Many Facets

America's Women Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment

NAPE
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation

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Suffrage Photos and captions
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Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County: Trixie Friganza (immediately behind the sign), who inspired the song "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," was a women's suffrage advocate from Cincinnati.

Library of Congress: Nannie Helen Burroughs holds a banner reading, "Banner State Woman's National Baptist Convention" as she stands with other African American women, photographed between 1905 and 1915. Burroughs was an educator and activist who advocated for greater civil rights for African Americans and women.

National Archives: This delegation of officers of the National American Woman Suffrage Association received from President Wilson a memorial to the French women in which he advocates the federal woman suffrage amendment. The picture was made on steps leading to executive offices of the White House. Front row, left to right: Mrs. Wood Park, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, Mrs. Helen H. Gardner: second row, Miss Rose Young, Mrs. George Bass, and Miss Ruth White.

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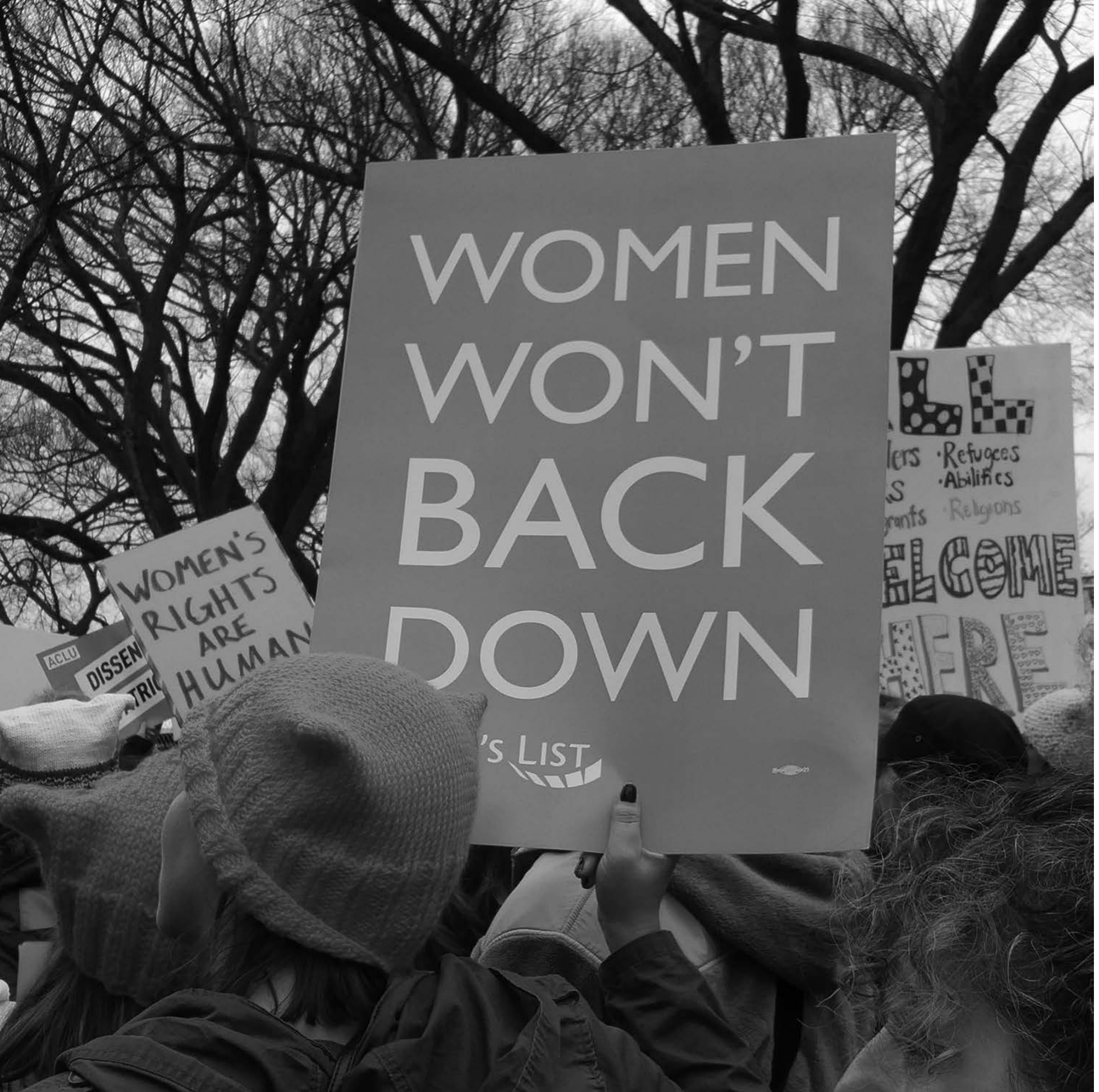

Foreward

The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity has its roots in the long history of seeking to eliminate sex bias and discrimination in vocational education. It began with a 1972 study by the League of Women Voters regarding the presence of sexism in vocational education. Next was Federal legislation in 1976 requiring that there be Vocational Sex Equity Coordinators in every state department of education. And in 1984, legislation passed that required the 50 states to spend a total of $100 million a year on programs to effect change in the classroom and in services to single and teen parents and displaced homemakers, people who needed skills in order to support their families. Supporting all of these pieces of legislation was the work of organizations like AAUW, League of Women Voters, the National Women's Law Center, NAPE, and many others.

From this beginning, equity coordinators first organized annual conferences around sex equity, formed the Vocational Education Equity Council as a professional group within the American Vocational Association; sponsored annual conferences to share resources; and in 1990, decided that a new independent organization was needed to develop and provide professional development to member states who needed help in addressing the broad issues around gender, race and disability in CTE. Though focused originally on gender equity, it became clear early on that gender could not be addressed without also addressing issues of race, disability and income disparity.

NAPE was incorporated in 1990 and has served as a leading voice at the national level on public policy issues, and in providing professional development throughout the United States. In 1994, Mimi Lufkin became Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NAPE and under her visionary leadership, NAPE's outreach to state members expanded, professional development materials and workshops were created and delivered, and the annual conferences addressed the challenges education faces, providing new thinking about the ways to address them.

In 1998, the flow of federal money to support gender equity programs ended with a new Career and Technical Education law. Since states no longer had access to federal money to develop new equity resources and support existing programs, NAPE established the NAPE Education Foundation in 2000, a 501c3 that could receive funding to support the research and professional development needed across the field of education to address the broad array of equity issues impacting students based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language and socio-economic status. Together the impact of NAPE and the NAPE Education Foundation continues to grow across the nation. This growth could not have been possible without the leadership and guidance of Mimi Lufkin who served as CEO for both NAPE and the Foundation for 24 years.

We are honored to provide this overview of the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity – NAPE – as we present to you this collection of essays commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. Throughout these essays, you will see clearly that the intersection of all that defines our identity cannot be separated and that, to be the inclusive country we want to be, NAPE's work is as essential today as it has been any time in the past. These are thoughtful and heart-felt words that reflect the diversity of our experiences, and our common hope for an equitable future for all.

With gratitude to all who contributed to this compilation,

Judith D'Amico
President, NAPE Education Foundation

Mary M. Wiberg
Past President, NAPE Education Foundation
Original Member of the National Alliance of Partnerships in Equity

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed to the support and development of our Many Facets commemorative publication. Special appreciation to NAPEEF President Judy D'Amico, Past President, Mary M. Wiberg, treasurer and Public Policy Committee Vice-Chairwoman Dr. Lou Ann Hargrave, Editorial Consultant Nancy Tuvesson, Technology and Design Manager Caryl Clippinger, as well as members of the NAPE Public Policy Committee.

The 'Gentlemen of NAPE' – NAPE Executive Committee President-elect and Public Policy Committee Chairman Michael Tinsley, NAPE CEO Ben Williams Ph.D., and Associate Director for Membership and Partnerships Gregory Jackson.

Sincerely appreciation as well to the Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation, The Invictus Group, LTD and The Experience Architect for their steadfast support and contribution.

Patricia's Professional Photos and stylist Krisma White.

Introduction

The Power of the Vote.

Nothing solidifies our American democracy more.

In this 2020 America, with all that confronts us as a people—pandemic, racial injustice, economic recession, and political upheaval—the power of the vote has life-changing implications. Women comprise 50.5% of the U.S. population. Our political leadership, the strength of our economy, the quality of our schools, the health of our people—in fact, the very direction of our nation—rest in a women's power to vote.

With this in mind, the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity is honored to present Many Facets: America's Women Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment.

This compilation of 21st century essays from a diversity of women throughout the nation not only honors the hard-fought efforts of the Women's Suffrage Movement as we commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, but also acknowledges the exclusion of that very right for women of color until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed.

Growing up as an African American woman in a military and political family during the height of the civil rights movement, I drew inspiration from the contributions, determination, and sacrifice made by women of all social, economic, and racial backgrounds. My suffragette role models and mentors became Ida Barnett Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Diane Nash, Charlotta Bass, Dorothy Irene Height, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Ann Richards, Bella Abzug, Dolores Huerta, C. Delores Tucker, Angela Davis, and Maxine Waters. These unapologetic women demanded truth from power. They gave—and continue to give—voice to a moral movement, often putting their lives on the line to ensure that the "right" to vote encompassed both gender and race.

Whether they published newspapers that condemned brutal atrocities against human beings, braced for violent attacks while marching across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, organized migrant workers to fight for fair wages, engaged in sit-ins at lunch counters, disrupted political conventions by declaring that they were "sick and tired of being sick and tired," held congressional chairwomanships, or ran for U.S. President, these disrupters for democracy provided the shoulders of strength, morality, and true grit that we stand upon today.

As you read Many Facets, we hope that you will take inspiration from the thoughts and experiences of this generation's suffragettes—young, seasoned, Black, Latina, Native American, White, straight and gay—who stand on the frontline of equity, diversity, and inclusion at this pivotal time in American history. We hope you will see these sisters in the struggle for the phenomenal leaders they are, while recognizing the unapologetic suffragette within you.

Lisa R. Ransom
Creator of Many Facets
Senior Policy Advisor, National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
Chair & CEO, Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation

Enacted on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits the states and the federal government from denying the right to vote to citizens of the United States on the basis of sex. This seminal legal precedent opened the legislative door for women to vote, run for office, and assume the mantle of leadership in our society.

Many Facets is an anthology of brief essays written by a diverse array of American women from across the nation who share their insights and perspective about the enactment of the 19th Amendment and its impact on their lives. At this pivotal time in American herstory, Many Facets pays tribute to the historic accomplishments of multi-generational suffragettes by recognizing America's current and next generation of women change agents.

100 Years in the Making: The 36 States that Ratified the 19th Amendment – and When They Did It.

June 10, 1919
Wisconsin was the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment on June 10, 1919.
Illinois
Michigan

June 16, 1919
Kansas
New York
Ohio

June 24, 1919
Pennsylvania

June 25, 1919
Massachusetts

June 28, 1919
Texas

July 2, 1919
Iowa

July 3, 1919
Missouri

July 29, 1919
Arkansas

August 2, 1919
Montana
Nebraska

September 8, 1919
Minnesota

September 10, 1919
New Hampshire

September 30, 1919
Utah

November 1, 1919
California
November 5, 1919
Maine

December 1, 1919
North Dakota

December 4, 1919
South Dakota

December 15, 1919
Colorado

January 6, 1920
Kentucky
Rhode Island

January 13, 1920
Oregon

January 16, 1920
Indiana

January 27, 1920
Wyoming

February 7, 1920
Nevada

February 9, 1920
New Jersey

February 11, 1920
Idaho

February 12, 1920
Arizona

February 21, 1920
New Mexico

February 28, 1920
Oklahoma

March 10, 1920
West Virginia

March 22, 1920
Washington state

August 18, 1920
Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920, making women's suffrage legal in the US.

States that ratified AFTER the 36-state ratification

September 14, 1920 – ***Connecticut***
February 8, 1921 – ***Vermont***
March 6, 1923 – ***Delaware***

Maryland originally rejected the 19th Amendment on February 24, 1920. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on March 29, 1941.

Virginia originally rejected the 19th Amendment on February 12, 1920. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on February 12, 1952.

Alabama originally rejected the 19th Amendment on September 22, 1919. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on September 8, 1953.

May 13, 1969 – ***Florida***

South Carolina originally rejected the 19th Amendment on January 28, 1920. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on July 1, 1969.

Georgia originally rejected the 19th Amendment on July 24, 1919. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on February 20, 1970.

Louisiana rejected the 19th Amendment on July 1, 1920. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on June 11, 1970.

May 6, 1971 – ***North Carolina***

Mississippi rejected the 19th Amendment on March 29, 1920. The state belatedly ratified the amendment on March 22, 1984.

When the 19th Amendment was ratified, ***Alaska*** was not yet a state. ***But (white) women in Alaska were granted suffrage rights in 1913.***

When the 19th Amendment was ratified, ***Hawai'i*** was not yet a state, yet Hawaiian women were also granted suffrage rights.

The District of Columbia is a federal district, not a state. Up until 1961, residents of DC could not vote in presidential elections.

Women in ***American Samoa***, a territory of the US, were not able to vote even after the passage of the 19th Amendment.

Women in ***Guam*** did not have voting rights after the passage of the 19th Amendment because they were not US citizens.

The Northern Mariana Islands became a territory of the United States in 1947 and was not able to vote on the 19th Amendment.

In 1898, the ***Philippines*** became a territory of the United States. As a territory and not a state, they did not vote re: the 19th Amendment.

In 1929, in response to pressure from the United States Congress, the ***Puerto Rico*** legislature granted literate women the right to vote.

People living in the ***US Virgin Islands*** are considered United States citizens, but are ineligible to vote for US President.

Contents

Meet the Facets

Association Facets

Connie Cordovilla

President
Virginia Chapter of the National Organization for Women
Co- President, Clearinghouse for Women's Issues

Women and the Vote: A Step on the Way to the Equal Rights Amendment

After nearly 150 five years of struggle since Abigail Adams reminded John "I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors" and the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, the recognition of the right of women to vote in the 19th amendment was a step that had echoed through all levels of society:

- In the social sphere, women were able to vote for laws that helped them retain their personal property, income and social status rather than reverting it to that of their father, brother or husband.
- Free public education for all children further encouraged girls and young women to look beyond the farm homestead and perhaps a family store (where their free labor helped bring in income but was not necessarily rewarded monetarily).
- It took about 50 years and a shortage of workers created by WWII when large numbers of women began working outside the home and, with the advent of Title IX, in jobs once segregated to men.
- Most of these gains however have been limited to white women. Women of color have been relegated to low paying jobs and experienced more barriers to education.

Even the having the vote did not mean real equality. The adoption of the 19th amendment did not remove the obstacles of ethnicity and race to universal suffrage. Native American Women were not recognized as US citizens until 1924 and then were subjected to the barriers of poll taxes, literacy tests and other delaying tactics. Asian American Women who were first generation Americans were not made citizens until 1952. And African American women were not really assured the right to vote until the ratification of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. And now with the gutting of the two most important clauses of the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court in 2013, we have actually regressed on all the voting rights of marginalized peoples, including women.

The fact that there were groups of women opposed to the idea of the vote is not surprising. It would require facing the truth of their real powerlessness rather than believing that women control some greater mythical power of moral good that is assigned only to them, like raising "good" children and running an "orderly" home. An additional further myth perpetuated across races and ethnicities as well as gender was that women could do only one task at a time. This "magical thinking" has been used as a salve, in many cases against the hurts and discriminations heaped on marginalized group. A true reckoning comes with the support and push for political and legal power that is universally recognized as dominant. Much the same arguments are coming around again against the Equal Right Amendment, but the pro-ERA forces are stronger than ever. Like every marginalized group, women of all colors and creeds have grown tired of decisions being made "about us" and "for us," but without us!

I would say that the women in my family had the greatest effect on my voting career. My mother told me that it as a privilege to be able to vote and I should go register and vote just as I paid income taxes and put money into Social Security. Her words were strongly supported by her mother, who voted for the first time in 1921 at the age of 40 and cherished having a say in the government of her city and her state as well as country.

My voting career was also influenced by an incident at the beginning of my college career when I went to sign up for my first semester. I told the male counselor that I wanted to register for an engineering degree and he leaned over, patted my hand, and told me that "nice girls" did not go into engineering. I asked him what made him think I was a nice girl and told him to sign me up! It reinforced my drive to make sure I took advantage of all the rights I had and fight for more.

When I think about my initial voting experiences, it seemed to be more of a privilege than any kind of useful political statement. But that changed with the violent racist attacks in the 1960s on Southerners who wanted their voting rights. These injustices influenced my choices and firmed the focus of my energies. I decided that if my vote was going to mean something, I needed to base my choices on candidates' support of the roles and expectations of women in our community and their awareness of social justice issues like civil rights. I made it my business to understand the impact of pieces of legislation and candidate stances on rights and equality.

Our role in voting and its importance to civil society evolves with that deepening understanding, the number of times you vote, and the issues that you face at every political decision-making level. Voting takes on even greater importance when you work actively to:

- Be sure that every eligible voter is registered, supporting early registration for high school students who will turn 18 before the election day and motor-voter automatic registration;
- Publicize the deadlines for registration and requests for absentee ballots;
- Share widely the places that allow absentee voting in person and related deadlines; and
- Be sure your polls are staffed with competent, non-biased election officers.

We are facing a tough but hopefully final battle to ratify the Equal Right Amendment. The weight of experience from winning the vote has helped form a resilience that women can muster for the next hard steps. It is my hope that no one will ever be told that "nice girls don't do that" when they want to run for president!

Connie serves as the president of VA NOW, Inc. and co-president of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues. She worked for thirty years at the American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO, working on civil, human and women's rights issues. Issues of gender equity are a primary concern to her both as young woman growing up in pre-Title IX America when she was told that "nice girls don't go into Engineering" and for her two daughters as they chose STEM-related careers. Women's voting power, whether local, state or federal, has been the key to pressing for equity.

Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard is currently the 17th National President of The Links, Incorporated and The Links Foundation, Incorporated.

With over 30 years of applied public health and behavioral medicine experience, Dr. Jeffries Leonard provides strategic consultation to public and private entities. She was appointed Chair of the DC Commission on African American Affairs and to the ReOpen DC Advisory Task Force by Washington, D.C. Mayor, Muriel Bowser. She is the recipient of numerous honors, awards and recognitions, and holds several non-profit Board positions. She is the proud graduate of Fayetteville State University, North Carolina Central University and Howard University.

Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, Ph.D.

National President
The Links, Incorporated

The right to vote is a powerful tool which can be used to transform lives, communities and the nation. To be clear, while white women were granted the right to vote 100 years ago with the ratification of the 19th Amendment, African American women were not able to do so realistically until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This is despite championing alongside white women in the pursuit for this right.

African American activist Mary Church Terrell's proposal that African American women join the Women's Suffrage Parade, held just before Woodrow Wilson's presidential inauguration was shunned. Organizer and suffragist Alice Paul said Black women could only walk in the back of the parade. To add insult to injury, when National Association of Colored Women leader Hallie Quinn Brown later asked Paul to support African American women in their efforts to remove legal and other obstacles to voting, Paul declined. "No" has never stopped African American women, though— it only fuels our efforts.

Politically, we have seen great change with the African American female vote being among the most consistently cast in this country. Our voice at the ballot box has allowed African American mayors of major metropolitan areas as well as small towns, both male and female, to be elected. We have used that vote to secure state legislative seats as well as seats in the U.S. Congress. I offer this as proof: Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman elected to Congress in 1968, opened the door for 47 other African American women who followed in her footsteps. Additionally, two African American women have been elected to serve in the Senate, Carol Moseley Braun was elected in 1993 and Kamala Harris joined the body in 2017.

Our voice has even seen the selection of Senator Harris as the Vice Presidential pick of a major political party.

Securing the right to vote and representation isn't the only space where we have made strides. African American women have used their voice to improve their position in the professional marketplace. More Black women now are college educated, many with advanced degrees, than ever before. That education has resulted in a shift for many from labor intensive to professional jobs and executive positions, as well as women being able to start their own businesses. Economic power has been a mixed bag for African American women. Yes, we no longer use side or back doors and buy items without being able to try them on. However, we are working more and harder than ever, and are still paid pennies on the dollar when compared with men and women of other races. Our dollars and consumer power don't seem to be respected when we face negative stereotypes from the very companies we support. As we explore "Black buying power," supporting our own businesses and withholding dollars from those who don't value us, we will see more gains. As we increase our voting numbers, we will see an America that better reflects all of her citizens.

When we use our vote, our voice, our power we possess the capacity to change the course of history. I am reminded of the power of the polls each time I walk into a voting booth. In fact, I remember the first time I voted. It was such a proud moment for me to cast my vote for my national and local candidates when I turned 18 years old. My parents and my grandparents took my brother and me with them when they voted. My husband and I, in turn, took our children with us when we voted. We always spoke about the importance of voting and the many people who fought and died for us to have the right to do this very simple, but powerful, action, just as my parents and grandparents did when they took me with them to vote. Now, my boys vote in every election and I hope they will share these important lessons with their children.

My grandmother recently passed at the incredible age of 109 years old. When I consider the span of her life as a Black woman living in these United States for over a century - longer than women have had the right to vote - the impact of suffrage is clear. Not having the right to vote and subsequently gaining that right had a great impact on her life and generations afterward. Because of her, because of her legacy, I have never missed an opportunity to cast my vote.

I take great pride and care when using my vote. That doesn't mean there aren't issues with the system. For example, the recent Supreme Court decision which allows states to pass laws requiring presidential electors to faithfully reflect their commitment to vote for the person they promised to choose. Was the decision justified? Yes. However, the ruling only amplifies the need to do away with the Electoral College.

The Electoral College was designed over 200 years ago to serve a country that looks vastly different from the United States of 2020. I believe younger generations will and should demand a more representative process. They've grown up in a world where it is easier to cast a vote for your favorite couple on "Dancing with the Stars" than go to the polls and vote for president, congressperson, mayor or even dog catcher.

We must begin to move toward a one person, one vote system that will truly be representative of the people. Truthfully, in the end, it is the people who transform communities. For centuries and centuries, there has been one thing that you could always count on – the power of African American women. From the shores to the bus to the ballot box, African American women have challenged and changed every aspect of American society. We have come this far and we will see it through to the end. We must and we will.

Lisa Rice

President and CEO
National Fair Housing Alliance

As soon as she was able, my mother, born just six years after women gained the right to vote and who grew up in Demopolis, Alabama, escaped north first to Chicago, then Cleveland, and ultimately Toledo. Much of her life centered around the struggles she faced as a young Black woman growing up in the Jim Crow south. It impacted her so much that she refused to go back to her hometown. The memories were too chilling. Memories of segregated schools that limited her educational career to the 6th grade. Memories of the daily degradations Black people faced when they visited the Post Office, local stores, or cafes. Memories of being illegally evicted from the home she loved, where she felt the safest, because of racial prejudice.

One of the memories that plagued my mother until her passing was the horrific death of her cousin, a youth organizer for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A brilliant and handsome young husband, father, and businessman, my mother's cousin was murdered because he was actively working to enfranchise Black women and men. My mother adored her cousin. When she left Alabama at the age of 18, she only returned two times – once to bury her grandmother and then again to attend her cousin's funeral. I still have as a keepsake the note she wrote to my father when she was leaving to attend that homegoing service in 1963.

While she never said it outright, I knew that her cousin's death was a compelling reason why my mother never missed an opportunity to vote. She told me stories about the barriers that were put in place by Alabama officials to preclude Black people from voting and how members of our family astonished election workers by being able to provide proof that they were property owners or could pass voting tests that whites in their community did not have to take. She instilled in me, as a young girl, how powerful, necessary, and precious is the right to vote and that it should never be taken for granted. She took me with her, before I barely knew how to spell "vote," to work on political campaigns and to canvass those on our neighborhood to register people to vote. She took me with her when she voted. She showed me, by action, how I must never forgo my civic duty.

As the head of a civil rights agency, I know too well the importance the vote represents for our lives and our democracy. With almost daily headlines about how the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis and infrastructure issues are threatening people's ability to vote, we are all becoming too keenly aware that this right that too many take for granted could be lost. What should also not escape us is that these threats will disproportionately impact women and women will no doubt overcome them, as we have over the past century that we have had the vote.

The Trump Administration has announced a series of drastic changes that will impair people's ability to vote via mail putting undue pressure on citizens to vote in person. Yet the U.S. faces grave disparities in transportation access along gender lines. While women comprise 51% of the U.S. population, according to one study, they only represent 36% of registered vehicle owners. Women's ability to exercise their hard-fought right will be particularly challenged this year if the ability to vote by mail is further jeopardized.

The health pandemic alone will put added pressure on women's ability to vote as the lion share of childcare duties and the responsibility to care for loved ones disproportionately falls on us. Experts predict that the U.S. will lose as many as 450,000 childcare slots, sharply reducing the ability of working parents to get the care they need for their children. Studies show that when childcare options are low, it is typically mothers who pick up the slack and where childcare access is diminished, it negatively impacts a woman's ability to participate in the workforce, be mobile, and provide economic support for her household. Women are disproportionately on the front lines either at work or in the home.

It is precisely because the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately impacting women in many ways that we must overcome every obstacle to vote. Our ability to obtain the healthcare we need for ourselves and our families will largely depend on who gains control of the White House. Ensuring that we have adequate support for our children's educational attainment, we will have financial support to endure the length of the pandemic, and we can remain stably housed, all depends on those officials that we entrust with the important decisions about how our taxpayer dollars will be spent to support our communities and our economy.

With women making up the largest percentage of the voting population, we literally have the power to determine how our nation will endure the pandemic and whether we will emerge bruised with growing economic inequality or transcendent with improved policies and programs that provide families with the support they need to lead healthy, stable and secure lives.

My mother taught me as a child that my vote was not just about me, that my vote was made available to me because of the many sacrifices that she and my other relatives made for me. That lesson, the reminder of the broader responsibility I have to my community through my vote, is what compels me to do all I can to ensure that others can not only exercise this incredible constitutional right but understand why we can never let any obstacle deter us from voting whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Lisa Rice is the President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), the nation's only national civil rights agency solely dedicated to eliminating all forms of housing discrimination. NFHA is also the trade association for over 200 member organizations across the country that work to eliminate barriers in the housing markets and expand equal housing and lending opportunities. NFHA provides a range of programs to affirmatively further fair housing including community development, neighborhood stabilization, training, education, outreach, advocacy, consulting and enforcement initiatives.
Ms. Rice is a member of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Board of Directors, Center for Responsible Lending Board of Directors, JPMorgan Chase Consumer Advisory Council, Mortgage Bankers Association's Consumer Advisory Council, Freddie Mac Affordable Housing Advisory Council, Urban Institute's Mortgage Servicing Collaborative, Quicken Loans Advisory Committee, Bipartisan Policy Center's Civil Society Advisory Council on Artificial Intelligence and FinRegLab's Machine Learning Advisory Board.

1996-2015 -Work Prep/ABE TANF Programs' Coordinator, ODCTE—managed two statewide programs that provided career and technical education, academic remediation, and employability skills to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients; 1981-1996--Equity Coordinator, ODCTE—(during this time) Managed the Displaced Homemakers Programs and the Careers Unlimited Programs; provided Gender Equity in-service training and technical assistance to local educational agencies; assisted with civil right reviews; and served on the ODCTE Accreditation and Evaluation team specializing in equity standards; 2004 -Adjunct Professor, Oklahoma State University—Taught curriculum; 1979-1981 -Career Specialist, ODCTE—Provided career education and guidance to high school and junior high students in three Oklahoma Counties' public schools; 1977-1979 Vocational Home Economics Teacher, Broken Bow Public Schools.

Lou Ann Hargrave, Ed.D.

Treasurer
NAPE Education Foundation

The major benefit of women getting the right to vote is their right to hold office. The more women in Congress results in more laws that are passed that protect and promote women rights. Currently we depend on Congressmen's compassion and sense of fairness to pass laws that are equitable. The fact that we still have not passed the Equal Rights Amendment is an example of how the under representation of women in state and federal government impacts women and girls' status and opportunities.

