

The Oppression Of Women In The Nineteenth Century And Their Fight For Suffrage

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The nineteenth century is considered the American Renaissance. The industrial revolution and major scientific achievements pushed the United State into the forefront of technological advancements. A decline in agriculture led society towards large-scale manufacturing enterprises especially in the northern states. Massachusetts became an industrial and financial leader for the country, producing textiles, shoes, and machinery. The massive growth of industry brought many immigrants, causing urban expansion to rapidly change the American landscape. The massive wealth reaped from industrial success led Boston to become synonymous with the highest attainment in America's cultural and artistic life.¹ The invention of the steam engine and locomotives connected the country allowing long distance travel to become much easier. As industry advanced into the century so did society. Politics became a means to a better life. Social and Political leaders began questioning social conditions, pushing for improvements in all areas of American life. Growing discontent with inequality and polarizing views on the horror of slavery boiled into the most devastating war in United States history. Out of the Civil War came a new era of civil equality, and in 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery in the United States forever. Following three years later, the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to all African Americans, ensuring equal protection under the law.

The final Amendment to be produced by the Civil War, the Fifteenth Amendment, granted the power of suffrage. There was just one catch, for the first time the word "male" was added to the Constitution, denying women the very power that stirred the Founding Fathers into

¹ "Boston, Massachusetts," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (U.S.A: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2005): 273-277.

war, ensuring woman's continued subjugation under the law and dependency on man. The hypocrisy of the men in power and the government they created would not keep women from seeking equality. The Women's Suffrage Movement gave a voice to passionate women and men who championed equal rights for all humankind. Many revolutionaries who advocated emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement now fought for women's right to vote, understanding that the only way to have true equality in a democracy is for all citizens to have the power to participate in the government that rules them. Many activists worked tirelessly to improve the lives of all women within the United States, chipping away at man's ultimate sovereignty.

Ezra Heywood championed the Abolitionist Movement, the women's suffrage movement, and individualist anarchist philosophies. His diligent advocacy and prolific writing became instrumental in furthering revolutionary views on freedom and equality. Heywood challenged the conventional notions of marriage and sexuality believing free love to be the basis of all social reform. He worked vigorously for women's rights and the equal treatment of all humankind until the day he died, in 1893, and his many works have become valuable windows into the society of nineteenth century America. "*UNCIVIL LIBERTY: An Essay to Show the Injustice and Impolicy of Ruling Woman Against Her Consent*", written in 1871, shed light on the injustices of male dominated society towards women in the nineteenth century.² In *Uncivil Liberty* Heywood successfully argues why, in order to maintain a true democracy, a nation must allow all of its citizens the right to participate in that democracy.

"The independence of British American Colonies, asserted in 1776, was an emphatic declaration of the right of peoples to manage their own affairs; an

² *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Ezra Heywood," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra_Heywood (accessed March 21, 2010).

appeal from governments to justice, from men to man. Till then nations were subject to enthroned power, whose will was superior to popular dissent. Singularly enough the managers of that revolution, after affirming life and liberty to be inalienable rights, proceeded to destroy life by wholesale in battle, and were so insincere as to deny liberty to a weaker race. The same hands which slew tyrants on Bunker Hill spread the shield of Federal law over chattel bondage at the South, and the Union of '89 became "a hard of States hunting slaves." Retributive justice has emancipated and enfranchised black men, but the insincerity of the fathers reappears in the dogma of exclusive male sovereignty, which rules one-half our adult citizens--the women--against their consent. This rude resistance to the logic of events affronts the essential principles of liberty, which inspired what self-government is yet thought safe in private affairs, and were designed to secure, at least, good manners in rulers."³

Heywood masterfully lays out a faultless argument as to why women must be given the right to vote in order for the United States to be a true democracy of the people. His essay is a passionate, aggressive, and unrelenting attack on male sovereignty. One hundred and forty years later his ideas still ring progressive. Heywood clearly makes the case; there is no liberty while citizens are purposefully kept powerless.

