

Roping in men key to advancing gender equality, says activist

Syarafana Shafeeq

Getting men involved in promoting healthy masculinity norms and championing gender equality is key to advancing the position of women in society, said women's rights activist Corinna Lim.

Speaking yesterday at the launch of her new book, *Gender Equality: The Time Has Come*, Ms Lim said men can play a key role in the conversation on issues tack-

ling gender stereotypes, and that more men are already doing so.

She said: "We cannot expect women to deal with masculinity issues. Men are more inclined to listen to other men."

"Thankfully, we are seeing an increasing number of men who understand male privilege and how gender stereotypes hurt them. More men are stepping forward to champion gender equality."

Without roping men in, society cannot fix, for instance, inequalities in the workplace and family

caregiving or eliminate gender violence and stereotypes, she added.

Ms Lim is the executive director of the Association of Women for Action and Research, or Aware.

The book brings together three lectures she delivered in April and May at the Institute of Policy Studies, where she was its eighth S R Nathan Fellow.

Ms Lim's lectures touched on key issues affecting women in Singapore today, including the state of gender equality, implications of masculinity norms and socio-eco-

nomic barriers that women continue to face at the workplace.

The book launch was held at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Minister for Law and Home Affairs K. Shanmugam, who was the guest of honour, said in his address that Ms Lim's lectures helped generate robust discussion on these issues, and the lectures and discussion can benefit policymaking.

However, laws and policies must be accompanied by mindset shifts, which must start from a young age, he added.

He said: "Our children have to be taught that respect between boys and girls is fundamental.

"We have to encourage our children to pursue their aspirations based on their interests and

strengths rather than outmoded gender stereotypes."

Ms Lim, in her speech, lauded Mr Shanmugam for a "ground-breaking" speech he gave in September last year, saying it can be seen as a "turning point where Singapore became a much more gender equal society".

She said: "That rather feminist speech launched the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development, which I see as the Government's first significant research project and campaign on gender equality.

"The people have spoken and I have no doubt that the Government will expand its efforts to tackle these areas."

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