

A Letter to My Daughters: Stay Strong on this Long, Arduous Journey to Gender Parity

By Angus (Rory) Finlay



On March 8th the world will celebrate International Women's Day, the global observance of women's crusade for gender parity. The World Economic Forum states that parity for women on this planet will not be realized until approximately 2133. Given that the first Women's Day was observed as far back as February 28, 1909 it is inconceivable that today, in 2016, we are so far away –

117 years in fact – from reaching the goal. We are not even half way there! How can that be? It makes me wonder, if I were a woman in 2016 how would that make me feel?

But in fact, I am a man; one who logged twenty-two years in the commercial world of marketing and brand building, working for a handful of great iconic companies. But it was less about the product and more about the talent – the people part of what I did – that I always loved most about my work. So, luckily I successfully pivoted my career path and for the last five years my professional life has revolved around talent and executive recruitment. Now I get up every day to be the catalyst to change people's lives. It is through great people that great companies can impact lives for the better and it is through outstanding talent that outstanding companies can make the world a better place. But if I am changing the world through people why can't I bring parity to this critical divide that stymies women leaders each and every day?

As the father of two successful, highly curious daughters who are out there in this big global world crafting their hopes and dreams and embarking on their own very personal journeys as future leaders... I find the answers hard to come by.

How do I tell my 29 year old, UK-based biochemist daughter that she will never close the gap with her male counterparts? What do I say to my US-based, 26 year old agency brand planner whose career aspirations are unlimited? Will she be afforded the same opportunities for advancement as her male peers? Do I tell them "keep your chin up" – it is only another 117 years before women leaders achieve parity?

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International Women's Day gives us a great opportunity to collectively consider how we change the gender game together. While I aspire to change the world through great talent, I can't provide the silver bullet for the next generation of women leaders... not even my very own daughters, but I can try to offer some fatherly advice to young women confronting the same challenges as my own two girls... here goes:

YOU are the trailblazer: Be proud of the fact that you are blazing a trail for generations of women who will come after you. This is a tremendous responsibility and one of the most important contributions you can make to help change the world for women everywhere.

Never blink: You will face much adversity and many more challenges than I ever had to confront moving through my own career journey. They will come when you least expect them. Look them in the eye, don't blink, and be confident knowing you are on the right side of the argument.

Be courageous: Show courage and always push the boundaries to be comfortable doing it your way, so that when you make people feel uncomfortable you will know you are moving the peanut forward.

You are already a hero: Take strength from those who have gone before you, but know you are already a hero. Women leaders have changed the path before you, just as you are changing the world now.

Make yourself proud: Stay true to who you are. Be dedicated to your desires, beliefs and dreams. Learn to change your style when needed – just not yourself.

And know that, at the end of the day you make me proud. I know I speak for all fathers when I say that a father's pride is in watching you take the world by the horns. I live the world through you and through your eyes, and this is the gift you give back to me, for which I can never repay you.

Now my daughters, go blaze your trails!

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