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## CULTIVATING PARTNERSHIP CULTURE AND GENDER EQUALITY: THE 2016 NAVAL ACADEMY ROUNDTABLE

**Emma Whitehead**

### **Abstract**

Emma Whitehead is an alumna of the Center for Partnership Studies Young Women's Leadership Program. In this article she reflects on her experience as a delegate to the 2016 United States Naval Academy Foreign Affairs Conference. The conference promoted the status of women and girls globally and Whitehead participated in a round table session on gender equity, sharing insights from the Center for Partnership Studies.

**Keywords:** Gender equity, global status of women, Center for Partnership Studies

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In April 2016, I served as a delegate to the United States Naval Academy Foreign Affairs Conference in a Roundtable Session on Gender Equality. The focus of this year's conference promoted the status of women and girls worldwide as an increasingly central element of U.S. national security strategy and foreign policy.

I was overwhelmed when I found out that the topic of this year's Naval Academy Conference on Foreign Affairs was global gender equality. I believe this is one of the most serious international security issues of our time, and it is encouraging to see a military institution promoting a global conversation. When one of my professors reached out to see if I would be interested in representing Colorado College as a student delegate, I was more than honored to take part. We cannot solve this problem in a vacuum. Awareness of a new Partnership cultural model at every level is

necessary in order to address systemic gender inequality across the world. We need this to be the awareness of everyone: Men and women, military and civilians, liberals and conservatives.

My college is known for being a liberal bubble in a conservative town. I became involved with civilian-military relationship building the summer after my freshman year when I traveled to Eastern Europe with a group of Air Force cadets and Liberal Arts students to study the political psychology of oppression and reconstruction in post-WWII Europe. This was the first time I engaged in difficult conversations with peers who did not share my ideology. As painful as this could be at times, I realized it was the only possible way to cultivate the trust and understanding necessary to fully engage with the political psychology of oppression and reconstruction. I have continued to work closely with a group aimed at bringing together students from both institutions to engage on a wide range of pressing domestic and international issues.

The Naval Academy conference was a chance to practice Partnership on several fundamental levels. It was an opportunity for young people from across the country representing different backgrounds and beliefs to engage productively on an issue that has consequences for every man, woman, and child on this planet. I had the opportunity to learn about efforts taking place to address gender inequality on a global level. The round table topics included women in politics, global feminization of poverty, women in leadership, education, and economic empowerment.

It was my goal to bring the language of Partnership to this conference and outline the differences between domination and partnership cultures. When I look at the state of the world, it is so clear to me how domination behavior has led to violence, anger, and increasingly divisive rhetoric that results in a broken system in which nobody benefits. Furthermore, we have accepted a political culture that models approaching disagreement with staunch ideological grandstanding rather than well-informed listening. My hope is that this conference was a bi-partisan setting in which young

leaders could begin to think about cultivating Partnership culture in their own chosen fields.

We have the potential to bridge the intellectualization of gender inequality with the lived experience of so many millions of people. Talking honestly about real-life gender inequity is an opportunity for young leaders to wrestle with this complex topic as we move forward in our diverse paths. I believe these conversations can inform the outlooks and practices of emerging leaders in whatever field they choose to pursue, such that we can address global gender equality in an increasingly interdisciplinary way.

These complex and interrelated issues, including gender, racial and economic inequity, touch every part of the human experience. A deeper understanding of where we are coming from, where we stand, and where we want to go as a culture can move us forward.

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Emma Whitehead is a graduate of the Center for Partnership Studies' Young Women Leaders Program. She graduated from Colorado College in May 2016 with a major in Political Science. Emma currently works as a Faculty and Coaching Resource Associate at The Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado Springs, CO.

Brigid Whitehead, Emma's mother, is a certified Caring Economy Conversation Leader, a graduate of the Power of Partnership course and Changing Our Story, Changing Our Lives: Riane Eisler's Cultural Transformation Course. Together, Brigid and Emma are creatively serving as a powerful mother/daughter Partnership team. Contact Brigid at [btwhitehead@mac.com](mailto:btwhitehead@mac.com). Contact Emma at [emailem@msn.com](mailto:emailem@msn.com).

CPS Alumni are actively promoting Partnership and Caring Economy in diverse settings worldwide. For information on the Center for Partnership Studies' Leadership & Learning Programs, see <http://centerforpartnership.org/>



Emma Whitehead and her mother, Brigid Whitehead of Denver, CO