

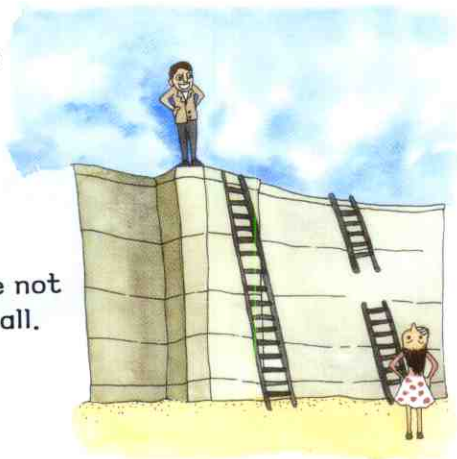
# ISSUE 38

## Socially Discriminated Against

**C**areer women, with advanced degrees, are boasting high incomes and professional positions. The existence of female professors, doctors, and lawyers is routine nowadays, and even woman CEOs are not considered unusual any more. Even so, feminists claim there are many social inequalities, while some men complain about modern women's aggressiveness. But it seems clear that "the good old days" of clearly defined, traditional women's roles will not be back any time soon.

Do you think women still face routine discrimination? In what areas do you think they are the most discriminated against? Give examples.

- (1) While being raised
- (2) Educational opportunities
- (3) In the job market
- (4) In marriage
- (5) In courtship
- (6) In status
- (7) Women in our society are not discriminated against at all.



# Sample Answers

(A) Why doesn't anyone ever talk about the ways men are discriminated against? Because the government and business are *keenly* aware of public opinion and seek to avoid *controversy*, they often hire and promote second-rate women instead of first-rate men. I don't want to be misunderstood: I have nothing against rewarding anyone for genuine merit, man or woman; but gender should never be part of the evaluation.

(B) I'm always amazed at how polite and well-raised our young girls are — and how wild their male siblings are in comparison. It seems very unfair to me that young ladies should be *repressed* in such an extreme degree, while boys are given *carte blanche* to do whatever they feel like. Unfortunately, these same patterns persist into adulthood as well. No wonder women have such *latent* hostility.

## Speak Your Mind

1. Do you think women are discriminated against in our society? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. What do people need to do to get equal rights?
3. Is it possible for the law to treat men and women the same? Why might this be more difficult than it seems at first?
4. Talk about the kinds of discrimination the poor face.
5. Talk about the kinds of discrimination the old must endure.
6. Talk about the kinds of discrimination against the handicapped.
7. Some men complain about *reverse* discrimination. What are they talking about?

→ **keenly** : very strongly

→ **controversy** : disagreement, esp. about a public policy or a moral issue that a lot of people have strong feelings about

→ **repress** : put (sb/sth) down; quell → **carte blanche** : freedom to choose

→ **latent** : present but not evident or active; hidden → **reverse** : opposite

# Speak Your Mind Helpers

## 1. Do you think women are discriminated against in our society? If so, how? If not, why not?

(A)

A generation ago, women had *justifiable* complaints. It was an *uphill* struggle for them to get a good, high-paying job and to get promoted into a better one. Many fields of employment were closed to them altogether. In their marital relations, they had fewer rights. The list goes on and on.... But that was then, this is now. Times have changed. There may still be *vestiges* of gender discrimination in our society, but they are disappearing fast.

(B)

I would say that the so-called "change" in gender relations is superficial at best. Firms and offices may have hired a few *token* female executives with genuine responsibility, but most of the women who work under them still have *menial* jobs. Females are still expected to be bread-makers rather than bread-earners, and are treated *accordingly*. Male-dominated society still has a long way to go before anything like true equality is achieved.

## 2. What do people need to do to get equal rights?

(A)

First, they need to realize how unequal the existing system actually is. Then they need to devote themselves to effective change. In their personal lives, they need the wisdom to be aware how their actions affect others; in their public lives, they need the courage to push hard for effective reform. Women have begun to take these actions in many societies, while other disadvantaged groups have not even taken the first step yet.

(B)

"Equality" itself is a very flexible goal. Do we want economic equality? Then, people are rewarded for their laziness and inability at the same rate as people with talent and energy. Perhaps we mean "equal opportunity," so external factors such as gender, age, geography, religion, nationality, or race are irrelevant to success. But does that mean that the truly incompetent are to be denied the basic necessities of life, since they are not skilled enough to "deserve" them?

→ **justifiable** : right or reasonable    → **uphill** : difficult

→ **vestige** : small part of (sth) that still remains when most of it no longer exists

→ **token** : symbolic    → **menial** : low or unimportant

→ **accordingly** : in a manner that fits

### 3. Is it possible for the law to treat men and women the same? Why might this be more difficult than it seems at first?

(A)

Although we like to believe that the law is designed to achieve justice, this notion is not always true. Many times laws are passed to protect or promote selfish interests. Even in the best circumstances, laws are likely to be *vague* and perhaps unenforceable. Finally, when we are considering new legislation, how do we all agree on what is both fair and *do-able*? After all, if we were all perfect we would not need any laws!

