in the developing world. Yet, as the international development community progresses, WuDunn offered that we should learn from these mistakes and *improve*—“You don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater—you actually improve.” Improvement is key, but furthermore, the moral and economic issues of gender inequity that WuDunn presented at Oakland University were too large to ignore.

WuDunn concluded by saying, “Why should you care?” Her reason was an even simpler than the moral imperative and economic benefits of empowering women. She said that research has shown that “once you have your material needs

taken care of . . . there are very few things in life that can actually elevate your level of happiness. One of those things is contributing to a cause larger than yourself.”

“So here is the cause. Join the movement. Feel happier and help save the world.”

—SHERYL WUDUNN

Since the 2012 Oakland Symposium, Sheryl WuDunn has galvanized a global movement to empower women called, “The Half the Sky Movement” led by both Nicholas Kristof and herself, but also gathering the likes of Desmond Tutu, Melinda Gates, and Hilary Clinton to become activists for the cause. The “Half the Sky” PBS documentary premiered on October 1 & 2, 2012. More information can be found online at halfttheskymovement.org.

“Socialization of Women: How It Impacts Us in the World of Work”

by Jocelyn Giangrande

Jocelyn Giangrande gave a presentation as part of the panel titled “Women Overcoming Social Challenges in the 21st Century.” She described the social constructs that have been placed on women and how this socialization impacts them at work and in business. She is a career expert, speaker, and author of the book What’s in Your Sandwich? 10 Surefire Ingredients for Career Success. She launched her company SASHE, LLC in 2008 for career guidance, training, and coaching. She has been featured in Women’s Day and HR Magazine.

From an early age girls and boys are taught values that impact us in the world of work. Many social psychologists believe that socialization starts at birth when girls are dressed in pink and boys in blue. According to Pat Heim in her book, *“Hardball for Women, Winning at the Game of Business,”* girls are socialized to be compliant, cooperative and nurturing. Boys on the

other hand, are socialized to be independent, assertive and un-emotional.

Socialization also occurs in the classroom where studies have shown that boys are encouraged to communicate more than girls. Often, boys who call out answers are rewarded whereas more girls are told to follow the rules by raising hands. This also plays out in colleges where studies have shown that professors take male contributions more seriously and allow them to dominate discussions. However, females were interrupted and asked less challenging questions. Thus girls learn to be less assertive and behave and boys learn to get their voices and accomplishments heard.

Also in the classroom, rewards and punishments differ between boys and girls. According to a study by Sadker, girls tend to be rewarded for nonacademic achievements, whereas boys are rewarded for academic achievement and performance. When it comes to discipline, boys are given harsher punishments than girls, allowing them to have thicker skin over time.

How girls and boys play also contributes to the difference in socialization. Most girls engage in passive play where all are equal and everyone wins. On the contrary, boys learn games that are competitive with winners and losers. This leads to girls learning that cooperation is more important than competition. Boys learn that competition is important; however, they learn how to lose, making them better equipped to handle conflict and failure.

Although this acculturation may serve us well in some settings, it counts against us in the world of work. Most workplace cultures are built to conform to more males-like values of assertiveness, competition and problem-solving. When women enter the workplace, we are often ill-equipped. To be successful and earn one's worth, one must know how to compete and assert oneself. However, the way in which women are acculturated, they learn values that are not often rewarded such as being nice, getting along with others, waiting your turn and avoiding conflict.

The workplace rarely rewards those who consistently fol-

low the rules and fail to assert themselves. Because most women learn that rules are important, they often work hard proving technical skills. Promoting accomplishments is foreign to most women. Therefore, accomplishments and good performance often go unnoticed. Women are also less likely to assert themselves when it comes to compensation.

Although women make up more than half of the labor force, they still have not made the strides that men have made in the workplace. Socialization plays a significant role in how women conduct themselves professionally, how they are treated, and how they are rewarded. The socialization of women is an important contributor to workplace success.

“Breaking Stereotypes: Strategies for Success”

by Mamatha Chamarthi

Mamatha Chamarthi spoke in the final panel of the symposium titled “Shattering the Glass Ceiling: Women in Business Benefit Dinner” at Meadow Brook Hall. She is the vice president and chief information officer for Consumers Energy. She also serves as board member for the Michigan Council for Women in Technology (MCWT) and member of the Wall Street Journal Executive Taskforce for Women in the Economy.

Empowering women is not a “woman’s” cause, nor a “social” cause. While aiding the empowerment of women indeed benefits women, it ultimately benefits the global business community. Empowering women to reach for and attain positions of influence in the workforce recognizes the value of diversity. Therefore, empowering women is an economic cause.

