

PERSONAL PRESENTATION SHEET



Forum : Forum on Inequalities

Thematic: How to reduce inequalities on different scales

Name of the Citizen : Melody E. BRANDENSON

Marital status: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Married/in a relationship○ Single• With children, if so how many: 2	Level of education <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Primary○ Secondary• Universitary
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1. How does the theme of inequalities concern you?

As a woman in her 40s, mother of two children and wife to a husband I've shared twenty years, I experience firsthand the inequalities that shape our communities. Native of rural west Texas, I live in a small town on the Permian Basin, 60 miles off Midland called McCamey. It originated as an oil boomtown in 1925 after George B. McCamey discovered oil here, but it's now known as the "Wind Energy Capital of Texas." Despite changes with the "sky litter" that is the green sector, our tight-knit community makes this home.

I am an executive at Branden Oil & Gas Ltd., a private oil empire grown by my great-grandfather when he first came to America in the early 1900s. The family company, passed through generations, will one day become mine.

I attended the University of Texas in Austin, one of the best universities of the state, for my bachelor's degree in business and my master's in Big Data Management. My education has allowed me to modernize my family legacy.

The company my family owns is about 230,000 acres of land rich in oil and gas. In a few statistics, Branden Oil & Gas Ltd. makes a little over \$400 million in revenue, has 1012 wells and about 80 loyal and trusted employees we consider as family. It is also under Family Limited Partnership, which means it is kept in family hands.

Living in the city during my college years broadened my views from the "west Texas private Christian school" life I was used to. Although it opened my mind on some political views, I am still a proud Republican. I used to vote red at every single election, but today, where our President is a felon, I feel confused. This was not the Republican party of one time, one that sought community, helping one-another, tradition... It's been replaced by a party that wants to divide, notably with the "Big Beautiful Bill" that prioritizes partisan agendas over the practical needs of families, small towns, and businesses like ours. It feels like the party I once proudly supported has drifted away from accountability, community, and integrity, the very principles that shaped my upbringing in McCamey.

However, I still believe in limited government, especially when it comes to Washington overstepping into our energy sector. The freeze in February 2021

showed how vital reliable energy is for families and communities. It was not Wall Street bankers who paid the price- it was our neighbors. Folks in D.C. don't see what it takes to keep the lights on in rural America. In Texas, we've been led into relying increasingly on "green energy." And now these same politicians want to double down on policies that put us at the mercy of unreliable energy, all while shutting down the oil and gas jobs that built this state. Maybe so, but I know one thing: it was not Wall Street bankers who paid the price that week. It was welders, rig hands, mothers trying to keep their children warm.

I was raised to believe in the Second Amendment, traditional values, and the idea that a man's home and land are his to protect. Small-town communities understand and uphold their own responsibilities, often without government intervention.

In McCamey, when one of us falls on tough times, it isn't D.C. that steps in, but it's the churches down the street, the ladies baking pies for a fundraiser, the neighbors digging into their pockets because they know what struggle is. *That* is real community.

And when it comes to work, I've never had much patience for all this talk about "diversity, equity, and inclusion." Out on the rigs, no one cares where you come from or what box you tick; they care if you're good at the job, and that's the only thing that should matter.

At the end of the day, these debates are not just about politics for me; they are personal. I have been married to my husband for over twenty years, and together we're raising two daughters who I pray will grow up with the same sense of grit and community that shaped me. I want my daughters to inherit a Texas where their opportunities are defined by effort, not zip code, and where the strength of a community still matters most.

2. What solutions would be helpful for you?

Any solution that is the kind to actually support families and communities like mine are ideal for me. Not everyone in McCamey has had the same opportunities as I have, and I must fight for them. Reliable energy, so we're not left in the cold during freezes, and policies that let local businesses thrive without too much interference from Washington. Programs that invest in our schools, healthcare, and community services matter because they help neighbors help each other. Anything that strengthens the bonds in our town and rewards hard work and grit is a solution I can get behind.

