



Celebrate Women's Equality Day by Fulfilling Its Promise

2020 is the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. In this episode, Gloria reminds us of the many hurdles women, especially women of color, have continued to face and overcome. And, she shares concrete actions you can take in your own life to make the 19th Amendment deliver on the full promise of its words.

Gloria Feldt: Like I always say, just when you think it's over, it's really just begun. Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I'm Gloria Feldt, here with secrets and tools to prepare and propel you with training and coaching to harness your incredible power to in your professional lives. I cofounded Take the Lead because I figured out how to crack the code that has been holding women back from equal leadership and pay. My mission is for women and men to hold equal power, pay, and leadership positions by 2025. At the end of each podcast, I'll share specific tips that will help you lead and succeed.

Unless you've been hiding under a rock in your quarantine, or you've put yourself on a strict social media and television diet to get away from the political talking heads, you know that this year, 2020, is the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote in all states in the United States. Thousands of women's organizations had planned celebrations leading up to the auspicious date, August 26th, the anniversary of when the amendment became formally part of the constitution. My inbox is now filled with invitations to virtual events on [Women's Equality Day](#), including Take the Lead's celebration, which is hosted by [Felicia Davis](#). Felicia is a Take the Lead Leadership Ambassador, a leadership brand advisor, and founder of The Black Women's Collective.

Felicia, along with her special guest, author, activist, and executive director and publisher of the Feminist Press at City University of New York, [Jamia Wilson](#), will discuss solutions to the intersection of racial and gender inequalities that persist today. This is the unfinished work we must do to reach full equality and justice for all, and especially to make the 19th Amendment deliver on the full promise of its words. I'll share a link in the show notes for how you can register.

Now, August 26th has been officially declared Women's Equality Day since the loudmouth hat-wearing Congresswoman from New York, where else, Bella Abzug, persuaded Congress to pass a joint resolution of Congress. That resolution begins

with these two whereases. Whereas the women of the United States have been treated as second-class citizens and have not been entitled to the full rights and privileges, public or private, legal, or institutional, which are available to male citizens of the United States. And whereas the women of the United States have united to assure that these rights and privileges are available to all citizens, regardless of sex. Now, looking back and reading these statements, I wondered. Were these true? It turns out it's complicated. The first whereas is certainly accurate. Women had never even been mentioned in the Constitution before the 19th Amendment. However, they had been excluded by implication of the references to men only, and the laws in many states explicitly placed women in secondary positions, sometimes not able to own property, with little or no protections from sexual abuse, and forget about equal pay or birth control. And remember those [help wanted female ads?](#) Hmm. I surely do. And believe me, the job opportunities available to women did not include the C-suite.

You know, if you think about Sandra Day O'Connor, who thanks to the work of feminist leaders eventually became the first woman to be appointed to the United States Supreme Court, well, [she was unable to find a job as a lawyer](#) after she graduated third in her class from Stanford University, even though men with those credentials were snapped up by major law firms.

Now, the second whereas is more complicated and uglier. Though Black and white women worked together in the early 19th century on both abolition and women's rights, and Black women have always been stalwart voting rights advocates, a patchwork quilt of [racist travesties emerged over time](#). Carrie Chapman Catt, the suffragist leader who's often credited with having the political savvy to put the votes for women amendment over the top in 1920, through much of her life she had championed the rights of all women, regardless of race. But [she was also quoted as saying that white supremacy would be strengthened by women's suffrage](#). And in an oblique way, women's suffrage did strengthen white supremacy.

As with every step forward, the cultural status quo pushes back hard. Jim Crow laws, poll taxes, and other means of voter suppression kept Americans of both genders from voting. Until the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#) was passed, there was almost no recourse against these voter suppression measures. 2020 turns out not to be the totally celebratory year it deserves to be. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution did mark a huge step forward for women, but 2020 is also a year of reckoning about the checkered history of women's suffrage as it pertains to race. This year is giving us a clear vision of the unfinished business that remains to be attended to before women truly have the equality that the 19th Amendment promised. That reckoning can only make us better as a society if, and the ifs are large, we take this moment when people are paying attention to the racism all under and around us. Because yet again, we are facing voter suppression laws and policies, from reducing the number of polling places and ballot drop offs to

reducing funds for the Postal Service and attempting to remove mailboxes and so much more.

