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Gender Inequality

As you take a look throughout history you can see that the idea of equality is somewhat of a myth. Despite the fact that it is the 21st century, there are many countries around the world that do not treat women equally. There are social standings that rate people on gender, race, sexuality and class. Although gender inequality may exist, there are some countries that have abandoned the idea and treat women equally. There are two plays in literature that indirectly display the idea of gender inequality/male dominance in a very clever way. The names of those plays are “Antigone” by Sophocles and “A Streetcar Named Desire” by Williams. Both of these plays depict the idea of male dominance over a female. Although these plays take place during different time periods, we will be able to see similarities in the ideas of male dominance and gender inequality which ultimately have carried over in the real world to this very day.

“Antigone” was written in 441 b.c, a time where male dominance was very well present. Although “Antigone” may have been about the fight between fate and free will, we can also dissect out the idea of male dominance when we see Ismene say “We are only women. We cannot fight with men” (Line 46-47) These lines are displayed in the beginning of the play and show us that it is not normal for a woman to fight against men as it seems to sound impossible to do so. Creon is making laws that completely disband the idea of

morality and tradition. As the play carries on we see Creon say “And no woman shall seduce us. If we must lose, Let’s lose to a man, at least! Is a woman stronger than we?”. (Lines 539-540) Here we have another display of gender inequality and male dominance where Creon believes that it is cowardly to lose a position of power to a woman. He would rather go down by a man than a woman because during this time period women were not considered to be as strong as men.

Whatever issues may have been going on between Antigone and Creon, we are able to characterize them as two individuals who are trying to prove a much bigger point and that is the idea of dominance over each other. In the time period this play takes place, Creon wants to live up to the idea of a man having his say over the actions of a woman and we can see that with the decisions he makes throughout the play. Whereas Antigone is trying to do the complete opposite and wants to rebel against Creon and be an example for others.

In “A Streetcar Named Desire” masculinity has a lot to do with Stanley’s character in a way in which it allows him to feel dominant over Stella. It is important to keep in mind that society is still living in a time where male dominance is in effect, which is why in this play we can also see women having the dependency on men. Women from this time period have gotten so used to living under a man and that is displayed by Stella’s need for Stanley. There are many moments in the play where we see Stanley’s actions as reckless and frightening towards females. The first example would be when Stanley aggressively throws the radio out of the window and attacks Stella. As Stanley’s friends may have pulled Stanley away we can see that Stella does not say a word because events like these may be normal. Blanche on the other hand is the complete

opposite and sees what is going on here and tries to wake Stella up. This is where we see Stella's dependence on Stanley. Deep down inside Stella knows what Stanley did was wrong but since this is taking place in 1947, it is not normal for a woman to leave her husband so she stays. Since society is set up in a way where it is not normally seen that a wife leaves her husband, she is forced to stay with him.

Destroying the radio and putting his hands-on Stella wasn't enough, he forces his way towards Blanche and rapes her. Stella is informed about Stanley's actions and she still does not believe Blanche story. Stella denies that the story holds any truth and continues to go on with her life meanwhile Blanche is sent to a mental institution. This is a clear example of Stella not being able to leave Stanley due to societies thoughts about men and the male dominance over females. After being physically abused by Stanley and having rape allegations put against your husband, it is very hard to believe that any women in the 21st century would want to deal and put up with that. But once again due to the time period they are in, Stella has no choice but to deny those allegations and continue on living with Stanley.

Given these incidents that display gender inequality and male dominance took place a very long time ago, there are countries that still treat women where they are less than a man. Countries such as China, Afghanistan, and India still practice the idea of women not having the right to be free and live life in equality. In an article written by Sumanjeet Singh called "The State of Gender Inequality in India" he states that "Gender inequality or the gender gap continues to be an immense issue of concern in India despite its achieving high rates of economic growth in recent years. Traditional patriarchal customs and norms have

relegated women to a secondary status within the household and workplace". The fact that women are given a secondary position at home and at work shows that women are still going through things that Antigone and Stella suffered with in the past. Being second in the household is basically saying that the man of the house is the only individual that has any say in what goes on much like how Creon felt when he was the king. This also has a direct relationship to Stella and Stanley because throughout out the play we rarely see Stella making any big decisions and if she does, she is shut down by Stanley due to the fact that she is given a secondary position at home. Sumanjeet also states that "According to the new (2015) report of the McKinsey Global Institute, 'The Power of Parity', India's global Gender Parity Score (GPS) is 0.48, which represents an "extremely high" level of gender inequality". With that score being extremely low it leaves Afghanistan as the only country who happens to be worse than India. It is easy to see that gender inequality tends to hover around countries that haven't been fully developed. They tend to carry on with the old beliefs of treating women less than men due to how things were set in place before them.

Even though many countries such as America and Canada have embodied the idea of equality through genders, there will always be areas where women will be treated with disrespect. "Antigone" and "A Streetcar Named Desire" are two plays that indirectly display how it was for a female to live in times like that. Antigone being second guessed by her sister for trying to go up against Creon and Creon saying things such as not wanting to lose to a woman. Examples like that clearly show the inequality between genders. Stanley being able to get away with doing anything because he knew no matter what happened Stella

would stay due to ideals and time period they lived in. Although gender inequality may be present as we speak, we are able to notice that it is an issue that has been around many years and will most likely stay unless something is done about it.

Works Cited Page

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