

At 18 Joana Baptista is the founder of three startups, a tech podcast and an economics magazine. She is a social entrepreneur and public speaker with a strong interest in diversity, STEM and entrepreneurship. Her "She Dot" charity aims to bridge the socio-economic divide for girls pursuing traditionally male careers and continues it together with her studies at the University of Oxford. She lectures in schools and large companies, including Cambridge University, Facebook and GirlGuides. Among the highlights of her career: the presentation to Princess Anne, the conference on female leadership in Boston in which she participated thanks to funding from the US embassy and her speeches at the AI World Summit. Winner of various awards: Women of the Future, WeAreTheCity, Inspiring Juniors and Women in Tech Awards, she has a keen interest that combines activism, education, STEM and entrepreneurship. Joana participated in TedX Rome 2019.

**In the 21st century there is still a 'woman problem at work', different salaries for the same role, how can the gender gap be combated?**

*If the people setting salaries are never challenged or held accountable, they'll never change. I think it's incredibly important that women feel confident in speaking about money and learning about what an average salary looks like for their kind of work. They may think they're being paid well, only to find out everyone else is being paid more. With this, then comes the confidence ask for a pay rise when they deserve one. This is something that women struggle with comparatively more than men, but shouldn't be! It is our right to be paid equally and fairly – and if that isn't the case we should fight for that. Similarly, if we think we're doing a better job than our pay suggests, we should believe in ourselves enough to ask for that pay increase. On the other side of the spectrum, it's incredibly important to hold companies accountable for their actions. Publishing a report with salary figures and the gender pay gap prevents companies hiding behind their corporate veil like they have done in the past, and even if in the worst case they change nothing, we can change our decision for who to work for.*

**Men continue to occupy the top positions in the world, Donald Trump and Boris Johnson are strongly male chauvinists, yet they do not emerge against Nancy Pelosi, Branda Hale and Gina Miller, are we facing the revenge of women against male sexism? Barack Obama said the world would be better if it were run by women, would Michelle Obama probably win the election if she ran, a woman as President of the United States when would it count?**

*One of the most shocking things to me is that there has still never been a female president in the United States – what a truly appalling figure. Women make up half of our population and yet are not represented equally in top positions. I do think that Barack Obama has some truth in what he says – though to moderate it slightly (so as to not upset all those sensitive men who live in such privilege they think equality is a threat) I believe that it is not necessarily that a woman would make a better leader than a man, but more that a man cannot fill a leadership position without understanding half of the people he leads. We are understanding more and more the value of soft skills in leadership, skills that traditionally are linked to women when we say they are 'caring' and 'thoughtful' and so on, yet we are not seeing this reflected in our elected candidates. I don't think Michelle Obama would win the election if she ran, despite probably being a better candidate than all the others. Not only will she not be taken seriously as a woman, she will also face oppression as a black woman, and greater than that, she will face critique for being a good, honest, genuine woman who doesn't need to use radical, offensive, marginal language and policies to attract votes.*

**The conformist generation that rules the world considers that young people are not able to really take action to change the planet, yet the new icon Greta Thunberg is 16 years old, she is 17, the Finnish**

**premier Sanna Marin 34. You can find a balance point that combines the enthusiasm of young people with the experience of past generations?**

*Experience comes with age, that is true, but also with age comes a loss of creativity, of imagination, of boldness. The older generations think that we as the youth cannot do as they do because they have spent so many years being pushed through a mold of adulthood that they think that is the only way. But no matter what our age, we all have something to offer. Climate change isn't only an adult problem, it's a planet problem – and if it takes a 16 year old girl to start a revolution, does it matter that she was 16 or that she started a revolution? This is not to say that older generations are not important – they are wise and knowledgeable and full of experience and talents. It is to say that unless we begin to see that everyone, no matter their age, gender, race, or background, can bring something to the table, we will never maximise our true potential.*

**The cultural gender gap is also reflected in small things, boys are given technical toys, girls are given Barbies. What problems did you have to face to start your STEM career?**

*We cannot be what we cannot see. If girls are brought up on slim, white, blonde, barbie girls who only like fashion and boys, how can they be expected to want to be astronauts, entrepreneurs or engineers? My parents introduced me to not only those traditional girly toys, but also to other, wider toys and encouraged me to explore all sorts of career and subject options no matter whether they were traditionally male or female. I also grew up going to an all-girls school and so very much felt my first hurdle as a girl in STEM when I stepped outside my school comfort zone into the 'big wide world'. I'm often not taken seriously, or made fun of for enjoying STEM. I found it difficult to 'fit in' with typical STEM groups because they were very unlike me in their personalities and it was hard to get involved in a place with such a masculine culture. I remember one particular example only last year where I participated in a Computer Science Competition, and having ranked in the top 1%, was invited to a further round and awards ceremony which I was so excited for until I walked in the room and realised that I was not only the only girly person there (everyone else seemed to be wearing zip-up hoodies and headphones, whilst I had a pink jumper and headband on), but also one of the very few girls in the room at all. It's very hard to express your passion for something if you can't connect with all the people around you that you share your passion with.*

**The quotas rose by law created in Italy and India for example, to force the insertion of women in the places that count in economics and politics, can be a solution to unlock the mechanism that sees the majority of men occupying the command roles?**

*I think creating quotas or objectives to get women into important roles is a good step, but not an ideal, complete step. In order to start a cycle of development you need to get women in – and if companies are not doing that themselves, quotas ensure that women are being placed where they should be. However, quotas are never the ideal solution because women should be placed into those role for their own virtues and without feeling like they are simply filling a quota. I don't think women will ever be taken seriously and respected in their roles if they have 'come from a quota', even if they are more than qualified for the role. So it's progress, but not the end goal. Let's reach a place where women, and other minorities, are employed for their merit, regardless of whether they are female or not.*

**Prof. Mary Semmerling with her famous poem, What I was wearing, highlighted a serious and terrible problem, which in cases of rape always tries to blame raped women by charging them with 'less virtuous' behaviors than socially acceptable morale. How to combat this attitude from institutions and society, whereby a woman is judged on the clothes she wears?**

*A woman does not have to be modest in order to be respected. This is the singular, important truth that is still not being heard. How embarrassing is it that we as people still choose to determine blame based on a skirt that was 'too short' or a top that was 'too revealing' rather than on a person who has done something so disgusting. In my opinion, this fundamentally runs much deeper to the perception that women are objects, a man's possession, and are only valuable if they can sit still and look pretty. Though many of us may not think of women in this way, our system still thinks this way. Society has not changed. Until we start valuing women based on their intellect, talents and successes instead of their looks, clothes and body, we will never erase this tragic notion of victim-blaming.*

**Most of the violence occurs within the home, in the female field we have the problem of arranged marriages for money, which is also increasing in Europe (in the United Kingdom an estimated 5,000 cases)?**

*Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights. We have not achieved equal rights for women until we have achieved equal rights for ALL women. This is the danger of privileged feminism – we forget that women all over the world are dealing with oppression in all forms and whilst solving the gender pay gap is important, it is more important that we work on saving the lives of thousands and thousands of victims of domestic abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, rape and so on. It's not enough to be a feminist (though this is a brilliant step forward), we must be intersectional feminists, and feminists of the world.*

**Do you want to add something to this interview?**

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