

## A Man's World

Do you believe it's hard to be a woman? For so many, it is a question worth debating. Because depending on the circumstances, the hardships of being a woman are higher or lower. But the difficulty in filling a woman's shoes is still present regardless. To Ayesha, who advocates as the current student trustee at the College of DuPage, the answer is a loud yes. She immigrated to the United States from Saudi Arabia around 2012. Even though she went through arduous cultural assimilation and understanding of the language at such a young age, the hardest part of her life is being a Muslim woman in a man's world like America.

Globally women are fighting for their rights to cover themselves how they want to. Especially Muslim women who cover themselves due to religion or by choice. We all want freedom, and women are no different from that. But, for some people, religious freedom does not apply to those who are non-Christians. Unfortunately for Ayesha, she got her hijab pulled off when she was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, leaving her confused. It was hard for her to understand what was happening and why. She was still trying to assimilate to a culture completely different from hers, and someone took the audacity to make her experience even harder. Why would someone approach another and dictate what they have to wear? Because when it comes to women, especially Muslim women, the world feels the power to rule over them. The prejudice in people against women is still predominant. Whatever they say does not matter. Instead, their "voices are not necessarily heard or asked for." However, Ayesha wears her hijab proudly every day. And she will not stop wearing it, because it is her decision to do so.

Being a woman by itself is not an easy task. The hardships of being a woman are not directly related to how they look, but it is also related to how they act based on what society tells

them to do. They are being criticized, sexualized, and controlled daily. And it is a current problem that we are still facing as a society. The experience that marked Ayesha the most was rebelling against her parents. In the early stages of her teenage years, she wanted to have a job to fend for herself. But her parents were opposed to the idea of her working. They stated that women have to stay at home. "I felt I was limited in my ability to do things because of my womanliness." She felt angry for so long. She was not allowed to do a task as ordinary as having a job. She shattered that stayed-at-home stereotype later on, which made her disconnect from herself and what she was used to seeing. It made her feel being a woman was lame. And even though it was more of a cultural difference, where the expectancy is for Islam women to stay at home, many women worldwide face these issues regardless of religion. They are getting ripped off because of their gender. Their capability is unlimited, but they are stopped from achieving their desires.

Ayesha finally got a job at a café in Wheaton, and she liked it. She felt more independent and ready for the new experiences ahead of her. But the hardships of life knocked on her door once again. She has an admirable desire to help people and a great sense of leadership, hence why she is the student trustee. So, the barista position was a perfect fit for her at the time. But her coworkers, who were predominantly men, did not see her actions or words as helpful. Instead, they saw it as a burden. They did not want to acknowledge her saying and decisions. Even though it was for the best outcome for the team, they decided to listen to the other's opinions, leaving her overlooked. It could have been a matter of age. But her male coworkers, who happened to be Ayesha's age, ideas were listened to and not hers. Many women around the world feel dissociated because of the feeling of being powerless. They become frustrated by the

inequity in the work field. And even though the world is slowly shifting for a brighter side, the expected results for a significant change are not yet present.

Aside from her work life, Ayesha grew up being politically involved. But she does not recommend politics because it is too dirty to handle. The people will try to bring anyone down so they can succeed. And it is a situation she experienced while working in a local government campaign around her high school time. A woman, who was part of the campaign, belittled her by talking behind her back. The woman explicitly said Ayesha was dragging her colleagues down because she is a Muslim woman. Society attacks her from everywhere. But she always stood up and kept going without caring much about the words. And women are constantly being categorized as something negative. If the subject is a man, the cards are in his favor. But when it is a woman, there is no clear pathway to take. There is always a bump on the road, a comment trying to bring them down, to make them feel useless. But women have the potential to be whatever they want. And Ayesha is not an exception. "I'm still considered an outcast for the things I do." Because the world does not like strong women in high positions. And unfortunately, some other women have been convinced of such a thing because society wants women to be the subordinate gender.

Women are portrayed as caretakers, sweet, and soft. But when they go to the outworld, they are called awful terms. And when it comes to leadership, they are being targeted the most. To Ayesha, representing a diverse student body like the College of DuPage has not been easy. But it has been a journey she cherishes with her heart. The problems arise when she speaks up. The world has not taken her words seriously. To an extent, it could have been because of her young age or because she is a person of color. But when the people who speak up are men, they are treated as the right ones, the assertive, and the powerful. So, the distinction between genders

has been clear. It is not a matter of color or age, but it is a matter of gender. Unfortunately, so many women feel distant from their “female energy.” Because it gives them that sense of being subordinate or less than others. They separate themselves from their personality traits and shift them “to be more masculine to be taken seriously.”

The world is full of prejudice against women. They are expected to be calm and gracious. They have to be the typical feminine housewives who take care of the house. But the majority of women, to not say all, do not want to stay at home and be the maid of a man. They want to be themselves and to not be judged because of that. The distinction between man and woman has slowly improved. Back in the day, women were not allowed to get out of the house without a man. Even though we do not have the same rules and expectations as before, there are still high expectations and demands towards women.

Currently, women face hardship in every aspect of their life. And the world still decides how they have to live their lives and how they should behave. They are targeted as overdramatic or hysteric when they do not get their voices heard. But when we add the Muslim religion to the mix, it is when the situation gets heavier and more complicated. Not only do they deal with the hardships of being a woman in a man’s world. But also, they have to face discrimination for their beliefs and decisions. They want to be happy with the lives they choose. But it is not a clear path. So, whenever we think the man has a hard life, remember the woman has it twice as difficult.