

NEWSLETTER

Issue 1

January 2019



Dear friends,

We are happy to present the first newsletter of the Center for Gender Equality and History (K.I.I.F.)! K.I.I.F. is a non-profitable, non-governmental organization aiming to study and promote gender equality, putting emphasis on the history of gender and gender relations in Cyprus and the world.

Our focus on history derives from the invisibility of women's history, gender history, and social history of Cyprus in general, and also from our desire to understand our present better by comprehending the roots of patriarchy, homophobia and inequality.

K.I.I.F. aspires to become a center for the exchange of scientifically and research-based ideas as well as a center for action toward gender equality; a space to reclaim the past as well as the future of gender relations on the basis of knowledge, mutual respect, individual and collective freedom, democracy and equality.

Anyone can become a member of K.I.I.F. as long as they agree with the main principles and goals of the organization. K.I.I.F. is governed by a nine-person Board of Directors which is elected by K.I.I.F.'s General Assembly, occurring once a year.

Next General Assembly

Wednesday 13/2/2019
Time: 7:00 p.m., at the
Municipal Multicultural
Center of Nicosia

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*CENTER for GENDER
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WORKING WOMAN: A Gendered View to the Past and the Future of Work

The Historical Labour Museum of PEO along with the Center for Gender Equality and History as well as PAOK Klirou are currently implementing the project “Working Woman: A Gendered View to the Past and the Future of Work”, funded by the European programme Erasmus+. The project offers the opportunity to young people to learn, discuss and express their opinions and demands on issues such as the historical development of women’s social demands at the Cypriot workplace, women’s role in the labour and social struggles, and eventually the contemporary situation of women and equality in the workplace, the trade unions, and the Cypriot society in general.



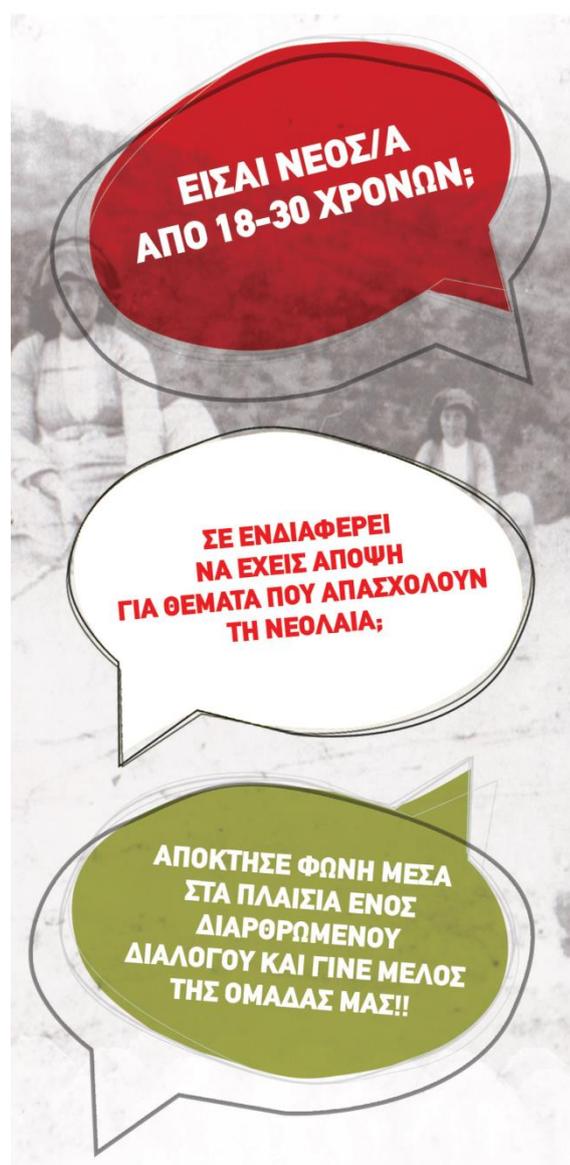
A main part of the project is the series of workshops/meetings titled “Gender – Society – Work. Women’s demands and social stereotypes in Cyprus: The past and the future” which will be open to the public and will occur during May and June 2019. These workshops will lead to a Cyprus-wide conference. The conference will elect representatives to conduct a series of meetings with stakeholders in order to launch the positions of the conference.

The project aims to thoroughly examine the historical importance of equality as a goal for a democratic work environment and a democratic European society, while it also aims to empower young women through promoting positive

role-models. The target is for both men and women to become more aware of the problems that women face in their working lives and of the gender stereotypes which prevent men and women from reaching their full potentials in professional life in a way that would be free from gender bias and prejudice.

For more information on the project or to apply for your participation in the project, please call 22866696 or the email museum@peo.org.cy.