Heywood's *Uncivil Liberty* clearly reveals how the philosophies of the Enlightenment changed man's ideas of government and the role government should play in individuals' lives. The Enlightenment's principles of liberty and self-government launched the world's first democracy, the United States of America. Heywood explains how the Founders of the United States did not live by the ideals that propelled them into power and how the Founders kept the power of government in the hands of white wealthy men. Women were given no voice or control in government, which left them powerless over their own lives. Heywood defines how men dominated all aspects of society making it nearly impossible for women to hold any independence, keeping women in perpetual vassalage. Heywood also reveals that women were

³ Ezra Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty: An Essay to Show The Injustice and Impolicy of Ruling Woman Against Her Consent* (Princeton, Massachusetts: Princeton Mass. Cooperative Publishing Company, 1871), 3.

not deterred by men's desire for complete control. The Women's Suffrage Movement gave voices to commanding, dynamic women who took their objections to the American public. *Uncivil Liberty* shows how freedom, equality, and the true meaning of citizenship within the United States has been evolving since its founding, beginning with the pioneering philosophies, principles, and values that flourished through the Enlightenment era of the eighteenth century.

The theories of the Enlightenment allowed a new concept of governance to be considered. Before the American Revolution and the creation of the United States Government the power to govern rested in the hands of a very few people. Ordinary citizens had no means to influence the powers that ruled over them. Enlightenment philosophies took the power to rule out of the hands of god and his "ordained" few, and gave it to all people. Heywood shows how the Enlightenment era that swept through Europe and the American colonies changed the world's political and cultural landscape forever. The language Heywood uses illustrates how the philosophies on Natural Law and Positive Law played a large role in shaping the United States civil and legal structure. America's Founding Fathers used the theories of natural law and positive law to create the United States system of law based on reason and universal order. Reason became the primary source of authority not God.

"Parties, majorities, state, church--all institutions are despotisms when in conflict with incarnate truth. Legitimate civil authority may be traced to one of two origins: 1st, Enlightened reason, natural equity. 2nd, Positive legislation. Since the latter is void unless it enact the former, law can have but one true source, abstract right, God's will about it."⁴

Challenging long-standing convictions within any society is always a problematical undertaking to attempt. The history of humankind is proof that new and radical ideas are often met with

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

anger, fear, and at times violence. Heywood acknowledges social activists who risked their freedom and lives to make their voices heard.

“Through John Baptist or Herod, Brutus or Cæsar, Cromwell or Stuart, Lincoln or Buchanan, the moral sense, often stifled or perverted, but never conquered, here and there gets into creed, deed, or positive law, and makes the epoch memorable. One evolves a truth and is reviled, starved, or murdered outright for it; the truth survives, overrules law and custom, and men grow famous in eulogizing what they killed the discoverer for announcing.”⁵

The American Revolutionary War is evidence to the intense struggle needed for social evolution and universal freedom. America’s democracy led the way for a global transformation of power from the prevailing few to the disadvantaged many.

“The right to rule first claimed by brute force, then by good will, charity, finally rests in liberty, delegated trust, consent. If principal or representative goes wrong, integrity dissents, bides its time and wins, though the true king be in a dungeon, and a culprit on the throne. The world will settle down into a community of peoples when abstract right is obeyed as supreme interpersonal, interstate, inter-National law, and the clearest self-interest.”⁶

The concepts of authority, supremacy, and control began shifting away from domination and subjugation towards an understanding that all citizens have the right to an equal say in what laws and rules govern their society. Heywood sheds light on the balance that must be maintained in order to have a free society. To have liberty and justice, society must treat all of its citizens equally or there is no liberty, only tyranny.

