CONCLUSION – WHAT’S NEXT?

If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.

– Maya Angelou

In many ways, developing an understanding of the ways politics and gender are linked is the easy part. Figuring out what happens next involves action. Deciding the best avenue for action is often complicated, it is hard to figure out where to start. This conclusion serves three purposes. The first is share stories of two women who saw a means by which they could improve the lives of people in their community and elected to act. With an eye toward understanding the link between action and information, the second section will give you a guide aimed at fleshing out real news stories from fake ones. The third section will provide a list of resources in areas of voting, community organizing, volunteering, running for office, and lists of books, films, and podcasts which may help inspire you to be an activist. It is important to realize that the key to activism is finding something you are passionate about. Something you are willing to move a mountain for. Then, look at the folks who are already doing this work, join them, or figure out a way to create your own change.

CASE STUDY: HARLEM RUN AND ALISON MARIELLA DÉSIR

Beginning in 2013, Alison Mariella Désir founded Harlem Run, an organization based in Harlem, New York. Initially, Harlem Run started as an avenue for runners of all skills to meet and go for a run. With a vision toward inspiring urban communities to engage in fitness and to use running as a vehicle for positive change, Alison channeled the goal of Harlem Run toward a focus on fitness and community engagement. The group’s ambition is to build up people to be better, physically, and emotionally, as well as to be more engaged in their community.

Learning about Alison, it is not surprising that Alison would want to build a community who are as much about fitness as they are about building better relationships. I spoke to her about this connection and she said, “I recently
started thinking about where this desire/compulsion for activism came from and I think that it is deeply rooted in my own personal need for inclusion and wanting the same for others. Throughout my life, I have been made to feel like an outsider or someone that I did not belong in certain spaces. Being one of only a handful of students of color throughout all of my schooling, for example. I have translated those feelings of rejection into a lifetime of making inclusion and accessibility my focus.”

After the U.S. 2016 election, Alison was looking for a way to channel her frustration with the pending new Presidential administration. In early January, 2017, she began plotting a strategy that would use her sport to bring positive attention to Planned Parenthood, an organization that was certain to be threatened by the Trump agenda. As Alison started contemplating her way toward this goal, she thought of two distinct facts. In 2017 the U.S.A. would celebrate its 240th birthday, and the growing threat the incoming administration would pose to women, people of color, and LGBTQ, people, to name a few. As she shared in Women’s Running in early 2017,

I knew that I had to do something. But what could be done? Over the past few years, running has been my meditation and my vehicle for creating solutions and social change. Whether on a personal level as a healthy coping mechanism for depression, or on a more macro level as the leader of an urban running movement, running has fueled so MUCH powerful change for me. (Désir, 2017)

Along with her fellow runners Talisa Hayes, Marquita Francique, Kim Rodrigues, and Alma Nolasco, Alison plotted the Four Women Run for All Women 240 mile run from Harlem, NY to Washington D.C.

In four days the four women would tag-team a run to raise money for Planned Parenthood and would end by running into the 2017 Women’s March on Washington. Using social networking, they would find places to shower, and (my personal favorite) request items like Oreo cookies from kind strangers wanting to know how they can help the women along the way. They slept, sporadically, in a van which followed as they ran. Initially, Alison set up a Go Fund Me fundraiser for the run, with a goal of earning $44,000 to benefit Planned Parenthood. (The number of $44,000 was set as a tribute to President Obama, the 44th President.) On January 7th the dollar amount raised was $22,000. By January 10th the $44,000 goal had been met. But, the Four Women Run for All Woman Go Fund Me was not done. As their run began on January 18, 2017, they kept the Go Fund Me up. The numbers of donations continued to grow and, by the time they had reached Washington, D.C., on January 21, 2017, the Go Fund Me had topped