

Kimberly 0:04

Welcome to the advancing women podcast. Where ambitious women come together to challenge the status quo, advance their careers and up level their lives. The advancing women podcast is hosted by gender equity expert and executive coach, Dr. Kimberly DeSimone

Kimberly 0:21

Welcome warriors to the advancing women podcast. So I had a different topic planned for this week's episode. But I've been kind of entrenched in discussions of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion this week. I also presented in a conference this week on the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in creating a culture of inclusivity in the classroom. And so DEI has been really on my mind and in my discussions a lot over the past few days. And I'm feeling compelled to talk about it today from the perspective specifically, of what it means for advancing women. I've shared in previous episodes plentiful research on the broken professional pipeline for women, how women have advanced, but only to a point, and how there are many social, cultural, institutional, and structural biases and barriers holding talented, qualified warrior women back. I try not to inundate with statistics and data points, but still provide a lot of the research. But for the purpose of context, when thinking about diversity, equity and inclusion and women's advancements, we have to talk about some key statistics and data points. They're very illustrated.

As recently as the 1950s, only about a quarter of married women worked outside of the home. Today, nearly three quarters of married women work outside the home, the workforce is about 48% women. That's an important statistic. Almost 51% of our population is women. Also, an important statistic. There are not many groups in the majority, albeit a slight majority, that are considered a minority group because they do not share the same power, privilege, rights and opportunities as men. Although women have made great strides in gaining access to education and employment, we continue to face significant hurdles that men generally do not confront. And that's just what the data and the research show. Despite women's growth in and attainment of overall equal representation in the workplace. They're hugely underrepresented in the upper echelons of organizations with women representing approximately 15% only a fortune 500 executive officers, less than 20% of top earners are women, and only 20% of board seats. In corporate America in the fortune 500 Leadership, there are 41 women in the role of CEO and that is a record number. And that record number of women puts us at about 8% of workforce almost 50% women with women highly represented at mid-level leadership yet at the top, and that's record breaking. And it's not just low at the CEO level. It's all executive levels. For example, in the financial services industry, women make up 61% of accountants and auditors, 53% of financial managers, and 37% of financial analysts, but they only make up around 13% of chief financial officers in fortune 500 companies. That's important because you think a lot about Okay, well maybe they just don't have the qualifications. But there are women in these roles, doing the types of work and gaining the types of experience that poised you to be in a position to move into a chief financial officer position in a fortune 500 company.

According to the women in the workplace study by leanin.org and McKinsey, for every 100 women promoted to manager 130 men are promoted, and the numbers dwindle exponentially, the higher you go up the pipeline. And before anyone starts thinking, well, there's more than just numbers of population. What about ability preparedness experience education, that too has changed gangbusters versus the outcome numbers. Women have made truly impressive educational gains. If you look, for example, at the type of education in schools where most CEOs graduate, you will find that they're most often have an MBA, Fortune 500 CEOs, I think it's about a third have MBAs far more than any other major or type of degree. The number of women enrolled in MBA programs has risen to around 40%. And the schools that train and graduate the most CEOs have even higher percentages of women graduating with MBAs. Where do most CEOs go to college? probably not going to be stunned by this number one Harvard

Kimberly 4:56

Harvard Business School MBAs number two, Stanford Harvard and Stanford apparently do an excellent job preparing and turning out CEOs. Currently a little more than 40% of Harvard MBAs graduated are women. Stanford is around the same and increasingly is putting out more than that. The current MBA class is 47% women. Women are taking on the

rigor, showing academic excellence to get into these top schools, which are quite challenging to get into spending 75 to \$100,000, to have what ends up being an 8% representation at that highest Echelon, CEO role that these types of schools are meant to prepare you for and put you in the game for to give you an at bat in those positions. And as most of you probably know, because you see it in your own industries, this is not just a corporate america problem. It's all professions, all domains, you can look at the legal profession. In 1959, when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was only one of nine women in her law school, you might have been able to make the argument that there were very few qualified women. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who by the way, worked like crazy against all odds to get into Harvard Law School, only to be constantly criticized for, quote, taking the spot from a man still struggled up against all of those biases and barriers. But today, women are making up 54% of law students. So there's much larger numbers of qualified women entering law firms. And yet, despite the larger number, only 20% are Equity Partners. And the reality is that the higher a woman rises in a law firm, the greater the chance that she will be the only woman in the room, or at least one of the only women in the room. I've seen it across multiple industries in my own personal journey.

