

Dear Stephanie

France has a new President in Emmanuel Macron who defeated Marie Le Pen in Sunday's French presidential election.

While there are plenty of reasons why people might have voted for Macron, apparently many French women took particular delight in supporting him because of the 24-year age gap between Macron and his wife. Something in fact which Macron has in common with Donald Trump, but in Trump's case, the age gap looks like a predictable cliché while in Macron's case, it's the exact opposite.

As pretty much everyone knows, Macron is 39 and his wife just turned 64. Macron was only 15 when he met Brigitte Trogneux, a married teacher at his high school in northern France who had three children. Macron's parents sent him to Paris to put distance between the teacher who ran the drama club and their precocious son, but their bond lasted, she divorced, and 10 years ago they were married.

Just days before the French vote, nearly all women interviewed said they were more interested in Macron because his marriage breaks the mould in French politics which has long been dominated by men with younger lovers - from François Hollande, the current president, who separated from his partner, Valerie Trierweiler, after a very public affair with an actress 18 years his junior, to former president François Mitterrand who took a mistress half his age when he was in his 40s - a younger woman who famously stood near his wife at his funeral in 1996. When older women end up with much younger men, the women are pegged as desperate "cougars" as Macron's detractors have called Trogneux on Twitter. Meanwhile the tabloid media have had a field day speculating about whether she has had hair extensions, veneers and botox.

Swap the genders and young men like Macron who fall for older women are seen in a much more positive light and generally applauded for their choice of partner, wrinkles and all. Further underscoring the double standards which see women painted as the villain no matter what, media accounts of the now First Couple's once illicit relationship have offered it as evidence of Macron's daring personality and willingness to break with tradition, qualities that helped make him a presidential frontrunner without a political party or any experience in elected office.

But as Christina Cauterucci writes on [slate.com](http://slate.com), this is a strange way to frame a romantic relationship between a teenager and his 40-year-old teacher. "If [the genders were reversed and] Macron had been a young woman who'd seduced her male high-school teacher away from his wife and family, her determination and ultimate success would not be proffered as signs of her leadership skills, the beginning of a life as an effective politician. She would be cast as an opportunistic Jezebel with daddy issues who slept her way into every political role she got."

Indeed, swap their genders and the story of Macron "as a goal-oriented romancer" and his unwavering resolve to woo his teacher "would be spun as a conventional tale of an uninged, desperate home-wrecker. Conquering resistance through patient pursuit would, to most observers, seem like obsessed-stalker behaviour coming from a young girl..."

Macron may have broken the cliché of the powerful older man and much younger trophy wife but we are still a long way from a bias and blame free society where women can act exactly like men and not be the subject of finger pointing and derision.

As always, we would love to hear your views on this and other topics! Please write to me at [su-mei.thompson@twfhk.org](mailto:su-mei.thompson@twfhk.org).

Warm regards

Su-Mei Thompson  
 CEO, The Women's Foundation

## TWF PROGRAMME UPDATES



### T.E.E.N. Alumni Update

Last Tuesday, our TEEN alumni enjoyed an exciting tour of a US Navy ship, USS Sterett, and heard from three of the female Navy officers about their reasons for choosing a career in the Navy, their daily working routine and the progress the Navy is making in terms of improving gender diversity. Many thanks to the US Consulate for organising the event and providing our TEEN alumni with this invaluable eye-opening experience.



### T.E.E.N. English Workshop

Our current cohort of TEENs enjoyed their final English workshop last Saturday. They celebrated their achievements at a graduation party where they expressed their heartfelt appreciation to all the dedicated volunteers who have been working with them since February.



### Financial Literacy for Primary Students

Last Thursday, TWF conducted another IEC-commissioned Student Workshop for 165 P.2 students at PLK Grandmont Primary School. With the help of the P.5 Financial Ambassadors we previously trained, the junior form students learnt key financial concepts and the importance of saving by playing a life simulation card game.

## GIRLS & STEM



### GGT Plantbot Workshops

The team completed a Plantbot Workshop at United Christian College last Saturday and ran another Plantbot workshop at Hong Kong True Light College yesterday. The girls learned the hardware and coding skills needed to build and manage smart plant watering kits.