(B)

A fundamental problem is that men and women are truly not the same. There are many physical, biological, genetic, and psychological differences. On the basis of how incredibly unlike men and women are, despite their superficial similarity, it is hard to *conceive* how they can both be treated "equally," especially since sometimes the *imposition* of equal standards would in fact be *grossly* unfair. Just two examples: if all women were given the same muscular tests as men, few women could hope to pass; if breast-feeding were to be a job requirement, men would be excluded.

### 4. Talk about the kinds of discrimination the poor face.

(A)

The poor lack a good education, so it is very difficult for them to get jobs good enough to *lift* them out of poverty. And, of course, their children inherit the same disability, and the cycle of poverty is never broken.

(B)

Due to the high cost of health care, and miserable living conditions, poor people tend to be a lot sicker than more *affluent* people. As a result, they miss more days of work and perform less effectively on the job, which tends to *perpetuate* their financial disadvantage.

# Speak Your Mind

## Speak Your Mind Helpers

### 5. Talk about the kinds of discrimination the old must endure.

(A)

I don't understand the implication. It's my impression that old people are highly *revered* in our society. How could they be discriminated against? They get discounted travel and shopping privileges, on the subway young people like me give them our seats, and they never have to pay when they are in a group at a restaurant! If this is being "discriminated against," how do I *sign up*?

(B)

One does not have to be particularly old for the discrimination to begin. Even people in their early middle age find it hard to find a new job or life insurance. If they are single, it is almost impossible to find romance. This discrimination is particularly difficult for them to deal with if they have always been part of a privileged group in the past; but, it can only get worse as they continue to age. It's sad, really, considering the years of experience and *expertise* they have acquired.

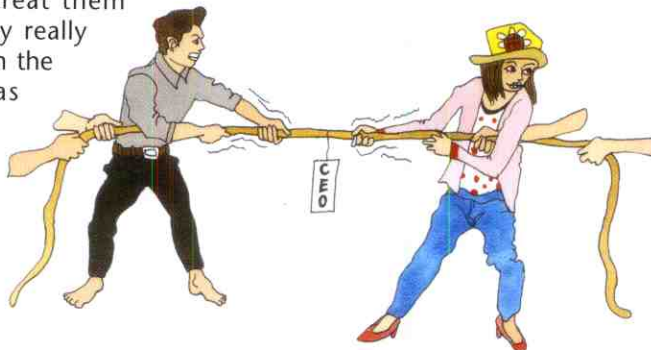
### 6. Talk about the kinds of discrimination against the handicapped.

(A)

People who walk, see, hear, and think normally have no idea how hard daily life can be for someone who is impaired in any of these *faculties*. If you doubt this, try to go upstairs in a wheelchair or cross the street safely with your eyes closed. Society not only discriminates against them but is also dangerous to them.

(B)

From the point of view of the handicapped, perhaps even worse than the actual job opportunities lost or the limited access to public facilities is the social *stigma*. Too many people avoid contact with them, as though their disability were *contagious*, or *go out of their way* to treat them differently, when all they really want is to be accepted on the same human basis as everyone else.



## 7. Some men complain about reverse discrimination. What are they talking about?

- F : Have you noticed any discrimination against men? Or, more to the point, have you yourself experienced any?
- M : No, I've never really paid attention. I thought that women were the ones who complain about being discriminated against.
- F : They do. And I think they have a perfect right to do so; they've been treated as second-class human beings for a long time.
- M : Always first-class in my book. I enjoy female company a lot more than *hanging out* with the boys.
- F : I hope that is not just some sort of *chauvinist* remark.
- M : Of course not! But what does this have to do with discrimination against men?
- F : I just started thinking about this a few days ago, and then I started to do some *digging*. According to the files in my office, almost every new *vacancy* and nearly all promotions in my company have gone to women. This seems pretty conclusive evidence that men are being discriminated against, doesn't it?
- M : I don't know. It depends. Are these women qualified to hold the positions they do?
- F : Yes, I think so. But men with the same qualifications have been *turned away*. It doesn't make sense.
- M : Maybe the company has a long history of favoring only men and is just trying to *make amends*.
- F : That's the classic "*affirmative action*" argument. There may be some element of justice to it, but it still doesn't make it right to the person being treated badly.
- M : I agree. But who ever said the world is a fair place? There's always a lot of *arbitrariness* in every situation.
- F : You're *mighty blasé* about this, I must say. I thought you'd be the first to cry out against unfairness in the workplace!
- M : I could never be the first, as long as you are around. You always lead the fight, even when I think you're wrong.
- F : So you think I'm wrong, do you?
- M : I don't know what to think. You may be perfectly correct for all I know. But I doubt that your case is very strong. The sample probably isn't large enough to be statistically *relevant*. If you are talking about, say, 20 cases in which women have been preferred over men, what if men got the jobs or promotions in the next 20 cases? Someone would probably suspect discrimination against women, but a longer view would reveal it to be a case of strictly equal opportunity.
- F : I don't think gender should be the reason for any job action. It doesn't matter whether the victims are male or female.
- M : I agree completely. I'm just not sure under the present circumstances if this qualifies as actual discrimination.