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'Injustices' chronicled Woman's philosophy is 'survival'

By Alice Hrnicek

A woman entering the working world two generations ago was less likely to notice and protest injustice, according to two women university employees.

Garnet Larson, a retired university instructor who is now a volunteer fellow at Centennial College, and Marilyn Kotaki, a counselor in special services at the Multi-Cultural Affairs Office, were Wednesday's Women/Speak lecturers.

Sponsored by Student Y and presented at noon in the Nebraska Union, this week's Women/Speak was entitled, "The Erosion of Women's Liberated Ideas Once They Enter the Work World." During the lecture, the women detailed some of the injustices they have encountered.

Larson said she has initiated numerous ideas and projects, but has had the credit taken away by a man.

Men take credit

"I can't say this hurts my feelings because this has happened all my life," she said.

Larson, who has been self-supporting since she was 17, has degrees in education, English, philosophy and social work at four different institutions. She said she never married and found that "trying for degrees was an excuse for staying in school."

Looking back, she said she should have entered the working world.

"I never had a great regard for doctorates because it doesn't take above average intelligence to get one," she said.

Larson taught while working on her doctorate which cost her an extra year, she said.

My dissertation got turned down the first time. But this other woman I was with got it right away. She went in and the professors pitied her. If I wanted my degree I should have gone in and cried."

Doctorate degree

But Larson said she submitted her dissertation with few modifications the next year and received her degree.

"My philosophy is a manner of survival," she stated. "I didn't expect to receive a great deal of credit where deserved because it was picked up by others. If it had been today, I would have been more upset."

Part of the reason for her philosophy she said, is that she had always been better able to relate to men than women.

"By going to men, my ideas were always looked at and even modified but almost always taken away," she said. "What was important was that if something was established that was valuable, it didn't matter where

the credit went."

Although in the past, Larson found men more frank and open than women, she said she believes that women no longer use the same tactics to protect their position.

"During the initial beginning where women were not common in the professional field, women looked to see whose place was where in a certain establishment. Women were in competition with men, because there were so few opportunities.

Unequal salaries

"I never got the same salary as men," she noted. As a full professor, she never received the top of the scale pay for associate professors, Larson said.

"If there was something you wanted to do, you weighed it against the money. It never occurred to us to challenge. Instead, I would go off and say it isn't worth it."

One of the conflicts Larson said she has encountered is living up to the unisex ideal and maintaining her femininity.

"I've always talked more easily to men, but in my relationships with men, I never played the role of woman. It startled me that living alone meant being unmarried."

Larson emphasized that the quality of intelligence is no different between men and women.

"Women may not necessarily compete with men but can take jobs on an equal pay basis," she said. "Must there be a reversal or is there some way men and women can come together and still have their sexualities but lose consciousness of it in certain situations?"

Working with men

Kotaki agreed that it is often easier to work with men, but added this is partially because she grew up with two brothers and no sisters.

"However, I often enjoy when I can share conversations with women, the thoughts and experiences women alone have in common," she said.

She added that a person has to realize that she will be working alone no matter who she is working with.

"The aloneness comes from competition," she said. "It's important to protect your vulnerability by keeping ideas to yourself so someone doesn't steal them. It can be a cruel world whether working with men or women."

The counselor received her masters degree in rehabilitative counseling from Michigan State University, she said. In her nine years as a working woman, she said she has learned to psyche herself up to be in certain situations.

"I was prepared to be the only woman or black in some situations, but I was not ready to be the first pregnant woman," Kotaki said.


After being employed at a social service agency in New York, she became aware of sexist comments made by men.

"The psychological preparation one needs, you're not even aware of until you encounter the situation," she noted.

One of the added difficulties she has incurred is raising a family.

"Because I'm more and more aware that I must spend time with my children, I'm finding it difficult," she said.

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short stuff

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