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Why wouldn't a woman want a husband as her sole provider or seek a career impacting her role at home? It's difficult for me to imagine growing up as a woman in the 1950s when this was the popular viewpoint. Unfortunately, this time capsule did exist. The average American family perpetuated that men were the breadwinners that mattered, and marriage was the primary goal for women. In alignment with these beliefs, laws existed that did not protect women, including laws that allowed employers to fire a woman for being pregnant and banks could require a woman applying for credit to have a husband co-sign.

Albert Einstein once said, "what is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right." Consequently, I can understand why Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg concluded in the 1950s that "being a woman was an impediment." While hers was an unpopular opinion, women had rights of second-class citizens. Although Ginsburg was not the first woman to feel this way, nor was she the only woman in the first half of the 20th century to advocate for women's rights, she challenged the gender roles of traditional America.

Ginsburg earned her law degree and thrust this unpopular opinion into the legal battlefield for gender equality. For much of the 1970s, she argued gender discrimination in the courtroom - winning five of her six Supreme Court cases. Ginsburg owned this responsibility to better the lives of women. I am fortunate to live with the privileges from the battles she fought and won. Thanks to Ginsburg, younger generations of men and women, including me, continue to fight for gender equality. Now, as an 86-year-old pop culture icon, she continues to serve not only as a Justice but a role model to those who want to defend what is right even if it's the dissenting opinion.

Einstein was correct when he spoke that popularity does not define moral acceptability. Although it's 2019 — more than forty years after Ginsburg's winning Supreme Court cases — gender inequality still exists. The most recent Global Gender Gap Report from the World Economic Forum declares it will take 108 years at our current pace to reach gender parity. Despite the work of Ginsburg and activists, widespread support for gender equality is still a work in progress.

It has taken Ginsburg more than 60 years to help move the needle on gender equality in America. Similarly, I believe the same perseverance applies to living as a woman of character. One act of compassion or citizenship may not change the world in one day, but I believe it helps move the needle. Ginsburg embodied her values throughout her career. As a Justice for 26 years, her courage to offer dissenting opinions has ignited change on a federal level. I can only imagine a similar ripple effect after 60 years of character in action.

What is right and what is popular will not always align — deciphering where I stand when the two do not sync can often be complex. For me, it means that I strive to live with integrity and actively participate in my community. Being a good neighbor, staying informed, and volunteering is easy.

The challenge comes when it's time to take action and defend what is right. Whether that's voting, calling my legislators, or donating to support advocacy, I cannot empower myself or others unless I'm willing to act. As Ginsburg said, "fight for the things that you care about but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."