*The meetings will be in Greek.



CREATING AN OPEN ONLINE ARCHIVE ON THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF CYPRIOT WOMEN

K.I.I.F. participates in the research project "A Women's History Archive: Cyprus Library Online for Gender" which is implemented by the Promitheas Research Institute in cooperation with K.I.I.F. and the University of Cyprus. The project began in January 2019 and is expected to be completed by December 2020. It is funded by the Research Promotion Foundation under the RESTART 2016-2020 programmes.

The research project includes two main stages. The first stage refers to collecting primary sources in regard to women's history in Cyprus which will concern the period between 1878 and 1960 (such as old newspapers, interviews, archive material, photographs etc.) that will be concentrated in a digital online archive which will be open to the public. The second stage includes research aiming to examine and evaluate the potential impact of knowledge regarding women's history on contemporary stereotypes and beliefs on gender. This stage will involve a group of students with the aim of studying and evaluating the impact that knowledge on women's history may potentially have against gender stereotypes and relevant beliefs.

The main aim of the project is to promote the history of women in Cyprus while tackling a series of issues: the restoration and reclamation of historical knowledge regarding women, the deconstruction of history myths and stereotypes referring to the history of genders, the demonstration of the importance of women's contribution to the progress and development of the Cypriot society empowering and encouraging women to demand their rights and equality. K.I.I.F. will inform the public about the progress and the findings of the research project while relevant announcements, material and project's newsletters will be uploaded in our website and Facebook page.



Next General Assembly



All the members of the Center for Gender Equality and History (K.I.I.F.) are kindly invited to the second General Assembly of K.I.I.F. which will take place on Wednesday 13 February 2019, 7:00 p.m., at the Municipal Multicultural Center of Nicosia (Polidinamo) on 40 Nikoforou Foka Avenue (next to Famagusta Gate).

Any member of K.I.I.F. has the right to run for the Board of Directors as long as they inform the organization for their intention to be a candidate in the elections by 11 February 2019 via sending an email to info@kiif.com.cy or calling 99293800.

Please keep in mind that the working language of the General Assembly will be Greek. However, we would probably be able to find individuals who will be happy to quietly translate from Greek to English and vice versa as long as you inform us in advance by email (info@kiif.com.cy) or telephone (99293800).

“Work is honour” and other women’s slogans in a collective work of art

In November 2016, the Center for Gender Equality and History (K.I.I.F.) participated in an art exhibition titled “nEUROsis” with the collective work “Us and Them”. The project was created by volunteers, members and friends of K.I.I.F., and Dr. Evi Tselika who was responsible for the supervision and general editing of the art project. The latter consisted of a banner decorated with archival photos which accomplished a visual narration of the history of women’s movements in Cyprus. The photos belong to the archive of the Pancyprian Federation of Women’s Organizations (POGO) and the Historic Labour Museum of PEO.

In several parts, the banner was embroidered with a thread which formed words or slogans referring to the history of Cypriot women. One of those slogans was “Work is honour” that, according to historical sources, was written on the stamp of the first working women’s organization in Cyprus, the Working Women’s Union, which was established in Famagusta in 1939. The contribution to the exhibition included the banner along with an audio component from the Women Walk Home march in 1975.

The volunteers who participated in the creation of this collective art project included Paraskevi Ioannidou, Andri Kyprianou, Eirini Kyritsi, Thekla Kyritsi, Andrea Neophytou, Elena Neophytou, Chrystalla Panayiotou and

Yiota Panayiotou. This past year, K.I.I.F. held the particular banner / piece of art during the march for the international women’s day, which occurred in Nicosia, 10 March 2018.



The First General Assembly of the Center for Gender Equality and History

The first General Assembly of the Center for Gender Equality and History (K.I.I.F.) took place on 28 November 2017. During the Assembly, the main goals and the first activities of the Center were presented along with an annual report of its activities and financial situation.

Moreover, a nine-person Board of Directors was elected by the Assembly and was structured as following:

Board Coordinators: Andrea Neophytou and Thekla Kyritsi

Financial Officer: Yiota Panayiotou

Members: Marianna Dimosthenous, Andri Kyprianou, Eirini Kyritsi, Elena Neophytou, Vasiliki Farao, Sotiroula Charalambous.



Open Dialogue with the Youth about gender stereotypes in Cyprus

From May to August 2017, Promitheas Research Institute in cooperation with the Center for Gender Equality and History organized a series of all-day conferences/workshops titled “Breaking Gender Stereotypes”. The series occurred in the framework of a structured dialogue project funded by the European programme Erasmus+. Participants in the structured dialogue were young people between 18 and 30 years old as well as academics, youth experts and stakeholders.