When I was the equity coordinator for a career a technology state agency, I was responsible for assisting with civil rights technical assistance. My specific area expertise was gender equity. During that time, I saw what I called the "dark side" of education. As I visited with administrators and teachers, they would share that they believed that there were educational programs that should be gender segregated. They would block nontraditional enrollments. Although this practice is less prevalent, it still happens covertly. Every time a female sports practice or a popular female dominated course is scheduled at the same time a male traditional program is scheduled, it reduces the opportunity for female nontraditional enrollment and vice a versus. This is especially true in rural schools where there are less course offerings. Without educational civil rights laws, this practice would be more prevalent and more blatant acts (i.e., sexual harassment) of discrimination would be possible.

Currently civil rights laws are under attack. The current administration is trying to weaken and minimize their impact. The administration has used the excuse of releasing local educational agencies and state educational agencies from the burden of regulations. As a voter, we must understand that our freedom is at stake. Not to fight for our rights will cause them to be diminished and possibly lost.

The first time I voted I took it for granted. I did not think of the women who fought and sacrificed for me to have the right to vote. I was standing in line and overheard a woman ask her husband how to vote. I was appalled. To me she just threw her vote away. It is our responsibility to be informed voters. We should never give our vote away. As I reflect, I know our foremothers would be aghast. We owe it to them to vote with conviction and understanding.

Being from a rural state I understood that the electoral vote protected our wellbeing from being lost to those of large states. It was a way of balancing the powers of small versus large states' needs. However, I have changed my mind. I have watched over and over my candidates receive the majority of votes only to lose to a candidates who gained the majority of the electoral votes. I now realize that it does not matter where you live. What matters is your political philosophy.

I do believe that we will have a female president in the future. Each generation has become more equitable. I remember being at a Future Homemakers of America convention, when we were asked to stand if our mothers worked outside of the home. I stood. I was one of only a few who did. Now the opposite is true. Most of the females in my generation chose traditional occupations. That is changing with every generation. As more women seek and gain elected position is local, state, and federal government, more citizens will be comfortable with women leadership.

I am very hopeful for women and girls' future. However, we must be diligent in our efforts to promote and protect their rights.

Beverly Evans Smith

National President & CEO
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

One of the first significant shifts in American life as we know it came with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which granted women the right to vote. This constitutional change was not only a movement of social transformation but, ultimately, led to significant economic and political changes that have shaped the status of women today. Before winning the right to vote, women could not own property or enter legal contracts making financial independence virtually impossible. Options to work outside of the home were limited to service industry jobs that paid minimal wages, and marriage was encouraged as the primary way to gain economic stability and societal relevance. And, although the movement to ratify the 19th Amendment was plagued with issues, the passage itself brought light into a world dimmed by misogyny.

Women, for the first time, were able to reclaim the power in their voice and vote. That is, for some women, but not for all women. Yet this monumental moment in our history was also a much-needed precursor for women of color to achieve that same power. While the passage of the 19th Amendment meant little to the everyday lives of African American women, its passage illuminates the juxtaposition that is being both Black and a woman in America.

Leading up to its ratification in 1920, Black suffragists like Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells, Nannie Burroughs, and the Founders of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, gave selflessly to the suffrage movement. It was Delta member, Mary Church Terrell, who said: "By a miracle, the 19th amendment has been ratified, we women now have a weapon of defense … it will be a shame to us if we do not use it."

The good news was that the suffrage movement crossed racial and economic barriers by bringing together female intellectuals, socialites, working-class, and women of color. But there were also those who did not support this movement. Some women feared that social, economic, and political equity would challenge the status quo of traditional gender roles and bring the issue of racial inequities to the forefront. Notwithstanding the environment of the times where segregation was still considered the law of the land, Black suffragists knew that obtaining the right to vote was a necessary step in securing true justice and equality for all. Thus, the Nineteenth Amendment became a gateway for all oppressed people to step through in search of the American dream.

I can't imagine a United States today where women didn't have an equal opportunity to vote. What began as a fight for the inalienable right to have a voice in our political process, has led to women holding prominent seats at political, economic, education, military, scientific and community activism tables all over this country. We are, and must remain, a society that provides the opportunity for young girls and women to see their moms, and aunts, and grandmothers as role models as homemakers and/or in the world at large as change-makers, innovators and instigators-for-the-good. The options and opportunities that now exist for my daughter, daughter-in-law and granddaughters are endless.

I can recall a time when voting was not my grandmother's right but became mine in the 60's. I can recall being told by a college professor that I should not be in his all male economics class because women had no place in business and that I needed to move to an education major. I can recall a time when a boss made me work late knowing that I would have to pay an extra fee for picking my children up late from daycare… only to see the day when he would work for ME years later!!

While women have made great strides, that "glass ceiling" in so many settings still exist. Equity in pay, healthcare, childcare, etc. still make headlines. The fight for equality and equity has continued throughout many generations, and with each struggle came an achievement beyond our wildest imagining. The right to vote for women seemed impossible until the passage of the 19th Amendment of 1920. Segregation appeared to be the only way of life until the Civil Rights Act in 1965. An African-American president was only a hope and dream for many until Barack Obama. And, there is no doubt in my mind that the goal of a woman elected as president will be achieved before the tricentennial. That is, long as the women at every "table" provide strong support, hope-filled encouragement and positive imagery for their daughters, granddaughters, sisters and other women of promise that they support.

Let's not take for granted what all women fought so hard for centuries to attain as if it cannot be lost in a moment's time.

Beverly E. Smith is the 2017-2021 National President & CEO for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., one of the nation's largest minority female-owned and operated public service non-profits. She also served as the organization's National First Vice President, National Secretary and was previously employed as Delta Sigma Theta's Executive Director. Smith retired from the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) as the Assistant Commissioner and Georgia State Director for Adult Education and GED Testing. As an entrepreneur, Smith is also senior vice-president of The HR Group Inc., a management consulting firm she has co-owned with her husband, Stephen, for 30 years.

Shirley J. Wilcher, M.A., J.D., CAAP is an authority on equal opportunity, affirmative action and diversity policy. She currently serves as Executive Director of the American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity (AAAED), the oldest-operating organization of equal opportunity, diversity and affirmative action professionals working in higher education, government and the private sector. She is also President and CEO of the Fund for Leadership, Equity, Access and Diversity (LEAD Fund). During the Clinton Administration, Wilcher served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), a civil rights agency in the U.S. Department of Labor.

Shirley J. Wilcher, MA, JD, CAAP

Executive Director
American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity

First, let me commend the countless women whose sacrifice and determination over many decades led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. The 100th Anniversary is a testament to the self-evident truth that women, as human beings, deserve the right to the franchise. As an African American woman, my reflection on the 100th anniversary must also be viewed from the perspective of both a woman and a descendant of Africans stolen from their homeland to support a brutal economy in the Americas.

I am the grand-daughter of women who were constrained to work as household help for Whites in the South and when they migrated north to Ohio. Although my parents chose to be jazz musicians given the limited options available, I chose to follow the footsteps of my uncle who, as a community activist, changed his name to Marcus Garvey Wilcher.

While working for a women's rights organization in the 1980s, I met a handful of Black women who worked for similar groups. Jennifer Tucker, Vicki Gregory, Claudia Withers and others formed A Black Women's Network, and we supported each other when we sought positions on boards and commissions. We also participated in civic advocacy organizations including the Black Women's Roundtable of the National Coalition for Black Voter (now "Civic") Participation.

We, in A Black Women's Network, weren't simply women or Black; we were the embodiment of intersectionality. As has been written: "All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave." We remember the history of Black women supporting the suffragist movement, including Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Sojourner Truth and the women of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, despite attempts to marginalize them. The debate about who should be first to receive the right to vote: women or Black men, was not only a distant memory. The women's movement today is not without its racial contradictions.

In 1984, I traveled to San Francisco to attend the Democratic National Convention. I was not a delegate, but I wanted to be there to see history being made. When I arrived, I learned that Geraldine Ferraro was to be named the first woman Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate. This celebration of women's advancement in politics was not without controversy, however. Black women made it clear that they wanted to be included in Ferraro's elevation to high office. Instead, they believed they were ignored and on August 2, 1984 these women established the National Political Congress of Black Women (NPCBW). Instead of being an afterthought they would groom other "sisters" to run for office and advocate for themselves. The leader of this movement was Rep. Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress and former presidential candidate.

The first convention of NPCBW was held in Sister Hall on the historic campus of Spelman College in Atlanta. To my amazement there was a stellium of Black women leaders in politics and civil rights advocacy. In addition to Shirley Chisholm, who was elected NPCBW's first President, the delegates elected C. Delores Tucker, former Secretary of State of Pennsylvania, Vice President. Both political parties were represented and Gloria E.A. Toote, a Republican, was elected Second Vice President. Angela Davis and Eleanor Holmes Norton were there as well as state and local leaders, including Gwen Patton, civil rights activist from Alabama; Gloria Lawlah, an educator, who was later elected to the Maryland Legislature; Augusta "Gussie" Clark, the second African-American woman to serve on the Philadelphia City Council; and the young "Able Mable" Thomas, who was subsequently elected to the Georgia legislature. Donna Brazile was our first Executive Director, Network member Jennifer Tucker was elected to the board and NPCBW advisors included Rep. Maxine Waters and Reverend Barbara Williams Skinner. I, who happened to go to San Francisco to witness history, was elected to be the first Recording Secretary after joining a slate of amazing women and addressing the delegates as Rep. Chisholm required us to do.

Were it not for the 19th Amendment, the incredible women who attended the organizing meeting in 1984 would not have been there to proclaim their right to be included as members of America's political leadership.

The "Congress," whose name was later changed to the National Congress of Black Women, went on to have many chapters and Dr. E. Faye Williams currently serves as its President. The organization was instrumental in my selection as Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Labor in 1994, and I will always be grateful to those remarkable women for making room for us, the next generation of leaders.

While there has been substantial progress since 1920, the 19th Amendment has not been a panacea. Women comprise only 23.7% of Congress, less than nearly every other developed country. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, intended to ensure that Blacks could exercise the right to vote, was later crippled by the Supreme Court. Today, this nation is ensnared in efforts to suppress the vote, openly and without hesitation and women of color who aspire to elected office face the headwinds of both sexism and racism. And we have not yet elected a woman president.

Despite the inevitable backlash, I predict that women, and Black women in particular, will continue to ascend to the pinnacle of political power. The historic selection of Senator Kamala Harris to the candidacy of Vice President of the United States is ample evidence of this. If the selection of Senator Harris is any indication, Black women have learned to broker their loyalty, hard work and strategic alliances to achieve their representational goals.

To quote suffragist Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand." Women, and particularly Black women, are making their demands and acting upon them. If this trend continues and women persist in mastering the art of political power through galvanizing the vote, I predict that by 2120 the ultimate glass ceiling will be broken and being a woman president will no longer be an aspiration, but a goal achieved.

Glenda Baskin Glover, Ph.D., JD, CPA

International President & CEO
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®

ANSWERING THE CALL
AKA Pays Homage to the Legacy of Suffragist Nellie M. Quander

"Fearing that a letter which I sent you has gone astray; I am sending you the same matter. There are a number of college women of Howard University who would like to participate in the woman suffrage procession on Monday, March the third. We do not wish to enter if we must meet with discrimination on account of race affiliation. Can you assign us to a desirable place in the college women's section?"

- February 17, 1913, Nellie M. Quander wrote to Alice Paul, Chairman of the Woman Suffrage Parade

In recognition of the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the Women's Suffrage Movement, I reflect on the concept of suffrage, equity and justice. Promises that remain unanswered like the question posed above to Alice Paul by Nellie May Quander. In fact, in response to her request, the Howard women were relegated to walk in the back of the parade.

There is no way I can provide my thoughts about this historic moment without expressing my admiration and gratitude for Nellie Quander's activism and legacy of excellence. She was a prominent suffragist, civil rights leader and member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® (AKA). She dedicated her life to leading African American women standing at the intersection of gender and race in the fight for racial justice, gender equality and the right to vote. Five years after Ethel Hedgeman and a core group of women studying at Howard University founded the first Greek-letter sorority for black college women, Nellie Quander led the charge to incorporate Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority on January 29, 1913.

As the International President & CEO of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority representing over 300,000 women in this country and throughout the world, I pay homage to Nellie Quander for being a lifelong advocate for women's rights. She and other sorority members joined the suffrage movement alongside other women of color—such as Ida B. Wells, Mabel Ping Hua-Lee, Jovita Idár, Susette La Flesche Tibbles and so many more— to gain the promise and rights enjoyed by other women and races. These women were beacons of light with a mission to promote the upliftment of women.

Because of the efforts of Nellie Quander and other suffragists, Black women have emerged as a key voting bloc going into the 2020 presidential election. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 55% of eligible Black women voters cast ballots in November 2018, a full six percentage points above the national turnout. Therefore, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority continues to actively mobilize members and underserved communities through the national voter engagement campaign, AKAs L.E.A.D. This campaign calls on members and communities to learn the issues impacting elections, empower citizens to exercise their right to vote, advocate for voter protection laws and decide elections by increasing voter turnout through voter education, registration and mobilization.

I conclude in honor of the first person I remember voting, which was my grandmother in 1968. My father was a civil rights leader in Memphis and drove a car full of Black women to the polls to vote for the first time. I watched my grandmother stroll into the polling location to cast her vote. With excitement and hope she exclaimed, "I VOTED! Things are going to get better."

From my grandmother, to Nellie Quander and now Vice-Presidential Candidate Senator Kamala Harris, a member of AKA and graduate of Howard University, progress is still connected to the suffrage movement and efforts to protect the right to vote. Nellie Quander will forever remain the sorority's precious pearl and suffragist. May we continue in her spirit to march forward for justice, equity and voting rights for all— answering the call of this day that "Black Lives Matter!"

Dr. Glenda Glover
International President & CEO, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®

Judith D'Amico retired as Vice President of Partnerships with Project Lead The Way in 2019. She began her career as a High School teacher building a problem-based learning program in partnership with the St. Louis corporate community. After relocating to Northern California, Judith worked as a Public Relations executive, serving on multiple boards and commissions in the Greater Sacramento region as well as California Statewide.

Judith is focused on advocating for equity, inclusion, and diversity, and on contributing to workforce development and education policy issues. Judith holds a B.S Degree in Education/English from the University of Missouri, and an M.A. Degree in Communications from Webster University.

Judith D'Amico

Board President
NAPE Education Foundation

This 2020 Commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment is a time of remembrance and honoring of the remarkable women who began the fight for the right to vote, to be recognized, to be heard. Of course, Seneca Falls was a defining moment in 1848 with the Declaration of Sentiments outlining the rights women should be entitled to as citizens.

But they were not done yet. It took another 45 years for all women to achieve voting equality with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Aimed at removing legal barriers at state and local levels that prevented Black Americans from voting, it was one of the most significant pieces of civil rights legislation in our history.

And now, we are still not done. Our foremothers and sisters built the foundation that allowed us, and demanded of us to continue the work. That may be to champion the issues of equal pay for women, more of our voices in the Boardroom, having opportunities to pursue positions of leadership in both the private sector and public office. It may be to say "Me, too" and be believed and see justice done.

This Commemoration is also a moment to remember and honor our own remarkable women in our families who were fighting and surviving on a more personal level. The women who possessed the same fierce independence and determination of the women who opened the door to women's rights. They who could now own property, control the money they earned, find and raise their voice with their vote. They not only now had the power of their voice, they had the power of choice. They could stand alone, if need be. All were women of strength who enriched the tradition of independence and resiliency, and who passed it to their next generation of women.

My great grandmother, widowed, farmed her own land in southern Illinois before and throughout the Depression. She took in her grandchildren and cared for them as their parents looked for work, and then were forced to leave their children with the extended family to go where the work existed. One of those parents was my grandmother, divorced, and having to leave my mother, at age five, with her grandmother. But my mother was not to be undone.

What could have been an emotional disaster, instead instilled in my mother the independence, strength and resiliency that is the hallmark of the women in my family. What could have been a traumatic childhood, instead was one of hard and satisfying farm work, one of connection to the land and rugged county life, one that prepared her for the challenges she would meet in her future. One that prepared her for making the choices that the 19th Amendment guaranteed.

My mother loved to read and loved school, and she tells of escaping to her favorite apple tree sitting among the branches to read for hours. She tells of school dresses made from feed sacks—how interesting that they were colorfully printed by the manufacturer! The school bus stop was a two-mile walk (or a tractor ride if she was lucky) up the dirt road and led her to the classmates and friends she is connected with to this day. During the summer she earned money as an early version the live-in nanny, and once she turned 15, she applied for her social security number and a work permit. This is one of moments she identifies as most important in her life. That work permit, and the freedom and privilege that came with it was infused with the spirit of the 19th Amendment. With her permit in hand, she worked summers while finishing high school. She also became part of her best friend's farm family that gave her a stable home during those high school years that led into World War II.

One of those World War II summers took her to a job in St. Louis where she lived with her single, older cousin, another strong and self-sufficient woman who advocated for her, protected and taught her how to navigate the big city. Then a blind date with a handsome Navy lieutenant, love at first sight, marrying after the War.

The challenges were to come: a car crash that ended a 20-year love affair with her husband; injuries that haunt her to this day; two teenagers to finish raising alone; a son who would serve in Viet Nam; a daughter who would work multiple jobs to pay for college; her perseverance in re-entering the world of work to sustain her family. The strength and courage that passed from generation to generation kept her going. Clearly, she was not to be done in.

I see this all now when my mother, at age 94, firmly states that she is not done yet! Living independently, tending her garden, and of course, reading and emailing on her iPad, texting on her iPhone, keeping up with new ideas, watching the current political action, Face Timing with her great granddaughter—all a reflection of the strength and persistence passed on by the women who came before her and for those of us who will carry the gift of it forward.

The legacies that demand the work to be continued speak to all of us, and to each of us. Each generation will build on the achievements that grew out of Seneca Falls, the passage of the 19th Amendment, the 1965 Voting Act, the Civil Rights Movement, and more.

What equity issues now must we continue to fight for, debate about, and deliver? What will we contribute to honor the work of our foremothers? What can we find in ourselves to give? However I choose to answer those questions, I know I too, am not done yet!

Rosie Allen-Herring

President & CEO
United Way of the National Capital Area

Born and raised in Mississippi, I am the youngest of 10 children, with my oldest sister 20 years my senior. While we grew up in the same household, with the same guidance from our parents, our experiences growing up in a state where racism is so well known and continues to ensue were different. Her early years of education were during the Jim Crow era, when children were segregated by the color of their skin. By the time I was ready for grade school, schools in our community were racially integrated. Although the time between my sister's education and mine provided us totally different experiences, the reality is the racial divide and inequity had not changed.

Now, every two or four years, after ballots have been cast and new leaders take office, I find myself wondering, "Has my old home town in Mississippi benefitted from policy change," and it saddens me that the answer is usually no. Even here in Washington, DC, the heart of our country where policy makers work, I see very little progress in equity among the communities where I live and work. In fact, just recently, the Mayor emblazed the words "Black Lives Matter" in massive yellow letters on the main street that leads to the "People's House" as a reminder that change must happen.

The 19th Amendment and right to vote is tantamount to our citizenship and who we are as a society and as a democracy. Voting is how we make change happen. Coming from the south and watching my parents covet that right to vote was powerful to see as a child. My mother and father, despite living in the deep South all their lives, worked hard to inspire us to be people of ethics and morals. They are/were people of intent and never missed the opportunity to vote. Our parents instilled in their six daughters and four sons the importance of making sure our vote was cast for every election. We were taught that if you wanted to see change at your local school board or on major policies at the federal level your vote mattered. As a woman, I take pride in being able to exercise the 19th Amendment with my mother, knowing that at age 98, she has yet to miss an election, be it local, state or federal.

It wasn't until my first year of college when I turned 18 that I was able to vote for the first time. Despite the fact that I used an absentee ballot, the moment was life changing because I finally had a chance to be a part of a system that my parents took so much pride in participating. What was especially memorable that year, 1984, was the fact that Jesse Jackson was a viable Presidential candidate. To see a person of color run for President is something that hadn't seen traction since Shirley Chisholm sought the democratic nomination in 1972. That year I saw myself as part of the process, with a candidate with whom I could identify. I knew then why my parents were so committed to each election and felt the importance of why I also needed to commit that year and all the years to follow.

Women have progressed significantly over the years, particularly women of color. My mother always knew that women could do anything they put their heart/minds into, and she made sure all her girls were aware of that fact. By the time I was born, my mother had chosen to work in the home. What I saw in her was the confidence of a woman who made critical decisions daily. She ran our home like a business and was clearly the household's CEO who managed all required for a large family and major decisions along with my father. What she exemplified was a woman who was confident, fearless, shy but fierce! Of course, she encouraged our higher education pursuits, knowing that it would be our equalizer. But above and beyond that, she also encouraged us to grow into our own, reminded us that women could go far and that we never had to conform to traditional female roles. Because of her, I felt empowered. Our family is female dominated. With six girls and four boys as her children, and 17 grandchildren—13 girls and 4 boys—my mother, now 98, still gives the family and women she's mentored in her life that confidence and inspiration that she gave to me. So when I think of the tricentennial, circa 3020, and whether or not the U.S. will have a woman president? Absolutely! In fact, by then, I'm hoping we would have had several!

Rosie Allen-Herring is President and CEO of United Way of the National Capital Area. Rosie is a thought leader who convenes public private entities, leverages talent and resources and creates collective impact in communities across the region. She holds a B.A. in Economics from Howard University, an M.B.A. from Strayer University, was an International Fellow of the United States-Southern Africa Center for Leadership and Public Values at the University of Cape Town (SA) Graduate School of Business and Duke University Graduate School of Public Policy, and is a graduate of the Harvard Business School's Strategic Perspectives in Non-profit Management Program.

Rasheeda S. Liberty was elected the 25th International Grand Basileus of the organization during the 58th Biennial Boule on July 31, 2020. In her new role, Mrs. Liberty, a 26-year member of the renowned sorority, will lead the organization as it celebrates its 100th year in 2022. Mrs. Liberty will provide leadership to over 100,000 sorority members and serve as chairman of the board of directors, comprised of 38 national and regional officers who manage the sorority's 500 chapters in the United States and in several countries. Ms. Liberty also serves as a regional finance director for Amazon. She is a recognized corporate leader with over 28 years of experience in delivering results for Fortune 100 companies. She is a member of numerous organizations including Top Ladies of Distinction, NAACP, Finance Executive Networking Group (FENG), and Jack & Jill of America.

Rasheeda Liberty

25th International Grand Basileus
Sigma Gamma Rho

In 1848, several small groups of women met in Seneca Falls, New York, for the first-ever Women's Rights Convention in the United States. They wanted to attend college, own property and enter professions such as law and medicine. While we take those things for granted today, it was not until 1878 that the 19th Amendment was actually introduced in Congress. Women such as Harriet Tubman advocated for women's suffrage in hopes that any rights won would later extend to women of color. Finally, on August 18, 1920 the 19th Amendment was ratified, giving women the right to vote.

In the last 100 years, women have progressed from wearing stocking and corsets as homemakers to wearing suits in the board room. With the women's vote being a determining factor in elections, women have successfully advocated for equal pay, birth control, equal education, sex education and job opportunities. In 1963, the Equal Pay Act abolished wage disparities based on sex. In 1972, Title IX was passed to give women equal opportunity for public education. Most notably, it allowed equal athletic opportunities for young women in high school and college. Additionally, women begin to hold political roles such as judges, congresswomen, senators, mayors, superintendents and school board members. Today, women serve as presidents of universities and major corporations and work to ensure equal wages and fair treatment for their employees.

For me, the 19th Amendment is synonymous with opportunity. It opened the door for women to have an equal chance to thrive socially, politically and economically. It meant that we would have a voice and would not be taken for granted. When we exercise that right to vote, people must listen. I remember always being excited to have the opportunity to vote. My father took me to the polls with him and explained the importance of voting, especially as an African American woman. When I cast my vote for the first time, I felt empowered and believed that while this action might seem small to many people it carried a lot of weight. I knew that I was making a difference.

One area where we can all make is difference is with the electoral process. In my opinion the electoral process is not a fair representation of voting. I believe that the national popular vote should control all elections. The presidential elections are a prime example. In 2000, George Bush was elected president, but Al Gore won the popular vote. Again, in 2016 Donald Trump bested Hilary Clinton and was elected president, however she beat him by 3 million in the popular vote.

In all other election the people's voice is heard and ultimately, we make the choice for judges, for senators, for the school board and other civic positions. I am an advocate for our collective voice, and believe the entire electoral college process should be eliminated. Maybe, if we all vote to eliminate the electoral college and continue to level the playing field by before 2030, we'll make history and elect a woman as the first president of the United States.

Mary Wiberg

Past President
NAPE Education Foundation

My mother was the granddaughter of immigrants from Scandinavia who came to the US in the late 1800's because they believed there was a brighter future here for their families. Mom was the oldest of nine children, she loved the one-room country school she attended on the prairies of South Dakota, and she read everything she could find. Her high school teachers, recognizing her abilities, found scholarships for her to go to college, and she went. She served as a role model for her siblings, most of whom earned college degrees or more. Her career was in education: teaching in one-room schools in South Dakota, high schools in Illinois, and eventually chairing a college English department. Throughout much of her career, she was also active in the League of Women Voters, following national, state, and local public policy issues closely.

She modeled for me what a good citizen needed to be: being informed about issues effecting people, our community, and country; listening to candidates for public office and asking questions of them; supporting excellent candidates running for office; serving on local government committees; and talking about the issues in our home. Above all, she demonstrated that the right to vote was a privilege and a responsibility. Having grown up in South Dakota in the early 1900's, she knew a lot about the importance of voting to women.

South Dakota was one of the states where suffragists worked hard to get women the right to vote. Several times state amendments were proposed for this purpose, but failed. However, in 1918, citizens voted to remove the word "male" from the list of legal qualifications one must meet to vote in South Dakota. My mother told me that the first opportunity for my grandmother to vote for a President was after the 19th Amendment had been ratified. She said, "When the 1921 election came, Ma proudly put on her best dress and hat and rode in the buggy with Pa into town to vote for President." Even when she struggled to feed her family of nine children during the Dust Bowl years and the Great Depression, my grandmother took the right to vote seriously, and throughout her life she set an example for the rest of our family.

But it was not just voting that I learned about from my mother. She demonstrated that women should also seek the same rights men had. When she was a college professor and asked for faculty housing available to other professors, she was turned down because she was not a "head of household." Only men were considered that, even if their wives were also working. She wrote a letter to the college president, objecting to the gender bias of this policy, and eventually the policy changed.

When I began my professional career, I, too, turned to education, but rather than teaching, I chose a career that allowed me to work on public policy focused on gender equity. In my work in career and technical education in Iowa and with the California Commission on the Status of Women, I learned that the many issues negatively impacting women could not be separated from the issues of race, disability, poverty, ethnicity, immigration status or sexual orientation. The work of achieving equity and equality cuts across all of these issues and any others that cause disparity in opportunity.

To achieve equity and equality calls for all of us to be active in our citizenship, to seek out candidates who will run for office with goals that include creating a more equitable nation – one with real opportunities for everyone, regardless of our differences. It calls on us to seek truth from those seeking to lead us, whether it is about themselves, their goals, or how they seek to govern fairly at the local, state, and national levels. It also calls on us to support likeminded candidates with our money, our work on their behalf, and our votes.

And are all of our votes treated equal in the United States? No, they are not. The Electoral College written into our Constitution was included because the delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention "distrusted the passions of the people," as noted in the Federalist Papers. They particularly did not trust the ability of average people to make good selections in a national election for a president. While the inclusion of the Electoral College in the Constitution was well-intended, numerous experts find it to be problematic. In addition, the electoral vote is based on the number of people in a state, not the number of voters who actually voted. I am not a mathematician nor an expert on the Electoral College, but, as a voter, I believe that it is time for Congress to review the Electoral College process and support electing the President of the United States by letting every vote count its full worth.