First, in corporate America, where we know women are massively underrepresented at top levels, but also in academia. In academia, women have earned the majority of doctorates for eight consecutive years and still represent only 1/3 of full professors, which is that top level and around 30% of college presidents are women, well, more than 50% of heads of departments are women. So you see, again, that broken pipeline, women only make up around 30% of College Board of Directors, which also contributes to this bigger problem. In medicine, women represent 40% of all physicians and surgeons, but only 16% of permanent medical school deans. So when people talk about feeling things have gotten so much better, it's really important to note how that is part of the complaint, we are doing much better until it comes to transcending that glass ceiling to those top positions of power, pay and prestige. The data clearly shows that the problem persists, that women who are on the verge of achieving those highest level positions in corporate and other domains are not doing so at anywhere near the rates that one would expect. Given all of these changes, that pipeline remains broken. And so we often hear about how things are so much better. And I'll hear people say, people have even asked me, so what exactly is it that you want as though? All as well? And where's my gratitude for how much better things have gotten for women? What I like to answer when someone asks this somewhat condescending question, or this exasperated question of, well, what exactly is it that you want? I like to answer. I'm glad you asked. And then I like to go on and talk about exactly what I want. I want diversity, equity and inclusion, and most importantly, action that drives a more diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce and world. I like how Sheryl Sandberg Facebook CEO puts it give us a world where half our homes are run by men and half our institutions are run by women. I'm pretty sure that would be a better world. Yes, I guess I have the audacity to believe in and want women as 51% of the population should hold 50% of the wealth, power and prestige. So, when we hear diversity, equity, and inclusion, what do we mean, as it relates, I mean, in some cases, I feel like this is really become buzzwords versus the real call to action that they are meant to be. So I want to take a few minutes and break down each one and consider how it relates specifically to the advancement of women.

So let's start with diversity. This one's a little bit complicated. It seems to be going to result in skepticism and people are becoming almost immune to the word like it doesn't mean anything. But it is a very important word. Okay. It has a very powerful meaning at its core. It's about the numbers. To be sure we have to consider fully the role the numbers play, because numbers are about representation. We have to look to the literal On the representation of women and understand the importance of this, in terms of normalizing women in leadership roles,

Kimberly 10:10

we have to look to the literature on representation and understand the importance and significance and impact of representation in advancing women. The effect that it has the research that shows that more women results in a more successful environment at work have increased creativity increased innovation, better returns on financial ROI. And obviously, the more women at the highest levels, the more women are promoted to higher levels, and the more boys impact and the more seats at the table women have. So there's some really important variables related to diversity that we can't just toss out. And think of diversity is just a buzzword, having that representation is important. And there's some magic numbers in terms of representation. It's shown in the literature, for example, that having at least three

women on the board of directors has the biggest impact. That's where you start to see impact after three. And part of that is because that's where women at the table start to move from just being so grateful that they're there to feeling like they can challenge and push the status quo and try to move towards an impact positive change. Having women in those large enough numbers to challenge the existing paradigms is critical. And even though it's the lowest hanging fruit of diversity, equity and inclusion, we are even still struggling with the basics of representation. You hear all these positive numbers, all these advancements of women, they're a little suspicious when we look at the overall health of the pipeline to those top level paid prestige, power roles, where it continues to be eminently male and male dominated. Ruth Bader Ginsburg said women belong in all places where decisions are being made. This speaks to diversity, but also equity and inclusion. Do we have presence representation and voice a true seat at the table versus a token seat at the table, where we're there for optics, but not for the opinions we have and to bring about real change and real decision making. That's critical. That's where we shift from just diversity having representation to equity, which is about meaningful representation.

