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TECHNOLOGY, AN ALLY TO THE 21ST CENTURY WOMEN: AN ESSAY

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ABSTRACT | 摘要 | RESUMEN

This essay explores how digital technology serves as a powerful ally for women's empowerment in Paraguay, particularly in the legal field. Drawing from the author's experience as the country's first judge to lead a fully digital court process, the text shows how technological tools help women reconcile professional and domestic responsibilities, while promoting greater access, security, and transparency in the justice system. It also highlights the persistent gender inequalities in Paraguay and argues that, while technology is not a cure-all, it can significantly reduce barriers to real equality—if implemented thoughtfully. The essay uses qualitative reflection to underscore how virtual hearings, remote work, and safety-enhancing tools like panic apps or monitoring bracelets offer concrete benefits to women. However, it also warns that unregulated algorithms risk reinforcing discrimination. The essay concludes with a call for responsible use and regulation of technology to ensure it contributes to lasting change for women in all spheres of life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“A vast and powerful new language is being developed for the future use of analysis, into which its principles can be introduced in order to have a more rapid and accurate practical application in the service of mankind”.

Ada Lovelace¹

2. BEING A WOMAN IN PARAGUAY

I am a woman, I am a judge, I am from Paraguay. We are a little more than six million inhabitants. Exactly half of the population is women, with an average age of 30. We are a young country. In the Supreme Court today, out of 9 members, only one woman represents us. We went backwards; we occupied three places in the past.

In the First Instance – where I belong – we occupy 50% of the seats. And in the Peace Courts, which are all over the country and have exclusive jurisdiction in cases of domestic violence, women are in the majority.

What happens in all the countries of the world, with some notable exceptions, is that women are not the rule in judicial or political decision-making positions; we are still a striking “exception”². Why am I telling you this? First, because I come from a country with a long history of authoritarianism and unequal treatment of its women in all areas from the home, where education continues to relegate women to household matters and men are prevented from learning to manage it, where the traditional role

¹ Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace better known as Ada de Lovelace, was born in London on December 10, 1815, and died on November 27, 1852 at the age of 36. She was the daughter of the poet Lord Byron and his spouse Lady Byron, who separated shortly after their only daughter (Ada) was born. Given her social position, Ada received an exquisite education in music, languages and mathematics. During the years of 1842 and 1843, he devoted himself to translating an article by the Italian military engineer Luigi Menabrea, entitled: The Analytical Machine. But the value of his work is not in the translation itself, but in the notes, he left on it, in which the first algorithm processed by a machine can be found. <https://portalfrases.com/frases-de-ada-lovelace/>

² At this moment in Argentina, they run the risk of not having any female Justice for the next ten or more years, the current president Milei has nominated two men for the next vacancies. Watch AMJA (Argentinian women judges) campaign “More women, more justice” <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/THqggTCeViTW1eQa/>

is still reproduced, that if women work outside the home, they should not neglect their main mission which is to raise children and take care of the home.

Statistics do not lie. There is a huge gap in access to education, which has been dragging on since the 1980s and has not been formally closed. Although today in the universities women are better students and occupy more than 50% of the classrooms, in public and private decision-making positions they remain a minority or nonexistent.

In numbers, 78.5% of women aged 18 and over have suffered some type of gender-based violence at least once in their lifetime. Violence against women is higher among young people between 18 and 29 years of age (86.5%). In the public sphere (work, education and community), sexual violence is the most common type of violence, ranging from the mildest to the most serious forms, such as sexual coercion. Around 63.1% suffered some type of violence in the public sphere throughout their lives.³

A country where every year more than 50 women are murdered by their partners, where sexual abuse is almost 75% of girls and where violence, machismo and discrimination are part of everyday life.

Our history can be summarized in two international wars in less than a hundred years - the first one in 1870, which left us only women, children and old people - ten years of foreign occupation, coups d'état, revolutions and autocratic governments are our genetic heritage, being this hostile and harmful scenario for women to get ahead on a par with men, recognized and respected in our rights and capabilities. Even so, we have moved forward, with everything against us, Paraguay exists thanks to its women.⁴

However, despite these sacrifices recognized in literature, in poems and songs honoring women, that is, on paper Paraguayan women had to wait until 1954 to have the right to vote and 1963 for the regulation of their civil rights to administer their own patrimony and marriage, even in a condition of inequality with men.