In this year of 2020 as we commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment, let us remember the many women who fought for the right to vote for all women, including those who worked to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1965 that guaranteed the right to vote to Black women And let us continue to be the role models those women were, bringing with us the next generations of girls and women to exercise their right and the privilege of voting.

Mary M. Wiberg, Past President, NAPEEF

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
International Centennial President

Valerie Hollingsworth Baker

International Centennial President
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Make Your Vote Count

I was so excited the first time I voted in 1983. I remember getting teary eyed when I went to the polls and saw my name printed in the register. This was my opportunity to have my voice heard. I wanted my vote to count!

Since then, I have made it a point to vote in every election, never missing an opportunity, no matter what. Since I was six years old I was going to the polls with my mother, who, along with my grandparents, set a strong foundation in me of what it meant to not only be a woman, but an activist as well.

My grandfather immigrated to Brooklyn, New York from Barbados in 1930. He worked hard for several years before he could afford to bring his wife over to the US, and in turn, once my grandfather saved up additional funds, he was able to send for his daughter. My mother worked just as hard as her father when she arrived in the United States. Once I was born my grandmother gave up her job to stay home and take care of me . While growing up we all lived in the same house, so I saw what it meant to be a wife and a mother through two different lenses.

As my grandparents grew older, my mother took care of them and me while still working a fulltime job as a supervisor with the U.S. Postal Service. We struggled, but I never knew it from my young point of view. My mother sent me to private school, I went on all the school trips, lived in a wonderful home, had wonderful home cooked meals and as an extra bonus she made all my clothes. To me, we were doing great!

My mother easily became the first woman to impact my life. Her example of hard work inspired me to graduate from high school and attend college at the age of 14. I refused to use sickness as an excuse to miss school. She was my rock, my ride or die. I excelled because she continually encouraged me to strive to be 10 times better.

Service also became a way of life because of my mother. We often volunteered at school, at church, and in the neighborhood. As I finished college, I looked for a way to continue my service and was presented the opportunity to join Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. It was at this time that I met the woman who would pick up the mantel from my mother: my mentor and one of Zeta's founding members, Fannie Pettie Watts. I was only able to spend the last 10 years of her life with her, but I knew Founder Watts believed in me. She encouraged me to stay the course when I became discouraged, and to work from the ground up when I had new ideas.

The memories and spirits of these two great women are what fuels me to encourage young women throughout our country to give meaningful service to their communities. Part of that service is exercising the right to vote. For people like Founder Watts, my mother, and my grandmother, voting was not automatic. When I think of the people who fought and died for African Americans' right to vote, or the written tests and jellybean jars they had to endure to make their voices heard, I value my right even more.

In the year 2020, we celebrate the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. While this is an important milestone in our history, and we pay homage to the diverse women who suffered, picketed, educated, and endured ridicule to demand the right to vote, it is important to note that this was an incomplete victory. People of Color were not given that same right in every state in America. African American women were often pushed to the back of suffrage parades, and even after the amendment was passed, only certain women of color were given the privilege to vote, often after enduring the humiliation of tests that disenfranchised many from even trying.

Despite the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it wouldn't be until President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that these tests were banned. Yet, today we still face voter suppression tactics. Jellybean jars and literacy tests have now been replaced with redlining, limited early voting, intimidation, voter ID laws, and felony disenfranchisement. Interestingly, many People of Color feel their vote doesn't count, but if it didn't, do you think there would be so many tactics used to block those votes?

The 2016 election discouraged many people from voting. Studies show that roughly 46% of eligible voters didn't complete a ballot. Those who did lamented on whether their vote even mattered since the electoral college seemed to overrule the popular vote. The good news is on July 6, the Supreme Court voted unanimously to allow states to pass laws requiring that their electors cast their vote in alignment with their state's popular vote. Now, more than ever, it is important that we get out and vote, so these laws are passed in our individual states.

So, to those who have become discouraged by the political system, I say the opposition doesn't want you to win. Just like breathing, our voice matters. Do not let anyone steal your rights. Just like Black lives matter, Black votes count!

It is because of the Black vote that we now have more women and people of color in Congress than at any other time in history. Today, a Black woman is poised to become the first woman of any race to become vice president. When former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton conceded the 2016 election, she said, "Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling, thanks to you, it's got about 18 million cracks in it." If we continue to exercise our right to vote, we will be able to crash through that ceiling within the next 10 years.

As we prepare to go to the polls in November, I encourage all voters to channel the spirits of those women and People of Color who came before us. Change is coming. We just have to continue to make our voices heard.

Mimi Lufkin

CEO Emerita
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

The ratification of the 19th amendment marks an important event in Women's suffrage, but not the end to the struggle that had started decades before. African Americans and other minority women continued to face discriminatory voting laws well into the 20th century. When looking at the history of the suffrage movement, I am reminded that social change takes a long time, includes many events, and requires significant diligence to ensure the ultimate goal. Often the celebration of historically marked events, like the anniversary of the 19th Amendment, can give one the false sense that the issue of women's engagement in the political process has been resolved. Nothing could be more distant from the truth.

Women have been running for office at all levels of government since well before they earned the right to vote. According to Her Hat Was in the Ring, at least 3,586 women campaigned for elected positions in the half-century before 1920. At the national level the first Congresswoman, Jeannette Rankin, was elected as a Republican from Montana to one term, in 1916 – three years before women won the vote. Today, only 23.2% of the U.S. House of Representatives and 26% of the Senate are women. 87 countries have or had women elected as heads of state or government – the US is not one. Why is it that over the past 100 years we have made such slow progress? Why is social change so incredibly hard?

Over the past 25 years I have had the privilege of being able to work with members of Congress and the Senate and their staff. Walking the halls of the Capitol, visiting member's offices, and hosting NAPE's public policy day on the Hill carry very fond and satisfying memories for me. Knowing that legislative language that I helped draft or influence has been enacted and helped to create changes in educational systems is more than I could have ever hoped for professionally. Having the opportunity to testify in front of Congress twice regarding the reauthorization of the legislation that funds career and technical education, has been a highlight of my public policy career. However, I have to admit that hearing from a former student who reminds me that I changed their life, or from a teacher that tells me that the professional development I just led them through has made a huge difference for them and their students is the most rewarding of all.

I grew up in a family where the right to vote was important and exercised. I remember my father emphasizing that every vote counts and that you never know when yours might make a difference. Although my parents were not particularly politically active, they chose to take on leadership roles as heads of parent and professional organizations that they were involved in and cared about. They were role models to me about the importance of supporting what you valued and that service to others was paramount. Throughout my life I have tried to follow their lead by working in a field that used my skills but was also defined by my passions. I have been blessed to have been able to impact the lives of young people directly during the years that I was in the classroom and now as I work with teachers who get to do the same.

My first recollection about the impact of my opportunity to vote came in the early 1970's when friends and their brothers were being drafted into the Vietnam War and yet they were too young to vote. As I consider this now, the passage of the 26th Amendment, lowering the voting age to 18, and the passage of the 19th Amendment were both about giving voice to a group of people significantly impacted by policy makers they did not have the right to choose. I remember clearly when the 26th Amendment was passed in 1971 and how excited I was that I would have the opportunity to vote when I turned 18, even though that would not occur for me for three more years. I can only imagine how women who had fought for the vote and even those who may not have been involved in the fight but who benefited from the outcome may have felt in 1920.

The first time I did get to vote was in 1974 when Jerry Brown was elected governor of California and we celebrated his success and mine at helping to choose my first elected official. Two years later I got to vote Jimmy Carter into office. I was on a roll! It wasn't long before I learned that I was not always on the winning side. The election of George Bush in 2000, even though he lost the national popular vote, made me begin to question the purpose of the Electoral College. Was this outcome what our Founding Fathers intended when they designed the Electoral College? I don't think so. I do not claim to be a constitutional scholar, far from it, but I do believe the recent Supreme Court ruling to "bind" electors to the presidential candidate that wins the popular vote in their state is a step in the right direction. I only hope that the upcoming election doesn't show us that that step wasn't far enough.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment and the formal historical marker for a woman's right to vote, let's remember those that made it happen and those that continue to make it happen. Having the right to vote is a privilege not to be taken lightly and a responsibility to be informed comes along with it. I encourage you to seek your place in the process of governing – whether that means exercising your right to vote, learning about the issues on your ballot, participating in a protest, running for political office, or taking on a leadership role in your community. Take the opportunity that our Founding Mothers have given us and use it!

Mimi Lufkin has spent her career as an educator advocating for access, equity and diversity in education and workforce development. She has been a high school teacher, teacher educator, founder and executive director of a microenterprise development program for low income rural women, director of a statewide gender equity professional development program and a community college director of development. In 1994 Mimi became the Chief Executive Officer of the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, a consortium of state and local education and workforce development organizations. In 2018, Mimi retired as CEO and continues to support NAPE as a consultant.

Melanie Campbell is president/CEO, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, convener, Black Women's Roundtable. Campbell is one of the hardest working leaders in today's Civil Rights, Women's Rights and Social Justice Movements. She is dedicated to investing in Black women's leadership, economic & political power; and mentoring Black girls. Campbell recently celebrated 25 years of service with The National Coalition and has served as an advisor to U. S. presidents, congressional members, corporate, labor, non-profit executives, philanthropists, faith leaders and others---on critical issues impacting Black America. Campbell is regularly featured in ESSENCE, Washington Post, MSNBC, #RolandMartinUnfiltered, and other media outlets.

Melanie Campbell

President and CEO
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
Convener, Black Women's Roundtable

As the nation celebrated Women's Equality Day on August 26th—to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, Black women could not celebrate this historic moment. American history marks this moment as when women won the right to vote. However, women faced many barriers when they attempted to register to vote and Black women faced even more horrors including----racism, voter suppression, intimidation and even threats to their very lives for attempting to exercise their right to vote, especially in the South.

For instance, in 1920, when Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, who founded an HBCU, Bethune Cookman University in Daytona, Florida (my mom, Janet Campbell and my sister, Cynthia Clarke's alma mater)-----attempted to encourage Black women to register to vote, she was targeted by the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacists, who attempted to intimidate her and other Back women.

Also, I think it is beneficial to note that Black men were afforded the right to vote in 1870, 50 years before the 19th Amendment was ratified----this was when the 15th Amendment was adopted "to prohibit states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on 'race, color or previous condition of servitude.'"

However, for Black women and men, it would take another 45 years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, before they would achieve full voting rights by the passage of the Voting Rights of 1965. The Voting Rights Act was sparked by the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s and 60s----especially "Bloody Sunday" when the late Congressman John Lewis, Amelia Boynton, Hosea Williams and others were beaten attempting to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma Alabama, in March 1965.

Today, 55 years after "Bloody Sunday" the right for 'Black suffrage' continues because in 2013, the U. S. Supreme Court decision in Shelby vs. Holder gutted the enforcement powers of the Voting Rights Act.

As a result, the constitutional essence of voting rights is on the ballot on November 3rd---especially for Black people, the disabled, students, and poor folks of all races. Women's rights and justice are on the ballot as well.

As a Black woman, my survey of the social, political and economic progress that has occurred as a result of the 19th Amendment, is through the lens of Black women, who have always connected both gender and race to the fight for equality. The tenacity and persistent of these women as suffragists and fighters for civil rights, social justice, and gender equality have blazed a steady trail of significant victories that have advance equality for all people in the United States.

Black women led in one of the major landmark victories for all people--The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Act). This Act opened public facilities, public accommodations, education, jobs, and voting booths to more Americans by making it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, and national origin. The employment provisions of Title VII of the Act went further to provide equal employment opportunities for women. But all women are still faced with the challenge of earning equal pay. So as women, will still stand together to fight this injustice.

Black women, like Dr. Dorothy I. Height and Diane Nash, were also at the forefront of the fight to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). This pivotal legislation brought the promise of the 19th Amendment closer to reality for all people by outlawing voter suppression tactics. In 1975, the VRA was extended to required voting materials to be translated into languages other than English, which allowed many immigrants to exercise their right to vote.

I believe the 19th Amendment also played a major role in promoting women's rights that paved the way for women to achieve reproductive rights in the 1970s. With the increased in availability of family-planning services, more women were able to advance economically, enroll in higher education and enter professional occupations. It also laid the foundation for Hillary Clinton to become the first woman to win the democratic nomination for president in 2016.

For Black women, the VRA and other civil rights legislation opened the doors for Black women to run for political office and win. We saw that new political power manifest in 1968 when Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress in 1968.

Congresswoman Chisholm earned the reputation of being "unbought and unbossed" when she took her political leadership further and ran for president of the United States in 1972. This opened a path for many other Black women leaders to run for the highest office in the land, including former U. S. Senator Carol Mosley Braun in 2004 and U. S. Senator Kamala Harris running in 2020.

Further, Black women are not only leveraging our political power by running for office. We are maximizing our collective and intergenerational leadership and voting power across generations. Most recently black women were successful in encouraging and advocating for Vice President Joe Biden to select a Black woman to be his vice-presidential running mate for the democratic nomination and American history was made when he selected Senator Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential running mate.

So, as we pause to celebrate and commemorate the 19th Amendment as an historic moment in American history, we have to ensure we tell the full story that Black suffrage is a continuous battle that must be fought and won with each generation. And as women, we have come a long way towards equality, but we still have more work to do.

Liberty and Justice Facets

Honorable Muriel Bowser

Mayor of the District of Columbia

This summer, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and look back on a century of progress in building a more inclusive and diverse democracy. Here in Washington, DC, where I am honored to serve as Mayor, we are also using this occasion to reflect on the perseverance of every voting rights activist who came before us and who overcame the unique dilemma of securing their rights from the very Congress that denied them a voice and a vote.

We know already that while monumental, the 19th Amendment was an incomplete victory. Black, Indigenous, Asian, and Latina women – many who were leaders in the suffrage movement – were still not able to vote, and in many cases wouldn't be able to for decades. And, we know that still today, the work continues to combat voter suppression and ensure our democracy better represents our nation. In fact, that work continues right here in the nation's capital where there are still 706,000 people, including more than 350,000 women and girls, who still don't have full access to our nation's democracy.

Most people know Washington, DC as the seat of our federal government. What many people don't know is that Washington, DC is also home to more than 700,000 Americans – 700,000 real people. Many of us are from families who have lived in DC for generations; I, myself, am a fifth generation Washingtonian. We are a city full of creatives and change-makers, extended families and chosen families, multi-generation Washingtonians and first-generation immigrants. We are driven by inclusivity, diversity, and our indomitable spirit – what we simply know as our DC values. We are known for our music scenes, our theaters and museums, our restaurants, our world-champion sports teams – for being a city with a little something for everyone. One thing we don't have, though? We have not a single vote in Congress.

But we have a solution. We have a Constitutional plan to make Washington, DC the 51st state and to finally bring an end to the practice of taxation without representation. The case for statehood could not be clearer. Washington, DC has more residents than two states. We pay more in federal taxes than 22 states, and more per capita than all 50. Our residents serve in the military and have fought in every major war in our nation's history. Washingtonians fulfill all duties of citizenship, but we denied our full Constitutional rights.

But I am determined to right this wrong. I am determined to ensure that my two-year-old daughter – and every future generation of Washingtonians – grows up with the rights she is owed. As she looks up and sees a woman of color, a U.S. Senator, on the ballot to become our nation's first female Vice President, I am determined to give her those same opportunities – the opportunity to grow up and become a senator of the 51st state.

In June, when the U.S. House of Representatives voted, for the first time in history, to make Washington, DC the 51st state in our nation, it was a testament to the determination and strategizing of the statehood advocates and DC residents who, for decades, have organized, educated, and refused to accept second-class citizenship. Today, we are both grateful for and inspired by all who came before us and proved true the words of Frederick Douglass – that power concedes nothing without a demand.

On November 6, 2018, Muriel Bowser became the first woman ever re-elected as the Mayor of Washington, DC and the first mayor to earn a second term in 16 years. Her administration is focused on making DC's prosperity more inclusive, advancing DC values, and building safer, stronger, and healthier neighborhoods across DC's eight wards. Because Washington, DC is unique in the American political system, Mayor Bowser functions as a governor, county executive, and mayor. Prior to becoming Mayor in 2015, Bowser served as the Ward 4 Councilmember on the Council of the District of Columbia – first elected in a special election in 2007 and re-elected in 2008 and 2012. With more than 20 years of experience in local government, she first entered elected office as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in the Riggs Park neighborhood.

Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence
U.S. House of Representatives
Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues

Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence (MI)

Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues
U.S. House of Representatives

August 26, 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution fulfilling the promise that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." The culmination of decades of tireless activism by pioneers of the women's suffrage movement is celebrated to honor their courage and to remind us that we are not done.

The women's suffrage movement was an imperfect movement towards equal rights for women. The struggle for the right to vote was interlaced with racism and historical narratives tend to minimize the role of Black suffragists in the fight for women's equality. And while most point to the Seneca Falls Convention as the suffrage movement's starting point, the roots of this movement stem from the abolitionist movement, where many of the early suffragists were active.

On March 3, 1913, one day before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson, a march on Washington took place calling for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority of Howard University was one of the only African American sororities to participate in this march. Segregated to the back of the suffrage parade, the Deltas along with many others were met with insults and beatings by the spectators who were mostly men. As a member of Delta Sigma Theta, I am so proud of the sorority's decision to protest despite getting pushback from those within the suffrage movement, the dangers of making dissenting views known, and taking a chance on whether they would get a return on their investment and time. The prevailing viewpoint at the time by Black women activists was that if White women needed the vote to advance their rights, Black women needed it even more so. And although it took seven more years before the passage of the 19th Amendment, the courageous Delta heroes who were relegated to the back of the parade, were at the forefront of paving the way for Black women's political engagement.

While we celebrate the women who fought for the ratification of the 19th Amendment, we know for women of color, the fight did stop in 1920. Native Americans gained citizenship with the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act, but still faced obstacles to casting their ballots for decades thereafter. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prevented Chinese immigrants from becoming citizens and voters until 1943. Hispanic Americans were also impacted by obstacles and threats of violence at the polls. Jim Crow laws and other exclusionary practices targeting Black voters were especially prevalent in parts of the South and contributed to voter suppression until the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. Signed into law 55 years ago to enforce the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, the VRA saw immediate results with a quarter of a million new Black voters now registered to vote across the country. As a Black woman, I am proud to say that the women of yesterday who marched, protested, picketed, and rallied understood that the key to equality and justice was through the power of the vote.

And still today, the fight for women's rights is far from over. Women, especially women of color, are working to secure their seat at the decision-making table. As my hero Shirley Chisholm has said, "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." When women's voices are heard, the conversation changes - we see a more inclusive decision-making process and unique solutions to address long-standing problems. How do we expect to achieve the best policies when nearly half our country' population is shut out from policy making? As the only Black member of Michigan's 16-member congressional delegation, I can tell you that representation matters. We need voices in the room to reflect the needs our diverse communities; to ensure we are addressing challenges such maternal mortality and ensuring affordable access to healthcare, voting rights, economic security, education, and more. The women whose shoulders we stand on fought not only for the right to vote, but for our voices to be heard in the halls of Congress and elsewhere.

It is remarkable that in the same year we are commemorating the suffrage centennial, we have the most diverse Congress in U.S. history with over 100 women serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, 90 of whom are Democrats and our fearless Speaker, Nancy Pelosi. We are also witnessing a record number of women once again run for office, and Senator Kamala Harris becoming the first Black woman and the first person of Indian descent to be nominated for national office by a major party, proving that a first woman President in the White House is not out of reach. Just like the suffragists of the past, the women of today are fighting to ensure that Americans of all backgrounds are guaranteed their fundamental rights, including the right to be heard at the ballot box.

Passage of the 19th Amendment was indeed a major step forward for American democracy, but our work is far from finished. Voter suppression efforts combined with COVID-19 continues to disproportionately impact communities of color. Together, we must carry on the suffragists' fight for access to the ballot box and combat the ongoing voter suppression efforts that undermine our democracy. The word Delta means change, and access to the vote is what drives change in our communities.

Honorable Melanie Shaw-Geter

Associate Judge
Maryland Court of Special Appeals

The passage of the 19th Amendment carries great significance because of its impact on the trajectory of American leadership and history. Its importance is underscored by the achievements of women who have moved this nation to a new level of success and significance in the world. The 19th amendment is of import to all of us and particularly to me, as a woman...a Black woman. Its history is one that is entwined with that of African Americans and our struggle for the right to vote as well. While we know and have learned about the stories of women like Susan B. Anthony, there were, also, many unnamed African American women who worked in the suffrage movement, but whose names and stories are invisible. No doubt, without the courage of these women, our history would not have been altered. In my view, the actual passage of the 19th Amendment is a snippet of a movement pushing a nation forward in its democracy journey, voting, being, one of the most important rights and responsibilities in this journey. The voter has the power to effectuate change in leadership, in laws, in our communities and yet, all too often, citizens fail to exercise and embrace this basic constitutional right. Often, voting is viewed as a burden, a minimal act with marginal significance.

I have no memory of the first time I voted because I started voting as a toddler, maybe even as an infant. You see, it was tradition in our household, on election day, to go to the polls with my mother and father to vote. During the 60's, my grandmother was a very active church organizer who worked tirelessly to raise money for the NAACP's legal work in the South. Grandmother had endured the ugliness of segregation, of being unable to vote and the violence associated with African Americans attempting to exercise their right to vote and thus, for her and for all of us, voting was not a choice. It was a sacred duty. Thus, regardless of the circumstances, the weather or the wait, we went to the polls. Waiting in line turned into a community event, where we greeted neighbors, politicians and saw so many familiar faces. We had fun, playing and talking and yes, there was always someone there with a snack for us. But as we moved closer to the front of the line, things quieted down, and it became a serious matter.

Throughout my childhood, there were many conversations in our household about candidates and positions, parties and platforms. My parents calmly explained the history of violence and blood connected to this responsibility and the importance of our legacy. As I grew, I came to understand, more deeply, the power of the vote, as I saw people, who looked like me, from my neighborhood and church, elected to positions where they advocated for important issues relevant to our community. I saw people who looked like me became judges, responsible for the fair administration of justice. As a result, I started feeling a sense of pride in standing in those lines. As I reflect on those moments now, I see myself so vividly telling my mother, who "WE" were going to vote for and her agreeing as we slipped behind the curtain and pulled the levers. Such a small thing. Such a sacred task. But forever, it instilled a lifelong duty and responsibility in my sister and me. It is for us a given that on each election day, we will vote. Neither my parents nor my sister and I have ever faltered.

When I became a mom, it was natural that I would take my daughter to the polls. I repeated my family history to her, hearing in my mind, my mother's voice. I relayed to my daughter the same stories my mother told me about voting, emphasizing her command that we must always vote. So, every election until she was a tween, we went to the polls together and like me with my mother, "WE" voted. I remember distinctly when then Senator Barack Obama was running for President of the United States, my daughter and I went to vote early in the morning. The lines were long, and we passed the time by discussing the candidates. Just as I had told my mother, my daughter told me who "WE" would be voting for. We marched into the voting booth, closed the curtain behind us and I watched my daughter's delight when she held my hand as we cast that ballot. At that moment, the legacy my mother had instilled in me and I was instilling in my daughter became real. My daughter understood the importance and the power of the vote. And so, in the tradition of her great grandmother, who could not always vote, her grandmother and her mother, she has continued to vote in every election, even casting her vote for her mother's election as a judge!

Our mothers, strong and smart, have taught us many lessons that we did not always immediately understand the significance of. With gentle voices and firm hands, they gave us tools to work for the future, for the betterment of ourselves, our sons and our daughters, our communities and all those who will follow...and yes, those who will elect a woman president. Upon reflection of the 100-year anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment, I am grateful for the women who paved the way to make it possible for my grandmother, mother, my daughter and me as well as my future granddaughter to be able to continue this sacred tradition and duty.

Judge Melanie Shaw-Geter is an Associate Judge on the Maryland Court of Special Appeals. Prior to this appointment, she served as both a District Court Judge and a Circuit Court Judge. During her tenure, the judge has initiated a multitude of community-based programming, including: Juvenile Drug Court, Re-Entry Court, Truancy Diversions and the Treatment for Mothers of Addicted Newborns program.

Judge Shaw-Geter is a committed community servant who is passionate about ensuring justice for all citizens as well as educating the community about our legal systems. She is the proud mother of Kailyn, a senior at the University of Michigan.

Congresswoman Doris Matsui
U.S. House of Representatives

Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA)

Co-Chair, Congressional High-Tech Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives

I remember the first time I voted - waiting in line, slowly making progress towards the voting booths. It is such a simple action that it is easy to forget the weight of the 19th Amendment and the women who made that moment possible. As I looked down at the names listed, seeing no names that reflected my own, I couldn't have fathomed that all these years later it would be my name on that ballot. One can trace back and connect the dots of modern American history and easily see the impact of strong, dedicated women from all walks of life, ages, races, and backgrounds. My story rests on the shoulders of these giants, and as a member of Congress I fight on each and every day to continue their legacy.

When the 19th Amendment was ratified 100 years ago, the United States of America had already existed for 144 years. Generations of women had been making history and advancing society long before its ratification - and while their contributions were overlooked by the law, those trailblazers left an indelible mark on the American soul. From Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Billie Jean King to Megan Rapinoe, Dolores Huerta to Patsy Mink, there is no history of economic, political or social change in our nation without these names or their stories.

That is not to underplay the significance of the 19th Amendment. It will forever be one of the most important milestones in American history. The right to vote is most basic to the function of any democracy, and that formal recognition of inclusion, of a symbolic seat at the table, has always been the foundation from which meaningful change is built. Yet, like most milestones or achievements, it cannot be taken without the context of the struggle of those before, and the continuing struggles of those after. For women across the nation, while the 19th Amendment was that formal recognition, it was neither the beginning nor the end - particularly for women of color. There is still work to be done, but our efforts are only possible because of their sacrifice, dedication, and courage.

Taking my familiar political arena as an example, the impact of the 19th Amendment might be most obvious by looking at the faces of the 116th Congress. While women have served in elected offices across the nation for years, we now have more women serving in Congress than ever before. And although my own presence, and the presence of the more than 100 women in Congress today might have been unfathomable a hundred years ago, this is unquestionably the legacy of the 19th amendment at work today.

House Democrats now follow the leadership of Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who made history as the first woman Speaker. We have countless committees, caucuses, and task forces headed by women, leading the creation of important legislation. This November, Senator Kamala Harris could continue to build on the path to equality by becoming the first woman, Black, and Indian-American Vice President in our nation's history. If sworn in as the Vice President of the United States, women and girls everywhere will see a dream realized. These achievements are the product of a long, arduous fight for equality in this country. But we must remember that these gains are still not enough. Women across our country continue to demand access to positions of leadership, equal pay, accessible reproductive health care, and respect.

Women have the right to vote - and we must keep it. Today, women and other voters face structural obstacles to the ballot box and we must do all we can to ensure everyone can vote safely and easily.

Women have the right to vote - and we must also build on it. A hundred years of voting has coincided with the most progressive and meaningful change in our nation's history. Recently, I joined my colleagues in fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and it is time we ratify the ERA. With our vote and a constitutional protection affirming our equal standing in our country, women will be able to truly thrive.

I hope that in the next one hundred years, our country is celebrating the contributions of women who were able to fully realize their potential, with the full support of our constitution and the full support of our democracy.

Representative Catherine D. Ingram

Ohio General Assembly

In the 100 years since women were given the right to vote, there have been many significant social, political and economic changes that have occurred as a direct result. I believe that society realized at one point that they had to recognize the women's vote as her own and not that of her husband or someone who needed to tell her how to vote and think, and be. The glass ceiling (though not called that back then) was a barrier to women progressing and it was ignored that women needed to be respected and heard from their own voice in many arenas and unequivocally needed to be taken seriously.

The 19th Amendment makes me think of the last Representative from Tennessee who found the note in his pocket, from (guess who!?), a woman. The Amendment was ratified to create what I deem, a simple necessary change to our Constitution What bothers me still is that it took decades to do so, and what bothers me even more is that ALL women were not included! It would take decades more for Black women to receive the honor to participate in what was an exclusive right. Now look at us!!