Equity versus equality is important to consider as well, because they're very different, but they are very important, both of them in their own right. Equality is a baseline. And it's a, again, more quantitative, it's aligned with diversity in terms of basic baseline fairness, and equity. So equal pay for the same work, for example, is a good equality goal. But it doesn't encompass the even higher echelon of equity. Because equity is a little bit more difficult than that it's a little bit more qualitative and quantitative, you have to look at not just giving people the same but giving people what they need to be successful. The ultimate measure of leadership should be must be how well we do at creating an environment conducive to the success of all, we can turn to many places that are excellent metaphors for workplace equity, and help explain the difference between equity and equality. If you're a parent, for example, you probably understand equity. Intuitively, we may love our children the same, but we certainly don't treat them the same all the time. Sure, there's an equality in terms of their baseline needs. But equity is about giving each child what they need to thrive. If one of your children needs math tutoring, you don't go out and get a tutor for the other child that's doing awesome and math that just doesn't need it. But you want to make sure you're being quote, fair. That's ridiculous. But this fallacy that equity and fairness are somehow opposed persists. You know, if we do it for one we have to do it for all right. No, actually, you don't just like with your children, you give them what they need, and what they need is different. And there's a host of reasons why they need different things. And our job as parents is to help our children be as successful as they can be, and to live the best life they can live. And the role of all leaders is to provide an environment where qualified and ambitious hard working individuals all have opportunities to advance and do as well as they can do within the organization. You can also look at gardening, that's one of my favorite metaphors for equity. If you're planting a garden, and you think about equality, and you say I have to treat every plant equal, they're all going to get the same sunshine. They're all going to get the same amount of water. They're all going to get the same amount of attention. What ends up happening as you might imagine some of the plants will thrive and grow and flourish. But some of the plants will die, because you can't treat them all the same because they have different needs. Different kinds of plants have different kinds of needs, okay? So you can't treat them all the same if you want your garden to flourish. And the same is true within the context of being in leadership, we as leaders have to think about how we create environments that remove barriers, and removing barriers is not accommodating, it's investing in potential.

And I think that's so important, I really am bothered by the language of accommodate, because I don't think it's the right word. And I think it has a connotation that suggests we're asking for something where I don't think that that's the case, it's about investing in potential. And if that means you have to as an organization make changes, adapt or pivot, then that's what it means. Accommodation language suggests laxing standards or unfairly expecting something when it truly is meant to mean and what it really means is to provide room for someone. If you look up the definition of accommodate it is to provide room for someone. It's not about me instead of you. It's about making room for me. Accommodating women within the workforce is not about women instead of men. It's about making room for women. Inclusion, and belonging is really the highest echelon of diversity, equity and inclusion. Cultural change activists, Verna Myers is often quoted for famously saying, quote, diversity is being invited to the party inclusion is being asked to dance. But I prefer to think about how this has inspired even better analogies for inclusion, diversity leader and inclusion trainer Daniel Juday notes, quote, inclusion isn't being asked to dance, it's choosing the music, or even better diversity is going

to a party inclusion is being a member of the party planning committee. And I love that it's deciding what kind of party it's going to be. Inclusion is about everyone having voice in the type of environment that they are in and how they can be most successful in that.

