

# Equality enjoins encouragement, compassion

Although Americans are familiar with the suffragettes of the early 1900s, they may not be aware that women in countries such as Persia were raising the cry of liberty as early as 1844. (*Tahirih*, by Clara Edge)

Recently a man who returned from rural Africa said that it angers him when American women speak out about their bonds and the roles they are expected to play.

**lisa paulson**

American women don't know how good they have it, this man argued, compared with African women who are rigidly fixed in their housewife duties.

Even after efforts of women around the world for more than 100 years, I told him, women are nowhere near the

station that they need to attain as members of the progression of human achievement.

"Humanity is like a bird with its two wings—the one is male, the other, female. Unless both wings are strong and impelled by some common force, the bird cannot fly heavenward. According to the spirit of this age, women must

advance and fulfill their mission in all departments of life, becoming equal to men. They must be on the same level as men and enjoy equal rights."

—Abdu'l-Baha

Even though American women have progressed to a higher stage of equality than their African sisters, Americans are not having an easy time confronting the issue of equality.

America cannot decide how far equality should go. Great debates occur on whether women should crouch with

men in combat trenches, ready to kill the humans that they might otherwise nurture.

Writers portray scenarios of co-ed bathrooms and eternal house-husbands.

There is another alternative, one which may solve the problem of trying to universally define equality.

Legislating equality has already proved ineffective in racial issues and the difficulty in having to decide whether a particular situation or person is sexist or not is obvious.

If individuals would realize that the traditional male qualities of force and aggressiveness are increasingly unnecessary being supplanted by the traditionally female qualities of patience and understanding, it would be easier to allow equality of opportunity for men and women.

It is becoming apparent that women are often as capable as men in many areas involving skill, patience and judgment. And it is becoming obvious that men are questioning their stereotype as the sole supporter of the family, the unfeeling pillar of strength.

Instead of fighting this trend and ridiculing those women who value a career or those men who show compassion, people could ease this period of evolution.

They could use their own qualities of understanding to encourage men and women to find their stations in life.

A mutual understanding and encouragement would surely be a refreshing change from the confusion, squalling and resentment of change that is so common now.

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