When I first voted I felt in my heart that I HAD to! No options, but to take advantage of something I had watched my parents labor to do for years. It felt more like a requirement than a choice. At the time as a teen I watched the Black Panthers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and marches and sit-ins and the denial to Black people to vote simply because they some "...didn't deserve to vote". So, when I could, I did. I had to vote! Once I realized how the Electoral College works, I know that all votes are important. Though I am disappointed as to why and how it was developed, I believe we must make sure our votes count until the structure can be changed.

When I think about strong women in my life, I'm sure that most people would never know their names because they weren't famous but I assure they were the backbone of their families and the communities they built. I will simply comment about my mother who at 5 ft 2 in was as strong and mighty as they come. She was not marching on the picket lines but was making sure that her family could have a better life. She was a domestic, an entrepreneur, a Pastor and packed a mean punch for some of the young guys in the neighborhood. She taught us all how to keep living, learning and growing. I also remember when I first met Dorothy Height. We discussed a few things that day while at the Educators' recognition breakfast, but what I remember most is her charge to me to stand fast and do the work I was guided to do. That statement continues to hold me up "a many a day"!

Women in charge long before 3020!!! The 19th Amendment was only the beginning.

How we love ourselves and therefore love one another will help us continue to change the world!

Ohio Realtor; Ohio Legislator; Ohio Legislative Black Caucus, 2nd VP; former Cincinnati Board of Education member; NSBA Regional Committee, NSBA National Black Caucus Exec Committee; full-time undergrad instructor NKU, College of Ed and Human Services; graduate instructor Education, Thomas More College; past President, Ohio School Boards Assn; Public Affairs specialist major Public utility; ; Exec Director of Minority Business Enterprise Mentoring program, Cincinnati USA Chamber of Commerce; Ohio Notary Public; audit committee Girl Scouts of Western Ohio; Member Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Dr. Alma S. Adams has served North Carolina's 12th Congressional District since 2014. She sits on the House Committees on Financial Services, Education & Labor, and Agriculture, and is the founder and co-chair of the Congressional Bipartisan HBCU Caucus and Black Maternal Health Caucus.

Before serving in Congress, Dr. Adams taught Art at Bennett College for 40 years. There, she led efforts to increase civic participation, coining the phrase "Bennett Belles are Voting Belles" and organizing marches to the polls. Dr. Adams began her public service by being elected to the local school board, followed by city council and the North Carolina General Assembly, where she served for almost 20 years.

Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D., (NC)

Chair, Congressional HBCU Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives

The first time I was able to cast my ballot was my freshman year of college. I was just out of high school in New Jersey.

It was 1964, and I'd just arrived at the campus of North Carolina A&T State University, a historically Black university in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Just four years before I arrived, North Carolina A&T and Bennett College students led a series of sit-ins protesting segregation, inspiring similar protests in more than 55 cities in thirteen states in the following months. The importance of voting and the high stakes were very clear on our campus.

Even before I left for college, I knew that voting was, as my dear colleague John Lewis always said, "precious… almost sacred."

I grew up during the Jim Crow era.

I was born in High Point, North Carolina and, although we moved to New Jersey when I was young, I visited family in the state on countless occasions. I can still remember vividly traveling from New Jersey to the south.

Stopping to get food was an ordeal. My uncle would drive, and most the time we tried to pack our lunch. We were afraid to stop for food and we knew that, even if we did stop, we wouldn't be allowed to eat at most places.

At the few spots that would serve us, we had to go to the back door and be served out of a to-go window.

I also remember my family telling me about the "jellybean test," where they had to guess the number of jellybeans or marbles in a jar in order to be deemed fit to vote.

From elected officials to poll workers, those in positions of authority put up as may barriers as they could. They were afraid of the power of the Black vote.

So, I knew that when I took my first vote, it would be a statement against all of the hurdles that were placed in front of those who came before me.

I was incredibly excited. I was just 18, and I felt like I'd accomplished so much by casting that ballot. I knew that my grandmother and mother had not had that opportunity.

I didn't have to be humiliated to register and vote, like other Black folks had been. That alone felt like a step forward, like a small accomplishment in the fight for civil rights.

Today, when I think about how many people choose not to vote, it's painful to hear. There are so many who came before us who could not vote, who were demeaned, hurt, or killed for trying to vote.

Many of those would-be voters were women.

The 19th Amendment was only the start for Black women. The fight for our right to vote continued for almost a half-century longer, through the civil rights movement and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Unfortunately, the impediments and discrimination we faced back then have not ended. Voter disenfranchisement is still present today, just in new and different forms. It's less violent and less obvious, but it is still pervasive and insidious.

The gutting of the Voting Rights Act in 2013 has allowed rampant voter discrimination in states with a history of racist voting policies, like North Carolina.

After the 2013 Supreme Court decision, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a law requiring a photo ID, cut early voting, and eliminated same-day registration, out-of-precinct voting, and pre-registration of high school students.

After a long legal battle, that same ID law was struck down by a federal court because it was intentionally designed to discriminate against African-Americans and, to quote the court, "target African-Americans with almost surgical precision."

And, until recently, my Congressional district was considered one of the most gerrymandered in the nation.

When the design of the district was challenged by voters in 2015, a U.S. Circuit Court ruled it unconstitutional. They found that the state legislature drew its lines for the specific purpose of diluting the power and voices of Black voters in North Carolina.

North Carolina's story is not unique. Laws like these, which disproportionately affect low-income, women, and minority voters, have been passed in states across the country.

Similarly, on the federal level, this Administration has put up roadblocks left and right to prevent Americans from voting.

The recent attacks on the U.S. Post Office (USPS) exemplify how President Trump believes and acts upon the idea that voting should only be accessible to those with means.

More Americans than ever are relying on the USPS to safely and promptly deliver election mail. Yet the President believes that mail-in ballots are only O.K. when he uses them, not when someone that looks like me does.

That's why we must continue fighting new forms of voter discrimination from the local level to the federal level.

In Congress, we are fighting to provide emergency funding to states to help make voting safe and accessible during this unprecedented pandemic, to restore the Voting Rights Act, and to make Election Day a federal holiday.

Unfortunately bills to do all these things – the Heroes Act, the For the People Act, and the Voting Rights Advancement Act – have been sitting in the Senate for months, waiting for a vote.

As I always say, you can't change policy unless you change policymakers – or change their minds.

The best, fastest, and easiest way we can fight voter discrimination is by voting.

Head to the polls – or mail your ballot in – and vote for local, state, and federal representatives who will fight for every citizen to be able to vote.

That is how we can best honor the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, and all those who fought for us to have the right to vote.

Senator Holly Mitchell

California State Senate

"Ain't I a Woman?, Sojourner Truth asked during her Women's Rights Convention speech in 1851. Truth knew many of the women in the audience believed her Blackness did not make her equal, a woman, or have a right to cast a vote. 169-years later, here I am, the first Black person to chair the CA State Budget and Fiscal Review Committee and the only Black woman currently in the CA State Senate. I am sure Ms. Truth is looking down on me beaming, or maybe she is screaming "FINALLY!

As we celebrate and look back on 100 years of voting, we have to recognize the often-exclusionary parts of the suffrage movement for women who look like me. Real change didn't happen until Fanny Lou Hamer, delivered her speech in 1964 reciting a line I often use, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired" she moved the crowd. Soon after her speech, the 1965 Voting Rights Act was signed into law.

While this part of our history may make you feel uncomfortable, we do not live in a color-blind society. It is important to understand our unjust history so collective healing can begin. When I think of wrongs made right, the California legislative referendum process comes to mind. After 24 years of fighting over affirmative action, this year in the legislature we had an opportunity to right a wrong by writing and passing Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 5. This current November ballot measure, if passed, would reinstate "Affirmative-Action" in California and replace the 1996 Ballot Proposition 209 which had eliminated affirmative action. Voters now have a chance to respond to the call for systemic change, revealing the barriers women and people of color face, while leveling the playing field.

The fight to suppress the voices of people of color and women continues as we fight the current administration's attempts at blocking voters by dismantling the U.S. Postal Service. We cannot solve problems we choose not to see, so it is our job as women who vote to decide what equity looks like. It is never too late to right a wrong. When I vote, I do it for my ancestors who couldn't, I honor them for fighting for me to hold these positions of power. I recognize the importance and pivotal moment in our democracy as we celebrate 100 years of voting, I also realize we have a long way to go. There has never been a better time to right our wrongs at the ballot box. Now is the time that we come together for all women to create a country where we have an equal opportunity to thrive.

A third-generation native Angeleno, Sen. Holly J. Mitchell is the proud daughter of career public servants and the protégé of community leaders who instilled in her a passion for service. Mitchell is a mother and has devoted her professional life to creating a California where ALL children thrive. She continued her family legacy of leadership when she was named the first African American to chair the powerful Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee. The Senator's groundbreaking successes include nearly 90 bills signed into law. These bills focus on improving human services, expanding access to healthcare, defending the civil rights of minorities and the undocumented, and reducing the numbers of children growing up in poverty. In addition to her chairmanship on the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, she also chairs the Senate Select Committee on Social Determinants of Children's Well-Being and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

By U.S. Representative Deb Haaland, one of the first Native American women serving in Congress and Congresswoman for New Mexico's First Congressional District

Congresswoman Deb Haaland (NM)

U.S. House of Representatives
One of the first Native American women serving in Congress

This year we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which was a huge feat and catapulted the women's equality movement in the United States. Though the 19th Amendment is an important milestone, we have to remember that not all women were granted the right to vote by that pivotal amendment. And, to be honest, it didn't even guarantee the right of any people of color to vote, because of intentional barriers that were put in place to keep people from voting.

Black Americans faced barriers to the ballot box that stopped them from voting, including poll taxes, voting tests, and grandfather clauses, all of which also impacted Hispanic Americans. Asian Americans weren't granted citizenship until 1952. Even though this country wouldn't exist without Native Americans who contributed democratic ideals to, served the nation in wartime, and taught settlers how to survive, we didn't gain citizenship until 1924 – four years after the 19th Amendment was ratified. And in New Mexico, it wasn't until a World War II veteran, Miguel Trujillo, sued the state of New Mexico for his right to vote in state elections in 1948, and native Americans did not universally have the right to vote until 1962.

There is also an incredible history of Native American women who inspired the suffragists. Long before the suffragist movement, Native women contributed equally to their Tribal governments and structures. It was from the Haudenosaunee that the women of the suffragist movement witnessed women who held property, controlled family and social structures, and were empowered in their communities. That structure still exists today. It is for those basic rights that the women of the suffragist movement took to the streets, were arrested, and even risked their lives.

One hundred years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, we are still in a battle for access to voting, especially for communities of color and working people. I organized voter outreach for years, and I'm familiar with the tactics -- closing polling locations, limiting voting hours, setting excessive requirements, and now attempts to get rid of vote by mail by dismantling the Postal Service. All of these are methods to disenfranchise voters.

The suffragist movement taught us representation matters. When we fail to include an entire groups of people from voting, it impacts the laws that are written and the people we elect. For example, it took more than 200 years to elect Native American women to Congress. Now, the missing and murdered indigenous women crisis has voices in Congress. Not only that, with more women in Congress than ever before, single moms, caregivers, daughters, and sisters raising issues that we all face, bringing their perspectives to the table and finding solutions.

Today, women take the lead – we hold legislative seats, manage massive companies, raise families, lead efforts to scientific discovery, and we vote. As we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment's ratification, it is our responsibility to ensure that the right to vote remains intact for everyone and that we exercise that fundamental right.

The future is bright, but we have to keep working.

LáVita Gardner

Former Executive Director
Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

Radical Change

The United States, a nation, rooted in the promise of American idealism, as outlined by the U.S. Constitution, and introduced in its Preamble, "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Prosperity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America" (U.S. Const.).

While beautifully written and blossoming with opportunity, this bold inclusiveness, did not originally extend to women, slaves, indigenous people, and those without wealth. The U.S. Constitution would go through several rounds of revision before coming close to ensuring its introductory promise – a promise that is yet to be fulfilled for many.

As a result, the history of the United States is bound by a series of practical ideas, built on the consistent actions of ordinary people, to create radical movements that disrupt widely accepted injustice and bias. Recounted as revolutionary in history, these movements have brought the nation closer to its foundational promises. The Women's Suffrage Movement, which was rooted in the Abolitionist Movement, is no different.

The culmination of the Women's Suffrage Movement – which included women of all races and hues – was based on the practical idea of equality, found victory in the enactment of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The amendment affirmed the "right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex" (U.S. Const. amnd. XVIIII). However, like the promises outlined in the Constitution's Preamble, the 19th amendment required additional work by ordinary people to reach its full potential. Despite the passing of the amendment, Black women, my ancestors, many of whom actively supported the Women's Suffrage Movement but resided in states with Jim Crow laws, were still unable to vote.

Ordinary women, the many women on whose shoulders I stand, continued to work toward realizing our right to vote. It is because of their work and continued fight, that I have voted in every election since I reached voting age. Their heroic fight is also the reason I bring my daughters with me to vote. While the 2020 presidential election will be unique, I will exercise my right to vote by mail. I will sit at the kitchen table, with my daughters, to complete my ballot, much like we completed our census. I will remind them of our civic responsibility and the great power of our vote and our voice.

I will remind my daughters that voting is a precious responsibility, not to be taken for granted as there are still places in the world where women are unable to vote. It is our responsibility to know our history and do our part to make real the promises of our nation. We must always acknowledge the men and women that fought to realize the promises we live. It is our responsibility to remember that in the 100 years since women won the right to vote in the U.S., we have seen significant economic, social, and political changes that have benefited this country, its territories, and the global community.

The future of women is bright in the United States. Collectively, we continue to work toward realizing the full promise of America's founding principles. Historically, we see examples of women, of all races, continually at the forefront of America's most important movements.

Economically, in the last 100 years, women's full participation at the ballot has increased women's participation in the workforce and business. As a result, increased economic strength and growth has been realized in the U.S. and has advanced our position in the global economy. Images of Rosie the Riveter, which became iconic during World War II, when women joined the workforce in mass, in factories and shipyards, and other traditionally male dominated positions, to keep the U.S. economy from faltering. In the years since, women's determination and ingenuity has continued to thrive. According to the Census Bureau, between 2014 - 2018, women, age 16 and over, made up 58.2% of the civilian workforce, and in 2012 there were almost 10 million women-owned businesses in the U.S. (2019).

Socially, women continue to lead and fight for social justice. Our rich history is filled with women who led the charge for change domestically and internationally. Women who embodying strength, compassion, courage, and empathy. They used their voice and, often their physical body, to stand up to injustice and bring necessary change. Examples include Harriett Tubman, an extraordinary leader of the Abolitionist Movement and Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the only woman of color at the founding conference of the United Nations in 1945. Dr. Dorothy I. Height, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, who was appointed by President Carter to serve on the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. These women, my ancestral links, labored and advocated for the many opportunities' women celebrate today.

Looking toward the future and celebrating our collective victories, women remain politically active, we vote in great numbers, and when we show up together, we disrupt narratives, injustice, and bias. Politically, we remain organized like Fannie Lou Hamer – ready to support women of all races interested in representing us in government. We remain unbought and unbossed, like my soror, the Honorable Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm. We revel in our audacity to be ambitious, like my Divine 9 sister, Senator Kamala Harris. When we consider how far we have come in that last 100 years, it is easy to behold, that we are our ancestors' wildest dreams.

This year, on August 18, 2020, I celebrated the ratification of the 19th amendment, serving as one of Maryland's At-Large Delegates for the 2020 Democratic Convention, proudly casting my ballot for change.

I am proud to be a Black woman, rooted in my ancestral fortitude, living in their promise, pushing forward for continued change and improvement. As women, we are a radical movement, we move the needle, we are ever consistent, and we are always moving forward.

LáVita Gardner, former congressional staffer, is the owner of The Experience Architect, a boutique strategic communications and events firm specializing in public policy, government, business, and entertainment. An advocate for vulnerable communities, Gardner is the board vice chair of the Maryland Diaper Bank and editorial board member of the Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation. She models her commitment to service as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and the Order of the Eastern Star, PHA. A PMP and CMP, Gardner received advanced education from Morgan State University, Bowie State University and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Elmy Bermejo is a senior government official with a passion for building relationships while assisting people and organizations attain their goals. She is currently the Northern California Director for External Affairs for Governor Gavin Newsom. Prior to that, she served as Senior Adviser for Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis of California, the first woman ever elected to this position. Elmy previously served in President Obama's administration at the Department of Labor. She serves on the SF Commission on the Environment, The Women's Foundation of CA, the Advisory Board of Hispanas Organized for Political Equality and is a founding member of EMERGE and Emily's List Latina Advisory Council.

Elmy Bermejo

Northern California Director, External Affairs for Governor Gavin Newsom
Board Member, Women's Foundation of California

The first time I voted was in 1984 for Presidential nominee Walter Mondale and Vice-Presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro. Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro of New York became the first female vice-presidential nominee representing a major political party. It was exciting. Hopeful. A realization of how far we had come. I believed this would be the norm. A woman at the top of the decision-making table!

That same year I became a US Citizen. Did you know that every person who applies to be a naturalized citizen of the United States goes through a background check? The Immigration officer who tested my knowledge of US history during my interview for US Citizenship told me that I was very boring. The background check came back clean!

I am an American by choice.

I have been voting ever since. I have also been volunteering on campaigns, supporting women, especially Latinas, to run for office and canvasing to get people to vote. This year in 2020 we celebrate the Centennial of the 19th Amendment. We honor and remember the courageous women and some men who led the struggle and fought for our right to vote. To truly honor their sacrifice, I hope we all vote in November.

When I became a US Citizen I was working as the immigration caseworker for US Senator Alan Cranston. It was my first official job and it was to assist constituents who had problems with the federal government. I had no idea that elected representatives actually helped constituents with individual problems. At the federal level this means, how to apply for a small business loan, how to get service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how get a social security check re-issued if it was lost or stolen or how to check on the status of your citizenship application when you filed two years ago or how to petition for a relative to join you in the US. In a nutshell, demystifying and unraveling federal systems to help people.

I had several jobs in the Senate office over the years. I was the military caseworker, the small business caseworker, the veteran affairs caseworker. But the best job was as the immigration caseworker - a position I was promoted to after the immigration maven retired after doing this work for 50 years in Washington. Big shoes to fill. Everyone knew her. And she knew people and she knew her stuff. She trained me. She gave me her Rolodex with the list of all her contacts with copious notes on what they did and how they could help. She was a very tough teacher with high expectations. I learned a lot. She wanted me to know my stuff well so that no one could push me around. So that I could stand up for the facts. It gave me confidence that I didn't know I had.

It was during my work as the immigration caseworker that I realized the importance and the value of being a United States citizen and the power of voting. I had been helping people become US Citizens and telling them to make sure that they registered to vote and what a great responsibility and a duty that is. But it wasn't until I became a US Citizen, and realized what having a US Passport and the ability to vote meant, that the importance of my new status really sunk in.

The Power of your vote. Su Voto es Su Voz. Your vote is your voice.

Why do so many people want to silence our vote? The direction of this country cannot be in the hands of a few people. Are they afraid that we will ask more questions and demand answers to those questions? Questions like, why don't I have clean drinking water in my community? Why is there a higher rate of asthma where I live? Why is it that in some counties in CA only 40% of the students will have access to broad band, so how can students be online for school and not fall behind creating even more disparities?

As demographics change across the US, more people of color, more women, more Latinas are running for office. That makes unenlightened people nervous. It is said that the people closest to the problems are the same people who are closest to the solutions. And those are the people who need run for office. Not only for statewide office, but for local city council, county boards of supervisors, school boards, water boards. Other ways to get involved include getting appointed to boards and commissions, learn advocacy skills to be at decision making tables. We are not waiting to be rescued or saved. We are coming up with solutions and creating the agenda.

The disparities have become so clear to me, especially as we fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Some elected leaders in our state put personal politics over science and public health. They not only endanger essential workers, but they refuse to listen to community members during public meetings by silencing them.

Leadership matters. Representation matters. Voting is essential. Filling out the Census form is critical in determining not only political representation, but it is vital to providing much needed services to communities across the U.S.

CA Secretary of State Alex Padilla recently said that Voting is the oxygen of democracy. We must clearly articulate and demonstrate what a life-giving force voting can be to all communities.

I am a serial public servant with an entrepreneurial flair. I have devoted many years to opening doors of opportunity and participation for my community. I don't give up. I am reenergized that in November I will vote for Joe Biden and my friend, Kamala Harris for President and Vice President of the United States.

In 2011 Geraldine Ferraro passed away. At that time I was working for the Obama Administration at the U.S. Department of Labor. We commemorated her historic nomination with a poster of her with the following quote, "She changed the game. She rewrote the rules. She proved to our daughters that anything is possible. This November we have an opportunity to make good on that promise. Let's VOTE!!

Education and Equity Facets

Randi Weingarten

President
American Federation of Teachers

My union, the American Federation of Teachers, was founded in 1916. Our founding leaders were women: Margaret Haley, who championed higher pay and greater professional autonomy for teachers, and Henrietta Rodman, who led the fight to allow women teachers to keep their jobs when they married or had children. They were barrier-breakers and dynamic leaders, but, although they were powerful enough to found a national teachers union, neither they nor any other woman in America had the power of the vote.

As we mark this anniversary of the largest expansion of suffrage in American history, we need to understand what it achieved and what it didn't; what it took to make it a reality (spoiler alert: it wasn't a signing ceremony); and what it is taking, right now, to protect that reality in the face of an administration hell-bent on restricting Americans' right to vote.

When women finally achieved the vote—after decades of agitation, protest, marches, fundraising, civil disobedience, petition drives, advocacy, jail terms, police brutality, lobbying and praying—we finally gained some agency over our lives. The right to vote underpins every other right. Without it, all of our human rights and civil rights are always on the table, with the potential to be bargained away.

What the 19th Amendment didn't achieve was the full enfranchisement of American women—or of American men, for that matter. We know that some of our sisters opposed the 15th Amendment (granting voting rights to people who had been enslaved) because it ignored women, and that many white women (not all!) abandoned their Black sisters in their final push for the 19th Amendment. These facts force us to be constantly on guard to make sure that our modern-day movements and coalitions are working for true equality and equity, not for the benefit of a select few.

It took both the monumental achievement of the 19th Amendment AND the blood-soaked efforts of millions of African Americans and their white allies to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which granted every citizen the right to vote and participate in our democracy on an equal and enforceable basis. And of course, as is still true now, elections matter: It took the House and the Senate to pass the bill, and a president, Lyndon Johnson, to sign it. Only then did the promise of a fully enfranchised citizenry come into view.

Our vote is our voice, our muscle and how we create change. We must expand it, exercise it and protect it, because—while it should be sacrosanct—it can be won or lost.

Look what can happen when we have the vote.

Before the right to vote, women had fewer employment options, no equality in marriage, no protection against discrimination. Now, there are numerous protections to level the playing field: Employment discrimination is against the law. Title IX prohibits discrimination against women in education, despite Betsy DeVos trying to eviscerate its protections for victims of campus sexual assault. The Affordable Care Act prohibits insurance providers from discriminating on the basis of gender, and, until recently, it required employers to cover birth control for women at no charge.

In 2018, we elected a record number of women to the House of Representatives, and a woman, Nancy Pelosi, once again became Speaker of the House (for the second time). In November, I'll vote for the first woman of color ever to be on a major party's presidential ticket. I couldn't say any of those things if it weren't for the 19th Amendment and the Voting Rights Act.

But justice can be eroded. In 2013, the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act, opening the floodgates for a deluge of state-based voter-suppression measures targeted at low-income voters and voters of color—men and women. In June, this court struck down the ACA's birth control provision.

It's not enough to have the right to vote if we don't exercise it to protect our broader rights. When we didn't in 2016, America got an administration that launched an all-out war on the rights of LGBTQ folks, immigrants, workers and women. We got a right-wing majority on the Supreme Court that gave us the anti-union Janus decision and refuses to protect voting rights, and a secretary of education committed to undermining public education.

That would have been bad enough, but now, while our country confronts three crises at once—a pandemic, an economic recession and racism—we also live under this president's chaotic, incompetent leadership. Donald Trump has mishandled every significant issue and crisis that has come to him, particularly the coronavirus pandemic; he'd rather tweet and divide Americans against each other in increasingly vicious ways than solve problems.

Trump pardoned Susan B. Anthony—for the crime of trying to vote—after sabotaging the post office in order to suppress votes. I think she would have preferred to keep her criminal record intact.

In November's election, everything is at stake for women. We have everything to lose, everything that matters to all of us, and everything that makes this country a democracy: our safety, our health, our jobs, our medical care, even our right to vote. In November, we need to vote like our lives depend on it. Because they do.

When I think personally about the 19th Amendment, I think about my grandmother, Ray Seegman Appelbaum, who emigrated to the United States from Ukraine before suffrage was a reality there. In fact, no one in her family could vote, because czars ruled them, not elected leaders.

Without a voice in how their country worked, they could only have dreamt about what the power of a voice and a vote might mean. Coming to America and building their families was dream enough; the right to vote made it all the more achievable.

The earrings that I wear every day, to remember my grandmother, come from her engagement ring. Her last public appearance before she died in 1983 was at my law school graduation. That day, she kept saying that, from coming to America and being able to vote, to now seeing her granddaughter become someone who could argue and fight for the law, was a gift she would never forget.

Neither will I. It's why I do what I do.

Randi Weingarten, President
American Federation of Teachers

Suzanne Elise Walsh is the 19th President of Bennett College, one of two historically black colleges for women in the United States. Prior to that role, she served as the deputy director for postsecondary success with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. Walsh's contributions extend to her role on a number of non-profit boards including Trellis Foundation, Carey Institute for Global Good, the Harwood Institute, Global Learning Council and the advisory board for Roadtrip Nation.

Suzanne Elise Walsh

President
Bennett College

I lived in the first century of women's suffrage: My reflections in stanzas

I lived in the first century of women's suffrage.
Most elections I would more or less engage.
The ballot always arrived by mail--
Except that one time when I briefly lived in Indiana.
My grandmothers lived in the first century of women's suffrage.
Voting is in my DNA.
It was expected.
I recently learned that my Grandmother Brooks, a Black woman in Illinois,
Worked the polls in the 1940s.
That was the unexpected.
She took her young daughters with her to the polls.
My Mother and her sisters voted in the 1950s and 1960s—
That was expected.
And so I thought all Black women could vote in the beginning of the first century of women's suffrage.
No one had stories of fighting to vote.
It just always was.
All of my friends and cousins and aunts voted. My grandmothers voted.
I lived in the first century of women's suffrage
And I took it for granted.
But now at the end of the first century of women's suffrage,
There are so many unanswered questions about what could have been.
What is it about the century mark that allows us to uncover the truth?
We are learning about dreams deferred and battles waged by unsung Black women of the South.
There are new books and articles and research about Black women at the Vanguard:
Black women who broke barriers, won the vote and insisted on equality for all;
About Black women's battles for the ballot box.
Why did we have to live at the end of the century of women's suffrage to get the facts?
Not all Black women could vote after 1920.
"For Black women, ratification of the 19th Amendment was not a guarantee of the vote, but it was a clarifying moment…
In the North and to the west, Black women successfully cast ballots in 1920,
Voting for the very first time alongside their husbands, fathers and sons.
Officials in Southern states confronted Black women with unevenness, hostility and downright refusal using,
Grandfather clauses that ensured that the descendants of disenfranchised slaves, though now free people, could not vote.
Literacy tests, which local election officials administered differently to Black versus white voters
Understanding clauses demanded that potential voters read and then explain a text
Unpaid poll taxes, all of which had to be paid before they could cast a ballot."
Not all Black women are celebrating the first century of women's suffrage.
Thus, perhaps I should amend my refrain and say,
I lived in the first half century of Black women's universal suffrage.
If this is just the beginning, where do we want to be at the end of our first century?
Where are we going? Who will we be?
What did our disenfranchised ancestors hope for?
It wasn't just the right to vote.
All of us are now living in the first century of Black women's suffrage.
It is up to us to embrace the legacy, live up to our ancestors' wildest dreams.
We must continue to vote.
Continue to run.
Continue to be in the streets.
Continue to tell the stories of the struggles.
Don't be like me and take it for granted.
The next 50 years belong to us!
We must not just live in the first century of Black women voting – we must act and lead.
What does the future hold at the end of the first century of universal voting for Black women?
Black women translating voting power into political and economic power
A Court full of Supremes.
A country where there is a Black woman not just nominated for VP but also
At least one Black woman President of the United States.
In this first century of universal Black women's suffrage
It is possible.
It is necessary.
They didn't want us all to vote.
They still don't
But we will.
Neither pandemic nor racism nor redistricting will stay Black women from completing our duty to vote and to lead.
My ballot always arrives by mail.
Voting is in my DNA.
I am proud to be living in the first centuries of women's suffrage.

