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2018 PSR/Sacramento Essay Contest 3rd Place Winner

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"The connection between women's human rights, gender equality, socioeconomic development, and peace is increasingly apparent." Mahnaz Afkhami

Anyone who has grown up with siblings of the opposite gender has likely experienced the simple reality set forth in this quote. For me, growing up with three brothers and two sisters, our games were grounded in fairness, toys split equally, and turns taken. If one of us demanded more than our share, the others argued or refused to play, the game halted, and fun was dispelled until the conflict resolved. We never considered the difference in our gender to be grounds for unequal treatment; it never even occurred to us. But we recognized that through cooperation and equal treatment, arguments were avoided, games ran uninterrupted, and creativity flourished.

This may be a simplified version of what Afkhami is conveying in her quote, but it is also evidence of the origin and teacher of human rights: the family. The idea that I, as a girl, might be treated differently than my brothers or other boys was never introduced to me as a child. Instead I grew up without questioning the rights of those around me or seeing any cause to treat one person differently than another. Learning in school about women's struggle for their own rights was nearly incomprehensible for me and opened my eyes to the injustices of gender inequality rampant throughout much of history.

But this isn't just my story. All people are born with equally open and innocent minds. It is their surroundings, their upbringing, and even their family or education that introduce to them the erroneous idea that not all are equal or born with "certain unalienable rights." It is for those surrounded by these preconceived notions, that the connection between women's rights, gender equality, socioeconomic development, and peace must become increasingly apparent.

Fortunately, the majority of the world today is recognizing to a greater extent than ever before the rights of all people - no matter their gender - and opening to them

opportunities they were previously barred from. These successes are not only long-overdue and rightly demanded, they also come without cost. On the contrary, when nations truly acknowledge the equality of both genders and safeguard their rights, they enjoy the prosperity of socioeconomic development and peace brought on by the equal contributions of both men and women to society, their strengths and perspectives balancing and complementing each other.

Most importantly, the furtherance of women's rights is not only necessary for the purpose of gender equality or a nation's prosperity, it is necessary for the dignity of all individuals and for the manifest truth that "all men are created equal" to be put into action in every aspect of society. It is my hope that someday soon the connection between women's rights, gender equality, socioeconomic development, and peace will no longer need to become increasingly apparent, but will be acknowledged as a self-evident truth that is sought after and safeguarded by all nations.