



*Suffragists demonstrate in front of the White House sometime between 1917 and 1919.
Image source: Wikipedia*

Suffragists Never Gave Up, and Neither Should We

<http://www.taketheleadwomen.com/blog/the-suffragists-never-gave-up-and-neither-should-we/>

September 09, 2015

by **Paula Cullison**

Noted anthropologist Margaret Mead once said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

In recognition of the 95th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment, which granted women the right to vote, I want to honor our foremothers and sisters with you.

Let us always remember them: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Alice Paul and the hundreds of others who showed an enormous strength of courage in the face of adversity.

They never gave up. Harassed, attacked, imprisoned and force-fed when they went on a hunger strike, they stood firm. They never lost hope that women would be given the right to vote. President Wilson ‘caved in’ because the public opinion was turning against him. The amendment finally passed by one vote in 1920.

Remember that many of the suffragists were abolitionists first ...they fought to end slavery. Social justice was in the forefront of their minds.

The suffragists also set the stage for the labor union movement most notably the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Their concerns were for fair wages and working conditions. As it happens, my mother was a member of ILGWU.

Most do not realize that the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was originally introduced in 1923 by Alice Paul. It was finally headed for passage in 1972 until the right-wing conservative

moment stop-gapped it. We were only three states short of getting it passed. Unfortunately, the movement for the ERA died in 1982, as it was not reintroduced in Congress.

We gave up, but the suffragists would not have given up. And I say, shame on *us* for giving up.

Momentum for the ERA is building again and it's up to us to get it passed. **The time is now. We deserve it.** In the USA, ALL men and women are created equal.

In 1979, the world was in awe when the UN presented the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an incredible, all-encompassing document. To date, 190 nations have ratified it, but unfortunately, we can't seem to get it through the U.S. Congress. The U.S. is one of the few countries in the world that have not ratified it. Shame on *US* for giving up.

A new grassroots movement is afoot called Cities for CEDAW, which aims to “implement a CEDAW ordinance in 100 or more cities at the municipal level by 2016.” We must work to ratify CEDAW, and the time is now. We must work together and see that cities in my state of Arizona (like Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tempe, Tucson, and Flagstaff)—and cities in your state—are added to the ever-growing list of Cities for CEDAW. Join me to make this happen.

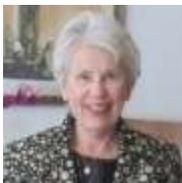
It was Bella Abzug, the former Congresswoman from New York, who was instrumental in having congress designate Aug 26th as Women's Equality Day. Twenty-four years ago, I invited Bella Abzug to speak in Phoenix on the politics of the environment and eco-feminism. She admonished us: don't walk softly and carry a lipstick. **It's time for action.**

Bella emphasized that women must be half of all the decision-makers in all areas: government, business, education, military, peace negotiations, and environmental issues.

Equal pay for equal work is a human right. We must not rest until there is parity. Furthermore, women deserved to be fully recognized. We deserve the ERA and CEDAW.

We must not settle for less, and we must not give up. We have work to do, **and the time is now.** Let us not forget our sisters in their struggle for equality, no matter where they live.

As Gandhi said: We must be the change that we want to see in the world.



About the Author

Paula Cullison is the President and Founder of the Arizona Women's Partnership, a nonprofit organization that provides grants to qualified charities that assist underserved women and children in Arizona. She is a freelance travel writer and photographer who is passionate about encouraging students to travel so they can fully understand the interconnectedness of all people. Her photography exhibit, *Have Passport—Will Travel*, is making the rounds at college campuses. To learn more about Cullison's work, visit her website at www.paulacullison.com.