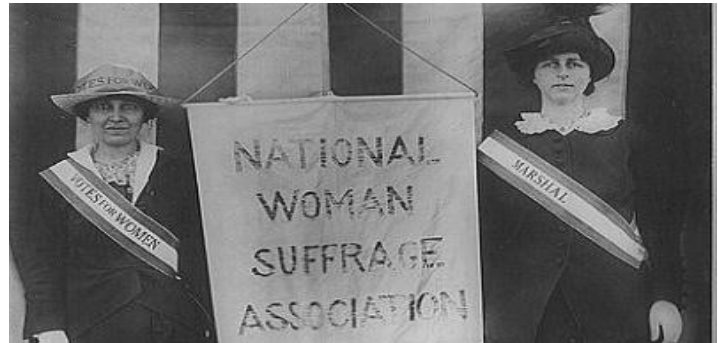


The Progression of Equality
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Women's rights may be one of the most heavily debated topics in American history. It took 70 years for women to gain the right to vote after the 19th Amendment was finally passed in 1919 and ratified in 1920. But it definitely doesn't stop there. Even today, the fight for equality still blazes on.

The Emergence

Although women in ancient Greece and even Rome had been denied the right to vote, in America it all began in July of 1848. This was when the first meeting devoted to women's rights was held in New York. At this gathering the Declaration of Sentiments was signed. This document highlighted the injustice these women were facing and set the course for the women's rights movement. 21 years later, after several more meetings had been held, Susan B. Anthony and associate Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association



(NWSA). This organization strived to gain voting rights for women by means of a Congressional Amendment to the Constitution (Sandbox Network, 2017). As prior stated, they ended up reaching their goal in the early 20th Century, but that was just the smoke before the fire. Groups like The National Association of Colored Women, The National Women's Trade Union League, and many more formed after that in hopes to get their points across in the same way the NWSA got their point across and to be just as successful as the NWSA was. However, that still wasn't the end of it. With each decade, women have grown hungrier and hungrier for equality and their rights, because after all women's rights are human rights.

The fight continued in the late 1960's when feminists in America and women's rights supporters started protesting for total equality between both men and women including abortion



rights, equal pay and social parity (Loveday, 2017). In fact, in 1966 the National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed by Betty Friedan. This organization not only fought for government supported child care services for women in the workforce, it fought for the end of job discrimination that women were facing as they stepped out of their “home maker” roles. On top of that NOW helped in raising support for the Title IX of the Education Amendments Act. This act required colleges to guarantee equal opportunities for women (Britannica, 2017). In conclusion, women have used different strategies throughout history to fight for equality across the board and each achievement in this long process has inspired the next one. Contrary to the illusion I presume I’ve created, not everyone was on board with total equality. In fact, some had a lot to say about it.

The Conflict

In a letter to Senator Duncan Fletcher a certain Martin L. Calhoun, a member of the Alabama Male Association Opposed to Women’s Suffrage, claimed that by adding this Amendment that Anthony was advocating for would entirely be the wrong choice. He argued that “If we take this right away from the states they lose their identity and become mere parcels of a central government.” (DocsTeach, 1918). Basically he wanted each state to have the right to choose and resolve this problem for itself. The ironic thing about that statement is that it’s exactly what all opposers of this Amendment are trying to do to women. They are stealing their identity, whether they realize it or not, and the sad thing is is that there are dozens more like Calhoun that not only fought against the right of women to vote but so much more. There were several others that didn’t support women getting an education, or women working, or even women standing up for themselves. With each new right these women fought for there were

always those opposed and those trying to drag them down. I guess the saying “Conflict is inevitable.” really is true.

