

Special Report

Empowering women in US

“In the US, we have a problem with young girls. When they get to High School, they don’t become interested in Science. It’s very common.”



Past President of the Association of Childcare Centre Services, Sabah (PPTS), Puan Hj Nalsia Yunus (right) airing her views during the workshop.

Mary Chin

FOR empowering women, the United States Government has an incredible programme called Wynette (Women’s Networking) under Small Business Administration (SBA).

Whitney Keyes, 42, an author, business advisor, motivational speaker and digital media personality, from Seattle, Washington, said this is one of the ways in which the Government empowers women from the minority groups.

“I am sometimes a part of the Small Business Administration (SBA) Through Wynette (Women’s Networking), we work among women in different communities like once a month.

“One month, we bring in a speaker who might be an accountant, and the next month, it might be someone who does marketing. Women pay a very small amount like US\$20 to attend those talks,” she said in an interview.

Keyes, who is the Director of Whitney Keyes Productions, said women empowerment is also achieved via micro-financing under SBA.

“If you are a woman-owned business, you may get access to funds. We have the same issue in hand as we know that if women are educated and empowered, they will educate the whole family”

Local banks, she added, will help and offer financing to women.

“Maybe they don’t have a perfect business plan but they have a good idea and need help for that.”

Asked whether the banks are strict and require a business plan in black and white, Keyes replied: “Yes and No, again I think for some of the small businesses, some banks are not as strict. They are willing to work and help a woman put together a business plan. This approach is more collaborative.”

In addition, the Young Women’s Christian Association

(YWCA), a non-profit organisation, also carries out a special programme to help women and girls.

“For example, I am a volunteer with YWCA and we help disadvantaged young girls. Some of them don’t have a computer at home. What we do is bringing in career women to show them (disadvantaged girls) what they could be.

“We teach them how to make resumes and offer job training. That way, the girls become more employable in the labour market. Yes, they have to compete for jobs,” she said.

Keyes is conducting a series of this workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Kota Bharu, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching.

What impressed Keyes was that almost all of the participants at the workshop do social work.

“As such, they are influential in the community, so it’s important to fund and support them. Yes, absolutely”

Despite the feminist movement in the US in the 19th and 20th centuries, which advocated gender equality for women, and the emancipation of women, Keyes said women are still striving for it (gender equality).

“But we are a big country with a diverse population, so there must be continuous education to make sure people pay women for what they are worth.”

Examining the issue, she thinks, sometimes it’s women’s own challenge.

“For instance, we (women) don’t ask for a raise as much as the men might ask. Don’t get me wrong...we have all equal pay for equal work.

“But let me give you an example. When I went to Microsoft, I was so grateful to have that job that I was just happy with what they gave me. But I had a male colleague and who said, ‘Oh, I am making this much money’ And I couldn’t believe that he asked for more money. He said, ‘Well, I did not accept what they gave me.’



Whitney Keyes