### GGT Bloomberg Company Visit

Around 40 students from TWHGs Chen Zao Men College enjoyed company visit to Bloomberg HQ last Saturday and last Monday. Many thanks to the passionate volunteers from Bloomberg who led the office tour, 15-minute student mentoring sessions and a 2-hour workshop on the fundamentals of C#.



### GGT Accenture Company Visit

Last Monday, 40 students from Tack Ching Girls' Secondary School visited Accenture's new 40,000-square-foot Interactive Studio in Quarry Bay. Students enjoyed various experiential training sessions and learned how Accenture is working with clients to co-create, innovate and apply the latest digital technologies and experiences to shape the way we live and work.



### GGT Media Coverage

Thank you to MTR for featuring the GGT Programme in action at Hong Kong True Light College on their [facebook](#) page.



TWF is delighted to be one of the supporting partners of Girls for Tech, a VR Experience Day organised by Hong Kong Computer Society. Learn more about Girls for Tech from Rita Ching, TWF Deputy CEO, [here](#).

## #MYREALCAREERLINE & SHE OBJECTS



### #MyRealCareerLine in MTR Stations!

From April 29 - May 12, TWF's #MyRealCareerLine 'Hero video' is playing in 33 MTR stations around Hong Kong! Keep an eye out for the video and if you see it, post a photo to [TWF's Facebook](#) with the hashtag #MyRealCareerLine. A big thank you to MTR for their ongoing support.



### France Further Regulates To Combat Anorexia

France has taken further steps to combat anorexia by requiring models to obtain a [doctor's certificate](#) attesting to their overall physical health and body mass index. Vive La France!

## FUNDRAISERS FOR TWF!



### Celebrate Mother's Day with TWF and Support our Girls Go Tech Programme!

Bring your mother and your kids for a fun-filled Mother's Day morning with TWF! TWF is delighted to have been selected as the beneficiary of FACE Club and HK Computer Society's [Charity Walk and Family Carnival](#). Support TWF's Girls Go Tech Programme and enjoy the 2km walk, live music, Transformers photobooth and more! We hope you can join us on this Sunday, May 14 for this fun-filled morning in Cyberport! Reserve your spot [here](#)!

## AWETHENTIC + GALLERY +

### DATE CHANGE - Celebrate HK Women with TWF at Awethentic Gallery!

Join TWF and Awethentic Gallery for a special night celebrating the amazing women of HK. Get the chance to view stunning works by Sean Lee-Davies and other amazing artists. A percentage of the proceeds from the event will support TWF's community programmes for women and girls in HK. We hope to see you there! *Drinks will be provided.*

**DATE: Wednesday, May 17, 2017**

**TIME: 6.30 - 9.00 p.m.**

**VENUE: Awethentic Gallery, Shop G28, Central Building, Central**

**Register by emailing**

[Sarah.AbbottLadner@twfhk.org](mailto:Sarah.AbbottLadner@twfhk.org) by Friday, May 12. Spots are limited so book yours soon!

**\*\*Please note that this event was rescheduled from May 11 and will now be held on May 17.**

## WHAT WE'RE READING

**Our top picks for recommended reading and listening on the key trends and breaking stories about women and gender:**

- [Improving Gender Equality In the Beauty Industry](#) (Entrepreneur)
- [Why Do So Many Incompetent Men Become Leaders?](#) (Harvard Business Review)
- [Closing The Gender Gap In Computer Science Begins In Kindergarten](#) (Forbes)

- [ESPN Survey Reveals How Student Athletes Feel About Body Image](#) (Teen Vogue)
- [Doubting Yourself Again? Nine Ways Women Can Grow The Confidence To Take Their Seat At The Table](#) (Forbes)

9A Chun Wo Commercial Centre, 23-29 Wing Wo Street, Sheung Wan  
E: [info@twfhk.org](mailto:info@twfhk.org) | W: [twfhk.org](http://twfhk.org) | T: +852-2592-8265 | F: +852-2592-8264

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