The Compromise

Like I’ve mentioned, the 19th Amendment was added to the Constitution, giving women the right to vote. However, that didn’t solve the rest of the problems. For instance, even now equal pay between the sexes is an issue. In 2017 it was recorded that a white woman makes 79 cents to a man’s dollar and a black woman makes 67 cents to a man’s dollar. It’s no different for abortion rights, there is still pro-life and pro-choice like there were back then and the end of the debate between the two sides doesn’t seem near. While abortion is still technically an option for all women, the laws being passed make it hard to remain a viable option. Plus, it may be more subtle in most cases now but racism is still a major problem. Yes most segregation is gone in the U.S. today thanks to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 but racism is still a hot button issue. It makes you start to think that if racism hasn’t gone away since its beginning in the 19th century it might not ever go away. Overall, we have made a lot of progress with a lot of these issues but a compromise on them in the near future doesn’t seem very feasible.



Short Term Change

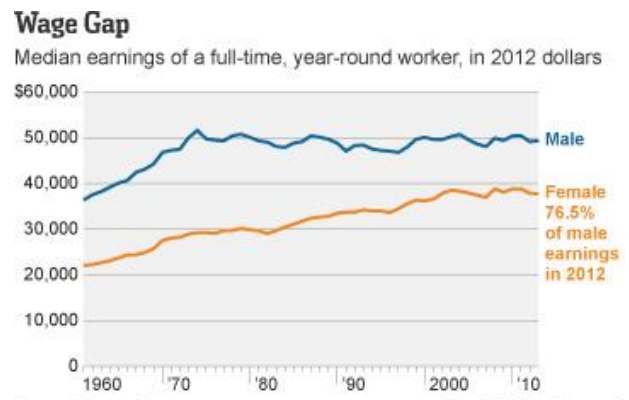
Going back to women's voting rights, the League of Women Voters formed promptly after the 19th Amendment was passed by Congress in 1919. Also, following the passing of the 19th Amendment, the women's rights movement was celebrated as the first successful nonviolent protest movement in American history (Bossart, 2010). While there were several physical changes after the Amendment was passed, I see the change in the women's sense of validity as the biggest change. They fought peacefully and remained composed the whole time and they finally got the equality they deserved. It's almost as if society finally listened to women and validated their opinion and stopped being so condescending towards women. I quite frankly think that that was more of a reward than just the right to vote because it was the breaking of a barrier. The story was quite similar when it came to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Shortly after that act was passed, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed as well. Yes this act focused solely on the voting rights of African Americans and ending the discrimination against their access to the ballot (Library of Congress, N/A). However when they gained their voting rights, it was the same feeling that these women had when they got theirs.



Long Term Change

As I've prior introduced, a lot of issues from the 20th Century are still issues today. Equal pay between genders still isn't real, abortion rights are still being disputed, discrimination of women in certain professions is still persistent, the list goes on and on. With that said we have

made major progress from when these problems first presented themselves. As shown to the right, the gap between men's and women's salaries, while still prominent, has shrunk compared to previous years. However it has yet to close. Plus abortion rights have definitely changed with laws



being passed about up to when you can get them, how you must get them, etc. Plus with all the different pros and cons to each stance it's almost impossible to take a side these days. On top of that, African American females have made so much progress in society and there are now so many successful African American females that are great role models. Robin Roberts, Simone Biles, Michelle Obama, to name a few, are all great role models in today's culture.

Our world, would be unbelievably different if the Civil Rights Act of 1964 hadn't been passed. My friend group, my school, my address, just about everything in my life would be different. Plus, if America couldn't even accept African Americans there would be no way it would be as accepting as it is now. What with legalized gay marriage, the new pronouns, and the several other milestones we've passed that would be unthinkable back then, we as a nation have come so much farther than separating those of different skin color.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the 20th Century women's rights movement altered the course of modern America. Although often overlooked in several American history lessons, it was a vital stepping

stone in the forming the America that we know today. With that said, I believe that the women's rights movement never truly ended. There are still several women's marches supporting topics like intersectional feminism, and women are starting to speak up more about the sexism and disrespect they've experienced to try to prevent it from happening to other women. Overall, we still have a long way to go but we have made massive progress from where we've began and I can't wait to wait until it's my turn to follow in the footsteps of these women and hopefully secure the fair and final compromise.