So with the weight of the history of inequality that we bear, achieving these percentages in the justice system has not been easy. Previous generations have started a long and difficult struggle to achieve

³ Paraguayan National Institute of Statistics link <https://www.ine.gov.py/>

⁴ **Residentas** were the women who, after the war against Paraguay in 1870, oversaw populating the country, giving birth to children of different fathers because the country needed them, working in the fields and in the city of a country in which only children and old people survived.

legal equality. I firmly believe that only by occupying public and private decision-making positions on an equal basis will we be able to achieve real equality⁵. Only in this way will we be able to guarantee equal access to public and private employment opportunities, achieving a quality of life that guarantees respect for the human rights of all women living in Paraguay.

Today, we are fighting for genuine equality. And how can we achieve it? In many ways and from many fronts. But I am convinced that technology is a great ally of working women. Many times, the good can become bad, and the use of technology can also harm us, but learning to incorporate this tool in our favor is crucial for the advancement of women on equal terms with men in all areas.

Let me tell you my personal experience and how technology was of vital importance in my life and career.

First digital judge

In October 2016, Paraguay implemented the first digital -zero paper- file in the history of Paraguayan Justice. The pilot plan was in the hands of a female judge, the one who speaks to you, and this has changed the way processes are handled, has made them transparent, streamlined and secure.

That old fear of the virtual in the courts, today and even more so after the COVID-19 pandemic, is beginning to be a thing of the past. But why a woman judge? Well, the answer is simple, because as you have seen, women occupy 50% of the positions of judges of first instance in the civil jurisdiction, which increased the chances that a woman would carry out this ambitious project, and thanks to that, I had the honor and the high responsibility to carry it forward and with prudent auspicious success until today.

So, how, you may ask, can this help us achieve real equality? Technology breaks down boundaries and paves paths. As women, we know well what it means to have to concentrate on handling a case and at the same time managing our household, all while using WhatsApp, Telegram, or any other type of instant messaging, and remembering to buy the birthday gift that our son must take to school. We are multiple. We are still fulfilling those roles in the 21st century despite being 50% of the global workforce, and we can do it today, better than our mothers, thanks to technology.

⁵ In Paraguay even unpaid domestic and care work is still the responsibility of 92% of women compared to 72% according to data extracted from the report "Uses of time and inequalities in Paraguay" published by the Center for Documentation and Studies in June 2019.

The electronic docket has allowed me to work from home, whatever time it is, from our phone if necessary and eradicates that obligation - which puts us at a tremendous disadvantage⁶ - to be physically at the courthouse for day-to-day paperwork. In my case, the face-to-face hearings, despite the pandemic, found the legitimacy they needed to become virtual, thus transforming the courts into what they should always be: a service, not just a place [2].

The electronic file gives us security, in many ways, since we can control our judicial offices and ensure that our signatures will not be adulterated. Security in that the files, as they were before, cannot be stolen, burned or adulterated.

This helps us to compete on equal terms, or at least it relieves us of the domestic and family burden that most women carry because of social and cultural imposition. We already know that we always have more housework than our male colleagues. For "let's be" honest, whether we are mothers or not, we are still wives, girlfriends, daughters, sisters, aunts or grandmothers and we have more domestic and unpaid care responsibilities than our male colleagues who can close the door of their homes and forget about those obligations that are still not equally shared.

Here I share with you some numbers that tell us in numbers what I have been telling you. This survey was conducted among women lawyers who litigate in courts, and they were asked if virtual hearings had helped them in their task of reconciling work and home life. Over 70% have responded affirmatively and this gives us the guideline that without realizing it, technology in all its expressions, from reading newspapers and keeping us informed to tools for work as meeting platforms, as today we are connecting and seeing each other, has smoothed the path of distance, time, borders, economic cost and helps us to participate in daily life and work on equal terms.

In Paraguay, being a woman and getting ahead is a (real) challenge⁷. I am sure that not only in Paraguay. As I said at the beginning, we move forward and we also move backwards, let's not take our rights or our conquests for granted. Speaking in public is forbidden in Afghanistan right now, where women, just a few years ago, were able to become lawyers and judges and convicted criminals. Today we

⁶ As statistics show that women assume the role of caring for other family members (parents, elderly, children, etc.) and domestic work in greater proportion than men.

⁷ We have not elected a woman president or a woman president of the congress even in the 21st century when in our region Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico have already achieved it.

learn about this brutal regression and violation of rights thanks to technology. Let's keep moving forward, even if we are forced to go backwards.

A Spanish saying goes: *"he who fights is not dead"*. So, we keep going.

