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From the Nashville Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/nashville/news/2018/10/24/music-industry-power-player-we-need-all-hands-on.html>

Music industry power player: 'We need all hands on deck now'

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Beverly Keel wasn't raised to speak out.

Like many women, she told the audience at the Nashville Business Journal's annual Women in Music City Awards Tuesday, she was taught to be a "good girl," to keep her head down and to let her work speak for itself.

But at a time when women remain under-represented in country radio play and a wide range of social issues demand attention — from sexual assault to gender income disparity — Keel has a message for her peers.

"When you're the only female voice in a room, speak up loudly, don't put up with being interrupted and demand attention," Keel, chair of Middle Tennessee State University's department of the recording industry, said near the end of her talk. "Fight to invite other females in a room. Praise other women on social media. ... And for goodness sake, ask for help when you need it."

Keel's advice comes as women in country music continue to lag their male peers in radio play and overall representation. It's an issue Keel is actively working to correct, particularly through Change the Conversation, an organization she co-founded in



NATHAN MORGAN FOR THE NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL
Honoree Beverly Keel, of Middle Tennessee State University, poses on the red carpet for the Nashville Business Journal's Women In Music City's awards dinner Tuesday at Omni Nashville Hotel.

2014 with fellow industry power players Tracy Gershon and Leslie Fram.

But, Keel told the Women in Music City audience, it's an issue every woman in the industry must focus on, regardless of their level of experience or success.

"It's easy to believe that we should wait until we're older and in a position of power," Keel said, but that's not the case.

"We cannot afford to have women believe that they have to be perfect before they can make a contribution," she said later in her talk, whether that be professional or personal perfection. "We have serious issues to address today. ... We need all hands on deck now, perfectly manicured or not."

As a sign of positive momentum, Keel pointed to last week's CMT Artists of the Year event. The brainchild of Fram, CMT's senior vice president of music strategy, the show featured only female artists.

"The show proved what [we've] been saying through Change the Conversation," Keel said. "Women are making some of the best music out there. Women want to support other women. ... We just need to know these female artists exist."

Still, Keel continued, the show itself is just a start.

"It's up to us to help tell the stories of these woman and their songs, and also tell your own stories along the way," Keel said. "It is unacceptable that today's country music has silenced the life experiences of so many women. We've got to change that."

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