Women today are the key influencers of purchase decisions. In the auto arena, women influence 80 percent of all car purchases⁶, and account for 85 percent of all consumer pur-

⁶ *Forbes*, 2010.



Mamatha Chamarthi speaks at the -
Women in Business Benefit Dinner -

chases⁷. Companies with a stake in capturing the power of the female market segment must align with that same segment in their own companies by hiring and empowering women as key contributors to the company's success.

Companies that do embrace the contributions of women are rewarded. Organizational Health Index (OHI) measures external orientation, coordination, control and six other factors. According to a McKinsey study⁸, companies with three or more women in top positions scored higher in OHI. Companies with high OHI displayed superior financial performance.

Beneficial attributes that women bring to the workforce include exceptional leadership abilities. Competencies in this area include intellectual stimulation, inspiration, participatory

⁷ *Competitive Edge Magazine* and *EPM's Marketing to Women*.

⁸ OHI & Successful Leadership Data Source: 2011 McKinsey Study "Women in U.S. Economy."

decision-making, and setting expectations and rewards. Women also are skilled networkers and visionaries in strategic and operational thinking.

Despite obvious benefits, empowering women is not a tactic universally employed in business today. We can review some sobering statistics. By comparing the global employment rate, of which 64 percent are women, we see that the U.S. lags behind considerably at 47 percent⁹. To illustrate this, as talent enters the pipeline, many companies hire equal numbers of men and women. But as employees move up the ladder, the number of women in leadership roles starts to wane. Women represent 53 percent of new hires; 37 percent are in middle management (a key first step in career advancement); 26 percent are in a VP or senior role; 14 percent are in an executive or CEO role; and only three percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women.

How do we, as a society, help women “shatter the glass ceiling”? Drawing on my own experience, it begins with a commitment to breaking stereotypes and working to change institutional mindsets. In particular, a woman’s career development must be approached with a number of strategies in mind.

As a woman, I have seen that it is important for us to be confident in our qualifications and capabilities. For an optimal work-life balance, we should set expectations *after* we land the job. Also, don’t be afraid to take chances and do not say *no* to any opportunity. It is also important for women to contribute to productivity improvements in the workplace. For this reason, it is very beneficial for women to train in disciplines with impact on productivity such as finance, professional services, and science and technology. Women should also actively pursue a mentor, become mentors themselves, and always share their knowledge with others.

Also, women should not forget to reach out for help. No one alone is perfect, but by building strong and sincere rela-

⁹ U.S. Data Source on women in workplace: 2011 McKinsey Study “Women in U.S. Economy.”

tionships with their resources, networks and mentors, women can invest in that network for assistance *before* asking for favors. Lastly, women can move upward into new roles by selling themselves on their *potential*, not just past or current experience.

For leaders, promote women based on potential and intervene at critical career points. Also be a mentor, sponsor others to provide opportunities, and serve as role models.

In conclusion, parents, teach your children early that nothing is off limits to any gender.

“Women in Broadcasting”

by Robin Schwartz

Robin Schwartz spoke in the panel “The Face of Society: Women in Politics and Media.” Her presentation discussed the role of women in the male-dominated U.S. media industry and her own history in media. She is a reporter and weekend news anchor for Fox 2 Detroit. The Associated Press has honored her and she has won five Emmys, most recently for “Recession Widows,” covering the impact of the recession on families and lives in metro Detroit.

As a weekend anchor/reporter at Fox 2 News in Detroit with more than 20 years of experience in broadcasting, I look back and marvel at how far women in my field have come. I started at Fox 2 in 1998, about 50 years after the evening news first began. Back then, only male anchors held the coveted positions on the network news, people like Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather, and Peter Jennings. It actually wasn’t until 1976 that ABC hired Barbara Walters as the first female network news co-anchor at a record-setting salary of a \$1 million a year. She’s spoken openly about how difficult it was. Her co-anchor Harry Reasoner was insulted to be sharing the spotlight with a woman, he was hostile to her on the air, and there was actually a rule that she was not allowed to ask the first three questions

during any in-studio interview. During one interview, she offered this advice to women trying to get jobs in broadcasting: “Just work harder than everybody. You’re not gonna get it by whining . . . and you’re not gonna get it by shouting . . . you’re not gonna get it by quitting . . . you’re gonna get it by being there . . . and I think that’s what happened with me.”