“In determining essential right we settle woman's rights, for the greater includes the less; every political or reformatory convention is the reappearance of government, through imperfect mediums, the people, from its primary source, natural equity. The subt'e law which regulates movements of sovereign particles of the body politic, the cardinal principle of civil liberty allows every one to do what she or he will, provided they invade not the equal right of every other one to do the same. Out of this come freedom of thought, expression and movement; the right of association, habeas corpus, trial by jury, all the safeguards which

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 4.

experience has thrown up around dissent, to withstand invasion, and enable right to give law to instructive fact...Hence government, not less than liberty, must justify its existence, and opponents of impartial suffrage should be classed as tyrants until proved innocent.”⁷

It is evident by Heywood’s *Uncivil Liberty* that the enlightenment affected the legal structure and basic fundamental principles created by the United States Constitution. The very essence of civil law, the foundation of our legal system, originates with natural law, a theory originating in ancient Greece with the philosophers Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. Natural law states that the world is governed by laws set by nature and that these laws are valid everywhere. Enlightenment philosophers extrapolated natural law into natural justice, which led to civil law.⁸ European philosophers, such as John Locke, Voltaire, and Francis Bacon used the theories of natural law and universal order to question preexisting spiritual dogmas and scientific authorities, social and economical restraints, intolerance, and censorship.⁹ Inspired by these novel theories, Colonial America embarked on a journey towards universal freedom for all that would continue centuries past the creation of the United States.

Despite the florid and passionate language extolled by the Founding Fathers, universal freedom was not actually their goal. With the chance to build any government fathomable, slavery and the exclusion of women became fundamental elements of the United States Constitution. Heywood’s *Uncivil Liberty* emphasizes how the principles of liberty and self-government that created the United States Constitution, to make all men free, were not extended to women. The inability to participate in the government that ruled left women powerless to improve their lives. The Founding Fathers had been given a chance to treat the wives they called

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., s.v. “Natural Law,” http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/natural_law.aspx (accessed March 22, 2010).

⁹ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., s.v. “Enlightenment,” <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Enlightenment.aspx> (accessed March 22, 2010).

“better halves” with equal justice and reverence they deemed fit to bestow upon themselves, and did not take it.

“An old play represents Adam crossing the stage going to be created; democracy is yet so much in embryo that its reputed statesmen think national unity is promoted by centralized dictation, and extol as "a republican form of government" that which forces the allegiance of dissenting men and dooms to political servitude all women. But civil law being merely the creature of man, and binding only as it enacts rights, those who presume to legislate for citizens-- permanent residents of mature age and sound mind, who contribute to the material or moral welfare of society--of either sex or any race without power of attorney, or other definite commission, are guilty of fraudulent usurpation, and their acts morally void.”¹⁰

A citizen’s ability to participate in government is vital in order to maintain a democratic society.

Voting is the process a citizen uses to participate in government. As citizens of The United States, nineteenth century women lived within a society they had no say over.

““Taxation without representation is tyranny," was a potent rallying cry in the struggle for a male independence, which compels women to pay for the support of governments they had no voice in creating. It is a recognized principle of democracy that persons indicted for crime are entitled to be tried by their peers; yet women are arrested, imprisoned and judicially murdered, by their self-constituted masters. By constitutional decree and custom, a majority of votes cast decide the election; in Massachusetts, according to the census of 1865, there are 63,011 more females than males; and, by the majority rule, the women may rightfully expel Legislature and Governor, from the State House, as usurpers.”¹¹

Men used women’s forced dependency, created by men, as proof of woman’s inability to live independently of man. Heywood easily refutes this hypocrisy.

