

Woman's Struggle for Independence

Women have had to fight for their independence. They have been repressed for a long period of history. Only recently have women started to gain respect as equals and individuals. Even today women are still looked down upon for their sex.

From the beginning of history women have been viewed as a lesser sex. In the time Mesopotamia women were in charge of the children and the home. In Ancient Egypt women had no power or authority. Women were viewed as property. The Hebrews, although respecting women, did not allow them to own any property or to have an active place in government. In Rome women were not allowed to voice their opinions. They were viewed as lesser beings, whose role in society was to give birth and to take care of children. They were property of their husbands and not viewed as individuals. Their husband was their master and women were practically slaves and were often mistreated by their husband. A servant to the male sex.

During the middle ages women still had almost no rights. They still didn't have the right to voice their opinion and were still viewed as property. If they disobeyed their male role model they were punished. The art of the Renaissance gave women some freedom to voice their opinion about the arts and social issues as long as their opinions weren't very radical. However women were only the objects in the arts. They were the models and not the creators. They were not allowed to express themselves but only to be expressed by others. This led into the period of the Reformation, women were still viewed as property and the homemakers. They did not really get their place in society.

The 17th century was the first real growth of the women's movement. Up until this time women had been in the same category as property or slaves. But as the French society moved toward revolution women began to speak of the injustice against them. "The Vindication of Rights of Women (1792) called for the extension of the principle of the liberty to women and urging that equal public education be made available for men and women" (Perry, 289). This list of the rights that women were lacking was one of the first attempts at creating a legislation that included women in its laws. During the scientific revolution men were making discoveries and coming up with new ideas all over the world. This was not possible for women because the education was not able to compare with that of the men's. After role models such as Tristan Flora women started trying harder to become a part of the society. They fought so that they could be intellectual individuals, and not just slaves to the male dominated society. They started thinking for themselves, having their own thoughts and ideas. In the modern 20th century women used the example of these women as arguments to push their cause.

When the idea of Nationalism began bringing countries together it helped women slightly. Yet still did not make them their equality to men. In the time of the Industrial Revolution women began receiving jobs in factories. Although they were still not treated as equals. They were paid significantly less than men for the same days work. The majority of women still stayed at home and took care of the household and children. The idea of socialism brought women more respect. With the idea of socialism women gained some standing in society as close equals to men. In a socialistic society everyone is equal, including women. This idea of equality women in the past could not even envision. As the battle for women's rights continued they gained the right in the United States to live freely. They could now own land and participate in the government. At the end of the 19th century women began to become educated. They began to prove their intellectual equality to men. As World War I came around women began to enter the workforce. With the men being killed in time of war it left a limited number of men to work in the factories. Women began to take over these roles. They were finally given responsibility and respect for their work.

By the time of World War II women had proven themselves in the workforce. They now could find employment, although there was still discrimination. During the 1950's women began to fight for liberation in the workforce. They wanted more

involvement in the work place. Women now wanted to go to college, support themselves, and fight for their country. They were no longer satisfied with raising a family. A woman could have a career and be a mother to her children. They became independent members of society. With their new position of education and career orientation, it gave a sense that men and women were truly equal.

Altogether women are gaining influence they still feel discriminated against because of their sex. There are many examples of women in high positions and women holding power. Queen Elizabeth I is one example of a woman in a position of power. These cases of women in power have rarely occurred in history. But even today in the 20th century there have been very few women officials. It seems most of the women who have achieved a position of power, achieved it because of their marriage to an influential man. Take any United States president's wife for example. Women such as these have a great deal of power and influence, but they wouldn't have this if it wasn't for their husbands. The idea that a woman can work and be just as productive as a man and receive the same rewards happens to a point. The majority of the heads of corporations are men, women make a lesser salary and aren't promoted as much as men. As a woman rises in power in a company she usually gets to a point and then the promotions stop. This event of a sudden stop in promotion has been called "The Glass Ceiling effect" (Lunt). This can only be explained as women are still being treated as a lesser being to men.

The reason why women are inferior to men is still unknown. It has been around for as long as men and women have walked the earth. Hopefully soon it will disappear completely and we can all be viewed as equals.

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