

PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Statement of Support for CEDAW and Women's Equality

Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) urges the immediate ratification by the U.S. Senate of the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A simple statement that women should be treated equally, however, does not give guidance to officials. These are further considerations for decision makers:

Family:

- Women should be equal partners with spouses or other adults in a family, with recognition of their sacrifices to bear and raise children.
- Families should be provided the resources and information to avoid trafficking of children or adults.

Health community:

- Birth control, with the right to choose abortion as backup, should be available to all females, without coercion.
- Health insurance and care should be available to all citizens of a country.
- The rate of underage pregnancies should be addressed by communities through education, access to reproductive health care, and social and family supports offered to youths of each gender.
- Medical professionals should discourage practices that harm females, such as FGM, scarring, prenatal sex selection, and unhealthy images.

Schools:

- Communities and nations should strive to make educational opportunities available to all, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, handicap, economic level, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Pregnant teens and young mothers should be retained in educational programs.

Neighborhoods/communities:

- Women should be educated not to discriminate against or mistreat other women.
- Neighborhood safety should be a local and national priority.
- Housing programs should not discriminate against families with children.

Churches:

- Women should be encouraged to participate in all church positions.
- Religious-based restrictions on women's freedom should be renounced.
- The golden rule, common to all major religions, should be applied to treatment of women.

Financial institutions:

- Investment in women-owned businesses and female-headed households should be encouraged.
- Adult women should be allowed to transact finances and property without approval of spouses or parents.

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The media:

- Women (and men) should be portrayed with dignity and fairness in all media.
- Women should be employed at all levels of each type of media, beyond tokenism.
- Unhealthy images of women should be replaced by realistic, healthy images.

Employers:

- Women should be given training and entry to nontraditional jobs, managerial jobs, and higher paying jobs.
- Maternity leave (and paternity leave) as well as family emergency leave should be recognized as being as necessary for employees as other health leave, leave for education, and leave for temporary disabilities.
- Ability to do a job should be the criterion for selection rather than gender, age, ethnicity, handicap, social status, religion, sexual orientation, or other considerations.

Criminal justice:

- Honor killings, rape (including marital rape), mutilation, all forms of discrimination, and sexual harassment should be prevented and punished.
- Gender disparities in trials and treatment should be eliminated.
- Inmates with children should be offered the services and supports they need to maintain and strengthen their positive contributions to their children's lives.

Governments:

- Support should be provided for those who care for elderly relatives, those with disabilities, and other dependents.
- Women should be allowed to participate on an equal basis in the military, government decision-making bodies, and grant opportunities.
- Financial security for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly should be provided by countries.

The individual:

- Women should take advantage of opportunities, make an effort to contribute, and view themselves as valuable parts of the nation and the world.

These considerations do not exclude other aspects of gender equality. They should be refined and expanded as our understanding of equity evolves.

PsySR seeks to bring greater psychological knowledge and public awareness to the issues highlighted in this statement. We thank Julie Carvalho for her leadership in this arena and in the preparation of this statement, first drafted in May 2008. For more information, please email women@psysr.org. We encourage new PsySR members to join in these efforts. Media inquiries are also welcome.