Many Facets

America’s Women Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment
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19th Amendment
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 1989, 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 training 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 anytime 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

Foreword
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 NAPEF President Judy D’Amico, Past President, Mary M. Wiberg, treasurer and Public Policy Committee Vice-Chairwoman Dr. Lou Ann Hargrave, Editorial Consultant Nancy Tovesson, 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

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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—indeed, the very direction of our nation—rest in a woman’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.

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 forefront 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. Rosson
Creator of Many Facets
Senior Policy Advisor, National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
Chair & CEO, Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
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<td>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 history, Many Facets pays tribute to the historic accomplishments of multi-generational suffragettes by recognizing America's current and next generation of women change agents.</td>
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Meet the Facets
American women were not really assured the right to vote until the ratification of the 19th amendment, which was a step that had echoed through all levels of society: in Seneca Falls, New York, the recognition of the right of women to vote in favor of them rather than your ancestors” and the Women’s Rights Convention that had taken place much earlier. Women’s voting power, whether local, state or federal, has been the key to pressing for equity.

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

Connie Cordovilla

Women of color have been relegated to low paying jobs and experienced more barriers to education. Most of these gains however have been limited to white women. The fact that there were groups of women opposed to the idea of the vote was not surprising. It would require facing the truth of their real powerless-ness rather than believing that women control some greater mythical power. I would say that the women in my family had the greatest effect on my voting career. My mother told me that it is 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 54 and championed 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 laughed over, patted my hand, and told me that “nice girls” did not go into engineer- ing. I asked him what made him think I was a nice girl and told him to sign me-up to 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 firm 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 legis- lation and candidate stances on rights and equality.

One 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 registra- tion for high school students who will turn 18 before the election day and move-vote 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 Rights 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!

I was 15 years of struggle since Abigail Adams reminded John “I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous and favourable 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 1921. And African American citizens until 1924 and then were subjected to the barriers of poll taxes, the 19th amendment did not remove the obstacles of ethnicity and race. Much the same arguments are made and fought for today and motor-voter automatic registration;

Co-President, Clearinghouse for Women’s Issues

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

Connie Cordovilla

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

Connie serves as the president of US NOW, Inc. and co- president of the Clearinghouse on Women’s Issues. She worked for thirty years at the American Federation of Teachers AFT-USA, working on civil, human and women’s rights issues. Issues of gender equity are a primary concern to her both as a young woman growing up in the late 1960s and early 1970s and as she works with “nice girls doing it wrong” Engineering” and for her two daughters as they choose STEM-related careers. Women voting power, whether local, state or federal, has been the key to pressing for equity.
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 in 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 deemed. 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 Hattie Quinn Brown later asked Paul to support African American women in their efforts to remove legal and other obstacles to voting, Paul declined. “We have 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 votes at the ballot box has allowed African American mayors of major metropolitan areas such 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 1992 and Kamala Harris joined the body in 2017.

Our voices have even seen the selection of Senator Harris as the Vice President 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 translated into many top level 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 in their efforts to remove legal and other obstacles to voting, Paul declined. “We have never stopped African American women, though—it only fuels our efforts.

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 10 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 them 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—their efforts to remove legal and other obstacles to voting. 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 translated into many top level 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.
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. Withアルバニア for her hometown. The memories were too chilling. Memories of segregated schools that limited her educational career to the 6th grade. 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 enroll Black women and men. My mother adored her cousin. When she left Alabama at the age of 18, she only returned two times—one 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 1962.

While she never said it out loud, 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 prevent Black people from voting and how members of our family anointed 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 when she voted. She showed me, by action, how I must never forgo my civic duty.

At 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 about how the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis and infrastructure issues are threatening people’s ability to 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. 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 39% 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 400,000 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 issues are diminished, it negatively impacts a woman’s ability to participate in the workforce, live 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 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.
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 rights 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 school students in three Oklahoma Counties’ public schools; 1977–1979—Vocational Home Economics Teacher, Broken Bow Public Schools.

