

As A Matter of Fact, I Am A Woman: The Gender Disparity in Journalism

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By Kayla Green

(KIM)

“I always worked hard. I never felt that I had to work harder to compete with them. I worked harder to compete with everyone in my newsroom, whatever newsroom that was I wanted my story to be the lead, I wanted to have an exclusive. I worked really hard for me...”

(GINNY)

“I would be carrying the equipment out to go shooting and they would be like what are you doing and I would be like going on a shoot and they would say but you’re a girl. And I actually, this was probably rude of me but I couldn’t resist, I grabbed my breasts and said yes as a matter of fact I am a woman and then I would walk out the door because at that point it’s like what do you do with that.”

(MARY)

“My goal was to kind of forge my own path. People were very shocked, journalist kind of had a hard edge image to them...”

(KIM)

“I never saw it as well I have to work harder because I’m a woman, it’s just in my nature to work harder.”

(GINNY)

“I was kind of tired of them asking me, why can’t I shoot and edit? Why can’t I do that?”

(MARY)

“...people would always try to be discouraging like oh wow somebody as sweet as you wanting to go into the journalism field.”

VO

KIM YOUNG—GINNY ORZEL—AND MARY MCCRANK—ALL COME FROM VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS—BUT THESE THREE WOMEN HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN JUST THEIR CURRENT ROLES AS COLLEGE PROFESSORS.

THEY’RE ALL WOMEN WHO SPENT THEIR CAREERS WORKING IN THE MALE DOMINATED FIELD OF JOURNALISM.

WHILE YOUNG WAS A RADIO AND TELEVISION REPORTER—ORZEL WORKED BEHIND THE SCENES SHOOTING AND EDITING —AND MCCRANK WAS A PRINT

JOURNALIST—THEY ALL HAVE SIMILAR STORIES FROM THEIR TIME IN INDUSTRY.

WHILE YOUNG GREW UP IN A FAMILY THAT SUPPORTED HER DREAMS OF BECOMING A JOURNALIST—MCCRANK GREW UP IN A COMMUNITY THAT DIDN'T EXPECT IT AT ALL.

(KIM)

“I grew up with brothers I grew up in a family that was equal, my dad and my mom were equal partners in a marriage and in raising children, I never saw this. And there was no way I was going out into the world and letting that happen. It was just foreign to me, no way.”

(MARY)

“But not until I took a journalism class at Mercy High did I even realize it was an option because most women in my generation became educators, they went into that kind of a field, sort of a service oriented field like being nurses or business associates and I just knew that wasn't for me.”

“So I'm just to lucky to have been able to go into that field at the time when a lot of people from my background going to an all private all girls Catholic school most people wouldn't have found themselves into that field.”

VO

AND FIGURING OUT HOW TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS A WOMAN WASN'T-- AND STILL ISN'T-- EASY.

(GINNY)

“..I come in and I say it doesn't work this way, it works this way, and nobody listens to me, it's as if I didn't say anything and then I tell a male staff member or another male faculty member, he says it, all of a sudden everybody listens to me.”

(MARY)

“...I decided I wanted to go into hard news for a few reasons. One of which was I didn't want to be stereotyped as a female feature writer.”

(GINNY)

“So it took me 4 years to finally get the computers to have exactly what I requested previously, but they didn't believe me. Of course they fought me on it and I had to go back to the documentation, I think if I was a man it would've come much easier to me. I actually had to bring the dean in and have a conference with 2 people from IT and the dean of the school before I got them to listen to me. It was that intense. So it is annoying, it is frustrating...”

(MARY)

“I wanted the hard news stories, I wanted to get hard hitting information, and I wanted to kind of blaze my own trail and be a tough reporter. And so I made the conscious decision to actually go into hard news so that I wasn’t kept into a certain type of role.”

(GINNY)

“So I’m always having to prove that I am good enough, and I always feel like I have to work harder and have more knowledge because I’m not gonna be taken seriously. It’s like that my whole life.”

VO

YOUNG HAD A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE.

THROUGHOUT HER TIME IN TELEVISION NEWS—SHE WAS LUCKY TO WORK FOR MEN WHO TREATED HER AS AN EQUAL WHEN IT CAME TO STORY ASSIGNMENTS.

(KIM)

“I covered the political beat, I covered Buffalo city council, I covered murder, I didn’t do any of those- I never was pushed aside into a corner that was those frilly let’s give Kim children’s stories or whatever or the mommy beat. I have been very fortunate but that doesn’t mean I don’t know many of my friends who have not been so fortunate.”

VO

THESE WOMEN WHO WEREN’T AS FORTUNATE—INCLUDE THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE—AND HELPED FORGE A PATH FOR FUTURE FEMALE JOURNALISTS.

