

#CSW70



Canadian Federation For Citizenship
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Turning To Meritocracy and Pluralism To Overcome Structural Barriers



Jenny Gulamani-Abdulla
Co-Founder, CFC

Agenda

- Canadian Context – Socioeconomic Gaps
- Structural Barriers – Rooted in Systems and Structures
- Meritocratic Environments – Importance of Shared Definitions
- Pluralistic Societies – Beyond Tolerating Diversity



Canadian Context

- The rising cost of living is widening socioeconomic gaps.
- Women continue to face significant systemic barriers to social and economic equality.
- They are at greater risk of job loss and loss of income.
- They continue to face gender wage gaps.
- Discriminatory practices in workplaces have been escalating.
- Workplace harassment and discrimination cases are on the rise.
- Higher rates of reported complaints to challenge unfair treatment (gender, disability – mental health, race).



Canadian Context

- Women continue to experience barriers in the workforce.
- Overall women earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by their male coworkers.
- That pay gap is even wider for Indigenous, Black and other racialized women, immigrant women as well as women with disabilities and single women leading their own households.
- Senior women are the fastest growing demographic of people experiencing homelessness.
- Racialized women face greater difficulty in being hired or promoted.
- Women with disabilities continue to face barriers to accessibility in workplaces.



Canadian Context

- Employers have an obligation to offer employment without discrimination and to guard against harassment based on prohibited grounds.
- Generally, human rights legislation is applicable to the following grounds: race-related grounds, creed, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, and family status. Some Canadian jurisdictions also prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression, as well as discrimination based on criminal convictions that are unrelated to employment, or criminal convictions for which a pardon has been obtained.



Structural Barriers

- Intentional and/or unintentional obstacles; historical.
- Embedded within the frameworks of our societies and institutions.
- Rooted in our laws, policies, norms.
- Examples – discriminatory hiring practices, income inequality in employment contracts and promotion packages.
- Prevent certain groups from participating or being included.



Structural Barriers

- Skilled immigrants excluded when local or Canadian work experience is a requirement.
- Selection criteria that is unrelated to the job, manipulated by unconscious bias or simply due to ignorance or lack of knowledge.
- Not accommodating disabled workers by having inaccessible premises/washrooms to deny entry or turn them away.
- Excluding certain groups by not offering them benefits and mentorship.
- Outdated workplace policies and subtle discrimination that leads to weakened sense of belonging.



Meritocratic Workplaces and Societies

- Skills, efforts and performance take centre stage.
- Merit based hiring practices where the focus is on capabilities (not connections and friendships).
- Talent is recognized and rewarded (more likely to stay).
- The culture of high achievement is nurtured (resulting in increased productivity).
- Shared definition of merit based on what matters most to the organization and institutionalize these throughout.
- True meritocracy stamps out discrimination (not a show!).



Merit cannot develop without equity!



Pluralistic Workplaces and Societies

- Collaborative and equitable models that go beyond tolerating diversity.
- Embrace differing viewpoints, contrasting ideas, and conflicting interests and goals.
- Prioritize transparent and respectful processes to actively engage with diversity.
- Consultation and negotiation occurs with the intention to understand all sides.
- Everyone feels heard even if the outcome is not favourable.



Pluralism requires intentional efforts!



Questions To Ask

- Are we spending time actively listening to marginalized groups about the structural barriers they face on a regular basis?
- What are we doing with these findings? Are we simply listening and not acting on these?
- What efforts are we making to involve the parties to update our policies and practices?
- Who is making the rules? For whom? Who is reviewing the rules and updating them to make them work for everyone.
- Change is hard... transformation can be slow and trust can erode if we do not act now.



**In a world where diverse and conflicting interests
create chaos and unrest**

**the urgency to turn to meritocracy and pluralism
becomes a necessity**

**not only to overcome structural barriers
but to simply co-exist peacefully.**



Thank You!

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