

Men and women have undeniable biological differences. Testosterone -- a hormone that helps build muscle and makes it easier to burn fat -- is naturally found more in the male body. In addition, the male brain is optimized for strong motor skills with stronger connections in the brain running from front to back. With these differences between men and women, it may seem that men are biologically a better fit for labor-intensive jobs.

Despite this, women have a unique set of skills that fit just as well into labor-focused jobs. According to Northwestern Medicine, women's brains are optimized to have better intuition, be more analytical, and be better at drawing conclusions; what women lack in biological physical strength they make up for in the ability to adapt to the dynamics of a specific trade. With proper collaboration, the unity of men and women in the workforce is irreplaceable. Both sexes bring equitable skills that should not be ignored by their peers.

Sadly, men and women have not always been seen as equals in the labor industry. Women faced many tribulations not only from their employers but their coworkers. Even with the presence of sexism, women in the workforce were resilient. They refused to work in conditions that did not meet their standards. Thanks to their perseverance, dignity, and courage, both men and women have safer jobs and are more respected by their employers.

The first collective bargaining organization of women was the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association (LFLRA) formed in 1843. After being underwhelmed by mill conditions and overworked by employers and with no one to help them but themselves, the LFLRA's first president, Sarah Bagley, worked with the group of women to organize strikes and participate in petitions. Although the LFLRA achieved almost nothing to improve working conditions, it did inspire countless other similar organizations of women to fight for the same goals.

One such organization was the first national Women's labor organization, the Daughters of St. Crispin. The Daughters of St. Crispin, founded in 1869, began in 1860 with over one-thousand female workers striking in Massachusetts. The Daughters of St. Crispin fought for equal pay among men and women and often collaborated with the Knights of St. Crispin, a similar men's labor organization that did not admit women. Additionally, members of the Daughters of St. Crispin testified before Congress in 1874 in favor of labor laws that limited working hours of women and children to ten hours a day.

Similarly, the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) was the first national organization dedicated to organizing women workers. The WTUL was created in 1903 after it became clear that the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had little interest in including women in its ranks. The organization, founded in part by labor leaders Mary Kenny O'Sullivan and Leonora O'Reilly as well as settlement workers Lillian Wald and Jane Adams, fought for education opportunities for women and better working conditions. WTUL advocated for an eight-hour workday, the establishment of a minimum wage, the end of night work for women, and the end of child labor. After the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in 1911 that killed 145 female workers, the WTUL conducted a four-year investigation that helped establish new safety regulations such as fire sprinklers.

Along with these organizations dedicated to supporting women and encouraging collective bargaining are women who stand as notable figures overall in the labor movement. Mary Harris Jones, for example, worked tirelessly to earn better working conditions. She focused her work on halting the growth of the number of working poor during industrialization. Working with the Knights of Labor, Mother Jones, as she was called, gave inspiring speeches and offered

a helping hand during strikes. Mother Jones continued on to help found the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1905 with another leading female labor movement figure -- Lucy Parsons.

Lucy Parsons' activism challenged sexist and racist stereotypes in the workplace. Even after her husband was executed for his involvement with the anarchist movement and alleged conspiracy to start a riot, Parsons continued to fight for her causes. She helped found the IWW and started to focus on poverty and unemployment. She organized the Chicago Hunger Demonstrations in 1915 that brought attention to the massive number of hungry citizens. Two weeks after the Chicago Hunger Demonstrations, the government started planning legislation to help the hungry and unemployed.

Countless other women and organizations throughout the United States have fought for the right to work alongside men as their peers. Their consistency helped all workers earn better pay, fair work hours, and helped eradicate child labor. These incredible women have not only established standards of today but will continue to stand as idols to inspire women to continue to speak their opinions. Women will continue to fight for fair pay, decent hours, and equality. The number of women in labor will rise thanks to advocacy for women in these occupations.

However, women will face new challenges. With the quickly expanding Information Age, women and men alike are facing unemployment; jobs that were once performed by human employees can be done faster and more effectively by a robot. Many middle-class jobs have been eliminated. Women of the future, starting today, will have to fight to stop the poor from getting even poorer and to stop workers from losing their jobs. Women will lead a movement that demands that employers value human employees more than robots by showing employers that the adaptability and problem-solving skills of human workers cannot be replaced with the

uniformity of robots. With role models from the past to inspire them and the ever-changing economy of the Information Age, Women of the future will need to use their perseverance, dignity, and courage to earn job security and respect for men and women alike.

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