“The legal subjection of woman is thought to be justified by an assumed natural dependence on man. The old claim of tyranny, "the king can do no wrong," is reasserted by that many-headed monster, the majority, which widens the circle of despotism, but retains the fact. As people were to the king so woman is now an appendage of man, who claims to be her "head," though nature seems not to have limited heads to the exclusive possession of either sex. That there is no natural feeling of dependence, on one hand, or of superiority on the other, is evident to

¹⁰ Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

the most casual observer of spontaneous dealings of the sexes. In practical sense and force a girl of fourteen is often ten years older than a boy of the same age; tells him how to act and protects him from the big boys at school. A widow lady who maintains herself and daughter, and lays up money by keeping a half-dozen families in clean clothes, rejoices that she has no man on her hands to support. Her next door neighbor, who sold, one day, forty cents' worth of her husband's service for two pounds of beef, said, that for another piece as large she would part with him entirely."¹²

What little independence women managed to attain was overshadowed by the fact that men controlled the government. Men's obsession with complete dominion over women even went so far as to enact laws to prevent her independence. In fact, along with having no claim to property, earnings, and children, their very bodies were deemed forfeit. In the court case *Missouri v. Celia*, 1855, a female black slave is declared property without the right to defend herself against a master's act of rape. Even "free" white wives had no legal standing to turn to for protection against spousal abuse and rape.¹³

Men did not just control the legal power of Government. Women were not allowed to attend school or study trade, and the limited jobs available paid almost nothing. Survival outside of marriage meant either dependency on family or a difficult life of hard labor and little reward. In 1860, eighty five percent of Chinese women were enslaved as prostitutes in San Francisco.¹⁴

Men controlled women's lives from birth until death. Marriage was generally thought of as the transfer of a bride's dependency from father to husband. A husband assumed control over all of his wife's affairs, and control over her. Once married a woman lost any right to control property that was hers prior to marriage. A wife could not make contracts, keep or control her own wages,

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Marcus Brooks, "Women's Rights in the 1800's America," Helium, www.helium.com/items/1165568-sojourner-truth-1869-1870-fraticide (accessed March 23, 2010).

¹⁴ Unknown, "The Path of the Women's Rights Movement," The Prism, <http://www.ibiblio.org/prism/mar98/path.html> (accessed March 22, 2010).

bring any lawsuit, or sell property.¹⁵ Outside of marriage there were almost no options for a woman to be able to support herself. Heywood's *Uncivil Liberty* shows how women had no control over their lives.

“To compel her to obey father before marriage, husband afterward, then her eldest son, may be consistent with Mormonism, which aspires to build an empire on Isaiah's prophecy that in the last days seven women shall cling to one man, and honors as "the wisest man" a patriarch who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines; it may be suited to a theology which makes man lord of creation and woman an afterthought, designates boys as the "sons of God" and girls as the "daughters of men," and paves hell, not in good intentions even, but with "infants' skulls not a span long;" it may be agreeable to her position in a Turkish harem, a Chinese palace, on a blazing funeral pile of a Hindoo husband, or in the hotter fires of a Boston brothel but it is quite repulsive to the free ideas which transformed the dark realms of the American Indian into a constellation of powerful States.”¹⁶

Due to religions deep roots within societal structure, women could not divorce. If a wife chose to flee the tyranny of a cruel husband they could only take the clothes on their backs, forced to leave their possessions and children behind.

“Under existing laws only a "prostitute" can claim her child; any married father, whether of age or not, by will or deed may dispose of his child, "born or to be born," and its mother is liable to fines and imprisonment for presuming to dispute his marital "rights." A Boston woman of wealth, culture and talent allowed a servant to conduct her two little girls, one two and the other five years old, to see their father then living in another house belonging to her; he immediately took them aboard an Atlantic steamer, carried them to Paris, and she did not see them again for ten years! He acted on legal advice, and the statute which permitted the outrage is still law in most, if not all, of the States. Recently a prominent member of the medical profession compelled his wife to die under his own treatment, rather than be cured, or even prescribed for by the physician of her own choice; and government permits husbands to exercise this murderous power. One unfit to have authority over a fly is made absolute master of his wife; and while he could

¹⁵ Jone Johnson Lewis, “Gains in Women's Property Rights During the 19th Century,” About.com, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_1848ny.htm (accessed March 24, 2010).

