



WOMANKIND'S JOURNEY TO UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

by *Shannon Dent*

In Hillary Clinton's concession speech, she said, "to all the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams."⁽¹⁾ Hillary ran for President in 2016, almost securing the title by winning the popular vote, but losing the electoral race. Women have gone from solely being homemakers to holding high positions in office today. There is still a fight for equality, however far women have come. That is, of course, in terms of success, not in society's overall opinion of women. That change has yet to come, and the question arises whether or not the quest of achieving political *and* social equality is a priority today.

The fight for suffrage began in the 1700s. Women began voicing their opinions in books (e.g., *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft), articles, and at conventions nationwide (e.g., Seneca Falls, 1848).⁽²⁾ They were nervous and excited⁽³⁾ about the new change, not knowing that it would take more than seventy years to complete.⁽⁴⁾ There would be hard work, discrimination and humiliation, resulting in the "success" of women's suffrage, where less than 50 percent of women voted in the first election of eligibility⁽⁵⁾

Susan B. Anthony led and helped women's rights by starting the Women's New York State Temperance Society. The objectives of this society were to end alcohol abuse and also give women autonomy.⁽⁶⁾ This spurred change

¹ Clinton, Hillary. "Hillary Clinton's Concession Speech (full Text)." CNN. Accessed December 07, 2016. <<http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/09/politics/hillary-clinton-concession-speech/>>.

² Gale. "Women's Rights." Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection. 2014. Accessed December 10, 2016. <link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/PC3021900182/OVIC?u=cant48040&xid=751747ae>.

³ Dismore, David. "August 28, 1920: Whistles and Bells Sound at Celebrations Across the Nation for Suffrage." Feminist Majority Foundation Blog. August 28, 2014. Accessed December 06, 2016. <<https://feminist.org/blog/index.php/2014/08/28/august-28-1920-whistles-and-bells-sound-at-celebrations-across-the-nation-for-suffrage/>>.

⁴ "The Women's Rights Movement, 1848–1920 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives." The Women's Rights Movement, 1848–1920 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. Accessed March 04, 2017. <<http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/No-Lady/Womens-Rights/>>.

⁵ "The Woman's Vote in National Elections." In *Editorial Research Reports 1927*, vol. II, 413. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1927. <<http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre1927053100>>.

⁶ Unknown. "Susan B. Anthony." Biography.com. 2015. Accessed December 10, 2016. <<http://www.biography.com/people/susan-b-anthony-194905#>>.

in the workforce by allowing women to have a voice and be known as part of a reputable organization. Ms. Anthony devoted her entire life to creating petitions that aided women's suffrage and the suffrage movement.⁽⁷⁾ Yet, after many years of dedicated advocacy, the Nineteenth Amendment was not passed until after her death. She told her friend, "To think I have had more than 60 years of hard struggle for a little liberty, and then to die without it seems so cruel."⁽⁸⁾

In 1887, women in Argonia, Kansas, formed an organization called the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.⁽⁹⁾ This union protested alcohol and advocated for women's rights in front of saloons. Not only were the women not taken seriously, but they were also "often insulted and harassed, accused of being lesbians and doused with water or beer."⁽¹⁰⁾

The day before President Wilson's inauguration in 1913, two suffragists named Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organized a march.⁽¹¹⁾ This march was secured with a permit and created to emphasize women's unhappiness with political inequality.⁽¹²⁾ Regardless, when the 5,000 women marched down Pennsylvania Avenue, they were assaulted. "Attacks ranged from spitting and throwing of objects to all-out physical assaults."⁽¹³⁾ Lucy Burns went through a lot during her ten years of advocacy; she was even sent to jail. Her journey had been so rough that she decided upon resignation and gave up her dream of suffrage.⁽¹⁴⁾

In 1917, women from all over the nation picketed the White House advocating for women's suffrage.⁽¹⁵⁾ The protest was a diverse crowd of women from more than 26 different states, and yet a group of police officers from Washington prevailed.⁽¹⁶⁾ They arrested 218 women, 100 of whom went to jail for standing up for what they believed.⁽¹⁷⁾

Suffrage took more than seventy years to attain, because advocates struggled to change the conventional thinking of the men who held the power to pass the amendment. Even many women disagreed with the movement. In fact, "in 1895 the women of Massachusetts were asked by the state whether they wished the suffrage. Of the 575,000 voting women in the state, only

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Troy, Gil. "How a Sexist Prank Elected America's First Female Mayor." *The Daily Beast*. June 12, 2016. Accessed December 10, 2016. <<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/06/12/how-a-sexist-prank-elected-america-s-first-female-mayor.html>>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gibson, Megan. "A Brief History of Women's Protests." *Time*. 2011. Accessed December 09, 2016. <http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2088114_2087975_2087964,00.html>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey Berry, Jerry Goldman, and Deborah Schildkraut. *The Challenge of Democracy; American Government in Global Politics*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

22,204 cared for it.”⁽¹⁸⁾ Many women took suffrage for granted and were not easily persuaded to appreciate it. This discouraged many suffragists, as the unity of women was becoming polarized.

Finally, on August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed and the dream achieved. Cities nationwide rang bells loud and proud commemorating the hard work that women had put in to see this happen.⁽¹⁹⁾ This amendment proved to be the epitome of womankind's success in America, because it had been the underlying goal of women fighting for equality for so many years. When the Presidential election took place later that year, it was a time of celebration, because women could voice their opinions and feel represented. It was the turning point in women's history, and was thought to be the finalization of women's equality.