This affects all voters. Men and women. But it is especially aimed at disenfranchising women and people of color. Now, I've heard people say that the 19th Amendment only gave voting rights to white women. That is also in the both true and not true category, similar to the [Declaration of Independence](#) saying all men are created equal. The 19th Amendment did, in the strict words of the law, give all women in the U.S. the right to vote. But as we have so often seen, laws don't necessarily change hearts and minds, nor do they necessarily prevent various kinds of shenanigans aimed at maintaining the power status quo of patriarchy.

In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, stating just as I noted, "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 sex. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." Now, that's all it says with no qualifiers as to which women were granted voting rights, so in effect, theoretically, all women were granted voting rights. But it wasn't until the Indian Citizenship Act was passed four years later that Native American women were allowed to vote, and even then many state laws still barred them from voting. It wasn't until 1943 that Chinese immigrants, including women, received the right to vote by the Magnuson Act. And first generation Japanese Americans, including women, were not allowed to vote until 1952, when the race restrictions of the 1790 naturalization law were finally repealed by the McCarran-Walter Act.

Until 1964, when the 24th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, poll taxes and literacy tests, which were heavily used against African American and poor white individuals, many of them women, many women were not able to cast their votes. Finally, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 strenuously prohibited racial discrimination in voting, resulting in greatly increased voting by African American women and men.

It took over 70 years, two full generations, for the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote, to go from a resolution passed by a women's rights convention to a Constitutional Amendment passed into law and ratified into the Constitution. The battles were hard fought. Women endured despicable allegations that giving women the right to vote would be the ruination of the family unit and the country. President Grover Cleveland articulated the sentiment of many men and even some women of the time when he said, "Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote." The suffragists went on hunger strikes. [They were beaten, tortured, jailed](#), and [some women even died](#) for the right to vote. So, the 19th Amendment deserves to be celebrated loudly and often during this centennial year. But oh, there is so much unfinished business yet to be done, so while we celebrate, we must also remain committed.

Here are four ways to celebrate Women's Equality Day 2020 while tackling some of that unfinished business:

1. First, know your history. Learn the facts about the suffrage movement, warts and all. We can't change things unless we face them. Study the status of women and girls in society and the policies that affect their ability to achieve to their highest and best intentions. Note that the Equal Rights Amendment that would assure women's equality under the law still hasn't been formally placed into the Constitution, even though it has been ratified by the necessary 38 states. You can check the [ERA Coalition website](https://www.eracoalition.org/), ERACoalition.org, frequently to see how you can help rectify that historic injustice.
2. Second, be of service. Invest in women-owned businesses and look for opportunities to support businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and other women of color to make your money especially impactful. Mentor and sponsor diverse women in your workplace. Donate to and volunteer for organizations that help women get jobs or get ahead in the jobs they have.
3. Third, go out and raise hell. Join organizations that work for racial and gender justice. We're always stronger and more effective together. March if that is your preferred way of being an activist. Speak up on issues that you're passionate about. You can do that by writing letters to the editor, posting on social media, many ways to express your opinions. Above all, vote in every election and work to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to vote in your community.
4. Fourth, go out and just do it. Run for office. Start a business. Launch a podcast. Demand equal pay. Take the lead wherever and however you are able and wherever and however you have the intention to do so.

If you listen to this podcast before 1:00 PM Eastern time on Women's Equality Day, August 26th, 2020, please join us when we launch a new online series called [Power to Change Conversations](#). We chose Women's Equality Day to kick off the series of conversations with women who can offer real solutions to the intersection of racial and gender inequalities that persist today. The unfinished work that we must do to reach full equality and justice for all, and especially to make the 19th Amendment deliver on the full promise of its words.

Let's celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment by committing ourselves to realizing its full promise of voting rights without impediment for all women in America.

Let me know how it goes for you. You can email me at any time at powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com. I'd love to know how you're faring. Until next week, Power to You.

Power to You is produced by Lantigua Williams & Co. Cedric Wilson is our lead producer. Virginia Lora is our managing producer. Carolina Rodriguez mixed this episode. For more about my work, please visit gloriafeldt.com, and follow me on social media @gloriafeldt. To learn about Take the Lead and our courses and

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