¹⁶ Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 6.

be arrested for cruelty to a horse in the street, he may enter his house--a castle to him, a prison to her--and whip the mother of his children at pleasure.”¹⁷

Not until 1839, in the State of Mississippi, were women allowed to hold property, and even then, only with their husbands’ permission. It took another thirty years before New York, Indiana, Maine, Missouri, and Ohio, had expanded women's property rights to allow married women to keep their own wages. As woman began to struggle for equality, man used all his power to stop her.¹⁸ The North Carolina Supreme Court, in 1862, denied a woman’s divorce after her husband horsewhipped and beat her. The Chief Justice rationalization, "The law gives the husband power to use such a degree of force necessary to make the wife behave and know her place.”¹⁹

Heywood makes clear man’s cruelty in trying to dominate women.

“To justify himself, her oppressor must class her psychologically with brutes, deny her a soul, prove either that she has no functions equal with man, or that she is incapable of exercising them--neither of which can be done. Boys who toss their empty heads at this reform, use freely that epithet which reveals so much contempt for the human understanding--"strong-minded." Men are thought to personate reason, and women sentiment; but generally male objectors to this claim are noted for nothing more than their plentiful lack of logic and superabundance of mulish prejudice. Notwithstanding these disparaging exceptions, men yield to reason; and, at no distant day, physical strength will rally under the banner of moral beauty.”²⁰

After emancipation, the Thirteenth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment, and Fifteenth

Amendment man’s argument for woman’s dependency and oppression began to fall apart.

Women could no longer sit back and watch men take everything for themselves. Learning from the social movements before, women organized and demanded freedom from forced motherhood

¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸ Marcus Brooks, “Women's Rights in the 1800's America,” Helium, <http://www.helium.com/items/1165568-sojourner-truth-1869-1870-fraticide> (accessed March 23, 2010).

¹⁹ “Women's Suffrage,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (U.S.A: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2005): 733.

²⁰ Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 7.

or spinsterhood. Heywood illustrates the importance of suffrage and the insanity of keeping it from women.

“Whether suffrage is a right or privilege, natural or conventional, its denial to woman is equally indefensible. Minors become of age, slaves are emancipated, lunatics regain reason, idiots are endowed with intelligence, criminals are pardoned, traitors amnestied, disfranchised males of every class shed their disabilities and are restored to liberty; but the fact of sex--the crime of womanhood--dooms one to perpetual vassalage! Not the ability to drink, chew, smoke, lie, steal and swear, votes--though election day too often indicates these vices to be important conditions of membership in the male body politic--but intellect, conscience, character, are supposed to vote; and the boy proudly becoming "a man before his mother," is crowned a sovereign at twenty-one, because in thought and discretion he ceases to crawl as an animal, and stands on upright intelligence. Is she who endowed him with these royal qualities less capable of exercising them? If the admission fee to franchise is not age, but property, why are poor men received and rich women excluded? If the door swings open to integrity and courage, why are these turned away in women while their absence is welcomed in men? Simply because this booted, spurred and whiskered thing called government is a usurpation, and men choose to have it so.”²¹

Despite man’s best effort to keep woman from advancing her position, women persisted.

Inigorated by the abolitionist and temperance movements they had advocated, women began to organize a movement of their own. The first Women’s Rights Conference of 1848, held in Seneca Falls, New York, launched the Woman’s Suffrage movement. With the dream of independence, a generation of women suffragists changed America forever.

The Women’s Suffrage movements’ goal seemed simple, ensuring the right of women by law to vote in national and local elections. However, that goal would take women over seventy years to achieve. Tired of having no control, women started pushing back against society’s boundaries. With a majority of the populace against change, women slowly chipped away at the constraints raining them in. Heywood’s *Uncivil Liberty* exposes how, in the face of total male

²¹ Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 7.

dominance, women started struggling for equality. The ideals that propelled the founders to revolution now fueled women's aspiration of universal suffrage for all citizens.