(KIM)

“I was kicking down doors long before there were doors to be kicked down. But before I did that there were people who busted through before me so I wasn’t that first crop.”

(MARY)

“It’s kind of funny because I grew up on Mary Tyler Moore so as much as my own tight knit Rochester community didn’t really see that as an option for young women, I never really saw an impediment to it.”

(KIM)

“Honestly when I went into the business there were role models. For me there was a reporter, Jessica Savage, she worked for NBC she was an amazing journalist. So I had role models and then subsequently women that I worked with in television who were older than I, they blew the doors down in local markets.”

VO

NOW—YOUNG—ORZEL—AND MCCRANK ARE ROLE MODELS THEMSELVES FOR THEIR STUDENTS—BUT GETTING HERE WASN’T EASY.

(MARY)

“Sometimes sources would try to put you off-guard. Oh what's a nice young girl like you doing this tough job, when you were asking them about closed door meetings and why they were holding them.”

(GINNY)

“Men would always offer to carry the equipment for me. And I would always politely say no thank you, no thank you and then one day I said do you ask men to carry their equipment and then I said why are you asking me? Do you think I'm incompetent to carry this equipment? And then it was like no no and these guys would back off.”

(KIM)

“I've had people proposition me, I've had people say things that are inappropriate and made me really uncomfortable. So while I say I'm strong, I don't think I handled those in the right way.”

(GINNY)

“When I worked with clients to shoot and edit, one of the things is you always put the mic up through somebody's shirt so you don't see the cord and it looks neater and it looks more professional. Well there were male clients who couldn't wait for me to mic them. I would show them how to do it, but they would prefer me putting my arms up their shirts to mic them and of course they would make all kinds of comments of like, you know as if I was sexually touching them when I was just trying to mic them.”

(KIM)

“...when you're covering stories you get cozy with the cops or cozy with judges, politicians and they feel like they can cross that line like they do with other people.”

(GINNY)

“...they would come in to watch a commercial or they would come in for a consultation on a script and they'd give me a big hug and they'd be arm in arm, they'd put their arm around me as they were talking and slowly but surely their arm would soon be touching my bottom and of course I would readjust it.”

(KIM)

“I had this attorney who ended up marrying the lead anchor at the station, he was a jackass and he said to me, we were at this event and he said oh weren't you the girl who left her heel prints on my mustang roof during prom or something, it was this really weird thing. And then they're delivering bread or something and he said hey Kim I got more on that loaf of bread alluding to the size of his penis...”

(GINNY)

“It was kind of one of those things where if you want a job you don’t say anything. This is what it is, and you deal with it, don’t say a word to anybody. Just keep your mouth shut.”

(KIM)

“...so you’re walking this fine line and because I felt like if I said you’re a jerk, you can’t talk to me that way then that source shuts down, then I don’t have that rallying kind of relationship so I took a lot of harassment that I probably shouldn’t have only to keep a relationship going knowing that they were brutish neanderthals.”

(KIM)

“...if I could talk to my young self I would say you know that’s inappropriate and you can’t let anyone talk to you like that, or grab you, or make lewd comments or other reporters. It’s just like this pen of wild animals.”

VO

EVEN THOUGH MCCRANK SAYS SHE DIDN’T FACE TOO MUCH DISCRIMINATION FOR BEING A WOMAN—SHE DID FACE A LOT OF IT WHEN SHE CAME OUT AS GAY.

SHE SAYS IT’S IMPORTANT TO HER TO LET PEOPLE KNOW WHO SHE IS UP FRONT—REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES.

(MARY)

“The way I see it is I wouldn’t want to work for someone who would discriminate anyway...if it wasn’t something that came up in conversation I may have not disclosed it but later on in life as you become more involved in the community and people know who you are, it would be very weird to not say to somebody oh hey you met my wife at a community action event last week, she was there with the bank and you were there with your nonprofit, it would be weird it would be almost like lying to not let somebody know that they knew my wife.”

VO

YOUNG ALSO SAYS STAYING TRUE TO YOURSELF IS IMPORTANT IN THIS BUSINESS.

AS A TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER—SHE WORKED WITH CONSULTANTS WHO TOLD HER WHICH COLOR LIPSTICK SHE SHOULD WEAR—CLOTHING ADVICE—AND HOW TO DO HER HAIR.

AS HARD AS IT WAS—YOUNG SET HER OWN PERSONAL LIMITS—AND DIDN’T SELL HER SOUL TO THE JOB.

