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Gender Inequality in the Music Industry

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Gender Inequality in the Music Industry

By Issadora Tulalian

In recent years, equality has steadily improved in job opportunity and society in general. Discrimination based on an individual's race, sexual orientation, religion, sex, marital status, pregnancy status, gender, and national origin for American workers are all highly illegal. However, when one considers the music business, it is still predominantly a male-dominated world.

When viewed through popular media platforms, it seems that there are many female artists in the business, however, *The New York Times* explains, "In an analysis of the top 600 songs from 2012 to 2017 — defined by Billboard's year-end Hot 100 chart for each of those six years — the study found that of 1,239 performing artists, 22.4 percent of them were women" (Sisario). Over the years, the percentage of women in the business has steadily been dropping. Statista shows that in 2015, 13.7% of the songwriters of pop songs were women. Comparing to recent years, this number dropped to 12.2% in 2018. The problem in the industry is that men are overpowering the business and what is being promoted and distributed to society is decided by men.

As a woman aspiring to enter the music industry, knowing the statistics of male versus female workers in the business was initially discouraging; however, I feel motivated and inspired by the females who have successfully found their place and helped create opportunities for future women in younger generations such as my own. Over the years, a multitude of organizations were created to help and promote women in the music business. Some of these organizations include Girlschool, Women In Music, Women In Music Canada, SoundGirls, Women In Music LA, and many more. Organizations such as the ones listed are created for the

purpose of female empowerment and recognizes female artists, and producers. Despite being underrepresented in the music industry, women have so much support from all the organizations and those who stand alongside gender equality. Other ways have been made to promote female representation such as female-led music festivals, and younger generations who network with female leaders in the industry.

The music industry being a male-dominated industry has in fact, only hindered the growth for this business, as well as, the success of women in the industry. For instance, in the most recent Grammy Awards of 2019, Ariana Grande refused to attend the award show because Grammy Producer, Ken Ehrlich, denied her the options for to perform songs in tribute to Mac Miller. This incident blew up all over social media on February 7th, 2019 after Ariana Grande posted the tweet, “i’ve kept my mouth shut but now you’re lying about me. i can pull together a performance over night and you know that, Ken. it was when my creativity & self expression was stifled by you, that i decided not to attend. i hope the show is exactly what you want it to be and more” (Grande). Grande was referring to Ken Ehrlich, 76, a Grammy Producer who has worked in the business and orchestrated the Grammy Awards for forty years. He was once again called out by rapper, Nicki Minaj, a few days later, for having bullied her in a similar manner. (Twitter).

While looking at the Grammys’ and the artists’ perspectives, I understand that artists cannot just perform whatever shall please them and their song has to be approved by the producers of the awards; however, the judges of the awards are all dominated by men. Ehrlich also grew up in a different generation. In today’s society, there are many more liberal people who are speaking out and evolving what we, as a society, accept. Gender equality has progressed culturally, but not in job opportunity. Personally, I believe the committee of the Grammy Awards

should have more female prominent roles helping alongside men. I believe the goal for feminism is not for females to dominate just as males have in society. But for females to have equal opportunity as men.

In 2018, Statista showed that the share for producers in the music industry in the United States was dominated by men by 97.7% and women 2.3%. On social media, users will see many female artists but do not realize the women performed music they listen to is produced mainly by men. In contrast, one must understand that years ago, a society where men worked and women stayed at home as housewives was acceptable. And today, many people who grew up as kids in that generation believe that tradition is still valid. It is understandable that men most often obtain these positions of influence, because the workers in the industry are definitely not from my generation. While over the years, women have definitely fought this ideation, the fight is not over. I believe society is evolving and the younger generations are changing tradition and promoting equality. There are a few inspiring women in the music industry that have definitely made an impact in the business. For instance, *The New York Times* states, “Taylor Swift and Nicki Minaj, along with Rihanna, have the most songwriting credits among women in pop music from 2012 to 2017, a study found.” (Sisario) Though their numbers are few, these women inspire many other females such as myself to continue into a male-dominated field despite the odds.

In conclusion, the music industry has progressed and is slowly growing; however, it is up to the younger generations and those, male and female, who wish to participate in helping this industry become a more equal environment for the benefit of the workers and society.

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