“The protesting indignation of some women who had the honor to be, at least, rebellious slaves, widespread and increasing unrest broke out in the first formal declaration of independence, issued in 1848, from Seneca Falls, N. Y., by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and others. It enumerated grievances equal in number and seriousness to those set down in the famous manifesto of '76, and is destined to work a more extended and beneficent revolution.”²²

It became abundantly clear to women working in the abolitionist and temperance movements that if women wanted the right to vote they would have to get it for themselves, for even in the abolitionist movement women faced discrimination. At the 1840 International Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England, the male delegates voted to deny women participation in the proceedings, even if they had been nominated to serve as official delegates of their respective abolitionist societies, forcing them to sit behind a curtain so as not to be seen by the men.²³ Heywood explains how excluding women from participation is ludicrous.

“Justice unites persons widely remote; injustice separates infinitely those standing side by side. Men reputed to know something of the nature of liberty, so-called radicals who have ceased to represent the normal sense, or even the intelligence of the hour, talk flippantly of "universal suffrage" while shutting out one-half of humankind. A wit believed in universal salvation, provided he could pick the men; so perhaps these backsliding progressive will conquer their prejudices against impartial suffrage, when assured that new comers will vote their party ticket.”²⁴

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments, written for the 1848 Women's Rights Convention, fashioned after the Declaration of Independence, sent shock waves throughout the nation inspiring and uniting women everywhere. In her address Stanton lays out the grievances

²² Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 6-7.

²³ Jone Johnson Lewis, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton Women's Suffrage Pioneer,” About.com, <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/stantonelizabeta/a/stanton.htm> (accessed March 25, 2010).

²⁴ Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 6.

men have committed against women and demands for the first time publicly, women's right to vote. Two years after the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, the first National Convention of Women's Rights took place in Worcester, Massachusetts.²⁵ Heywood points out that women used every opportunity to shed light on the injustices and hypocrisy they faced within American society.

“A dozen years ago or more, the writer, with other specimens of sophomoric assurance, one morning at breakfast, questioned the propriety of Lucy Stone's refusal to pay taxes, allowing her furniture to be sold in preference; the combined, college-learned, male wisdom thinking it a great ado about a small matter. A lady opposite, who first called his attention practically to peace and anti-slavery reform, flung over the table, "No taxation without representation. Did you ever hear of Samuel Adams and John Hampden?" It was the first and last argument he ever attempted to make against woman's suffrage.”²⁶

The first major legislation enacted towards equality for women came early in the movement with the New York Married Woman's Property Act of 1848, successfully championed by Elizabeth C. Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Paulina Wright Davis, and Ernestine Rose. The statute gave women the right to control property and earnings even after marriage.²⁷ The Suffrage Movement also made progress on the social front, chipping away at restrictions and opening new avenues for women to pursue. Quaker physicians establish the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1850, creating the first institution to give women a chance to learn medicine. The same year of *Missouri v. Celia*, The University of Iowa became the first state college to accept women, and in 1870 Iowa became the first state to admit women to the bar.²⁸ Getting the vote would be a

²⁵ “Women's Suffrage,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (U.S.A: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2005): 733.

²⁶ Heywood, *Uncivil Liberty*, 7.

²⁷ Jone Johnson Lewis, “Gains in Women's Property Rights During the 19th Century,” About.com, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_1848ny.htm (accessed March 24, 2010).