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’s rights. Currently we depend on Congress’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 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 versa. 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 candidate 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 positions in 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 into 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.

For the first time, women 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 illuminated 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, socialists, working-class, and women of color. But there were also those who did not support this movement. Some women found 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, 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 MY years later!!

While women have made great strides, that “glass ceiling” is in 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. Suppression 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 only with 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 obtain 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 served 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., JD, CAAP
Executive Director
American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity

First, let me commend the countless women whose sacrifice and deter-
mination 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 perspectives 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 conscripted to work as household help for Whites in the South and when they migrated north to cities. 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 1960s, I met a handful of Black women who worked for similar groups. Jennifer Tucker, Vicki Gregory, Cassandra Wilcher and others formed A Black Women’s Network, and we supported each other when we sought positions on boards and com-
nissions. 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 Black 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. Many Black women made it clear that they wanted to be included in Ferraro’s ticket, 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.

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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, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker, Madam C.J. Walker—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 andunderserved 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, encourage 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.

As the International President & CEO of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority 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!”

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

International President & CEO
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®
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 their children with the extended family to go where the work existed. The strength and courage that passed from generation to generation kept her going. Clearly, she was not to be undone.

What could have been an emotional disaster, instead instilled in my mother the independence, strength and resilience 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.

Judith D’Amico retired as Vice President of Partnerships with Project NAPE Education Foundation. She was a public relations executive, serving on multiple boards and commissions in the Greater Sacramento region as well as California statewide. 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.

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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 emblazoned 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 our 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!
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 these 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, 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 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 a 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 Hillary 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 before 2030, we’ll make history and elect a woman as the first president of the United States.

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 scholarships to over 150,000 currently 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.
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 communities, 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 in the confines of 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 the Equal Rights Amendment. Let us also 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
International Centennial President
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Valerie
Hollingsworth Baker
International Centennial President
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Make Your Vote Count

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. Ballot boxes 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 overlook the popular vote. The good news is on July 5, 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!

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. As we vote, let’s channel the wisdom 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 view every obstacle as an opportunity, no matter what. When I think of the people who fought and died for African American’s right to vote, or the written tests and jellybean jars they had to endure to make their voices heard, I feel humble.

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.

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. As we vote, let’s channel the wisdom 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 view every obstacle as an opportunity, no matter what. When I think of the people who fought and died for African American’s right to vote, or the written tests and jellybean jars they had to endure to make their voices heard, I feel humble.

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Women have been running for office at all levels of government since well before they earned the right to vote, learning about the issues on your ballot, participating in a protest, 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 1919.

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 “limit” voters 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.

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.

The ratification of the 26th amendment marks an important event in the women’s suffrage movement, I am reminded that social change takes a long time, includes many events, and requires significant diligence to ensure the ultimate goal. When 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.

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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 public office, or taking on a leadership role in your community. Take the opportunity that our Founding Mothers have given us and use it!
Melanie Campbell
President and CEO
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
Convenor, Black Women’s Roundtable
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 hurdles including—racism, voter suppression, intimidation and even threats to their lives for attempting to exercise their rights to vote, especially in the South.

For instance, in 1965, when Dr. Martin Luther King, who founded an HBCU, Bethune Cookman University in Daytona, Florida (my mom, Janet Campbell and my sister, Cynthia Cloke’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 Black women. Also, I think it is beneficial to note that Black men were afforded the right to vote in 1870, 50 years prior to the 19th Amendment being 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 Act of 1965. The Voting Rights Act was sparked by the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s and 60s—especially “Bloody Sunday” when the late Congresswoman 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 in 2020.

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 the struggle for gender and race to the struggle for voting power. The tenacity and persistence of these women as suffragettes 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 bases of race, color, religion, and national origin. The employment provisions of Title VII of the Act were further to provide equal employment opportunities for women. But all women are still faced with the challenge of earning equal pay. As women, we will still stand together to fight this injustice.

Black women, like Dr. Dorothy L. 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 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 running in 2020.

