

Darcy Farwell

From the Revolutionary War all the way to modern day warfare, women have given up their talent and lives for the betterment of their country. Time after time women ensured their capability to accomplish anything a man can do. The struggles and triumphs of women hoping for gender equality teaches that gender is not a limitation, even in the military.

Howard Zinn, a noteworthy historian, described the eighteenth century declaring, “they were not mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, they were absent in the Constitution and they were invisible in the new political democracy. They were the women of early America.” Women were expected to keep house and care for the children, with little to no power over the lifestyle that society had bestowed upon them. Statistics show that women did 55 hours of household chores a week and that in the 1960’s 38% of women were teachers, nurses, or secretaries. However, these societal expectations were challenged when remarkable female leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony took up the call to become social deviants and acquire the inalienable rights they deserved.

After years of showing their worth through the First World War and keeping a significant feminist movement in motion, women finally obtained the right to vote in 1920. However, women would not stop there to acquire equality in all sectors of society. As time moved on women were able to reach their full potential as doctors, lawyers, and politicians. Just recently, our country took another historic step further when the Department of Defense declared that women could serve in any branch of the military as long as they met the gender neutral requirements.

The decision to formally integrate women into the United States’ military has caused both outrage and praise. President Obama responded to the decision declaring, “Women have proven that they, too, are qualified, ready and up to the task. In the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, our courageous women have served with honor, on the front lines-and some have given their very lives.” However, some people have stated that the military is supposed to be the best, and women would not guarantee that. The most recent Miss USA is in the military herself and rebutted all criticism by asserting, “We are just as tough as men. As a commander of my unit, I’m powerful, I am dedicated, and it is important that we recognize that gender does not limit us in the United States Army.” Throughout the course of history, women have faced backlash for any decision they make that might question the current societal expectations. Thus, the women in the military will act with valor and honor to prove that gender equality in the military was a beneficial decision. Any woman in the military will be a reminder to all that gender is not a limitation anymore. A woman in uniform will not only serve our country but all the young girls who see that anything is possible.

Understanding the struggles and triumphs of the acquisition of gender equality has taught me that change can start with just one person. From Susan B. Anthony leading an audacious feminist movement to Deshauna Barber commanding a military unit, these women teach young women everywhere that gender is not a constraint. Women do not expect to be given the equality they want, but expect to fight for the equality they deserve. Society is realizing that women are capable doing whatever they set out to do; from being a marine or even a commanding officer in the army. The 21st century has brought a new era of opportunity for women. One of the only limitations now is what a woman thinks she cannot do. As a young woman myself, I have discovered that my opportunities are as boundless as my desire and that the leaders of tomorrow may be the young women of today.

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Olivia Hoynes

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Molly Pitcher, Deborah Sampson Gannett, Sybil Ludington, and many more used militant force to defend the home front during the American Revolution and contributed to the war effort long before women earned the right to enlist during World War I. When women finally earned the right to enlist in the Navy and Marine Corps, they lacked political influence, and it was not until after WWI that the 19th Amendment was passed in an attempt to silence the National Women's Party. This newfound amendment corrected a fundamental flaw of the original founding document and sparked further political change by giving women the opportunity to elect officials whose platforms promote equality. Despite the influx of woman voters, the improvements were gradual.

After women filled the "men's jobs" during World War II and took on non-combat roles, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act gave women access to veteran benefits and permanent status in the military. Later on, during the Gulf War, men and women set sail together for the first time, and 41,000 women were sent into the combat zone. However, in 1994, women were prohibited from serving in units with a primary agenda of engaging in direct ground combat. Then, in 2013, women were granted the right to serve in any frontline combat position if qualified, largely due to the demands of woman voters. Still, women are not considered for the most elite of the ranger regiments, and many representatives accredit this to woman's lack of physical vigor or aimlessly blurt out, "It's just biology", when referring to the so-called threat of allowing women to serve in combat roles.

