

'Women Leading Social Change' Conference

Wednesday 8th July 2009
TUC – Congress House
Great Russell Street
London

*Independent – State School Partnerships:
Mulberry School for Girls, City of London School for Girls, Central Foundation School
for Girls, Channing School, Skinners Company School for Girls, Highbury Fields
School for Girls*

Rationale

The above-named six girls' schools are involved in a long-standing, successful partnership which promotes the high quality education for young women. Each school has its own distinctive ethos which reflects the particular community and area which they serve. Each school promotes the importance of leadership by young women in employment, in public and community life and family roles. Each school develops aspiration, confidence and high level communication skills amongst their pupils to enable them to succeed in future life. This project is designed to support these aims. Pupils are becoming increasingly aware of the global environment in which we live and that their lives are becoming evermore affected by the prevailing international socio-economic and political situation.

This conference is designed to support these aims, pupils are becoming increasingly aware of the social and global environment in which we live and that their lives are becoming evermore affected by the prevailing international socio-economic and political situation. The theme of the conference will focus on collective change and a celebration of women's action for social change. The three concerns of this conference will focus on:

1. Women campaigning to right a wrong
2. Women combating evil
3. Women tackling body image

By exploring the themes above the conference is designed to boost women's confidence, skills and participation and put equality at the heart of bargaining and organising strategies. The conference is constructed to promote the development of pupil voice in discovering the struggles made by women throughout history and in the present day. Many of these women who took action for social change saw themselves as 'ordinary' women fighting to write a wrong, but they were far from being ordinary and it is this that the conference aims to highlight and celebrate amongst pupils. This will support aspiration and demonstrate the potential for leading social change. Although we are keen to celebrate such efforts it would be foolish to think that discriminatory attitudes and practises have been seen off. Rather it is time for renewed focus on the subject of women in society – to take account of changing times, to draw together a range of initiatives that affect their lives and to identify the needs and interests of women today.

The conference also will address 'Body Image' as a theme as a communication tool to encourage conversation of an exceedingly difficult subject: body image and self – esteem. At a time when young women are growing up surrounding unattainable beauty standards, this will be an opportunity a chance for young women to hear from role models and make a significant positive impact on the self-image when they need it most. Inspired by Susie Orbach's book 'Bodies', the theme will explore body image and ask in terms of age, gender and cultural identity: What is a healthy body?

Conference Objectives

There are a number of educational objectives for young women at the conference:

1. To develop a consciousness of the concept of leading social change and the range of possibilities for taking action locally in their own community, nationally in corporate, public and political spheres and internationally as participants in a global society.
2. To create an understanding of leadership by women across the world and the diversity of issues faced by women and the power for self-determination
3. To become aware of the work by women in acting agents for positive social change in the world, learning through women from a diverse background.
4. To help young women build positive, self esteem by understanding and dealing with feelings and physical appearances, in particular weight and shape.
5. To consider their own leadership skills and skills in advocacy through:
 - Taking responsibility for the planning and organisation of the conference, supported by teachers
 - Learning through the experiences of the women they meet.
 - Following up on and disseminating what has been learned to others.

Associated Projects

1. 'Milestones: The Fight for the Partnership of Equals' film produced by Mulberry Films. An exploration of women in the workplace made by Mulberry School, Channing School, Skinners Company School for Girls and Highbury Fields. This film will signify women's struggles for equality at work.

2. 'Twenty One Twenty First Century Women' Exhibition by Alice Instone. Women appearing in the series include wife of current UK Prime Minister and lawyer Cherie Blair, music artist Annie Lennox, television presenter Fiona Bruce, barrister Baroness Helena Kennedy, author Jilly Cooper, fashion designer Nicole Farhi, pressure group director Shami Chakrabarti, healthcare chief executive Val Gooding and UK lottery chief executive Diane Thompson.

3. Magic Me Intergenerational Project. Feminist Utopia Postcards.

Speakers

Keynote Speaker – Pinky Lilani OBE on the theme of ‘Determination is the key to success’

Dr Katherine Rake OBE, Director Fawcett Society
‘Fawcett’s Campaign in closing the Pay Gap’

Kay Craberry CBE TUC Assistant General Secretary

Sheila Wild, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Baroness Lola Young

Dr. Susie Orbach, psychotherapist and visiting professor at LSE.

Prof. Angela McRobbie, Media and Communications, Goldsmiths – University of London

Chris Southam, Managing Director ‘Chill Out’ Image and Personal Development Consultants

Humera Khan, Activist and Educator, Founder of An-Nisa Society.

Ruth –Ann Lenga (TBC), Holocaust Educator

Shuheir Hammad (TBC) , American- Palestinian Poet