Kristen A. Clark, Ed.D.

New Jersey Career Equity Resource Center Coordinator
New Jersey Department of Education

This Isn't One Vote

November 5, 2001. I had absolutely no idea what to expect. You always hear about what it means to "rock the vote" and "let your voice be heard" or, how cool it is to reiterate Diddy's "Vote or Die" campaign slogan. But, how do you do that—vote--when you aren't quite sure what your voice is or what place you hold in the world? Can you do that when you haven't yet actualized your purpose?

Mrs. Wurtzel, my fourth-grade teacher, introduced us to the world of elections through a mock voting scenario when, then, Presidential Candidate Bill Clinton was running for his first term in office. I was enthralled with the life of Bill Clinton. He was so young; he could have been my father. His wife stood by him and supported him; my mother was our family's ultimate cheerleader. His daughter was just about our age; she could have been my friend or my sister. And, here we were at the young age of 9 beginning to actualize that all that really matters in that moment—the moment you cast your ballot—is that it will have an impact. It is a reflection of your values and beliefs.

In my family, there was never a question of if you will vote, but rather what will you vote for. I mean in the world of a young person voting simply ushered in a perception of adulthood. It was a cool thing to be able to do.

I must say, however, that when I turned 18 and legally went to vote, the feeling of fascination and excitement wasn't so overpowering. The entire experience felt rather heavy. The responsibility to do the right thing, quite honestly, became a burden. Oh, how I wished to be 9 again when voting was just "fun" and made for an all too engaging story I could tell my parents when they asked, "how was school today, babe?" In the instant I was prepared to cast my vote, I felt I was prepared to offer an anticlimactic story at best.

There are so many thoughts, emotions, and anxieties involved in that moment. The moment that, for me, would not only change my life, but perhaps initiate a series of events that would impact the course of our society. Did I mention that this was a heavy load to carry?

The future, though, seemed so far away, even though each minute, each second is technically the future.

The past. It's much harder to imagine. I have trouble imagining a time before me, before the 19th Amendment when not a single woman, let alone a woman of color, had the right to vote. It's devastating to reflect on a social, political, and economic society that negated the reality and impact of approximately 50% of the world's population—women. It would be many years until women who look and live an existence like mine were even considered to be allowed in polling places. Women of color who, in the age of slavery, worked tirelessly alongside their husbands and children without rights. Women who, before 1920, didn't dare to dream because they couldn't. Women who, since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech "Ain't I A Woman," have been screaming and demanding legitimacy.

These are the souls, my ancestors, that I was voting for.

All of this, the convergence of the past and the future happening at that very moment would forever change history with just a swift flick of this lever.

Imagine a television or movie episode where the main character is standing motionless as all the events that led to a particular moment in time are flashing before their eyes. And, while seeming emotionless, they are overtaken with all the emotions at the same time. That was me.

I wasn't voting just for me.

- I was voting for all of the people who sacrificed their lives to even provide me with that option.
- I was voting for all of the women that believed in a better world for women of color where our voices and shared experiences matter.
- I was voting because one day I would be an aunt to young queens and a young king who needed to understand that there was a seat created for them at the proverbial table and they needed to sit in it.
- I was voting for the needs of all of the traditionally marginalized individuals who, for infinite reasons, won't have the opportunity to cast their votes.

And, that is why the burden felt so heavy.

I am 18. I cast my vote. I feel proud. I feel scared. I feel that I don't know if my one vote counts for anything much. Why am I still anxious?

It isn't just one vote.

Dr. Kristen A. Clark works to ensure equity and accessibility within statewide CTE programs as the Career Equity Resource Center Coordinator for the Office of Career Readiness with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). Key projects in her role include overseeing coordinated efforts with Rutgers' University Center for Women and Work, enhancing accessibility to Career and Technical Education for special populations, partnering with state agencies on statewide educational equity efforts, and collaboratively developing equity guidance for statewide CTE programs throughout the various Career Clusters ®.
Dr. Clark is a graduate from Rowan University with a Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

After many years in the private sector and government working as an economist to address technology and renewable energy issues, Marie-Louise "Mal" currently works on educational policy at the American Federation of Teachers with a focus on career and technical education, and serves on NAPE's Program and Policy Committee.

Marie-Louise Caravatti, Ph.D.

Associate Director
American Federation of Teachers

I am an immigrant and the first time I voted was in my birth country, England. It was a rite of passage for me and I marched off to vote as soon as I became eligible. I came to the United States for graduate work and because of my education and skills I qualified for a resident visa that allowed me to work at the same time as I continued my education. As a resident of Washington DC – policy central – both my studies and work focused on U.S. policy. But it felt very strange indeed to be arguing policy positions as a non-citizen, so when I became eligible for citizenship I made the leap and became a U.S. citizen. It was exciting, but I cannot say that it really felt so different. I was technically a U.S. citizen, but it was not until I got to vote for the first time in a U.S. presidential election that I really felt I was an American. I was making my own personal decision about the future of my country – E pluribus Unum – I was now a full member of this remarkable country that had opened up so many opportunities to me.

Citizenship, voting, contributing to your community are inextricably connected in my mind. When I consider the sacrifices, the extraordinary lengths, and battles that suffragists had to wage to get the vote for women, both in the United States and its close cousin England, it leaves me dismayed that so many do not exercise this hard fought for right. The struggle for voting rights also laid bare many of the class and racial divisions that exist in societies. In England, property ownership served as the means of excluding certain classes of citizens. In the United States, race became the determining factor as Black women were left out of the 19thAmendment and discriminatory state voting laws effectively prevented many people of color from voting well into the 20th century. It is infuriating that some are still trying to curtail access to voting for Black, Brown and immigrant citizens. This not only undermines democratic governance, but it deprives the nation of the many benefits that diversity and active citizen engagement can bring to a society.

The contributions that women have made to our civic life in the one hundred years since obtaining the right to vote have been transformational, at both the national, local and personal level. Women have fought to make our laws fairer, and having been on the receiving end of discrimination, women have mobilized to strike down discrimination for everyone. One of our greatest contributions is in the realm of education, both as a means of giving everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential in life and as a means of strengthening our democracy. The fight for equality continues with much unfinished business: while women have been able to advocate for greater economic opportunities, we are still underrepresented in many of the top-paying and most consequential professions such as the law, upper echelons of corporations, and in the nation's political life, where so many decisions affecting our citizens are made. Today, as we grapple with multiple crises simultaneously - an economic crisis, a global health crisis, racial inequality and a climate crisis, to name but a few - it is vital to our democracy that everyone exercise their right to fully participate in the life of the nation by voting. And for women, this may just be our chance to put another crack in that glass ceiling.

Rev. Gwendolyn Boyd, D.Min.

Engineer, Scientist, STEM Advocate
Former Academic Administrator
Past National President, Delta Sigma Theta

In every generation courageous woman stand on the shoulders of other brave, daring and courageous women who were willing to fight for freedom and justice.

In this moment, we celebrate the history making event when 100 years ago women received the right to vote, the impact it has confirmed and the impetus it has inspired for others to rise up and fight for their rights.

The movement was successful because their cause was just. We are glad that we have witnessed over the last 100 years that women refused to compromise, dared to be defiant in the face of criticism, and never surrendered to oppressors. Sojourner Truth reminded them as they gathered in one of her speeches "Ain't I am woman?" Her words rang true and served to inspire, educate and encourage these women to never accept second class citizenship. Sojourner challenged them to think and to act. She affirmed that the cause was just, and the time was right for a new lexicon on how women are to be treated, respected, valued and appreciated.

In this moment we celebrate women who were motivated for progress, zealous for social justice, and intemperate for intolerance.

Reviewing the chronicle of events, we see where coalitions were formed over a hundred with women of like mind, spirit and commitment. Yes, their cause was just. However, they knew that they needed to add more voices of other women who were also being oppressed. They reached to powerful women who were part of disparate groups, organizations, and coalitions to come the table. These new women like Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells were respected and powerful in their various communities. Their different voices and different experiences added value to the cause of equality and justice for all women. They influenced women in the next generation like one of my mentors Dr. Dorothy Irene Height. As she took the mantle of the National Council of Negro Women from her mentor Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Dr. Height was an iconic coalition builder. She strengthened the organization and made it a movement. She was the only women at the table as part of the planning and implementation of all facets of the civil rights movement. She was the only woman on the platform at the March on Washington. She was a woman who concentrated her energy and her influence to promote career equity and pay equity for women. Significant to me was that she was a woman of faith who was always concerned about the needs of others. She shared with me personally so many significant lessons in leadership that I continue to use daily in my interactions with others. She was a powerful woman who truly walked with and was acknowledged by presidents, kings and other political leaders but always had her mind and heart set on making a difference in the lives of women all over the world.

As we celebrate 100 years, we know meetings were good but there needed to be a more public demonstration of the commitment to the right to vote by showing the collective power of women which was actualized in the suffrage march in Washington, DC. It is this same model that allowed the Civil Rights movement to honor the vision of its leaders with the March on Washington. This led to political changes that allowed women and then African Americans to vote. This led to representation in local, state, and national elections and the forming of the Congressional Black Caucus, where one of its founding members was Hon. Shirley Chisholm who was the first African American woman to run for President of the United States. Over the last 100 years we have seen women elected as mayors, governors, judges, school board members and city council members. Women have been appointed as cabinet members with Hon. Alexis Herman as the first African American woman appointed as US Secretary of Labor. Hon. Patricia Roberts Harris who was the first African American woman to serve in any United States Presidential Cabinet. Harris served as US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and US Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (which was renamed the Secretary of Health and Human Services during her tenure). She also served as United States Ambassador to Luxembourg. Most significant event in this chronology of significant change over the last 100 years was witnessing the election and reelection of the First African American President of the United States of America Barack Obama, which also allowed us to witness and appreciate the presence , dignity and solemnity of the First African American First Lady Michelle Obama.

Growing up in Montgomery, Alabama I was able to bear witness to acrimonious, cruel, and inhumane treatment of those who believed that we were equal, those who believed that we were all created in the image of God. But when I had to integrate my Junior high school it was more than apparent that view was not shared by those in authority. Many years later when I had the opportunity to vote for the very first time, I reflected on all the things that I had seen growing up in Montgomery and the progress that had been made to allow me to cast a vote. Reflection is important but casting the vision to the future is what we also need to keep moving forward. That is why I still believe that one day there will be the fulfillment of the dream and a woman will be elected President of the United States of America.

So, in this moment we celebrate women who were purposeful, dedicated, tenacious, persistent, dedicated, devoted, audacious, enterprising, bold brave, risktakers, committed, and focused on the goal for the right of women to vote which changed the narrative of this nation and the world.

Rev Dr. Gwendolyn E. Boyd her BS from Alabama State University in mathematics, was the first African-American female to earn a MS degree in Mechanical Engineering from Yale University, earned MDiv and DMin from Howard University, her professional engineering career at the Johns Hopkins University APL and is a nationally recognized STEM champion who served on President Obama's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African American. Boyd, returned to ASU and served as the 14th and first female President. From 2000-2004, Rev. Dr. Gwendolyn Boyd was elected to serve as the 22nd National President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

Tonette is an Equity Analyst committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion explicit to race and systemic inequalities of underserved populations.

Tonette Salter

Equity Analyst
California Joint Special Populations Advisory Committee
NAPE Executive Committee

"Believing slavery to be a direct violation of the laws of God, and productive of a vast amount of misery and crime; convinced that its abolition can only be effected by the acknowledgment of the social justice and necessity of immediate emancipation – We hereby form ourselves into a Society of aid and assist in the righteous cause as far as lies within our power"- The Preamble of the Anti-slavery Society.

There is no impossible when women join forces. Not long enough has the years passed of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibit states and the federal government from denying the rights to vote to citizens of the United States. Two-hundred and thirty-one years ago, white males could vote as citizens of the United States but discriminated against voting practices from men and women of color and women. The gap for women's right to vote and white males was 131 years. Yes! 100 years since the 19th amendment passed, there is no impossible when women join forces. During those 131 years, there were women arduous at work in the abolishment of slavery that put breath into the women's rights movement. Bold, outspoken, humiliated, insulted, and fearless comprise the actions of women trailblazers like Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordon, and the Grimke' sisters, Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké.

It was 1979 when I first learned about the Grimke' sisters sitting in the living room having tea with Ms. Helen Bass. They were two white sisters who opposed slavery in their childhood. Living on a plantation and seeing the treatment of slaves shaped their gregarious boldness, antipathy, and stance for both slavery and the limitations of the rights of women. Ms. Bass, said these are women who are not of color, like you Tonette but have in common with you is your strong belief in yourself and your inquisitiveness for reason. My father thought it was important I had a mentor at an early age to expose me to the history of women. Therefore, since I was the age of nine I had weekly visits with Ms. Helen Bass. She was a woman trailblazer who protested with Septima Clark, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, and John Lewis before she became the first Black American faculty at Purdue University. Nevertheless, on that particular day of when I was visiting, it was about expanding my mind of those who were not black to help shape America.

Sara and Angela Grimke's self-worth, the belief of fair treatment to all, and despisement of slavery was their legacy in the fight for the abolishment of slavery and women's rights. Their work, through the auspice of the American Anti-Slavery Society help elevate the women's rights movement. They believed like many other women, Susan B. Anthony, in the future of women leaders. Ms. Bass unlocked my 10-year-old mind and help forge my kaleidoscope that there is "no impossible". Exposed and awake at a very young age affirmed the value of my voice, advocacy for women to move in spaces that excluded their voice for changes.

It is 1987, May 16th, I am 18 years of age. My voice can be heard and I can contribute to the change in my country. Sure, I ran for school elections at a predominately white high school in El Cajon, CA, with no more than eight blacks attending in the 4 years I graduated. My ego was lifted when I was selected as the Vice President of my Sophomore class, Secretary of my Junior class, and a Varsity Cheerleader, but I did not believe my voice was heard. I rode the bus to San Diego County Registrar's Office on Monday, May 18, 1987, and registered to vote. I felt empowered, liberated because my voice will be heard, and I believe there is "no impossible".

The 19th amendment means I am a product of change and my actions I live by were influenced and shaped by the past women catalyst of change, Grimke' sisters, Shirley Chisholm, Ida B. Wells, Susan B. Anthony, and Helen Bass. My right to vote continues to uplifts the voices from the past; the voices of my great grandmother (Ida Mae Robinson) who was ostracized from her family and the community for having four children out of wedlock; my grandmother who was separated from her brothers; my mother who did not believe her voice counts; and for women who identify as a woman; and for black women to dismantle and change the challenges faced by all women of harassment, unequal pay, access to jobs, housing, healthcare, economic mobility, and leadership positions.

As Sojourner Truth said, "Ain't I a Woman." Indeed I am. I have hope, tenacity, resiliency, determination, and there is no impossible when women join forces. I believe there will be a woman president before I part to a higher life.

Tegwin Pulley

NAPE Texas Director

In 1970, I read a Dallas Morning News article about a women's political meeting. I immediately made calls to both Democratic headquarters and Republican headquarters. I had just missed the women's political caucus but learned about a meeting of the National Organization for Women (NOW). I met some remarkable women leaders through NOW. I felt I had "hit the motherload" when it came to women's rights. It was the beginning of my lifelong journey to understand why society's expectations of women were so different than for men and to address the resulting inequities.

In 1973, I attended the National Women's Political Caucus Convention. The gathering in Houston was the first women's political convention since Seneca Falls in 1848. Over 1,500 women attended. There were caucuses of Black women, Hispanic women, and more. Caucus founders included Gloria Steinem, editor of Ms. magazine; Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm the first Black woman to run for President of the United States; Congresswoman Bella Abzug; Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Jill Ruckelshaus, U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner; Ann Lewis, Political Director of the Democratic National Committee; Elly Peterson, vice-chair of the Republican National Committee; LaDonna Harris, Native American rights leader; Liz Carpenter, press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson; Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and Fannie Lou Hammer, community organizer and leader in the women's rights and civil rights movements. All recognized the need for action to address inequities for women. I attended a convention workshop on credit facilitated by Abzug. In 1973, it was almost impossible for a woman to get credit in her own name – a husband or father would have to sign to secure credit cards, loans or mortgages.

Frances (Sissy) Farenthold was elected President of the Women's Political Caucus. It became a powerful force. Both women and men candidates sought their endorsement. Farenthold ran for Governor of Texas twice. In response to being questioned constantly about her qualifications, despite a law degree and years of public service in the Texas legislature, Farenthold said "It's about time the unqualified women of Texas joined the unqualified men in the legislative bodies of our state." Who says the women's movement doesn't have a sense of humor?

The power the of vote has served as a critical underpinning of women's empowerment. In the 1970's women advocated for legislation. More women ran for office. We established shelters for battered women, rape crisis centers, abortion clinics, women's centers, childcare centers, and more. In Dallas, we formed a Feminist Federal Credit Union. NOW supported two lesbian nurses in a custody battle for their children. We monitored the media for fair representation of women and challenged the licenses of TV stations resulting in more women being hired as reporters.

Women were denied admission to universities on the grounds that they were taking the spot of a man who would use the degree in his career. We advocated for passage and implementation of Title 1X guaranteeing women and girls equal educational opportunities, including higher education admissions and participation in sports. The Women's Equity Action League reviewed textbooks to see how women were portrayed and testified before the state board of education. In a science textbook I read, I found only one picture of a woman – she was emptying a dishwasher.

Women fought for equal pay and fair treatment at a time when many women were fired if they got pregnant. Job discrimination was rampant. A friend applying for a professorship was asked what kind of birth control she and her husband used. In an interview for a research position at an aerospace company, another friend with a PhD was asked if she could type. When she commented that the job description did not require typing, the recruiter said: "You don't understand, we only hire women to type."

Fifty years later, as we celebrate women's right to vote, we have made significant progress. Yet, we have so much more to do to ensure equal rights for women and for every American. The right to vote is a fundamental recognition of the basic human dignity of each of us. It is key to being treated fairly. The historical struggle to obtain the right to vote clearly shows that voting rights were based on an unjust hierarchy of human value.

In the first presidential election in 1788, voting rights generally were limited to white men who owned property. Almost 100 years later in 1870, after the civil war, the 15th amendment stated that the right to vote could not be denied because of race. Yet, barriers to voting persisted, including poll taxes deliberately aimed at reducing the voting rights of Black men.

After decades of struggle, women won the right to vote in 1920 through the 19th amendment.

Still voting rights did not extend to all women. In 1964, the 24th amendment made poll taxes unconstitutional and, in 1965, Congress passed the voting rights act. It barred policies and practices that limited voting by Black people and other targeted groups and required a "preclearance" of voting laws in jurisdictions with a historical pattern of voter suppression. Voting rights were set back in 2013 in Shelby County v. Holder when the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act by no longer requiring "preclearance."

At a NOW national convention in the 1970's, when I was walking between venues, I was shoved and a card was forced into my hand. The card read "You have just been visited by the Ku Klux Klan. Would you like a real visit?" Almost 50 years later, white supremacy continues to threaten equality. In 2020, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, the right to vote is under attack with state and local officials erecting new barriers to voting with a disproportionate negative impact on communities of color. This is a call to action for each of us who believes in equal rights and basic human dignity.

Tegwin Pulley is a woman on a mission for equality and social justice. She retired from Texas Instruments (TI) where she was Vice President. Her leadership resulted in: TI becoming one of the best companies to work for; over 180 awards to TI for diversity, work-life and inclusive environment. Her commitment to women's rights includes serving as President of Dallas NOW, the Women's Center of Dallas, Women's Issues Network, the Dallas Summit, Leadership Texas, and the Women's Museum. Her commitment to equity continues in her role as Texas Director for the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity.

Linda Calhoun is founder and executive producer of CareerGirls.org, which she started after working as a database consultant for international development projects for USAID and the World Bank. She is president of the Friends of the San Francisco Commission on Women; chair of the board of directors, Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Foundation; board member of the Alliance for Girls; chair, International Relations Member-Led Forum, Commonwealth Club of California; and a trustee of World Affairs. She earned a Bachelor of Science, Mass Communication, Boston University; International Marketing Certificate, American University, Paris

Linda Calhoun

Founder and Executive Producer
CareerGirls.org

When I Became Aware

From my earliest memories, election day was a revered holiday. The adults in my family had focus and determination. While I didn't completely understand what was at stake, I knew something important was going on.

In 1964, during the Goldwater vs. Johnson Presidential race, the fear and apprehension about a possible Goldwater win were palpable. I could hear it in my mother's voice and those of her Black women friends and relatives. It was clear that it mattered to everyone in our world that Lyndon Johnson would win that election. His support of civil rights was, of course, the driving force behind their enthusiasm.

It had only been seven years since my family fled the harsh Jim Crow Segregation laws of Virginia, moving to Connecticut in 1957. Not voting was simply unthinkable. Lyndon Johnson's victory that night in November 1964 was a joyous occasion.

Voting = Agency

The women in my family did not sit back and let fate direct their life. They were architects for a better and prosperous life. They took the initiative, saved money, bought land, and they voted. I am the beneficiary.

The fruits of political participation resulted in improvements to the living conditions of my family. After my grandfather's early death, my grandmother was able to live on her own. She maintained her independence and dignity until the end of her life. That was possible thanks to programs such as Medicare, home heating oil assistance, and the occasional free cheese giveaway. Her safety net was tied directly to victories at the ballot box.

Casting My Vote for the First Time

The mood was different on November 4, 1980, the first time I cast my ballot. I returned to my old high school gymnasium. I was stunned by the turnout. The air was thick with older, blue-collar workers' determination to "take back their country." I had the sense that my white neighbors had turned on me. My intuition was confirmed by the landslide election of Ronald Reagan that evening. Although my candidate was not victorious, I became tenacious in exercising my political will and voting. My voice would be heard.

I not only treasured my own right to vote, but I also began to actively follow the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. I first learned of this brutal totalitarian system in my grade school social studies class. It was hard to accept that unlike US slavery, as taught in our history books, it was a current act of oppression.

Years later, I had the opportunity to turn my outrage into action. In 1994, I had the supreme privilege and honor of serving as an election observer in the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa. At the time, there was considerable political violence surrounding the elections. I will never forget when the South African Ambassador to the United States welcomed our group of observers as "midwives at the birth of democracy."

I was assigned to be an observer in Hluhluwe, a small town in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province, about 170 miles north of Durban. My voting districts ringed the periphery of King Zulethini's mountainous compound. On the morning of the election, we approached the first voting station just before dawn. I saw the silhouette of a queue of people stretched across the horizon. As we walked along the line, I saw people being carried on stretchers and holding on to others as they waited to cast their votes for the very first time. It gave me chills. This first, all race, democratic election in South Africa resulted in Nelson Mandela becoming President.

The peaceful transition from apartheid to a true democracy stands as a momentous milestone in human history. And to have, albeit small, an officially prescribed role in its dismantling is a memory I will always treasure. It also became the catalyst for the work I was to do for the rest of my life.

Think Globally, Act Globally

One of the things I learned from my experience in South Africa was the transformative power of a determined generation of youth. The idea for Career Girls came to me as I thought about their impact and ways I could help empower youth around the world. I recalled how I had benefited from the stories shared by my grandmother about overcoming poverty and oppression from her childhood. What if I could harness the power of stories of women from different ages, backgrounds, and experiences to help young people navigate their way through life?

I decided to dedicate my life to amplifying the voices of women across the globe and creating a platform to share their collective wisdom with the next generation of girls. In a nutshell, my dream is for every girl worldwide to have access to diverse and accomplished women role models to learn from their experiences and discover their path to empowerment.

What I Do

I began the journey by reaching out to successful women and asking them about what they do, how they got there, and, most importantly, what do girls need to do to create a future of their choosing. Fortunately, I was not alone in fulfilling my mission. Most successful women want to help the next generation succeed. They want to share their wisdom to inspire, educate, and empower girls coming up behind us.

Today, my non-profit organization, Career Girls, provides a comprehensive video-based career exploration and readiness tool for girls. With interviews from an inclusive community of 700 women, we have amassed the most extensive online collection of career guidance videos focusing exclusively on diverse and accomplished women. Our website has 14 million page views from 232 countries and territories around the world.

It is easy to become discouraged when you turn on the nightly news, but my faith in the future is renewed when I see girls soaking in the knowledge and wisdom of their elders.

Dahlia M. Shaewitz

Vice President, Transition, Disability and Employment
Institute for Educational Leadership

Like life, politics is complex. It may not seem so in today's polarized national climate, but at the local level there are constant conversations among my neighbors about what is best for our families, our community, our state, our nation, and the world. The answers are not red or blue, they are intricate, they are personal, they are mutable.

I grew up with a mom who was a capital "D" Democrat and she always voted. This is how I learned to vote, along party lines. In our household and our lower-to-middle-class suburban neighborhood there was a clear understanding that the Dems stood for fairness and the social safety net that my family relied upon. That included free-and-reduced lunch for me and my sister and social security disability income (SSDI) to supplement our family income after my father fell ill.

It took some years before I investigated what it meant to align with a party of my choosing and began to develop my own political awareness that includes party, candidate positions, and the communities I was a part of. Even when I was voting with a clear majority, I believed that my one vote added to the totality of the impact for the candidate.

In my late 20s I read Personal History by Katharine Graham, former editor of the Washington Post, an unusual and powerful female figure leading an influential newspaper. As I read her description of the newspaper union strikes in the early 1970s against the Washington Post, my mother informed me that my Dad had crossed the picket line. He was a union supporter who "scabbed" in order to feed his family of five. I felt a mix of pride in my Dad for doing what he had to do as a father and husband, and amazement that he was a part of the history I was reading in a book. Never did I doubt my parents' support for the union that ensured employment for many Deaf people at newspapers around the country at a time when job opportunities for people with disabilities was less than minimal. As people with disabilities at that time, my parents did not have their choice in careers, they did not have access to the education and training that would move them into a higher income bracket, and they made choices based on their specific circumstances. This is like voting—each individual makes a decision based on what she or he believes is important given their life circumstances. Like many Americans my parents worked, raised their family, and voted with equal attention.

I have read the reports about low voter turnout. I look at the system that promulgates a sense of frustration because it forces people to choose between getting home in time to pick up the kids, make dinner, and rest after a hard day (or night) at work--or dropping a ballot into a box. We give citizens hard choices then despair when they choose what makes sense to them. If we want true representation in the ballot box, then we should make voting easy. That may include a National Voting Day for all citizens with paid time off from work, a system to ensure that every citizen age 18 or older is registered to vote, and accessible voting options for people with disabilities.

The suffragette's movement that gave women the right to vote in the early 20th century was momentous, but it was not adequate. First, not all women got the right to vote, only white women. Second, those white women could only vote for white male candidates, most of whom did not consider women or issues women cared about. In the past 100 years, women have slowly accumulated basic rights that include owning property, controlling their bodies, and working and living independently. Today, my great-great grandmother would not have her children removed from her home because she was Deaf and recently widowed. Today, my grandmother would have been treated equally to her hearing brothers and offered the same opportunities. Today, my mother would be retired from her dream career as a Deaf nurse. Today, women have more rights and more choices. Yet, these basic rights remain under threat by political actors who do not represent the needs and interests of women.