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As a result, the constitutional essence of voting rights is on the ballot in 2020—especially for Black people, the disabled, students, and poor folks of all races. Women’s rights and justice are on the ballot as well. 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. 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 the struggle for gender and race to the struggle for voting power. The tenacity and persistence of these women as suffragettes 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.

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For Black women, the VRA and other civil rights legislation opened the doors for Black women to run for political office and win. We are now that new political power manifested 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 to run for political office, the highest office in the land, including former U. S. Senator Carol Mosley Braun in 2004 and C. 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 running in 2020.
Liberty and Justice Facets
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 secure 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 2009 and 2013. With more than 28 years of experience in local government, she first entered elected office as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in the Riggs Park neighborhood.
August 24, 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 intertwined with racism and historical narratives tend to minimize the role of Black suffragists in the fight for women’s equality. And while much of that debate is left 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. Surrounded by the backdrop of the suffrage period, 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 sun immediately 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’s 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 our diverse communities; to ensure we are addressing challenges each 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 parent 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. It is in this spirit that we must carry on the struggle for the right to vote and voting rights are central to our democracy. 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.

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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 neighborhood there were many conversations in our household about candidates and positions, parties and platforms. My parentscalmly explained the history of violence and blood connected to this responsibility and the importance of our legacy. As I grew, I came to understand, my neighborhood and church, elected to positions where they advocated for important issues relevant to our community. I saw people who looked like me become 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 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 as 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 related to my daughter the same stories my mother told me about voting, emphasizing her command that we must always vote. So, in every election until she was a teen, we went to the polls together and I saw 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 vote and for 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 our future granddaughter to be able to continue this sacred tradition and duty.

Honorable Melanie Shaw-Geter
Associate Judge
Maryland Court of Special Appeals

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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, she has written a multitude of community-based programming, including: Andrews Drug Court, Re-Entry Court, Trauma Diversion and the Treatment for Mothers of Addicted Neonate 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.
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 ratifica- tion - and while their contributions were overlooked by the law, these 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 unimaginable 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 commit- tees, 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 In- dian-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.
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!

In the 106 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 woman’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 unapologetically 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 knew, 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 were “… didn’t deserve to vote”. So, when I could, I did. I had to vote! (Once I realized how the Electoral College works, I knew that all votes are important. Though I am disappointed as to why and how it was developed, I believe we must make sure our vote 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!
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, and in 2015, the voters of North Carolina elected her to state office, where she served for almost 30 years.

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 when I was just 18, and I felt like I’d accomplished so much by casting that ballot. I know 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 face of the hurdles that were placed in front of those who came before me.

When I arrived at Bennett College in 1982 I was just out of high school in New Jersey when I was just 18, and I felt like I’d accomplished so much by casting that ballot. I know 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 face of the hurdles that were placed in front of those who came before me.

Dr. Adams began her public service by being the first Black woman to be elected to the local school board, followed by city council and the North Carolina General Assembly, where she served for almost 30 years.

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

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

“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!”

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, removing the barriers women and people of color face, while leveling the playing field.

The Senator is the proud daughter of career public servants and the protégé of community leaders who instilled in her a sense of service. Mitchell has dedicated her professional life to ensuring a better life for all children in her native Los Angeles. Mitchell has authored landmark legislation that strengthens California’s anti-poverty and racial equality initiatives. She continues her family legacy of community service and leadership through her advocacy to create the powerful Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee. Mitchell’s groundbreaking success includes the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee. Mitchell also chairs the Senate Select Committee on Social Determinants of Children’s Well-Being and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.
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 settler 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 group 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.
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, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” 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. Recognized 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. While beautifully written and blossoming with opportunity, this bold idea, 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.

The cultivation of the Women’s Suffrage Movement – which included women of all races and ages – was based on the practical ideas 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. XIX). However, like the promises outlined in the Constitution, the amendment required additional work by ordinary people to reach its full potential. Despite the passing of the amendment, the fight for equality did not end. 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 hero’s fight is always in my mind, along with my daughters, to ensure voting is never 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 ensure the promise of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution is realized.

