

# The Straits Times

Honour less-dominant half of society

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EVERY March 8 is International Women's Day (IWD), to recognise the needs and achievements of women. Some countries mark IWD officially, with men gifting related and familiar females. It enjoys Mother's Day status in countries where children give presents to mothers and grandmothers.

On this day, shouldn't more nations and men honour women - the less-dominant half of society? This year, 308 global events are listed. Guess how many are in Singapore. One: a 'Women Mean Business Luncheon' hosted at a hotel by the Australian High Commission and Unifem Singapore.

Once, in Jurong East, a man restrained a woman - presumably a relative or girlfriend - from leaving. As she wasn't hurt and didn't seek help from passers-by, he was allowed to drag her away. I regret not intervening. At another time along Margaret Drive, a middle-aged man called a younger woman companion 'stupid' and cuffed her on the head. She threatened to call the police, a move I lauded.

Recently, a Straits Times Online Forum writer reported a man assaulting his female companion in Marche, VivoCity. Security guards summoned declared they couldn't do anything. No wonder 2007's IWD theme is 'Ending impunity for violence against women and girls'. Women bully men too but, statistically, men are quicker to violence and overwhelmingly so than women.

Nurtured a certain way, I saw women as 'weaker', 'irrational' and 'less capable' despite trying to be objective. But, having worked with superlative women like Ms Saw Phaik Hwa - who now runs SMRT - when she started out, I find women grossly unappreciated.

Women are better care-givers as they tend to humanise relationships and environments. Most familial networks atrophy after a matriarch's demise.

Gender studies show males systemise while females empathise when solving the same problem.

Shown the same video clips, male infants found machines compelling while human faces captivated their opposites - nature, not nurture, predisposes.

Males and females differ to complement each other, not rival or conflict as in, 'Anything you can do, I can do better'. Testosterone advantages men physically and visual-spatially while oestrogen enhances female communicability.

If New York Senator Hillary Clinton becomes America's first female Commander-in-Chief, would the Middle East and the world spill less blood? I think so. If girls prefer dolls to toy weapons, how many women - unless fanatical - would send their sons to battle after carrying them for nine months?

Anthony Lee Mui Yu