In 2016, a new face entered the realm of women's rights activists - me. A recent, controversial bill, H.R.4478 (Draft America's Daughters Act), came to my attention, and soon after, I found myself, once again, sitting in Congressman Walter B. Jones' Greenville, NC, office inquiring about pressing new issues. For the first time, women are being considered for inclusion in the Selective Service Act, a gargantuan step towards equality of the sexes. The support that H.R.4478 has received in the senate is largely the result of elected officials who support equality, and these legislators were elected because of the support of woman voters. In short, political influence due to the 19th Amendment has led to monumental change in the way women serve in the military - in combat roles, with veteran benefits, and on co-ed ships. Women's role in the military has progressed from that of camp follower and nurse to a role that is ambiguous. How will I serve? As a scientist, a sniper, or a medic? Thanks to the political influence gained by the 19th Amendment, women are less restricted in the role they can take on in the United States Armed Services. As the military begins approaching gender neutrality and breaking down the barriers of traditional gender roles, women begin to gain the opportunity to serve their country however they please.

Slowly but surely, women are gaining numbers and rights in the United States military; yet, they must continue to prove themselves to be taken seriously by their peers and commanding officers. As a young woman invested in STEM, this issue is close to my heart. Sometimes, I am underrepresented in physics and computer science classes that are dominated by boys and find myself repeatedly proving myself by spending extra hours in the lab and perfecting my code. Women are a minority in STEM and in the Armed Services, and for us, equality is a constant battle – so we cannot let our guard down.

Olivia Hoynes
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On the Road Towards Gender Equality: Lessons from Rwanda and South Korea

“There is still work to do to secure the blessings of our country for every American daughter.” – Barack Obama, 2015

The United States ranks 28th on the World Economic Forum’s 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, which measures gender inequality across the realms of economics, health, education, and politics. No ranking is infallible, but the index suggests that despite the 19th Amendment’s guarantee of suffrage, the United States is falling behind its peers in the fight for gender equality. I believe that studying other nations is a powerful way to gain insight into ways the United States can improve gender equality, and in particular, Rwanda and South Korea have important lessons to share. On opposite ends of the spectrum in economic development, these countries demonstrate an important truth: as a nation, we need to address both constitutional and cultural causes of inequality to foster a durable improvement in the standing of American women.

Rwanda provides a shining example of how a constitutional mandate for female participation in civic life can mitigate broader institutional weakness to engender a more equal environment. Though categorized as a “least developed country” by the international community, Rwanda was ranked 6th on the Global Gender Gap Index, higher than developed nations including France, Germany, and the United States. Much of Rwanda’s success stems from the government’s rebirth in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, when women lobbied to fight traditional stereotypes by enshrining equal rights directly in the Rwandan constitution. Articles 54 and 77 guarantee equality within political organizations, Article 82 mandates that women hold 30% of senior political positions, and Article 185 establishes a Gender Monitoring Office. These high standards for female empowerment have produced stunning results—Rwanda has a higher number of women than men in Parliament and ranks among the best in the world for wage equality.

On the other hand, South Korea, one of the world’s most highly developed nations, ranks 115th out of 145 countries on index. Gender protections exist in the letter of the Korean constitution, but cultural norms prevent them from being adequately enforced. For example, although the Korean constitution contains references to gender equality—Article 11 includes gender in a list of multiple forms of unlawful discrimination, and Article 36 mandates equality in marriage and family life—court rulings show that men are consistently favored in matters of divorce and inheritance. I can attest to Korea’s inequality, as my mother sought to avoid it by immigrating to the United States. Born as an American citizen, I have experienced the repressive elements of Korea’s historically male-dominated Confucian culture primarily through eye-opening visits and stories. If these cultural norms are not addressed, Korea’s progressive constitution will always lack teeth.

Rwanda and South Korea are contrasting nations that bear important lessons for the United States in pursuing gender equality. Rwanda is a testament to the importance of designing institutions with the *expectation* of female participation, not merely the right. The United States lacks a constitutional commitment to equality that extends beyond suffrage, and could benefit from a close examination of Rwanda’s constitutional quota for female participation in

government. But South Korea shows that policy is necessary but insufficient. To achieve equality in practice and not just in writing, I believe our leaders must take proactive roles in addressing harmful gender norms through educational initiatives and wholehearted appeals to the American people. No one approach provides a silver bullet to cement gender equality in the United States, and I view the 19th Amendment's enfranchisement of women as a crucial first step down a long road: as long as we stay on that road, we will arrive in a society where women can enjoy true equality.

