



# I focus

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# Open your eyes!

**I**nterviewed Dr Marceline Naudi, Head and Senior Lecturer within the Department of Gender and Sexualities at the Faculty for Social Wellbeing.

## What are your research interests?

It starts with women and gender but more specifically, violence against women, gender-based violence, femicide and of course also LGBTIQ and all the 'isms' or the various grounds of discrimination. The respect for everyone's human rights is another major research interest I have.

## How would you define social wellbeing?

There are many ways to define social wellbeing. In relation to my specific areas of interest it's about respect, in other words being respected for being who you are, feeling that respect, being able to respect yourself because you reflect what society sees in you.

## Is there place for doing good in today's society?

There is always place for 'doing good!' As our society stands, some people have greater access to things which are considered of value, like good health, good education, good employment, general wellbeing, to mention just a few. Those of us who have greater access must surely also have a responsibility to narrow the gap between the 'haves and the have-nots' – *don't you think?* However, I would also add that it is not a matter of 'charity', but of rights and responsibilities.

## Why do people resort to discriminating against minorities?

Discrimination is often based on prejudices which we may have acquired as we grew in an unequal society. It is also based on a lack of knowledge and sometimes fear. It was Marie Curie who had said, *'Nothing is to be feared, it is only to be understood'*. We need to learn to be open to 'the other', that is, that which is different to us. Change is always difficult, and we often prefer to stay in 'stasis' rather than challenge norms that are discriminatory, whether in their intent or effect.

## What in your opinion are the variables that would make society more inclusive?

We need to continue to raise awareness about the negative impact of discrimination. As I often tell my students, most peo-



Dr Marceline Naudi

ple are not 'horrible, mean and nasty'. Most people do not discriminate against others with malicious intent to cause harm. Most people are discriminatory in their actions because that is what they have absorbed from society around them as they grew up. So these actions, these prejudices that inform the actions, need to be challenged.

## What are the challenges being faced in society?

At the moment there appears to be a bit of a backlash in relation to my areas. Right wing ideology is raising its head in many European countries. LGBTIQ rights are being used to discredit the notion of gender generally, it's a divide and rule tactic. I personally believe that we need to remain united in our fight for human rights for all. We can agree to differ on specifics, but overall remain united.

Of course, at this specific moment in the history of our times,

we face the COVID-19 challenge. Everyone is facing this challenge, rich and poor, male, female or other. However, the negative effects are still felt more by some than others. If you are 'locked down' in a villa with outdoor spaces, many rooms, electronic devices, and sufficient internet to go round it's one thing, but if you're 'locked down' in a small space with a lack of resources, it's another. Furthermore, if you're 'locked down' with loving and respectful others, it's again different to being 'locked down' with an abusive partner. The issue of domestic violence and COVID-19 makes for an explosive and potentially very dangerous combination! This is being raised internationally by the United Nations, by GREVIO (the monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention on violence against women and domestic violence, of which I am currently President) and others. We need

to be aware of our relatives, friends, neighbours and we need to alert the authorities when we suspect abuse, since the measures in place to protect us from COVID 19 may be hindering victims and survivors of abuse in reporting or escaping their abuser.

## Why the need to study gender and LGBTIQ?

Look around you! Our whole society is gendered! Everything we do relates to gender and heteronormativity. By studying these areas, we become more aware of these things – again, as I often tell my students, we need to 'open our eyes', to be able to 'see' all the ways in which our gendered and heteronormative norms have insidiously permeated every aspect of our lives. Of course, it's not only about seeing/identifying, but also about creating change, creating a more egalitarian and just society that does not strive to place us all in boxes.

## What is the European Observatory on Femicide about?

The European Observatory on Femicide came out of an EU Cost Action on Femicide Across Europe, of which I was part. As a European Observatory we aim to collect data (quantitative and qualitative) on killings of women because they are women, across Europe. We have set up various country groups, with specified focus points, and we are working on two thematic groups which will collate the data collected by the country groups. The aim is to bring home to the powers that be that this is just not acceptable. We can't just speak nice words and allow women to continue to be killed! The EU, the Council of Europe, the individual countries, all need to walk the walk – talking the talk is no longer sufficient.

## Are we managing to use research and policy to influence tangible changes in our society?

Unfortunately, we often rely on EU funded 'projects' to carry out research. This means that we often have to 'fit' the research to the project criteria. Also, since EU projects have a short life (often 2 years), by the time the research is carried out it's too late for it to inform the other parts of the project, like training, and changes in policies. We also need to use the media to make sure we get the message across to policy makers and politicians.

## What courses will you be offering next academic year?

In October 2020 we will be offering, together with the Centre for Labour Studies, a Diploma course on Gender, Work and Society. This tends to act as a way in to academia for returners, mainly women, who had left any form of formal education some time back. It eases them back in. Versions of this Diploma course have been offered for around the last 20 years or so and each cohort includes people who then chose to study for a B.A., eventually even a Masters, and some made it to PhD. In October 2020 we will also be opening our two Masters' programmes, Master of Gender Studies, which is mainly research based, and Master in Gender Society and Culture, which is mainly taught. These are open to anyone with a first degree (second lower and above) from whatever discipline. Come, and open your eyes!

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