

Gender Equality: A Discussion with Gail Bindley-Taylor Sainte



On Thursday, March 08, 2018, Utah Valley University (UVU) had the privilege of hosting Gail Bindley-Taylor Sainte who spoke about gender equality and civil rights issues among other concerns of particular importance to a developing international community; she also spoke about the role that the United Nations plays in ensuring these things are addressed as well as specific programs that have been implemented. Bindley-Taylor Sainte is a native of Trinidad and Tobago and has cultivated an impressive career over 30 years. She served as the Deputy Chief of Public Information of the diplomatic mission based in Ethiopia, as well as an information officer of NGO relations at the United Nations beginning in 2007. Throughout her impressive career, she has served as a staff representative, as part of the staff union, as the first Vice-President and then as Secretary.

During her 30 year career, a hallmark of Bindley-Taylor Sainte's work has been the empowerment of women. While speaking to students of UVU, she posed thought-provoking questions about the impressions that students have about gender equality, the meaning of the word feminism and whether or not people consider themselves to be feminists. She, appropriately, was speaking on International Women's Day and some of the questions seemed to genuinely start people reflecting on their viewpoints. She placed a heavy emphasis on equality as opposed to putting women over men. She mentioned that some people are afraid of the word feminism because it in some contexts denotes putting men down, when the real goal of actual modern feminism is simple equality; equality of opportunity and mutual respect.

Gail Bindley-Taylor Sainte made mention of issues that remain relevant despite the progress and development of the modern world with respect to human rights and women's rights in particular. Specifically, she mentioned how many women still face a lack of genuine career prospects in specialized fields, a lack of childcare for working mothers' children in various fields, in some

aspects a lack of positive recognition for outstanding performance, and generally a poor outlook on women in some areas of the workforce. In the face of these systemic or societally constructed issues, Bindley-Taylor Sainte then discussed a few measures taken by the U.N. to promote gender and ethnic diversity. Mostly these efforts consist of increasing the frequency that people are exposed to the idea of diversity, including posters, videos and internet content that display an appropriate amount of gender diversity. Other ideas include having panel discussions or other gatherings where successes in diversity can be praised and discussed.

She also stressed how crucial it is for men, those in positions of leadership or power, as well as all others, to see *themselves* as playing a part in affecting positive change. Not only that, but it's vital to view gender equality as a positive and beneficial thing to all. Diversifying the workforce by genuinely incorporating more women brings ideas, beliefs and traits that otherwise would be absent. This enriches and advances society. Similar to how true democratic processes involve a diversity of representation for varying ideologies, workplaces should reflect similar diversity in representation for the genders. True gender equality is not achieved when women or men are barred from achievement on the basis of their gender, but when everyone enjoys equality of opportunity and privilege irrespective of their ethnicity or gender. Gail Bindley-Taylor Sainte is a voice for true equality.

Overall, Gail Bindley-Taylor Sainte's attitude was of a positive yet focused nature; understanding how far the world has come, but remaining aware of what else can be done. She has been a champion for not only women's rights, but genuine equality between the genders, respecting both women and men. It was a privilege to have her at UVU.

Erik Knighton, Utah Valley University student