

In 1890, less than one half of one percent of women were employed gainfully outside of the home. Over the next hundred years, women have not only gained access to jobs outside of the home, but also fought for equality in the work place. These struggles have not been easy by any means. Women have overcome many obstacles in their journey into the work force, none greater than the views of their male peers. Many males thought and continue to think that there is no place for women in the work place. Women made their strides into the work force by not only following examples of their courageous pioneers, but also by banding together to show their strength.

During the mid 1800's a small number of women began their assault on, what were at the time considered, male-only jobs. Fields such as teaching, preaching, medicine, and law were all jobs dominated by men. Women had made some progress in the work force before the 1850's. In the mid nineteenth century women were the majority for grade school teachers, up from the ten percent of elementary teachers, that were teachers in the colonial period. This can be largely attributed not to the fact that men were more accepting of the idea that women belonged in the work place, but rather men were drawn to the higher paying and more socially appreciated managerial jobs brought on by the industrial revolution. School boards did not mind these talented leaving because they could higher a "less qualified woman" for as low as one fifth of males salary for the same job.

Susan B. Anthony was the first woman to publicly speak out against this gross injustice towards women. After being fired to "replace a male teacher fired for incompetence, she was paid one third of the salary he had received," (Reifert 74) she went to the state teachers convention of 1853 to register a protest. After being hushed once and a half hour of debate she was finally allowed to speak her piece. Although nothing came of her first encounter with the women's movement, she quit teaching and went on to become one of the great leaders of the women's movement.

Antoinette Brown was another woman that was not happy with the status quo of women in society. She started, in 1846, by attending Oberlin college, which only nine years before had become the first co-educational college. Oberlin, although being very receptive of women in their women's department, they did not let women take any courses besides the ones offered in the women department. This led to a conflict when Brown made her intentions of obtaining a theology degree known. Brown won the battle to attend the classes she needed for her degree, but this was by far not the last battle for equality she would have to fight. Oberlin "refused to grant her a student's license to preach," and after her course work was completed Oberlin would not "allow her to take part in the graduation ceremony, be licensed, ordained, or even have her name registered on the class roll." (Reifert 76) It took three years, of hard looking for Brown to find a Protestant Church that would allow her to be ordained. Finally after all of her struggles Antoinette Brown was ordained the first Protestant female minister in America.

"Women in the early 1800's were discriminated against both as practitioner and as patient." (Reifert 77) Women were thought that it was wrong for them to seek help from doctors for any problems that had anything remotely to do with their reproductive system. It was also thought that women were too fragile to deal

with the work that goes with being a doctor. Elizabeth Blackwell saw first hand the effects of the first problem mentioned. She watched a family friend die because she was embarrassed to bring her problem to the attention of her male doctor. Blackwell was not deterred by the Idea that no medical school would take her, because she could not compete with males. After all almost everyone at the time believed that "the female brain was different then the male brain." (Reifert 78) Blackwell finally gained admittance to Geneva College after a unanimous vote of the student body to let her in. This vote should not be taken as a sign that men were becoming more accepting of women infiltrating what was formally known as male only territory. It should be noted that most of the students believed that either the vote was a joke or that Blackwell would not stay around long. Blackwell proved all the skeptics wrong by graduating in the top of her class, but still no hospital in the United States would allow her to intern. For her internship Blackwell went to Paris. When She got back to the United States Blackwell found that no hospital would allow her to use their facilities. In 1857 she secured enough money to turn facility into a hospital. Similar to doctors, nurses were largely male until the 1850's. Nursing followed a similar path as elementary teachers, as more higher paid jobs opened up, it left room for women to take over less glamorous jobs.

In the early nineteenth century lawyers were thought by apprenticeship. This was a very big problem for women that had an interest in this field, because no men lawyers would ever dream of having a female apprentice. The emergence of law schools made the job of a lawyer remotely accessible, but by no means easy. Such is the case of Myra Bradwell, who graduated from Chicago School of law, but was refused a license to practice law by the Illinois State Bar. She took her battle to the Supreme Court, by was ruled against. After her ruling was overturned in 1890 at the age of 59, she became a licensed lawyer and two years latter practiced law in front of the same court that had refused her rights 23 years earlier.

Before these women had broken into these previously all male jobs women's jobs four general limitations. They are "(1) that women perform work similar to that of the home; (2) that no great skill be involved...; (3) that no great physical strength be required...; (4) that the work should not involve contacts with the rougher male sex..." (Riegel 135) Contrary to the Desires of their employers to maintain their workers femininity, the women, they provided their employees with very adverse working conditions. "The conditions under which most women were described by an on looker :

girls take off their street suits
and put on an old skirts and waists
matted with glue dirt, in which the
spend ten hours a day scorning,
cutting and sniping, wetting great
sheets of paper and paste... at a
few cents a day"

(Cantarow

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Women at time made around half of what their male counterparts made. While male unions were proving very successful in the advancement in working conditions for men, but most unions had little interest in helping women's causes. For this reason, in

1903 the WTUL (Women's trade Union league) was launched. This helped Women unite to achieve better working conditions. The WTUL was very influential in the organization and support of the major women's strikes.

Women fought many hard battles to gain access to areas that were at on time strictly off limits to them and fought hard to improve their working conditions. With out the struggles of these women other women might not have the rights they have today.