

Redirecting My Energies to Become A Woolf Woman  
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I am about to lay it down, so listen up. I will speak in the vernacular so that everyone will understand.

It is September 13, 2015. There are less than 5 years left before 2020 arrives. That's 4 years, 3 months, 2 weeks and 5 days. In total there are 1,570 days. I support the 50/50 in 2020 movement. But the clock is ticking and desperate times call for desperate measures. We have made great strides, but it looks like we are not going to make it.

I realize that the foundation for gender parity is set. I, for my part, will now go back to the old-fashioned notion of making one's way in the world in a practical way.

I love being effective. I have skin in the game. I take every available measure to achieve every goal I set.

Therefore, I am taking these extraordinary measures to help achieve gender parity:

1. I am not working with any company, festival or organization that does not have a policy in place (or in the works) for gender parity – or heritage parity for that matter (read that statement in theatre speak as “a diversity program”)
2. I am resigning from organizations which I don't feel are living up to their mission statement.
3. I am refraining from spending time or volunteering time for “awareness” efforts. We are aware. We are just not effectively setting, pursuing and achieving our goals.
4. I am not participating in shaming organizations that don't have gender parity goals. Unless they are breaking the law, their use of their own resources is their choice and they are entitled to that.

Now – here is my “I Am” list

1. I am diligently focusing on creating an income stream with my talents. That means that I am actively writing my own properties that I will have control over and I can sell: plays, musicals, children's stories, essays and poetry.
2. I am spending my time creating income for myself as a freelancer.
3. I am seeking representation for my properties.
4. I am diligently sending out my work using all the submission opportunity information that is readily available at this point in time.

Recent history shows us that boycotts and strikes sometimes do work in powerful ways. If enough of us make it a policy to spend our talents, earn our dollars – and spend our dollars – in

places that please us, we will create a more equitable environment. Gender parity – and heritage parity – are rights.

Perhaps if enough of us step away from the places that don't please us, and work to create an equal presence in the places (and organizations) that do, we can create a more equitable environment for everyone.

### Becoming a Woolf Woman

Now – I want to remind us all of Virginia Woolf's statement beginning, "*Give her a room of her own and five hundred a year...*"

Virginia Woolf delivered a set of lectures at Cambridge University in 1928. These lectures became the basis for "A Room of One's Own" which was published the following year. We have all read that book. What a woman needs, she said, is an income of £500 and a room of one's own.

Today in US dollars, that amount is approximately \$53,500. Add a taxation rate of 28% and the minimum amount of earnings is \$68,480. (If one earns approximately \$68,500 and pays one's taxes on time, she will end up with about \$53,500 as a net income to actually utilize.)

Now – let's think about Virginia Woolf's premise that someone should "give" a woman a room of her own and five hundred a year. In Woolf's scenario, someone should give her that money. It is passive, guaranteed income. She does not have to earn it. In addition, the woman is to be left alone, without household or any other responsibilities, simply to write. For her whole lifetime. Woolf's scenario presupposes that maids, gardeners, housecleaners, cooks and servers are providing all of the necessary daily services to the woman. In addition, all other medical, legal and other professional needs would also be paid for. To fund a staff for one's household today – well, let's just say that the figure needed would probably triple.

Woolf's "Her" does not work outside the home – she does not lecture, teach, direct, dramaturg, take day jobs, write articles, make speeches, or volunteer for "the cause". She uses her time solely according to her own discretion. *She is not obligated to do anything but sit and write in order for Woolf's scenario to become reality – that a great piece of literature might be written.*

Now – I know a few women who are in this position, but I am not. I need to keep a roof over my head. Virginia Woolf was wealthy and had social status by birth and by marriage. She was born into a patriarchal society and was given an *inheritance*. It was given to a her, but it was given by a him. At this point in history, as theatre artists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a scant 100 years after women were even given the right to vote, we are still being *grandfathered* in to the social and economic environment.

We have be *grandfathered* into the workplace of the theatrical profession, by dint of our place in history, and we have to create a new legal, social and economic environment for ourselves. We must heed Virginia Woolf's statement about having income and a room of one's own, and also her unintentional assumptions about the realities of patriarchal support. In order to take

advantage of her wisdom and insight, we must make enough money to pay for our own expenses throughout our lifetimes, and build wealth, and leave an *inheritance* for someone else. That is what keeps the system, and the parity going.

So much work has been done to change the legal environment in the past 100 years so that women can own property, obtain a loan, work outside of the home and retain an *inheritance* in issues surrounding marriage and divorce.

As you see – the English language at present doesn't even accommodate the reality of our situation. So let's add words to the language, change the paradigm, and create a new social and economic environment based on leaving not only laws, but wealth and property, to others that we care about.

The basis of that parity starts with wealth. Money. For some of us, income earned by working. I don't have children, but I want to leave an *inheritance* to someone. And I surely need to cover my living expenses while I am alive. So I am doing everything I can to build my own resources and parity. It is my privilege and my challenge to take advantage of my position in history. But mostly my privilege, and I am taking advantage of it with the time I have.

So how am I going to be a “Woolf Woman” today?

I am going to buckle down and focus. I am eliminating distractions. I am shutting out the emotional siren calls of outrage and bitterness. Woolf spoke rationally and I think that has contributed to the way that her message has endured. She looked at practicalities. And she gave me a basic outline, which I have updated for my own use.

I am combining Woolf's 86-year-old enlightened message with 50/50 in 2020's modern one. I seek to earn \$75,000 per year (padding the figure for inflation) by 2019. That will make me a “Woolf Woman” by January 1, 2020, and begin to set the stage for some literary achievement.

The key to being a Woolf Woman is financial. For me, it means paying off my mortgage, creating passive income through securing royalties for my properties, and eliminating debt. Creating stability. Having income-producing investments. Owning property. Reducing costs. Increasing income.

My formal education is complete. I earned an MFA from Columbia and a BA from Drew University. I have been a college professor. I have worked in corporations, as a senior staff member at a university, and as a public relations director, a publications manager, as an editor, as a writer, a singer, an actress, a dramaturg, and a financial advisor. I am single. I own a house. I own a car. I don't have children. I am a freelance theatre professional.

If we as women are going to speak out with power and effectiveness, we must find our way into mainstream culture. And that requires financial independence. How did others do it? Often they were supported by private wealth, inheritances, their spouses or significant others, their churches or other religious and civic organizations. I do not have those support systems. I have to earn it myself.

It is time to get back to basics. Arranging my life to give myself that income of £500 a year. I have a room and I use it. Now it is time to get creative.

And by the way, if you have found value in this article – if it has helped you to focus - send me \$5 (or more!) through paypal to [hamiltonlit@hotmail.com](mailto:hamiltonlit@hotmail.com). I'm starting right now to earn passive income.

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