

Hillary Is That Girl

*Written by April Mihalovich, Tabor Academy Associate Editor
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Hillary Clinton's self-run Facebook page describes her as a "Wife, mom, grandma, lawyer, women & kids advocate, FLOAR, FLOTUS, US Senator, SecState, author, dog owner, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, glass ceiling cracker, 2016 presidential candidate." Many of these roles are visible, as most people are familiar with her political ventures, familial status, and penchant for pantsuits. However, what we don't always see at first glance is how hard she has had to work to achieve these titles. Clinton has demonstrated this multiple times, most memorably by slamming her counterpart, Donald Trump, in the First Presidential Debate by saying that "I am prepared to be president" after he criticized her for being prepared for the debate. If even the strongest of female leaders, Hillary Clinton, is criticized for doing her job, what precedent is set for the women of the next generation?

Tabor has made large strides in recent years to close the gender gap both in the classroom and in campus culture. I Am That Girl, an organization promoting a positive shift in girl culture by building "a community for girls to be seen, be heard, and belong", as expressed in their mission statement, has recently become a large part of Tabor's campus culture. Attracting many students—both male and female—IATG challenges students to talk about what it's like to be a girl on campus and to share their own experiences and struggles. Ultimately, this organization has played a profound role in Tabor culture. From putting up posters and positive notes around campus to hosting dress down days to support a particular cause, IATG has brought light to many of the social barriers that need to be broken and ways in which girls can better support each other. Although Tabor boasts a myriad of wonderful and unique students, it can't be ignored that boarding school is inherently closed off and comprised of a very specific population. Other clubs like IMPACT and Spectrum, diversity clubs that have been instituted this year, work with each other and in partnership with I Am That Girl to raise awareness on how diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class affects student life. Shown through astronomical growth in student participation in these clubs, Hillary Clinton has inspired more and more students to stand up to social injustices on campus and to handle these situations tastefully as exemplified throughout her campaign.

The Clinton campaign has exposed students to a large-scale manifestation of ideas which have so often been discussed in and out of class; feminism and the glass-ceiling have taken on a new meaning for many Tabor students. In any Tabor classroom, it's rare to see discrimination based on gender. In my experience, most teachers either use gender as a way to gather different experiences and opinions, or they simply ignore it altogether. Leadership positions, such as Class President and dorm proctorship are offered equally to each gender. With no co-ed dorms, girls in female dorms are offered proctorship the same as a boy in a male dorm would be, and student government positions are divided into a male and female subcategory for each role. Even though

Clinton's impact among high school students may be subtle, its effects are not. The presidential debates have sparked student-run talks about how Clinton is patronized by the media and by other politicians, as well as how that translates to our everyday lives. On the flip side, often discussed is the way in which Clinton handles these situations and the strength demonstrated through her civilized, logical arguments. Many chapel speeches this past year have focused on bigger, more controversial issues, such as encouraging girls to speak out about the mis-definition of feminism and to recognize and appreciate the diversity among our student body.

Our school is composed of many strong, admirable, young women, and Clinton's influence has encouraged these girls to speak up, reject being called the "nasty woman", and encourage other girls to do the same. By confronting issues and pursuing this cause, students have mirrored Clinton's campaign and shown that girls at Tabor need to be taken seriously, not despite their gender, but in spite of it. By handling outrageous personal digs during the presidential debate, Clinton has responded with poise and intellect, proving her legitimacy as a presidential candidate and her confidence in her ideas despite the misogynistic comments made by the media and other politicians. She cares about the success of others and encourages the celebration of being a woman, rather than putting women down. These are all qualities present—and will continue to be persist—in Tabor students.