The War the Women Waged
By Christal Lee

Cannonballs boomed. Weapons were fired. Difficult steps were taken. The American Civil War would be seared in the minds of all proud Americans. Great soldiers sacrificed their time, efforts, and even their lives for the Fifteenth Amendment. Just as a fight was fought for the freedom of the slaves, a battle was fought for the rights of women. Leaders like Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Carrie Chapman Catt inspired women to take up this righteous cause and influence generations of women up to this day.

It is 1848, and the battle has begun. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton sounded the war cry as strong supporters gathered at the first organized convention. Just as in the Battle of Fort Sumter, decisions defined friends and enemies. The convention was the women's first voiced opinion, in which was soon mocked by the public. Although, like the Union, they lost this fight, suffragists would not back down. This was just the beginning. Sharp conflicts arose; in 1871, as Victoria Woodhull argued that women could already vote but the House denied it, and in 1872, where the proposed suffrage was declined by just one vote. Proud victories were won; in 1890, where AWSA and NWSA merged; and in 1912, when Roosevelt's Progressive Party included women's suffrage in its platform. Large and small moves, like civil disobedience and suffrage hikes, led to imprisonment of women like Lucy Burns. Though they were made low, with strength in spirit and in numbers, the climax point was attained. The Battle of Gettysburg could be compared to the Suffrage Parade in 1913, the turning point in the overall battle. States sided by women. Opinions were changed. The 19th Amendment was finally approved in 1920.

The victory for women's rights, like in the Civil War, proved to be a great seed of faith and trust in the American democracy. Ratifying the 15th and 19th amendment gave all races and all genders true citizenship and a voice that would be heard. Frances Perkins, the first woman to be appointed a seat in the U.S Cabinet, aided thousands of people when she helped establish the Social Security Act of 1935. Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman to be elected in Congress, became one of the founding members of Congressional Black Caucus, which is, until today, "developing leaders, informing policy, and educating the public." Truly, without the 19th and 15th Amendments, women and African-Americans would have never been heeded, and America would be very different from where it stands today.

I would always remember the day my mother wanted to vote. My mother grew up in the Philippines, but travelled to America for a better education. Years later, upon acquiring her American citizenship, she was excited to vote for the very first time. So excited that, in fact, she became a poll watcher. Unfortunately, while volunteering, devastating news came that her mother-in-law died while on a vacation in a foreign country. Deciding to comfort and support her husband, she was not able to vote. While recalling these past events with my mother, I was surprised at her great approval and honor that she spoke about a woman's right to vote. The experience influenced my young mind and heart.

Cannonballs seemed to boom as women took a stand. Weapons seemed to fire as women argued for their rights. Difficult steps were taken in the strenuous journey. But this brought about good change, without a single casualty. For me, as a soon-to-be woman voter, I stand with my mother, and all women, with the words of Susan B. Anthony, "There never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers." The 15th Amendment and 19th Amendment ratified true equality and rights for every man and woman, of any color.

Comparing the two, the 19th Amendment truly stresses that women do make a difference. Laws created and established by women changed the nation. Because of the 19th Amendment, it gives the nation hope for a brighter future, stability for the present generation, and pride of our past. Pride of the war that the women waged.

Ashia Lewis
July 8th, 2016

It's Complicated.

A Look at the Relationship between the 19th Amendment and the Rights of Black Women

The Nineteenth Amendment was perhaps one of the most revolutionary federal decisions of the twentieth century, completely remodeling the American political landscape. What followed was more than a vote, but a legitimate voice for half the U.S. population and political discussion relevant to both men and women. Despite its ratification in 1920, the idea of the human right to vote despite physical characteristics has been at the center of political protests both before and after its ratification. From the meeting at Seneca Falls to the successful women's rights movement of the mid to late 1900s, the concept of the amendment has inspired women to fight for rights previously believed to be unusual or undeserved. The complexities of its enactment are especially evident when looking at the case of black women from the early 19th century to modernity.