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 embodied 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 Harriet 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 J. Height, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, who was appointed by President Carter to serve on the President’s Commission on the Status of Women. Women who embody the strength of ordinary women, the women of all races and hues – was based on the practical idea of equality.

A promise that is yet to be fulfilled for many.

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 unashamed and unbossed, like my role, the Women’s Congressional Shot Caller. We need in real adversity to be ambitious, like my Brave 9 Vote, Senator Kamala Harris. When we consider how far we have come in the last 100 years, it is easy to doubt, that we are not our ancestor’s wildest dreams.

This year, on August 18, 2020, I celebrated the ratification of the 19th amendment on the 100 year anniversary of the passage 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.

Gardner is the board vice chair of the Maryland Diaper Bank and the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland. 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, Boston State University and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

LáVita Gardner, former congressional staffer, is the owner of The
Elmy Bermejo

The first time I voted was in 1984 for Presidenti nomininates 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 everyone who applies to be a naturalized citizen of the United States goes through a background check? The Immigration officer who processed my application 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 Latinos, to run for office and canvassing 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. I truly honor their sacrifices, 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 loan, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a loan, how to get service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service connected benefits if you are a veteran, how to get a service 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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—the other 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 upends 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 19th 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 democracy come into view.

Our vote is our voice, our muscle and how we create change. We must exercise it, exercise it and protect it, because—while it should be sacrosanct—it can be won or lost. It can be expanded, exercise it and protect it, because—while it should be sacrosanct—it can be expanded, eroded and even put on the table, with the potential to be bargained away.

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 his presidency, particularly the coronavirus pandemic; he’d rather tweet and divide Americans against each other in increasingly vicious ways than solve problems.

Trumps pardoned Susan B. Anthony—for the crime of trying to vote—and 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 us all, 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, Roy 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.

I think about how the 19th Amendment changed our democracy. I think about how, in 1965, 70 years after the 19th Amendment, we had enough to vote for Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey. 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 democracy come into view.

President
American Federation of Teachers

In 2018, we elected a record number of women to the House of Representa tives, 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 his presidency, particularly the coronavirus pandemic; he’d rather tweet and divide Americans against each other in increasingly vicious ways than solve problems.

Trumps pardoned Susan B. Anthony—for the crime of trying to vote—and 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 us all, 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, Roy 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 1981 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.
I lived in the first century of women’s suffrage. My reflections in stanzas
1
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.
There are no hard 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.

Suzanne Elise Walsh is the 19th President of Bennett College, one of the 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 Stuffle Foundation, Casey Institute for Global Good, the Harvard Business, Global Learning Council and the advisory board for Roadtrip Nation.
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 daunting 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 fell on me. 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.
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 19th Amendment 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.

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 NAFTE’s Program and Policy Committee.
In every generation courageous woman stand on the shoulders of others before, 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 impact 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 bold in the face of criticism, and never surrendered to oppressors. Sojourner Truth reminded them as they gathered in her home that “Ain’t I a 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 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 intempetere 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 experience added value to the case 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 generation of all facets of the civil rights movement. She was the only woman on the platform at the March on Washington. She was the 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 choosing the collective power of women which was actualized in the suffrage march in Washington, DC. It is in 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 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. Alexi 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 then 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 hear stories of activism, civil, 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 first time, I reflected on all the things that I had seen growing up in Montgomery and the progress that has 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 leaders, risk-takers, committed, and focused on the goal for the right of women to vote which changed the narrative of this nation and the world.

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“Believing slavery to be a direct violation of the laws of God, and produc- 
tive 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 right 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, humili-
tated, insulted, and fearless comprise the actions of women trailblazers like 
Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, and the 
Grimké sisters, Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké.

It was 1979 when I first learned about the Grimké 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. Neverthe-
less, 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.

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, 
Grimké 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 (Ma 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 joy, access to jobs, housing, healthcare, economi-
cal 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.