Kimberly 17:20

If we were creating the workforce today, in a world where both men and women work in equal numbers, were fathers want to be more involved in raising their children and women want to advance more professionally. Again, Sheryl Sandberg said, a truly equal world, that's inclusion. That's having a seat at the table, not as a guest at the table, a true seat as an equal at the table. When women want things to change in the workforce, it's not an accommodation, we're not guests in the world asking to come to the party, we're half the world's population asking for a world that works just as well. For us. That's not an accommodation. That is called humanity. Gender equality. And equity is not a female fight. It's a human fight. It's about creating an environment that works for all of us, not at the expense of some doing the same for everyone might be good for human resource people who want to make decision making and policy decisions easier. Presenting the same when it suits the argument and claiming the same as fair is nonsense. It's perfectly fair to have women doing the same job as men for less money, I guess all kinds of rationale is used to justify that difference, but ask for the structures to be changed or adapted. And that is when it becomes necessary for everything to be the same. This is same, disguised as fairness when it suits the existing power structure, and it's just not cutting it. It does not create an environment conducive to the success of all because as we know, different people, especially those from underrepresented groups, women, persons of color, often need more to be successful, because the traditional model of success was not designed by or for them.

This is not to blame or shame. It is what it is, or should I say it is what it was, we still have a workforce that was designed during a time that looked very different for our country. And so it continues to work well for those it was designed to work for. But as things have shifted, and we have a more diverse workforce with far more women working full time, women wanting to be advancing in that arena, men wanting to be having stronger partnerships in the home and wanting to be a stronger part of the lives and the raising of their children. Things have changed and that doesn't work anymore. So how do we get there? That's really the difficult question, right? Well, the first thing we need to do is create environments conducive to the success of all by meeting the needs of 21st century workforces. I'm tired of being fed a bunch of crap about not making accommodations, because that suggests that this is a man A world and those wanting to advance must adapt to the existing paradigm that was designed in a different time and no longer works for anyone, women or men. It results in a world where women who want to work and men who want to be more involved at home are both on successful where burnout, stress and poor mental and physical well being are the norm. And we're women and persons of color are not only unable to advance to those top levels, but also feel animosity, for even expecting things to change. We need to rewrite the rules when those rules perpetuate inequity and injustice. This idea that you can take the existing workforce designed originally around the homemaker, breadwinner model and just pour women in and stir will never work, especially not for women. You know how I know it's not working, we've been trying for half a century, and women keep stepping up to the task, getting the degrees, working hard overcoming the barriers, working, working, working.

And at the end of the day, when you look at those top levels, what we see is very, very little change and a very resilient pipeline to the top level positions of pay prestige and power. We need to realize that equity is about understanding how same doesn't work. And this is easier to fix than people want to admit. It's very frustrating to me, when people act like this is insurmountable. Right? So I hear a lot of the time things like, Well, you know, we're trying to get women caught up, we're trying to help with the pay gap. But then there's policies in place that do the exact opposite of that. And sometimes these are easy policies. And yet they're still there. And I can give you a perfect example of that. When we create an environment where we say, well, it's fair for everyone who gets promoted to get a percentage rates. Often organizations in an attempt to create more equitable raise and promotion structures will implement things like a percentage raise. So everyone, let's say at the manager level gets a 10% raise when they move to the director level, or anyone at the Associate Professor level gets a 10% raise when they get promoted to a full professor. This is creating a narrative that suggests it's fair because everyone gets the same percentage raise. But the thing is, when women have

historically been paid less than their male counterparts, that percentage increase isn't fair and equitable, because it continues to increase the pay gap. So 10% on the male employees higher salary is going to result in more money than the 10% raise that a person the woman at the lower salary is going to get. So you are not being fair, you are perpetuating the pay gap. We have to be really careful when we start disguising policies and behaviors that continue to perpetuate and exacerbate the problem as fair and equitable. And we need to challenge leaders to do better.