In this framework, five conferences/workshops took place aiming to discuss and analyse the mechanisms which (re)produce gender stereotypes on different levels of the Cypriot society. The conferences included seminars, lectures by academics and experts, workshops, round discussions with politicians, trade unionists, journalists and other stakeholders, along with the presentation of audio-visual material.

This way the dominant gender stereotypes in Cyprus were tackled, along with the mechanisms which contribute into their reproduction and the construction of gender norms of “femininity” or “masculinity”. Many issues—from a child’s education within the family, the roles determined by religion, the educational material and teaching methods to the occupational segregation between “male” and “female jobs”, the gender inequalities at the workplace and in politics, and the shaping of stereotypes by the media via information, entertainment and advertising—were examined during the conferences demonstrating the importance of dialogue and awareness raising in regard to gender stereotypes.

The project “Breaking Gender stereotypes” resulted in the publication of a booklet discussing basic concepts and data regarding gender stereotypes, their consequences, the distinction between sex and gender as well as the segregation between male and female toys, colours, professions etc. Below you can find two brief and interesting quotes from the relevant booklet, which can be downloaded for free from K.I.I.F.’s website [only in Greek]:

<http://kiif.com.cy/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Booklet-Gender-Stereotypes.pdf>

Pink vs. Blue

Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, children in Europe—boys and girls—were dressed in white clothes. During the first decades of the same century, white clothes began to be gradually replaced by colourful clothes. However, the boys were the ones who would get dressed in pink and the girls would be the ones in blue! International women magazines of the 1940s urged parents to dress their sons in pink because this was an intense colour which was seen as masculine while they urged them to dress their daughters in blue which was seen as more gentle and delicate. It was only later that the trend began to reverse and it was only after 1980 when baby staff and children toys became clearly divided into pink for girls and blue for boys; a phenomenon that is connected with greater profit for children’s products since parents would hardly offer their daughter any toy which belonged to her brother but, on the contrary, they would buy brand new clothes, objects and toys for her.

What is a stereotype?

The term stereotypes, as used today, was introduced by the author Walter Lippmann to describe ideas and images that already pre-exist inside our minds and are not based on our experience but on a predetermined belief which eventually prevents the functionality of our judgment. In other words, social stereotypes are schemes, beliefs and images which are entrenched and used in order to evaluate something according to the predetermined view. Take, for example, the assumption that “women are bad drivers”. When someone has this pre-existing belief, then when they see a woman making some kind of a driving mistake, they receive this as a confirmation of their stereotypical belief. However, when they see a man making a similar mistake, they do not take this as a mistake made by the entire category of “men” but as a mistake of an individual person who happens to belong in the particular category. This way, the behaviour of an immigrant person can be received as a confirmation of racist beliefs, while the same behaviour coming from a home-grown person would be received as a random or isolated behaviour of a particular individual. This process leads to prejudice against people and situations, and to phenomena such as racism and sexism.

One of the main goals of the Center for Gender Equality and History (K.I.I.F.) is the promotion of women's history in Cyprus. Realizing that women's presence is almost non-existent in the dominant narratives does not refer only to the Cypriot case. Women's history and their invisibility in history is a matter of research on an international level.

Although in terms of declarations, it is often stated that women had an important role in the development of society and that great social changes would be impossible without the "female ferment"¹, it is also true however that—intentionally or not—women's contribution in the development and the progress of humanity is not quite recorded. Even when women are not completely absent from historical narration, their role seems secondary or supportive and is presented in a stereotypical way. Moreover, certain events and data—connected with women and social history—are often deemed as less significant by mainstream history, such as gender relations, patriarchal structures and women's oppression.

Women's invisibility can therefore be found on multiple levels such as school text books, historical monuments, academic bibliography, street nomination etc.

K.I.I.F. aims not only to highlight women's history which is overall invisible but, at the same time, to detect the roots of behaviours, stereotypes, relations, social and other roles that are uncritically reproduced through time determining social life until today. The reproduction of a particular historical narration, according which the male activity is understood as more historically crucial than the female, and women are supposed to have played a less important role, leads to the simultaneous reproduction of particular values

according to which women should be restricted in inferior roles—both in the family and interpersonal relationships as well as the public space.

K.I.I.F. has implemented several projects concerning the history of Cypriot women. Among them is the formation of a women's history walk in the old Nicosia presenting events and data from women's history. The walk was already presented four different times to the public and will continue to be organized by K.I.I.F. as part of its year-round activities. Another important project—which started in January 2019—is the «Women's History Archive: Cyprus Library Online for Gender». The two-year project is funded by the Research Promotion Foundation. It includes data collection regarding women's history which will be archived in an open online database.