The right to vote, which some women spent their lives working for, resulted in only 36-40 percent of women voting in 1920.⁽²⁰⁾ By 2012, it had risen slightly to 63.7 percent.⁽²¹⁾ Suffrage did not bring everyone to the ballots. It did not even set the pace for women's equality, because many women did not want anything to do with fighting for women's rights, let alone taking advantage of the right to vote.

When women entered the workforce in the 1900s, court cases of sexual discrimination and harassment arose, solidifying the idea that men and women could never be equal in American society. In 1975, “women earned 62 percent of what men earned; by 2008 that figure had risen to 77 percent”.⁽²²⁾ On top of that, women running for higher offices were seen as a joke.⁽²³⁾ When Shirley Chisholm ran for congresswoman of New York, she sought a Democratic presidential nomination. Men and women of New York responded with, “I think being president is a man's job” and “I don't think [women are] as levelheaded yet as the men are.”⁽²⁴⁾ Many ridiculed and laughed at her.⁽²⁵⁾

¹⁸ Abbott, Lyman. “Why Women Don't Want to Vote.” *The Atlantic*. Accessed December 08, 2016. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1903/09/why-women-do-not-wish-the-suffrage/306616/>>.

¹⁹ Dismore, David. “August 28, 1920: Whistles and Bells Sound at Celebrations Across the Nation for Suffrage,” *supra* note 3.

²⁰ Crocco, Margaret Smith, and Della Barr Brooks. “The Nineteenth Amendment: Reform or Revolution?” Accessed December 10, 2016. <<http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/5905/590505.html>>.

²¹ Rayne, Sierra. “The GOP Should Be Worried about Its Declining Share of the Male Vote.” *American Thinker*. May 16, 2015. Accessed December 10, 2016. <http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2015/05/the_gop_should_be_worried_about_its_declining_share_of_the_male_vote.html>.

²² Gale. “Women's Rights,” *supra* note 2.

²³ Maddow, Rachel. “When a Woman Presidential Candidate Was a Joke (Video).” *Gay News, LGBT Rights, Politics, Entertainment*. 2016. Accessed December 10, 2016. <<http://www.advocate.com/politics/2016/6/09/rachel-maddow-when-woman-presidential-candidate-was-joke-video>>.

²⁴ Unknown “Rachel Maddow on When a Woman Presidential Candidate Was a Joke (Video).” *ADVOCATE*. June 09, 2016. Accessed March 28, 2017. <<https://www.advocate.com/politics/2016/6/09/rachel-maddow-when-woman-presidential-candidate-was-joke-video>>.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

During Hillary's campaign for presidency, on October 21, 2016, "#repealthe19th" began to trend on men and women's Twitter accounts. The hashtag stemmed from an article that demonstrated who would win the election if only men voted or only women voted.⁽²⁶⁾ The results were Trump being elected by the men and Hillary by the women.⁽²⁷⁾ The article went viral as many people voiced their opinions of the Nineteenth Amendment. One woman tweeted, "I would be willing to give up my vote to see [the election of Donald Trump] happen."⁽²⁸⁾

The right to vote, which was once an honor, has seemingly degraded itself into being nothing more than a common protocol that so many women take for granted. The amendment was seen by many as an award to those who fought for women's equality. To ask for its repeal is to insult the dream of millions. It is an insult to how hard so many women worldwide have worked from past to present for political equality.

Women have achieved suffrage and are represented in the workforce, yet the voting turnout is low and women still do not receive equal pay. In fact, a study shows that in 2015, the United States median annual earnings for men was \$51,212, while women's was \$40,742.⁽²⁹⁾ Even today, social and political equality seem unattainable, and many women find politics and voting to be a man's domain.⁽³⁰⁾ Even though Hillary Clinton and almost fifty other women have run for president, not one has reached the highest form of political office.⁽³¹⁾ The American government is a representative democracy, yet a president of their own gender has never once represented women.

Looking at the strenuous journey of going from pre-suffrage to holding high political positions, women have been hard at work for years. These women have taken up the hardest task of all: to change someone's mind. They worked to change women's role in society. But not once has a woman become president and not once has every woman voted. Advocates for women's equality face this problem every day. Equality can only come when every man and woman, every race and religion, has equality of opportunity.

²⁶ Rahman, Khaleda. "#repealthe19th: Trump Supporters' Twitter Campaign to Reverse Amendment That Gave Women the Vote after Poll Shows He Would Win the Election If Only MEN Voted." Daily Mail Online. 2016. Accessed December 08, 2016. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3836460/Donald-Trump-supporters-tweet-repealthe19th.html>>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap (Spring 2017)." AAUW: Empowering Women Since 1881. Accessed March 28, 2017. <<http://www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/>>.

³⁰ Abbott, Lyman. "Why Women Don't Want to Vote." The Atlantic. Accessed December 08, 2016. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1903/09/why-women-do-not-wish-the-suffrage/306616/>>.

³¹ Lewis, Jone Johnson. "44 Women Who Have Run for President." [About.com](http://www.about.com) Education. 2016. Accessed December 10, 2016. <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/publicofficials/tp/ran_for_president.htm>.

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