I have early pioneers like Barbara Walters to thank for paving the way for me and the countless other women in broadcasting today. Fran Harris of Westland was reportedly the first woman to do radio and TV news in the Detroit area back in the 1940’s. She also created the first “courtroom” television programs, a little-known fact about a woman whose idea is still popular to this day. According to the latest survey on women in television and radio news, 97 percent of stations have women on staff, women make up about 39 percent of the workforce, and 28 percent of news directors are women. The people who conducted the survey noted the number of women in broadcasting seems to be dropping by a small percentage. Possible reasons given were that women were more likely to lose their jobs during the economic downturn over the last few years. Or—more women could be leaving the business because more stations are requiring reporters to carry their own cameras and shoot stories themselves (instead of having a photographer)—or because of the family—“unfriendly” nature of the business—the crazy hours, working holidays, nights, early mornings, weekends, etc. They’re continuing to watch to see if it’s a trend.

Even with our great strides, women in broadcasting still face several challenges. It’s hard to be a working mom! Even though Barbara Walters landed that million dollar contract back in 1976—salaries still are not comparable. In many cases, men still make more for the same jobs. Broadcasting is also difficult business for women as they age. But, statistics and my experience show there are plenty of opportunities for women in this field if they choose this challenging, exciting and exhilarating career path. I’m certainly glad I did.

“Growing Women’s Leadership and Entrepreneurial Abilities in Greater Detroit”

by Deirdre Green Groves

Deirdre Greene Groves presented her work in the panel titled “Breaking the Cycle: Impoverishment to Empowerment.” Her discussion focused on how the social capital of women can be used in the revitalization of metro Detroit. She is the executive director of The Collaborative Group and Challenge Detroit, founded in Birmingham, Michigan.

As part of The Collaborative Group, I lead a mission to “bring together the intellectual capital of [southeast Michigan’s] top talent to foster . . . prosperity in the region.” Growing the leadership and entrepreneurial abilities for women is an essential component of achieving our mission and the revitalization of Detroit.

The greater Detroit area has faced many issues throughout its history. Today, one of the largest issues we face is the “brain drain.” Despite the state that history left our city in, public and private sectors are investing in the physical and social values of our community to keep top talent here while drawing on fresh perspectives.

Challenge Detroit, an initiative of The Collaborative Group, is at the forefront of this mission. In partnership 30 organizations, Challenge Detroit was launched in January 2012. The fellowship program received 900 applications and narrowed it down to the final 30 fellows who were invited to spend a year living, working, playing and giving in the greater Detroit area.

Each fellow works for a top company in an innovative, entrepreneurial role, receives a stipend to live in the city, engages in social and cultural activities, and gives their time and talent to monthly team challenge projects in partnership with local nonprofit organizations. The team challenges are the heart of Challenge Detroit focusing on issues and opportunities facing our region and utilizing our collective brainpower to develop

new ideas. The fellows also participate in a leadership development and mentorship program throughout the year to further hone their skills as ambassadors for our program and the city.

It's incredibly important to see the females in our program succeed so they are granted equal opportunities as future leaders in our community. As a woman, I recognize the importance of connecting our next generation of female leaders with the leadership and entrepreneurial opportunities found in Detroit. Like the men, the women in Challenge Detroit will benefit from the empowerment they find in the leadership and entrepreneurial abilities to be gained in our program. The effect will be transformative. We expect that these individuals will transfer the incredible opportunity they discover in Challenge Detroit and from Detroit to give back to the city through community engagement, mentorship, service, and leadership.

Efforts such as Challenge Detroit and other initiatives from leading organizations in the greater Detroit area, will guarantee a brighter future for the women in our community, the city of Detroit, and for ourselves.

“Gender Discrimination Task Force”

by Henry Baskin

Henry Baskin contributed his expertise in the panel titled “Empowering Women Through the Legal System” with Katherine Strickfaden, J.D. on the legal constraints and opportunities for women in Michigan. He was a former Oakland University Board of Trustees Chair (1996–2012). He has been named a “Super Lawyer” (2006–2012) and has been recognized as one of Michigan’s Ten Most influential Lawyers and a top divorce lawyer. His abstract below focuses specifically on the Gender Discrimination Task Force and its impact on Michigan law.

A Gender Discrimination Task Force was formed in 1989 by the Michigan Supreme Court in order to identify remedies

for the gender bias that existed generally in the law, and also to identify issues with regard to divorce litigation.

The Commission concluded that the manner in which the legal system handled personal relationships was strongly entrenched in traditional, archetypal, and outdated attitudes. While those attitudes may still exist today, the passage of legislation in 1994 eliminated some of the bias that was present. The legislation provided for the personal protection of abused and threatened persons who were in marriages and other relationships. The abused persons were, and still are, primarily women. They endured years of bias by legal and judicial systems that failed miserably to protect their rights.