²⁸ Unknown, “The Path of the Women's Rights Movement,” *The Prism*, <http://www.ibiblio.org/prism/mar98/path.html> (accessed March 22, 2010).

far greater task. A rift developed among feminists over the Fifteenth Amendment. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others refused to endorse the amendment because it did not give women the vote. Lucy Stone, Ernestine Rose, and others argued that once black man were enfranchised; women would achieve their goal. As a result of the conflict two organizations emerged, the National Woman Suffrage Association created by Anthony and Stanton, and the American Woman Suffrage Association created by Stone. The two organizations would eventually combine into the National American Woman Suffrage Association presided by Stanton in 1890.²⁹ The Women's Suffrage Movements strategy to attain the vote involved approaching the issue from both a State and Federal level. Wyoming became the first territory to give women the vote in 1869 and over the next twenty-five years, one by one, individual states conceded.³⁰

None of the remarkable women who began the movement would live to see the fruits of their labor. In 1920, after seventy-one years, congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution giving women the right to vote. The bill passed was the exact bill Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton submitted to congress over forty years earlier.

Heywood's *Uncivil Liberty* clearly reveals how the philosophies of the Enlightenment changed man's ideas of government and the role government should play in individuals' lives. Heywood explains how the Founders of the United States did not live by the ideals that propelled them into power. He describes how the Founders kept the power of government in the hands of men, giving women no voice or control in government, leaving women powerless over their own

²⁹ Unknown, "History of Women's Suffrage," Scholastic, <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/suffrage/history.htm> (accessed March 27, 2010).

³⁰ Unknown, "The Path of the Women's Rights Movement," *The Prism*, <http://www.ibiblio.org/prism/mar98/path.html> (accessed March 25, 2010).

lives. Heywood shows that men dominated all aspects of society making it nearly impossible for women to hold any independence. Heywood also exposes that women were not discouraged by men's desire for complete control. The Women's Suffrage Movement gave voices to unwaveringly determined women who championed their objections across the nation.

There has been one conflict plaguing the United States since its very conception; what are civil rights. For a country founded on principles of universal freedom, fighting for freedom has been the country's greatest battle. We have come a long way since the time of Ezra Heywood, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In 2008 Barack Obama became the first African American President. Two hundred and sixty women have served in Congress since 1917; a record ninety-three women currently serve in Congress, seventeen in the Senate and seventy-six in the House.³¹ There have been three women appointed to the Supreme Court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and in 2009 Justice Sonia Sotomayor.³² Still, two hundred and thirty-four years after the birth of the United States the fight for equality still continues and one hundred and sixty-two years after Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the Declaration of Sentiments, the issue of equal treatment of women still haunts us. Women still face discrimination, social double standards, and it is estimated that one in four women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Studying the evolution of civil rights in America sheds light to the immense struggle citizens have had to endure to create the tiniest improvements in their lives. Even when faced with overwhelming evidence, the majority constantly and often violently objects to any change. All of the social movements for equal treatment and suffrage have been

³¹ Jennifer Manning and Colleen Shogan, *Women in the United States Congress: 1917-2009* (U.S.A: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 2.

³² Linda Lowen, "History of Women on the Supreme Court," About.com, <http://womensissues.about.com/od/genderwarriors/a/HistoryWomenSCOTUS.htm> (accessed April 20, 2010).

paved in the blood of citizens spanning generations. The extraordinary amount of time and perilous effort it has taken to gain the rights that we now take for granted is a blueprint for any future change.

Gay rights is the newest civil rights movement in the United States. It is legal in thirty States to be fired for sexual orientation and thirty nine percent of all lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender workers reported experiencing some sort of workplace discrimination or harassment. Same-sex couples are denied the rights heterosexual couples are given automatically, like the ability to make medical decisions for a partner. Only five States have legalized same-sex marriage, while thirty States have banned it by amending their State Constitutions.³³ When looking to the Nation's past civil rights movements as examples, what we can learn is that continued persistence and resistance pays off. There is much work to be done for the advancement of equal treatment for all citizens, but there is hope, for if slaves can be freed and women can gain the vote surely we can accomplish anything.

³³ Michael Jones, "A Few Statistics on LGBT Issues," change.org, http://gayrights.change.org/blog/view/a_few_statistics_on_lgbt_issues (accessed April 20, 2010).