“In mainstream history, women's presence is nearly non-existent”

Ζωντανεύοντας την αόρατη ιστορία των γυναικών
Οδοπορικό σε μίαν άλλη Λευκωσία

Σάββατο | 29 Οκτωβρίου | 9-12 π.μ.
 Αφετηρία διαδρομής: Παρθενναγωγείο Φανερωμένης

Το Κέντρο Ισότητας και Ιστορίας του Φύλου σας προσκαλεί στην ιστορική διαδρομή που διοργανώνει στην παλιά Λευκωσία με θέμα την ιστορία των γυναικών.

Διοργάνωση: ΚΙΙΦ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΙΣΟΤΗΤΑΣ & ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΦΥΛΟΥ
 Χορηγός: ΟΡΓΑΝΙΣΜΟΣ ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗΣ ΚΙΤΡΟΦΙ

Το Γυναικοπάζαρο

Περιορισμένος αριθμός θέσεων

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Invitation to the first women's history walk in the old Nicosia organized by K.I.I.F.

¹ Expression used by Karl Marx in his letter to Ludwig Kugelmann in 1868 and became quite popular in leftist circles.



Reviving the invisible history of women: A walk in another Nicosia

The article below, by Andrea Neophytou, refers to the formation and organization—by the Center for Gender Equality and History—of a women's history walk in the old city of Nicosia in which events and elements of women's history are highlighted. As part of its year-round activities, K.I.I.F. organizes such women's history walks which have the form of history tours. If you are interested in participating in a future walk, please send an email to info@kiif.com.cy to ensure that you will receive information about the next walk.

The realization of women's invisibility in historical narration led K.I.I.F. to the organization of the women's history walk titled "Reviving the invisible history of women: A walk in another Nicosia". Throughout the walk, the aim is for the participants to become familiar with data and events from women's history in Cyprus. After conducting relevant research using different sources, such as interviews, maps, announcements and other historical material, a group of K.I.I.F. volunteers formed and organized this walk/tour, putting some light to the traces of female activity in the urban landscape of the old Nicosia.

The starting point of the walk was the former girl's school of Faneromeni where female personalities such as the directors of the school, Theano Parouti and Eleni Christou, declared the first women's demands to the Nicosian society and established the first women's club, putting emphasis on women's education. Studying the history of the Faneromeni's school, one can see how the female



students were trained to become good housewives and mothers by the school textbooks. One can also see the lack of a versatile education for girls while fields such as science and maths were not considered appropriate for women. One can also trace the paradox that, although only financially privileged women had access to education, it was however seen as inappropriate for the women of the upper and upper middle classes to work. For this reason, women teachers came from the popular strata. These stories are only a few of the stories narrated during the walk. They are just a starting point for further reflection and discussion. The walk continues to the house of Marouthkia—or, according to the dominant nomination, the house of Hadjigeorgakis Kornosios who was her husband. Through her story one can find traces from the history of the upper-class women during the Ottoman era. Some streets later, at the old building named "ROYAL" revives the history of the labour women's movement. The first Cyprus-wide rally of working women occurred in 1955. A conference hall full of women zestfully demanding social insurances, just as the rest of the labour movement. At this point, one finds out about an important woman, pioneer for women's struggles in Cyprus, Kyriakou Pavlou. Kyriakou was a keynote speaker at the rally and she was elected as a member of a three women committee to submit a petition to the British government demanding legislation for social insurances. Four years later, also in ROYAL, the Pancyprian Federation of Women's Organizations (POGO) organized its founding conference consisting of 1500 representatives from all over Cyprus and radical demands for the time period: equality, equal pay, freedom of organization, social insurances etc.

The history of the old Nicosia is unravelled from an alternative perspective. In a small road, we find the “House of Working Women”. A few steps ahead, the main street named Ledras was a road marked by social movements. Pioneer women marching or demonstrating to demand better wages and better work conditions. In this location, where hundreds of women are now working mainly as sales women and employees in the coffee shops and the restaurants, some decades ago working women passionately struggled for workers’ rights as well as for women and children’s rights. Next stops in the walk: the women’s bazar, the hamam, the theater... and many other stories that are hidden in the urban landscape of the old Nicosia. Mrs Eleni, Sofia Tsimilli, Ourania Kokkinou, Marouthkia, Cemaliye, Nezire, Polyxeni Fysentzidou, Kyriakou Pavlou, the sales women, the working women and the prostitutes, they all narrate a different story; the story of women.

The walk was funded by the Youth Board of Cyprus under the “Youth Initiative” programme.

For further information regarding past and future walks, please visit our sites:

<https://www.facebook.com/kiif.cy>

<https://www.Kiif.com.cy>



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