Law enforcement and the judiciary had determined that domestic violence and/or abuse was to be treated as a “family matter.” Any report to law enforcement or the courts resulted in a “peace bond” or an admonition, without any thought toward preventing future violence or abuse, guided by the then-typical attitude that women do not enjoy equal protection by law when it came to family matters and personal relationships. The Michigan Personal Protection Orders which were promulgated in June of 1994 provided that the court and law enforcement would work co-jointly to make certain that all persons were equally treated and that there would be no discrimination in the issuance of personal protection orders.

The circuitous path of a prosecutor sending violated persons to the court, and the court referring them back to the prosecutor came to an end when it was suggested that upon proper showing, a personal protection order *would* issue, *would* enter the Law Enforcement Information Network, and *would* be treated as a major crime and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Michigan’s Personal Protection Order Legislation now provides protection to a spouse, a former spouse, an individual residing or having resided in the same household or an individual who had a child in common with the abuser. It also provides similar protection to those in dating relationships. The net effect of this legislation and the changing attitude of the ju-

diciary was to protect thousands of people who formerly had very little, if any, access to protection.

As a result, gender disparity and enforcement were challenged and changed. Although the use of personal protection orders is sometimes abused, it is nonetheless an effective tool in law enforcement and protection of individuals. The additional legislation went on to prevent stalking, defining it as a crime, and protected, to the extent possible, those persons who were subjected to deviant and socially unacceptable behavior.

The legislation reflected the beginning of what was part of a growing and continual change in attitude and respect for the stature of women in the law.

“Success and Adversity, Historic Race Relations in Detroit”

by Adriene Lim

Adriene Lim, in the panel “Women Overcoming Social Challenges in the 21st Century,” spoke on the role gender and race played in the shaping of today’s Detroit. As a resident of Detroit during the turbulence of race riots and “white-flight” she brought personal as well as academic experience to the discussion. The overarching themes of her presentation encompassed many of the far-reaching structural issues for women’s empowerment. Adriene Lim is the Dean of University Libraries at Oakland University.

Many women continue to confront challenges in our society, especially in relation to the socialization and stereotypes connected with differences in gender, race/ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. Framed in a personal, historical, and local context, my presentation examined the ways that imposed and assumed identities can both constrain and empower women. Cultural and societal norms, expectations, and systems interact to shape women’s lives, from the earliest moments as girls when they are expected to dress and behave in a certain



Oakland University Student Subha Hanif
at the Women in Business Benefit Dinner

way, to the racial and socioeconomic discrimination that they may face as woman workers in the world. Yet, for some women, becoming consciously aware of these forces may serve as the first act in “getting back their own heads”—a form of resistance to the sexist, racist, classist and heterosexist ideologies that continue to affect human society. I argued that women are not truly free as human beings, unless they are able to make conscious, fully informed choices in their lives, and that these choices cannot be realized without courageous intellectual exploration, study, and reflection.

ENDNOTE

The many presentations and discussions at the 2012 Oakland Symposium contributed to an inspiring learning experience for the Student Body and the greater community of Oakland University. The topic of gender inequality resonated on campus for months afterwards—furthering the discussion and promotion of solutions to this truly global problem. Proceeds

from the symposium's benefit dinner and another event hosted by Oakland University's Residence Halls Association called "Grizzposé" raised \$4,300 for the *Schools for India* charity—designated to build a school to educate girls in rural India. The symposium was chiefly organized and partially funded by the Oakland University Student Congress with additional financial sponsorship from the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Dean of Students Office, Student Affairs Division, and Student Program Board. Additional student organizations, businesses, and community organizations contributed volunteers, promoted the event, and sponsored additional costs. The Oakland Symposium Committee thanks these sponsors, partners, and hosts for a very successful and rewarding program for the benefit of the Oakland University Student Body and larger "global community." Information on subsequent symposia at Oakland University as well as additional information on the Empowering Women in the Global Community symposium can be found at oakland.edu/symposium.

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Benjamin Eveslage, an Oakland University student majoring in International Relations, was the Symposium Director along with co-directors Elisa Malile and Samantha Wolf. After attending the Women in the World Summit in New York from sponsorship by the Provost's Office, these students used their experiences to coordinate the 2012 Oakland Symposium with the help of the Oakland University Student Congress and other partners.

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GRAPHICS

Any photos or graphics can be provided in full resolution. Additional photos from the symposium can be seen here: <http://photorick.net/P1203141/>.—Photo Credits to Richard Smith (photorick.com@gmail.com)