Sara and Angela Grimké’s self-worth, the belief of fair treatment to all, 
and despotism of slavery was their legacy in the fight for the abolish-
ment 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 did not believe my voice was heard. I 
rode the bus to San Diego County Registrar’s Office on Monday, May 16, 1987, 
and registered to vote. I felt empowered, liberated because my voice will be 
heard, and believe there is “no impossible”.

Equity Analyst 
California Joint Special Populations Advisory Committee 
NAPE Executive Committee

Tonette Salter
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 1,000 women attended. There were caucuses of Black women, Hispanic women, and more. Caucus founders included Glenna 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; Kitty Dukakis, U.S. Representative; Liz Carpenter, press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson; Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and Frances Leavitt, 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 1977, 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 her endorsement. Farenthold ran for Governor of Texas twice. In response to being questioned constantly about her qualifications, despite a law degree from Harvard Law School, Farenthold commented that the job description did not require typing, the recruiter said: “You don’t understand, we only hire women to type.”

In 1978, I ran for Texas State Senate. I was the first woman to run for Texas Senate in more than a century. 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 IX 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 sought 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 used 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 assure 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 practices and procedures that limited voting by Black people and other targeted groups by requiring “proof” of language and literacy tests. The act made it illegal to use discriminatory practices to prevent qualified citizens from voting. The Voting Rights Act had a profound impact on increasing voter turnout. Voter registration rates increased nationwide, particularly among women and Black voters.

Almost 50 years later, while women continue to make great strides toward equity, the challenges to our rights continue. In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court did away with the Voting Rights Act, the cornerstone of the civil rights movement. With the Voting Rights Act removed, states continue to implement discriminatory voter suppression laws.

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In the 2018 midterm elections, over 122 million women voted. This is a call to action for each of us who believes in equal rights and basic human dignity.

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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 focused 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 won that election. His support of civil rights was, of course, the driving force behind their enthusiasm.

I had only been seven years old 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 lives. They were architects for a better and prosperous life. They took the initiative, saved money, bought land, and voted. I am the beneficiary.

The fruits of political participation resulted in improvements in 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. I saw them line up at the polls early in the morning of the election, we approached the first voting station just before dawn. I saw the silhouette of a space of people stretched across the bottom.

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 be, albeit small, an officially prescribed role in a democratic election is a memory I will always remember. 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 did 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 them.

Today, 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.
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 our 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 in between, 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-middle-class suburban neighborhood there was a clear under-voted. This is how I learned to vote, along party lines. In our household 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 candidates.

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 amusement 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 chance 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 intensity.

I have read the reports about low voter turnout. I look at the system that surrounds people of all kinds, and I see a political landscape that is not inclusive of all our lives. To address the needs of people with disabilities in office. To address the needs of 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 women 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.
The right to vote has a tri-fold meaning to me, which evokes those 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 as making invisible those that contrast my humanity. Representative Maxine Waters made famous the invocation, “Reclaiming My Time.” This phrase, a House political procedural rule, was used as a tool of intervention that suggests, “You are wasting [my] time on unrelated irrelevant laundry list dialogue.” (Holliman et al., 2018, p.15). Our voting advocacy is powerful in silencing political movements that are unrelated and irrelevant weapons aimed to disentangle 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 able to be an 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 access that move us for humanity. Voting safeguards my existence as a competent and thought-provoking individual with a democratic process that promotes 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 Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for president (Farr, 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). Withnull elevation of Racial Diversity, it was jubilation for women’s legislation which mitigated the unjustified wrongs of our then society. This legislation was indeed a huge win, but not for Sorohas Who were Black, Woman like me.

The 19th Amendment Was a Huge Win, But Not for Sorohas Who were Black, Woman like me.

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

I was a Beautiful Black Woman, Celebrating a Victory for Sisters Who Were Not My Sorohas 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 Gender-Based 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 Thin-Fills Identity.