We need candidates who will address issues that impact all aspects of our lives . To address the interests of women of color, we need women of color running for and in office. To address the needs of the transgender community, we need transgender representatives in every level of government. To address the needs of people with disabilities, who make up more than 20% of the US population, we need a proportionate number of people with disabilities in office. To achieve our very late-in-the-game goal to have a woman in the highest office of the United States, we must change what we believe about leadership including how we lead, why we lead, and for whom we lead. And we must give voters a chance to register and reach the ballot box to elect that leader.

How can we achieve these important political goals? We need to empower girls, women, transgender, people with disabilities, and non-binary citizens to deepen their understanding of policy, develop their leadership skills, expand their networks, and run for office. By working together, we can change the representation of our political leaders to represent all of us.

Ms. Shaewitz develops strategies and approaches to empower youth and adults with and without disabilities to create their futures and lead their communities toward greater inclusion and financial independence. She oversees a portfolio of work that addresses the systems changes and collaborations needed to connect youth and adults with disabilities to education and employment opportunities. She works with workforce agencies to evaluate strategies that improve employment outcomes; universities to develop in-person and online training; private corporations to increase awareness and value of disability inclusion; and stakeholders to create a climate of full inclusion of people with disabilities in their programs and products.

Dr. Natalie Parker-Holliman is the founder of GIRLSwSTEAM and a P-12 Practitioner and Leader in the area of Mathematics, STEM, and Gifted & Talented Education. She brings to the table an "above all" innovative approach to preparing students for their futures and supporting educators throughout their careers. Dr. Parker-Holliman researches and writes on equity in education and is a sought-out speaker in the areas of mathematics education, leadership, educational equity, and global STEM collaborations.

Natalie Parker-Holliman, Ph.D.

Founder & Board President
GIRLSwSTEAM

Wo Mi, Emi ni Amẹrika*

The 19th Amendment, to Me, Means
"I Was Partially American."

Look at Me
I Am A Beautiful Black Woman
Celebrating a Victory for Sisters
Who Were Not My Sistahs
And for Those Who Could Not Identify with Me

You see, I Was Partially American
And in 1920, the 19th Amendment Meant
I Was Partially Privileged to the Rights of our Constitutional Liberties

This America Was Not Designed for Me
My Ancestors were Brought Here Unwillingly

The Intersectionality of My Humanity
Brings Up a Narrative of my Previous Three-Fifths Identity

The 19th Amendment Was a Huge Win,
But not for Sistahs Who was Black Women Like Me

This Legislation Was Indeed
A Win,
It Provided White Women with Voting Rights
Which Mitigated the Unjustified Wrongs of Our Then Society

It was Jubilation for Women's Legislation
With null Elevation of Racial Diversity in the Celebration
Yielding Us No Immediate Ratification

Because Of
The 19th Amendment
I Channeled my Inner TRUTH and Had to Ask…

" And Ain't I A Woman?"

And Even Despite,
We Fought the Good Fight,
Marched for Your Plight,
With Our Voting Privileges…
Nowhere in Sight

Almost Five Decades Later
BLACK WOMEN WON THE RIGHT TO VOTE
Broke Down Barriers, and
Pushed the Needle Toward Equality and Inclusion for All

My Voting Power is an Instrument for Change
It Represents Infinite Political and Social Action Range
MY VOTE is Used to Illuminate and Elevate MY VOICE
Voting in This Society is Indeed
My Super-Power

In 1920, I Was Looked at-as Partially American
Because of Privileges and Socio-Economic Divides
Many Choose to Scrutinize
While Refusing to Empathize, Synchronize, and
Much Less Mobilize for the Greater Good
Not Only Yesterday, but This Rings True Even Today

I Am A Black American Woman
With an Optimistic Dream for Tomorrow

I Will Not Be Silenced
For Such - A Time - As This

The Year is 2020,
Our Tide is Shifting,
When you Think of America
You will See Me
Wo Mi, Emi ni Amẹrika*

Written by Dr. Natalie Parker-Holliman, PhD
Edited by Emmily Leavy

The right to vote has a trifold meaning to me, which evokes three themes focused on illuminating my voice, centering the reality of my whole existence, and embracing the value I add to humanity.

My Voice has a Presence because voting operates as my sounding board. Using my voice, I can push forward narratives, policies, and laws that align with my values as well while making inaudible those that contradict my humanity. Representative Maxine Waters made famous the invocation, "Reclaiming My Time." This phrase, a House political floor procedural rule, was used as a tool of interruption that suggests, "You are wasting (my) time on unrelated-irrelevant dialogue" (Holliman et al., 2018, p.15). Our voting advocacy is powerful in silencing political movements that are unrelated and irrelevant weapons aimed to disenfranchise specific marginalized groups of people and push personal-made political vendettas forward. Using our voices through voting empowers us to reclaim our time while interrupting corrupt political agendas.

My Existence is Reality. Many leaders before me have paved the way so that I am visible in our autonomous society. As a thread in the fabric of our nation, my existence as a Black woman is intersectional and compounded due to gender and race. The voting right for women was a starting point that has led to better opportunities and actions that make room for my humanity. Voting safeguards my existence as a competent and thought-provoking individual with a democratic process that promises protected freedoms for me. Black women now exist in our American society as a full person, and the impact of our presence is a reality. The tide has risen, and women are "unbought and unbossed," a slogan made popular by U.S. Congresswoman Shirly Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for president (Carr, 2017). Her candidacy made possible the serious bid of other women candidates, even those with compounded identities, to run for political office and to seek the highest responsibility as president. Due to Chisholm's' efforts and others with the same just activism, I can envision a woman as our nation's president before we see the Tricentennial (circa 3020).

My Humanity is Invaluable. A women's value to society is unmatched. As a reciprocation of the words of a great educational leader, Rochelle Gutiérrez (2016), I suggest that Women Don't Need America - America Needs Women. As our society advances, so must our practices that are inclusive and honors the voices of diversity. History has intentionally muted women's voices and contributions, as it provides a secondary focus on our accomplishments and life's work.

If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair----Shirly Chisholm

Voting allows us to position women to be at tables of power. This 100-year commemoration of the 19th Amendment empowers us to put in place gender-specific voices that speak to the narratives that affect our lives and those of others. Voting is our Voice and Power. It allows us to be politically and socially conscious and elect people who make decisions that align themselves in efforts to illuminate our humanity as women in this society that always has been and will be invaluable.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick

Senior Program Manager
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson, Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind, We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,

Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march, Pioneers! O pioneers!...

Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways, Pioneers! O pioneers!...

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
Pioneers! O pioneers!
~Walt Whitman

Colorado has always been the land of pioneers. Even though the territory of Wyoming, to our north, was the first territory to grant women the right to vote with the passing of the Wyoming suffrage Act in 1869, Colorado became the first state to enact women's suffrage by popular referendum in 1893. After Congress finally passed the 19th Amendment, on December 15, 1919, Colorado voted to ratify it. By August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution had been ratified by 35 other states. This opened the door for women to vote, and cracked open the door for women to pioneer new fields and new roles, finding increasing opportunity for success in new ways.

I come from a long tradition of strong Pioneer women. My great grandmother came to the west in a covered wagon. My grandmother, Pearl May Means Sturdevant, managed their homestead in the dustbowl of eastern Colorado, on the Kansas border. Her daughter, my mother, Mildred Francis Sturdevant Fitzpatrick (Millie), was born in 1921, one year after the 19th Amendment was ratified. When Millie was a teenager, her parents, believing in equal education for their daughters, moved them to Boulder, Colorado so that she and her siblings could attend the University there. After graduation, Millie showed her Pioneer spirit and became the head statistician for the Texaco Oil Company. She held that position until the end of WWII, when she was asked to step down to make room for a male replacement. She quit in protest and went on to see the world. She became the assistant chief stewardess for United Airlines and ferried the likes of Jimmy Stewart, playing gin rummy with him on her intercontinental flights. She traveled the world as a travel agent, visiting 152 countries and all the continents except Antarctica. She retired from the travel business at age 80. At 99 she still drives her Subaru around Littleton to church and for a game of bridge with her (much younger) friends. She taught me that I could do anything that I set my mind to.

I spent my youth as a competitive figure skater, winning a gold medal at the Southwestern regionals and silver medal at the Midwestern sectional championships (22 states) my junior year of high school. My freshman year at college, my Pioneer heritage drove me to apply and was admitted as part of the first class of women at Claremont Men's College and then was one of two first women accepted to Stanford University's Management Engineering double degree program. Pioneering new roles, I was the first woman industrial engineer on the production floor at Hewlett Packard site in Colorado Springs and for many years was the only woman engineering manager in our manufacturing section. It was there that I felt the impetus to pave the way for the next generation of young women and follow my passion to encourage more girls to pursue careers in STEM. I pivoted and became the Executive Director of Southern Colorado Girls STEM Initiative, a program that has reached nearly 400 girls annually since 2010. In addition, my work at NAPE allows me to impact the path of the next generation of young women to come.

I have twin daughters, Kenna and Kaitlin. Kaitlin's third grade teacher told me to not expect her to attend college because she is dyslexic. Proving that teacher wrong, she went on to be the "soldering goddess" for her high school robotics team and received the first $60,000 scholarship for a Colorado student to study at Worchester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. She is now working as an electrical engineer supporting the factory that builds consoles for Navy ships. Her twin sister went on to care for the sickest newborns as a level IV NICU nurse at the Rocky Mountain hospital for children. I also have two step daughters, each of them having two daughters and one of my (step) granddaughters has three daughters. ALL girls! I hope that the torch has been passed and that my daughters and granddaughters and great granddaughters know that they can be afforded the right to a full and rewarding future because of the women that have come before them. The doors of possibilities were open to us by those strong women, those Pioneers, united to fight that first fight for our right to vote.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick is NAPE's Senior Program Manager. Kathleen also leads the Southern Colorado Girls' STEM Initiative. Prior to NAPE Kathleen was at the Center for STEM Education at the University of Colorado (UCCS), directing the programs that supported the research on STEM retention. She also is an instructor on Entrepreneurship and Innovation at UCCS. Prior to joining academia, Kathleen worked at HP as an engineer and engineering manager. She was part of the first class of women at Claremont McKenna (Men's) College graduating with a BA in management engineering, as well as receiving a BS/MS in industrial engineering from Stanford.

Dr. Lisa Williams is a national consultant on topics of equity and access in public education. She is a founder with Education in Equity Partners (EEP), a consultant with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) as well as her independent company, EMCS. She has provided guidance for school boards, public and private schools as well as school systems and non-profits in the areas of racial equity, gender equity in STEM, leading for equity, school transformation, and culturally responsive practices. Dr. Williams has served as a Subject Matter Expert with the United States Department of Education Department of Career, Technical, and Adult Education division related to equitable access in STEM/CTE. She serves as the board President for Restorative Response Baltimore, an organization that provides guidance and support for Restorative Practices and Community Conferences to decrease violence and create inclusive environments across the Baltimore Area.

Lisa Williams, Ed.D.

Executive Director, Equity and Cultural Proficiency
Baltimore County Public Schools

As a Black woman, my relationship with the anniversary of the 19th amendment is as complicated as is my relationship with my American identity. It is essential that I begin my essay about this occasion with the recognition that most Black women were not able to vote as a result of the passage of the 19th amendment. Jim Crow laws, poll taxes, "citizenship tests" etc., were all mechanisms that effectively nullified access for many Black women across the country but particularly for those living in the south. Women in bodies like mine were afforded access to the vote (in mass) some 40 years later with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Recognition of the intersections of my identity, my Blackness and my woman-ness is how I frame my interpretation of the meaning of this moment. The question of what the next hundred years, the tricentennial anniversary of the 19th amendment, will mean in the life of this country will be determined in large part by what we come to understand and embrace as it relates to the ideas of both "Woman" and "Black." I mean to suggest that when Black women are fully included in the franchise (as we should be clear that efforts to usurp this right are still present), all women will enjoy greater opportunity. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Its important in this celebratory moment that we dwell not only on what credits society but that we solemnly consider that which describes the work yet undone to become "a more perfect union."

The Black women in my life, particularly elders, like my grandmother and my mother were essential to developing my archetype identity as citizen. There were many things that my mother ensured that her daughters would internalize as it related voting. The one that stands out in my many memories in growing up included the consistent engagement in the act of voting. It was the embodiment of resistance for her. As she navigated a world full of exclusions and limits, each opportunity she could pursue that gave her voice, she did with vigor. She would take us with her to vote so often that I remember the excitement that I had voting for the first time on my own at 18. She never missed an election cycle, rain, work, none of it stopped her....and this model, taught me how important this exercise was. There were not long conversations about these things, just determined actions.

Another critical lesson that my mother taught me about what citizenship could look like and mean on the body of a black woman is rooting herself in the legacy of those who have done the work to move society to inclusion as the natural condition. She inserted herself in spaces, in her soft voice, she took up space. I think it is essential that that girls and women use voice and take space so that in the next 100 years, not only will we have had presidents who happen to be women but women who are presidents. The gifts, talents, and insights that women bring to the world make it a better place. It is my hope that societal progress looks like more and more women, all women- trans, women of color, Black women walking boldly into the space where the world is lead anew.

Cordelia Ontiveros, Ph.D.

Professor Emerita
Chemical & Materials Engineering Department
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

In the 100 years since women achieved the right to vote, there have been many social, political and economic changes. Since the first women were elected to the United States Congress one hundred years ago, the number of women serving in Congress has increased substantially, especially during recent years. In 2018, a record number of women were elected to federal and state offices. It takes generations for large structural changes, such as the composition of the U.S. Congress, to occur. Women had limited access to college, law school, and the military, which have been paths into politics. After the passage of Title IX in 1972, some 50 years after the 19th Amendment, women had greater access to higher education and have participated in increasing numbers. Women now represent the majority of college students nationwide. Also, women entered the workforce in greater numbers. Just last year, in the United States, the percentage of women among the college-educated workforce became slightly higher than the percentage of men. In 2016, women comprised more than 50% of law school students for the first time. In the U.S. military, in the last 50 years, both the percentage of women and the percentage of women among officers have grown substantially. Although women's participation has been increasing in these areas, it will take additional time for greater numbers of women to advance into leadership positions.

By the 19th Amendment Tricentennial in 3020, I think that the United States will have elected several women as President. The number of women serving in Congress has increased substantially in recent years, and these women will advance to leadership positions, including President of the United States.

For me, the 19th Amendment and the right for women to vote means that we have a voice. We have a voice to elect representatives who share our priorities. We have a voice for change. We have a voice to advance our country for all members of our society.

My parents were my biggest source of support and inspiration. I received my strength and determination early in life from them. They were true pioneers for their generation. My mother was trained through the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and was a registered nurse. She had a large and positive impact on my life and my career. She worked in hospital critical care and intensive care, taught nursing, and served as a nurse in the Head Start program. She inspired her nursing students and her Head Start students, and she inspired me. My father was a decorated World War II veteran who received a degree in engineering and worked in the space program. Together, they raised me and my siblings with high aspirations, and they encouraged us to reach for the stars and to pursue our dreams. Each of us children completed a college degree, and several of us received advanced degrees.

I loved math since I was young, and in high school I enjoyed chemistry. In college, I pursued chemical engineering, and I stayed with it all the way through graduate school. Now, I love sharing my enthusiasm with the next generation and inspiring young people to pursue their dreams through higher education. At Cal Poly Pomona, I have had the opportunity to develop initiatives for K-12 and postsecondary STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education enhancement. I truly believe in the power of education to transform lives and communities.

In 2013, I co-founded the Cal Poly Pomona College of Engineering Femineer® Program, which serves to inspire and empower K-12 female students to pursue STEM majors and careers. The Femineer® Program is a unique and innovative three-year hands-on curriculum. Year 1 is Creative Robotics to develop programming skills while exploring creativity. Year 2 is Wearable Technology with more advanced programming, sewing with conductive thread, and soldering. Year 3 is Pi Robotics in which participants apply skills to build and control a robot. The Femineer® Program has grown to over 100 schools in six states. More than 3,000 K-12 students have attended the Annual Femineer® Summit. Participants in the Femineer® Program report increased self-confidence and increased interest in pursuing engineering in college and as a career. The Femineer® Program received recognition in 2015 from the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics for increasing educational outcomes and opportunities for female Hispanic K-12 students across the country.

Also at Cal Poly Pomona, I founded the Cal Poly Pomona Women in Engineering (CPP WE) Program, which promotes a close community for female engineering students by connecting them with female faculty and alumnae, holding speaker series, providing mentorship programs and offering a variety of student leadership development opportunities. With just 15% women in the engineering workforce, our economy is missing out on the talent of a large portion of the population. Inclusive teams develop more creative solutions for the many challenges we face. At Cal Poly Pomona, the percentage of females among the entering engineering student population has increased by 60% from Fall 2007 to Fall 2019, from only 13% to 21%. CPP WE builds skills, self-confidence, and a supportive community for all to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

So much has changed in the last 100 years. When my mother was a young girl, almost 100 years ago, she did not dream that she would see her children attend prestigious universities in California and beyond. My father did not dream that he would see a man fly to the moon and that he would play a direct role in that achievement. When I received my Ph.D. in chemical engineering from Princeton University, it was at a time when women in engineering programs were extremely rare. As a female Hispanic with a Ph.D. in chemical engineering, I was part of a very small community. Often, I have been the first and the only. I look forward to the days in the next 100 years when girls and women will experience true freedom and equality and the opportunity to achieve their dreams. I know it is possible.

Dr. Cordelia Ontiveros served as Interim Dean and Associate Dean in the College of Engineering at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona) and is Professor Emerita in the Chemical & Materials Engineering Department. She received her B.S. from Cal Poly Pomona and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Princeton University, all in Chemical Engineering. Dr. Ontiveros has received numerous awards for her transformative leadership. Her accomplishments include establishing the nationally recognized programs Femineer®, for K-12 students, and Cal Poly Pomona Women in Engineering, resulting in a 60% increase in the percentage of women among engineering first time freshmen.

Judea Goins-Andrews is a New Orleans native with a passion for STEM. As an active advocate for diversity in STEM careers for over 15 years, Mrs. Goins-Andrews has had the honor of working as a program director developing initiatives to recruit and retain underrepresented students in engineering and consulting K-12 schools on implementing STEM workforce development programs. Mrs. Goins-Andrews was also a member of the state leadership team for Louisiana's STEM Equity Pipeline pilot with NAPE. Mrs. Goins-Andrews received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering from Louisiana State University and is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration from Texas A&M University.

Judea Goins-Andrews

Diversity in STEM Advocate

My earliest memory of voting is accompanying my parents to the polls in New Orleans. Prior to voting, my parents would obtain the party ballot suggestions from the local newspaper, discuss their decisions and vote identically. The polls were located at our neighborhood elementary school. I enjoyed visiting with my elementary teachers who volunteered at the polls. It was an exciting and fun adventure that I understood was important adult business. I have fond memories of the early voting experiences. However, my most memorable voting experience was the year my parents disagreed on the gubernatorial candidate.

In 1991, the incumbent gubernatorial candidate for Louisiana, Buddy Roemer, switched from the Democratic to Republican party. Governor Roemer was also a vocal opponent of efforts to raise teacher salaries. My mother was an elementary teacher in New Orleans. Pay raises for teachers was an important issue for her and she supported the candidate who promised raises for teachers, Edwin Edwards. My father was a supporter of Buddy Roemer and thought my mother was being unreasonable focusing on teacher raises. The political discussions in our household that year were passionate. For the first time, I saw my mother actively disagreeing with my father on a political matter. My mother's ability to vote in her best interest independent of my father is directly due to the hard work and sacrifices of the women who petitioned for the 19th Amendment and Black suffragist who continued to advocate for voting rights for women of color.

In high school, I was able to further indulge my interest in politics. I became a member of Tri Hi-Y, a social club created by the YMCA to promote self-esteem, leadership skills and civic responsibility in teenagers. The biggest highlight of the school year was preparing for the YMCA Louisiana Youth Legislature, affectionately referred to as LEG. We spent months learning parliamentary procedures, creating bills and voting for local representatives to prepare for this 3-day event. Tri Hi-Y and Hi-Y club members from all over the state would travel to Baton Rouge and take over the Louisiana State Capitol. Members presented bills, participated in committees and voted for statewide representatives. We briefly experienced the life of state legislatures and learned more about the legislative process.

Due to my participation in Tri Hi-Y, I had the opportunity to volunteer for Mary Landrieu's 1996 campaign for the US Senate. I was so excited to participate in the campaign for a woman who I believed represented and would advocate for all Louisianans. Even at the age of 15, I was aware of the unique challenges faced by female candidates for legislative positions. I also understood the importance of representation.

My mother was my first example of the intersectionality of voting concerns for women of color. As a teacher, a profession dominated by women in the United States, my mother had economic interest that differed from my father. My mother was also the primary bread winner for our household. According to a May 2019 article by the Center for American Progress, an independent nonpartisan policy institute, Black mothers are more than twice as likely as white mothers and over 50% more likely than Hispanic mothers to be the primary source of economic support for their families. The wage gap is only one of the important issues that have a greater impact on women of color. Access to low cost and high quality healthcare, the protection of women's reproductive rights, environmental protection and criminal justice reform are additional issues that disproportionately effect women of color. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, and the introduction of the Women's Health Protection Act in 2019 are a few examples of important legislation that has occurred since women received the right to vote.

Since first registering to vote in 2000, I've taken for granted the ability to vote. When I go to my local polling station and present my ID, I have the ability to enter a voting booth and cast my ballot according to my concerns, issues that affect women and people of color. With the current political climate and the important social issues being elevated through ongoing protests, this year's election has increased importance for me. My husband and I discuss politics on a daily basis, read a variety of publications and follow our favorite activists on Twitter. We recently moved to a new state and are experiencing a difficult process to change our voter registration. As a citizen, I am discouraged by the many steps and hurdles I am currently experiencing to vote, including visiting multiple state offices. These challenges highlight the work remaining to ensure every citizen has the ability to easily participate in civic activities. The fearless and unrelenting efforts of the suffragist to pass the 19th Amendment provided the foundation of activism for voting equality. It is the job of all of us to continue this activism to guarantee all citizens, regardless of political affiliation, country of origin, or criminal history, have the ability to vote.

Katherine Wilcox

Executive Director
EnCorps STEM Teachers

Since the beginning of time, women have defied social norms and navigated through systemic barriers intended to limit access to education and the workforce. To me, no one better literally "piloted" her way through the norms and barriers of the times than Amelia Earhart, who was a great inspiration to me. I so admired her pioneering spirit, her outspoken independence and perseverance in pursuit of her goals. As a high school student, I had the opportunity to intern with the FAA in Denver through the recommendation of my math teacher. After the experiences of being on the runway with the engineers and observing their work, solving problems, I knew that I wanted to be an engineer, as well. My high school classmates that joined me at the University of Colorado, School of Engineering did not include one other female, and I was one of five young women in total studying mechanical engineering. 2 ½ years into my pursuits, after feeling fully marginalized, I switched my major to Economics with advanced classes in Econometrics and double-majored 1 ½ years later.

Women's votes can change the balance of power in the United States as they should, with women representing the majority of our population. For too long, men have denied gender equality and in doing so, defeated attempts to create access to education and adequate healthcare and to enact pay equity, and deprived women of rights in our justice system.

Ultimately, the right for women to vote created the mechanism to empower women and communities to affect change in our country. In my opinion, the two most significant changes that have occurred in the last 100 years since women achieved the right to vote have been the economic progress of women as a result of allowing more women to enroll in higher education and enter professional occupations, and the promotion of reproductive rights for women with the increased availability of healthcare services and supplies.

As record numbers of women are being elected into Congress, reflecting a better representation of our country, I believe that the US will enact the Equal Rights Amendment that will ensure equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex. I believe that I will see female President in my lifetime that will also work to make that happen.

Prior to joining EnCorps, Katherine's career included more than 25 years of experience in senior management positions in national corporations and co-founding and leading a computer accessories brand. With an appreciation for education, and an understanding of the importance of high standards, hard work, diversity and challenge, she sought a "life-reimagined" career as an educator by joining EnCorps as a Fellow in 2010. She became Southern California Director in 2013 and has served as EnCorps' Executive Director since 2014.

Annissa Langworthy, Associate Professor of Biology and Equity Consultant, began working with NAPE in 2012. She started as a campus coordinator for the NSF funded OSTEP (Ohio Science and Engineering Talent Expansion Project) to improve admissions and transferability of underrepresented citizens into STEM programs with the Ohio State University. In 2015 she became an Equity Consultant for NAPE travelling to different parts of the country delivering NAPE's Micromessaging, PIPE-STEM, Non Traditional Careers. She co-authored the state wide analysis and best practices for the Oregon Department of Education (2018) and served as an editor for NAPE's AREP tool kit (2016).

Annissa Langworthy

Associate Professor of Biology/Anatomy and Physiology
Stark State College
NAPE Certified Equity Consultant

In the 100 years since the passing and ratification of the 19th amendment, women have been responsible for reshaping the political discourse. Our thoughts, opinions and actions have progressed women's health and women's economic security. We were no longer livestock for sale through marriage, no longer bound to bear children as part of the marriage contract. We became able to live more as the individuals we wanted to be, pursuing education, entering professions previously closed to women. It changed the state's Medicaid requirements to include family planning services and supplies. This action reinforced economic security as woman could have professions that paid a higher wage from the benefit of family planning. Women and couples were able to plan when to have children and could enroll and graduate with degrees because of family planning. The chain reaction of this amendment created the 30% surge in female skilled workers between 1970 and 1990. It allowed for the recognition of women to be visible contributors and vocal parts of society; women were no longer property. The suffrage movement for the 19th Amendment was a way to open the door to more, to a better humanity. It created the opportunity for the tireless feat of Black suffragist who were responsible for connecting the suffrage movement for gender and race. For them gaining voting rights was a way to protect Black and Indigenous Persons of Color (BIPOC), and a way to foster racial equality in American society. Their action paved the way for civil rights and was paramount to the Voter Act of 1965, giving Black Women the right to vote. One modern day positive from their efforts, was the 2008 election saw the highest group population turn out, 65% of Black Women voters, voted. Reading and learning about the 19th Amendment reminds me of a phrase I often hear repeated, "Women's Rights are Human Rights".

In reflecting on the impact of the 19th Amendment on me, oversimplified, it supports my being recognized as an individual. I am able to pursue the things that interest me without needing permission of my father or husband. More importantly I am able to financially support myself in these pursuits. From the amendment I was afforded the opportunity to attend college and graduate schools to obtain multiple degrees. With my education I have enjoyed the fluidity of changing professions and advancing professionally based upon my merits. I have been recognized by professional peers as an important voice to be included in conversations in regard to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. That even though I live my life differently than societal standards, I am a recognized contributor to my community. I am able to support others in my profession, I strive to lift other individuals up, encourage others that there is more for them if they choose to endeavor for it. I am able to personify this because of the amendment and the impact it had on other laws after. The passing of the 19th Amendment reminds me that I am not only what societal and political canons say I am. I am a whole person defined by my own principles. Legally, I can be in existence in America because of the 19th Amendment coming into subsistence.

The first time I voted was in the 1992 presidential election. I remember feeling like I was an adult, like it was a rite of passage. I did it because that is what I was supposed to do as a legally adult citizen. At that time, I was a sheltered 18-year-old, who did not fully comprehend the gravity of what voting meant, how it would impact me. I wasn't aware of what it meant to be a woman voter, or what it took for me to have the right to vote. Before that experience voting was something you did to select the student-body officers who would promote the cool stuff being on our campus. It wasn't until much later as I continued to work hard to put myself through college and graduate school that I began to be more aware of the impact it had on me, and on others. The first time I voted that I felt I had a true understanding and could make a difference was the 2008 presidential election. Having graduated from my last program when the recession hit, having worked in the medical field, and was just beginning my educator profession, I finally understood. I wanted to be a part of moving us forward to better for all of us, not some of us. I wanted to be a part of amplifying voices that were often not heard. With Obama winning the election, and my being a part of that, I believed I was a part of something greater. I began to understand the journey, the risk, the fights all the women before went through, for me to walk in and cast my vote.

