

I am thrilled to be here with you at our second YaleWomen awards ceremony.

I had a really hard time figuring out what to say tonight. This is, in a way, my valedictory, because I am finishing my term as a council member for YaleWomen in June. I have served Yale as a volunteer in some capacity since 1987. (*Maybe I have to start learning to say “no”.*) The heart of that service was a 14 year stint on the AYA board, followed by becoming the founding Chair of YaleWomen and serving for over eight years as a member of the Council.

I have loved every minute of it. I have met and developed friendships with men from the classes of the 30s, and alums from the 20-teens. I have traveled to New Haven, Ghana, Australia, and all over this country to further the work of Yale. I have reconnected with classmates, and made friends with classmates that I didn't know at Yale. I received at least as much out of my Yale volunteer life as I gave. If you don't already volunteer for Yale, or another school, you should try it.

When we formed YaleWomen, we wrote a Strategic Plan that had four focus areas:

building community

promoting lifelong learning

contributing to society, and

contributing to Yale.

Reflecting on what YaleWomen means to me, I have come to believe that building community is the heart of what we do, and is at the intersection of all of our goals.

I want to tell you two stories.

The first is from our YaleWomen blog. In the fall of 2017, we produced a webinar on salary negotiation. Two of the women who attended, one from Chicago and one from Paris, were in the middle of considering new jobs, and were friends. As one of them put it, they later had the opportunity to sneak away from work and family and get together for a day in Barcelona. They

ended up using the information from the seminar to inform their own conversation about job transitions, and to encourage each other. To take a step they may not otherwise have taken. YaleWomen reached both of them, helped to reconnect them, and catalyzed their thinking about their lives and careers.

The second is not in any blog.

Many of our Chapters have regular meetings to draw women of similar interests together, whether it's around work, a hobby, or a love of reading, but sometimes they simply get together socially. One of them has a purely social event every year, with no theme or agenda, other than to get to know each other better, and every year a few women attend who had never come to any Yale event before. (*I think that's one of the powerful things about YaleWomen and the other shared identity and interest groups that have blossomed over the last 10 years.*) One year at this event, they gathered in a circle so that each of them could share who she is. As the stories filled the room, many women recognized themselves in the others. Soon, one woman started to speak, compelled to share a story she had never told anyone, about a brutal sexual assault that she was the victim of years before. She gave details, and she named a name. The person who told me this story described an outpouring of love and support, ranging from hugs to in-the-moment, concrete plans to connect her with a prominent attorney who could help her seek justice. Eventually, they continued around the room, and more women shared their stories. Many of them talked about their own experiences of being a target of assault or harassment. They all came away understanding, in their bones, that not only were they not alone, but each of them was there for the others, that many of them have been through the same things, and survived. This is what can, and does, happen in our YaleWomen community. One of the women in this group said to me, "YaleWomen filled a need in me that I didn't know I had."

Both of these stories might seem to be inward-looking, Yale women "simply" helping other Yale women. But what's happening is more than that. We have built a powerful, connected, community of support and action, where intelligent, committed, motivated women are contributing their time, talent, treasure and love to make this world a better place, a more diverse, inclusive, equitable place. Think about the words of the panelists this afternoon, they

voiced inspirational ideas about how each of us can take action to stop discrimination, combat hate, and work toward equity.

In the conversations just now a lot of women were asking, “What can I do? I’m not a lawyer, I’m not Anita Hill.” I think that every single one of us can do something: it’s in the hallways of your workplace, it’s speaking up for someone who has had the courage to speak up for herself, it’s examining how judgment of your colleagues might be driven by bias. It’s taking a moment to understand, to be intentional, to figure out where each person is coming from, to understand the value of this person and her perspective. And, you don’t know how what you do will influence others. I was struck by how Catherine Lhamon, sitting in between Anita Hill and Ann Olivarius, described how she had read about Ann in law school, which she started just after the Thomas hearings, and how Ann and Anita each had an impact on her life and career. I bet when Ann Olivarius started her work she never imagined where it would go. Everything you do has an impact – and it might not happen until decades later.

Yale women can change the world. The women to whom we are about to give our awards have changed the world. There is a power in this room. As Anita Hill said, “You have the capacity to talk to a wider audience.” You can change the world, and I challenge to you is to take action in your own life, to use your power, and our collective power, to do the same. To repeat what Anita said earlier, “Go forth openly, boldly and radically”, and let’s do it.