Preceding even the basic Thirteenth Amendment right to live unimpeded by enslavement, black women understood the social and political importance behind the principle of an undeniable right to vote on the basis of both race and gender. Parallels between the secondary status of women and the cattle-equivalency of blacks drew the support of a number of black political activists, including Sojourner Truth, who expressed suffragist sentiments,

"Now that there is a great stir about colored mens getting their rights is the time for women to step in and have theirs...I feel that I have right to have just as much a man. and if colored men get their rights, and colored women not theirs, the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before." - 1867

The roots of the movement extend further than the nineteenth century, yet the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 sparked a catalyst for the first large cohesive grouping of activists for female suffrage. With this new entity and increasing talk of the Fifteenth Amendment, the relevancy of the black female's vote was questioned. The inclusion of blacks within the movement garnered those who both agreed and disagreed. Take, for instance, the contrasting cases of Susan B.

Anthony and Sojourner Truth. Although both played a quintessential role in the infantile movement, they shared almost Manichean differences on their perception of blacks and the vote. Susan B. Anthony saw the black vote as unessential, and lacking the same merit of that of white women on the grounds of intelligence and justice.

"The old anti slavery school says women must stand back and wait until the Negroes shall be recognized... If intelligence, justice, and morality are to have precedence in the government, let the question of the woman be brought up first and that of the negro last..." - The Revolution, 1869

Many white suffragists, particularly those in the South, shared the belief of Susan B. Anthony primarily because they felt the Negro was undeserved of the vote or that women could outweigh the votes of black men and women combined.

On the other end of the spectrum, those suffragists similar to Sojourner Truth believed that an alliance between black and white suffragists would propel the movement for the rights of both groups exponentially faster.

“Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [Member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?” – “Ain't I a Woman”, 1851

With the recent passing of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 adding fuel to the further separation of the National Equal Rights Association, the purposeful marginalization of black women began. In response, black women created their own political entities. Groups such as the Alpha Suffrage Club were born, and perhaps for the first time in history, black women were acting as true American citizens- freely exercising their natural First Amendment right to speak out against injustices specifically targeted at them.

During the 1960s, Americans were in the midst of the modern Civil Rights movement and second wave feminism. With the approval of contraceptive pills in 1960, second wave feminism continued to advance; however, with the simultaneous rise of Jim Crow, black women would be conditioned not to join the primarily white, mainstream feminist movement. With the focus on stabilizing voting rights for African Americans, black women would not be able to immediately benefit from the rewards of second wave feminists using the 19th Amendment for advancement.

Although in direct violation with the 15th Amendment,

*“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 race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” - Fifteenth Amendment*

the oppressive state laws of the South directly prohibited blacks from exercising their right to vote. Although black women were important figures in the leadership department of the 60s Civil Rights Movement, men within the movement still harbored not-so-subtle hints of male chauvinist attitudes. Black women were often meted out the position of foot soldiers, cooks, or cleaners, while outward leadership positions were withheld for men. Dorothy Height provides the best example that even a capable, educated female leader would be hidden or be replaced with males. Height can even be seen at the podium during Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” Speech, where her slot was replaced by the more radical speech of John Lewis, whose speech had to be altered because of its aggressive militancy.

After the passing of the 1964 Voting Rights Act, black women weren't disenfranchised on account of race or gender, but consistent distancing from the mainstream feminist movement hindered them from immediately pursuing the advancements that came from the Nineteenth Amendment. This would change with the opening of the 1970s, where America experienced the birth of black feminine thought. Many black women found themselves partnered with the more militant black panthers, but black women, led by a number of scholars and influential black minds, experienced a revolution of pride and success. Women like Angela Davis and Patricia Hill Collins made history with some of the first studies on black female psychology, and with her right to participate politically secured by the Voting Rights Act and the unchallenged Nineteenth Amendment, Shirley Chisholm became the first black person to start a campaign for the presidency, before her male counterparts.