Kimberly 23:03

Next, we need to expect more. Inclusion is about culture, and who has the power and voice in the organization is part of that a seat at the table? being invited to the dance isn't enough. We can't be happy with taking the scraps thrown to us. We deserve and should expect more. So from now on, when people ask well, what exactly is it that you want in their exacerbated voice as though we couldn't possibly want more than what we have? I recommend answering I'm glad you asked then tell them it's not what you want. But what you expect, as an important, talented, critical part of the organization who brings immense value. Tell them you expect equal representation, voice pay and privilege. And tell them this as often as you can. Importantly, we need to be mindful of the unintended consequences, the fallout from COVID-19. This has had a negative impact on women in the workforce. I've talked in previous episodes about the burden of care, which is much higher for women than men that second shift. And that has increased significantly with COVID when we moved a lot of life to home, but the life of children going to school to the home. It was many women who ended up pulling out of the workforce. And we need to be sure that we're having the tough discussions to ensure that we have a strong recovery plan that includes on ramps to get women back to work. And to really look to the positive side of COVID, which is an increased understanding of how a flexible workforce can truly exist. I mean, there's been a lot of debunking that we cannot allow for flexibility but also maintain control and continue to progress and have high productivity and that is just not the case. But we have to think about in every way. How we are considering the ways to get women who have had to take a leave, whether it's because of COVID or anything back to work back into those positions of opportunity, we really need to think about how to address these problems. Because what happens is you have something like COVID, everyone's feeling better, but nobody wants to think about the fallout from so many women having to kind of take a step back or to even slow track themselves because of this, and how we're going to make sure we ratchet them back up to where they need to be. Finally, when people say what do you want? What's the goal, I would say normalization. And normalization is important, because that's when a phenomenon is no longer seen as extraordinary, exceptional or unconventional. So when you see a board with 10, or 11 men and one or two women, and it feels weird that might be when things have become more normal in terms of women having representation because right now when we see that we don't think anything of it, if you see 10 or 11, out of 12 men on a board, people don't even flinch. If you were to see 10 or 11 women on a board of 12 though, it would be really notable and you'd stop in your tracks, you'd wonder what was happening. Recently, Rosalyn Brewer, the CEO of Walgreens, and the Sunda brown docket, the CEO of TIAA made history as the first time in the fortune 500 that we have two black women CEOs, and it's newsworthy. 8% all time high women, CEOs, newsworthy, historical. That's what I mean when I talk about normalization, when a population that's 5050, male, female, and with women graduating and record numbers out of colleges, and we don't think that 8% is groundbreaking and extraordinary, that's when we will really be able to say that we have fixed the problem. When leadership looks more like the population being led, then maybe we can stop the fight and ratchet up the celebration. We cannot though we must not accept that this is as good as it gets. And it's anywhere near equitable or fair. We cannot be made to feel brainwashed almost into believing any messaging or narratives that suggests we should be grateful for what we have, just because it's better than it has been in the past. That's nonsense. Because we have a broken pipeline for women, where talented and qualified ambitious women, warrior women doing all this ask and often much more are failing to advance in their career paths, despite herculean efforts to those top earner, high prestige decision making roles, the highest impact levels in organizations.

Kimberly 27:53

And so each week, I leave you with a manifest statement, a key takeaway, and for this week, I'm turning to this call to action quote from political activist and warrior Angela Davis. I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept. For all you warriors listening who want to continue to transcend barriers and thrive, you won't want to miss next week's episodes, make sure to hit that subscribe button. For more

resources, you can visit my website [www dot advancing women podcast.com](http://www.advancingwomenpodcast.com) and connect on Instagram at [advancing women podcast](#). I love getting your feedback and ideas on topics you'd like to hear me cover in more depth or new topics you'd like me to explore. So please email me at Dr. De Simone at [advancing women podcast.com](mailto:drdesimone@advancingwomenpodcast.com) with your ideas and feedback. That's drdesimone@advancingwomenpodcast.com I just want to thank my producer Joe Jacobs, the audio warrior who wrote the music for this podcast. It's totally badass and I love it. And a huge thanks to Heather Harris, the creative warrior who designed the advancing woman podcast logo, and thanks to all of you for joining me here today.