As a Black Woman, I Am A Beautiful Black Woman, a P-12 Practitioner and Leader in the area of Mathematics, STEM, and Gifted & Talented Education. I bring 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 and a P-12 Practitioner and Leader in the area of Mathematics, STEM, and Gifted & Talented Education. She and a P-12 Practitioner and Leader in the area of Mathematics, STEM, and Gifted & Talented Education.

Dr. Natalie Parker-Holliman is a lead author 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 the areas of mathematics education, leadership, educational equity, and global STEM collaborations.

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

Three-Fifths Identity
Brings Up a Narrative of my Previous Thin-Fills Identity

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and new roles, finding increasing opportunity for success in new ways.

women to vote, and cracked open the door for women to pioneer new fields.

S. Constitution had been ratified by 35 other states. This opened the door for

Colorado voted to ratify it. By August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.

vote with the passing of the Wyoming suffrage Act in 1869, Colorado became

of Wyoming, to our north, was the first territory to grant women the right to

Kathleen Fitzpatrick
Senior Program Manager
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson, Pioneers! 0 pioneers!

All the past we leave behind, We debase upon a newer mightier world, vowed world,

Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march, Pioneers! 0 pioneers!

~Walt Whitman

Pioneers! O pioneers!...

Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,

O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!

O you daughters of the West!

Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,

Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,

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

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

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 (2 states) my junior year of high school. My freshman year at college, my Pioneer heritage drew me to apply and was admitted as part of the first class of women accepted to Stanford University’s Management Engineer- ing double degree program. Pioneering new roles, I was the first woman in-

I come from a long tradition of strong Pioneer women. My great grand-

~Walt Whitman

Pioneers, united to fight that first fight for our right to vote.

The doors of possibilities were open to us by those strong women, those

and rewarding future because of the women that have come before them.

and great granddaughters know that they can be afforded the right to a full

that builds consoles for Navy ships. Her twin sister went on to care for the

Colorado student to study at Wochester Polytechnic Institute in Massachu-

sers. 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

reached nearly 400 girls annually since 2010. In addition, my work at NAPE

Director of Southern Colorado Girls’ STEM Initiative, a program that has

more girls to pursue careers in STEM. I pivoted and became the Executive

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

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

receiving a BS/MS in industrial engineering from Stanford.

I graduated with a BA in management engineering, as well as

first class of women at Claremont McKenna (Men’s) College.

as an engineer and engineering manager. She was part of the

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 $40,000 scholarship for a

Colorado student to study at Wochester Polytechnic Institute in Massachu-

Kathleen Fitzpatrick is NAPE’s Senior Program Manager. Kathleen also leads the Southern Colorado Girls’ STEMI 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.

Kathleen also leads the Southern Colorado Girls’ STEMI 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.
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.” It’s 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 to voting. The one that stands out to me is my 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.

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 Insight President for Restorative-Responsive Schools, an organization that provides guidance and support for Restorative Practices and Community Conferences to decrease violence and create inclusive environments across the Baltimore Area.
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 myths into politics. Prior to 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 2020, 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 on in my life. 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 career. She worked in hospital critical care and intensive care, taught nursing, and served as a nurse in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps program. She inspired her nursing students and her heart�示 students, and she inspired me. My father was a decorated engineer who obtained 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 studied 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 women in 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 serve over 100 schools in six states. More than 3,500 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 2014 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 alumni, 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 large 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.
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 identical. 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. I’m very 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 H-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. We briefly experienced the life of state legislators and learned more about the legislative process in the Louisiana State Capitol. Members presented bills, participated in committee and voted for statewide representatives. We briefly experienced the life of state legislators and learned more about the legislative process. Tri H-Y and H-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 committee and voted for statewide representatives. We briefly experienced the life of state legislators and learned more about the legislative process. Due to my participation in Tri H-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 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 affect women of color.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Voting Rights Act of 1983, 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 suffragists from the 19th Amendment provided the foundation for activities 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.