Similar to the products of second wave feminism, black feminism fully realized the social, political, and economic power that came from the Nineteenth Amendment. The long term effects of cases such as Roe vs. Wade, which legalized abortion and made birth control accessible, allowed black women to more readily join the workforce or successfully complete higher education. The Nineteenth Amendment was pivotal for the discussion of these few changes, and the long term social, political, and economic impact has become more apparent with the continuance of modernity.

The element of the black feminist movement of the mid-70s has remained with young black women today. Black women have continued to challenge the status quo, and in return the unknown success of black women has become a thing of the past. With the appreciation of independence and opportunity available to black women, we have not only increased high school graduation rates by 63% over the past 50 years (more than tripling it), but have also become the fastest growing segment of female owned businesses (starting business at six times the national average), generating an estimated \$44.9 billion in revenue over one million firms.

As the current presidential debates draw to a heated pinnacle of debate, millions of people have become glued to the political banter that continues to divide the population into two specific groups. Although we may focus on the country's current political divide, I will instead remember my privilege; privileges brought to me by the dedicated women of the past. Not just the privilege to vote, but the reward of right- or the ability to know that I can choose what happens around me. Although the relationship between the Nineteenth Amendment has one been one of many complications, the long term effects of the Amendment have allowed myself and those like me to feel and BE true Americans, experiencing the true values of what it means to be free and brave.

A Mixed Nation, One Democracy

I am a proud member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. We are one of the largest sovereign nations in the United States, but as natives, we are aliens in our own land. Outnumbered and pushed to the brink of extinction, our numbers, culture, and rights dwindled as European settlers ventured further and further west. My ancestors' only hope of survival amongst these foreigners, resided within the words of the new nation's Constitution. In 1788 the fledgling country's Constitution was ratified. It would take more than 13 decades and 19 amendments, mainly, the passing of the 14th and 19th amendments, before natives would be recognized as American citizens and begin to have the same rights as the white citizens.

In the beginning, the young nation's Constitution only applied to the white, male population, and it was not until amendments were introduced and ratified did the Constitution start applying to a much broader population. In 1868 the 14th Amendment was ratified, granting citizenship, protection, and due process under the law to those born in the United States. Although this amendment claimed all persons born in the U.S. to be citizens, it excluded Native Americans. We were considered to be "domestic dependent nations", hence forth; we were only tribal citizens not Americans. So, in the eyes of the government, we did not count towards Congressional representation. Finally, in 1924, after many heart breaking years, all natives were granted citizenship. Four years before Native Americans were named citizens, the 19th Amendment was passed, giving women the right to vote. The problem was, this amendment too, excluded my ancestors; applying its rights to only white women. Because voting was governed by the states and not the Federal government, it would not be until 1957 that all the states allowed America's original inhabitants the right to vote. These amendments, along with others, were hard fought for, through marches, rallies, speeches, and petitions. Eventually all Americans,

no matter their race or given anatomy, were allowed to take part in the country's democratic government.

The American democracy is like no other in the world. Some would even venture to say that our democracy is an example that other nations should follow. While this may be true, our constitution and democratic practice is far from perfect. The fact that the Constitution has been ratified 27 times is proof enough. But, the amendments made democracy in America her peoples' democracy. The 14th Amendment eliminated the counting of slaves as 3/5th of a person and provided "everyone" born in the U.S. citizenship. Although it was not until 1924 that my native ancestors were granted their citizenship, this amendment worked towards uniting a mixed nation. In 1920 the 19th Amendment was passed, fought for by women suffrage supporters, who demanded that women were provided the same rights as the men. In the beginning, this too would only apply to white women, but finally, in 1957, this right was expanded to all natives. These amendments demanded that the government uphold the key elements of the American democracy: "basic personal and political rights, fair and free elections, and independent courts of law." The amendments made certain that the American democracy was just as Abraham Lincoln defined it, "Government of the people for the people."

When our founding fathers composed the constitution and set our democracy into motion, there was no way they would know just how long it would last. Nor, do I think, they thought their constitution and democracy would end up encompassing so many minorities. My people had their land, rights, freedom, and culture robbed from them, but thanks to the constitution and its amendments, we were able to get them back enforced by the people of America, the 14th Amendment gave us our citizenship and the 19th Amendment granted us the right to vote. Each took time but, because of them, we became one nation.