With consideration to the individuals who worked for the passing of the 19th Amendment and for Civil Rights, one woman always comes to mind. Audre Lorde. She was a writer, feminist, womanist, librarian and civil rights activist. She was a poet and author whose work focused on confronting and addressing injustices of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and homophobia. Her words are powerful, when I read them, I feel what she is describing, read her poem "Who Said It Was Simple". To me her written works create a female amalgam of women before and after the 19th Amendment; embodying their intellect, their strength, their beauty. When I read her words, I think of all the women before me and with me who said/say, this is what I see, we can do better, and fought/fight to put it into action. To embody this idea, the advancement of what 19th Amendment started , I end with her quote: "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether or not I am afraid."

Gabrielle Sloss

Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship Liaison Education Specialist
Oregon Department of Education

It is no coincidence that we celebrate the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment this year. Although the ratification of the amendment kicked off “the Roaring 20s” shaping American culture; the ‘20s also saw the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, continued segregation and oppression of American Indians and African Americans, and women were not allowed to vote. Furthermore, at the end of the decade a massive economic decline led to the Great Depression.

The start of this new decade, 2020, has an eerily similar kick-off. Although Civil Rights laws in the 1960s saw advancement in human rights, today we have seen the revitalization of oppression against our brothers and sisters of color, continued efforts to control women’s reproductive rights, and the dismantling of humanity through hate of the things we refuse to understand. This fear, loss of security, and individualism shaped the outcome of the 2016 elections leading to further separation between them and us.

I have been privileged most of my life by the color of my skin yet did not recognize the historic significance of the 19th Amendment until I was 35 years of age. As the decades roll on, I am constantly reminded of the fight, advocacy, lobbying, sweat and tears of my fellow sisters linking arms to have our voices matter. This year is no different. During a time where we are trying to stay grounded in humanity while fighting separation by a global pandemic and the continued murders of our sisters and brothers of color by the very system that is supposed to protect them, voting is a way to come and fight together.

Some may have lost hope in our voting system--why not? Our systems are actively fighting to take away our Constitutional Rights. Some do not believe their votes matter---there is no one to fight for me, to hear me. Voting is a way to have your voice heard, to make the world the the place you want it to be for you AND humanity,

“People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.”

— Dorothy Day

Before joining the team in July 2015, Gabby was a manufacturing liaison for Clackamas County aligning secondary and post-secondary CTE manufacturing programs through articulation, developing business and education partnerships, and enhancing programs to meet industry standards. Her current work affords her the opportunity to address equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in building awareness for a diverse workforce and education community.

Gabby Sloss is a Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship Liaison Education Specialist for the Secondary and Post-Secondary Student Transitions team for the Oregon Department of Education’s Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Higher Education Coordinating Commission’s Office of Community College & Workforce Development, and the Bureau of Labor & Industries Apprenticeship and Training Division. Her Master’s in Social Work developed the platform for communication and project planning processes across multiple systems like workforce, education, business and industry, government, mental health, and human services. Gabby is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and moved to Oregon in 2010.

Jill Cook is an assistant director of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), where she developed and oversees the National School Counselor of the Year and Recognized ASCA Model Programs. She is a member of The College Board's Counselor Community Advisory Group; the Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference; the Coalition to Support Grieving Students; the Special Olympics North America National Recognition Program's Certifying Body and the STEM Equity Pipeline. She participated in the American Express Leadership Academy and worked on the revision of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. Jill was a music teacher, school counselor and assistant principal before joining ASCA.

Jill Cook

Assistant Director
American School Counselor Association

The first time I voted I was 19 and in my first year at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My brother took me to the polls where, like other members of my otherwise conservative family, I voted for the Democratic candidates.

1984 was not a good year to be a Democrat in North Carolina.

Ronald Reagan won the state by almost a 2-to-1 margin over Walter Mondale, who had made history by selecting a woman (Geraldine Ferraro) as his running mate. Jesse Helms narrowly defeated Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt to win another term in the U.S. Senate in what was then the most expensive non-presidential race in history.

My Southern Baptist family, most of whom lived in and around the mountains of Boone, was used to being on the short side of the vote. Our grandfather, an illiterate tobacco farmer, had become a New Deal Democrat after Franklin Delano Roosevelt's economic policies helped save our family from potential financial ruin during the Great Depression. After FDR died in 1945, he drove to see the train that carried the former president's body from Georgia to New York.

At the time, my mother was 8 years old. Always a reader, she became the first in the family to graduate from college. She taught high school, got an advanced degree, and then became an assistant professor at Appalachian State University. Socially conservative and uncomfortable about her upbringing, which included a mentally ill brother who underwent a transorbital lobotomy as a teenager, she felt the conflict of being a working woman in the 1970s and 1980s.

My mom never missed an opportunity to vote. She knew the lasting impact that Roosevelt had on her family's history. She knew despite the inner turmoil she felt in her own life that voting for the right candidates and the right causes could make a difference.

One such candidate was her older brother, Glenn Hodges. Uncle Glenn carried the Democratic torch in Watauga County, serving on numerous nonprofit boards and for 19 years as the County Clerk. He was so well regarded for his community service that, several times, he prevented die-hard Republicans from pulling a straight ticket.

This was my life growing up. I knew that education gave me power. Even though I was just one voice and one vote — albeit one often on the losing side in a conservative state — I knew that the rights granted to me by the 19th Amendment gave me the chance to stand for my beliefs.

When my husband and I moved with our family to Northern Virginia in 2001, we decided to live in Lorton, where the District of Columbia's prison was closing after decades of overcrowding. We learned that the then-Occoquan Workhouse, which was part of the complex, housed 72 women suffragists from June to December 1917 who had been arrested for picketing the White House and demanding the right to vote.

Several years after the prison closed, the workhouse was reopened as an arts center. The Lucy Burns Museum, named after one of the leaders of the women's suffrage movement, is scheduled to open post-pandemic in honor of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.

I wish my mother, who died in 2005, was here to visit the museum. I hope my grown daughters, who took classes at the arts center as children, will take a tour once it opens.

As a mother and someone who has devoted my professional life to education, I have encouraged my children to become politically active and to help others who are less fortunate. Our entire family has participated in protests and marches that, sadly, have become more commonplace in today's world as our country has become more divided.

Four years ago, a woman won the popular vote for president, only to be thwarted by an Electoral College process that has served us well but has, like many things, passed it expiration date. This November, 36 years after I voted for the first time, a woman again will be on the ticket for vice president. Someday soon, or at least during my lifetime, I believe a woman will be president.

The only way for that to happen, however, is to be politically active. We must be actively unwilling to fall into the gulf of our current divide.

Danielle Zimecki-Fennimore, Ed.D.

Dean of Academic Compliance
Mid Atlantic Rowan College of South Jersey

It was 1992. I was a freshman at Kean University and desperately trying to find my footing, teetering on the edge of childhood and independence. I was trying to find myself in a sea of new ideas and new experiences, listening to old friends through late night phone calls and forging new relationships at old Jersey diners discussing the plight of the melancholic Gen Xer's decision to move forward with plans.

I can clearly remember being lost, trying to figure out life, when I saw a flyer asking people to volunteer to work for the presidential campaign. I had done some research, watched some of the appearances, but it all seemed gimmicky. Working on a campaign might be good for me, I thought. Let me get out of my comfort zone and try something new. Therefore, I took the flyer and the number and dialed. It was at that moment that I was hooked, and never looked back.

Working for this presidential candidate made me realize the importance of my preparation during my high school days. As I looked back at my United States History II class in my Senior Year of high school, Id realized how much I had enjoyed the discussion we had over learning about the Electoral College and voting rights in the United States of America. As a class, we learned all about the 19th Amendment and the importance of rights for women. It left me both inspired and wanting to know more, to study more. I toyed with the idea of becoming a writer or a history teacher or a lawyer. The class left me exhausted with ideas about how women's suffrage had opened doors for me and made it able for me to become just about, whatever I wanted to be, do whatever I wanted to do. Just from listening to my teacher, Mr. Johnson, and his passion for history, I wanted to vote. I wanted to be part of the political solution and exercise my rights as an American citizen, and a woman, and vote.

It was at that moment that I first had the idea, the notion, that I could make a difference. Voting was it for me. After working for that campaign, I knew what I had to do. I skipped my field hockey practice that cold November day, jumped in my car, and drove the two hours home. I will never forget the look on my parents faces as I walked in the door for dinner, after I had voted. "What are you doing home?" my mother asked, with glee filled in her voice. "I voted," I said, as I sat in my spot at the kitchen table, next to my younger brother, with the largest grin on my face. I was not going to tell them to which side I gave my vote, as this was for me. It was a chance for me to assert my independence, to find my footing, and to realize that I had a voice.

In the years that have past, I have voted in almost every election, missing one due to sickness, but never due to disillusionment at the process. I know what we have gone through as a sex and I want to make sure that I never miss an opportunity to illustrate the importance of one vote, one voice. As of late, the turmoil of our country has made it ever so more important to exercise our rights. We need to honor the women of the past by educating ourselves on the candidates and base our votes on women's rights, equal pay, and the ability to show future generations that we were here, we did show up, we voted. In 1992, an eighteen-year-old girl went to vote in her first election, educated on the politics of the day, honoring the days of women past and the 19th Amendment. In 2020, that same girl, now a forty-six year old woman, will do the same thing, still giddy with the same youthful excitement, and exercise her right to vote.

Dr. Danielle Zimecki has over twenty-five years of experience in various educational settings starting with teaching in both public and private elementary schools, switching to administration, and then higher educational administration. In her spare time, Danielle is mom to two growing young men, 14 and 11, and volunteers to do all of the "boy mom" things that she once loathed, but has grown to love.

Business and Industry Facets

Allison L. Dembeck

Executive Director of Congressional and Public Affairs
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

As a little girl, my mother would take me with her to vote. I never went with my father, only with my mother. It became our tradition. Before walking into my elementary school, which was her local polling place, we would sit in the car while she regaled me with stories about her college days. Protesting the Vietnam War. Late night conversations with friends who would tell my mother that in their home countries one could be shot for protesting, and there were no fair elections. My mother would impress upon me how she learned from those experiences what a privilege she had, acknowledging that maybe she never would truly understand, but hoped she could impress upon me the importance of exercising my right to vote when I was old enough. We would then walk into the school. She would sign in. She would take me into the voting booth and let me pull the heavy metal lever to draw the curtains closed behind us. I longed for the day when I could walk into that booth by myself and become the woman behind the curtain.

I cast my first vote by absentee ballot in the 1996 presidential election because I was away at college. I was surprised none of my suitemates requested ballots because, while I was disappointed to not vote in a polling place, I was excited to be voting in my first election, and a presidential election at that. I haven't missed an opportunity to vote since.

I grew up in New York, one of the more populous states of our country, with its large share of electoral votes. Later, I lived in Virginia, which has a mid-sized number of electoral votes, and most recently, I live in the District of Columbia, which is at the bottom of the list for electors with three electoral votes. I've experienced the electoral college from different perspectives, and my thinking has evolved over time. It ensures that the 11 most populated states in the country—California, Texas, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, and New Jersey—aren't the only ones who decide presidential elections. While these states still have more electors, the electoral college helps create a balance between more populated and less populated states and between more rural and more urban states, giving representation to residents of both. If the electoral college were eliminated, it would be significantly more difficult for residents of states like Wyoming, Vermont, Montana, North and South Dakota or the District of Columbia to see their political views represented.

As I get older, it feels like election season gets more partisan, and I hear friends and family complain they don't feel the candidates represent their views, discouraging them from voting. Our election process is not perfect. The primary process favors extreme candidates from the fringes of both the right and left of the political spectrum, crowding out centralist candidates that may perform better in the general election. However, just because the process isn't perfect doesn't mean that voting isn't important. Every time I vote, I think of my mother and how she made the act of voting a special experience. When I fill out my ballot, I reflect on how hard others fought to ensure I have the right to make my voice heard, to be counted. A recognition I attribute to those early experiences with my mother. She was successful in instilling upon me that voting is a privilege, and I learned not to take it lightly.

Allison L. Dembeck is an executive director of Congressional and Public Affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, focusing on education, labor, and workforce development issues. Before joining the Chamber in September 2012, Dembeck was a Senate Republican Policy Committee, a legislative assistant for Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH), and a manager of government relations for Ceridian Corporation. Dembeck also did two stints with the House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce. She is a former adjunct faculty member of Montgomery College. She has an M.A. from The George Washington University and a B.A. from Binghamton University-State University of New York (SUNY).

A leading authority on leadership development and organizational performance management , Karima is a shrewd adviser to distinguished organizations from DC to Dubai. She is the author of Poised for Excellence: Fundamental Principles of Effective Leadership in the Boardroom and Beyond (Palgrave Macmillan), which launched at the United States Military Academy at West Point. As an extension of her work, she speaks regularly both nationally and internationally and serves in ad advisory capacity on select corporate boards.

Karima Mariama-Arthur, Esq.

Author and CEO, WordSmithRapport

The 19th Amendment represents an important historical milestone—one marked by a profoundly protracted struggle—that gave birth to the unprecedented socio-political ascension of women. The need for legislative intervention, combined with the complex issues surrounding women's suffrage, had much to do with the political climate of the times and illuminated the unambiguous desire to control the socioeconomic status of all women. Not surprisingly, even after this this Amendment was ratified, the states were still motivated to disenfranchise women—particularly those of color—by using violence, intimidation, polling taxes, literacy tests and other vulgar tactics to keep these eager would-be-voters at bay. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 sought to address the obstacles all people of color faced in casting their ballots by providing state oversight, but the structure of that supervision was diminished by the United States Supreme Court in 2013. Unfortunately, the desire to stonewall voting rights for surreptitious gain has persisted into modern-day history; the tactics have only become more sophisticated. Thus, the onus is on the citizenry to continually monitor the integrity of the system and ensure its equitableness for all eligible voters.

The right for women to vote represents a critical sea change in an ever-evolving era of social justice. The concepts of participation and representation are necessarily entangled; each requires the allegiance of the other to be sustainable. Moreover, the impetus driving the evolution of any society, requires an unfettered commitment to embracing a shifting landscape that necessarily includes women and the valuable contributions they bring to the table. Women, by their own engagement and worthy exploits, continue to add sum and substance to the meaningful tapestry that is the global milieu.

I voted for the first time in November 1992, when President Bill Clinton was elected. I was in college and overjoyed to finally be able to participate in the electoral process. I thought, "Today I get to vote my preferences in real time, in a way that matters and that will reverberate around the world." Understanding everything my ancestors went through to make this opportunity available to me, I was bursting with pride to execute. The experience soon became a significant reference point that exemplified how courage and power were intrinsically mine and could be drawn upon whenever needed.

Casting my first ballot also inspired me to reflect on the power of my grandmother's love and how courage, in some instances, had been a struggle for her. Her expectations were high and she encouraged me to embrace all the possibilities that my future could hold. She was one of my fiercest supporters and would frequently say, "Hold your head up high. You can do anything you set your mind to, if you would only believe it. What do you believe for yourself today?" There are few things more comforting than my grandmother's infinite wisdom and warm embrace, except perhaps, her world-class peach cobbler. I am forever grateful for how she challenged me to show up in excellence, which included showing up at the polls.

I would anticipate that by the Tricentennial (circa 3020) the U.S. would have had a woman president in the White House. Women have continued to show up in the most unlikely of places since the beginning of time; the office of president should be no different. I'm encouraged by the fact that history is still being written and I have every reason to believe in the audacity of such a bold manifesto. I only hope that I am here to see and celebrate it!

Sherry Lansing

Motion Picture Icon
Co-Founder, Stand Up To Cancer and CEO,
The Sherry Lansing Foundation

At a very early age, my mother taught me that voting is one of the most sacred trusts we have. As an immigrant from Nazi Germany, she revered and celebrated the freedom of open elections. Therefore, I have always taken voting very seriously. I research all of the candidates' positions; I evaluate all of the propositions; and I take great pride in casting my ballot.

I began voting when I was 21, just after graduating college. Reflecting back on that time, women's professional options were limited; we were generally expected to be teachers or nurses. And, while those are extremely noble careers, today it is heartening to see that women have unlimited opportunities. Slowly but surely, society is becoming gender blind. Nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of politics.

I live in a state where I have been fortunate and honored to vote for three women who have become US Senators: Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer, and Kamala Harris. Now, Senator Harris has been selected as Joe Biden's running mate. She is following in notable footsteps: Geraldine Ferraro, who served as Walter Mondale's Vice Presidential candidate in 1984; Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and Senator Margaret Chase Smith, who ran for the Democratic and Republican Presidential nominations in 1972 and 1964, respectively; and of course Hillary Clinton, who as the Democratic party's Presidential nominee in 2016 won the majority of the popular vote. Each of these extraordinary individuals exemplifies the advances that women in the US have made since the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. I fully expect a woman to be elected President during my lifetime... and I feel a responsibility to do everything possible in my role as a citizen to help make that possible.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, let's take a moment to remember the women who paved the way for its passage: Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Ida Wells Barnett, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and countless others. Every woman in America, no matter her political affiliation, owes an enormous debt of gratitude to these tireless advocates for equality as we prepare to make our voices heard in the upcoming November elections.

During nearly 30 years in the motion picture business, Sherry Lansing was involved in the production, marketing, and distribution of more than 200 films, including Academy Award winners Forrest Gump (1994), Braveheart (1995), and Titanic (1997). In 1980, she became the first woman to head a major film studio when she was appointed President of 20th Century Fox. Between 1992 and 2005, she served as Chairman and CEO of Paramount Pictures. In 2005, Sherry created her nonprofit foundation dedicated to cancer research, health, public education, and encore career opportunities. Among the foundation's initiatives is the EnCorps STEM Teachers Program, founded by Lansing to retrain career-changers with the technical backgrounds to serve as California public school science and math teachers. In addition, Lansing is a co-founder of Stand Up To Cancer, which funds multi-institutional cancer research "Dream Teams." She also serves on the University of California Board of Regents – and on the boards of The Broad Museum, the Carter Center, Encore.org, the W.M. Keck Foundation, the Lasker Foundation, the Pacific Council on International Policy, and the Scripps Research Institute.

Anne L. Howard-Tristani is President of Howard-Tristani International Consulting, working in Government Relations, Public Affairs, International Higher Education, and Cultural Affairs. As an executive, she served two Hispanic-Serving Universities in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, a U.S. Congressional Committee, an international public relations firm, and a non-profit foundation. She was promoted to the U.S. Senior Executive Service and awarded the SES Certificate of Recognition by President Jimmy Carter and received the Department of Commerce Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Congressional Liaison Work. She is currently writing a book about her uncle and mother: Sibling Citizens: The Lives and Legacies of Hubert H. Humphrey and Frances Humphrey Howard.
Mrs. Howard-Tristani earned an M.A. in Political Science from Georgetown University, a B.S. from Boston University, and, is a graduate of the Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, SES Program for State and Local Government. She is married to Dennis Chavez Tristani; they have three adult children.

Anne L. Howard-Tristani

President
Howard-Tristani International Consulting

The 19th Amendment opened the door for women to continue working and fighting for equal rights in all aspects of our lives. Even though we celebrate its Centennial, the struggle for true equality and justice for all women does not end, especially for women of color and those who have been marginalized and denied full access to basic human and civil rights in our nation that guarantee a decent standard of living, adequate nutrition, health care, housing, a living wage, job security, education and training, affordable child-care, women's reproductive rights, security in old age and retirement, and much more.

Major global and national events of the early and mid-twentieth century—World Wars, the Depression, creation of the UN, Declarations of Human Rights, the New Deal work programs and the Fair Employment Practices Act—directly influenced women's rights and especially my family in South Dakota. Hubert H. Humphrey (Jr.), my late uncle, became Mayor of Minneapolis, U.S. Senator from Minnesota and Vice-President of the U.S. He introduced Civil Rights legislation in the Senate every year from 1949 until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The 1964 Act states that employers cannot discriminate against a person based on their race or sex. Before this, employers could choose not to hire a woman because of her sex. In 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, making it illegal to pay women less than men for doing the same jobs.

Many of us grew up under the influence of extraordinary women, including and especially our mothers, and my late mother, Frances Humphrey Howard (FHH) was no exception. Growing up in a family of modest means in rural South Dakota, she went on to earn both a BA and MA from George Washington University. Prior and during WWII, she was fortunate to work for Eleanor Roosevelt (ER), after having been referred to her by the Reverend Worth Tippy "as a little green ear of corn from South Dakota who may ripen and flourish under your leadership!" Among her jobs at the Office of Civilian Defense, my mother was responsible for arranging housing, recreation activities, social and medical services, and finding church affiliations for young women arriving in DC to help with the war effort.

Mrs. Roosevelt's profound influence on my mother's entire professional career continued throughout her life. FHH assisted ER in establishing chapters of the American Association of the United Nations throughout the country to enhance the UN's influence here and abroad, starting and serving as the first Executive Secretary of the UNA of South Dakota. Moving to Maryland in 1956, FHH became the first Executive Director of the UNA of Maryland.

Growing up in a political family, a woman's right to vote was very important. In elementary school, I remember my mother was always involved in campaigning for our Maryland Congressman and Senators. FHH campaigned in every Presidential or Vice-Presidential Campaign of my uncle's beginning in 1960. HHH's political life and campaigns were totally intertwined with our lives. In 1964 when I was 15, I began campaigning across the country when HHH ran for Vice President with Lyndon Johnson. I took time off from my university studies to actively campaign for HHH's Presidential Campaign in 1968. I also campaigned for his brief Presidential bid in 1972.

I always assumed women could run for public office, and that my mother never ran because her brother had already started his political career in 1945. After Uncle Hubert's historic and passionate Civil Rights speech at the 1948 Democratic Convention in Philadelphia, where he urged all of the Delegates to, "... get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of Human Rights", and his subsequent election to the Senate in 1949, I'm sure my mother never thought of running for political office given the responsibilities of raising her family. Looking back, during the 1940's and early 1950's I believe the time was too early for women to be successful in running for national elective office.

I always thought I first voted in 1968 for HHH when he ran for President, but I couldn't because I was only 19. When I went to college in 1967, men my age were being sent to fight in Vietnam but we could not vote. The voting age was not lowered nationally to 18 until 1971 with the passage the 26th Amendment. I cast my first vote in 1972, a year after I graduated from Boston University. Unfortunately, Senator George McGovern, who FHH had first encouraged to run for Congress in the 1950's when we lived in South Dakota, lost the Presidential election in a landslide to Richard Nixon.

My commitment to public service and making a difference in other people's lives was inspired by my mother's career and life-long commitment to public service, profoundly impacting my own career and professional interests. She was a "bridge builder", helping build international understanding, friendships, and cooperation with persons from diverse countries and cultures. She fostered my interests and helped facilitate my early work in the international family planning area and women's reproductive rights by working for an NGO. That led to my later work and contributions in formulating federal legislation and policies as a staff member in Congress and at the Commerce Department, which helped create new jobs as well as build the infrastructure of our country and promote international relations and business development abroad. Through my work in Higher Education in Puerto Rico, I helped to build bridges for new international cooperation and development around the world. My work had a demonstrable impact in advancing the education and future careers of needy and under-served Hispanic students and faculty.

While we are inspired by the courage, passion, energy and ingenuity of the women suffragists of the 20th century, we must continue to fight against structural racism in our country, voter suppression, and limitations on full equal rights for all women in America. It is definitely much easier for women to enter public service and hold elected office today. I believe the electoral college system should be re-examined. I remain optimistic about the future possibility of more than one woman being elected U.S. President, definitely before 3020, and that more women will be elected to public office. The 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment presents an opportunity for us to renew and galvanize our efforts to help achieve greater equality for all women and to begin the hard work that lies ahead.

Debjani Biswas

CEO, Coachieve, LLC

In the hundred years since women were given the right to vote, what significant political social and economic changes have occurred?

Many households now have dual incomes which in turn impact purchasing power, division of household chores, voices. The way we define 'family' has changed. Women have left relationships - where before they might have stayed - because they were not financially independent. We hear more voices across the gender spectrum.

And yet - if we look at economic changes - we still have, in the US - Equal Pay Day in April! This is how long a woman has to work in the following year - in order to earn what the average man would, between January 1st to December 31st in the previous year.

The gender pay gap is measured by monetary value as well as representation. Race and gender intersect, obviously, when we look at gender parity. A Hispanic, Native American, Black, White and Asian female makes, respectively, for every dollar earned by a male (as per the March 2020 NPWF article*) 54, 57, 62, 79 and 90 cents on the dollar. This averages out to 82 cents on the dollar, overall, for women. For comparable work, educational background, and multiple other factors. So, while there have been significant political social and economic changes – we have a long way to go to bridge the gender gap.

What does the 19th Amendment: the right for women to vote - mean to you?

The 'right for women to vote for 100 years' doesn't feel entirely accurate. We have to recognize the dominant narrative: a default as to what 'normal' or 'all' represents. So the fact that white women were given the right to vote a century ago has become the metric by which we measure total female suffrage.

Perhaps it would be good for us to ask another question: How many years has it been since all women have had the right to vote in the United States? So, while the 19th Amendment means a lot to me - I also feel that we need to accurately see all the constituents and perspectives that represent history. Understanding exactly what we are leaving out of the narrative.

I would like to expand the term 'right to vote' to the phrase 'right to a voice'. Power has to be a huge part of the discussion. We seek both power and voice.

Let's examine each of these questions.

Can you listen as if you might be wrong?

What are you completely sure about? Mark Twain said "It ain't what you know for sure that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so". What do you 'know for sure' about the 19th Amendment, suffrage? Was the right to vote 'given' to women? Or was it hard-earned, fought for, sacrificed over? What are the rights that we take for granted in 2020, that would be a huge luxury - or even unheard of – a century ago?

My recommendation? Go back to the history books and revisit them with accounts and narratives from different perspectives. The Native American, African American, Latinx lens. The long time citizen versus the first-generation immigrant. Then reflect on how different the narratives are…

What else might be true?

What early messaging have you received around your right to power and voice? Not just the right to suffrage but the right to say no? The right to demand - in everyday mundane tasks - an equal opinion, value, 'gravitas'?

Start with the hundreds of (sometimes day to day) choices which are made in the household:

- Whose channel of choice is the car radio set to?
- Is the television always tuned to a sports channel - as a default option - even though only one person wants to view this channel?
- Who controls the finances?
- Who decides which side of the family gets to visit the children more often?
- Who determines (where there are two religions in a household) which religion will be practiced?
- Who sets family values around the words and language that is allowable, acceptable and desirable?
- Whose favorite foods (among the adults) are cooked more often than the other?
- Who does more than half of the chores in the household?
- Add your own questions as you become detectives of your power dynamics at home.

You may be aware of some power dynamics – oblivious to others. 50/50 is unrealistic - relationships not being math problems! Just start noticing simple behaviors which give away - or hold on to - power.

Is it true discussion, or a dominant automatic selection? Observe the unconscious power loss/gain in everyday dynamics. After completing the home 'power inventory', repeat at work. With your boss, colleagues, team members. You might be surprised.

If you realized that you are in equitable relationships with well-balanced power dynamics: kudos! If not: self-awareness, skill building and calm assertiveness are critical to reclaiming your voice.

Start small, surround yourself with allies, be open to feedback.

What would you do if you weren't afraid: (of doing the right thing - using peaceful methodologies)?

What if the messaging you indoctrinated in early life was inaccurate? 'Should' females be docile/agreeable/accepting/nice; males strong/tough/uncaring/competitive? Of course I am exaggerating to make the point – but – what tired gender stereotypes must we shatter?

Do you think by the tri-centennial 2120 the US will have a female president?

The answer really lies in your hands. Will your ballot be towards the platform which includes a woman - or the all male ballot? Recognizing that the VP position is an excellent stepping stone to a presidential ballot? Or will you vote for someone who openly leverages racist and sexist dogmas and fear mongering? That is the beauty of democracy – that we get to formulate history if we aren't afraid of speaking up against inequity, starting at the top.

I have deep pride in America - and faith that we can - and will - do the right thing. Now comes the hard work. Continuing on the path our wonderful path breaking sisters laid out, removing boulder after boulder on the path to gender equity.

Won't you join us?