Judea Goins-Andrews is a New Orleans native with a passion for STEM. She has a degree in environmental engineering and is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration from Texas A&M University and is a member of the state leadership team for Louisiana’s STEM Equity Pipeline pilot with NSPE. Mrs. Goins-Andrews is the Diversity in STEM Advocate for Louisiana State University and is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration from Texas A&M University.
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 unspoken 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 experience 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. 1½ years into my pursuits, after feeling fully marginalized, I switched my major to Economics with advanced classes in Econometrics and double-majored 1½ 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.
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 economic security. Women were no longer burdened for the sake of family planning, 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 enhanced economic security as women could have pregnancies 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 no longer property. The suffrage movement for the 19th Amendment was a way to open the door more, to a better humanity. It created the opportunity for the timelines 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 repeat, “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 gain a better understanding of society. The establishment of Women’s Rights and 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, reading her poem “Who Said It Was Simple”. To me her written works embody their intellect, their strength, their beauty. When I read her words, I think of all the women before me and with me who said, “this is what I am, I have 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.

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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 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 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 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.

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 too was once one voice and one vote — albeit one 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 71 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 one day.

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 its 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.
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.

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 living 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, I realized how much I had enjoyed the discussions 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 13th 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 what, 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.

Dr. Danielle Zimecki has over twenty-five years of experience in various educational settings, starting in both public and private elementary schools, switching to administration, and then later to educational administration. In her spare time, Danielle is known for 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
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. Protest- ing 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 these 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 roommates 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 states with those 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 centrist 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 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
Executive Director of Congressional and Public Affairs
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
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 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 intrinsicallymine 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 2020) 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!
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. Simply 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, Ada Wells Burnett, 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.
Anne L. Howard-Tristani is President of Howard-Tristani International Consulting, working in Corporate and Government Affairs, with a focus on Women's Development, Social, 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 Secretary of Commerce, a U.S. Congressional Committee, an international public relations firm, and the U.S. Senior Executive Service. 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.

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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 our mothers, and especially our mothers, and 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 study 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 of the American Association of the United Nations throughout the country to help with the war effort. 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 community planning aid and women’s reproductive rights by working for an NGO.

Looking back, during the 1940’s and early 1950’s 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 of 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 1950s when we lived in South Dakota, lost the Presidential elections to a landslide 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. I was a “bridge builder”, helping build international understanding, friendships, and cooperation with persons from diverse countries and cultures.

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 Robert’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 our family. Looking back, during the 1940s and early 1950s I believe the time was too early for women to be successful in running for national office.

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 study 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 of the American Association of the United Nations throughout the country to help with the war effort. 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 community planning aid and women’s reproductive rights by working for an NGO.

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Anne L. Howard-Tristani is President of Howard-Tristani International Consulting, working in Corporate and Government Affairs, with a focus on Women’s Development, Social, 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 Secretary of Commerce, a U.S. Congressional Committee, an international public relations firm, and the U.S. Senior Executive Service. 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.

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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 hear, in the US - Equal Pay Day April 20. 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 Diverse, Native American, Black, White and Asian female makes, respectively, for every dollar earned by a male (as per the March 2020 SFRIP article) 54, 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 represent 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 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 learning out of the narrative.

I would like to expand the term 'right to vote' to the phrase 'right to a voice'.

What early messages have you received around your right to power and voice? How did you learn to think beyond the obvious: do you have the courage to challenge the status quo?

What early messaging have you received around your right to power and voice? What did you hear in your formative years that shaped your relationship with power?

We have a unique perspective on gender at Coachieve: we define gender as a spectrum. The 'right for women to vote for 100 years' doesn't feel entirely accurate. We represent the dominant narrative: a default as to what 'normal' or 'all' represents.
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 1952 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 withaye concern: political partisan and a widespread and unchecked viral epidemic. By 1956 the fearsome polio epidemic had begun to subside, due to the miraculous new vaccine. And the end of McCarthyism had also begun to resound, 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 Smith, during the spring of 1954 so we could watch the Army-McCarthy hearings. It was a for- tune purchase, because it allowed us to play cards 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 gymnasiu m 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 syringes, no disease. I asked my grand- mother 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 women 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, intelli- gent, active citizen, but above all to be a helpful, stimulating, inspiring work for. I want her to be a good homemaker, a good mother, and a loyal, intelli- gent, active citizen, but above all to be a helpful, stimulating, inspiring work for. I want her to be a good homemaker, a good mother, and a loyal, intelli- gent, active citizen, but above all to be a helpful, stimulating, inspiring work for. 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Irelene P. Ricks, Ph.D.