(KIM)

“I knew that I had to present a certain image and so I understood that. I was open to that to a certain degree. Again when I was reporting on farming I wasn’t wearing blazers and suits and lipstick that matched the color of the grape crop that I was reporting on. I made it work for me. But then again when I was anchoring it’s a much different kind of dynamic. Everything is visual and I know what the disparity is. I know that my male counterpart got fat and bald and that just doesn’t play well. I saw friends of mine that lost their jobs at 50 because they were too old to be reporting anymore where my male fiends are still working. The disparity is great and real.”

VO

THE DISPARITY ALSO SHOWS UP IN PAYCHECKS.

(MARY)

“At the time I entered the field there was this really fascinating story in one of the journalism field publications called the Pink Collar Ghetto and what it as saying was as the journalism field attracted more women, the pay scale went down. And as the pay scale went down, more women entered the field.”

(KIM)

“I had a colleague who was doing the very same job I was and we were talking about salaries in the newsroom and he was making a substantial amount more than I was. And so I went to our general manager and I said I don’t really understand this pay difference, we’re doing the same job and yet he’s being paid more. And my general manager said to me but he has a family to raise. And i said to him but I also have 3 children, and well you know you’re married.”

(MARY)

“So it’s sort of this interesting force where publishers knew they could offer less salary because we were women and more women entered the field because we weren’t as hung up on salary where as maybe a male reporter would be demanding more, knowing he could leverage more.”

(KIM)

“...I remember really pushing back against that and saying how unfair that was. He did give me a raise, it never really equaled to what Scott my colleague got but it was the first time that I encountered that, that pay difference.”

(MARY)

“Nobody ever taught us that, nobody ever taught us how to leverage for salaries. My friends and I laugh now, our fathers didn’t expect us to go into the fields we’re in.”

(KIM)

“And quite frankly, he wasn’t even doing half the job I was. I mean I love him to death but he was lazy as all get out and I was really busting my tail just getting all kinds of stories.”

VO

ORZEL AND YOUNG PARTIALLY ATTRIBUTE THESE KINDS OF DISPARITIES TO THE WHITE MALE DOMINATED WORLD WE LIVE IN—AND HAVE LIVED IN FOR AS LONG AS MANY OF US CAN REMEMBER.

BUT THEY ALSO SAY WOMEN ARE TO PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR BUYING INTO THE NARRATIVE BEING SOLD TO US.

(GINNY)

“...who’s making these decisions and who’s allowing that to happen. As much as people have fought and as much as people have protested against it, nothing is changing because there’s too many white men that are in charge. And that’s gotta change, and how do we change that?”

(KIM)

“...it takes women to fight against the patriarchy, it takes women to stand up to that and not subscribe to that but what I think is happening is that women are buying into it.”

(GINNY)

“...I think that there needs to be consequences and they need to be coming from a lot higher up.”

(KIM)

“Too many women reporters are thinking that you only need to be Miss America to be a journalist. Women have to get on the bandwagon and fight against that. The patriarchy will exist so long and only until women bring it down. And we’re our own worst enemies.”

(GINNY)

“...the whole point of our system was to prevent something like this from happening and yet here we are.”

(KIM)

“...if all little girls are seeing are Disney images of what women are, and female anchors who are just eye candy and asking stupid questions then we’ll never move forward.”

VO

EVEN THOUGH TIMES FOR WOMEN IN MALE DOMINATED FIELDS ARE TOUGH--MCCRANK AND YOUNG SAY THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER.

(MARY)

“...sometimes I just kind of throw it out there like my wife and I this weekend did this or we like this show or maybe our reading habits, and it catches students’ attention. And a lot of times students have come up to me and thanked me for being so open, that they too were struggling or had some issues with family and just kind of knowing there was somebody out there in their field and their department who had gone on to overcome diversity and the adversity, it made them feel like they too can succeed.”

(KIM)

“I think what you will find when you go into this business is that women are really supportive of each other. I have found that, my female friends, my mentors, they were gracious and kind.”

(MARY)

“And so it really means a lot to me. I feel very lucky.”

VO

ONLY TIME WILL TELL IF WOMEN WILL PREVAIL OVER THE PATRIARCHY.

WE CAN START BY STANDING UP FOR OURSELVES—AND OWNING WHO WE ARE AS WOMEN.

(KIM)

“...don’t buy into the Barbie doll reporter narrative. You’re a journalist, you have to hold onto the fact that you’re a journalist, you’re not eye candy you’re not there for ratings, you’re a journalist and your job is to tell stories and yes you have to look presentable and you have to look good while doing it but you can’t let somebody take who you are from you.”

VO

KIM YOUNG—GINNY ORZEL—AND MARY MCCRANK—ALL COME FROM VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS.

BUT THESE THREE WOMEN ALL SHARE COMMON STORIES AND COMMON HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.