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Firing of New York Times Editor Reignites Equal Pay Debate.

DAVID GREGORY, moderator:

Joining now by NBC News' Maria Shriver, Carolyn Ryan, who is Washington Bureau chief of the New York Times, and also here in the studio, Carly Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett-Packard, former California Senate candidate, she's now global chair of Opportunity International. Welcome to all of you. Maria, you and I have been talking about this. The facts of Jill Abramson may-- may be murkier now, right? Not completely resolved. The larger question about equal pay, about equal treatment for women in leadership, is a conversation that will go on independent of Jill Abramson's circumstances. What do you think?

MARIA SHRIVER (NBC News Special Anchor/Author, The Shriver Report): Absolutely. I think this is a teachable moment. We don't know the facts of Jill Abramson's situation, but pay discrimination, pay inequity does exist. It's like global warming: only a fringe few deny its existence. And it particularly affects women in low income jobs-- women of color, 57%-- 57 cents on the dollar. It's one of the reasons one in three women in this country, working women, are on the brink of poverty. Things can change that, passage of the fair check-- Paycheck Fairness Act can change that. I think this is also a teachable moment for women in leadership. How do women lead? What is their style? Are they judged differently? I think they are, and women have to decide for themselves what kind of leaders do they want to be. Can they…

GREGORY: And that's…

SHRIVER: …withstand what-- being called certain names? How can they survive in the workplace?

GREGORY: And that's one of the issues here. Carolyn Ryan, you're Washington bureau chief for the New York Times. So I'll go ahead and put you on the spot by even asking the question, look, you look at her management style-- tough, tough editor, obviously. So many women are telling each other it's time to lean in, time to get over self-confidence. Is the culture ready for that?

CAROLYN RYAN (New York Times Washington Bureau Chief): I mean, In terms of the culture, the one
thing that I worry a little bit about is it feels like there's all this legitimate pent-up frustration among women about broader sexism issues. And I worry a little bit with this story that it's essentially become a caricature. So you have Jill Abramson, who's an extraordinary journalistic thinker and one of the best brains of her generation, a formidable intellect; and now she's being caricatured as a victim. And the New York Times, which is essentially in-- its major news department's being run by women day to day-- is being caricatured as a bastion of sexism, which isn't true and hasn't been my experience there. So I just worry that there's a way that much of the frustration gets transferred on to the story that isn't accurate.

GREGORY: Is this a case-- I mean, now you're seeing publicly in the New York Times essentially being very clear about why they fired her, about management problems, how she was treating people, her manner with colleagues, publicly embarrassing them. I mean, it's gotten pretty acrimonious. Does anything strike you about this as being a double standard? Would a man be treated the same way upon an exhibit?

CARLY FIORINA (Fmr. Hewlett-Packard CEO): Absolutely not. And the most obvious example of that is the announcement about her departure. Here is a woman who, having been told she has an abrasive style-- how many times have women heard that? She's been a distinguished reporter for the New York Times and editor for three years. There is not a single word in her departure announcement about her contributions, about her record, about her time at the New York Times, she is excised from history. No more lectures, please, from the New York Times about the treatment of women. Arthur Sulzberger, the more he talks, the more clear it becomes to me that, of course, she was treated differently. Whatever the issues in the newsroom were, the dynamics about her departure would not have been the same for a man.

RYAN: I mean, I’m not here to speak for the newspaper. I think Jill is known as a truth teller, and I think she wanted the people to talk about her departure. I think she wanted it to be clear that she was being fired. She didn't want the ceremonial…

FIORINA: There wasn't a single positive comment about her in her statement of departure, not thank you for your time, not thank you for a wonderful record of service to The New York Times, not a word. That is disrespect of the most public form.

GREGORY: I want to ask Maria-- because when you and I were talking about this this weekend, I raised this as well, I have an eight year-old daughter. Now, fast-forward to the point maybe she's in her early 20s, the advice that I might I give her about getting into this business that I know something about that can be pretty rough and tumble. What qualities would I want her to have? I want her to be true to herself, but I also would want her to have the toughness to deal with what she’d have to face in an industry still dominated by men, which would create a certain toughness that not all men are ready for.

SHRIVER: I think any advice, David-- I think any advice you give your daughter today about the workplace she's going to walk into will be outdated. The fact is the United States of America needs to modernize its laws to help women stay in the workforce. We don't have paid leave. That's one of the reasons that women drop out and then come back to lower paying jobs. In the Shriver Report, we reported that if we close the pay gap, we would cut poverty in half in this country, add half a trillion dollars to the economy. So I think we need to have these discussions about leadership, about how women are treated, about the pay gap. We need to talk about modernizing our laws so that young women can grow up and
work and still take care of their families, still be treated with respect, be judged for who they are as leaders and human beings as opposed to women or men.

GREGORY: All right. But very quickly, Carly, in terms of what women face in leadership in situations, do you think it's going to change? Do you think it's going to be outdated?

FIORINA: Well, it is changing. Clearly, it is changing. We see more women in positions of leadership. When I became the CEO of Hewlett-Packard, I was one out of the Fortune 50. We now have 12. Clearly things are getting better. And yet, women remain the most subjugated people on the face of the earth. Dynamics around are different. Women remain an underutilized resource. And may I just say that politics is part of the problem here. When liberals use women as a political cudgel, when they basically say if you don't support our liberal orthodoxy on all these issues, you're waging a war on women, that's disrespectful to women. We are half of this great nation. Every issue is a woman's issue. And our opinions are as diverse as men’s, but the dynamics around women remain different than the dynamics around men. New York Times, exhibit A.

GREGORY: We're going to leave it there. Maria Shriver, thank you so much. Carly Fiorina, as well. FIORINA: Thanks.

GREGORY: Carolyn, we’ll see you in just a minute on our political round table, as well.