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.

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 subordinate them because of skin color. As a result, women of color must battle sex and race inequities that often pit them against minority 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 values to sex assignment rather than individual ability. As long as there is confusion regarding gender roles and gender stereotypes, there will always be a degradation 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 #41 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 vs. 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 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 values to sex assignment rather than individual ability. As long as there is confusion regarding gender roles and gender stereotypes, there will always be a degradation 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.

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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 has also held Federal Keys in Political Science from Howard University, and undergraduate degrees in English and Government from Georgetown University.

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Next Gen Facets
Drew E. Mitchell

My first year in predominantly white middle school, the diversity specialist, a Black woman, asked me clear, “Who wants to be acceptable?” Not understanding the question, I naively raised my hand. She later asked, “Who wants to be accepted?” Surprisingly, 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 family’s last three generations. Since pre-kindergarten, I attended a small Montessori school that taught from a global, politically neutral perspective. The little house 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 railroad mammy of their community who worked as a seamstress and a shop worker after migrating to Turner’s 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 under-served three- and four-year 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 neighborhoods.

My classroom’s family successes included being decorated veterans (which my grandfathers also were), business owners (much like my parents), and by Leagues school graduate. I began to wonder if I again misinterpreted the narrative, to be considered a “Good Black American”, I’d be expected to disguise their duality as assimilation. Then, palatably understood my grandmother’s mantra that everywhere you go is home. I thought of her and the children and I nodded in silent agreement that I was still voting for all of us.

The U.S. will undoubtedly have a woman President in 2020. 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 work 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 U.S. citizens 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.” Blackصيرگنдер 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 recognition is the coveted yet unparalleled gift that innovates this country and will create unexpected outcomes with the right to vote. The right to vote is my reparations, my legacy, and my grandmothers’ service for which I am humbled and proud to continue. My vote means participation for a multifaceted national ideology. The 19th Amendment declares a woman’s vote could no longer be denied on account of gender, not considering that U.S. citizens could be transgendered or intersex.

As a child, I knew the importance of a vote. I was a 4th grader voting for President. I learned that a U.S. citizen could be disqualified or intersex.

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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.

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-grandmother migrated 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 forlorn conclusion by that stage in the race, but circumstances did not diminish 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.

Antonia Pogacar
National Campaign Finance Travel Director

Antonia Pogacar is a campaign finance professional in Washington, DC. She has spent 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.
I have always liked to burn candles. Even as I sit and write, I am surround
ed 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, humility, 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 insulate a space with their adorning, and sometimes overwhelming,
smells. Secondly, candles have an aura of spirituality and power about them
that I find intoxicating. Lastly, candles are a beacon of hope. Their answer-
ning 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
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 casting 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 insinuated 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.
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. Beyond her commitments 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 organization, WAVES of Change, greatly impacted people by the outcomes of elections.

As a young woman in America, 100 years since the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, 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 became 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 need 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 disaster; 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.

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 dreams 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 concern revolved around exams, not statistics, and I didn’t even know how to vote. While I can see how all that 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 irrevocably.

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. As a young woman, 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; 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.
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. Kendi 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, LGBTQ, 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 content 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, LGBTQ, BIPOC, uniquely abled and marginalized individuals, and reducing recidivism. Racism still hurts and hinders 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 Des Moines, Iowa, and shot by a white male, Parker Martin 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 glans into the future of changing the nation’s narrative mind and behaviors about race, women, black women, LGBTQ, BIPOC, uniquely abled individuals, and reducing racism. However, we can venture to say the mindset of freedom for women of color in America is battles with patience, infused with rage, and hope is symbolic of the expression of the struggle is real.

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