3. CONCLUSION

Let us not be careless, let us learn the lessons of history, and since we live in a world still governed by the patriarchal model, let us use technology with the care and responsibility it deserves. For although technology frees us and cooperates us to break down those standards, as I shared with you my experience with the digital file, it has helped me to be a woman, judge, boss, mother, wife, daughter and friend at the same time, without neglecting any of the roles that we continue to exercise, let's be aware that gender bias and discrimination will not end with technology or AI [3], on the contrary, they will remain in force and very solidly incorporated in the algorithms [1] that today determine what we consume in social networks and even in the not too distant future, how we will decide the judges in courts. We have time to change these patterns and that the technology of the future does not replicate these behaviors of discrimination towards half of the population, but that does not depend on it, it depends on all of us, so that new generations of women continue to move forward thanks to technology and not in spite of it, as has happened so many times in the history of mankind.

The great Víctor Hugo said that the 18th century proclaimed the rights of man, and the 19th century would proclaim those of women. Víctor Hugo was a century wrong because of excessive optimism, but I dare to say that the 21st century belongs to women, and this is largely thanks to our great ally, technology. The technological revolution, like the industrial revolution in its time, changes the world, changes women, changes the law and changes the way we work.

Technology is not just a simple change of speed in the way we work. Technology changes our ways of relating to each other socially. It changes everything and every one of our habits. It has evolved so much that it has "transformed" the paradigm that (we) women had of having to choose between work and family, because today it allows us to reconcile work and family if we learn how to do it in our interest.

Technology floods our lives in a positive way. In medicine, it allows us to make advances in diseases that only afflict women. It brings us comforts that allow us to compete on equal terms in sports, in science, in military careers, in everything that a woman intends to do and achieve.

At the beginning, we mentioned the cruel reality of violence that women in Paraguay face. technology also protects us. How to? It allows us to use electronic bracelets or anklets to control if the aggressor approaches his victim, and allows us to use applications such as the panic button to give the necessary alarm and save lives.

Ada Lovelace, in the 19th century, bequeathed us the algorithm that allowed the development of today's technology. She was a woman scientist in a man's world. Let's not waste the legacy of a visionary and extraordinary woman. It is our obligation and responsibility to incorporate technology into our lives as an ally, rather than seeing it as an enemy, to improve our quality of life and that of all women around the world. And it is the obligation of all of us to use technology responsibly, to regulate it if necessary, so that the next generations of women and men, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, will remember and study the technological revolution as the milestone that allowed real equality without exceptions.

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ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

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TECNOLOGÍA, UNA ALIADA DE LAS MUJERES DEL SIGLO XXI: UN ENSAYO

RESUMEN

Este ensayo analiza cómo la tecnología digital actúa como una aliada clave para el empoderamiento de las mujeres en Paraguay, especialmente en el ámbito judicial. A partir de la experiencia de la autora como la primera jueza del país en liderar un proceso judicial completamente digital, el texto muestra cómo las herramientas tecnológicas permiten a las mujeres conciliar las responsabilidades laborales y domésticas, al tiempo que mejoran el acceso, la seguridad y la transparencia en el sistema judicial. También se aborda la persistente desigualdad de género en el país y se argumenta que, si bien la tecnología no es una solución absoluta, puede reducir significativamente las barreras hacia la igualdad real si se implementa con responsabilidad. Mediante una reflexión cualitativa, el ensayo expone los beneficios concretos de audiencias virtuales, el trabajo remoto y dispositivos de protección. Finalmente, se advierte sobre los sesgos en los algoritmos y se propone regular la tecnología para garantizar avances duraderos en los derechos de las mujeres.

Palabras clave: desigualdad de género, empoderamiento de las mujeres, justicia digital, Paraguay, violencia de género, tecnología y sociedad

技术, 21世纪女性的盟友: 篇随笔

摘要

本文探讨了数字技术如何成为推动巴拉圭女性赋权的重要力量, 尤其在司法领域。作者作为该国首位领导全数字化法院流程的法官, 分享了亲身经验, 说明科技工具如何帮助女性平衡职业与家庭责任, 同时提升司法系统的透明度、安全性与可及性。文章指出, 尽管巴拉圭依然存在严重的性别不平等, 但科技若被妥善使用, 可显著减少女性在追求真正平等道路上的障碍。文章通过反思性分析强调了远程庭审、灵活办公、以及如报警App和电子监控装置等安全技术给女性带来的切实益处。然而, 作者也警告, 若缺乏监管, 算法可能延续或加剧性别歧视。文章最后呼吁以负责任的方式使用并监管技术, 使其成为女性争取权利、改善生活条件的有力工具, 而非新的障碍

关键词: 性别不平等, 女性赋权, 数字司法, 巴拉圭, 性别暴力, 技术与社会