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Jocelyn Riley is a writer and media producer in Madison, Wisconsin. Her company, HerOwnWords.com, focuses on women's history and women in nontraditional careers. Riley has interviewed well over 200 women, ranging from welders, machinists, carpenters, entrepreneurs, and engineers, to quilters, basket-makers, artists, and writers. She has received the Write Women Back Into History Award from the National Women's History Project and the Governor's Pathfinder Award from the State of Wisconsin. She serves on the board of the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity Education Foundation.

Jocelyn Riley

Writer, Media Producer
President, Her Own Words, LLC

My first voting memory is of standing in line in a school gymnasium in Minnesota with my grandmother as she waited to vote in the 1956 presidential election. It was the same gym where I'd stood in a long line of fellow baby boomers a year or two earlier as we waited to get our polio shots. No child wants to get a shot (few adults do, either), but I remember being so terrified of getting polio that I welcomed the chance to be vaccinated. My early youth was filled with two curses: political poison and a widespread and unchecked viral epidemic. By 1956 the fearsome polio epidemic had begun to subside, due to the miraculous new vaccines. And the era of McCarthyism had also begun to recede, although it left a residue of bullying, bitterness, suspicion, and fear. Like much of America, my family's response to McCarthyism was to purchase our first television set, a small green-screened Zenith, during the spring of 1954 so we could watch the Army-McCarthy hearings. It was a fortuitous purchase, because it allowed us to stay inside and watch cartoons and soap operas and sit-coms during a summer when we were restricted from doing more fun things like going to the movies or the beach. In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, the beach was not an option for children until there was certainty that the polio vaccine was going to work. So the school gymnasium held both good and bad memories: the syringe and the faith that now I wouldn't get polio and I could go to the beach and the movies.

Voting was something altogether different. There was nothing tangible about it, no Senate hearings, no syringe, no disease. I asked my grandmother why she was voting. She said that her mother hadn't been able to vote until she was nearly fifty and that voting was her "civic duty." I'm sure my 7-year-old mind was a little hazy on what a civic duty might be, but I can still see how emphatic she was that voting was important. When I later researched the woman suffrage movement for my video "Votes for Women?!," which highlights the arguments both for and against women's right to vote, I was amazed to find out that Kate Douglas Wiggin, author of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, told the U.S. Senate in 1913 why she opposed women voting: "I cannot believe that the ballot is the first or the next or the best thing to work for. I want her to be a good homemaker, a good mother, and a loyal, intelligent, active citizen, but above all to be a helpful, stimulating, inspiring force in the world rather than a useful and influential factor in politics." But Belle Case La Follette offered the Senators a different argument: "It is only when women are given their share of responsibility in the solution of public questions that the affairs of government will be brought into the home for discussion. Not until then will government become a familiar subject, interwoven in the family life and understood as it must be if democracy in its best form is to endure."

The first time I voted was in 1972, when Massachusetts was the only state George McGovern carried. I was newly married and living in Cambridge at the time. I considered myself a forward-thinking feminist who kept her birth name when she married and was the equal of anyone on the planet. (Life has humbled me a little since then, by the way). I vividly remember walking up Broadway Street with my husband to hear presidential candidate Shirley Chisholm speak at Rindge Tech a couple of blocks from our apartment. Chisholm, the first black woman to serve in Congress, was a presidential long shot, but it was so exciting to hear her speak and see that people were listening to her with respect. My grandmother was born in 1901 into a world in which most American women couldn't even vote and now a woman was running for president. There was a good-sized crowd in that old high school and my husband and I agreed that it was just a matter of time before a woman would be on the presidential ballot. Chisholm didn't make it either onto the ballot or into the presidency, but she showed the path forward and she made a great case for herself and for women in general in her 1970 autobiography, Unbought and Unbossed.

I have hope that if we keep casting our ballots and showing our children and grandchildren that the right to vote is a precious privilege, we will make our way toward a more perfect union and a more just and equitable society. My grandmother, who was a single mother of two and then a single grandmother helping to raise three grandchildren, endured many injustices in her personal and professional life. Like millions of American women before and after her, my grandmother did not want to be divorced. When her husband beat her, she tolerated it. But when he began to beat their children, my grandmother left him. All the pious hokum in the world that women were too pure to vote and should be content to be inspirations for men did not help my grandmother support her children when my grandfather turned out to be not only an abuser but a deadbeat as well. Luckily, my grandmother had a profession; she had attended nursing school before her marriage. But she was divorced in the depths of the Depression and she was unable to find a job as a nurse. She worked in a department store for ten years until the economy improved. She often spoke of her early days as a Registered Nurse, when nurses, who were nearly all female, were required to stand when doctors, who were nearly all male, were present.

Those days are mostly gone, but we still see plenty of petty put-downs of female politicians that cast them in a light that seems to preclude positions like the presidency. I thank my late grandmother for her self-respect, her courage, her hard work, and her determination. She sometimes had to defer to men, but she never allowed herself to be a doormat devoid of dignity. Despite her overscheduled life, she was a delegate to a national American Nurses Association convention. Their goal was to make working conditions better for nurses. My grandmother was never a politician in a wider forum. But within the realm open to her as she juggled her many responsibilities, she took her civic rights, her civic duty, her profession, and her family seriously. Voting in every election was her way of demonstrating that she was a fully engaged American citizen.

Irelene P. Ricks, Ph.D.

CEO of the Potomac Group International, Inc.

Voting is more than a simple exercise of our civil liberties, it is a moral imperative that provides citizens with the authority to frame our democratic ideals of freedom and justice with representatives at the local, state, and national level who reflect our core values.

It's always been said that women vote on 'kitchen table' issues such as child care, health care, and employment equity. Although that remains true, women of color have placed new emphasis on criminal and racial justice reforms that impact our families in profoundly different ways than our white counterparts. 'Crimes against humanity' was once the phrase used most often to describe the Jewish holocaust in Europe but it now defines the contemporary plight of African Americans in the U.S. Names like Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and countless others, compel us to vote for enlightened leadership in November 2020 to improve the human condition of all Americans regardless of race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, income, or ability.

The history of African American suffragettes underscores the resilience of African American women. We never retreat from battle, whether it is fighting to secure the vote, pushing for anti-lynching laws, dismantling racial apartheid, or demanding economic security. To honor the history of the women's movement is to cherish guardians, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Dorothy Height, and Fannie Lou Hamer whose famous rhetorical "Ain't I a woman?" will live forever in our minds and hearts. African American women are often asked to choose between being a woman of color or being female – a ridiculous and unnatural choice because those are inseparable parts of a whole. We have earned our places in Congress, state houses, and even the White House – with our nation's first African American First Lady Michelle Obama - and we have achieved these goals as women who are also African American. I believe firmly in the maxim that 'past is prologue' and that the courage, stamina, and brilliance of women who came before us illuminate our present and future torch bearers. Dynamic leaders like Congresswomen Maxine Waters, Karen Bass, and Senator Kamala Harris, to name just a few, prove that voting works and that women who vote are the difference between a government that respects (or merely tolerates) women as full participants in our shared democracy.

I honestly don't recall when I first voted – it was so long ago in 1979 but I was a sophomore at Georgetown University and student volunteer for Senator Kennedy's presidential campaign. I know I voted because I was politically aware and active, and my minor was in Government (the university's name for political science). But I do vividly remember when my daughter voted for the first time. She was a freshman at Howard University in 2005 and she voted in our little precinct in Colmar Manor, MD. My mother and I accompanied her as far as we could inside the polling station and polling staff cheered us on. It was a real community event!

On reflection, upon its passage the 19th Amendment didn't mean quite as much for women of color because black women were intentionally sidelined in the process. However, that has never slowed the political progress of black women who have still managed to push forward in a society that was constructed to marginalize and sublimate them because of skin color. As a result, women of color must battle sex and race inequities that often pit them against nonminority women and men of all races in discussions of power and privilege.

I am convinced that as women begin to see themselves as power brokers in the U.S., they will be able to better leverage their value and demand equity across the board – in the workplace, in civil society, and even in their personal lives where domestic violence continues to be a national issue. I have always argued that the main problem for women's equality is the fact that many women still do not consider themselves to be equal to men. There is a significant and powerful faction of women who continue to ascribe value to sex assignment rather than individual ability. As long as there is confusion regarding 'gender roles' and 'gender stereotypes' there will always be a devaluation of women because the system was structured by men, for men. As they fashioned norms and passed laws, men did not put themselves in positions of powerlessness. That role was assigned to women.

The electoral college had a concept that made sense on paper regarding a decent representation of power based on population. However, Madison warned of the overweening power of a factional minority in Federalist Paper #10 and that is what has been playing out since the Supreme Court decision of Bush v. Gore in 2000. Since its founding our nation has grappled with the question of which ideologies should prevail (conservatism v. liberalism) but we are now gripped with a much darker perspective of what it means to be American and who has the right to enjoy the full privileges of citizenship.

I will end on a note of optimism because I am an optimist by nature. But I have three fundamental questions to ask the new generation of American women voters: (1) What kind of republic do you want to have – one that is inclusive or one with a very narrow definition of citizen; (2) How do you plan to use your vote to select representatives to empower your community to lead more productive lives: and (3) Will you run for office – local, state, national level?

I will always believe that we are stronger together. I am not certain how we will fare in the aftermath of what has become one of the most divisive periods of our history since the Civil War, but I do think that if we adhere to principles of honesty, fairness, and justice we will come out of this a better republic that can last another two hundred years or more.

Irelene Ricks is a native Washingtonian who has worked professionally in the field of postsecondary education, workforce development, and program management for over twenty-five years. She has served as an educator, policy analyst, researcher, and higher education policy advocate for non-profit organizations; universities; Federal agencies; Capitol Hill; and the White House. She has been a member of the Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation board for over a decade. She received her doctoral degree in Political Science from Howard University and undergraduate degree in English and Government from Georgetown University.

Next Gen Facets

Drew E. Mitchell

Operations Associate and DEI Specialist
Urban Teachers

My first year in predominantly white private middle school, the diversity specialist, a Black woman, asked my class, "Who wants to be tolerated?" Not understanding the question, I zealously raised my hand. She later asked, "Who wants to be accepted?" Suspiciously, everyone raised their hands. That day's lesson was about socioeconomic mobility pertaining to the American Melting Pot, our American Dream, and being an African American female by examining the advancements of my families' last three generations. Since pre-kindergarten, I attended a small Montessori school that taught from a global, politically neutral perspective. The little I knew about layered concepts in American History came from the songs in the American History Edition of the animated VHS tape School House Rock.

As one of six Black students out of a total of 200 students at that middle school, I was proud of my family's legacy as community servant leaders. I shared that my father's mother, "Nolie", was the widowed matriarch of their community who worked as a seamstress and a steel worker after migrating to Turners Station, Baltimore from the Antebellum South. I went on to share that my mother's mother taught for 35 years in the State of Pennsylvania's version of Head Start ("Get Set") serving North Philadelphia's most underserved three- and four-years olds. Both grandmothers gave me a thorough understanding of what it meant to be a good American: started from little, worked hard, advanced their families' station in life despite extreme circumstances, and gave back to their neighborhood.

My classmates' family successes included being decorated veterans (which my grandfathers also were), business owners (much like my parents), and Ivy League school graduates. I began to wonder if I again misinterpreted the question. I was certain an American legacy was determined by our participation in the growth and safety of our neighborhood as an extension of our commitment to a livelihood alongside leaders who were our neighbors and family. The instructor assured me the lesson was that every Americans' legacy is reflected by the culture by which their families immigrated. Under this narrative, to be considered a "Good Black American", I'd be expected to measure my family's success by the acquisitions and affiliations acquired by their willingness to disguise their duality as assimilation. Then, palatably describe racialized trauma and inequity as the American hurdle to generational wealth for Black women like me. Meanwhile, my classmates defined their legacies by luxuries and future opportunities already secured via nepotism.

From an early age, my parents were adamant about how exercising one's right to vote was a hard-won privilege that should never be taken for granted. I learned why voting was a solemn, confidential matter from Grandma Nolie. As a sharecropper's daughter under Jim Crow laws in South Carolina, she saw Black women in her hometown killed and tortured for attempting to vote and telling others who they were interested in voting for. Despite the truth of her experience, my grandmother instilled in us that Black women had to vote as a civic duty and a demonstration of one's commitment to service and their community. Her activism was fulfilling these duties without voting. This is the backdrop that aligns my vote with community sustainability, generational wealth, and self-efficacy.

I voted in 2015 during my sophomore year at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA while serving as a political action chair with Temples Black Student Union and tutoring at a North Philly juvenile detention facility with the Petey Greene Foundation. After supporting community members and protesters following Michael Brown's murder and assisting with recovery efforts following the Baltimore City riots, voting was the only form of activism I had yet to exercise. My polling place was a gated public middle school at the epicenter of Temple University's urban campus. On a normal day, the playground in front of the door would be filled with children from our community meetings. That day, the school was lined with protesters and police officers yelling, "Clear the way! Voter's only! Go home or clear the way!" Conflicted by the climate, my surroundings, and homesickness, I remembered my grandmother's mantra that everywhere you go is home. I thought of her as the children and I nodded in silent agreement that I was voting for all of us.

The U.S. will undoubtedly have a woman President in 3020. U.S. Leadership mandates a woman's experience and tenacity to lead from multiple perspectives, negotiate to achieve long-term change, and navigate the ever-changing temperaments and dynamics that hinder equitable public service. The principles of The Constitution are works in progress in regards to social, political, and economic equity as we prioritize diverse representation for a multifaceted national ideology. The 19th Amendment declares a citizen's vote could no longer be denied on account of gender, not considering that a U.S. citizen could be transgendered or intersex.

Toni Morrison said, "The function of freedom is to free someone else," and if you are no longer wracked or in bondage to a person or a way of life, tell your story. Risk freeing someone else." Black cisgender and transwomen's collective power have sustained generations of families and communities despite being omitted from the American narrative. The ingenuity Black women acquire from striving two times as hard to receive half as much money and recognition is the coveted yet unparalleled gift that innovates this country and will create unprecedented outcomes with the right to vote. The right to vote is my reparations, my legacy, and my grandmother's service for which I am esteemed and proud to continue. My vote means participation for generations before and after me, actualizing both of my grandmothers' visions of accepting the honor and responsibility of serving the community. Klansmen thought they instilled my grandmother with fear. They didn't realize they ignited her impenetrable determination for a future of excellence so much so that I'm here writing to you today as one of the many facets on Sojourner Truth and my grandmothers' diamond whose willpower and vote shape the world.

Drew E. Mitchell is a bilingual Baltimorean Operations Manager and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion specialist for Urban Teachers, a non-profit teacher training program. She pilots an Intersectionality based coalition building curriculum that examines the historical transgressions of racism which shape public education in order to prepare culturally competent educators for underserved, multi-ethnic classrooms and communities in Baltimore City. Prior to earning her B.S in Strategic Communications from Morgan State University in 2018, Drew served as an operations liaison and researcher for recovery efforts in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria and human trafficking relief in Rome, Italy.

Antonia Pogacar is a campaign finance professional in Washington, DC. She has spent over a decade in senior fundraising positions with Democratic House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer. Antonia began her career as finance director on a House race in her home district in Northwest Ohio, and subsequently worked on campaigns in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Women's Studies and Italian from Bowling Green State University, completed graduate work in Urban Planning at Georgetown, and earned a Master's of Business Administration from Virginia Wesleyan University.

Antonia Pogacar

National Campaign Finance Travel Director

In her memoir, My Life On The Road, feminist activist, Gloria Steinem said of voting, "We must not only vote but fight to vote. The voting booth really is the one place on earth where the least powerful equal the powerful" The voting booth is the great equalizer. It has empowered subjugated groups in the United States to cast their ballots independent of family, community, employers, government officials, or others who might seek to influence or silence their voices. The privacy of the voting booth guarantees this right for each citizen, and the passage of the 19th Amendment helped realize its power for women.

The women in my family have a strong independent streak, and the importance of civic engagement has been passed down through generations. My great-great-great grandmother journeyed from Ohio to the Kansas as part of an organized effort by abolitionists to populate the territory with anti-slavery settlers. This was amid contentious efforts in Washington to prevent civil war by balancing the numbers of pro- and anti-slavery states admitted to the Union. Her granddaughter, Clara Ellen Warnock was 22 when the 19th Amendment was ratified. Clara instilled in her daughters and granddaughters the importance of voting. It was thanks to Clara's passionate support of Congressman Maurice "Mo" Udall that her granddaughter, my mother, Anesa, cast her first-ever vote for him in the 1976 Democratic Presidential Primary. Both women were inspired by Udall's opposition to the Vietnam War and commitment to the environment. Hardly mainstream for rural Kansas, they cast their votes with the full confidence that while their views might differ from the larger community around them, their voices were no less valuable. Similarly, Anesa recounted a story of her mother, Ruth, confiding that she had voted for John Fitzgerald Kennedy for President in 1960. She made my mother promise not to share that information with the neighbors.

In 2004, I voted for the first time. I voted for John Kerry in the Democratic Presidential Primary in Ohio. His nomination was a foregone conclusion by that stage in the race, but circumstances did not dampen the impact I felt with submitting my ballot. My mother went with me to our polling place, and we did what the women in our family have done since 1920, we exercised our power through our vote. Independent of husbands, fathers, partners, colleagues, we speak our truth in the privacy of the voting booth without fear of repercussion, the great equalizer.

The act of voting is powerful. Despite discouragements that may range throughout society, it puts people of every race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability on an equal plane. Civil rights leader, Congressman John Lewis said, "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have," and his life's work paid testimony to this. We should not take this powerful tool for granted. While the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote, access to this power precarious for many, especially women of color. Our right to vote is only as valuable as our ability to exercise it. So it is not enough to simply show up on Election Day. We must heed the call to action from leaders like Steinem and Lewis, and fight for everyone's right to vote. It is by exercising our own right and ensuring the access of others, that the power of the vote is truly realized for all women.

Blaise Pelote

Second-year Undergraduate Honors student
Xavier University

I have always liked to burn candles. Even as I sit and write, I am surrounded by candles large and small, old and new. I am not really sure where this love for candles emerged from in my younger years, but I have always needed to have candles around me. In their crudest of forms, candles are wax figures that burn to provide light, smell, comfort, and warmth. But to me, candles are so much more; they are a metaphor. Candles symbolize light in a time of darkness, humanity, and exposure. Candles are malleable, yet strong—they may be quickly melted away and just as quickly hardened. My affinity for candles can be attributed to a few things. Firstly, I love the way that candles inundate a space with their addicting, and sometimes overbearing, smells. Secondly, candles have an aura of spirituality and power about them that I find intoxicating. Lastly, candles are a beacon of hope. Their unwavering burn of a flame is significant of the eternal resilience that is embedded within the seams of the American flag.

In June, I tuned into George Floyd's funeral. I watched as George's family and friends poured out memories of him and I cried with them from Prince George's County, Maryland like I had known them my entire life. I listened intently as Rev. Al Sharpton pleaded with my generation to vote and I vowed in that I would never let an election go by without voting. I felt both weak and empowered in that moment. And though I was confused, I knew that I had a say in my future, and that I deserved a say in my future. I voted for the first time during the quarantine. Maybe it was because I was unable to go to the physical polls, or maybe because I was shaken awake by my mother, but voting was not as dramatic and life changing as I had always thought it would be. I knew that I was carrying the weight of my community and those who came before me, but I struggled to feel deeply attached to what I was doing. However, that night, when I turned on the news, I remembered why voting was so important. Voting is the candlelight in a time of darkness. Voting is what keeps hope alive. And as a young, Black woman, voting is in many ways the only way that I will ever feel politically significant. Like candles, women needed a spark to their flame. The Nineteenth Amendment was that spark, and ever since, the power and light of women has burned. Like the aroma of a candle, women have inundated previously uncharted spaces and made them their own. Like the light of a candle, women have given wisdom and guidance and warmth to this country. Like the dark wick sticking up from the melted wax, women have weathered a storm. But our wax holds its shape, our flame burns everlasting. We are unapologetic, we are intelligent and capable, we are the backbone of this country.

As a member of Generation Z, I look into the future with a hopeful eye. Celebrating 100 years since the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment feels oddly personal to me. Though it is easy to look at the women's suffrage movement as a figment of the wandering past, a quick look onto social media reminds us that we are fighting a women's rights—or civil rights—movement every day. I walk ubiquitously in the shadow of many strong-willed Americans who refused to settle for anything less than they deserved. And, as I watch my generation stand up for what they believe in—on either side of the aisle, —I am excited and anxious to see what groundbreaking movements we will make. I am a Black woman. I am a new voter. I am a student and an activist. I am a product of the Nineteenth Amendment and the great leaps that this young nation has made to honor the very women that birthed and nurtured it in its early years; the women who continue to uplift it as it matures and the women who will care for it in its old age.

Blaise Pelote is a second-year Undergraduate student at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans, Louisiana; she is originally from Upper Marlboro, Maryland. She is studying Biology on the Pre-Medical track with minors in Chemistry and Spanish. She is an active member of her university's Foreign Language Club—where she serves as the treasurer—and Xavier's chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success. She is a member of the Xavier Exponential Honors program and also serves as a Community Health Ambassador. She hopes to go on to medical school after finishing at Xavier.

Rachel Clark is a junior supply chain management major at Howard University. On-campus, Rachel serves as President of the Howard University Supply Chain Student Association, as well as Director of the Development and Alumni Relations department within the Howard University Student Association (HUSA). Off-campus, Rachel serves as the CEO and Founder of her nonprofit environmental service organization, Waves of Change; and was recently recognized as a 2020 Young Futurist by The Root Magazine for her sustainability work. This summer, Rachel founded the first National Black Voter Registration Day in the United States in partnership with The Collective PAC.

Rachel Clark

Undergraduate Student
President, Howard University Supply Chain Student Association
Howard University
Founder, National Black Voter Registration Day

I have never been a revolutionary. At Howard University, I study supply chain management within the School of Business and truly have a passion for my major. I like supply chain management because everything is based on logic and efficiency- there is little to no politics in delivery times. If you had asked me six months ago what my dream for my future was, I would have probably told you something along the lines of "becoming a manager within a Fortune 500 company". Only a few months ago, my biggest concerns revolved around stocks, not statistics; and I didn't even know how to vote. While I can see how that all might seem outrageous now, and more than a little fickle, there was a comfort in never taking any risks and playing it safe; after all, the saying "ignorance is bliss" would not be so popular unless it was at least a little true. But the comfort of my safe little world was shattered abruptly and irreparably.

On May 25th, 2020, just a little over two weeks after my twentieth birthday, George Floyd was murdered in cold blood in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When the video of his death emerged, I remember watching as this man who could have been my father was killed slowly, and my heart shattered into a million pieces. In its place, a fire within me emerged; a type of fire I had never felt before. I was enraged. The injustice stole the air from my lungs, and like many others in America, I couldn't breathe under the weight of the tragedy. I remember sitting in horror, unable to tear my eyes from the screen, feeling my chest tighten as tears filled my eyes and my throat constricted. I knew I had to do something, I just didn't know what.

Every single day there were protests across the country after for George Floyd's murder and with each passing day the urge within me to act grew stronger. But I was living at home with my family at the time, and my father and brother were both at high risk for Covid-19, which meant attending the protests was too risky. From my building frustration finally came an idea, if I couldn't go out and protest, I would protest in another way: by using my vote to make a change in America. The only issue was, I had never voted before and didn't know where to begin. I started doing research and learned the process, as well as much of the history behind voting. I learned that African Americans have had some of the lowest voter turnout rates out of any other race for years and that despite this we are consistently some of the most greatly impacted people by the outcomes of elections.

So many of my peers probably felt the same way I did six months ago: content with burying our heads in the sand and wishing for the best; but the time has come for us to wake up and act. What people do not realize is that voting is an act of protest in itself, especially as a woman. In the 100 years since women were given the right to vote, I believe that many of us have forgotten its importance, including myself, but after George Floyd's death, my idea of voting completely shifted. What I once viewed as a boring task better left to my parents, suddenly became the greatest act of revolution for my generation. Voting is the greatest tool to make a change in the United States, and so I decided to found the first-ever National Black Voter Registration Day in America on August 28th, 2020 as a way to encourage it.

National Black Voter Registration Day is more than just a day to learn how to get registered, it is a reminder of the importance of OUR vote. This day alone, is filled with many reminders of why the black community needs to stay engaged in voting. In 1833, slavery was abolished in the United Kingdom. In 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was brutally murdered by three white men, which fueled the flame of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his iconic "I Have A Dream" speech in Washington, D.C. Also in 2005, Hurricane Katrina formed before making landfall in Louisiana, impacting the lives of hundreds of black residents. Finally, in 2008, Barack Obama accepted the Democratic nomination for president, becoming the first black man to win the nomination and bid for Presidency in the United States of America. Encapsulated within the 28th, you see slavery, murder, and natural disasters; but you also see revolutionary calls to action and black political power. So many of these events seem different from one another, but the power of voting impacts them all. Voting decides what happens in history. If we vote for a country that does not have consequences for the murder of black boys, we create an ongoing cycle of Emmett Tills in the future. If we do not vote for a country that encourages black leadership, Barack Obama could be the last black president our country will ever know. As you do more research you see that voting is behind many of the greatest historical events in our country. Voting creates the landscape of our nation, and that landscape influences what can and can't occur.

As a young woman in America, 100 years since the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, voting is just as important now as it was then, if not more. After so much time, it can be easy to take our ability to vote for granted; but as a people, we must remember that the polls are the protest and to be a voting woman in the United States in 2020 is to be a revolutionary. With so many faced with voter suppression and a lack of resources, it is not a task without challenge; but no revolution has ever been easy.

Reflections

The Struggle is Real

Navigating the complexities of social norms and social roles has long been integral to the American historical narrative. The 19th Amendment ushered in a more progressive and equitable era in our nation's history by providing women, who represent approximately half of the population, the right to vote. That right to vote increased the presence of women's voices in the choices that served as the foundation for much of the society we experience today. While providing some women the right to vote through this Amendment, it is important to note that all women, including women of color, did not have the opportunity to use their voice at the ballot box because they were excluded from these changes to our Constitution. Their voice was silenced.

The implication of this was significant as it ignores a key part of the story. This practice perpetuated what Ibram X. Kendia calls the "human hierarchy." We see the reality of this impact, the residual effects, through the disparities among communities of women nationwide as it pertains to employment, socio-economic status, and incarceration.

It is through our right to vote we can impact policy, establish clear procedures and guidelines, as well as welcome elected representatives that reflect our values, beliefs, and philosophies and how our socio-political world operates. Women had a monumental moment in 2018 with over 100 women elected into the house. But, the race hasn't been fair, and the struggle is real.

The challenge is not actualizing the historical and social impact of the Nineteenth Amendment, but rather what the future of freedom for women, including traditionally marginalized people, LGTBQ, uniquely abled individuals, and reducing recidivism will be in light of the exclusion from policy implementation.

Let us actualize for a moment about the current behavior and context of freedom in the state of America. Suppression, oppression, gaps between setbacks and gains have widened and magnified across the country for women, black women, LGTBQ, BIPOC, uniquely abled and marginalized individuals, and reducing recidivism. Racism still hunts and burdens our everyday life. The present state of America is laborious and elicits non-hope for human hierarchy transformation.

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, the recent shooting of Jacob Blake, and others not mentioned in the media like Italia Marie Kelly. Italia Marie Kelly had attended the George Floyd protest in Davenport, Iowa, and shot by a white male, Parker Marlin Belz. How is the struggle not real? Even in the depths of racist acts against black males, the women of color lives and freedom is overshadowed, the struggle is real to change the behavior of America.

The unrelenting protest, DEI supportive statements from white leaders nationwide, corporations, nonprofit and public organizations, and education current momentum behind policy changes offers optimism and a glance into the future of changing the nation's narrative mind and behaviors about race, women, black women, LGTBQ, BIPOC, uniquely abled individuals, and reducing recidivism. However, we can venture to say the mindset of freedom for women of color in America is battling patience, infused with rage, and hope is symbolic of the expression of the struggle is real.

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