

## ***2010 Winner Gina Vicarel's Speech***

When thinking of my role as “Young Careerist”, I often consider those who have come before me. Words such as duty, sacrifice, pledging and commitment provoke many emotional thoughts as I stand before you today. One of the most gratifying aspects of being a “Young Careerist” is the sense of pride that comes with its involvement. One of the greatest feelings I have had is being able to give back to those who will one day follow this same path.

With a humbled hearing, I realize what women of previous generations have given up for all of us to be gathered here today. Pioneering women such as Jane Adams, who was the first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize; Susan B. Anthony, who introduced The Women’s Suffrage Movement to the United States; and Harriet Woods, the first woman to win a statewide office in Missouri serving as the Democratic Lieutenant Governor in 1984.

Although we have made great strides in closing the gap, we are still fighting the same fight as generations past. Women still struggle currently in the workplace for equal pay and/or career progression into executive roles. More alarming are the results of a study conducted in 2009 by the World Economic Forum, which encompassed 134 countries as it relates to gender parity. The United States did not even rank in the top ten, finishing 31st.

I have been subject to similar discriminations on my quest to climb the corporate ladder, entering into a male dominated profession in the business world. For instance, the last opening for an Area Vice President position at my company had four female candidates and two male candidates; not one of the female candidates were called back for a second interview. Yet these women will serve in a training capacity to the new male Area Vice President. This is a true example that the equality gap is alive and open. Knowing these obstacles existed and still exist is what drives me every day to rise to this challenge for all women of the past, present and future.

For the women of my past, THANK YOU for my rights and my freedoms that allow me to speak here today as a Young Careerist. Today, myself and others will represent you with great duty in further promoting a movement where progressive equality exists. Soon we will pass the torch to young women of the future, with the hope that we have continued to build on the foundation laid for us by you, and for them.

As we part ways today, I hope I have empowered all of you in a daunting task to PRESS ON for our struggle with equality. In closing I leave you with a quote that summarizes well over 150 years of Civil Rights for Women: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is not just in some of us; it is everyone. As we let our own light shine we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

-Marianne Williamson